

dition—on Sunday evening by the guides whose names I have mentioned, assisted by Mr. Craven, Mr. Vernon, and Mr. Seymour Hoare.

‘I desire to give you only a statement of the facts, and to make no comment upon them; but I was shocked to find, on examining the remains, that Mr. Moseley had hardly any nails in one of his boots, and all rock-climbers know how impossible it is to ensure steadiness under such conditions, and it is quite clear that if the rope had not unhappily been removed, I should not have had to trouble you with this letter.

‘No blame whatever attaches to Rubi, to Inäbnit, or to Mr. Craven, for whose position the keenest sympathy is felt; and it is hardly necessary to state that the kindly and considerate conduct of M. and Madame Seiler is not likely soon to be forgotten.

‘Mr. Moseley’s effects have been forwarded by the authorities to the American Consul at Geneva; and my colleagues and myself have taken the responsibility of burying what is left of our friend under the south wall of the English Church at Zermatt, by the side of Lewis and Patterson, and under the shadow of the great mountain which now numbers another gallant mountaineer and accomplished gentleman among its many victims.

‘Zermatt, Aug. 19.’

Of the second fatal accident to a traveller, we have received no authentic details. According to the best accounts, on August 18 a party of young Englishmen, with ladies, but without guides, left Ormond Dessus to cross the glacier between the Diablerets and Oldenhorn. In the descent one of the young men, a Mr. Forester, attempting to glissade, fell over a precipice and was killed. His corpse was recovered with great difficulty.

THE DEATH OF JOSEPH BRANTSCHEN ON THE MATTERHORN.

Within a few hours of Dr. Moseley’s fall a second death occurred on the Matterhorn under very peculiar and painful circumstances. A Swiss party, consisting of Herr Lüscher and Professor Schiess,* of Basel, with J. M. Lochmatter and Joseph Brantschen of St. Niklaus and Pierre Beytrison of Evolena as guides, reached, on the afternoon of August 12, from Breuil, the cabin on the Italian side of the Matterhorn. There Brantschen was taken ill during the night; there he was left alone while his companions crossed over the top of the mountain to Zermatt; and there he was found dead (by three guides sent to his succour) on the afternoon of the 14th, some thirty-six hours after he had been left.

Shortly after this event the ‘Times’ published a letter from ‘An Alpine Clubman,’ giving a most distressing account of the circumstances. This letter is too recent in our readers’ minds to need reprinting. All the explanation it requires will be found on a subsequent page. About

* Professor Schiess is a member of the medical profession, and, we believe, practises as an oculist. He read a paper on ‘Mountain Sickness’ to the Congress at Geneva ten days before his ascent of the Matterhorn.

the same time paragraphs and letters appeared in various Continental publications throwing more or less blame on Brantschen's companions.

In consequence of these reflections, the Basel Section of the Swiss Club, to which the travellers belong, requested them to furnish an explanation of what had occurred; and the statement, translated below, was, on September 12, read before it by Professor Schiess, on behalf of himself and Herr Lüscher.

'When, on August 10 last, we were on the look-out for a guide to lead us over the top of the Matterhorn from Breuil to Zermatt, an expedition which neither of our special guides had yet made, J. M. Lochmatter recommended to us Joseph Brantschen as a strong man. Our original intention had been to engage a capable man at Breuil, but our St. Niklaus guide preferred a Valaisan to an Italian. Brantschen was already known to one of us in previous years, but only as a second guide. We therefore, following the advice of young Herr Seiler, the manager of our hotel, first looked about us for another man. Unfortunately Zum Taugwald and Moser, whom he recommended us, were both already engaged. As Brantschen, in other respects, satisfied us, and there was no one else there, we engaged him, although he had only once before made the same expedition. That he was one of the leading Matterhorn guides, as some ill-informed newspaper writers have pretended, is entirely incorrect.

'On our way across the Théodule Pass to Breuil, Brantschen tried to persuade us to cross the peak in one day, instead of, according to our first plan, sleeping in the Breuil cabin. After some discussion, we adopted this suggestion. We started accordingly very early from our night quarters in the little hotel at Breuil. Brantschen led at first; afterwards, when the way was more difficult, Lochmatter. When we reached the "Cravatte," whence the top is first seen, it was already 1 P.M. Lochmatter told us we had still four hours' work to reach the top, and the question arose whether it would not be more prudent to spend the night in the Italian cabin, as we were afraid of arriving too late at the Zermatt Club-hut. We were without wood. Had we remained firm to our first plan, we should have taken a porter with more provisions and a proper supply of wood.

'We reached the cabin at 1.20 P.M. After we had looked about us for a time, we directed the guides to drag out and put in the sun the five sheepskins which were at hand. The temperature in the sun was 24 degrees R. Then we all lay down beside the hut, and each tried to go to sleep.

'The hut, built by the Italian Alpine Club, stands, according to Tschudi, 4,122 metres above the sea, some 70 metres higher than the top of Piz Bernina. The ascent from Breuil to the hut is more difficult than that from the hut to the top. The hut has a small door opening inwards and a small window. No furniture is provided, except a number of warm sheepskins and an india-rubber air mattress with three divisions, which, however, no longer holds the air. Tea and chocolate were made in an empty metal case by the aid of chips cut out of some few billets which we found there.

‘In the course of the afternoon we remarked that Brantschen was unwell; Lochmatter kept on pressing him to eat and drink. We took no great heed of the matter, and looked on it as mountain-sickness, or the result of drinking too much water during the ascent. On my asking Brantschen when he had first felt unwell, he answered, since he had slept in the sun. We observed no spitting of blood on his part during the ascent; had we noticed anything of the kind, we should naturally not have taken him with us. Up to 5 P.M. he was sitting on the doorstep, his gaze directed on Breuil. Later on, after he had lain down, he began to groan and throw himself about, in the night also to rattle in the throat (röcheln). Being asked where he felt pain, he answered, he felt pains all over (es thue ihm überall Weh). There was altogether not much to be got out of him either by us or by Lochmatter. He was, however, in no high state of fever, he was not hot to the touch, and his pulse was not unusually rapid. There was no remarkable coughing. My guide (who spoke nothing but French) acted as cook, and succeeded with the small stock of wood in making tea several times, and towards morning chocolate also. This tea was the only restorative we could offer to the sick man, and he seemed to take it gladly. Towards morning he at last became quieter, his breathing more regular, and he left off groaning and crying out (er hörte auf zu stöhnen und zu jammern). The guides and my travelling companion contrived to get some sleep. I had no rest, and saw the first grey of dawn. In the night the howling of a storm was several times heard.

‘When we began to stir in the morning, Brantschen was decidedly better, he was able to raise himself upright, and to answer questions. We ourselves saw nothing of blood-spitting or vomiting, nor did we hear either of the guides remark anything of the kind. This, therefore, is no more a true report than the heart-rending departure-scene of the “Times” correspondent; it is really marvellous how in this narrative—we will not inquire whether intentionally or not—what actually occurred has been distorted. The story of the “Times” correspondent, the responsibility for which he must entirely bear, appears to me as a compound of reporter’s zeal, misunderstanding, lively imagination, and disgust at the fact that two Swiss Clubists should have crossed the Matterhorn, which had not been crossed in 1878.*

‘To our astonishment we have also been sharply attacked from a side from which we assuredly were entitled to expect a colleague’s absence of prejudice and accurate taking into account of our circumstances, namely, by the President of the newly-founded “Alpen Klub Oesterreich,” Herr Meurer. This gentleman had, like us, intended to cross the Matterhorn from Breuil; his party was, however, stopped below the peak on the Italian side by bad weather.

‘It was a pleasure to us, on the other hand, to read in the “Journal de Genève” a completely accurate account from a correspondent entirely unknown to us.

‘On the morning of August 13 the guides had given a hope that Brantschen might recover sufficiently to accompany us; for this reason

* See post.

the start was delayed till 6 o'clock. But it became evident that this was impossible. And now no discussion took place, neither was there any interchange of plans between the guides and Brantschen.

'It appeared best to all of us to wrap up Brantschen well, to furnish him with the necessary provisions, and to hurry over quickly to Zermatt (*rasch zu Zermatt zu eilen*), and send him help. Had we remained with him it would have been of no benefit to Brantschen; and I am also convinced that he himself thought our course of action perfectly natural, otherwise he would have made some remonstrance, which he did not do. We bade him keep up his courage and wished him farewell, in the hope that he would by degrees entirely recover. Lochmatter further recommended him to place himself during the day in the sun outside the hut.

'Many have found themselves in a worse position than Brantschen's in the mountains. From all injury from weather he was protected by the hut and an abundant supply of sheepskins; he had sufficient provision, and the certain prospect of being succoured on the second day by his fellow villagers. Had a traveller—for instance, I, with my Evolena guide, remained there it would have been no help to Brantschen. The tea and wood were used up. Lochmatter alone, as his friend and neighbour, could have exercised an encouraging influence. We had no medicines. Had bad weather come on, our retreat to Breuil would have been cut off, and without being of any assistance to Brantschen, we should have put ourselves in the greatest danger.

'It was impossible for Lochmatter to remain, since he was the only man who could have gone with one of us to Breuil or Zermatt. To Herr Meurer's suggestion that we ought to have gone to Breuil, we reply that this would have been of little or no advantage. It was 6 A.M. before we started on the 13th, at least two hours must have been spent in the lonely inn at Breuil in organising the necessary relief party, it could not therefore have reached the cabin the same evening; even at the soonest it would not have been expected till the forenoon of the 14th. On the other hand, we knew that we should find in Zermatt friends of the sick man, as proved to be the case; and these came up in the first hours of the afternoon of the 14th.*

'It was in Zermatt that we first learnt that Brantschen was an unhealthy man; that two years previously, in an ascent of the Matterhorn, in which he had displayed great courage, he had contracted a lung disease, and had never been sound since. At that time he had been left behind in the Swiss Matterhorn hut.† Again, in the spring of 1879 he had had recourse to the doctor, and in the present season he had been left behind on account of bodily weakness. Of this we had heard nothing before or on the mountain, although Lochmatter was at any rate aware of the earlier Matterhorn affair. Of Monte Rosa he might maintain that he knew nothing, as he had but just returned from a three weeks' tour to Chamonix. When we spoke to Herr Seiler, the father, at Zermatt, he said at once he should have counselled us altogether against Brantschen.

* See post.

† See post.

'We had, therefore, without warning of any sort, undertaken a dangerous expedition—on which it was essential that each of us should be absolutely sure of the others—with a man actually bodily incapable for it (with which, however, we do not wish to reproach him). Consider the situation of a traveller with a porter and such a guide! Consider that he might have fallen ill not in the hut, but between it and the top, and bad weather might have come on in addition, in which case all three might have perished irretrievably. This side of the business has perhaps not been sufficiently considered; yet it seems to me a somewhat essential one for us Clubists.

'Were it possible in this sad affair to assign, according to human computation, to each his share of blame, some would certainly fall on the man who engaged himself for an undertaking for which he must have known beforehand he was, through no fault of his own, no longer fit. We bear Brantschen no ill-will, the poor man unhappily has had to suffer only too severely; he was exceedingly anxious to earn something for his family and naturally hoped for the best; but still it was not right entirely to conceal from us the past. Knowing nothing of it, we looked on Brantschen on the morning of the 13th as a man likely to recover. It is disloyal to judge us as if we had then known circumstances which now in consequence of what has happened are everywhere well known.

'At 1.30 A.M. on August 14 we reached Zermatt. We had sent from the Swiss hut a message before us, and at 3 o'clock the relief party started over the Furgge Glacier skirting the Matterhorn. It found Brantschen already dead and stiff; apparently a rupture of the heart or lungs had happened. When he died One only knows: when the stiffness of death comes on at such heights is written in His book.

'As Brantschen was a heavy man, the three guides could not attempt to bring the body down, and seeing another party coming up from Breuil, they returned, having dragged the body out of the hut and covered it with stones.

'From my communications with Herr Seiler, who in the whole matter has stood by us in the most amiable and thankworthy way, I learnt that without calling for the services of an unreasonably large body of men, it would be impossible to get the heavy body down to Breuil uninjured. The plan was therefore agreed on that a party which, about eight men strong, left on August 20 for the Italian cabin, and to which we on our descent from the Breithorn gave up our own guides, should let down the corpse on the Stockje side, where another party waited with sledges.

'Had Brantschen remained ill in the hut, there would have been no means of getting him down. He must have remained there with a companion until he had recovered sufficiently to descend himself. How difficult the ascent to the hut from Breuil is, is shown by the fact that two parties who subsequently started from Zermatt were unable on account of storms to reach the height of the hut. 'H. SCHIESS.

'C. LÜSCHER.'

There are, it is obvious, many points in this statement open to com-

ment, were detailed criticism opportune. But it seems only necessary now to call attention to two matters in which the writers have been misinformed.

Active guides would have found no difficulty in going from the hut to Breuil and returning in the day. On this point Mr. Whymper and the English climbers who know the mountain best are in agreement with Herr Meurer, who was on this side of the Matterhorn a few days before and can speak therefore as to its condition at the time. Some years ago an English climber started from Breuil, crossed the top, descended to the Hörnli, and regained Breuil by the Furgenjoch in the same day.

It is untrue that Brantschen was left alone in any cabin on the Matterhorn in 1877. In that year, while descending the mountain in company with Mr. J. H. Wainwright and François Devouassoud, he was taken ill, and, after the party had unroped, was left behind with another guide near the Hörnli for a few hours. Nor had his disease its origin in any courageous act. All his symptoms point to his illness at that time as well as his subsequent death having been caused by exposure to cold acting on a constitutional weakness.*

It is unfortunately impossible to supplement this statement by the depositions of the guides taken at the inquest. Up to the present time the Swiss Alpine Club has not been successful in obtaining copies of these documents. This, as Englishmen are painfully aware, is by no means the first time that the judicial authorities of Canton Valais have withheld information as to the proceedings of their tribunals in a case in which their publication was essential. Their conduct in this instance has been most unjust to the travellers concerned.

We must now place before our readers the following communications, which have been addressed to the Editor by Mr. Percy Thomas, the 'Alpine Clubman,' who wrote to the 'Times,' and by Mr. W. W. Richmond Powell:—

'19 Cornwall Gardens, S.W., October 11, 1879.

'Dear Sir,—The story, as I first told it in the "Times," under the signature "An Alpine Clubman," came to me through my guide, Joseph Imboden † of St. Nicolas, and it purported to be the exact account brought down by Lochmatter to St. Nicolas. Moser brought over the tale from Zermatt.

'The details given to me were so circumstantial that I could scarcely believe them to have been fabricated, especially as guides (and Lochmatter in particular) are not imaginative as a rule.

'Imboden himself was quite overcome when telling me the story, and it naturally made *me* feel rather warm on the subject.

'No one would be more sorry than myself to think an injustice had been done to the parties implicated; but although it is possible the details

* The *Neue Alpenpost* of Zürich (October 11) has published a letter giving an absurd and untrue account of what took place in 1877. Full opportunity to correct his correspondent has been placed at the disposal of the editor, and we should be glad to learn he had availed himself of it.

† The President of the St. Niklaus guides.

of the parting scene are an exaggeration, I do not think there can be two opinions with regard to leaving a sick man to the awful solitude of a mountain hut for 36 hours! I wrote to Imboden some days back for all the information he can get from Lochmatter, and I enclose his reply, by which you will see that, while varying some of the details, he adheres to the first account he gave me as substantially accurate. Lochmatter, I may mention, acted as my guide but a few days previous to the Brantschen affair.

‘ Believe me, yours very truly,

‘ PERCY W. THOMAS, A.C.

‘ The Editor of the “ Alpine Journal.” ’

‘ 56 St. James’s Square, Notting Hill, W.,

‘ October 7, 1879.

‘ Dear Sir,—As the controversy respecting the fate of Brantschen on the Matterhorn, and the degree of culpability attaching to the two Basel gentlemen seems to be by no means extinct yet, I send you a few particulars which have come under my own immediate knowledge in the matter. I have withheld these from the daily papers, since the opinion I formed of the conduct of the two gentlemen is adverse to them; but it is desirable that there should be a clear understanding on the subject so far as the Alpine Clubs are concerned.

‘ On August 13 I ascended the Matterhorn from the Swiss side, accompanied by a friend, and by the guides Peter Taugwalder and Abraham Imseng. We reached the summit at 10.30, and there found Professor Schiess and his companions, with whom, however, we then held no conversation, as they remained at the lower extremity of the summit ridge. After a very brief halt, we retraced our steps down the mountain; but our progress was exceptionally slow, owing to an accident to one of the party from a falling stone, and we did not regain the hut till 5 P.M. The others arrived about ten or fifteen minutes later, and we then learnt of their having left Brantschen in the Italian hut; but from what they told us of the matter, neither my friend nor myself gathered the faintest notion that he was in any way seriously ill. They merely spoke of him as having been unwell during the night, and complained loudly that by his “*jauchzen und jammern*” he had interfered much with their sleeping. We were naturally surprised at their having left him by himself, but they assured us that they had given him an ample supply of food, and altogether treated the case in so light a way that I, for one, never suspected that anything worse was the matter with him than perhaps a fit of indigestion. We all quitted the hut by 5.45, the other party preceding ours by a few minutes; and in consequence of our continued slow progress, we did not reach Zermatt until midnight was chiming; but the others were still slower, and did not return until about 1½ hr. later. On entering the village we met two men—one of whom I was afterwards informed was Brantschen’s brother—and Taugwalder immediately commenced in an excited way to tell them about the poor man who had been left in the hut, and who “*might be dead by that time for all one knew.*” I interfered, and remonstrated with him for exaggerating the case, but he replied that it

was far worse than I believed, and that Lochmatter (the Professor's guide) had told him that Brantschen had been delirious all the previous night and was seriously ill, although somewhat better when they left him.

'I should mention that Taugwalder never alluded once to this matter during the descent; but by the light of what has subsequently become known, I do not suppose that he exaggerated or misrepresented the facts as he received them from Lochmatter.

'If Herr Schiess and his party were really anxious to send the man succour as soon as possible, they missed, I believe, an opportunity which they might well have made use of; for shortly after leaving the Swiss hut we met an Englishman (a Mr. Gardner, *not* an A. C.) with two guides, who proposed passing the night there, and going to the summit next day. Had he been made aware of the circumstances he might very possibly have been able to make some arrangements to visit Brantschen, if only to see how the poor fellow was getting on. The anxiety to despatch speedy assistance the Swiss travellers subsequently profess to have felt was, certainly, at the time by no means apparent.

'Believe me, dear Sir, faithfully yours,

'W. W. RICHMOND POWELL, A.C.

'The Editor of the "Alpine Journal."'

It is greatly to be regretted that the depositions of the guides are not before us. In their absence, it is impossible to determine how far they were responsible for the course adopted. But in order to form an opinion on the conduct of the party as a whole, it is not necessary to go beyond the travellers' own statement. Professor Schiess has gone out of his way to impute ridiculous motives to an Alpine Clubman, and by so doing made it incumbent on Mr. Thomas and ourselves to publish the authority on which the letter in the 'Times' was based, and thus to show that the assertions of which he complains come not from English press-writers, but from his own countrymen, Brantschen's comrades. But since the guides' formal evidence is unattainable, we will not attach weight to any second-hand statements. We treat Professor Schiess and Herr Lüscher as we should if they were our own members. We accept frankly, now that they have published it, their account—in so far as it deals with circumstances within their own knowledge and experience.

On the facts of this account, unfortunately, but one judgment can be formed in the Alpine Club. In the face of the description given by Professor Schiess of Brantschen's condition during the night, his excuses are altogether inadequate. The adoption of a route by which the nearest succour was (at the pace of the party) $19\frac{1}{2}$ instead of 8 hours off, may have been simply a deplorable error of judgment; but the determination to leave the sick man alone at all showed unpardonable want of heart. It must ever be to us a matter of profound regret that any travellers or guides should, without the least pressure of necessity, have left a sick man without firewood in a hut 13,000 feet above the sea to over thirty hours of certain and absolute solitude. There can be no doubt that the desertion of Brantschen under such circumstances was a flagrant breach of the first tradition of all

honourable mountaineering—the tradition, by virtue of which every member of a party, guide or mountaineer, has been accustomed in danger or distress to count on the support of his comrades.

To have to express such a conclusion is most painful; but we should fail in our duty as the mouthpiece of the oldest body of mountaineers, if we spoke less plainly.

A subscription was started at Zermatt for the widow and large young family left by Brantschen. It was, we are informed, headed by his last employers with 48*l.* and the Basel Section of the Swiss Club with 40*l.* It has now turned 250*l.* Herr Seiler, who has most kindly interested himself in administering the funds, found Brantschen's debts exceeded by a third his effects. We quote his words:—

‘Quant à la famille Brantschen, elle n'a d'autre ressource que les dons des bienfaiteurs; les enfants sont tous en bas âge et incapables de travailler; la mère est une bonne femme, pleine de courage; en administrant bien la somme qui se trouve en caisse, et avec le peu qui sera encore donné, la pauvre famille sera sauvée de l'indigence dans laquelle elle serait tombée sans le secours des bienfaiteurs.’

The liberality of the Swiss public and of the visitors to Zermatt seems to have met, or nearly so, the needs of the case; but a few more pounds, Herr Seiler writes, could be well applied in setting up the family. Those who are inclined to supply them can send their contributions directly, by Post Office order, to Herr Seiler, Brigue, Canton Valais, or to Mr. P. Thomas, 19 Cornwall Gardens, S.W.

ALPINE NOTES.

THE AIGUILLE DU DRU.—On Friday, August 29, the second ascent of the higher peak of this mountain was effected by Mr. J. Baumann and Mr. F. J. Cullinan, with the guides Emile Rey of Ccurmayeur and Joseph Moser of Täsch. The party having slept somewhat higher up than did Mr. Dent's party on the occasion of the first ascent, started at 4.15 A.M. on the morning of the 29th. They reached the summit at 9.45 A.M. and remained there until 10.20. The sleeping place was regained at 3.40 P.M., and after resting there for an hour the party returned to Chamonix, the Hôtel Couttet being reached at 8.30 P.M. The entire time occupied by the expedition from the sleeping place to the summit and thence down to Chamonix, was therefore sixteen hours and a quarter; Mr. Dent's estimate that it would be possible to ascend the mountain and return to Chamonix in from sixteen to eighteen hours being thus fully borne out. Both guides behaved admirably, but especial credit is due to Rey, who took the lead throughout the day, and who on this occasion, as well as on other occasions this season while with the same party, displayed all the qualities of a first-rate guide.

The number of the 'Alpine Journal' containing Mr. Dent's account of the first ascent was carried by the party, and was referred to several times and found very useful in more than one doubtful spot as indicating the right way up.