snows gradually disappear; that nature loses its savage and inhospitable aspect; that the contours of the soil grow rounder and more softened; and finally, that the smiling vegetation and fairy-like bloom of the plains replace the desolate monotonousness of the bleak fields of snow.

These rivers of solidified water, which, in the Alps, are found wherever the mountain-summits rise above the perpetual snow-line, and which descend into the valleys far below that boundary, perform no unimportant part in Nature's grand economy. On the awakening of spring, Nature, too, awakes; the budding trees announce and prepare the laughing verdure of the woods; everywhere the gloom of winter disappears before the genial influence of April. The glaciers alone respond not to the warm embraces of the sun, and the summer heats apparently play upon their impassive surface without producing any impression.

But when we reflect that these long, motionless, frozen rivers descend unbrokenly from the region of eternal snows, we easily divine that their origin must be sought, no less than their sustenance, in the remote recesses of the mountain-summits. The glaciers are the advanced guards despatched from the inaccessible heights where reigns Eternal Winter; they are the emissaries of those powers of frost which clothe in snow and ice the supreme elevations.

The snow which falls on the loftier mountains never melts; it preserves its condition of solidity upon all rocks whose temperature never rises above zero. The masses which are thus accumulated, year after year, would eventually, one might say, threaten the very sky; they would gather in ever-succeeding strata on the summits, and deprive the plains of the benefit of their waters, if provident nature had not guarded against so evil a result. And it guards against it by the formation of glaciers. A glacier is immovable only to the eye; in reality, it is endowed with a progressive motion. This motion is miraculously slow, and in this very slowness of progression rests the providential intention of the phenomenon. Little by little the glaciers advance into the valleys; there they undergo the influ-

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