

were falling. Thunder was heard muttering. It came nearer and nearer; and now our ears were filled with reverberating echoes. There was a thundering like the worst bombardment on a battle-front. From the banging and the crashing one might imagine the mountain crests collapsing into the depths; and every other second the darkness was riven by flashes of lightning. The storm increased in violence, till one felt that some fearful natural catastrophe was impending.

Then the first rain-drops fell, big and heavy. From higher up the valley we heard the noise of a regular cloud-burst. All three of us got into the car. At five minutes past four the storm broke loose in earnest. The cloud-burst had reached us. It came streaming and sheeting down upon our heads, while hail-stones as big as hazel-nuts bounced about on the gravel of the valley bed. As these natural projectiles were hurled against the roof of the car we expected it to be smashed in over our heads at any moment. Some Turki travellers were pressing themselves against the cliff at a spot where it hung over a little, affording some protection from the hail. But the rain came streaming down the rock-face, and the unfortunate travellers were certainly soaked to the skin. Their horses stood with hanging heads, while the water dripped from the rugs. They were restive, and started nervously under the whip-lash of the hail.

Our car was only a few meters from the perpendicular cliff. I thought of the dangers that threatened us — blocks might break loose, to fall and crush us at any moment. And along the very foot of the cliff a swiftly growing stream came creeping down, yellow as pease soup. Realizing the menace, TSERAT backed the car out towards the middle of the valley, that lay rather higher than the two sides.

Here we felt pretty safe. But now a stream came welling down on the right-hand side of the valley too. We were on a broad island between the two streams. The right arm grew swiftly, and now — there came a raging torrent, cleaving the island diagonally. It passed right under the car. It grew with alarming speed, and in half a minute it had joined the two others, to form one single, roaring, raging flood, filling the whole valley-bottom. Cascades with chalk-white foam came plunging down on all sides from clefts in the rock. The noise was indescribable. All conversation was drowned; and all the time the rain and hail came beating down on the roof of the car, and on the foaming, surging torrent.

The fury of the flood increased momentarily. The water was above the splash-board and was trickling into the car.

There was still a chance of safety. The gravel of the river-bed lay tightly packed. Our engine was still just above the water. TSERAT jumped out, took a look at the ground, and found at the upper end of the gravel-bed a spot where the depth was not great. Soaking wet, he returned to the wheel and reversed at top speed. Gallantly the car worked its way up the valley, through rushing waves crowned with yellow foam, and we were soon in shallower water. On the left-hand side, where a projecting rock stuck out into the valley, was an old ruined