

ALPINE GLOW.

BY JAMES McCOSS.

Thou wert to me,
That minute, with thy brow in heaven,
As sure a sign of Deity
As e'er to mortal gaze was given.
Nor ever, were I destined yet
To live my life twice o'er again,
Can I the deep-felt awe forget—
The ecstacy that thrilled me then.

Moore.

MONT BLANC.

ACCOMPANIED by my old friend, the late Robert Clarke, I stood one September evening in the main street of Cham-onix and watched the snows of Mont Blanc and the wondrous staff of Aiguilles gradually becoming dull and lifeless-looking in the diminishing light. The sky was clear, but the setting sun, as often happens, had buried itself behind a bank of cloud. The street lamps had been lit, and the valley generally had taken on a murky twilight. The mountain rose cold and grand, with no apparent stain upon its snows. Suddenly the sunbeams struck the upper snow and converted it into a dome of the most brilliant and dazzling golden-pink against the sky, which was a cold grey-blue shade. The rocks, too, were lit up and were changed from grey to red, and seemed ready to burst into flame. There was the same warm glow one sees on the gabbro when the sun is setting in Coire Lagan. For some time the gilded summit, surrounded by the lesser heights, held communion with the sun, while we waited in silence. Gradually these peaks in order of their heights turned pale in succession, and with a cold smile the colour died away, leaving only the summit snows of Mont Blanc crowned with a pale orange shade. I remember Bob's joy in watching this Alpine glow on Europe's highest snows, accentuated by the darkness



CHAMONIX AND THE MONT BLANC, 15,781 FEET.

of the valley where we were standing. The following verse explains very beautifully what the mountain seemed to be saying to us :—

I was a cloudy Alpine peak,
Barren and bleak,
And scarred and cold ;
But when you came
You turned my snow to flame,
My rocks to gold,
My crumbling crags to crimson spires
On lofty alabaster ways,
My sunset clouds to saffron fires
Before your vestal shrine ablaze,
My sombre pines to silver lyres
Sounding your praise,
Yea, and my very wounds and scars
To rosy furrows sown with stars.

Ronald Campbell Macfie.

LOCHNAGAR.

On February 10, after being in the shadow of the precipice of Lochnagar for four hours, we stepped over the snow-cornice into the sunshine, and coiled up the rope. It had been a wonderful hill day with bright sunshine. There was a hard frost and not a breath of wind, the snow was in excellent condition. The rocks were ice-glazed and colossal icicles were hanging from them. Under these conditions it is very pleasant on the plateau, but if the wind blows and the drift should rise, the conditions quickly undergo a change, and a walk round the cliff is a terrible ordeal. It was 4.30 p.m. and the sun was sending its beautifully-coloured horizontal rays towards us. A vast cone, with its apex pointing away from us was cut out on the country to the east of us ; night was within its borders and twilight still all round ; it was the giant shadow of Lochnagar. We seemed to be standing on the point of the gnomon of a gigantic sundial, the face of which was formed by miles of snow and heather-covered hills and glens. In the evening light each ridge and peak stood out with startling distinctness, and the snowy summits of the Cairngorms were all a rosy pink colour. There was a stillness that could be felt, and everything seemed unreal

and difficult to realize at the time. In the west the sun was sending a ruddy glare across the glittering snow of the White Mount, which dyed our faces, and cast our long shadows over the snow. A long, delicate cloud just above the sun was gradually adorning itself with prismatic colouring which was inexpressibly gorgeous, and the long series of western ranges melted into a uniform hue as the sun declined in their rear. We stood for half an hour under the most perfect conditions and watched the steps of the evening gradually creeping upwards towards us. The Dee valley was lost in a blue twilight, but we were still in the sunshine. At last only the small patch where we were standing remained in the ruddy glare of the sunbeams, but it, too, died away, and we were left in what seemed a cold and dead region. It is true there was still a wonderfully coloured sky, but its reflection did not last long on the hill-tops. We were now between the day and the night. The western heavens were of the most brilliant blue, with spaces of transparent green, while a few scattered cloudlets glowed as if with internal fire, and some higher cloudbands reflected a rich, bright purple. The horizon blushed with a pale red glow, against which the rugged skyline was silhouetted. To the east the night rushed up furiously, and it was difficult to imagine that the dark purple sky was really cloudless and not blackened by a rising storm. At 5.30 p.m. we were cutting steps down the Ladder and into the darkness as the stars began to appear in the dark, moonless sky.

The setting sun on Lochnagar
Seen from the glens both near and far,
The winter's snows had a ruddy hue,
But seen from the top the glens were blue,
And the rocky ridges towards Braemar
Had many a cold and rugged scar.