

## A DESCENT OF THE MOENCH.

JULY 14, 1896.

**A**N 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.