

pencil could never adequately represent the strange and exciting spectacle which displayed itself to our gaze. It seemed to us more like some weird vision of another world than anything we had ever expected to see upon this earth of ours. It was near 7 p. m. before we had descended the first half of the *couloir*, and we drew breath more freely when we reached the rocks which I mentioned before as having formed a resting-place during our ascent. The storm now slowly but surely approached, and we hurried on to descend the lower half of the *couloir*. The guides had chosen another way, which was the cause of our being plunged into unforeseen difficulties.

The horrors of the upper passage were renewed, and as the darkness of the coming storm fast closed upon us, it became very difficult to plant our footsteps securely. We were lowered from rock to ice, and clambered from ice to rock, until we thought that the way could not be worse; yet still we could see no sign of the end, and it soon became certain that we must spend the night upon the Ortler Spitz. This was an appalling prospect, unprepared as we were for such an emergency; and well might the boldest heart feel a shudder at encountering the terrors of such a night as we now feared must be before us.

We had come to the worst spot in the descent, where we had to be lowered over a smooth jutting piece of rock, with nothing to hold on by, down to the glassy *couloir*, from whence we had to climb to a little hollow on the side of the mountain. I took one look at the gulf below me, and went down, keeping my self-command with difficulty. It was soon over, however, and I crept round to a ledge overhung by rocks. We were scarcely settled here, when the thunder came crashing around us, and the rain fell heavily. Schaff pointed, for our comfort, to another black chasm into which we had to be lowered, and said he feared there was no chance of our reaching Trafoi that night, in which we all agreed. It would have been certain destruction to have proceeded at that hour, yet the horrors of having to remain on the ledge for the night, almost overpowered us. This ledge or rather sloping shelf of loose stones, was divided into two little hollows, and was covered by the overhanging rock above us, from which, unfortunately, there was a constant dropping of water, so that there was not a dry spot to be found. We could not move forward lest we should fall over the precipice which lay beneath; we could not sleep, for there was no place to lie down in; and we dared not sleep leaning against the rock, as it involved the danger of tumbling over also. We could not walk backwards and forwards, so as to keep ourselves warm with exercise, because the shelf we were on sloped so much, and the loose stones under our feet rolled down the height at every step. We had no food, no drink, no light, and our clothes were saturated with wet by the constant dropping from the rock over us. We were altogether in a most unenviable condition.

The storm now came on in earnest; the thunder rolled like ten thousand pieces of artillery, and the echoes reverberated through the mountains as if they never would end. The lightning was intense—flashing through the dark clouds; now in bright, white zigzags, and then in red streams of flame that lit up the peaks and snow-fields, as though they were on fire, while the great ice-cliff near us glowed as if it had been transmuted into one sheet of lava.

The scene was too awful for one to be able to look at with composure, and I strove to keep my eyes closed, but in vain,—each flash compelled me to open them, and gaze on the brilliant spectacle around. The storm ceased after two hours' duration, and the moon shone out peacefully over the mountains, forming a striking contrast to the preceding scene. We were now shivering with cold in our wet clothes, but providentially there was no wind, otherwise I know not what we should have done. Ten o'clock arrived, and we had been here about two-and-a-half hours. I endeavoured to obtain some sleep leaning on a stone, while Schaff and I kept as close as we could together, in order to

get a little warmth into our frames; the other guide had retired into a nook by himself. Eleven o'clock, twelve o'clock came. Oh! how slowly the weary night wore on! Many hours appeared to pass by, and yet when I looked at my watch by the moonlight, frequently not half-an-hour had really elapsed. We felt, however, we must try and win through, as it would never do to give way to despair.

One o'clock, two o'clock passed, and our situation was becoming agonizing. My eyes would not keep open, and yet each moment I was awoke by a frightful forward movement, as if I were about to fall over the cliff. My brief doze appeared full of dreams, generally pleasant ones of home and repose. It was evidently now freezing, our teeth chattered with the cold, and we trembled from head to foot. Not a sound was to be heard save the bound of rocks or stones from the *couloir*, and the occasional roll of an avalanche. Sometimes the stones came tumbling over our heads, but we were well protected from them by the overhanging cliff. At three o'clock the moonlight began to fade away, and everything grew dim. Schaff had gone into the nook with the other guide, and J. and I stood together intently watching for the first glimmer of daybreak over the distant mountain tops. I scarcely moved my eyes now from the heights over which I knew the dawn would appear. At four o'clock we saw the welcome streaks of light, and at five o'clock I roused the guides, but to our horror one of them told us that he feared we could not reach Trafoi that day either. He said he was sick, and certainly looked worse after the night than any of us. The rain that had fallen the evening before had been frozen over the snow of the *couloir*, and had converted it into one smooth glassy surface, down every yard of which steps would have to be cut. As day advanced, Schaff revived, and sent Ortler to cut the steps, and at 7.30 we heard the welcome words, "Now you go forwards," and we braced up our nerves for the struggle, glad at any rate to leave the ledge where we had spent twelve such weary hours.

We had first to walk across the line of steps cut in the ice, until we reached the centre of the *couloir*, when we began to descend. We soon got to the end of these steps, and as fresh ones had to be cut as we descended our progress was slow, and the labour entailed on the leading guide very heavy. The rocks and stones came bounding down all this time,—the large ones with loud crashes, and the smaller ones with a sound like the whizz of a rifle bullet. Our guides were evidently afraid of them, and we hurried on as well as we could, but there was a certain sort of excitement, as they whirled past, probably like that felt by soldiers in action when the bullets are heard flying past them. Schaff got a severe blow in the leg from a stone, and I was struck by a small one in the back. Ortler being exhausted at step-cutting, we tried to walk on the *couloir* without steps, but we had no sooner attempted it than J. (who had lost one of his crampons) slipped on the ice and was sliding away; but happily I had my alpenstock well in at the time, and was enabled to hold him up.

After three hours' hard work we reached some rocks, where we rested, and then we got quickly down the soft snow of the lower slope, at the foot of which we bade adieu to the regions of ice and snow, our way lying now through a steep stony descent, where we met a man who had been despatched by our kind hostess with refreshments for us. The heat was very great by this time, and I could not take either meat or wine; my mouth and throat were literally dry as if they had been made of parchment, in consequence of the long abstinence.

About noon we reached the woods, where unfortunately no water was to be had, and my sufferings from thirst were so great that I could scarcely drag myself along. At two o'clock we reached the little chapel where the three fountains are, and I rushed into it and drank copiously of the delicious water—the first thing that I had tasted with the least benefit for the last thirty-six hours. I was at once restored; the sense of fatigue vanished, and we walked on

rapidly to Trafoi, which we reached after an absence of thirty-six hours; twelve occupied in the ascent, five in descending to our night's resting-place, twelve on that awful ledge, and seven in the final descent. The inhabitants had nearly all given up for lost, and the report of it was brought away by some travellers leaving the place. Mr. H., one of the Alpine Club, who was staying at our hotel, felt confident, however, that we were safe. He and his wife had been watching us during the morning making our way on the *couloir*, like flies crawling down a wall, and on our arrival he came forward to greet us most cordially. After a light repast, we parted with our guides, having first proved our sense of their courage and careful attention by a suitable recognition of their services, and then retired to the rest we had so hardly earned. Next morning we awoke thoroughly refreshed, and found ourselves in no way the worse for all the hardships we had endured.

The spot that we spent the night on was about 11,000 feet above the level of the sea, as well as we could calculate. We could scarcely have lived through the night if there had been any wind, unprovided as we were with suitable covering of any kind. We felt truly thankful to Providence for our escape from such imminent peril, and resolved never to risk our lives in a similar undertaking. Next morning we bid farewell to quiet little Trafoi, and walked down the valley to Prad, finding ourselves the objects of some curiosity to the inhabitants, who called us "the Ortler Herren," the news of the ascent having quickly been circulated through the neighbourhood. On our arrival at Prad, the curate and several of the townsfolk called to congratulate us on our escape, and we had to submit to a friendly catechizing on various points of interest connected with the ascent. They told us that telescopes had been brought to bear on us while we were on the mountain, from various places in the surrounding district, as far as Heiden in the upper valley of the Adige. We could not help being impressed by the simple kindly manners of the people in this portion of the Tyrol, unspoiled as they are by that great influx of tourists, which in other parts of the Continent has exercised such a prejudicial effect upon the character of the inhabitants.

### "ALL RIGHT AT LAST."

I.

"MY dear," said Captain Smith, of H.M. revenue cutter *Dauntless*, to his wife, looking up from the damp sheet of the *Times*, that lay on the breakfast table beside his well-filled plate, "here it is again."

Pretty, daintily-attired Mrs. Smith, for she was still a comely woman, though her hair was thickly streaked with grey, rose from her seat behind the massive urn at the opposite end of the table, and leaned over her husband's broad shoulder, her eyes following his finger, as he pointed to the few words so strangely interesting to them both.

"God grant that it may be successful this time," she murmured, and then her tears fell fast, for the memory of a day gone by was heavy upon her, and her thoughts had travelled back to a darkened room, where a young mother had pressed her firstborn to her heart. Ah! the changes since.

"Come, come, Rosa," said the captain, "you will make yourself ill. A terrible trial it has been for us, but I almost thought we had learned to say, 'Thy will, not ours, be done.' Darling, it is best—it is best. Dry your tears, and let our trust be in Him who is not only a God at hand, but a God afar off." Then he kissed her very tenderly, for the shadow of the sad past was on him also.

When this petted son was about fourteen years of age, he ran away from home and went to sea, and the distressed parents had heard no tidings of him for years. They thought the pictures of sea-fights hanging in their library, and paintings of grand tempests on the old ocean, had first given their child a liking for the sea. This had