

fern, closely resembling *Asplenium germanicum*. From Primiero a pleasant and easy expedition is the ascent of Monte Pavione, the highest point in the Vette di Feltre range, whence is obtained one of the most extensive panoramas in the district, including Venice and the shore of the Adriatic, as well as all the neighbouring Dolomites. On the slopes of Monte Pavione and in the valleys which lead to its base the number and variety of flowers is extraordinary, the Val della Noana being particularly rich. One of the most beautiful flowers I have seen in the Alps we found among the rocks on this mountain—*Ranunculus narcissiflorus*, a very striking plant with its crown of fine snow-white flowers.

In fact, one of the great charms of the Primiero mountains is the contrast between the luxuriant maize-fields and vineyards of the valley and the varied Alpine flora of the higher regions, where gentians, saxifrages, and snow-crocuses brighten the rocks and pastures.

MAY AND DECEMBER ON THE FAULHORN.

BY E. S. KENNEDY (FORMERLY PRESIDENT OF THE ALPINE CLUB).

As my life had attained the allotted space of threescore years and ten, it was evident that no time was to be lost if I were to introduce my daughter, who had not yet completed her second decade, to the old Swiss hunting-grounds. Thus it came to pass that May and December went on the tramp together.

Did such metaphorical designations presage, as in a figure, their future physical fulfilment?

Landing at Beckenried, on the Lake of Lucerne, we thence strolled idly onward to the Grand Hôtel at Seelisberg. We did not luxuriate long at that charming spot, but, crossing the Bergli, found ourselves at my old quarters in Isenthal. Here we made acquaintance with Gasser, whose children are descendants in the third generation from that Carl Imfanger who, in bygone days, had accompanied me up the Uri Rothstock.

Starting from Isenthal, we left the Hangbaum hut and the Klein Thal on the left hand, and, following the Gross Thal to the Roth-Grätli, finally descended to Engelberg. While crossing the glacier we were, like Mr. Elliot Forster, similarly fortunate, and saw many chamois, one herd on the Engelberger- and the other on the Sättli-Stock. From Engelberg we took the Joch Pass to Im Hof. A delightful bathe may be enjoyed, *en passant*, in the lovely Engstlen-See. We had now made two or three passes, and felt correspondingly elated. A few days' training had put us into tolerable condition, and we began to entertain ambitious designs. It was time to try a summit. Which should we select? Should it be the Münch, or the Eiger, or the Schreckhorn? No! all these have been worthily described, and

to the alpine world their names have become 'familiar as household words.' Was there, then, no peak in existence whose successful ascent had not yet been chronicled; no peak whose name was not yet associated with tales of thrilling adventure; no peak that was not yet celebrated for 'hair-breadth 'scapes' from mountain perils? Yes! There was one solitary summit still unrecorded in alpine literature; many a mountaineer had gazed at it from the Grindelwald valley, but nearly all, impelled by an irresistible influence

to run a-foot
Even to the frozen ridges of the Alps,

had wended their way in the opposite direction. Let, then, the neglected Faulhorn be chosen for our first grand ascent. Distinguished members of the Alpine Club may look down upon us from their towering heights with pitying wonder, and treat with scorn and contumely our humble efforts to gain distinction. One question, however, may perhaps be permitted. Have these alpine men studied their Murray with advantage? In the pages of that excellent guidebook it is thus written:—'There is a footpath from the top of the Faulhorn, passing the waterfall of the Giessbach; but it is difficult, and even dangerous, slightly marked, and not to be attempted without a guide.'

Starting, then, from Im Hof in an open 'Einspänner,' we passed through Meyringen, and, leaving our carriage some little distance before reaching Brientz, followed a path through the woods on the south bank of the lake to the Giessbach Hôtel.

We are now at the foot of our mountain, but the usual elaborate preparations for an ascent are imperceptible; troublesome arrangements with guides, vast accumulations of provisions, unwelcome disturbance of early slumbers, are all absent. Rain had fallen during the night, but the morning of August 17, 1887, broke hopefully. My daughter and I made a start, with feelings in which hope and doubt were, perhaps, intermingled; and thus May and December found themselves tracing the devious paths that so picturesquely lead up from the hotel by the sides of the foaming Giessbach Falls. Our *noms de voyage* were not altogether allegorical, nor was their signification limited to the spirit by which each of us was individually animated. As we crossed and recrossed the rustic bridges, gleams of brilliant sunshine broke in upon us through the moisture-laden foliage, and were glinted back from the dancing bubbles of our mountain torrent. It was not unlike a bright May morning in England; but we did not then anticipate that before twenty-four hours had elapsed the rigours of bleak December would prevail, and that thus the human types of May and December would find their analogue in the realms of nature.

Crossing the upper bridge, and winding up through the woods that clothe the lowest spurs of the Faulhorn, we emerged upon the slopes of the Bätten Alp; thence following the higher branch of the Giessbach we soon found ourselves enclosed by steep rocks on the right hand and on the left, while in front they assumed an almost precipitous

character ; it was like the Happy Valley of Rasselas, all exit from which was an impossibility, and the poetic influence of the spot might have successfully tempted us to indulge in the luxury of idleness, had not stern reality been in the ascendant. We pushed straight ahead, scaled a stiffish bit of rockwork at the further extremity of the valley, and once more followed the Giessbach stream along a comparatively level piece of alp. Our friendly guide the Giessbach at length disappeared, while all trace of a path, too, had become a thing of the past. After mounting steep grass slopes, we gained the lowest edge of the highest pine woods, and here the path, restricted by the trees, became again perfectly distinct, and, thus assured that we had succeeded in preserving the right direction, we zigzagged rapidly upwards. While the pine woods had preserved our path intact, the close-growing stems of the fir-trees had at the same time concealed from us the changing character of the weather. These friendly influences of the wood had now ceased, so that, upon emerging once more into the open, we realised two rather discouraging facts; the one that the path had become almost obliterated, the other that we could not see more than fifty yards ahead.

Concurrently with the increase of mist, the doubts of December grew in strength, and the prospect of reaching the summit became simultaneously clouded over. The inevitable alternative was a strategic movement to the rear, or, in other words, an ignominious retrograde confession of failure. May, however, is the season of hope, and not a word of despondence is heard; but December looks back upon past experience, and the usual precautions are taken. We accordingly made various landmarks with stones and pieces of rock, and at occasional intervals turned, and looking backwards, studied and endeavoured to impress upon our memory those features of the scene that could be easily recognised, such as a lump of rock, or the broken stump of a tree, or a group of alpine roses. This is a precaution that is, perhaps, not often taken; but it is, I think, worthy of adoption when difficulty in finding the homeward line of march is to be anticipated. The aspect presented to the eye on the upward journey differs wholly from that which it meets with on the descent. The welcome recognition in fog and difficulty of even a limited picture gives confidence to the hesitating step, and imparts courage to the anxious spirit; the hitherto bewildered mountain explorer warms to his work with renewed hope and vigour.

We adopted, too, one other trifling expedient. It is commonly said that the thoughts of drowning men revert to the associations of their earliest days. We did not, it is true, contemplate for ourselves so melancholy a fate, but we were certainly getting into a humid condition, or, speaking colloquially, presenting the appearance of drowned rats. What wonder, then, that the literature of childhood should occur, and that in such retrospect the adventures of Jack and the Bean Stalk should occupy a prominent position! We had, however, no beans to drop, but we had a capital substitute. We had egg-shells, and these we scattered upon the ground. It is left to the reader's imagination to discover to what receptacle the eggs of correlation were consigned.

Meantime, with every foot of ascent the mists were becoming thicker ; we could see but twenty yards, and had only alpine cattle-tracks to follow. It is well known that fog possesses not only a distorting, but also a magnifying, power. Whether this power is limited to material objects may be a question ; the fact, however, is incontrovertible that the alternative of a retrograde movement now began to assume much greater proportions, consequently we should not perhaps be far wrong if we concluded that the occult power of fog embraces even the immaterial world. The scales were almost *in equilibrio*, but, if the equivocal paradox may be allowed, the upward scale was still inclined to preponderate. The mountain scale and the scale in which its possibility was impartially weighed were thus in accordance. At this critical juncture human voices were heard through the gloom. My daughter and I exchanged significant glances, which, being interpreted, meant, ' Shall we seek assistance ? ' The thought was humiliating, but yielding to the dictates of prudence, I shouted. The unmistakable Swiss *patois* was heard in return, the clatter of wooden *sabots* sounded upon the rocks, and presently the figure of a boy loomed through the fog. ' Were we in the right direction for the top of the Faulhorn ? ' ' Yes. ' ' Could he guide us to the inn there ? ' ' Yes. ' ' Would he do so ? ' ' He would ask his master. ' Boy disappeared, but soon returned and said that his master had consented.

We started at a good pace, *puero duce*. Not a vestige of a path could be discovered. Our route was over rough grass alps, then a descent into the rugged bed of a mountain torrent with V-shaped transverse section, then a scramble up the loose slippery rocks that formed the opposite side, where there was scarcely foothold, and no time for selection. Hurrying rapidly onwards, we reached the foot of very steep slopes of shale, falling away precipitously on the right hand and on the left. These we were obliged to attack *en face*, for the ridge was too narrow to allow a zig-zag ; the treacherous material, evidently the result of disintegration, gave way at every step, and thus we fully appreciated the derivation that interprets the word ' Faulhorn ' to mean the ' rotten or crumbling peak. ' We toiled upwards rejoicingly, for two hours' good work from the last of the fir-trees had placed us at a considerable elevation, and we could not be far from the wished-for goal.

The wind was howling through the mountain gorges, and vision was limited to about two yards, when suddenly vertical rocks rose up in front of us, and lost themselves in the obscurity above. Further progress was absolutely barred. But the boy speaks, ' I wis nit wo i bi ' — ' I know not where I am. ' Was not an expression of wrathful indignation pardonable ? But there was tremor in the boy's voice, perhaps an effect of the cold ; there was moisture in the boy's eye, perhaps an effect of fog ; there was a catch in the boy's breathing, perhaps an effect of atmospheric rarefaction. And the words of anger remained unspoken. Every mountaineer knows how depressing is the conviction that the previous long weary grind has been worse than wasted, and has only served to create additional labour. Whatever weight may then oppress the spirit, it is essential for all to be of a cheerful counte-

nance. But why despond? Had not the theory that the magnifying power of fog was not limited to material objects now been proved? The fog had become impenetrable, while simultaneously the alternative of a retrograde movement had become gigantic, and thus the argument had become unassailable. Our descent was rapid. On the steep ridges of shale our previous course was well defined; the watercourses, too, were of some assistance, for all fell in the same direction, and thus if a stream ran from left to right we crossed it, if in the opposite direction, we remained on the same side. The boy shouted and shouted again, but there was no answering cry, and the discouragement of silence was beginning to tell upon us, when my daughter said, 'Listen!' It was true. The joyous tinkle of cow-bells was distinctly heard; and soon through a rift in the mist three or four alpine huts scattered below us came into view. It required but little time to run down to the Sägis Alp, a spot that is rarely, if ever, visited by the alpine climber, and one which the foot of the tourist has never trodden; for is it not situated in the wildest part of a pass that 'is difficult and even dangerous'? Here we made acquaintance with Peter Abeggler, the occupier of the principal hut, and the owner of a hundred head of cattle. Peter Abeggler received us in the most courteous manner, no gentleman could be kinder; he led us through the outer chamber in which is standing room for eight or ten cows, and conducted us into the second apartment, in which were the usual apparatus for cheese-making, and the flight of wooden bars that led to the dormitory or loft above the dwelling-place of the cows. The hut itself is of the old-fashioned Swiss type, that is now fast disappearing before the advance of modern improvement. It is built up of horizontal pine logs, through whose crannies the cheering sunshine will at times sparsely gleam, while at other times rain and snow will be fiercely driven. In this hut we gladly took refuge, and almost immediately the rain, which had so long been threatening, fell heavily. Peter Abeggler lighted a fire in the stony corner of the hut; above this stockings and damp garments were hung upon our alpenstocks to dry. Our host produced clean woollen over-alls of his own for my daughter to wear, and then gave us hot milk, with fresh white bread and the purest of butter. After our repast my daughter and I threw ourselves down upon the hay above the cows, and there soon slept the sleep of him 'qui a bien diné.'

The sun had sunk many degrees towards the west, and the storm had passed away to the eastward. It was a calm; in the far-distant valleys beneath there were sunshine and shadow, and before us, to the southward, seen indistinctly through the mist, rose up the Sägis Grat. This ridge is toothed and jagged, and doubtless derives its name from 'Säge,' a saw; it has its origin near 'Zwei Lutschinen,' and taking a north-easterly and easterly direction, culminates in the Faulhorn, having left the little Sägis See on the south, and the Sägis Alp on the north. Upon this Alp we now stood. Three courses were open for us to follow—to pass the night in the hut; to descend to the Giessbach Hôtel; to push on once again for the Faulhorn. We awaited the return of Peter Abeggler, who had gone to look after his cows; he soon returned, bringing for my daughter a beautiful wreath of

alpine roses. 'Would he put us in the right path?' 'Yes, certainly; but he must first partially milk one of his cows.' This was for us. After a draught of new milk, and with Peter as a guide, we left the hospitable hut on the Sägis Alp, and after a rapid climb up steep and rocky grass slopes, found ourselves on the Sägis Grat. A warm hand-shaking, a hearty wish of 'Glückliche Reise,' and we parted. We may never see Peter again, but one of those striking Swiss friendships had been formed which every alpine man has experienced.

We knew the great value of time, but the heavy work of the day was beginning to tell, so that, as we followed the fairly defined path, the pace rather slackened. The mists had again surrounded us, and the shades of evening were beginning to fall; hence when the path lost itself on one of those level spots where snow-water stagnates, it seemed right to adopt one more precaution. The plan causes delay, but at the same time it almost ensures safety. One traveller remains stationary, while the other goes ahead for fifty yards; if he is still in the path the first man joins him, if he is not in the path he simply makes another trial. But now the path divided—one branch to the right, the other to the left—and doubt arises. My daughter, looking closely upon the ground, discovered the impress of a hoof. We followed this trail, but it began to descend, and once more there is a doubt. A momentary lift of the fog, however, revealed to my daughter an ascending zigzag ahead; but once again a doubt arose as we disturbed a covey of ptarmigan, for we drew the conclusion that the birds would not go to roost close to a human habitation. We shouted, but there was no answer. Soon, however, an indistinct mass loomed through the misty gloom. It was the Faulhorn Hôtel. Its doors were opened, and we were safely housed in its warmed and lighted Speisesaal. In another quarter of an hour lightning flashed through the room, thunder almost immediately followed, and an alpine storm raged around.

At daybreak the sky overhead was clear azure. Indoors the windows were frosted over, out of doors they were blocked up with snow. The storm-clouds of the past night were setting in the east, but the storm-clouds of the coming day were rising rapidly in the west. We hurried out, and were rewarded by one of those views whose impression is indelible. Every object, whether close at hand or in the far distance, was clad in the pure white mantle of fresh-fallen snow; while the whole range of alpine giants stood out in sharp distinctness against the deep blue-black background. In half an hour the alpine tempest was upon us. Throughout the day the wind howled around as it drove before it whirling masses of vapour, and hurled snow and icicles against our sheltering inn; but even its walls were not proof against the force of the blast, for many times during the day the snow was shovelled up from the floor of the Speisesaal. It was mid-winter, and thus it happened that both metaphorically and physically May and December found themselves upon the Faulhorn.

Another morning dawned, but the fury of the gale had scarcely abated. I went out early to make observations, but had not gone more than two yards before I fell up to my chest in a snow-drift. Breakfast

soon followed, then a consultation, then a suggestion by the landlord of a sledge descent. The sledge was brought to the lee side of the house. We two, wrapped in rugs, and furnished with warm gloves, seated ourselves therein. Three sturdy men appeared, the strongest took a shaft in each hand, the other two men seized ropes, the one fastened to one side of the sledge, the other fastened to the opposite side. The inn stands upon a kind of raised terrace from three to four feet high. This difference in elevation was wholly obliterated, and the snow had become one continuous surface, or, if the *équivoque* may be permitted, the *inequality* had been transformed into an *inn-equality*. At the word 'Vorwärts' from the landlord, the men started off at right angles to the inn, and at once plunged madly into this mass of snow, when the whole cavalcade, the sledge itself, the sledge drivers, and the sledge occupants, were thrown at once into struggling confusion. We instantly recover, and are off again. The men simply take a bee-line in a southerly direction, rushing every obstacle that presents itself. Every vestige of the zigzag had disappeared, nevertheless we knew when we crossed the usual path by a sudden plunge into soft snow from four to five feet deep; and we knew, too, when we were not in the path, for then the higher side of the sledge would suddenly leap over a rock with only two or three inches of snow upon it, while the lower side would sink deep into a snow-drift, and the prospect appeared imminent that we should all be hurled into the depths below. With natural instinct, but with utter uselessness, the occupants of the sledge would then put out their hands, the upper occupant in the attempt to seize a rock, the lower one in the equally vain attempt to uphold the sledge by pressing upon the yielding snow. But our sledge drivers were stalwart men, they knew the character of their work, and they were ready at rescue; and their combined strength, rightly applied, prevented an overthrow. We knew, too, when the sledge actually ran away with us, for then all three men would throw themselves down almost upon their backs, they would gather up the snow in big heaps before their feet, after the manner of a glissade, and thus check our velocity, until we were brought up by some snow-hidden masses of rocks. The whole descent was a great novelty, and a most exciting and enjoyable experience. The pace, too, was exceedingly rapid, while the men exhibited a wonderful amount of skill and knowledge, for let it be remembered all this was done starting from a height of nearly 9,000 feet, in a gale of wind, and in a driving snow-storm. We parted from our sledge drivers at a point that the geography books would call the lower limits of perpetual snow; thence we walked the remainder of the distance, and at last May and December found themselves snugly ensconced in the Bear Hôtel of Emil Boss at Grindelwald.

This is not altogether a bad route for entering Switzerland. Between Isenthal and Engelberg the Uri Rothstock may be ascended, while Titlis may be taken between Engelberg and Im Hof. The really beautiful effects of coloured lights may be seen at the Giessbach, while by starting thence tolerably early the alpine man may get his lunch on the Faulhorn, and reach Grindelwald in time for evening *table d'hôte*; he will thus be in fair training for climbing nobler 'peaks, passes, and glaciers.'