

with a rock for a pillow, and let my thoughts take what turn they would. Herbert's conversation and strange theories came back to me, and I looked again at those mountains which MacNey treated as enemies. They seemed to be clothed in mourning, and gray clouds rising on all sides, seemed to try to hide them from man's gaze. Suddenly the wind arose, moaning and wailing through the branches of the old pines. Doubtless this was what my friend meant by the *voice of the forest*, and it really seemed to complain and groan as the hurricane grew stronger, twisting and cracking the trees. The branches despairingly shook the mosses that hung from them like long white beards, and joined their voices to the confused chorus, both terrible and melodious, which now arose.

A flash of lightning pierced the clouds, large drops of rain began to fall, and I had just time to reach the Rosegg inn when the storm broke in all its violence, and the rain and hail poured wildly down.

I became more and more anxious. I imagined Herbert and his companions lost in the whirlwind of snow, and subject to the most frightful danger. Surely they had seen the storm approaching; why, then, had they not returned? The darkness increased. A flash of lightning showed me the path which led to the glacier, and in the distance it seemed to me I could discern two men. They were walking as fast as they could against the storm, and as they came nearer I recognized Hans, our guide from Pontresina, accompanied by another guide; they were alone, Herbert did not come with them.

Neither wind nor storm could restrain me, and I rushed out to meet the two guides.

"Where is my friend? My friend MacNey!" I cried to them.

Then Hans, turning and pointing to the mountain, said in a hoarse voice:

"He is back there!"

"He there, and you here!" I cried.

"What have you done? What has become of him? Why did you abandon him?"

"He suffers neither from snow nor storm," answered the guide with a shiver.

"Dead! Is he dead? Speak, speak in Heaven's name!"

We entered the inn. The two mountaineers were wet to the skin, but paid no attention to the fact; their faces were

stamped with an indescribable terror and fatigue.

"Ah! The rabiosa brought us bad luck," said the guide. "What's the good of making fun of sacred things?"

I shrugged my shoulders. This man's superstition seemed to me more than ridiculous.

"Speak, tell me about him, can't you!" I cried.

"Well, sir; we started before dawn, as you know, and reached the glacier as the sun rose. Mr. MacNey was wild and reckless, and this made us uneasy. He walked first, and although I am well accustomed to the mountain, (twenty years have I climbed its sides,) I swear to you sir, that I could not follow him. Mr. Herbert stopped at nothing, jumping over the snow bridges which hung above the crevasses, and it is a wonder he was not killed before reaching the end of our climb."

"Finally, about ten o'clock we reached the top. Mr. MacNey, of course, wished to be the first to put his foot on the highest rock, after which he jested and ridiculed the mountain in his usual scornful manner. Then he told us strange tales, like those of last evening, shook his fist at the glaciers and the Bernina: I really believe he was going mad. . . .

But that was nothing to what was to follow! "And now," he cried, "I must get the Altica for my friend, the flower of the glacier, and then the festival will be complete!"

"We began the descent. We had the choice of two roads, one well-known and easier than the other, which tourists generally follow; the second, shorter, but much more dangerous. Naturally Mr. MacNey wished to take the latter. He consented, however, to have this rope tied around his waist, it also bound together my companion and myself. He continued to go first, in spite of all I could say."

"We had been going down for about an hour, when suddenly Mr. MacNey cried out: 'There! Do you see it! There! At the bottom of the rock at the edge of the precipice, where the snow has melted away . . . , there is something red, it is the Altica, the Altica I'm looking for!'

Here the guide stopped to wipe the perspiration from his forehead.

"I tried in vain to prevent Mr. MacNey from carrying out this idea. He interrupted me with a laugh: 'If you are