

From this point the ascent was more and more steep and very slow, as every step had to be cut. Their difficulties were increased, also, by a mist which gathered around them, and by the intense cold. Leuthold kept the party near the border of the ridge, because there the ice yielded more readily to the stroke of the axe ; but it put their steadiness of nerve to the greatest test, by keeping the precipice constantly in view, except when hidden by the fog. Indeed, they could drive their alpenstocks through the overhanging rim of frozen snow, and look sheer down through the hole thus made to the amphitheatre below. One of the guides left them, unable longer to endure the sight of these precipices so close at hand. As they neared their goal they feared lest the mist might, at the last, deprive them of the culminating moment for which they had braved such dangers. But suddenly, as if touched by their perseverance, says M. Desor, the veil of fog lifted, and the summit of the Jungfrau, in its final solitude, rose before them. There was still a certain distance to be passed before they actually reached the base of the extreme peak. Here they paused, not without a certain hesitation, for though the summit lay but a few feet