

CHAPTER IV.

[GLACIERS OF THE ALPS, PYRENEES, AND SPITZBERGEN (EUROPE)—GLACIERS OF THE HIMALAYA (ASIA)—GLACIERS OF THE CORDILLERAS (AMERICA).]



WERE it possible for the reader to transfer himself, by some enchanted scarf or carpet, such as one reads of in the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, from the "cheery ingle" or the garden-bower—wherever he may be perusing these pages—to the frozen landscapes of the Alps, how vast and how singular a panorama would he see revealed before his gaze! He would stand silent and astonished, as a German writer remarks, before that Titanic mass of mountain architecture, built up by powers whose origin and action can indeed be described, and whose relation to other powers can be elucidated according to the laws deduced by science from the observation of natural phenomena, but whose extension and boundaries in the universe human knowledge can only dimly apprehend. Far away in the clear, cold, sapphire sky—in that wondrous azure never obscured by cloud or vapour, that living and ever-present symbol of the Infinite—roll, like billows suddenly frozen and stiffened into rest, mountain upon mountain, folded in a robe of eternal snow, like a dead giant in his shroud! Below, the huge *lammergeier* plies the labouring wing, and the startled chamois flings his shadow from crag to pinnacle, and the silence is but partly broken by the low murmur of the remote cascade; and lower still, the mountain-flanks are hung with masses of deep forest-growth made musical by the song of birds;—but where he stands, on the lofty peak, no life shares with him the awe of the solitude or the intensity of the silence; he looks above, and the heavens are still; he looks around, and from the Alpine heights comes no welcome voice; not a flower, not a leaf, not a blade reminds him of the sweet sylvan landscapes and the happy meadows;