

afraid, I can easily go alone to get this pearl of the mountain."—"May God protect us!" I cried. "Since you insist on this folly, we will not let it be said that we abandoned you, and Hans Rickly will try to save you from the abyss." We had to cut our steps in the ice, and hold on by the rough places, in order to reach the little platform which MacNey had seen."

"He looked then, just like a mad man. I could not help shivering, when I saw him pick the fatal flower with its leaves of purple. He put one proudly in his cap: "And now, he said, off for Rosegg! Hans, you said you never saw the Altica except in the hands of a corpse. Here is one in my hand," and he sprang forward. . .



"I saw him pick the fatal flower."

"Take care!" I shouted, but it was too late.

While speaking, he had come to the edge of the earth at the foot of the rock, and in his madness, for I believe he was mad, forgetting the narrowness of the place where he stood, he advanced, and the ground gave way beneath his feet * * *

"My companion and I withstood the fearful shock which followed. I thought,—for in such moments a thousand ideas cross your mind in a second's time,—I thought that all was not yet lost, that the rope which was tied around us all, would prevent him from falling into the abyss; but as I arose, for the violent shock had thrown us into the snow, I felt with horror, that the rope did not pull * * *

It had been cut on the edge of the rock, as if by a knife!

For a moment we remained stupefied, Karl and I, not daring to go to the edge, for fear of what we should see. Finally we approached. On a carpet of snow, three hundred metres beneath us, a black shapeless mass could be seen."

"The flower had taken its revenge!"

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Two days afterwards, the little street of Pontresina was filled with a silent crowd of people. A thick smoke covered the valley, and from time to time the church bell was heard, tolling the death knell. A funeral was taking place.

We had found the body of the unfortunate MacNey, stretched out on the white shroud of the high peaks. He showed no trace of wounds, and his face bore an ineffable smile. His hand still held a dried flower: I put this famous *Altica rubra* in my herbarium in memory of my poor friend. Hans did not want me to touch it, and I am convinced that he regards me to this day as a doomed man.