

ing climb of half an hour brought the travellers to the top at 1.10 P.M. It had been intended to descend to Saas by the course followed by Messrs. Watson and Wethered in an ascent made from the eastern side not many days before, but in the face of a blinding snow-storm—as none of the party had been on the mountain before—it was thought wiser to retrace their steps. A few fragments of provisions, however, lying on the rocks to the right were sufficient to suggest the alternative and to indicate the direction taken by the former party; so it was determined, notwithstanding the very unfavourable state of the weather, to attempt to go down by the ordinary route to Randa. In spite of not being able to see six feet ahead during the first 3,000 feet of the descent, Almer was hardly once at fault; having the advantage of clearer atmosphere below, the intricacies of the Kien Glacier presented no serious obstacle, and the party eventually re-entered Randa at 8.30 P.M. The expedition, exclusive of halts, occupied 16 hrs. 45 min. The route by the spur abutting on the Weingarten Glacier, to which reference has been made, would probably shorten it by at least an hour.

THE LYSKAMM ACCIDENT.

To the Editor of the ALPINE JOURNAL.

‘Dear Sir,—A short narrative of the late fatal accident on the Lyskamm has been already published in the “Times,” but we think that a few more details may perhaps be satisfactory to members of the Club. On September 6th, Messrs. William Arnold Lewis and Noel H. Paterson, with Niklaus, Johann, and Peter Joseph Knubel, left the Riffelhaus at 2 A.M., to make the ascent of the Lyskamm. As they did not return that same night, Mr. J. A. Carfrae, accompanied by Peter Knubel, Joseph Imboden, and J. J. Trüfer, started the following morning at 6.30 in search. They followed the tracks of Mr. Lewis’s party to the foot of the arête leading down from the summit of the mountain towards the Lysjoch, and there found two knapsacks which had been left by them at this spot on the preceding day, before they began the final climb. This circumstance caused them at once to fear that an accident had occurred, and after skirting the lower slopes of the ridge on the Italian side for nearly an hour, they reached a point from which they saw the whole of the party lying upon the snow at some distance beneath them. Being unable to reach the bodies from this point, they retraced their steps, and after making a slight détour arrived at the spot. The cause of the accident was at once apparent: a snow cornice on the arête about 500 feet below the summit of the mountain had given way under the weight of the party, and they had fallen some 1,200 feet on to the glacier beneath. The whole of the party had received such injuries that death must have been instantaneous in every case. Portions of the broken cornice were lying round the bodies, and the line of their fall could be traced by two axes belonging to members of the party, one of which was found upon the ice slope some 300 feet

above, and the other upon rocks still higher up. As soon as the news reached Zermatt, arrangements were at once made for recovering the bodies, and at 2 A.M. on the morning of the 9th, a party, consisting of some thirty guides and porters, under the leadership of Joseph Imboden and of Messrs. H. Seymour Hoare, J. W. Hartley, W. E. Davidson, Josef Seiler, and Herr Gütz (the doctor of Zermatt, who accompanied the expedition at the request of the Swiss authorities), proceeded to the spot. The task of bringing down the bodies was one of great difficulty, and the party did not reach Zermatt until after 10 P.M. Messrs. Lewis and Paterson were buried in the English churchyard at Zermatt, on the afternoon of the 10th. The funeral of the Knubels took place at St. Niklaus on the following day, and was very largely attended by members of the Club and other English visitors who were then staying at Zermatt and the Riffel.

‘We cannot close this letter without testifying to the admirable conduct of the whole of the guides and porters concerned in the performance of what was to all a most trying task; and if, where all behaved so well, any should be distinguished beyond the rest, the names of Joseph Imboden, Peter Rubi, Johann Jaun, and Aloys Pollinger are deserving of especial mention. It is impossible for any words of ours to do justice to the kindly sympathy of Monsieur and Madame Seiler, or to the solicitous care with which every detail connected with the interment was arranged by them.

‘We are, dear Sir,

‘Yours very sincerely,

‘J. A. CARFRAE, W. E. DAVIDSON, J. W. HARTLEY,

‘H. SEYMOUR HOARE, J. SHORT.

‘Hôtel Monte Rossa, Zermatt, September 11.’

Mr. Hartley writes:—‘The cornice had broken away in two places, leaving some 10 feet in the middle still adhering to the mountain. The length of the parts which broke away was, perhaps, 40 feet on each side of the remaining portion. The distance of the fall we estimated at from 1,200 to 1,500 feet. The bodies, from the nature of the injuries they had received, had evidently fallen upon their heads on the rocks, and then, in one great bound, had reached almost the spot where they were found. The rope (which appeared to me to be very short) was broken between Mr. Lewis and Peter Joseph, who was at one end of the party. From this, and from Peter Joseph being much the most mutilated of all the party, we came to the conclusion that he had been descending last, and, probably, threw himself over on the Swiss side, but the weight and impetus being too great to be arrested, he was most likely jerked with great force over the arête to the Italian side, so breaking the rope. The rope was good and sound, being new this season, and belonging, I believe, to Mr. Lewis.

‘Most of the guides were of opinion that the fall occurred on the upward route. Davidson, and I, and some few guides, thought otherwise, and we (Davidson and I) had hoped to have ascended the arête to the spot to settle this question, but bad weather came on the night we got the bodies down, which, added to a strong disinclination on the

part of our guides to continue mountaineering this season, prevented our doing so.'

Mr. Davidson adds:—' With regard to the Knubels I should like to add for myself that from personal knowledge I considered Niklaus and Peter Joseph (Hans I knew only as a man and not as a mountaineer, and for that reason alone I am unable to speak in the same way of him) to be both of them not only "sans peur et sans reproche" as men, but also able and experienced mountaineers, and I would have gone anywhere with either of them.

' After crossing the Lyskamm this year, under most perfect conditions of snow and weather, and with exceptionally good guides, I decidedly came to the conclusion that it is usually under-rated by climbers. The Lysjoch arête, although not of course difficult from a climbing point of view, must always require very great care and steadiness, and almost anywhere upon it a decided slip would be most serious. The Felikjoch arête (which I rather fear climbers may now be inclined to try in preference to what has hitherto been the ordinary route) is the longest and hardest snow arête by far that I have ever been on. Under by no means unfavourable conditions, it took our party *more than six hours* of continuous work (about an hour of which we passed "à cheval" on the ridge) to go from the Felikjoch to the summit; and that we were by no means a slow party can be seen from our times from the Riffelhaus to the Felikjoch ($5\frac{1}{2}$ hours), and from the summit of the Lyskamm to the Riffel ($4\frac{1}{4}$ hours, with considerably over an hour's halt en route).'

The spot whence the fall occurred not having been visited, we have no means of knowing within what distance of the crest the party had ventured, or what was the breadth of snow which gave way with them. Under the circumstances, it is obviously proper to avoid any public expression of opinion as to how far any want of caution on the part of the guides may have contributed to the catastrophe.

There need, however, be no hesitation in pressing on all climbers, guides or amateurs, the lesson of this lamentable disaster. The danger is no new or unfrequent one; snow cornices have been and always must be encountered in the most prudent mountaineering. This is not the first, though the most impressive, warning of their peril. Mr. A. W. Moore has told very forcibly how his party, led by Melchior Anderegg, narrowly escaped destruction on the well-known S. ridge of the Mönch ('Alpine Journal,' vol. vi. p. 300). Mr. Moore was descending by a route not traversed in the ascent, and in such cases, owing to the difficulty of seeing the state of a ridge, the greatest caution is always necessary.

Even the best guides have a tendency to under-estimate an invisible danger when on well-known ground. Forgetting that the cornice varies every year, they are apt to assume that the allowance made for it one year will suffice the next. Moreover, a leader and stepcutter has special temptations to keep near the crest of the mountain, where he finds the slope less steep than a yard or two lower down, and the foothold often snow in place of hard ice. Every climber can do something

to help his guides to avoid this danger. The leader on an arête is naturally engrossed in his own labour, and also unable from his position to observe the nature of the ground actually underfoot so well as his followers, who are some of them 50 feet below him. The Lyskamm itself gives an instance of what may be done. Mr. Hardy ('P. P. and Glaciers,' II. series, vol. i. p. 390), describing the first ascent of the mountain, tells us how the leading guide, P. Perren, constantly appealed to those in his rear to know how he stood with regard to the cornice. A further security is provided if the traveller insists that the proper amount of rope (18 to 20 feet) separates every member of the party.

At Zermatt itself it may be believed that no warning will be wanted for many years; but in other parts of the Alps there are many guides, very much less skilful and far more likely to commit an error of judgment than the poor fellows whose fate we now deplore, on whom the lesson of the Lyskamm should be impressed by travellers. While fully agreeing with all that has been written or said as to the superiority of guides over amateurs in physical qualities, we are sure that there are many matters of snow and ice craft in which an experienced Alpine Clubman can give a second-rate guide—and a great proportion of guides must always be second-rate—very valuable instruction.

It has been evident from the first that the catastrophe arose from a cause entirely independent of the condition of any of the climbers. The discussion raised in the 'Times' on this subject has accordingly been generally looked on among mountaineers as both unkind and pointless, and the Editor of the 'Alpine Journal' has been asked by numerous correspondents to give some expression to this feeling on the part of the Club.

It seems also right to point out that the article on 'The Lyskamm Accident,' in the 'Saturday Review,' hitherto deservedly looked on as trustworthy on Alpine matters, was both wrong as to facts and wild in its suggestions.

The subscriptions which have been received for the widows and families of the three Knubels are acknowledged, as far as has been possible, within the cover of our present number. There are in the three families six children, all under six years of age. It is proposed under local advice so to invest the money as to insure to the widows the largest possible yearly annuity until the children are of an age to support themselves and their parents. Any further subscriptions should be sent to F. Wallroth, Esq., 4 Hare Court, Temple, E.C.—EDITOR.

WILLIAM LONGMAN

(AND HIS LAST WORK).

It is impossible to allow this number of the Alpine Journal to appear without some tribute to the memory of Mr. William Longman, in whose death we have to lament the loss of one of the earliest founders and most enthusiastic supporters of the Alpine Club.