

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—I seek the aid of your world-real columns to expose an outrage committed on myself while travelling in Switzerland, feeling assured that publicity may have the effect of preventing a repetition of the experiment upon travellers ignorant of the law of the country and not knowing where to turn for redress.

On Friday last on reaching the Rhone Glacier Hotel, on my descent from the Grimsel, about 11 a.m., I applied to be booked by diligence to Brieg. I was informed that the gendarme (whose office adjoins the hotel) was the booking officer by the *diligence de la poste*. Upon applying to be booked the gendarme informed me that he could secure me "a place," but that he could not promise the *coupe*, as that might be full, that he would take the money (12*f.*) for the *coupe*, and if that was full he would return me the difference between the charge for the *coupe* and "a place." When the *conducteur de la poste* arrived I applied to him for my place. He was far from civil, and stated that my name was not on his bill, and that there was no "place" for me. I referred him to the gendarme. As I do not speak German I could not understand the conversation between them, but I could see that the *conducteur* had resolved not to give me a place. I then asked the gendarme to see his book, in order to ascertain the names of the passengers booked some time after me, and to discover whether they got places. My application to the landlord of the Rhone Glacier Hotel (who spoke English, and at whose house I had dined) was without effect, and I drew the conclusion that it was intended to compel me to stay at the hotel till the morrow, or hire a carriage and pair to Brieg at the cost of 70*f.* I went again to the *conducteur* and informed him that as my "place" had been guaranteed by the authorized booking officer, and I had paid my money, I insisted on being taken to Brieg. I only obtained more incivility. When the time for starting (2.30 p.m.) arrived, I perceived that several *voitures* and not the ordinary diligences were about to convey the passengers. As there were other carriages with horses ready to start, standing with these *voitures*, I should not have been able to ascertain which of them were intended to take the mail passengers, if I had not marked the carriage two persons (whom I had heard say they had booked through to Brieg) entered. I was in the act of taking my "place" in this carriage (there were two unoccupied) when the *conducteur de la poste* (a powerful fellow of some 6ft. 1in.) sprung at me like a tiger, seized me by the arm and beard (tearing away a complete handful), and thrust me from the step of the carriage. My alpine stock was in my left hand, and I had hold of the carriage with my right. I was thus prevented by the suddenness of the assault from exercising an Englishman's usual mode of defence. While I was thus held I managed to get my alpine stock into the form of a bayonet charge. Upon this (and without the stock touching him) the *conducteur* let go his hold. I immediately went to the gendarme (who was not far off), though I am not certain whether he witnessed the assault or not), and requested him to take the *conducteur* into custody and take down my charge. This disinterested public officer shrugged his shoulders, said he could do nothing, and refused to give me the name of the *conducteur* or tell me where the Prefet of the district resided. Three English gentlemen who witnessed the assault, and had already hired a *voiture* to take them to Andermatt, insisted upon accompanying me to Brieg to testify to the assault and assist me to bring the *conducteur* to justice. We hired the first *voiture* and pair at a cost of 70*f.*, and reached Brieg (notwithstanding the attempts of the *conducteur*, who was first, to keep the road) before the mail. The *directeur de la poste* had left his bureau, but we were promised an audience by the clerk at 8 in the morning. By the advice of an *avocat* (for whose honest advice I am much indebted) I stated the facts in the form of a letter of complaint to the *directeur de la poste*, and left with it the receipt given me by the gendarme and the handful of hair the *conducteur* had torn from my face. My three kind friends accompanied me to the *directeur*, signed the statement of facts, and requested to be examined in any way he thought proper as to the assault. The *directeur* informed us that he should transmit the letter of complaint, together with his own report, to the chief *directeur de la poste*, and added that the *conducteur* had been placed on a less profitable route in consequence of his incivility to passengers. I forwarded a copy of my letter of complaint (by the *avocat's* advice) to the British Consul at Berne, asking for his assistance.

In England the course to adopt in such a case is plain, but in a country whose laws an Englishman is ignorant of, and when the assailed has to return to England (as in my case) within a few days, the chance of obtaining redress seems very small. As I insisted (much against their inclination) upon paying the carriage hire of my three good friends to Andermatt (their original destination), the £ s. d. cost to me is 142*f.*, exclusive of hotel expenses, &c. This is a small matter, but freedom from personal violence (especially at the hands of a semi-official, as I presume the *conducteur* to be) is of great importance to English travellers in Switzerland. The mighty influence of *The Times* may do much, if not to redress the present grievance, at least to prevent the commission of like outrages on British subjects. I therefore beg you to insert this letter in your journal.

I enclose my card, and am, Sir, your obedient servant,
AN ENGLISH TOURIST IN SWITZERLAND.

Grand Hôtel Mirabeau, Rue de la Paix, Paris, Aug. 18.

P.S. Allow me through your journal to return my hearty thanks to the three gentlemen (from London) who so kindly afforded me their assistance, at considerable personal inconvenience, and also my acknowledgments for expressions of sympathy to an English clergyman and an English physician and his wife, who were at Rhone Glacier when the assault was committed.