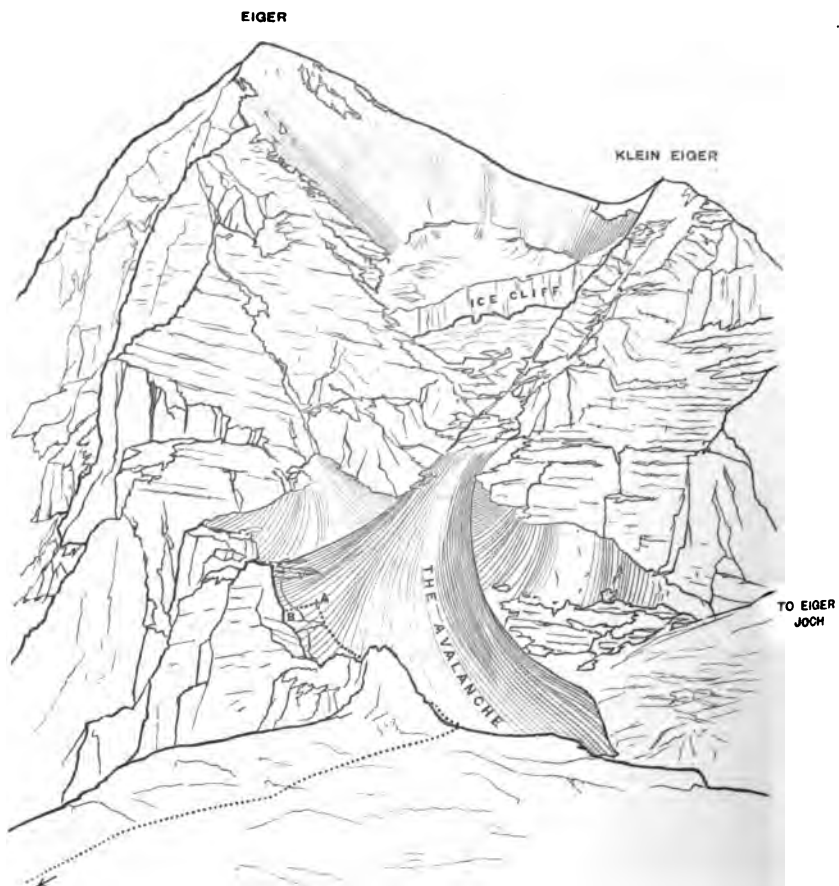




WENGERN SCHEIDECK

DIAGRAM TO ILLUSTRATE "A RACE FOR LIFE",
FROM AN OUTLINE BY F. F. TUCKETT.

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A RACE FOR LIFE. By F. F. TUCKETT.

*'Tum quâ durati concreto frigore collis
Lubrica frustratur canenti semita clivo,
Luctantem ferro glaciem premit, haurit, hiatu
Nix resoluta viros, altoque à culmine præceps
Viventes turmas operit delapsa ruina.'*

SILIUS ITALICUS.

OUR experience of Switzerland during the month of June last year, I think, fairly entitles my companions and myself to the sympathy of all, and, perhaps, the gratitude of some, inasmuch as we were not only made the luckless scapegoats of all the varied forms of meteorological misery which the Alps are capable of inflicting when in a thoroughly vindictive mood, but scarcely had we departed, moist, mouldy, and malcontent, when a turn for the better took place, and we had to comfort ourselves with the thought that we had at any rate served as so much blotting-paper to mop up the Oreads' tears, and set them smiling again on our more fortunate successors. When it did not rain, it snowed; when it did not snow, it hailed; when it did none of the three, it blew; and when the weather had apparently exhausted its repertory, it either began over again, or sulked, and indulged in those varying forms of alternate threatening and pretended amendment which are almost worse than more pronounced spite, as a false friend is worse than an open enemy. We seemed to be wandering in Dante's

*' terzo cerchio della piovà
Eterna, maledetta, fredda, e greve:
Regola e qualità mai non l'è nova.
Grandine grossa, e acqua tinta, e neve
Per l' aer tenebroso si riversa.'*

INF. vi. 7.

On June 12th we were beaten back—oh that I should have to make so humiliating a confession!—by a snowstorm and avalanches on the Col de Sageroux. We had to abandon the Diablerets after two attacks, one frustrated by soaking rain, and the other by the 'föhn,' which raged in such furious fashion, scattering the roof shingles far and wide around Plan des Iles, and sweeping the cascades of the Creux du Champ in dust-like clouds of spray right across the vast cliffs of that mighty cirque, so that there was no standing up against it:—

'La bufera infernal, che mai non resta,
Mena gli spirti con la sua rapina,
Voltando e percotendo li molesta.

Di qua, di là, di giù, di su gli mena;
Nulla speranza gli conforta mai,
Non che di posa, ma di minor pena.
E come i gru van cantando lor lai,
Facendo in aer di sè lunga riga;
Così vid' io venir traendo guai,
Ombre portate dalla detta briga.'

INF. v. 31-49.

Mists persistently shrouded the Wildhorn whilst I patiently waited at Lauenen with Christian Lauener, the rest of our party having gone forward to An der Lenk by the carriage road; and when I rejoined them at the latter place on the 21st, in hopes of a pleasant expedition over the Wildstrubel to the Gemmi *en route* for the Bel Alp, rain below and fresh snow aloft drove me and my brother-in-law, Mr. J. H. Fox, to adopt the mild but charming alternative route of the Hahnenmoos, Adelboden, and Frutigen, whilst the ladies, under Mr. Howard's care, went round all the way by road. We did, indeed, succeed in getting up the Wildstrubel from Schwarenbach, but the momentary exception only proved the rule; and after several days' stay at the comfortable hotel on the Bel Alp, during most of which time it took two men and a boy to make out the Aletsch Glacier, and the prospect and retrospect of dinner were the two excitements of the day, it was in no very jubilant frame of mind that we at length threw up the (saturated) sponge, pushed down to Sierre, and, hurrying into a railway carriage, accomplished a flank movement upon Bern, which for the moment was inaccessible from the Valais by any other route suitable for ladies.

Our spirits, let down with so much water, were by this time far too weak even to rebel; and indeed it would have been perfectly useless, for, struggle as we might, we were not to

escape the clutches of the storm-fiend. Lauener and I started by the first train on the morning of the 28th for Gunten on the Lake of Thun, in order to visit the Glacière of the Schaffloch, whilst the ladies with our other gentlemen and F. Devouassoud proceeded later in the day to Interlaken, but my heart sank within me as from the steamer's deck I watched the Niesen and Stockhorn gradually emerge from the mists, clad in a pure mantle of snow far down into the region of pines. To be brief, we found the snow almost amongst the meadows a few hundred feet above the village of Sigriswyl, the Bergli Alp deeply covered, whilst beyond it, on the steep slopes above the Justithal, it was unpleasantly inclined to slip away in avalanches. The following morning Christian and I, again bent on performing some valorous exploit, actually screwed up our courage to no less formidable an expedition than an attempt to reach the summit of the Faulhorn viâ the Scheinige Platte, but were compelled to beat an ignominious retreat after wading through deep, soft snow for two hours, beyond the inn on the latter point, and satisfying ourselves that four or five more of the same sort of monotonous and laborious grind would be required to accomplish our object. The Scheideck and Wengern Alp were reported to be covered to a depth of three feet; and though this of course rapidly disappeared, it was with the gloomiest forebodings as to the impossibility of effecting anything in the shape of an expedition that our whole party finally assembled on the 30th at Grindelwald, which we had named as a rendezvous for certain of our friends who were to arrive the next day direct from England.

Amongst these was a tried and trusty ally of former years, Mr. E. R. Whitwell; and, after a hearty greeting, his first question was, 'Well, what's to be done?' '*Gar nichts*' was the truth at the moment, and I uttered the dismal words; but of course, as was natural in one whose spirit had not been broken by such a month of torture as we had just gone through, he did not seem to see it at all, and the weather once more showing some signs of maintaining the slight improvement which had set in a day or two before, we agreed not only to hope for the best, but to go up to the excellent inn on the Wengern Scheideck the next evening, so as to be prepared to take advantage of any chance that might present itself.

Our idea had originally been to ascend the Eiger and Jungfrau from the Wengern Alp before separating, Whitwell to proceed to Zermatt, and I to return home; and though my own hopes of accomplishing anything were now, I must confess, of the faintest, my friend's enthusiasm and my own keen

longing for at least one good climb before turning my back for a year upon the mountains, were irresistible. Accordingly the night of July 2nd found Fox, Whitwell, and myself, with Christian Lauener and his brother Ulrich, who had now joined us by arrangement with Whitwell, at the highly-to-be-recommended inn on the Wengern Scheideck, bent on trying what might prudently be effected on the morrow, if the weather should prove favourable. I say 'prudently,' because it was distinctly agreed that if, during the ascent, either we or the guides should see reason to believe that the state of the snow was still such as to render avalanches probable, the attempt should not be prosecuted. It had already disappeared with wonderful rapidity from the lower slopes, and had been discharging itself from the higher levels in an almost ceaseless succession of avalanches ever since our arrival at Grindelwald on the 30th, so that, as the sun was at times hot on Sunday, there was a reasonable probability that the expedition would not necessarily involve any imprudence, especially if the night should turn out to be clear and frosty, and we honestly acted on our resolve to turn back in the event of the snow proving to be in a dangerous condition.

Quitting our comfortable quarters between 3 and 4 A.M. on the 3rd, we skirted the ridge which rises from the Pass itself to the summit of the Falbbodenhubel, and still maintaining a south-easterly direction after passing the latter, soon found ourselves at the edge of the valley occupied by the Eiger Glacier, up which our course, now bending to the left, lay. During a short halt at this point we became aware that we were being followed at no great distance by another party, and in a few minutes were joined by Christian Almer, his son, and a porter, who were to accompany our friends Miss Brevoort and Mr. Coolidge over the Eiger Joch on the following day, and, stimulated by our example, and with a view to shorten the work of the morrow, were off to explore and cut at least a portion of the necessary steps up the formidable 'eiswand.'

Pushing on again in company, and entering upon the glacier, now entirely concealed by snow, we soon had to bid adieu to the others, who struck off to the right for its southern arm, separated from the branch up which our course lay by the great rocky buttress which descends from the Klein Eiger. The northern affluent of the Eiger Glacier lay between the base of this buttress on our right and the Rothstock—a mere irregular tooth jutting out rather boldly and picturesquely from the western arête of the Eiger itself—on our left. The lower

and upper portions of the ice-stream are to some extent divided, at least towards the right or Rothstock bank, by a rocky barrier or step (*stufe*), which, however, presents no sort of difficulty. Bearing, therefore, most fortunately as it proved in the sequel, well to our left, so as to hug the cliffs of the Rothstock and keep as much as possible out of the track of any avalanches, we advanced at a steady pace, considering that the snow was much softer than was agreeable or desirable at so early an hour.

We were nearly opposite the highest point of the Rothstock, whose cliffs, here slightly receding so as to form a sort of bay in the direction of the chord of whose arc we were at the moment moving, were probably about a hundred yards distant. Ulrich Lauener was leading, followed successively by Whitwell, Christian, and Fox, whilst I brought up the rear. The rope had not yet been resorted to, most providentially for us, as it would necessarily have hindered our freedom of movement. The morning was dull, and though by this time—about five o'clock I imagine—there was plenty of light for all purposes, there was nothing at the moment at all exhilarating or exciting in our proceedings as we trudged steadily up the gently inclined slopes straight for the base of the Eiger.

It will be within the recollection of most, and at any rate a map or photograph will make it abundantly clear, that at the point we had reached, we had the Eiger itself directly in front, rocks forming its lower portion, though wonderfully masked by masses of snow, which almost filled up the spaces between the successive ledges, and rendered its appearance very different from that which it usually presents in July. Above these was the beautiful western snow arête running up at a high angle to the summit. From this last another snowy ridge descends in a south-west direction to the Klein Eiger, more than 1,600 feet below it, and it is the prolongations of these two arêtes which form the boundaries of the north branch of the Eiger Glacier. Enclosed by them, and in the hollow or re-entering angle between the summits of the greater and lesser Eiger, a considerable mass of glacier descends very steeply, and terminates in a lofty cliff of ice or névé probably 250 to 300 feet in height, which seems to hang suspended some 2,000 feet above the Eiger Glacier, and is, so to speak, connected with the latter by a steep couloir, broken here and there by rocks, and gradually broadening out in a funnel shape until it ultimately blends with, or enlarges into, the main valley up which we were advancing.

I have said that Ulrich was leading, and I may here remark

that he is a little hard of hearing; and though his sight, which had become very feeble in 1870, is greatly improved, both ear and eye were perhaps less quick to detect any unexpected sound or movement than might otherwise have been the case. Be this as it may, when all of a sudden I heard a sort of crack somewhere up aloft, I believe that, for an instant or two, his was the only head that was not turned upwards in the direction from which it seemed to proceed, viz., the hanging ice cliff; but the next moment, when a huge mass of sérac broke away, mingled apparently with a still larger contingent of snow from the slopes above, whose descent may, indeed, have caused, or at least hastened, the disruption of the glacier, every eye was on the look out, though as yet there was no indication on the part of anyone, nor I believe any thought for one or two seconds more, that we were going to be treated to anything beyond a tolerably near view of such an avalanche as it rarely falls to anyone's lot to see. Down came the mighty cataract, filling the couloir to its brim; but it was not until it had traversed a distance of 600 to 800 feet, and on suddenly dashing in a cloud of frozen spray over one of the principal rocky ridges with which, as I have said, the continuity of the snow slope was broken, appeared as if by magic to triple its width, that the idea of danger to ourselves flashed upon me. I now perceived that its volume was enormously greater than I had at first imagined, and that, with the tremendous momentum it had by this time acquired, it might, instead of descending on the right between us and the rocks of the Klein Eiger, dash completely across the base of the Eiger itself in front of us, attain the foot of the Rothstock ridge, and then trending round sweep the whole surface of the glacier, ourselves included, as with the besom of destruction.

It would need the pen that has described the 'Vision of Sudden Death' to analyse the exact impression which such a process of almost 'unconscious cerebration' produced; and if I were but a De Quincey, I would hold my readers for a few minutes in suspense, as I piled up simile upon simile, and made them realize—though even then but imperfectly; for what word-painting can grapple with such a subject?—the awful downward rush, the 'swift destruction unawares' of the coming horror! As the great master of prose to whom I have alluded remarks: 'Meantime one aspect of sudden death there is, one modification, upon which no doubt can arise, that, of all martyrdoms, it is the most agitating, viz., when it surprises a man under circumstances which offer, or which seem to offer, some hurrying, flying, inappreciable minute chance of evading it. Sudden as

the danger which it affronts must be any effort by which such an evasion can be accomplished.' I instinctively bolted for the rocks of the Rothstock—if haply it might not be too late—yelling rather than shouting to the others, 'Run for your lives!'

Ulrich was the last to take the alarm, though the nearest to the danger, and was thus eight or ten paces behind the rest of us, though he, too, shouted to Whitwell to run for his life directly he became aware of the situation; but by this time we were all straining desperately through the deep, soft snow for dear life, yet with faces turned upwards to watch the swift on-coming of the foe. I remember being struck with the idea that it seemed as though, sure of its prey, it wished to play with us for awhile, at one moment letting us imagine that we had gained upon it, and were getting beyond the line of its fire, and the next, with mere wantonness of vindictive power, suddenly rolling out on its right a vast volume of grinding blocks and whirling snow, as though to show that it could outflank us at any moment if it chose.

Nearer and nearer it came, its front like a mighty wave about to break, yet that still 'on the curl hangs pausing;' now it has traversed the whole width of the glacier above us, taking a somewhat diagonal direction; and now run, oh run! if ever you did, for here it comes straight at us, still outflanking us, swift, deadly, and implacable! The next instant we saw no more; a wild confusion of whirling snow and fragments of ice—a frozen cloud—swept over us, entirely concealing us from one another, and still we were untouched—at least I knew that I was—and still we ran. Another half-second and the mist had passed, and there lay the body of the monster, whose head was still careering away at lightning speed far below us, motionless, rigid, and harmless. It will naturally be supposed that the race was one which had not admitted of being accurately timed by the performers; but I believe that I am speaking with precision when I say that I do not think the whole thing occupied from first to last more than some five or six seconds. How narrow our escape was may be inferred from the fact that the spot where I halted for a moment to look back after it had passed, was found to be just twelve yards from its edge, and I don't think that in all we had had time to put more than thirty yards between us and the point where our wild rush for the rocks first began. Ulrich's momentary lagging all but cost him his life; for, in spite of his giant stride and desperate exertions, he only just contrived to fling himself forwards as the edge of the frozen torrent dashed past him. This may sound like ex-

aggragation, but he assured me that he felt some fragments strike his legs; and it will perhaps appear less improbable when it is considered that he was certainly several yards in the rear, and when the avalanche came to a standstill, its edge, intersecting and concealing our tracks along a sharply defined line, rose rigid and perpendicular like a wall of cyclopean masonry, as old Bible pictures represent the waters of the Red Sea standing 'upright as an heap' to let the Israelites through.

The avalanche itself consisted of a mixture, in tolerably equal proportions, of blocks of sérac of all shapes and sizes, up to irregular cubes of four or five feet on a side, and snow thoroughly saturated with water—the most dangerous of all descriptions to encounter, as its weight is enormous; and, being by the mere fact of motion and friction kneaded up into balls some of them a yard in diameter, their differential motion, unlike that of the dry, soft, floury sort, mashes and pulverises any body or substance involved in the mass. Such a moment is not very well suited for making reliable observations, but I seem clearly to remember that, beyond the momentary rush of the snow and ice 'staub,' sharing the momentum of the mass from which it proceeded, there was nothing of the nature of those great blasts which we are told not unfrequently immediately precede or follow the larger avalanches, and often cause even more destruction than the latter.

On examining at our leisure the nature and extent of our avalanche, we found that, as it now lay, it covered the valley for a length of about 3,300 feet and a maximum breadth of 1,500, tailing off above and below to 500 or 1,000 feet, and probably averaging five feet in depth over the whole surface. In fact, it *filled* the valley occupied by the northern branch of the Eiger Glacier to below its point of junction with the ice-stream which descends from the Eiger Joch, except at *one* point where a little bay remained free at the foot of the Rothstock, precisely where we happened to be at the moment of its fall. Had our position on the slope been a few hundred feet higher or lower, or in other words, had we been five minutes earlier or later, we must have been caught beyond all chance of escape.

Naturally all thought of prosecuting our attack upon the Eiger after such a warning was now at an end, so after making a few measurements we mounted hastily to the summit of the Rothstock for a more comprehensive view in a position of perfect safety. From this point the great triad of peaks, which constitute the glory of the Wengern Alp, shows to great advantage, whilst, in the opposite direction, the valley of Grin-

delwald and its northern barriers are well seen. Ulrich was a good deal upset and looked very white and grave, as, indeed, we all might well have done; but, in his case, this arose not so much from personal fear as because, whilst we were concealed from one another by the clouds of snow, he and W. had changed places in the line, and when we emerged from the obscurity he at once missed Whitwell, whom he expected to see below him with the rest of us, and, turning deadly pale, threw up his arms as he shouted, 'Ach Gott! wir haben einen Herrn verloren!' Of course the mistake was only momentary, but the shock told on his powerful frame, and he did not get over it the whole day.

I suggested that as Almer and his companions must have seen the avalanche, and would probably feel very anxious on our account, we might as well send them a cheery *jodel*; and he told me afterwards that it was indeed a joyful sound, as he had at first quite given us up for lost, and 'trembled like a child.' Thus assured of our safety, however, he pushed on for the Eiger Joch, and only returned in the evening, soaked to the skin, but with that fine smile of honest pride that plays about his mouth and eyes when he knows he has done a good bit of work, announcing half shyly that he had cut more than 1,000 steps on the great ice-wall, and would have gone to the top if the bad weather had not hastened his return. His track had led him across the lower portion of the fresh-fallen débris, and he assured me that he had never seen so mighty an avalanche in his life.

It may serve to convey some idea of the mass which had descended when I add that, if we assume its dimensions to have been: length 3,300 feet, average breadth 1,000, and depth 5—in many places it was twice as thick as this—we get 611,000 cubic yards, or in round numbers a weight of about 450,000 tons, taking the ice and saturated snow to average about fifteen hundredweight to the cubic yard!

On our way back we had an opportunity of judging of the crushing, resistless force with which it must have swept down from the condition of the rocks on the right bank of the glacier, which we naturally hugged as closely as possible as a means of escape in case of any renewal of the discharge before we could get out of the line of fire. To a height of seven or eight feet the low cliff was plastered so thickly and uniformly with a layer of frozen snow, that, for a length of a hundred yards or more, scarcely a particle of rock was visible, so completely had it been whitewashed by the tremendous friction!

Did time and space permit, I should be tempted to add, for

comparison's sake, some details of the distinguishing characteristics of other 'avalanches I have met,' and not always succeeded in avoiding; but, after all, it might only give a handle to unprincipled persons to 'point a moral' without 'adorning a tale,' and I refrain. Lest, however, notwithstanding the explanations I have given in justification of our setting out at all to see for ourselves the actual state of the snow, and our distinct resolve to abide by the prudential conditions laid down at the outset, anyone should be disposed to think that we practically courted the fate we so narrowly escaped, I desire to add that avalanches from this particular quarter are, according to the best local testimony, of very unfrequent occurrence, and of course still more rarely take place at so early an hour. I trust, too, that nothing I may have written, in attempting honestly to convey, as nearly as possible, the precise impressions produced on myself *during* those brief moments of excitement, suspense, and danger, will lead anyone to suppose that, either at the time or since, such an adventure was, or can be, lightly spoken of, or felt to be other than a very merciful and providential deliverance.

Note on the terms Lauine, Lawine, and Avalanche.—The above expressions have become so familiar by constant use that their derivation and exact significance are perhaps seldom thought of and not very generally known, and I therefore add a few remarks on the subject, which those who are inclined to exclaim 'What's in a name?' may skip if they prefer it.

Simler, in his '*Vallesix et Alpium Descriptio*,' Elzevir edition, 1633, under the head of '*Itinera Alpina difficilia et periculosa propter nives*,' page 288, remarks as follows:—'*Maximum omnium periculum est à decidentibus conglomeratis nivibus quas nostri Löuvvinen, Rhети Labinas, vocant, haud dubiè à labendo, unde et Germanicum nomen alterius vocis depravatione factum est.*' He gives a very good description of the various sorts of avalanche, and states that they '*Commoventur levi de causâ, si enim in monte summo arboribus nudo et acclivi nix commota fuerit, vel à prætervolante avicula, vel ab aliquo animali alio, aut etiam a vento vehementiore, aut prætereuntium hominum clamore, quando scilicet ipsâ reperussione vocis, quam Echo vocant, aër impulsus nives etiam movet.*' He quotes Silius Italicus (*vide supra*) and Claudian:—

. 'multos hausere profunda
Vasta mole nives, cumque ipsis sæpe Juvencis
Naufraga candenti merguntur claustra barathro,
Interdum subitam glacie labente ruinam .
Mons dedit; et trepidis fundamina subruit astris.'

De 4 Cons. Honorii.

Dr. Jacob Wagner, in his 'Historia Naturalis Helvetiæ curiosa' (Tiguri, 1680), has very similar comments to the foregoing, 'De Labenis vel Labinis,' both as to etymology and characteristics.

Scheuchzer, in his 'Itinera' (Lugduni Batavorum, 1723, page 220), has the following remarks:—'*Labina* vel *Labena* vocabulum ad ultimam Latinitatem relegandum notat nivosas ingentes moles conglomeratas, quæ per declivia Alpium Latera *labi* (inde autem nomen) solent. In vernacula nobis Linguâ vocantur communiter *Louwinen*, *Lauwinen*, *Schneelauwinen*, *Lauwenen*, *Louwinen*, *Löüinen*, *Lovenen*, *Läuwinen*, *Lobinen*, *Lobinenstrich*, quasi *Leænæ*, uti quidem videtur (Phil. Camerario. Hor. subcisiv. Cent. 11. § 77), à bruti hujus celeritate, impetu et immensis viribus quibus non facilè resisti potest. Mihi cum Simlero 'de Alpibus,' p. 113, videtur Latina æque ac Germanica denominatio arcessenda à Rhætis, qui Italico Idiomate *Labinas* vocant *Lavine*, vernaculo autem *Lavigne*. Scribantur hæ voces vel enuntientur, a nobis Germanis, uti scribuntur, et erit Etymologia in vado. Ægid. Tschud utitur voce *Schnee Schlipfe*, qua rō materiale et formale Labinarum optimè exprimit: alii *Labinas* vocant *Schneebrüche*, *Schneelüste*, satis emphaticè. Helvetii Gal. Ling. *Levanze*, *Vallantze*, à valle (quòd conglomeratæ illæ nives in valles usque à summis montium jugis decidunt) vocant. . . . Labinarum genera sunt potissimum duo, unum, si novæ et molles duntaxat Nives conglobantur et labuntur. Simler vocat has *Windlowenen*, tum à causâ, vento nivem recens delapsam, commovente, tum ob effectum, quoniam celeriter ruunt, et lapsu suo *ventum procellosum excitant*, qui etiam eminùs quæque prosternit, Abietes crassissimas frangit, homines et jumenta suffocat, ædes et stabula subvertit; item *Staublowinen*, *Staubloweln* à vento et pulvere nivoso, quo constat, et quævis in valle obvia obtegit ac involvit, alii κατ' ἔφοχην *Schneelauwinen*, quòd ex mera nive constant: Itali *Lavine di Freddo*, Engadienses *Lavigne da Fraid*, quasi dicas *Labinas ex frigore*, *Labinas hyemales*, hybernas, quoniam hyeme potissimum et frigidissimâ aëris temperaturâ quâ nivei flocci recens lapsi raram porosam constituunt massam, à vento quovis facile dissipabilem, nec dum propius coactam oriri solent, sunt hæ admodum periculosæ, eo scilicet sensu, quatenus fugâ non tam facile evitari possunt et citò sæpe Viatores obruunt, nec via recta decurrunt sed à vento flante nunc hac, nunc illac pelluntur: alio tamen respectu minùs lethales, quàm quæ mox describendæ veniunt, quoniam minùs sunt compactæ, ut qui iis involvuntur faciliùs sese extricare queant, nec vitam statim suffocati amittant. "Alterum,"

pergit Simlerus, "quod inveteratam nivem quoque trahit et multum terræ secum abripit." Nuncupantur hæ *Schloss* et *Schlaglawinen*, quoniam non tam secundante vento, quàm ponderosa mole cuncta, quæ in via occurrunt, prosternunt, diruunt, nec solam nivem secum vehunt, sed et arbores radicitus extirpatas, rupes et saxa prægrandia (unde et *Grundlowenen* appellantur, "weil sic den Grund selbs mit sich fortführen, oder alles von grund ausreissen), et Viatores, quos corripunt, vel statim suffocant, vel tam arctè claudunt, ut capite solo liberi, reliquo autem corpore integro involuti sese exsolvere nequeant, sed perire necessum habeant. Hoc sanè sensu prioribus sunt magis exitiales, minùs tamen periculosæ, quatenus non tam citò defluunt, nec etiam tam latum occupant spatium, quin maturè conspectæ evitari possint. Itali hoc Labinarum Genus vocant *Lavina di Caldo*, Engadienses *Lavigna da Chiod*, quoniam verno potissimum tempore, quo calor redit et nives constipat excitari solent. Utrumque genus describit carminicè Rebmannus, page 131 :—

‘ Der Schnee durch ein klein Windlein leicht,
 Oder von Vogels fluk bald weicht.
 Und rukt über den Berg hinab,
 Also das das Land erthönd darab,
 Und stost zu grund Baum und Erdrich,
 Felsen, Hauser, und was dergleich,
 Menschen und Viehe, was es trifft an,
 Muss ztodt, zu grund und Boden gan.
 Solch Schneebruch ein Lowin genant,
 Den Bergleüthen ist wol bekant;
 Wann aber starker Wind entstand
 Das Staubloweln hiemit angond
 Den Schnee dik in der Luft umbtreiben,
 Da muss der reisend Mensch oft bleiben.
 Dass er vom Schnee wird tieff bedekt,
 Wird bald erfröret und ersteckt,
 Wo nicht das Volk grabt nach mit gwalt
 Und also ihn bey leben bhalt,
 Und er nit ztieff hinunder fallt.

Labinarum causæ efficientes existunt quæcunque quovis modo, mediata ærem vel immediata nivem, in altissimis Montium Jugis movere aut devolvere aptæ natæ sunt; uti Lapidés et saxa decidua, venti, Nix recens delapsa, mobilior inveterata, flocci ex arboribus delapsi, nix vento cumulata; arboresque putridine consumptæ quæ collabuntur, Sonus tintinnabulorum, Campanarum, Sclopetorum, vox hominum clamantium aut etiam colloquentium, Pluvia, Calor vernus, Rupicapræ et aviculæ quævis."

Berlepsch ('The Alps,' Stephen's translation, page 177) says, 'The majestic crushing fall of heaped-up snow to the ground is called in different local districts in the Alps "Laue," "Lauwe," "Lauine;" in Tyrol, "Lahne;" in the Romansch mountains, "Lavigna." The name as ordinarily written in civilised German, "Lawine," is hardly to be heard from the people. Philologists have already disputed about the origin and meaning of this word, and started strange game in the dark forest of conjectures: some bring in Latin, and declare that it can only come from the word "labor, lapsus sum, labi," whilst others resort to metaphors, and say that the lioness (Löwin) has stood as godmother to the word, because the fall of snow dashes over the rocky wall into the valley with the rage and power of a wild beast. If we keep to the simple expression of the people, we shall find "Lau" to be the root of the word; the mountaineers, sparing of speech, shortly describe the whole phenomenon as "Lau" or "Lauine," because it takes place with the advent of the warm ("Lau") winds in the spring.'

Galschet ('*Jahrbuch des Schweizer Alpen Clubs*, vol. iv.), in a valuable paper entitled '*Deutung Schweizerischer Localbenennungen aus den Hochalpen*,' speaks of '*Lovine* (*althochdeutsch*)' or '*Labina* (medieval Latin),' and says that the village of Abländschen (French Avérenche), near Saanen in the Simmenthal, derives its name from the avalanches descending from the Gastlisflühen, 'in patois *avelantze, evalantze, liantze*, from the medieval Latin *advallare*, to descend into the valley.'

Littre, in his magnificent French dictionary now in course of publication, has the following:—'*Avalanche*. Étym. génév. *evalanche*; bas-lat. *avalantia*, descente; de *aval*, descendre.' So '*Avalaison*' or '*Avalasse*' is a '*cours d'eau torrentiel qui se forme soudainement à la suite de pluie et de fontes de neige*.' Note further that '*aval*' veut dire proprement, faire descendre, mettre en bas; et il n'a eu longtemps que ce sens-là; puis, comme faire arriver les aliments dans l'estomac est aussi les faire descendre, il a pris peu à peu ce sens, et le primitif a tombé en désuétude, ne restant plus que dans quelques locutions techniques et dans certains patois.' Saint-Simon, for instance, writes: '*Quand autour du roi quelqu'un avalait son chaperon, les plus près du roi lui faisaient place, c'était une marque qu'il voulait parler avec lui;*' where it is obvious that the courtier was not expected to swallow his hood as well as his pride in token of a desire for conversation.