

undergone at the moment of the descent of the avalanche. Julien Coutet had rolled over thrice before, bounding across the great crevasse, he fell into the small one. He attributed his safety to the circumstance that he carried, slung across his back, the barometer-case of the doctor, which had held him momentarily suspended on the brink of the abyss, whence he had rebounded like a ricochet shot. Marie Coutet had seen four of the five guides who preceded him fall with their feet uppermost ; only one seemed to preserve his upright attitude. As for himself, he had felt hurled along like a cannon-ball, and in the twinkling of an eye, lo, he was lying half buried on a bed of snow ! A second afterwards, another of his comrades seemed to drop from heaven by his side ; it was Julien Devoissous.

The only one of the guides not swept away by the avalanche was Mathieu Balmat. Divining what had happened ; comprehending, with the instinct of a mountaineer, that the new snow had separated from the old, and was gliding in one mass down the incline ; gifted, moreover, with prodigious physical strength, he thrust his long iron-tipped pole through the recent snow, which was not above three feet deep, and planted it in the older and indurated soil. By exerting all his energy he was able to cling to the pole, while the avalanche carried away beneath him his companions and his brother, Pierre Balmat, to find a sudden and terrible death at the bottom of the abyss.

Thrown down and rolled over like the others, Dr. Hamel had found himself fortunately checked on the edge of the crevasse. Colonel Henderson was driven much nearer the fatal brink, and had only been arrested in his headlong course by the mass of snow which surrounded him. He was completely interred in it, even his head being covered, and was only extricated from it with great difficulty.

On arriving at the Grands Mulets they met the three guides despatched in the morning to obtain a supply of provisions, and who