

## LOST ON THE STRAHLECK. By STAFFORD F. STILL and EGERTON W. RUCK.

ON the morning of August 27th last, we started from the Grimsel at 4 o'clock, intending to go over the Strahleck to Grindelwald, having as guides Peter Taugwald the younger of Zermatt, whom we had brought with us, but who had never been in the Oberland before, and Muhlermann of Lauterbrunnen, who stated he had been over the pass three times, and was strongly recommended to us by one of the first Oberland guides. We arrived at the summit of the pass at 11.45, and, the day being very fine, we had a splendid view. Muhlermann complaining of a headache on the way, we considerably recommended him some brandy out of our flask he was carrying; he took a little, and, as we afterwards found, not for the last time. After a short halt, we started from the top, keeping north for about an hour, when we came to a steep snow-slope; this we had descended for a short distance, when Taugwald stopped, and said we could not go any farther in that direction, and asked Muhlermann whether he was sure we were right; and then, to our astonishment, the latter declared he had no idea where we were, but thought we ought to be more to the east. On referring to our map and compass we ascertained that Grindelwald lay more to the north-west, and that our route should be considerably to the left. Muhlermann then admitted that it must be so; so turning to the left, we crossed several very steep snow-slopes and precipitous rocks, down some of which we had to be lowered, until we came in sight of what Muhlermann said was the Mettenberg.

Knowing that there was a path from the top of that mountain to Grindelwald, we decided upon making for it, and after crossing the débris of several avalanches we reached at 5.30 what we then supposed to be the side of the Mettenberg. The fog, which had been increasing for the last hour, now became so thick that we could not see ten yards in front of us, and as Muhlermann seemed to have no idea of the direction in which the path from the summit lay, there was no choice but to stop where we were until the morning; so, as we had our knapsacks with us, we began to put on our dry stockings and shirts, and trowsers, over our knickerbockers, but before we had time to complete our toilet the rain came down in torrents. After hunting about for some time and getting thoroughly drenched, we discovered a hole in the rocks into which we could just put our heads and bodies, our legs being outside.

Here we each ate a mouthful of meat from the little we had fortunately saved out of the day's provisions, and then asked Muhlermann for the brandy flask, expecting to find it nearly full; but, alas! it was almost empty, there being just enough for a sip each; we then smoked our pipes, and afterwards tried to go to sleep. But it was of no use; for though we could keep our bodies pretty warm by tight packing, our feet and legs were quite numbed from the wet and cold, and besides, the hole in the rocks in which we were was very wet, as water was trickling down the back and dropping from the roof. About 1 o'clock we sat up as well as we could, the roof being too low to admit of sitting upright, and smoked another pipe; it was still raining hard. Soon after 4 o'clock we tried to get up, but found it no easy task, our legs were so stiff, and our feet like stones. The mist was still as thick as ever, and the rain had changed to snow; however, we did not feel inclined to stop in our lodgings any longer, so started to try and find a way down. Muhlermann now declared that the summit of the Mettenberg was below us, and some way off, and that we were on what he called the comb of it, from which, after repeated unsuccessful attempts in several directions, extending over nearly seven hours, we found it impossible either to get on to the top of the Mettenberg itself, or descend to Grindelwald (this village, when the fog lifted, we could see several thousand feet below us); so at 11 o'clock we determined to try and retrace our steps to the Grimsel, making up our minds to spend another night out, as we had only eight hours' daylight to do what had taken us twelve hours' hard walking the day before, even if we could find our way, which was very doubtful as heavy snow and rain had fallen, and snow was still falling, which made the rocks very dangerous; however, we thought it was our only chance, so started back.

After we had crossed several snow-slopes and rocks, Taugwald, who had taken the command and had all the work to do, Muhlermann having given up before this and declared that we were 'Alle fertig,' went alone to explore a couloir, by which he thought we might get down on to the Ober Grindelwald Glacier, which lay some way below us to the east. After descending it for a short distance and finding it practicable, he shouted to us to follow as fast as we could, for it seemed probable, after the heavy snow and rain, that we might have an avalanche upon us; however, all got down safely, and then finished the little food remaining, being by this time almost starved. After following the Glacier down for about ten minutes, we were brought to a

complete standstill by the crevasses, and had to retrace our steps and cross to the Wetterhorn side. Here we climbed up some very steep rocks for a short distance, and were fortunate enough to find some niches cut, which are used in the ascent of the Wetterhorn; these we followed, and finally came into the path leading to Grindelwald. Muhlermann now plucked up his courage, and, much to our amusement, continually shouted 'Vorwärts.' At last, at a quarter to 5, we arrived at the village, having been thirty-six and a half hours from the Grimsel.

We cannot speak too highly of Taugwald, for without him we should certainly never have reached Grindelwald; and had we been obliged to carry out our intention of attempting to retrace our steps to the Grimsel, we should in all probability never have arrived there, for we must have spent another night on the rocks, and our strength must by that time have failed us from insufficiency of food and the cold.

[It is hard to understand how any guide—not drunk—could have lost his way in clear weather in descending from the Strahleck to Grindelwald. It seems, however, pretty clear, after talking over the matter with Mr. Still, with the help of Mr. Hinchliff, that Muhlermann must have kept along the west flank of the Schreckhorn so high as to cross the ridge in the depression between the Great and Little Schreckhorns, and so have continued along the Eastern or Upper Glacier side of the mountain in a fruitless and idle search for the top of the Mettenberg; that they spent the night on that side, and in the morning still worked northward in search of an imaginary path, till they were hopelessly stopped by the precipices which front the valley. Turning back, they made their way with great difficulty and danger, still above the Upper Glacier, descending at last probably by much the same route as was taken by Mr. Anderson in his ascent of the Little Schreckhorn (see *Peaks and Passes*, 1st series, p. 240, sqq). Certainly the travellers may be thankful for an escape from very imminent danger. It may be permitted to the Editor to express his own satisfaction in the praise given to young Taugwald, whom, notwithstanding what has been said in respect to the catastrophe on the Matterhorn, he remembers as an able, willing, and pleasant guide.—  
ED. A. J.]