

that I have chosen Neli; say, do you not know it?"

"Yes," said Ulrich, calmly; "but as Neli is free our wills are nothing; she alone will choose."

"And you know she has already done so, do you not?" added Hans, with kindling eyes. "You have used your opportunities and turned her heart towards you. I have known only how to suffer alone and be silent, while you—you have been able to speak. I have only brought black bread to the house every day; you come with carved cups. I saw that one yesterday. But you do not suppose I shall let myself be robbed of my happiness without revenge?"

"What do you mean?" interrupted Ulrich, shuddering.

"Listen," continued he, seizing Ulrich's arm. "I wished to speak to you in a place where no one could interfere. Hear what I am going to tell you. Neli must be mine; she shall be, whatever happens; do you hear? And if any one dare to take her from me, as sure as I am my mother's son, I would kill him, if he were my friend,—yes, if he were my brother. For years past I have married Neli in intention; I have carried the idea about with me in the mountains to keep me company; it has been my rest and my pleasure. I warn you, do not upset my hopes, or by the God in heaven, harm will come to you!"

"It is not my cousin who is speaking now," said Ulrich, with emotion, "it is a demon that is tempting him and speaking in his stead. Let us leave all to God, who knows if it may not soon be all you could wish. You know the condition of obtaining Freneli; in trying each to fulfil that condition, may not that fate which has hitherto been the lot of all the Hausers be in store for one of us, and so leave the place free for the other?"

Hans fixed his glittering eyes upon him, and said:

"And that other—you are hoping it will be you."

Ulrich shook his head. "You know that all the chances are against me," replied he, bitterly; "and I should be the one with the greatest right to complain if I did not trust to Him who is above."

"But when will He decide between us?" cried Hans, passionately.

"This very hour, perhaps. Till now you have been blind and deaf with anger, but listen and look yonder," said the carver, who for some moments had been attending to the increasing noises and the darkness which was beginning to envelope the mountain.

With his hand he pointed southward.

Large furrowed clouds, as if driven on by some furious power, were rapidly descending along the highest points; the sharp air of the glaciers became lukewarm, and loud and confused rumblings were heard in the depths of the snowy defiles.

After a quick glance at these symptoms, a flash of furious joy passed across the face of Hans.

"By my faith! you spoke like a prophet," said he, turning to his cousin, "and your prediction is very likely to come true."

"I believe there is in reality a storm coming," observed Ulrich.

"It is the *foehn* coming," cried Hans with his eyes fixed on the sky; "do you feel how warm the breeze is? Do you see those whirling clouds down below?"

Ulrich immediately recollected the fears Uncle Job had expressed in the morning. He knew this burning whirlwind, which comes from the deserts of Africa, and, falling upon the Alps, breaks and crushes the winter's snow and ice and almost everything in its way. Even in the lowest valleys all the cattle have to be taken in at the first sign of the *foehn*; every fire is put out, and no one dares cross the threshold of the house. Ulrich asked his cousin if he were quite sure it was the *foehn*.