CHAPTER XI.

ASCENT OF THE FINSTERAAR HORN.

Some few days before I left Cambridge, in July, 1857, purposing to make an eight weeks' tour in Switzerland with my friend, Mr. Ellis, of Sidney College, a laugh was raised at my expense, by the suggestion of a facetious friend that I might distinguish myself by an ascent of the Finsteraar Horn. In point of fact, at that time neither I, nor any one present, knew that two happy mortals had succeeded in reaching its summit so far back as the year 1841, and the suggestion that I should attempt to scale it, was intended to have pretty much the same force as would now be conveyed in a recommendation to try the Matterhorn; though, perhaps, the time may come when even that mountain will not be considered inaccessible.

I was, therefore, intensely delighted when on meeting Mr. Kennedy by appointment at Interlachen, on the 4th of August, he informed me that he had met with two Cambridge men at Reichenbach, who were planning to take the Strahleck Pass from Grindelwald to the Grimsel, and thence attempt the Finsteraar Horn, and that they had kindly authorised him to invite Ellis and myself to join the expedition.

Here was a glorious opportunity for giving a fitting response to the scoffs of my Cambridge friends. We at once eagerly accepted the invitation, and arriving at Grindelwald the next day, were introduced to Mr. St. John Mathews, of Trinity, and Mr. William Mathews, of St. John's, our acquaintance with whom soon ripened into friendship, under the genial influence of common labours and common hardships. They had engaged the services of Auguste Simond and Jean Baptiste Croz, of Chamouni, and also of Johann Jaun, of Meyringen, who had made two ascents of the Finsteraar Horn with Herr Solger, of Basle, in 1841. Kennedy and his foot page, commonly, and not altogether without reason, known as Fortunatus, with Ellis and myself, completed the party.

We made a successful passage of the Strahleck, though, unhappily, we had rain and snow in all the higher portions of the pass,

and could see little or nothing of the magnificent scenery by which we were surrounded. After two days' sojourn at the Grimsel, where the weather continued bad, we determined to change the point of attack from thence to the Æggisch-horn; and accordingly reached the Jungfrau Hotel on the evening of Saturday, August the 8th. Heavy clouds on Sunday morning, with rain in the afternoon, which at night-fall turned to snow, followed by thick wet mist all the next day, ought, I suppose, to have rendered us despondent, and probably would have had that result, but for the consoling assurances of our host, that the bad weather would not, nay, could not, last more than a fortnight. Happily, however, on Tuesday morning the clouds began to break. St. John Mathews, Jaun, and I sallied forth to explore a portion of the Middle Aletsch glacier, while the rest of the party walked to the top of Æggisch-horn; but I believe the one question which occupied every one's thoughts, and pretty frequently found utterance, was, "Will to-morrow be fine enough for the Finsteraar Horn?"

There had been some strong negative opinions expressed in the early part of the day, before we separated; but the sky had brightened so steadily, that when the whole party met at dinner, and the question was put, the ayes were everywhere, and the noes nowhere. At length the last dish was removed, a fresh bottle of Beaujolais produced, and we proceeded to settle about guides for the morrow.

We had already with us, as I have mentioned, Johann Jaun, the only Oberlander who had ever reached the summit; and our two Chamouni men had shown themselves so extremely knowing in places where they had never been before, that we were inclined to trust these three as guides, and take only porters for the provisions and bedding. But old Jaun put in an objection: he knew no French, Simon and Croz no German; and so Jaun would have another man with whom he might consult in places of difficulty. I suppose the absurd system of rota, in force at Chamouni, accounts for the fact that so few of the first-class guides of that village, who are all such clever fellows, care to increase their efficiency by a study of foreign languages, as they feel that no additional acquirements would place them in advance of their comrades. They should bear in mind, however, that though this is true at home, it is not so in Switzerland; and that they would very materially increase their chance of making long engagements to travel in the

Oberland, or other mountain districts, by acquiring a knowledge of German and English.

We readily consented to Jaun's not unreasonable demand, but on applying to the landlord, we met with a fresh difficulty. He endeavoured to persuade us that we required, at least, two additional guides, and introduced to our notice Aloys Bortis, of Viesch, a dark, sturdy-looking fellow, with a grave countenance and a limited vocabulary; one of his few words, however, was "camerado," and the burden of his discourse was that he would not go without his camerado, and that he and the camerado must each have fifty francs. In vain we argue; neither jokes nor simulated wrath can move him :—"Fifty francs for me, fifty francs for my camerado, or I go not." We appeal to the landlord, but to little purpose. Bortis, he thinks, is right. Ah! treacherous Wellig, good landlord, good cook, as thou art, I cannot but abuse thee in this matter, for the camerado is thine own cousin, and out of that hundred francs the lion's share is thine. Bortis is no free agent, but thy slave, and while we are marvelling at the immovable greediness of that apparently stolid worthy, he is but repeating the lesson he has learnt from thee, "Fifty francs for me, fifty francs for my camerado, or I go not." *

We were too determined, however, on trying our luck on the morrow to hold out very long, and at last an abatement of ten francs being proposed, we closed without further dispute, and agreed to give ninety francs to Bortis and the camerado, Franz Wellig, and twenty-five to a porter to go with us through the whole excursion, while wraps and provisions were to be sent on to the Faulberg, where we intended to bivouac, by two other porters at a very trifling expense. We gave a few directions as to the roasting of sundry meats for the morrow, and then, as the crowd of guides and servants, who had been interested watchers of our dispute, vanished from the salle, settled down again to our Beaujolais, and a cozy chat till bed-time.

We woke on August 12th to find the clouds all swept away, and as brilliant a morning as we could desire. In the highest spirits

* Wellig, whose hotel on the Æggisch-horn deserves the highest praise, and who is himself a very excellent fellow in most respects, acts both unwisely and unjustly in hiring men like Bortis and Bennen as his servants for the season, and then taking from them the fees which they receive for acting as guides to travellers, which he himself fixes at an unnecessarily high rate, but which they are made to demand as though they were really acting for themselves.

we ate a hearty breakfast, and then descended to the kitchen to arrange about provisions. Wine in abundance, one bottle of brandy, afterwards unwisely increased to two, roast mutton, roast veal, ham, sausage, cheese, bread, figs, and raisins, were put together, one after the other, till the pile looked big enough to feed an army, and the corresponding arithmetic amounted to seventy-four francs. Later in the morning, the guides expressed a desire for "noch ein wenig Brod und Fleisch," and the result of our consenting to this request was that the bill was increased to 114 francs, whence I presume that the word "wenig" does not exactly correspond to our English "little;" nor do I think it would have been a difficult matter to prove, from the character of the additions which were actually made to our store, that the phrase "Brod und Fleisch" includes things potable as well as things edible.

At 2·30 P.M. we started, twelve in number, including the five companions already named, Fortunatus, five guides, and one porter, forming together a tolerably imposing procession, although perhaps the dignity of the thing was rather affected by a certain levity of manner, and a boisterous tendency to laugh and shout. We were all in the highest spirits, and the two Chamouni men were greatly delighted at the idea of conquering one of the giants of the Oberland, and of returning to their native village covered with glory, the result of deeds achieved beyond the Rhone; while amongst the aborigines who accompanied us we had, marvellous to relate, a *volatile* Vallaisan, in the person of Alexander Guntern of Biel, a thoroughly jolly little fellow, as full of noise and rattle as a French waiter; and, in fact, at a later period of the expedition, when steadiness of head and hand were all-important, he was a little more obstreperous than was agreeable, and we were obliged to call him to order.

Little time was occupied in reaching the summit of the grass slopes, which, rising at the back of the hotel, stretch in a northerly direction towards the picturesque pile of the Æggisch-horn, and whence we looked down upon the bright little Märjelen See, sparkling in the sun-light, and bearing on its bosom numberless islets of ice, broken off from the great cliff of the Aletsch glacier, which forms its western bank. It was at the south-west corner of this lake that we were to get from the rocks on to the ice, and away we all started, like so many schoolboys, racing against one another, leaping over masses of rock, and frequently alighting on ground of too juicy a character to be pleasant (for the whole hill-side was

full of springs), but all bent on accomplishing the descent in a rush. It proved, however, rather longer than we had anticipated, so difficult is it to judge of vertical distances, and water at the bottom of a valley always has the effect of diminishing the apparent depth. About 3·40 we were running along the margin of the lake, and I believe bathing was mentioned; but I had tested its chilling powers on a previous occasion, and was able to give such a forcible account of the pleasures of immersion at a temperature of 32°, that the suggestion dropped. On reaching the ice, which is very much crevassed at its point of juncture with the rocks, Kennedy, W. Mathews, and I left the rest of the party; and while they, conducted by the guides, kept along the left bank of the glacier, where they met with wide and deep crevasses and a troublesome moraine, we took the centre of the glacier, and, after one or two slight difficulties at starting, found the ice in a most agreeable condition, with only such fissures as we could step or leap at pleasure.

As this magnificent glacier is nearly two miles broad, the two parties were soon shut out from one another's vision by the intervening hummucks of ice; and we, independent explorers, being ignorant of the exact position of the Faulberg, pushed on at a pretty rapid rate till we were opposite the extremity of the range of rocks which form the *grat* of the Walliser Viescherhörner, and in which we knew the Faulberg must lie. We now felt certain that we had advanced too far, and, after retracing our steps for some distance, we turned towards the left bank, and shouted lustily, in the hopes of attracting the attention of the other party. For a long while our shouts were unanswered, but at length a distant cry was heard, and far away we espied our friend Guntern perched on a rock, and making the most frantic demonstrations. He had been sent in chase of us by our friends, who had taken up their quarters for the night as early as six o'clock. But although it was past seven before we joined them, I am thoroughly convinced that we were quite right in selecting the middle, which is almost always the best part of the glacier; for had we possessed any means of recognising the Faulberg, and had we, when directly opposite to it, and not before, left the central route and made straight running to it, we should have anticipated the other party by more than an hour. In this case, if in no other, I am prepared to maintain, against all Senior Wranglers, Senior Optimes, or Junior Optimes who may present themselves, that two sides of a triangle are shorter than the third.

About five miles from the Märjelen See, on the left bank of the glacier, is a break in the rocks apparently about sixty feet broad. Clambering up the débris, and looking into the breach, you see that it extends laterally in either direction, and that you are standing at the mouth of a small amphitheatre; if you enter this, and climb up the rocks on the left, you will find, at the height of about 150 feet, two small clefts, and you will have reached the only shelter which nature offers you in these parts. The larger of the two caverns is tolerably roomy, and is capable of containing five or six persons,—*comfortably*, I was going to say, but there is one little drawback. Whether it is a favourite haunt of the fays of the mountain, and they have found it convenient to have a constant supply of water at hand, I cannot say, but certain it is that the water is turned on, and that there is no means of cutting it off, but down it comes, drip, drip, drip, splash, splash, splash, all day long, and, unfortunately, all night too. You may avoid it when you are awake, but when you are asleep,—ah, bah! you never are asleep there,—but just as you are on the verge, down comes a big splash, and you are broad awake again; and so it will happen again and again, till at last, in despair, you drag out your rug into the open air, and roll yourself up again on the rocks outside. Such was the fate of the majority of our party on the night of August 12th; but St. John, and W. Mathews, and I had agreed to share the smaller hole, which is supposed to contain three; nor will I deny that, by some means or other, we were all inside at the same time, but the crush was considerable, and I don't think either of us knew, with any degree of certainty, which was his own leg, and which his friend's, or whether his shoulder was being damaged by a nubbly rock or by his neighbour's elbow.

Sleep, however, that comes to all, came to us, and from nine to one we dozed by turns and at intervals. At one o'clock, a well-executed crow from Guntern, who seemed in most respects a very fitting representative of the early village cock, warned us to rise, and, after a slight snack of bread and coffee, and much more time than necessary, though not perhaps more than usual, spent in packing the provisions, we started for the grand assault at 2.30 A.M.

The moon, now in her last quarter, had risen nearly two hours, but she was only just peering above the eastern ridge of our amphitheatre as we moved down the rocks, and a few steps of descent brought us again into black shadow. On we stumbled, though

hardly at first possessing the free use of our limbs, creeping along the base of the Faulberg, now over rock, now over ice, and occasionally, when the latter was very steep, compelled to cut steps, till, by the time we were getting into open ground, the moon was high in heaven, lighting up the whole scene with intense brilliancy, and yet not dazzling down the brightness of the lesser fires, which, in that pure air, shone so sharp and clear, that they seemed almost within our grasp.

The position which we had now attained commands one of the most magnificent views in the whole range of the Alps. From it the spectator looks down upon a vast sea of ice, the confluence of three glacier streams, which, uniting here, pour down their frozen waters along the mighty highway which we had trodden the day before. It is the Place de la Concorde of Nature; wherever you look there is a grand road and a lofty dome. Turn to the south-west, and from between the outermost spurs of the Ebnefluh and the Aletschhorn, comes tumbling a branch of the Lötsch glacier, with the spires of the Mittaghorn and the Grosshorn in the background. Turn half way round to the right, and you are met by the waves of the mightiest stream of all, the Greater Aletsch, fed by the everlasting snows of the Jungfrau and the Mönch, the cowled head of the latter hidden by the nearer cliffs of the Trugberg, but the spotless Virgin dazzling all eyes with her queenly beauty, as she lifts her face to meet the pure salute of her sister-monarch in heaven. If you are not completely fascinated, let your heels lift you through another quadrant, and you are looking north-east, along another road of ice, which leads between the rocks of the Grünhorn and the northern outworks of the Walliser Viescherhörner to—shall we say to glory, or to the Finsteraar Horn? That great wall of rock, almost completely covered by snow, which we see in the background, is the Strahl-grat, and though not the Finster, is yet of it; and in three hours more, if all be well, we shall be clambering up its western slopes. One minute before we step forward, one lingering look down the way we have come, the fourth of our cross roads, and far away, with nearly twenty square miles of ice between us, rises the jagged ridge of the Æggisch-grat, which separates us from the Rhone valley, from civilisation, and the busy throng of men.

And now the word is "vorwärts," and we have left the rocks, are passing rapidly over the smooth *névé;* there is scarcely a

crevasse to be seen, but the light coating of frozen snow, which crunches pleasantly under our feet, renders our progress both easy and rapid, notwithstanding the sharpness of the ascent. We are walking nearly due east, with the moon on our right hand; gradually she grows paler and paler, and, as warned of the approach of day we hurry on to the top of the col, and thence look up at the snowy heights around us, there comes creeping over the topmost pinnacles that exquisite roseate tinge which all mountaineers know and love so well, but which pen and pencil must alike fail to delineate. Peak after peak is lighted up with the faintest pink, which rapidly deepens, through the most delicate gradations, into a warm flush of rosy-red, till, just as their unearthly beauty seems to surpass all that we have seen before, suddenly, in a moment, their whole face is changed, there is not a tinge of crimson left, but they are all glistening bright, like burnished gold, for the sun has risen upon them.

This glorious vision happened to us on the morning of August 13th, towards five o'clock; and as we now somewhat reluctantly prepared to move onwards, we saw the base of the Finsteraar Horn considerably below us, and perceived that we must descend diagonally along the face of a snow slope of about 30° or 35°, with our left shoulders towards the hill-side. This, to my mind, is one of the most troublesome parts of snow-walking, and though in such cases the alpenstock stands one in good stead, yet the difficulty of getting a firm stroke with the foot, and the necessity of constantly swinging one leg over the other, renders a slip very probable. And so, at this point, the whole dozen of us were tied together with a strong though light rope that we had brought from England. Nor was this intimate connection between us formed too soon, for scarcely had we taken half-a-dozen paces, when I completely lost my legs, and had it not been for the friendly cordon, which my neighbours on either side at once tightened, I should have gone rolling down for 200 or 300 feet; —not indeed that I should have come to any particular grief, for there was nothing but snow to roll on or to, but the time lost in the re-ascent of each unfortunate (and most of us took our turn in slipping) would have been very considerable. But with the rope, half a minute sufficed to bring each man on to his legs again, half a minute more to shake himself free of the extra snow, and the caravan was again in motion.

Although we had seen the highest peaks gilded by the sun, yet, being on the western side of the mountain, we remained in shade

for some hours; but just as we neared the foot of the great peak, we caught a few warm rays through a rent in the Grat, which terminates in the Rothhorn, and, hailing the omen, at once decided it was time for our morning libations. Throwing off the rope, we hastened to fill our cups and horns with some of the Valais wine, and drained off our bumpers of that rather unpalatable and decidedly thin liquid, as though it were the choicest grape of Burgundy.

And truly, though I seem to sneer at it now, it is but seeming, for I am fully convinced it is the proper drink for the mountains, and that cold tea or milk on the one hand, and brandy on the other, are equally a snare and a delusion. The former are not sufficiently invigorating, and though brandy should always be carried in case of illness, it should never be administered except as a medicine.

Some bread and mutton are now washed down by a second draught of wine, and we are off again. For the next two hours we are climbing up a wall of rock which seems almost vertical: now hand over hand; now getting well into a corner, and bringing our backs into play after the fashion of chimney-sweeps; now coming to some awkward place, where the tallest man must go first, for his arms alone are long enough to feel the way, and choosing some safe ledge, must stretch down thence a helping hand to his shorter brethren, who occasionally, too, are thankful for a shove behind; now completely baffled by some monstrous crag, we are driven to take to the hard snow at the side, and ascend by sharp short zigzags, which without the confidence-inspiring rope are not altogether pleasant; then back again to the rocks, and holding on like grim death, or taking advantage of some small, *very small*, plateau for a moment's delay, while we wipe the streaming sweat from our faces; on again with a cry to those below to look out, for the stones beneath our feet are giving way and crushing downwards;—till at last our advanced guard gives notice that we have reached the top of the rocks, and that a great slope of snow stretches upward before us as far as we can see. One by one we clamber on, glad enough at the prospect of a change of exercise, and though the slope looks somewhat severe, the rope is soon readjusted, and we are making long zigzags up the incline, with our alpenstocks ringing merrily in the snow, and the detached fragments skimming away from us with increasing velocity.

Though we were still sheltered from the sun, the glare of white began to tell on our eyes, and we were glad to assume our spectacles

and veils, especially as we had little occasion to look to our steps, for, though at times Bortis' hatchet was in requisition, the snow for the most part yielded pleasantly to the feet.

About half-past eight o'clock we took the opportunity offered us by a small clump of rocks, left bare in the midst of the vast expanse of snow, to make our final breakfast. "Now, *mes amis*, we must eat pretty heartily, for there'll be nothing more in that line till our work is over. Pass the mutton over here, Simond." "I fear, Monsieur, that there is no mutton here." "No mutton! Do you hear that, Mathews? there's no mutton here!" "Nonsense, Simond, we can't have finished it all." "That is true, Monsieur, but it has been left at the bottom of the rocks." "How absurd! Well, give me a slice of veal then." "Monsieur, I am desolated, but there is no veal." "How! no mutton, no veal; what is there then?" "Il y a du jambon, Monsieur." "Jambon! oh, yes, I know, tough as an old boot." "Il y a des saucisses, Monsieur." "Ah, that horrible *wurst*, it made me ill for a week the last time I ate it at Altdorf." "Il y a du fromage, Monsieur." "Ah, well, give me some gruyère then, though it's queer stuff for breakfast." "Monsieur, ce n'est pas gruyère, c'est le fromage du pays." "Fromage du pays, indeed! a mixture of bad butter, tallow, and salt. Upon my word, this is too bad; who packed the last knapsack?" "Messieurs les guides de l'Oberland." "Then Messieurs les guides de l'Oberland had better go down the rocks again, and fetch up something that we can eat." "Your plan would be admirable, my dear fellow, only that they would be four hours away, and we should get rather tired of waiting in that time."

So then, here we were, without the slightest prospect of returning to our stores till three or four in the afternoon, and the man we had specially engaged to carry our food of no manner of use, inasmuch as he was carrying such as we could not touch. The guides had consulted their own taste alone in the selection of what they would carry into the higher regions, and there was nothing but bread for us, and not enough even of that to satisfy our voracious appetites.

I suppose I need hardly say that we growled. I should like to know the Englishman who would not under such circumstances. But growling could not conjure up mutton; and so, washing down our crusts with some red wine and snow, we pursued our way, with our tempers *very* slightly soured.

Soon after this, the youthful Fortunatus confessed fatigue, but not before Franz Wellig, the camarado, who had been forced upon us, had exhibited very marked symptoms of distress. He happened at this time to be the leader of the file, and every five minutes he came to a dead stop, and looking back with as unconcerned an air as he could assume, inquired who had called to him, or why the rope had been checked? Half-a-dozen such stoppages and inquiries soon convinced us that he himself was the tired horse; and as he was really causing serious delay, we insisted upon his stopping altogether, or going on more steadily. He had already, in my opinion, had more cognac than was good for him, but being somewhat flustered by our objurgations, he now drew frequent and copious draughts from the dangerous flask. In spite of these, rather than by their assistance, he managed to keep on with us as far as the edge of the Strahl-grat, which we reached at 9.15, and where we made a short halt to look upon the new world that now burst upon us. For the last two hours our view had been superb, and its range had gone on steadily increasing in every direction, save the east; but now that we had gained this knife-like ridge, right at our feet, but some 5,000 feet beneath us, we saw with delight the magnificent basin of the Finsteraar glacier, encircled by precipitous cliffs, so steep in many parts that no snow would rest upon their face, and with but one enormous gap through which the frozen torrent swept away to join the Lower Aar.

I have heard an *arête* described as an infinitely narrow ridge of rock, with an everlasting vertical precipice on one side, and one longer and steeper on the other. This is not strictly true of any *arête* with which I am acquainted; but in the case of the Finsteraar Horn, the nearly vertical precipices towards the east are above 5,000 feet in height; while on the west a snow-slope stretches away to a still greater distance, at an angle of 65^0 or 70^0, and the ridge itself is only just sufficiently broad to allow the assailants to advance in single file. Had there been any wind, we must at this point have given up all hopes of success, but the sky was cloudless, and there was not a breath stirring. We had taken off the rope, and when I suggested to Simond, on starting, that it would be well to readjust it, I was met with the rather startling answer that it would be worse than useless here, for that the weight of any unfortunate who slipped would certainly drag the others down. "Non, Monsieur," said he, "içi, chacun pour lui-même." Not that he by any means

acted on this principle, for he was always ready to give a hand to any one who wanted it.

Fortunatus had now had enough, and determined on awaiting our return to this patch of snow, but Wellig, considering himself rather insulted by our taunts, started off in a huff to be the first at the top. Barely, however, had he gone a hundred yards, when he dropped as if he had been shot. Ellis, who came next, thought he was only resting, and walked quietly over him; but when I came up I saw it was something more than a rest. His eyes were turned up and his mouth drawn down, and he presented altogether a singularly fishy appearance. What to do I knew not, but Croz, who was close behind, at once adopted an original method of treatment, which, though apparently harsh, was eminently successful. Seizing him by the two lapels of his coat, he brought him into a sitting posture, and then shook him backwards and forwards so heartily that a very few oscillations brought him out of his swoon, and being now completely done up, he retired to join Fortunatus.

Onward we went along the *arête*, generally quite independently, but sometimes giving a helping hand to one another, and in very awkward places condescending to take hold of a strap held by one of the guides. When the rocks were bare of snow, we could see what we were about, but when there was snow, we had to try it first with our alpenstocks, as it often lay over the edge in the form of a cornice, and several times I had the gratification of seeing my pole pass right through, and as I drew it back and beheld the glacier right beneath me, I knew that had I unwarily put my foot there instead of my stock, I should have gone down "like lightning, and finally been dashed to pieces, thousands of feet below, in the horrible depths of the glacier." But as every one knew that caution was necessary, and nobody had any desire to imitate lightning, we continued our course at a considerable altitude above those depths; and I would say once for all, that to the healthy man with steady head, strong hand and firm foot, and with tried companions of the same calibre as himself, there is no such thing as danger in these excursions, except from want of caution. The inclination of our route was very variable; in parts so steep that the step-like character of the rocks alone enabled us to proceed, whilst in others it was not more than a very gentle ascent. At one point the ridge was so narrow and so awkward, that we were

obliged to crawl for some few yards on our hands and feet, till, coming to more pleasant places, we were again able to walk, or rather to clamber uprightly. Through the whole distance the hand bore quite as important a part as the foot; and though I wore no gloves, and my hands were of course frequently in contact with ice and snow, the sun was so powerful, and the exercise so severe, that I felt not the slightest inconvenience from the cold.

At 11.53 we had gained the summit, a small semicircular plateau, on which the ten of us who had persevered in the ascent could scarcely stand at the same time; and in the centre of the semicircle was the cairn of stones which Solger and Jaun, the only human beings who had preceded us, had erected in 1841.*

I was soon at the top of this, spite of the rebukes of Bortis, and, hat in hand, led a very efficient volley of cheers. A very small modicum of brandy tempered with snow was then administered to each (wine would have been better, but it would not have been possible to carry a sufficient quantity through the final climb), and we sat down to enjoy the magnificent scene around us.

The valleys of Switzerland are so narrow, and the walls of rock that hem them in so steep, that at great heights they are usually concealed from the spectator. Not a speck of green was now visible, nothing but the great white and black expanse of snow and mountain.

Our panorama on this occasion must have had a radius of seventy or eighty miles, and would have extended farther, but though the sky was still cloudless overhead, a low bank of cumulus cloud was creeping up all round the horizon. However, 17,000 square miles can hardly be considered a contracted view, and we found it quite sufficient for our contemplation during the short half hour we remained. Close around, but below us, rose the grim Schreckhorn, the obelisk-shaped Eiger, the round-headed Mönch, the graceful Jungfrau, and the massive Aletschhorn, a

* It is true that in a book published at Aarau in 1813, it is stated that three guides reached the summit in 1812; but I think no one acquainted with the character of the Oberlanders will be inclined to believe that they carried out such an undertaking by themselves, while certainly a regard for truth would not prevent their asserting their success, though they might never have attempted the final *arête*. When Mr. Kennedy made his first attempt to ascend Monte Rosa, which proved unsuccessful, his guides advised him to say that he had been to the top; and though he of course rejected their counsel, they went down into Zermatt and spread this falsehood through the village.

group nowhere perhaps to be equalled in beauty of shape and variety of outline; while, at a greater distance, we saw the Süstenhorn, the Bortelhorn and Monte Leone; and, right beneath the mid-day sun, the glittering peaks of the Fletschhorn and Mischabel range, with perhaps the top of Monte Rosa looking over them. One of our party, I think it was the veteran Kennedy, saw Mont Blanc; but this was a happiness denied to his less experienced companions. Half an hour soon slipped away, and after depositing a piece of paper with our names thereon in the empty brandy-bottle, which we fixed securely in the cairn, we prepared to descend, but not before we had detached sundry fragments of rock to carry away with us. It is currently reported that each man says he has got *the* top. I am sorry to disappoint the other four aspirants, but I can assure them that I have it myself.

Whatever may be the difficulties of ascending an *arête*, coming down is, I think, much worse. The very fact of the downward motion increases the chance of a slip, and the strong wrench by which you haul yourself up an awkward place, is more easily learned than the steady, slowly-relaxing grasp by which you drop yourself down. In short, if, to use an Irishism, in ascending mountains the descent came first I think fewer exploits of this sort would be accomplished; but, being once up, there is no choice left, you must come down. Bortis seemed to be so thoroughly of this opinion, that he started off at a rattling pace entirely on his own account; but on being stigmatised as *ganz Teufel* by Jaun, he returned, and though he continued unattached, condescended to give us the benefit of his occasional assistance. As for the rest of us, we divided into three parties of three each, and roping together with rather longer spaces than usual, commenced the descent in the following manner. I will take as an example the trio in which Croz, Kennedy, and I were the performers. Croz and Kennedy remained stationary while I descended, till I came to a spot where I could not only stand steadily but bear a strain on the rope if necessary; then, while Croz and I waited, Kennedy joined me, and thus set me at liberty to make a fresh start, till, when I stopped a second time, Croz joined Kennedy, who then descended to me. Thus there was never but one person moving at the same moment, and though this plan necessarily occupies a considerable time, it is the safest method of descending such an *arête* as this.

We reached the Grat in about two hours, and as Kennedy and

I were bent on a comfortable supper and bed at the Æggisch-horn, we took Croz with us, and, bidding farewell to the rest of the party, readjusted our rope, and dashed rapidly down the snow slope. We soon overtook Fortunatus and the camerado, and rather foolishly yielded to the entreaties of the former to take him on with us; I say foolishly, because he had no chance of getting beyond the Faulberg that night, and it would have been far better if he had waited to be picked up by the second detachment. As it was, however, we took the two on to our rope, and, after a rapid glissade or two, came to the top of the rocks. Here we held a council of war as to our mode of proceeding. Kennedy was for one long glissade, but Croz recommending the rocks, we adopted this as the more prudent course, though I believe we might have taken the snow with perfect safety, and, in that case, we should have reached in ten minutes a much lower point than that which we attained after a troublesome struggle of nearly two hours. A short rest at the foot of the rocks, and we were soon treading in our old track of the morning past the base of the Grünhorn. But in what a different state did we find the snow! Then it only just crunched beneath our feet, while now we sank knee-deep at every step; then not a crevasse was perceptible, but now, though by an inexperienced eye they were still hardly to be recognised, the long sunken lines stretching across the fields gave warning of the deep abysses, which were only just covered over to the depth of eighteen or twenty inches by a mass of soft snow. In some cases even that had disappeared, and the fissured *névé* itself was visible. Croz had succeeded in crossing one of these crevasses, and had planted his stock, and taken up a firm position on the other side, after the approved fashion, but when I, whose place on the rope was second, took the leap, the snow on which I alighted gave way beneath me, and down—I should have gone but for the rope. A vigorous pull from Croz, and an energetic use of my own arms and legs, soon brought me up again; indeed, I never sank below my chest. But I had converted the crevasse into such a tremendous gap, that there was no chance of the rest following in that place, and so we had to go for some distance along its edge, with two of us on one side, and three on the other, till it was sufficiently narrow for an easy jump, and we were all once more pushing forward together.

At 6.15 we discarded the rope, and soon after, bidding good-

night to the camerado and Fortunatus (who had already caused us serious delay, and who were now within easy distance of the Faulberg), we rattled on to the main Aletsch glacier, and, taking a central course, were soon skimming rapidly over its surface, though occasionally getting a shoe-full of water as we splashed into the small pools, which are generally scattered over large glaciers, and whose surface ice, after a long summer day, is always very thin. When we had pushed about half way down the glacier, the sun sank beneath the horizon, and almost at the same moment Kennedy announced to us that he was losing his sight. The long day's glare had been too much for his eyes, and he could scarcely see the ice at his feet.

Here was an agreeable position. Three men in the middle of a glacier, which neither of them had traversed but once before, one of them blind, evening setting rapidly in, and, by way of making things pleasanter, dark clouds rising, a drizzly rain beginning to fall, and low thunder growling in the distance. However, we could not stay there, and so on we went, with poor Kennedy as helpless as a child, led sometimes by Croz, sometimes by me, and fancying every little hole was an enormous crevasse. Once he proposed a bivouac, or rather that we should choose a good piece of ice, and promenade thereon till daylight should appear; but the suggestion was received with coldness not to say with scorn, and after a good deal of floundering, especially towards the end, where we got a little too near the left bank, and became involved in some rather awkward crevasses, we reached the rocks at the head of the Märjelen See at 10.30, and were not sorry to be again treading on terra firma.

Our difficulties were not, however, quite at an end, as we found a good deal of trouble in picking our way in the dark among the masses of rock, which border the lake, and cover the hill-side; and, in our anxiety to avoid them, we did not pay quite as much attention as we should have done to our route, and after an hour and a half's ascent, found that we had taken a direction too much to the east, and were descending into a valley separated by a narrow ridge from that in which lay our much-desired haven.

Happily, as soon as we left the ice, Kennedy's eye-sight began to amend, and by this time he could see quite distinctly, for it was he who discovered the error, and but for his warning we should have gone much further wrong. Convinced, however, by his arguments, we soon mounted this intervening ridge of 400 or 500 feet, and

after a little while, falling into the regular track, set steadily onward for the hotel.

It was at this time that I experienced the only sensation which seemed to argue considerable fatigue, and though I allude to an optical illusion of which I was the victim, I believe it originated rather in fatigue of the mind than of the eye. The moon had risen, and where her rays were reflected from what must have been wet rocks or pools in the distance, I seemed to see a magnificent hotel with well-ordered terraces and gardens, and I particularly noticed the moonbeams playing on the roof, which was apparently of slate. A remarkable point about the illusion was that the building was perfectly symmetrical, and could not, therefore, have been owing to the shape of any of the rocks.

At length, at one o'clock on the morning of August 14th, we reached the real hotel of the Æggisch-horn, though this seemed to me, as we approached, to be four or five times larger than I knew it to be.

Our vigorous hammering at the door was responded to by a sleepy inquiry as to the place whence we came, to which we merely vouchsafed the answer, "Finsteraar Horn." It proved a very efficient "open sesame." We were at once received with rapture by the elder Wellig, who would fain have embraced us, I believe, but not reading in our faces any encouragement for that extreme proceeding, contented himself with a vigorous *shak-hands*, and with the performance of an extempore triumphal dance. Called to a sense of his duties by a demand for supper, he disappeared for an instant to return laden with all sorts of delicacies, exhibiting such a celerity of motion, and so just an appreciation of what we should most desire, as did him infinite credit.

The rest of the party joined us in the morning at breakfast time. They had reached the Faulberg about eight, and slept more soundly than on the previous night. After a very jovial breakfast we settled accounts, of which, for the benefit of future visitors, I offer a copy.

Bill for provisions	114	francs.
Bortis and Camerado	90	„
Guntern	25	„
Three guides for three days, at eight francs a day* .	72	„
	6) 301	
	50·16	

Croz, and Juan received eight francs a day as their regular rate of

Thus 50 francs 16 centimes was each person's share of the expense. I do not think this is a very large sum for so much pleasure, and had we been unencumbered by the camerado, and remained firm as to the quantity of provisions, in which case the supply would have been really ample, eighty francs would have been saved, and each individual's expense reduced to 36 francs, 83 centimes.

J. F. HARDY.

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

I have elsewhere spoken of the book published in 1813, giving an account of the excursions made in the previous year by the Meyers of Aarau. Amongst these is the alleged ascent of the Finsteraar Horn by three guides who are said to have accompanied Rudolph Meyer, junior, to the top of the Oberaar Horn. There can be no doubt that one, if not both, of these statements are incorrect, though for my own part I do not question the truthfulness of Rudolph Meyer, whose report of the ascent was published at second hand by the Aarau editor. I am inclined to believe that the point reached by Rudolph Meyer was that north-west of the Oberaar Horn named by Agassiz the Altmann, and that the guides may probably have attained the ice-capped peak of the Studerhorn between the last and the Finsteraar Horn. It is true that Meyer asserts that a few days later he saw from the Finsteraar glacier the pole which his guides told him they had planted on the summit; but every one knows how much the imagination helps the eye that is straining to perceive some minute object; and speaking with due hesitation in a matter where certainty is not possible, I believe that the first mortals who ever attained this formidable peak were Herr Solger and his guide in 1841.

wages, and although they were really only occupied forty-four hours, we thought it right to consider the expedition as one of three days, as it spread over a portion of Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.