

## THE ROTHORN AND THE GRANDMAMA

The sun was shining in the sky,  
Shining with all his might,  
Which wasn't odd, because it was  
Upon an Alpine height.  
The Grandma, gazing upward, thought  
It was a lovely sight.

The mountains were as high as high,  
The valleys low as low.  
The Grandma thought: "The bit between  
Looks awf'ly far to go;  
The zigzag paths must double quite  
The mileage of the crow."

"If seven men with seven ropes  
Helped me, O aged Guide,  
Do you suppose we'd reach the top  
Of any peak?" she sighed.  
Gauging her tonnage at a glance,  
Old Felix thus replied:

"The Zinal Rothorn we will climb  
Together, just we two,  
With steady pace and many rests—  
Perhaps of tea a brew.  
*Gehen sie* to the Rothorn Hut,  
Where I will come to you."

The Grandma packed her rucksack with  
The very min-i-mum,  
Which weighed upon her shoulders a  
Considerable sum;  
And on the venture started out—  
With butterflies in tum.

While toiling up the Gorge of Trift  
A nice young man she met;  
He saw her bent beneath the weight,  
Her brow all damp with sweat;  
He took her sack upon his back  
And off again they set.

This Galahad was Swiss, and he  
No word of English knew,  
And all the Grandma knew in Deutsch  
Were naughty words—a few,  
And so they talked in prep-school French  
(But using *vous*, not *tu*.)

Resting at Trift, she shares with him  
Her *petit déjeuner*—  
Some ham, some rolls, some fruit, and then  
(Of course) some *thé anglais*;  
She thinks: “To Zermatt he’ll return  
When I go on my way.”

But no! Again he takes her sack  
And on and up they climb  
Upon the horrible moraine  
That lasts uncounted time.  
It makes poor Grandma feel and look  
Ten decades past her prime.

At last the Hut! Her gentle knight  
Now shakes her by the hand  
And tells her that *la promenade*  
Has been *réellement* grand.  
She thinks his type of chivalry  
A very special brand.

Old Felix joins her and they sup  
On soup and cheese and bread,  
And then her palliasse she seeks  
To rest her weary head;  
And finds a lady next to her  
Just making up her bed.

They chat, and find (as women will)  
Just who and what they are;  
The lady is American,  
From Cal-i-forn-i-a,  
Aged seventy, and says that *she*  
Is a GREAT-Grandmama!

The lights go out, the hut-guests rest—  
They number ninety-four;  
The Grandma feels that ninety-three  
Have all begun to snore,  
With grunts and sighs and trumpet-notes,  
A veritable roar.

Great-Grandmama the leader is  
Of this loud orchestration;  
The Rothorn Hut is shaken to  
Its ultimate foundation.  
The little window closed up tight  
Induces suffocation.

The hours pass on so slowly, till  
The awful night is done,  
Herr Graven lights the lantern, and  
They rise up one by one;  
The Grandma oozes from her bag—  
The great day has begun.

They rope up on the terrace while  
The stars shine in the sky,  
They climb the Rothorn Glacier on  
The snow so crisp and dry;  
The mountain-tops all turn to rose  
To show that dawn is nigh.

The rocks are reached; old Felix cries:  
"Now *kommen sie* up here!"  
With ice-axe tucked in rope-loop where  
It prods one in the rear,  
One's fingers freeze on *verglas* and  
One shivers; (NOT with fear).

They reach the snow-ridge gleaming white,  
The sun is beating down.  
How close the granite pillars of  
The Rothorn's lovely crown!  
"The summit is two hours away,"  
Says Felix, with a frown.

Their axes and their sacks are left  
Securely in a *cache*;  
They quickly cross the couloir where  
Those falling stones may crash,  
And climb up to the last arête  
To make the final dash;

And all around her watching stand  
The Horns of Weiss and Breit,  
Of Gabel, Trift, and Matter, with  
The Dent Blanche on the right;  
And Mont Blanc eyes her kindly from  
His Upper-Circle height.

“A moment’s halt,” the Grandma begs,  
To quench this awful thirst!”  
—A respite granted then and blest,  
But later to be cursed:  
A figure on the summit stands—  
GREAT-Grandma’s got there first!

“DOTTY I.”