

The Last Arete

Alpinist—

Excelsior, there's nought we may not dare!
Why, now, confess defeat, when plain in sight
Looms the stern peak—to which we've toiled
and fought
Up many a mountain gorge and soaring height?
It were a shame if we should now go back
And, leaving all we've won, retrace our track.

Undaunted by the circling mists we camped,
Laid siege; while hail and snow went storming
by,
Assaulted through the brilliant mists; that
wrapped
A veil, impenetrable to the eye,
Around the wastes of ice, the snowfields bare
And craggy peaks that pierce the upper air.

We scorned to own defeat, when lost to sight,
'Mid cloud and snowstorm, was that summit
cold;
But started out the morn e're yet the sun
The highest cornices had edged with gold.
See now! the noonday glare reveals our fate
Above a rampart white and sharp arete.

Guide—

Crevasses open-mouthed have reft the face
Of brightly gleaming ice, that upward led.
Their clear green depths a gap impassable
present
Across the glacier slope ahead;