

ground, by operating underneath them. This kind is observed particularly towards the beginning of summer. It is the least dangerous ; because those places in the Alps are known where the snows periodically detach themselves, and the circumstances which retard or accelerate their fall.

2nd, *Creeping Avalanches* (*Avalanches rampantes*; *Schleich-lavinen*), which

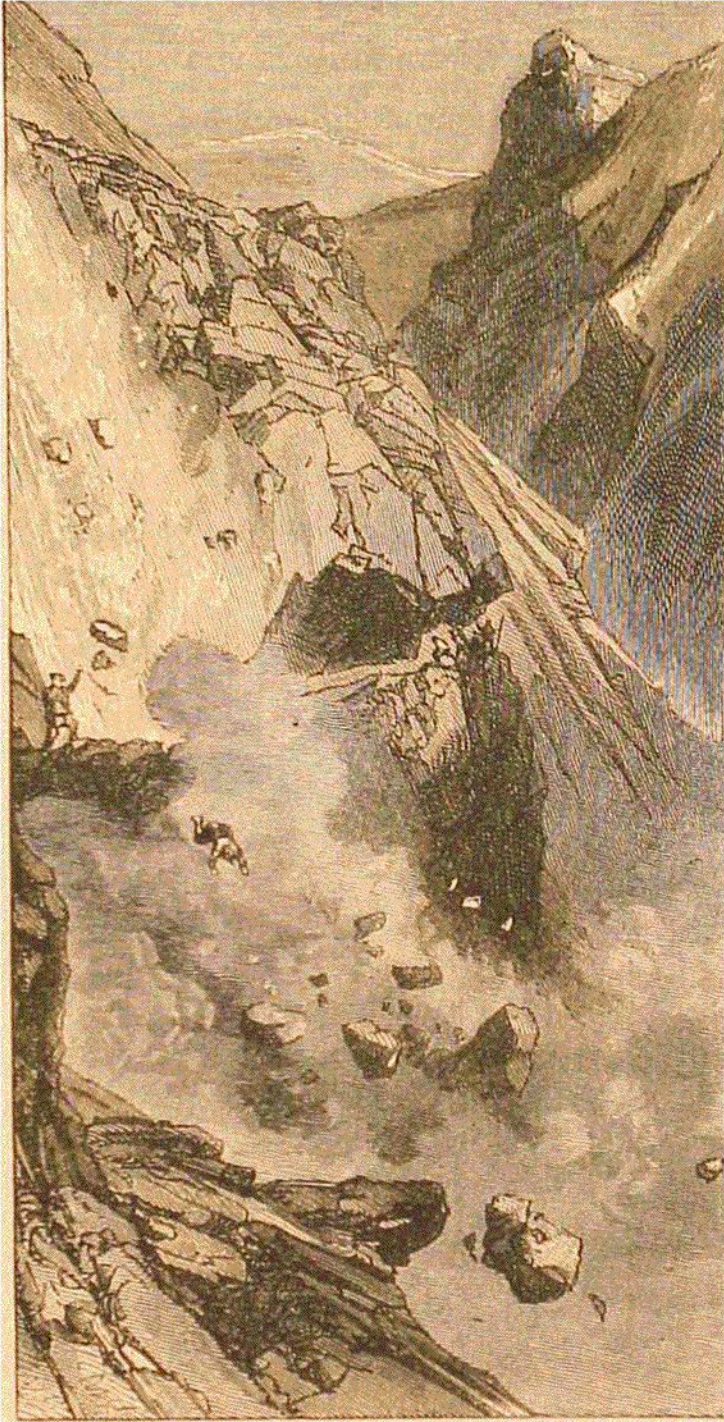


FIG. 96. — AN AVALANCHE IN AN ALPINE VALLEY.

occur on the gentler slopes, covered with snow, and nearly always on the southern exposure of the mountains. They descend slowly, increased by the snows they accumulate on their route, and gathering up behind them the obstacles they encounter until the latter yield to their increasing pressure or the mass divides into two parts, each of which then takes a separate downward course.

3rd, *Earth Avalanches* (*Schlag-lavinen**), which are the most dangerous, on account of the rapidity of their fall ; and occur in those parts of the mountains where a gentle incline terminates suddenly at the edge of a precipitous wall. The accumulated snow-masses glide gradually to the limit of the inclined plane, and remain for a while poised on the brink of the tremendous cliff, like an eagle prepared to spring, until either pressure, or some slight disturbance of the air—a gust of wind—a shout—the report of a gun or pistol—impels them forward. Then they sweep over the precipice with a horrible crash and collision which no words can describe ; carrying destruction and death along their terrible path. As, frequently, they

fall from very considerable elevations, they produce a concussion of the air violent enough to sweep away the peasant and his hut to a remarkable distance from the theatre of the catastrophe. Certain Alpine passes, such as the Schoellen, on the Saint

* *Schlag*, literally, a stroke, a blow.