

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE NEW YEAR, 1896

"WEDNESDAY, January 1, 1896.  $-41.5^{\circ}$  C. ( $42.2^{\circ}$  below zero, Fahr.). So a new year has come, the year of joy and home-coming. In bright moonlight 1895 departed, and in bright moonlight 1896 begins; but it is bitterly cold, the coldest days we have yet known here. I felt it, too, yesterday, when all my finger-tips were frost-bitten. I thought I had done with all that last spring.

"Friday, January 3d. Morning. It is still clear and cold out-of-doors; I can hear reports from the glacier. It lies up there on the crest of the mountain like a mighty ice-giant peering down at us through the clefts. It spreads its giant body all over the land, and stretches out its limbs on all sides into the sea. But whenever it turns cold—colder than it has hitherto been—it writhes horribly, and crevice after crevice appears in the huge body; there is a noise like the discharge of guns, and the sky and the earth tremble so that I can feel the ground that I am lying on quake. One is almost afraid that it will some day come rolling over upon one.\*

\* These rumblings in the glacier are due to rifts which are formed in the mass of ice when the cold causes it to contract. New rifts seemed