

gun, which he had let go, with the hope that by resting it across the gap it might help to support him, but at this moment the softened snow yielded, a slight cracking ran along the fissure, and the bridge, sinking as an avalanche, disappeared with him in the abyss below.

CHAPTER X.

By the return of daylight the next morning, the foehn had ceased to blow, but its passage might be traced by the spaces filled up, the tops cleared of snow, and the swollen torrents still discharging themselves in the valleys.

The sky had recovered its usual winter tint of pale blue, and was quite cloudless, which made it look like an immense veil suspended above the Alps. The temperature was, however, perceptibly softened, and there was a feeling of spring in the air, sensible even on these sharp heights; the glaciers were restored to mute immovability, and silence reigned again supreme in these wild deserts.

Sheltered on one of the loftiest points, Uncle Job had in safety seen the foehn pass, but the snow, which was continually freeing itself from the slopes, obliged him to put off his intended crystal-nesting exploit.

As soon as dawn reappeared, the old man calmly bent his steps towards the lower ranges, where he hoped the thaw would have prepared for him a harvest of plants. He soon reached the spot where the shaking of the glacier had overtaken Ulrich. His way did not take him nearer any part of that frozen sea; roused curiosity alone led him to look more closely at this strange revolution.

At first he went carefully along by the side, but afterwards cautiously ventured upon the frozen surface, stopping every minute or two to be sure he did not feel it slipping under him.

At every step there were witnesses of yesterday's ravages in crevices here

filled up, and here enlarged, and in the sunken bridges of snow all around.

In reaching one of these bridges, of which there was left only a slight part on an arch miraculously upheld over the gulf, Uncle Job perceived, half buried in the snow, an object for which at first he could not account. But scarcely had he lifted it up, when a cry escaped him; he recognized the rifle of Ulrich.

Full of horror, he turned to the gaping fissure. Still visible on the snowy surface were traces of the young hunter's steps and the place where he had disappeared. The old man tried to look to the bottom, but the crevasse, revealing at first two walls of azure green, suddenly made a turn and nothing more than a dark and profound depth could be seen.

Uncle Job knelt on the edge, however, and, bending his head over the opening, called aloud. His voice was faintly re-echoed along the mysterious deep. He listened; there was no answer. Leaning still further over, he uttered a second and more prolonged cry; then a third. This time he fancied he caught a sound, but so uncertain that he feared it might only be the filtering of the subterraneous waters, or the return of his own voice.

However, at renewed calls, the reply became less confused, and without being able to distinguish the words spoken, Job could yet hear that it was a human voice.

Quickly springing to his feet, he unrolled the rope he carried round him, and after fixing it firmly by means of an iron crook driven into the ice, he let it slip to the bottom of the chasm, to the place whence the voice had come. The end of the rope was quite lost to sight, and remained swinging for some seconds.

Again reaching as far as he could over the brink, Uncle Job renewed his call. At last, it seemed to him the cord was moving; it became straightened, and knocked against the sides of the fissure.