

from peak to peak like a celestial avalanche. Summits, mountain-sides and ravines, seemed one after another issuing from gloom to take their place in this gigantic panorama.

Just as the old man was finishing his prayer with the reverential amen, the morning beams reached him; they invaded the spot on which Job and Ulrich were standing, and wrapped them both in a dazzling glory. Job turned to the east with a gesture of thanks and salutation.

"Very good," said he with a smile; "here is what will show us the game and the precipices; now the rest depends on our prudence. Recall to your mind what a chamois-hunter wants,—according to the proverb, 'A heart stouter than steel, and two eyes to each finger.'"

"I will try not to forget it," said Ulrich.

"Then God be with you, my son."

"And so with you, Uncle Job."

Tenderly shaking hands they parted. The young man turned and saw Job plunge into one of those deep folds which furrow the mountain sides; he was quickly lost to sight, but almost immediately arose his clear and vibrating voice from the ravine; he was singing the psalm repeated by the martyrs of the Reformation when on their way to death, "This is the happy day."

CHAPTER VII.

After listening a minute or two, Ulrich began climbing up the steep ascent, and he soon passed the last fir tree. As he got higher and higher, the prints seemed to increase before him. The sun was still rising, and, like a victor, rapidly taking the most inaccessible fortresses, he attached successively to each point his flaming banner. The fogs that floated in the lower parts broke up by degrees, and were carried off by the morning wind, like the shreds of a magnificent veil, through the rents of which day glanced even to the depths of the valley.

Insensibly, and in spite of himself, roused from his reverie, Ulrich began to look at what was surrounding him. There is in the mountain air, in the thousand provocatives to curiosity, in the proud boldness of all that meets the eye, an indescribable excitement that emboldens and strengthens.

The body feels more active, the mind more courageous. In the face of those snows, which forbid any approach, those precipices which bar the way, one is seized with a sort of aggressive fever, just as before an enemy; one hears from within one's self all the fanfares of life, and a thousand inward voices cry at once—"Forward!" Seized with this species of intoxication, the young carver quickened his speed, and got into the dangerous paths of the lesser chain.

Summer huts, scattered here and there in the lower ranges, were so buried under the snow as scarcely to relieve it; nothing could be seen but some stunted fir trees, and a few bushes of dwarf box piercing the sterile ground.

Soon even these disappeared, and the rocks were naked, spotted only by the trailings of the hoar frost.

At length Ulrich reached the flinty passage spoken of by his uncle. It was a deep breach cut into the rock, and into which the sun could never penetrate. He was just going into it, when a shadow arose in the darkened entrance, and he recognized his cousin Hans.

The hunter wore the same dress he had worn the day before. His gun hung from his shoulder by a belt, and both hands were resting on his iron-spiked staff. His face was even more gloomy than usual. He seemed to be guarding the defile through which Ulrich had to pass.

At sight of him Ulrich stopped with an exclamation of surprise.

"You here, Hans," cried he, "God be with you! Which way did you get here?"

"Is there only one path in the Wen-