

the other, so that in case any accident happens some may escape, and carry succour to their less fortunate fellows. In dangerous passes, you are recommended to remove the bells from the harness of your animals ; to set out at early dawn, before the sun's first rays have attacked the treacherous surface ; and to move forward in the most utter silence, to *avoid waking the slumbering lion*.* Frequently, the precaution is taken to discharge a pistol at the entrance of a dangerous ravine, for then the concussion of the air produced by the report of the fire-arm brings down all the avalanches on the point of falling.

Some of the Swiss towns and villages are only preserved from the ravages of these awful visitants by the forests which overhang them ; and the clearing of the mountains is consequently forbidden by severe laws. In other localities, above the houses exposed to avalanches, men construct a kind of rampart or stone bastion, with an acute angle, intended to cleave and part in twain the monster which may hurl itself upon the barrier. Above some of the dangerous passes of the Splugen, and other Alpine localities, vaulted galleries have been erected for the defence of the traveller.

The reader will not be surprised, after the foregoing details, to learn that history has preserved a record of many of the more signal disasters occasioned in the Alps by the fall of avalanches. We proceed to note a few of them.

In 1478, sixty Swiss soldiers were simultaneously destroyed by an avalanche.

In 1499, four hundred Austrian soldiers were buried under a mass of snow in the Ersebirge ; but help was at hand, and they were successfully extricated.

In 1500, an avalanche overwhelmed, in the pass of the Great St. Bernard, a hundred persons.

In 1624, another avalanche, descending from Mont Cassedra, swallowed up three hundred individuals.

In the month of February 1720, at Obergestlen, in the Valais, one hundred and twenty houses were destroyed, and eighty-four persons and four hundred head of cattle perished.

In 1749, an avalanche swept away a great part of the village of Ruacras (in the canton of the Grisons), involving in the frightful whirlwind a hundred men and women, of whom, however, sixty were eventually saved. So gentle was the descent of this avalanche, that persons living in huts on the side of the mountain were not awakened by the movement ; only they fancied that the night was very long, and it

* From the German word *lavine*, the common people have made *lavinne* (a lioness).