

LETTER XXXVIII.

DEAR CHILDREN:--

To-day we have been in the Wengern Alps--the scenes described in Manfred. Imagine us mounting, about ten o'clock, from the valley of Lauterbrunn, on horseback--our party of three--with two guides. We had first been to see the famous Staubbach, a beautiful, though not sublime, object. Up we began to go among those green undulations which form the lower part of the mountain.

It is haying time; a bright day; all is cheerful; the birds sing; men, women, and children are busy in the field. Up we go, zigzag; it grows steeper and steeper. Now right below me is a field, where men are literally working almost on a perpendicular wall, cutting hay; now we are so high that the houses in the valley look like chips. Here we stand in a place two thousand feet above the valley. There is no shield or screen. The horse stands on the very edge; the guide stops, lets go his bridle, and composedly commences an oration on the scene below. "O, for mercy's sake, why do you stop here?" I say. "Pray go on." He looks in my face, with innocent wonder, takes the bridle on his arm, and goes on.

Now we have come to the little village of Wengern, whence the Wengern Alps take their name. How beautiful! how like fairyland! Up here, midway in air, is a green nook, with undulating dells, and shadowy,

breezy nests, where are the cottages of the haymakers. The Delectable Mountains had no scene more lovely. Each house has its roof heavily loaded with stones. "What is that for?" I ask. "The whirlwinds," says my guide, with a significant turn of his hands. "This is the school house," he adds, as we pass a building larger than the rest.

Now the path turns and slopes down a steep bank, covered with haycocks, to a little nook below, likewise covered with new hay. If my horse is going to throw me any where, I wish it may be here: it is not so bad a thing to roll down into that hay. But now we mount higher; the breezy dells, enamelled with flowers and grass, become fewer; the great black pines take their place. Right before us, in the purest white, as a bride adorned for her husband, rises the beautiful Jungfrau, wearing on her forehead the Silver Horn, and the Snow Horn. The Silver Horn is a peak, dazzlingly bright, of snow; and its crest is now seen in relief against a sky of the deepest blue. See, also, how those dark pines of the foreground contrast with it, like the stern, mournful realities of life seen against the dazzling hopes of heaven.

There is something celestial in these mountains. You might think such a vision as that to be a bright footstool of Heaven, from which the next step would be into an unknown world. The pines here begin to show that long white beard of moss which I admire so much in Maine. Now, we go right up over their heads. There, the tall pines are under our feet. A little more--and now above us rise the stern, naked rocks,

where only the chamois and the wild goat live. But still, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, looks forth the Jungfrau.

We turn to look down. That Staubbach, which in the valley seemed to fall from an immense precipice, higher than we could gaze, is now a silver thread, far below our feet; and the valley of Lauterbrunn seems as nothing. Only bleak, purplish crags, rising all around us, and silent, silver mountains looking over them.

"That one directly before you is the Monk," says C., calling to me from behind, and pointing to a great snow peak.

Our guide, with animation, introduced us by name to every one of these snow-white genii--the Falhorn, the Schreckhorn, the Wetterhorn, the great Eiger, and I cannot remember what besides. The guides seem to consider them all as old friends.

Certainly nothing could be so singular, so peculiar as this ascension. We have now passed the limit of all but grass and Alpine flowers, which still, with their infinite variety, embroider the way; and now the auberge is gained. Good night, now, and farewell.

That is to say, there we stopped--on the summit, in fair view of the Jungfrau, a wall of rock crowned with fields of eternal snow, whose dazzling brightness almost put my eyes out. My head ached, too, with the thin air of these mountains. I thought I should like to stay one

night just to hear avalanches fall; but I cannot breathe well here, and there is a secret sense of horror about these sterile rocks and eternal snows. So, after dinner, I gladly consent to go down to Grindelwald.

Off we start--I walking--for, to tell the truth, I have no fondness for riding down a path as steep in some places as a wall; I leave that to C., who never fears any thing. So I walked all the way to Grindelwald, nine miles of a very rough road. There was a lady with her husband walking the same pass, who had come on foot the whole way from Lauterbrunn, and did not seem in the least fatigued. My guide exhausted all his eloquence to persuade me that it was better to ride; at last I settled him by saying, "Why, here is a lady who has walked the whole route." So he confined himself after that to helping me find flowers, and carrying the handkerchief in which I stowed them. Alas! what herbarium of hapless flowers, laid out stark, stiff, and motionless, like beauty on its bier, and with horrible long names written under them, can ever give an idea of the infinite variety and beauty of the floral crown of these mountains!

The herbarium resembles the bright, living reality no more than the morgue at St. Bernard's is a specimen of mountain travellers. Yet one thing an herbarium is good for: in looking at it you can recall how they looked, and glowed, and waved in life, with all their silver-crowned mountains around them.

After we arrived at Grindelwald, tired as I was, I made sketches of nine varieties, which I intend to color as soon as we rest long enough. So much I did for love of the dear little souls.

One noticeable feature is the predominance of yellow flowers. These, of various kinds, so abound as to make a distinct item of coloring in a distant view. One of the most common is this--of a vivid chrome yellow, sometimes brilliantly striped with orange.

One thing more as to botanical names. What does possess botanists to afflict the most fragile and delicate of earth's children with such mountainous and unpronounceable names? Now there was a dear little flower that I first met at St. Bernard--a little purple bell, with a fringe; it is more particularly beautiful from its growing just on the verge of avalanches, coming up and blossoming through the snow. I send you one in this letter, which I dug out of a snow bank this morning. And this fair creation--this hope upon a death bed--this image of love unchilled and immortal--how I wanted to know it by name!

Today, at the summit house of the mountain, I opened an herbarium, and there were three inches of name as hopeless and unpronounceable as the German of our guides, piled up on my little flower. I shut the herbarium.

This morning we started early from Grindelwald--that is, by eight o'clock. An unclouded, clear, breezy morning, the air full of the

sounds of cascades, and of the little bells of the herds. As we began to wind upward into that delectable region which forms the first stage of ascent, I said to C., "The more of beautiful scenery I see, the more I appreciate the wonderful poetry of the Pilgrim's Progress." The meadows by the River of Life, the Delectable Mountains, the land of Beulah, how often have I thought of them! From this we went off upon painting, and then upon music, the freshness of the mountain air inspiring our way. At last, while we were riding in the very lap of a rolling field full of grass and flowers, the sharp blue and white crystals of the glacier rose at once before us.

"O, I want to get down," said I, "and go near them."

Down I did get, and taking what seemed to be the straightest course, began running down the hill side towards them.

"No, no! Back, back!" shouted the guide, in unimaginable French and German. "Ici, ici!"

I came back; and taking my hand, he led me along a path where travellers generally go. I went closer, and sat down on a rock under them, and looked up. The clear sun was shining through them; clear and blue looked the rifts and arches, all dripping and beautiful. We went down upon them by steps which a man had cut in the ice. There was one rift of ice we looked into, which was about fifty feet high, going up into a sharp arch. The inside of this arch was clear blue ice, of the

color of crystal of blue vitriol.

Here, immediately under, I took a rude sketch just to show you how a glacier looks close at hand.

C. wanted, as usual, to do all sorts of improper things. He wanted to stone down blocks of ice, and to go inside the cave, and to go down into holes, and insisted on standing particularly long on a spot which the guide told him was all undermined, in order that he might pelt a cliff of ice that seemed inclined to fall, and hear it smash.

The poor guide was as distressed as a hen when her ducks take to the water; he ran, and called, and shouted, in German, French, and English, and it was not till C. had contrived to throw the head of the little boy's hatchet down into a crevasse, that he gave up.

There were two francs to pay for this experiment; but never mind! Our guide book says that a clergyman of Yevay, on this glacier, fell into a crevasse several hundred feet deep, and was killed; so I was glad enough when C. came off safe.

He ought to have a bell on his neck, as the cows do here; and apropos to this, we leave the glacier, and ride up into a land of pastures. Here we see a hundred cows grazing in the field--the field all yellow with buttercups. They are a very small breed, prettily formed, and each had on her neck a bell. How many notes there are in these bells! quite a diapason--some very deep toned, and so on

up to the highest! how prettily they sound, all going together! The bells are made of the best of metal, for the tone is of an admirable quality.

O, do look off there, on that patch of snow under the Wetterhorn! It is all covered with cows; they look no bigger than insects. "What makes them go there?" said we to our guides.

"To be cool" was the answer.

Hark! what's that? a sudden sound like the rush of a cascade.

"Avalanche! avalanche!" exclaimed the guide. And now, pouring down the sides of the Wetterhorn, came a milk-white cascade, looking just like any other cascade, melting gracefully over the rocks, and spreading, like a stream of milk, on the soiled snow below.

This is a summer avalanche--a mere bijou--a fancy article, got up, or rather got down, to entertain travellers. The winter avalanches are quite other things. Witness a little further in our track, where our guide stops us, and points to a place where all the pines have been broken short off by one of them. Along here some old ghostly pines, dead ages ago, their white, ghastly skeletons bleached by a hundred storms, stand, stretching out their long, bony arms, like phantom giants. These skeleton pines are a striking image; I wonder I have not seen them introduced into pictures.

There, now, a little ahead, is a small hut, which marks the summit of the grand Scheidich. Our horses come up to it, and we dismount. Some of the party go in to sleep--I go out to climb a neighboring peak. At the foot of this peak lay a wreath of snow, soiled and dirty, as half-melted snow always is; but lying amid the green grass and luxuriant flowers, it had a strange air. It seemed a little spot of death in the green lap of rejoicing life--like that death-spot which often lies in the human heart--among all seeming flowers, cold and cheerless, unwarmed by the sunbeam, and unmelted by the ray that unfolds thousands of blooms around.

Now, I thought, I have read of Alpine flowers leaning their cheeks on the snows. I wonder if any flowers grow near enough to that snow to touch it. I mean to go and see. So I went; there, sure enough, my little fringed purple bell, to which I have given the name of "suspirium," was growing, not only close to the snow, but in it.

Thus God's grace shining steadily on the waste places of the human heart, brings up heavenward sighings and aspirations which pierce through the cold snows of affliction, and tell that there is yet life beneath.

I climbed up the grassy sides of the peak, flowers to the very top. There I sat down and looked. This is Alpine solitude. All around me were these deep, green dells, from which comes up the tinkle of bells,

like the dropping of rain every where It seems to me the air is more elastic and musical here than below, and gives grace to the commonest sound. Now I look back along the way we have been travelling. I look at the strange old cloudy mountains, the Eiger, the Wetterhorn, the Schreckhorn. A kind of hazy ether floats around them--an indescribable aerial halo--which no painter ever represents. Who can paint the air--that vivid blue in which these sharp peaks cut their glittering images? Of all peaks, the Eiger is the most impressive to me.

It is a gigantic ploughshare of rock, set up against the sky, its thin, keen, purple blade edged with glittering frost; for so sharp is its point, that only a dazzling line marks the eternal snow on its head.

I walked out as far as I could on a narrow summit, and took a last look. Glaciers! snows! mountains! sunny dells and flowers! all good by. I am a pilgrim and a stranger.

Already, looking down to the shanty, I see the guide like a hen that has lost a chicken, shaking her wings, and clucking, and making a great ado. I could stay here all day. I would like to stay two or three--to see how it would look at sunrise, at sunset--to lie down in one of these sunny hollows, and look up into the sky--to shut my eyes lazily, and open them again, and so let the whole impression soak in, as Mrs. H. used to say.

But no; the sleepers have waked up, the guide has the horses ready, and I must come down. So here I descend my hill Difficulty into the valley of Humiliation. We stumble along, for the roads here are no turnpikes, and we come to a place called the Black Forest; not the Black Forest, but truly a black one. I always love pines, to all generations. I welcome this solemn old brotherhood, which stand gray-bearded, like monks, old, dark, solemn, sighing a certain mournful sound--like a benedicite through the leaves.

About noon we came to Rosenlauri. As we drew near the hotel the guide struck off upon a path leading up the mountain, saying, by way of explanation, "The glacier!"

Now, I confess that it was rather too near dinner time, and I was too tired at once to appreciate this movement.

I regret to say, that two glaciers, however beautiful, on an empty stomach, appear rather of doubtful utility. So I remonstrated; but the guide, as all guides do, went dead ahead, as if I had not said a word. C., however, rode composedly towards the hotel, saying that dinner was a finer sight than a glacier; and I, though only of the same mind, thought I would follow my guide, just to see.

W. went with me. After a little we had to leave our horses, and scramble about a mile up the mountain. "C. was right, and we are wrong," said my companion, sententiously. I was just dubious enough to

be silent. Pretty soon we came to a tremendous ravine, as if an earthquake had rent a mountain asunder. A hundred feet down in this black gorge, a stream was roaring in a succession of mad leaps, and a bridge crossed it, where we stood to gaze down into its dark, awful depths. Then on we went till we came to the glacier. What a mass of clear, blue ice! so very blue, so clear! This awful chasm runs directly under it, and the mountain torrent, formed by the melting of the glacier, falls in a roaring cascade into it. You can go down into a cavern in this rift. Above your head a roof of clear, blue ice; below your feet this black chasm, with the white, flashing foam of the cascade, as it leaps away into the darkness. On one side of the glacier was a little sort of cell, or arched nook, up which an old man had cut steps, and he helped me up into it. I stood in a little Gothic shrine of blue, glittering ice, and looked out of an arched window at the cascade and mountains. I thought of Coleridge's line--

"A pleasure bower with domes of ice."

On the whole, the glacier of Rosenloui paid for looking--even at dinner time--which is saying a good deal.

JOURNAL--(CONTINUED.)

FRIDAY, July 22, Grindelwald to Meyringen. On we came, to the top of the Great Schiedich, where H. and W. botanized, while I slept. Thence we rode down the mountain till we reached Rosenloui, where, I am free to say, a dinner was to me a more interesting object than a glacier. Therefore, while H. and W. went to the latter, I turned off to the inn, amid their cries and reproaches. I waved my cap and made a bow. A glacier!--go five rods farther to see a glacier! Catch me in any such folly. The fact is, Alps are good, like confections, in moderation; but to breakfast, dine, and sup on Alps surfeits my digestion.

Here, for example, I am writing these notes in the *salle-à-manger* of the inn, where other voyagers are eating and drinking, and there H. is feeding on the green moonshine of an emerald ice cave. One would almost think her incapable of fatigue. How she skips up and down high places and steep places, to the manifest perplexity of honest guide Kienholz, père, who tries to take care of her, but does not exactly know how. She gets on a pyramid of *débris*, which the edge of the glacier is ploughing and grinding up, sits down, and falls--not asleep exactly--but into a trance. W. and I are ready to go on; we shout; our voice is lost in the roar of the torrent. We send the guide. He goes down, and stands doubtfully. He does not know exactly what to do. She hears him, and starts to her feet, pointing with one hand to yonder peak, and with the other to that knifelike edge, that seems cleaving heaven with its keen and glistening cimeter of snow, reminding one of Isaiah's sublime imagery, "For my sword is bathed in heaven." She points at the grizzly rocks, with their jags and spear points. Evidently

she is beside herself, and thinks she can remember the names of those monsters, born of earthquake and storm, which cannot be named nor known but by sight, and then are known at once, perfectly and forever.

Mountains are Nature's testimonials of anguish. They are the sharp cry of a groaning and travailing creation. Nature's stern agony writes itself on these furrowed brows of gloomy stone. These reft and splintered crags stand, the dreary images of patient sorrow, existing verdureless and stern because exist they must. In them hearts that have ceased to rejoice, and have learned to suffer, find kindred, and here, an earth worn with countless cycles of sorrow, utters to the stars voices of speechless despair.

And all this time no dinner! All this time H. is at the glacier! How do I know but she has fallen into a crevasse? How do I know but that a cliff, one of those ice castles, those leaning turrets, those frosty spearmen, have toppled over upon her? I shudder at the reflection. I will write no more.

I had just written thus far, when in came H. and W. in high feather. O, I had lost the greatest sight in Switzerland! There was such a chasm, a mountain cut in twain, with a bridge, and a man to throw a stone down; and you could hear it go boom, and he held his hat! "Not a doubt of that," said I. Then there was a cavern in the ice, and the ice was so green, and the water dripped from the roof, and a great river rushed out. Such was the substance of their united

enthusiasm.

But, alas! it was not enough to lose the best glacier in Switzerland; I must needs lose two cascades and a chamois. Just before coming to Meyringen, I was composedly riding down a species of stone gridiron, set up sidewise, called a road, when the guide overtook me, and requested me to walk, as the road was bad. Stupid fellow! he said not a word about cascades and chamois, and so I went down like a chamois myself, taking the road that seemed best and nearest, and reached the inn an hour before the rest. After waiting till I became alarmed, and was just sending back a messenger to inquire, lo, in they came, and began to tell me of cascades and chamois.

"What cascade? What chamois? I have not seen any!" And then what a burst! "Not seen any! What, two cascades, one glacier, and a four-year-old chamois, lost in one day! What will become of you? Is this the way you make the tour of Switzerland?"

Saturday, July 23. Rode in a voiture from Meyringen to Brienz, on the opposite end of the lake from Interlachen. Embarked in a rowboat of four immense oars tied by withs. Two men and one woman pulled three, and W. and I took turns at the fourth. The boat being high built, flat bottomed, with awning and flagstaff, rolled and tipped so easily that soon H., with remorseful visage, abandoned her attempt to write, and lay down. There is a fresh and savage beauty about this lake, which can only be realized by rowing across.

Interlachen is underrated in the guide books. It has points of unrivalled loveliness; the ruins of the old church of Rinconberg, for example, commanding a fine view of both lakes, of the country between, and the Alps around, while just at your feet is a little lake in a basin, some two hundred feet above the other lakes. Then, too, from your window in the Belvedere, you gaze upon the purity of the Jungfrau. The church, too, where on Sabbath we attended Episcopal service, is embowered in foliage, and seems like some New England village meeting house.

Monday, July 25. Adieu to Interlachen! Ho for Lucerne and the Righi! Dined at Thun in a thunder storm. Stopped over night at Langnau, an out-of-the-way place. H. and G. painted Alpine flowers, while I played violin. This violin must be of spotless pedigree, even as our Genevese friend, Monsieur--, certified when he reluctantly sold it me. None but a genuine AMATI, a hundred years old, can possess this mysterious quality, that can breathe almost inaudible, like a mornbeam in the parlor, or predominate imperious and intense over orchestra and choir, illuminating with its fire, like chain lightning, the arches of a vast cathedral. Enchanted thing--what nameless spirit impregnates with magnetic ether the fine fibres of thy mechanism!

Tuesday, 26. Rode from Langnan to Lucerne just in time to take the boat for Weggis. From the door of the Hotel de la Concorde, at Weggis, the guide chef fitted us out with two chaises à porteur,

six carriers, two mules with grooms, making a party of fourteen in all.

After ascending a while the scenery became singularly wild and beautiful. Vast walls and cliffs of conglomerate rose above us, up which our path wound in zigzags. Below us were pines, vales, fields, and hills, themselves large enough for mountains. There, at our feet, with its beautiful islands, bays, capes, and headlands, gleams the broad lake of the four cantons, consecrated by the muse of Schiller and the heroism of Tell. New plains are unrolling, new mountain tops sinking below our range of vision. We plunged into a sea of mist. It rolled and eddied, boiling beneath us. Through its mysterious pall we saw now a skeleton pine stretch out its dark pointing hand--now a rock, shapeless and uncouth, far below, like a behemoth petrified in mid ocean. Then an eddy would sweep a space for the sun to pour a flood of gold on this field far down at our feet, on that village, on this mountain side with its rosy vapor-wreaths, upon yon distant lake, making it a crater of blinding brightness. On we went wrapped in mantles, mist, and mystery, trembling with chilliness and enthusiasm. We reached the summit just as the sunset-gazing crowd were dispersing. And this is Righi Kulm!

Wednesday, 27. At half past three in the morning we were aroused by the Alpine horn. We sprang up, groping and dressing in the dark, and went out in the frosty air. Ascending the ridge we looked off upon a sleeping world. Mists lay beneath like waves, clouds, like a sea. On

one side the Oberland Alps stretched along the horizon their pale, blue-white peaks. Other mountains, indistinct in color and outline, chained round the whole horizon. Yes, "the sleeping rocks did dream" all over the wide expanse, as they slumbered on their cloudy pillow, and their dream was of the coming dawn. Twelve lakes, leaden pale or steel blue, dreamed also under canopies of cloud, and the solid land dreamed, and all her wilds and forests. And in the silence of the dream already the tinge of clairvoyance lit the gray east; a dim, diffuse aurora, while yet the long, low clouds hung lustreless above; nor could the eye prophesy where should open the door in heaven. At length, a flush, as of shame or joy, presaged the pathway. Tongues of many-colored light vibrated beneath the strata of clouds, now dappled, mottled, streaked with fire; those on either hand of a light, flaky, salmon tint, those in the path and portal of the dawn of a gorgeous blending and blazoning of golden glories. The mists all abroad stirred uneasily. Tufts of feathery down came up out of the mass. Soft, floating films lifted from the surface and streamed away dissolving. Strange hues came out on lake and shore, far, far below. The air, the very air became conscious of a coming change, and the pale tops of distant Alps sparkled like diamonds. It was night in the valleys. And we heard the cocks crowing below, and the uneasy stir of a world preparing to awake. So Isaiah foresaw a slumbering world, while Messiah's coming glanced upon the heights of Zion, and cried,--

"Behold, darkness shall cover the earth

And gross darkness the people;

But the Lord shall rise upon THEE,
And his glory shall be seen upon thee!"

Hushed the immense crowd of spectators waited; then he came. On the gray edge of the horizon, under the emblazoned strata, came a sudden coal of fire, as shot from the altar of Heaven. It dazzled, it wavered, it consumed. Its lambent lines lengthened sidelong. At length, not a coal, but a shield, as the shield of Jehovah, stood above the east, and it was day. The vapor sea heaved, and broke, and rolled up the mountain sides. The lakes flashed back the conquering splendor. The wide panorama, asleep no more, was astir with teeming life.

Tuesday, July 28. One of the greatest curiosities in Lucerne is the monument to those brave Swiss guards who were slain for their unshaken fidelity to the unhappy Louis XVI. In a sequestered spot the rocky hill side is cut away, and in the living strata is sculptured the colossal figure of a dying lion. A spear is broken off in his side, but in his last struggle he still defends a shield, marked with the fleur de lis of France. Below are inscribed in red letters, as if characted in blood, the names of the brave officers of that devoted band. From many a crevice in the rock drip down trickling springs, forming a pellucid basin below, whose dark, glossy surface, encircled with trees and shrubs, reflects the image. The design of the monument is by Thorwaldsen, and the whole effect of it has an inexpressible pathos.

HELVETIORUM FIDEI AC VIRTUTI

On the monument's plinth can be read the following:

DIE X AUGUSTI II ET III SEPTEMBRIS MDCCXCII

HAEC SUNT NOMINA EORUM OUTNE SACRA

(illegible) (illegible)

DUES XXVI DUCES

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Rode in our private voiture to Basle, and rested our weary limbs at the Three Kings.

Friday, 29. Visited the celebrities of Basle, and took the cars for Strasbourg, where we arrived in time to visit the minster.

Saturday, 30. Left Strasbourg by the Rhine morning boat; a long, low, slender affair. The scenery exceedingly tame, like portions of the Lower Mississippi. Disembarked at Manheim, and drove over to Heidelberg, through a continual garden. French is useless here. All our negotiations are in German, with W., S., and G. as a committee on gutturals.