

A DESCENT OF THE MOENCH.

JULY 14, 1896.

AN island of the mist. White companies
Of clouds thronged wondrously against the
hills,

And in the east a darkening of the winds
That held awhile their breath for very rage,
Too wild for aught but vaporous quivering
Of melting fleeces, while the sudden sun
Fled to his home. Afar the Matterhorn
Reared a gaunt pinnacle athwart the bank,
Where towered behind it one vast pillar of cloud
To thrice its height. Behold the ice-clad dome
On which we stood, all weary of the way,
And marked the east awaken into scorn,
And rush upon us. Then we set our teeth
To force a dangerous passage, and essayed
The steep slope not in vain. We pushed our way
Slowly and careworn down the icy ridge,
Hewing with ponderous strokes the riven ice
In little flakes and chips, and now again
Encountered strange and fearsome sentinels,
Gray pinnacles of lightning-riven rock
Fashioned of fire and night. We clomb adown

Fantastic cliffs of gnarled stone, and saw
The vivid lightning flare in purple robes
Of flame along the ridge, and even heard
Its terrible crackle, 'mid the sullen roar
Of answering thunder. And the driven hail
Beat on our faces, while we strove to fling
Aloft the axe of forged steel, encased
In glittering ice, and smite unceasingly
On the unyielding slope of ice, as black
As those most imminent ghosts of Satan's frown
That shut us out from heaven, while the snow
Froze on our cheeks. And thus we gained the
field

Where precipice and overwhelming rock,
Avalanche, crag, leap through the dazzled air
To pile their mass in one Lethean plain
Of undulations of rolled billowy snow
Rent, seamed, and scarred with wound on jagged
wound,

Blue-rushing to the vague expanse below
O' th' unknown secrecies of mountain song.
Dragging behind us beautiful weary limbs,
We turned snow-blinded eyes towards the pass
That shot a jasper wall above the mist
Into the lightning-kindled firmament,
Behind whose battlements a shelter lay,
Rude-built of pine, whose parents in the storm
Of one vast avalanche were swept away
Into the valley. Thither we hasted on,
And there, as night stretched out a broken wing

Torn by the thunder and the bitter strife
Of warring flames and tempest's wrath, we came
And flung ourselves within, and laid us down
At last to sleep ; and Sleep, a veined shape
Of naked stateliness, came down to us,
And tenderly stooped down, and kissed our brows.