

gern Alp?" asked the hunter, coldly.

"What were you doing?"

"I saw you coming. I was waiting for you."

"You have something to say to me?"

"Are you not come in search of the chamois that Uncle Job saw yesterday?"

"Of course."

"You will not find them—I have just seen tracks of them; they are gone towards the glaciers."

"Ah well! I will follow them in that direction."

"Are you decided?"

"Yes, why not?"

"Then we will hunt together," said Hans, raising his staff, as if he wished to set out.

This was the first time he had ever made such a proposition to Ulrich, who looked at him in a surprised manner, which Hans thought he understood.

"Are you afraid of my company?" demanded he roughly.

"Why should I be afraid of it?" replied Ulrich.

"Who knows? Perhaps you think you will have to follow me too high and too far?"

"By my life! I did not think of that," replied Ulrich rather haughtily. "Although you may be a far better hunter than I, yet I have not so forgotten my old trade that I cannot go where you do."

"Let us set off then," interrupted Hans, entering the narrow passage and beginning to climb.

Ulrich followed, and soon they reached the plateau, whence diverge numerous paths in all directions.

The hunter showed Ulrich the marks of which he had spoken, and which really indicated the recent course of a troop of chamois towards the highest peaks.

Then leaving Upsigel at their right, they resolutely attacked the slopes which separate the Eiger from the Wengern-Alp. They were not long in getting to the snow which covered the first mountain-side, and they crossed

it in a straight line, guided by the tracks; but on the other side of the slope these tracks were suddenly lost in the fields of crystalline ice lying spread at their feet. As far as the eye could reach, nothing could be seen but high points, between which lay frozen sheets bounded by grey blocks of rock. They might have been likened to the out-pouring of gigantic rivers from the sky and suddenly congealed in their fall.

The hunters had now reached exactly the entrance of that prodigious dyke of glaciers which seems to bar the passage of the Alps to man for the space of a hundred and fifty leagues.

Here was the ice sea of Grindelwald and Aletsch; further off the frozen lakes of Fischer, Finster-Aar, Lauter and Gaulti.

Hans seemed for a moment to study the different routes, and then, without saying a word, he went southward. His step had a feverish rapidity and a provoking assurance in it. The more difficult the way became the greater his speed, leaping crevasses, clambering steep and rugged parts, and bounding down frozen ravines, with a sort of contemptuous anger. His whole being seemed to have undergone a change since he had entered upon those lofty solitudes; his eye was fired with a proud ardour, his dilated nostrils appeared to inhale the sharper air of the summits, and his lips moved at times as if he were murmuring to himself some mysterious defiance.

He would utter a slight exclamation as each fresh obstacle rose before him, then clear it with a bound. At sight of such angry impetuosity one would have taken him for a barbarian conqueror treading under foot an enemy's earth, and verifying and enjoying his victory at every step. And this exultation, far from getting less, increased with the dangers of their route. This was, indeed, his field of battle; as the smell of powder animates the soldier, so the air of these desert heights intoxicated him.