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## THE TRAGEDY OF THE DENT BLANCHE.

BY VAGABUNDUS.

We reached the Bricolia Alp about 3 a.m., and halted for an hour for rest and refreshment. Any one who has ever been in a chalet on an alp can imagine the picture. For others I shall try to call it up. An alp, let me explain, is not a mountain, but a green spot, high in the mountains, where cattle can be pastured in summer. A few men are necessary to look after a large herd of cattle, to milk them, and to make the milk into cheese. Hence, wherever there is an alp, there is always a chalet, generally a little group of chalets (chalet is the Swiss equivalent of our English word hovel). At the Bricolla Alp there is a group of chalets. In one of these we sheltered ourselves.

Entering by a small door, where every one had to stoop to go in, we found ourselves in the one room of which these chalets generally consist. All round it were shelves, on which stood great tubs of milk or cheese in every stage of its manufacture. In a hole in the earthen floor a fire burned, the smoke of which escaped through the chinks in the roof and walls, there being no chimney or windows. That is usual in the hovels of the peasantry all over Europe. I have found it in Switzerland, in Norway, in Ireland. As we were cold, the guides soon made two more fires on the floor, so that all might crouch round them, and we ate

some of the food we carried with us, buying up all the milk that the herdsman had left in order to wash down our cold meat, bread, cheese, and chocolate.

It was a curious Rembrandt-esque sort of sight. A lot of rough, sunburnt men sitting on empty pails, blocks of wood, anything that came handy, while the fires flickered, throwing a red glare on the dark-brown smoked roof and walls, and the bronzed and bearded faces of the guides. Our lanterns, some of which we hung up on the walls or from the roof, added a feeble glimmer above, which helped us to see what we were eating, till the quantity of wood put on the main fire blazed up so brilliantly that we put the lanterns out, and saved the remnant of our candles.

About 4 a.m. we began to move forward and upward. A cold, wet mist had descended on the alp since we had taken shelter there, and the grey dawn was just beginning to break. About five, when we reached the moraine at the edge of the glacier, my strength was so far exhausted that I did not think it wise to go on. My left hand was so damaged as to be almost useless, and my general condition was such that I feared that on a difficult glacier I should be a hindrance, and not a help. So I turned back with my injured friend.

As soon as I had turned back I