

tempest, and perhaps to a heavy fall of snow or sleet, in addition to the intense cold of the night, would have placed us in a most terrific and awful situation, rendered even more appalling by the uncertainty whether we could proceed the next morning. This, for the reason already stated, would be impossible if the weather continued stormy till that time.

Bidding farewell, therefore, to the Grand Plateau, we commenced the descent of the declivity leading from it, by following the steps made in the morning, and which had not entirely disappeared. In some places, indeed, we could plainly trace the route made by the party who had ascended on the 25th of July. It resembled a shallow ditch in the snow, the surface was perfectly smooth, and there were no marks of the feet. At first we did not venture to slide, there being a precipice on the right; but, before we had got half way down, the leading guide, tired of winding about, started off, and we followed his example, passing close along the edge of the precipice. My blood ran cold, and I shuddered as I did so; but it was only for a moment—in the next I was at the bottom of the hill. The slightest mismanagement of the guide, behind whom I sat, would have inevitably destroyed us.

In crossing the second plain, we also constantly lost the trace of our route among the broken parts of it and the debris of

avalanches. Several had fallen since our passage in the morning, and we hurried on, lest others should come down upon us. To descend the hill from this spot to the first plateau was an arduous undertaking. It was nearly perpendicular, the lower part of it terminating in a small flat space of a few feet, on the farther side of which was a precipice. However, it was decided to glissade it. A guide slid down to receive the knapsacks, which being placed on the ice slid down to him; the rest of the guides followed, Devouassoud and myself bringing up the rear, stopping at the very edge of the cliff. From the great inclination of this steep, the rapidity with which we slid defies all description; during the instant in which it was performed I was nearly unconscious of what I was about.

The clouds collecting above us, showed that there was now no doubt but that a very violent storm would soon pass over, if it did not break upon, the mountain. We had considerable difficulty in making our way down the cleft at the foot of the hill, and it was rather increased by the impatience of the guides, who were now most anxious to get to our quarters on the Mulôts. Unfortunately we could not cross expeditiously the plain which we came upon after another short slide. Some of the crevices had closed, others had opened, and some large blocks of ice had fallen since the morning. Among these we proceeded towards the bridge or block of ice, along the side of which we had before crossed, and