

"On every part of the damp, black earth, appeared tufts of plants of a delicate foliage, saxifrage, with its stars of silver and gold, violet soldanelles and microscopic mosses. Then, at the very foot of the rock, a flower that I had never seen before, its strangely cut purple corolla fluttering in the breeze like the wings of a butterfly.

"To hasten towards the flower, pick it, examine it curiously, was the work of a moment. I quickly laid my find between two leaves of the press which I always carry with me, then arose to join my friends.

"Scarcely was I on my feet, when an indescribable uneasiness took possession of me. It seemed as if my feet could not leave the ground, and I felt as if a cloud of blood passed before my eyes. Then an acute pain circled my head; I cried aloud and fell . . .

"After that I remembered nothing except that I seemed to hear beside me the sound of shrill laughter. . . .

"Several days later I regained consciousness, and found myself in my room at Pontresina. . . .

It appears that my guides and hunting-companions had heard a cry of distress in the mountain, that they had started to look for me, and had found me soon after I had fainted, stretched out on the snow apparently lifeless." . . . With great difficulty they brought me to the hotel, where the doctor declared I was the victim of one of the worst sunstrokes he had ever known."

"Thanks to my iron constitution, I did not succumb to the brain fever which followed, and I could at length slowly make the round of my room."

"You had a strange notion in your delirium," the doctor said to me one day, "a fixed idea possessed you, you were for ever fighting with an imaginary being, from whom you wished to take something . . . 'The flower! the flower!' you repeated, 'I want it. The flower, it is mine! You shall not take it back!' . . . and the struggle would begin again between you and some phantom demon, who loaded you with chains. . . ."

"As my strength and memory came back to me, I had only one wish, one thought, to see again this strange flower, which I had only seen for an instant. I found my press in my room, and opened it with a feverish hand: in the place where I had put the *Altica rubra*, there was nothing, *absolutely nothing*, but a

reddish stain like a little drop of blood. . . . The flower had disappeared.—It is probable that while I was ill, some curious friend had opened the flower press and had let my precious find drop out. Yet my servant assured me that no one had touched it since my accident."

"Well, that's the latest trick the mountain has played me," added MacNey, as we reached the chalet of Rosegg. "Tomorrow, my revenge, and you will be conquered this time, you great rebel!"

Decidedly he was slightly mad, my friend, Herbert MacNey.

II.

The first thing we all did on arriving at the rustic hotel, at the foot of the glacier, was to take a hot grog. Then as Herbert and his guide were to set out before day-break, they lay down for a few hours to rest. Before retiring I went to my window, opened it, and admired once more the splendor of the summer's night.

The moon had nearly reached the horizon, and was disappearing behind the enormous mass of mountains. The peaks were illumined by its pale light, but the valley and glacier were plunged in darkness. Save the dull and infrequent rumble of some distant avalanche, not the least sound could be heard. The air was thick, and seemed changed into heavy draperies. The gaunt pines lifted their black plumes heavenward, making the solitude more solemn and terrible.

This picture, however, did not prevent me sleeping so well, that I was unconscious not only of the departure of Herbert and his guide at four o'clock, but also of the sunrise, which it seems was wonderful that day. Two English ladies, who breakfasted with me, gave descriptions of it that would make Delille jealous.

After getting my painting apparatus together, I started out and found a comfortable place by the side of a torrent, where I settled down to try a larch study. The sky, which had been so clear the preceding night, was losing its colour hour by hour, and was assuming a milky aspect. Towards noon the heat became unbearable, the tops of the mountains disappeared beneath the heavy vapour, and everything warned us of an approaching storm.

After the noon meal, I settled myself again, with brushes and canvas, beside the torrent, but an indescribable torpor took possession of me, and I felt unable to work. I stretched myself on the grass,