something of the ridge thus conquered will marvel most at this brilliant *tour de force*, and will most heartily recognise the determination and daring which enabled the successful climbers to triumph where so many of their predecessors had failed.

THE ACCIDENT ON THE MEIJE.

THE news of the remarkable ascent of the Meije by the eastern ridge, made, on July 26 last, by Herren O. and E. Zsigmondy and L. Purtscheller, *without guides*, had hardly become known to the Alpine world, when it was first rumoured, then announced, that in the attempt to discover a new route from the south made by the same two brothers and Dr. Schulz, without guides, Herr Emil Zsigmondy, a brilliant climber only twenty-four years old, had lost his life on August 6. The fact that this terrible misfortune followed so closely on a splendid triumph, and the appalling circumstances under which the mishap took place, combine to make the Meije accident of 1885 one of the most melancholy and saddening recorded in the long Alpine death roll.

The following deeply interesting narrative has been published by Herr Otto Zsigmondy in the 'Oesterreichische Alpenzeitung,' for August 28 last.* 'On August 5 we were in La Bérarde. The weather was fine; Emil, Dr. Schulz, and myself went up the Tête de la Maye, while Kellerbauer and Purtscheller made the ascent of the Tête du Roujet. While on the summit we discussed our plan of making the ascent of the Meije on the following day, in pursuance of a promise which we had made to Dr. Schulz. I wished to follow the usual way up, but my brother was very keen to strike out a new route which he had examined on August 3, when on the Aiguille du Plat. This involved attacking the south wall of the Meije immediately below the Pic Oriental, and climbing towards the Grand Pic by a rocky ledge (Felsband) which mounts in that direction, and is marked out by numerous patches of ice. We saw very well from the Tête de la Maye that this ledge came to an end at a wide couloir which is below the gap between the Grand Pic and the last of the great teeth in the ridge leading towards the Pic Central; and it was there that we expected to encounter the most serious difficulties.

'We returned to La Bérarde, procured provisions, and the same afternoon we three went up to the Châtelleret, a Club hut in the Vallon des Etançons, about 2 hours from La Bérarde, and spent the night there.

'The next day (August 6) we started about 2 o'clock by lantern light, and by very inconvenient slopes of moraine reached the Glacier des Etançons, which we crossed in a N.E. direction, finding many crevasses and holes. About 6 A.M. we gained the rocks under the Pic Oriental.

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* We are indebted to the kindness of Herr J. Meurer and the editor of the German Alpine Club publications for permission to translate and publish the papers of Herr O. Zsigmondy and Dr. Schulz.

The passage from the ice to the rocks presented very great difficulties, after overcoming which we found ourselves on the rocky ledge of which I have spoken before. Here we were exposed to heavy falls of stones, the weather was threatening, a storm began to rage. After some time the storm subsided, and the weather then became very fine. Amid ever increasing difficulties we pushed on along the rocky ledge, which was for the most part covered with fresh snow heaped together and then frozen. The snow did not extend as far as the precipice; there was generally a space between them, and it was along this that we were able to climb by the aid of our crampons. Here and there the ledge was interrupted by very steep terraces of rock, about 10 mètres high, the overcoming of which was attended with great difficulties. Finally, in this way we reached the last ice patch, which lies under the second of the great teeth, counting westward from the Pic Central, but this was gained only with very great trouble. We were now unable any longer to continue traversing the face to the left as we had been doing, and had to climb straight up this ice-patch by the aid of steps. After successfully accomplishing this, we climbed about 40 mètres over smooth, difficult rocks almost straight up, and gained a horizontal terrace. Our object now was to gain the great couloir of which I have already made mention. To do this it was necessary to cross over a rock pillar (Felspfeiler), which projected from the wall. My brother Emil clambered up it by working up one side of it obliquely, but he could not get down on the other side without taking off the rope. Before doing this, Schulz and I got round the pillar by help of the rope let down to us from above. On the other side there was good foothold, and we thus found ourselves on the continuation, as it were, of the horizontal terrace. On my suggestion, we left the rope hanging here (my brother having untied himself), in order in any case to secure our retreat. Professor Schulz remained here and slept a little while, my brother and myself going off on a reconnaissance. The terrace soon narrowed considerably and became a horizontal crack along which we walked as far as the edge of the great couloir. By bending forward we could then look down into it. It was glazed with ice, the sides smooth and steep; in the opinion of both of us it was impossible to advance further in this direction. This reconnaissance took three quarters of an hour or an hour. We went back to the place where Dr. Schulz had remained, by aid of the rope got round the rock pillar; then I climbed up it to disentangle the rope, and came back to the terrace.

'From where we were standing, several couloirs led up the wall above us. My brother remarked that now there was nothing left for us but to try one of these couloirs. He attempted that on the right, but came back, after he had got up about 10 mètres, in consequence of our urgent request and wish. This attempt was made when he was not tied with the rope. I was now convinced that the attainment of the summit by this way was impossible, and I very decidedly urged a retreat, especially as it was 1.30 P.M. Professor Schulz then said to my brother, "Now, Emil, what do you think, haven't you yet given up all hope?" And my brother replied, "What would one have if

one hadn't some hope?" (Was bliebe einem, wenn man nicht die Hoffnung hätte). No one spoke of renewing the attempt.

'Without discussing the matter, and before we expected it, my brother began to climb straight up the rocks, having previously fastened our Manilla rope round his body. The rocks here were precipitous and smooth. The only way seemed to be a shallow gully which ran obliquely upwards; but, looked at from below, it offered hardly any hold, though of course we below could form no decided opinion on this point. About 30 mètres above where we were standing there was a similar though rather smaller terrace; my brother clearly aimed at reaching this in order to see how it was above, but, as I have stated before, not a word was uttered on this matter.

'We were now 250–300 mètres (=c. 820–984 feet) below the Grand Pic, or about 3,600 mètres high according to Dr. Schulz's aneroid. Five mètres above us was a projecting block, on which there was a small ledge, which was the only place where one could find the necessary foothold.

'After our 17 mètres (=51 feet) of Manilla rope had been paid out, Emil called out to us below, asking whether we could climb up after him a little way in order to give him a few more mètres of rope, saying that he did not think he was very far from the upper ledge, and wanted very much to get quite on to it. I had no more wish for experiments, for I held any further attempt to be objectless; but naturally I had just as little idea that Emil would get into a place where he was not quite secure. I could think so all the less as in the attempt just before he had acted in so very careful a way.

'Although I was decidedly against a further advance, I could not, placed where I was, judge whether Emil's situation did not perhaps render it desirable or even essential that he should have the rope he asked for; so I called out, "Professor Schulz's 20 mètre silk rope is still here—if you really wish it very much we will tie ourselves with it." He replied in a joyful voice, "Ah, that's all right" (Ach, das ist gescheit). These were the last words I heard him utter. We tied ourselves with the silk rope, paid it out slowly, and Emil climbed very cautiously up till he was about one mètre below the second terrace already mentioned. Here probably the overhanging rocks rendered further progress impossible, and Emil appeared to be preparing to come down again. He threw the rope around a rocky tooth to the left, and commenced the descent. It was after he had got down about a mètre that the terrible fall occurred. The loop of rope slipped off the tooth, as was clearly shown by the sudden slackening. Just before Dr. Schulz said, "If only nothing happens to him!" At this moment there first came into my head the idea that Emil might fall, and almost at the same time the fall took place. I heard immediately after a noise over my head,* caught hold at once of the coil of rope

* [We are authorised by Herr Otto Zsigmondy to omit certain words occurring here in the original, stating that he heard his brother utter a cry. He writes, 'These words came erroneously, without my knowledge, into print. My brother uttered no sound at the fatal moment.']

which was all ready to pay out, and wound it round my arms and hands. Professor Schulz too must have seized the rope while it was quickly running out, for his little finger was injured. The next instant I received a frightful blow on the head, which for the time deprived me of consciousness. (Probably this was due to the fall of one of the ice axes, which were all stacked together. Mine was carried away by the rope.) The rope was torn away from a rocky tooth close by me round which I had hastily thrown it; I was swung round, fell my whole length on my right side, was dragged down a little way, and found myself over the precipice, but grasped a rocky tooth with both arms, and was thus able to hold fast. But the rope broke! It seemed to me that it broke in the air, but I am not very sure. When I came to myself (my swoon can hardly have lasted half a second) I noticed the broken rope fluttering in the air, and saw at the same moment the fall of my brother, and his descent on to a small ice-field below us. All this took only a few seconds. My brother can hardly have realised his frightful position; he uttered no cry or shriek of horror; everything took place with incredible rapidity. A small ice-field was about 40 mètres below us, it was the last ice-field up which we had climbed. Beneath it there is a perpendicular precipice of 600–700 mètres (=c. 2,000 to 2,500 feet) to the glacier. If the ice had been covered with deep soft snow, Emil's fall would probably have been stopped there, especially as the rope had greatly diminished the speed of his descent, and there would have been the possibility that at least his life might have been saved. But when he slid down over the little ice-field, which was as smooth as a mirror, the frightful catastrophe became inevitable, for there followed a terrible fall over a wall 2,000 feet high! . . .

'My head was hurt, my face streamed with blood, the thumb on my left hand was broken, the rope had cut deeply into my arms and hands, and because of my fall my right side was severely bruised.

'Schulz and I at once began the descent, despite the bewilderment caused by this frightful accident, and hurried down as fast as possible; for, however unreasonable (*unberechtigt*) it may seem, before I had convinced myself of the reality of what had just happened, I could not give up a last glimmer of hope.

'As the silk rope was broken, we had only a bit of about five mètres, and the descent proved extremely difficult. We followed the same route as on the way up, save that we got from the rocks to the ice by another way which my poor brother had discovered on the ascent. At last, after four anxious, wearing hours, we reached the Glacier des Etançons, on which we found the body lying, not far from the rocks, and immediately under the place where the accident had happened. The first look told me that my last hopes were gone. . . .

'We two went down to the Châtelleret hut, where we arrived at 9.30 P.M. The next day we descended to La Bérarde, where we found Purtscheller and Professor Kellerbauer. The former got together five men to recover the body. These went as far as the edge of the glacier, two ventured on the ice itself, but Purtscheller himself had to undertake the heavy work of bringing down the body, as the men

were of no use for this purpose. That day (August 7) the body was brought down to the edge of the glacier; next day two other men were engaged, and Purtscheller with the body reached La Bérarde about 1 P.M. The bringing it down was attended with the greatest difficulties, and Purtscheller showed the greatest self-sacrifice in accomplishing it.'

Herr E. Zsigmondy was a Protestant, but notwithstanding, M. Vallier, the new curé of S. Christophe (the chef-lieu of the valley three hours below La Bérarde), who showed the greatest sympathy and kindness throughout, permitted the burial to take place in his little churchyard. On the 9th the evidence of the survivors was taken and the necessary legal formalities gone through. The funeral, which was attended by his four mourning companions, the authorities of the village, and most of the inhabitants, took place on August 10, the burial rites being performed by a Dutch minister, Monsieur J. G. Van Ryn, who happened to be at Venosc. Professor Kellerbauer delivered a funeral oration, and laid the broken rope on the grave with a wreath of edelweiss; Herr Purtscheller's rope, which had so often joined him to his unfortunate friend, was used to lower the coffin to its resting place.

It is worth noting that in a list of successful ascents over 3,000 mètres which Herr Emil had made during the last nine years, six only out of a total of ninety-nine were made in the company of guides.

Dr. Schulz has also published two articles (the first dated Vallouise, August 15) on the accident in the 'Mittheilungen d. D. u. Ö. Alpenvereins' of September 1 and 15. We give them, as well as Herr Otto Zsigmondy's narrative, in order that our readers may have before them the whole evidence of the two survivors of this most horrible accident.

'On August 6, with Herren Otto and Emil Zsigmondy, I started at 1.50 A.M. from the Châtelleret hut in the Vallon des Etançons to try to climb the western peak of the Meije by a new way. E. Zsigmondy had carefully examined the south wall of the Meije from the summit of the Aiguille du Plat, and was of opinion that from a point on the Glacier des Etançons close under the Pic Oriental of the Meije it would be possible to reach the gap east of the Pic Occidental (or Grand Pic) by means of a broad band of snow. From this gap the Pic Occidental could be climbed either direct up the rock precipices (the route of July 26) or from the side of the Glacier Carré. I had been prevented by an injury to my finger from taking part in the ascent of July 26, and an attempt which I made with Pierre Gaspard fils and J. B. Rodier to climb the Meije by the usual way from the south had been defeated by bad weather. Gaspard was already engaged for the following weeks, and there was no other guide to be found for the Meije. Then Otto Zsigmondy offered to guide me up the Meije by the usual way and asked his brother to take part in the expedition. Emil Zsigmondy agreed, but on the condition that we should take not the old way but that which he had examined, which he thought to be possible and to be easier and less dangerous than the ordinary way. Although Otto and I held that the old way was safer and would more certainly bring

us to the summit, and maintained this against Emil, the latter persisted in his idea, and it was therefore arranged to carry out the ascent according to his plan.

'About 10.30 A.M. we reached the last snow field on the broad snow band which runs up the south face of the Meije from the foot of the Pic Oriental towards the gap east of the Pic Occidental. At 11 the rocks above the snow field were attacked and overcome by a steep couloir about 40 mètres (= 130 feet) high. An attempt to gain the gap by climbing up to the left along a ledge of rock was given up because the ledge abutted against smooth rock-faces. We were now immediately above the last snow field and on the rocky ledge which is just under the second of the great teeth (counting from the east) on the ridge between the Pic Central and the Pic Occidental. The lower rim of the Glacier Carré was a good bit below our level. Otto and I advised a retreat; Emil, too, said "It doesn't seem to go." On our return from the rocky ledge we had untied the rope, because, while traversing a very hard bit, we could only hold on by our hands to the rope which we had fastened to a rock above. In spite of our frequently expressed wish to descend, Emil was very unwilling to allow that the attempt had failed. He tied round him one end of our strong Manilla rope (20 mètres long) and began to climb up the very steep rocks immediately above us. An attempt to get up by means of a rock-rib to the right had to be given up. Emil chose then a flat, steep gully which ran straight up from a rock terrace at the foot of which we were standing; by this it seemed possible to gain another rock terrace about 30 mètres higher up. Emil had climbed up about half this couloir when he called out to us "It doesn't go any farther." We replied, "Come back;" on which he came down several mètres. On the way he dislodged several stones which flew over our heads, so that we sheltered ourselves under the projecting ledge. When we looked up again we saw Emil again climbing up, though we fancied he was coming down. With indomitable energy he had conquered the hard bit and was clambering upwards—he was so far from us that the 20 mètre rope was all paid out. He then shouted down to us "I can get on farther; have you any rope left?" As the Manilla rope was all paid out, Otto took my thin rope made entirely of silk (21 mètres in length) and tied it on to the Manilla rope. He called out, "We still have the silk rope," to which Emil joyfully replied, "That's all right" (O! das ist gut). He climbed up farther, so that about 10 mètres of the silk rope were in use and he was about 30 mètres above us, while 10 mètres more of the rope lay by us coiled up. Emil was a mètre or two from the terrace, beyond which it seemed possible to advance further. We looked up and noticed that the place where he was was nearly perpendicular or even overhung. Emil was working his way up with difficulty; Otto became anxious, so that he cried out, "I am afraid that something may happen to-day" (Ich fürchte, heute passirt noch etwas). We now saw that Emil in order to secure himself took the rope which was fastened round his body, and made a loop round a projecting rock above his head. He took hold of the rope with both hands, and in this way let himself

down a little way. Though the state of things was so exciting, yet for fear of falling stones I retired under the projecting ledge again. Otto went on looking up. Then I suddenly heard an uncanny noise, caught the low cry "Oh," and the next minute poor Emil fell on the ledge above us, then with great force in a curve over our heads, striking the rocks close to us. Otto had with great presence of mind wound round his arm the rest of the rope lying beside us. I caught the end of it with my right hand. I saw Otto reel because of the shock of the falling body, and I myself felt a strong jerk, which threw me against the rocks and severely injured my right hand. Quick as a shadow Emil's body flew over our heads. When we recovered our senses at this frightful instant, we both had about five mètres of the silk rope in our hands; it broke, and Emil's already mangled body without stopping slid down further, together with the Manilla rope and the greater part of the silk rope. We saw him slide over the snow field below us, then he fell over the nearly perpendicular rock wall, about 2,000 feet down to the Glacier des Etançons. Who can describe our terrible situation? With about five mètres of the thin silken rope we attempted the frightful descent—Otto with the thumb of his left hand broken and his right hand severely injured by the rope, I with a badly hurt right hand—and after four hours found Emil's frightfully disfigured body. It was 7 P.M. We left the glacier as night began to fall, and with difficulty in the darkness reached the Châtelleret Refuge. Next morning Purtscheller with five men brought down the body. It was carried to S. Christophe, where it was mournfully laid to rest provisionally in the churchyard of the little village, amid very grand scenery, a Protestant minister saying the service.

'I cannot describe in words what all of us—his family, science, the Alpine world—have lost by E. Zsigmondy's death.'

In his second paper Dr. Schulz thus continues his remarks: 'To complete my narrative I have to add the following details.

'The object of Emil tying the rope round him when he climbed up, was chiefly to hold up the other two members of the party when he had found a safe standing place, or, to save time, to pull them straight up. It was also meant as a security for Emil himself so long as the distance between him and us was not too great. When he was 10 mètres from us the rope by reason of the very steep and difficult rocks was almost a make-believe protection; it was quite so when the distance was 20 mètres, and still more so when it was 30 mètres. Emil knew this as well as we did, and relied solely on his powers of climbing. We had often seen him safely overcome bits of equal or similar difficulty, and in this particular case we did not think that so good and "safe" a climber could fall.

'As to the actual cause of the fall, I think that the loop of rope flung by Emil round a rock slipped off. I am not sure whether this happened when he was descending by aid of the loop he had first made; perhaps it was when he wished to lengthen this loop, so as to come down farther, or when he was trying to make a second loop round a rock farther below. At the instant of the fall I was not looking

up; the rocks also were too high and too direct above us to allow us to follow each movement of Emil in detail. Hence it was that Otto, who saw Emil totter, did not at once perceive what was the occasion of the fall. He too, like me, supposes (in his account published in the 'Oesterr. Alpenzeitung') that the loop of rope slipped off the rock, "as was clearly shown by the sudden slackening of the rope." It is not altogether impossible that the fall was due to his having dislodged a stone, or to his simply having lost his hold, although in the case of so experienced a climber, I consider this latter theory more improbable than the former. At any rate the place was such that coming down was more difficult and dangerous than going up. Our duty, when the fall occurred, was clearly indicated. We had to try to check the fall by seizing and holding fast the rope, only there was no time to consider whether it was possible to save Emil or not. The rope lay close by Otto. He was able, with great rapidity, to seize it and wind it round his right arm. I had to first make two steps and grasp the projecting rock in order to catch hold of the end of the rope. I succeeded in rolling it round my right hand, in holding on to the rock with my left, and in planting my feet against the rock. Meanwhile Emil struck first on the rock ledge above us, then flew through the air, striking the rock once more close to us, a little below where we were standing. Even then the 30 mètres of rope between Otto and Emil had not quite run out; it was only when the body, after striking the rocks the second time, again flew into the air, that the rope tightened with frightful violence, which pulled down Otto and dragged him a little way. Hence the silk rope broke, not in consequence of its being dragged over the rocks, but when it was stretched to its utmost extent by the weight of the falling body. Otto nobly withstood this great strain, but he was falling down when it came upon me; I was able to resist it, though tightly jammed against the rocks, and though the rope cut deep into my hand, especially the little finger. After being thus brought short up, Otto was able to grasp a rock, and we were saved.

'The sudden and complete breaking of the rope is pretty well explained, in my opinion, by the fact that Otto had hastily thrown over a rocky tooth the coil of rope which he had twisted round his arm. The strain then took place between the falling body and the rope fastened to an unyielding rock. Many of my readers know how a good strong bit of packthread, which one twists in the right way round one's hands, can be broken by a sharp jerk. If the strain had, instead of being between the body and the rock, been between the body and Otto's arm with the rope twisted round it, the rope probably would not have broken, for Otto's body offered an elastic and yielding resistance quite different from that of a rock. But in that case Otto would certainly have been carried away and I could not have held him up. The fact that the rope was fastened round a rock, and the tremendous shock explain in this case quite naturally and easily the breaking of the rope, which in the very different conditions of the Matterhorn accident in 1865 has remained an insoluble riddle. It is true that in our case the rope was torn from the rocky tooth, Otto thrown on his side and dragged down, but I think these were all secondary effects of

the shock, the first and chief result of which was the breaking of the rope. The silk rope, which had been previously used in only one campaign (on ten partly easy ascents), and had been in parts slightly frayed, had been carefully repaired by a rope-maker before this trip. The place where it broke was thoroughly sound. Yet the fact that it was the silk and not the Manilla rope which broke, is of some importance with regard to the use of silk ropes in mountain climbing. The Manilla rope was broken in several places by the fall after the breaking of the silk rope. I think that even if we had used only a Manilla rope the fall could not have been stopped, for the frightful strain would have snapped this just as much as the silk rope; and if it had not broken, neither Otto nor myself could have stood the tremendous shock. We should have been dragged after the already mangled body of Emil, and the whole affair would have been shrouded in mystery.

'Contrary to Otto's opinion, I am inclined to believe that Emil's body was already mangled. After striking twice on the rocks, at intervals of 20 and 12 mètres, our unfortunate friend must have been either dead or so terribly injured that his life could not have been saved. It is as certain as it is comforting to think that Emil at once became unconscious, and died immediately after.

'When I had in some measure recovered my composure (it was naturally harder for Otto to realize the frightful catastrophe) we tied ourselves together with what remained of the silk rope, and began the descent, of which the difficulties were doubled under the sad circumstances. I went first; Otto, despite his injuries, undertook the more responsible post of last man on the steep rocks. Many difficult bits were only accomplished by continually helping one another. When we came to the ice-field we found that our steps had been spoilt by the hot sun. I had continually to cut steps down; in some gullies and couloirs with streams trickling down them, this was only done in constant and imminent danger of falling stones. Right and left the stones whizzed over our heads. On the glacier Otto went ahead.

'We hastened to a dark point on the glacier, which, from a great height above, had appeared to us to be the body of poor Emil. We were not mistaken. It was a terrible meeting. Otto sunk into my arms, sobbing loudly. In the course of a hurried examination of the body we found his paper money which he carried in a leather wallet in his breast pocket, but none of his other possessions—in particular, the most valuable, his memorandum book, his knapsack with its contents, his purse, &c., were all missing, and a more careful search later did not succeed in finding them. The very strong new rough coat which still covered the body was full of holes, the body itself horribly disfigured. Otto wished to carry down the body on his back, and it was only my repeated representations that induced him to go on.'

The snow-band, the ice-fields, and the great couloir can be pretty well distinguished on the engraving of the Meije which is to be found at p. 121 of vol. ix. of this 'Journal;' but it is clear from both accounts that the couloir actually reached was not the formidable one close under the Grand Pic, but another farther E., under the second of the

great teeth counting west from the Pic Central. The object of the party was to gain the last gap at the E. foot of the Grand Pic, and so to rejoin the route that the Herren Zsigmondy had forced on July 26. Speaking from many years' acquaintance with the south face of the Meije, the writer of these lines can fully endorse the dangers and difficulties the climb must have presented. He happened to pass close under this face on July 30 (that is, a week only before the accident), and was then struck by the unusual amount of snow and ice there was on it. It is believed that no actual attempt to climb the south face between the Grand Pic and Pic Oriental had been made before that of August 6, though it had been often closely examined.

The occasion of the accident is unhappily but too clear. The noose of rope thrown over a rocky tooth had not been well fastened, and in consequence of a jerk slipped off. There could be no real hope, after that, of checking the fall of Herr Emil, for as he fell 30 mètres down to his friends, and the length of the joined ropes was nearly the same, he must have fallen almost 60 *mètres* (or *not far from* 200 *feet*) before his companions could even think of trying to hold him. Now no rope light enough for use in the Alps (whether hemp or silk) could have resisted the weight of a human body falling that height, even though it struck twice on the rocks.*

But the cause of the accident lies deeper, and we trust will be laid to heart by all climbers. Both Herr Otto and Dr. Schulz tell us that the idea of the new route was Herr Emil's; that the attempt was attended with the greatest difficulties and dangers, and that they were both in favour of abandoning it; but it is clear that Herr Emil persisted in it with a resolution which would be most praiseworthy did it not border closely on recklessness. It was no doubt hard for a young man who had accomplished very remarkable feats of climbing, and who ten days before had conquered the Meije by a route which had turned back party after party, to acknowledge himself beaten, when so great a height had been attained. But climbers nowadays (as our pages for the last few years amply show) do not shrink from facing dangers and attempting routes which their predecessors had wisely avoided, not because they could not overcome the difficulty, but because their own judgment or that of their guides forbade them to try. Every great peak in the Alps has now been conquered; but it does not follow that because a mountain has been climbed, every one of its faces or ridges can or ought to be done. If mountaineering

* We may recall the words of the Alpine Club committee of 1864 (*Alpine Journal*, vol. i. p. 323): 'Each of these three ropes (Manilla hemp, Italian hemp, and flax) will bear 12 stone falling 10 feet and 14 stone falling 8 feet; and it may be useful to say that the strain upon a rope loaded with a weight of 14 stone, and suddenly checked after a fall of 8 feet, is nearly equal to that which is caused by a dead weight of 2 tons. None of these ropes, however, will bear a weight of 14 stone falling 10 feet; and the result of our experiments is that no rope can be made, whether of hemp, flax, or silk, which is strong enough to bear that strain and yet light enough to be portable.' Now Herr E. Zsigmondy weighed not quite 10 stone, but he fell nearly 200 feet before the rope was taut!

is allowed to degenerate into a form of gambling in which the players stake their lives, it would cease to be what it is now, the noblest form of recreation known to man, it could no longer be defended. The overcoming of difficulties is stimulating and health-giving; the forcing of stone-swept precipices and of toothed ridges, useless in itself, has resulted, and will result in such misfortunes as that of Emil Zsigmondy's death on the Meije. It cannot be too often repeated that prudence and foresight are as essential to a genuine mountaineer as physical strength and agility; when they are lacking the natural consequence will ensue—many narrow escapes will be followed by a fatal accident. There are places in the mountains which no man should try unless he has full confidence in his own powers, and also—this is the all-important point—absolute knowledge of the limit of his own powers. It is much more important to the mountaineer to know what he cannot do than to know what he can do. The lesson, then, of the Meije accident is the need of exercising self-restraint and caution in climbing. As a rule these valuable safeguards are supplied by the guides of the party. When guides are dispensed with (and we are distinctly in favour of guideless mountaineering *within proper limits*), the adventurous amateurs are bound to be extra careful, and in many cases no doubt are so; but no impartial person can doubt for an instant that in the expedition of August 6, 1885, the limits of prudence had been exceeded, and in due time the penalty was exacted. The fact that Herr Emil Zsigmondy had just published a book on the 'Dangers of the Alps' serves to show that he was fully aware of them. He had often escaped unscathed from the most perilous positions; but no one can be surprised, though all must most deeply lament, that Herr Emil Zsigmondy by his death has proved the absolute necessity of observing those rules which he had often, if not absolutely broken, at any rate perilously strained, with impunity. If this terrible accident serve to impress this lesson on the minds of climbers tempted to 'chance' it, the disaster will have some fruit, but any lesson would be but ill compensation for the early death of so enterprising, so daring, and so brilliant a climber as Emil Zsigmondy.

We have spoken plainly concerning this accident, but this seems to be an occasion when plain speaking is imperatively demanded.

We gladly publish the following letter from one who was personally acquainted with Herr Emil Zsigmondy.

'Dear Sir,—Concerning the recent terrible accident by which Dr. Emil Zsigmondy lost his life, you will have information enough from other sources, and I have no intention of discussing its details. I trust, however, that you will allow me in a few words to speak of the man and not of the mountaineer. Dr. Emil Zsigmondy was not a member of our club, but I had the pleasure of his friendship as a fellow-member of the Austrian Alpine Club and of my own profession. The loss has been great to the brotherhood of climbers and mountain lovers; but the loss has been no less signal to science and the medical profession. No one could fail to recognise the energy, the enthusiasm, and the thoroughness that distinguished Zsigmondy's mountaineering exploits. A smaller circle, perhaps, knew how these characteristics were but part of the man's nature, and, as such, brought to bear on all that he undertook. A brilliant career seemed to be assured for him, for though not quite twenty-four years of age he had already attained a high position in the

scientific world. But it was destined, we know not why, that he was only to furnish yet another instance of a bright nature suddenly called away, and of great promise abruptly checked. There remains to us but the example of a man who was possessed of strength of character beyond his years, and of intellectual gifts developed and fostered by rare individual perseverance. Well might it be said of him—

> Thou madest man, he knows not why;
> We think he was not made to die.

'In May of this year Zsigmondy paid a brief visit to England. Some of us are not likely to forget the slight figure, the keen face, the bright enquiring expression; nor can those who knew him more closely fail to recall his genial disposition, his nature as simple and affectionate as that of a child, happily blended with the gentle courtesy and refinement so characteristic of his native city of Vienna. There is beauty in the dignity of an honoured old age slowly drawing to a close, but there is no less beauty perhaps in contemplating a life whose brightness was never permitted to fade.

'I remain,
'Yours very faithfully,
'CLINTON DENT.'

OTHER ALPINE ACCIDENTS IN 1885.

IT would almost seem as if accidents in the Alps occurred in cycles at intervals of a few years. We all remember the sad summer of 1882, and that of 1885 is scarcely less distressing, save only that none of the victims belonged to our own Club. The accidents we have to chronicle here have this in common, that in three out of the four the parties were not accompanied by guides, and though it cannot be stated as a matter of certainty, yet it is highly probable that in each case the presence of a guide might have prevented the mishap.

On July 4, at 2.30 A.M., there started from the Châlet de l'Ognan, near Chamonix, a party consisting of the Abbé Chifflet (bursar of the Carthusians at Lyons) and his two guides, Joseph and Clément Dévouassoud, of Argentière. It is stated that their intention was to cross the Col des Courtes to the Talèfre glacier, a new expedition which M. Chifflet had planned in the spring, and of which he had spoken to the curé of Argentière on July 3.* The weather was then fine and clear, though another account says that it was bad and stormy. Nothing more was heard of them alive. Their non-arrival at the Montenvers or at the Châlet de l'Ognan excited uneasiness, so that on July 8 a party of guides from Argentière went in search, and discovered the bodies of the unfortunate climbers lying on the Glacier d'Argentière at the foot of the col. The abbé and the elder guide were still roped together, though their bodies were much mutilated; the younger guide, with a fragment of rope still round him, lay about forty yards off. The bodies were carried down to the village of Argentière, where the Dévouassouds were buried, the body of M. Chifflet being conveyed to Lyons. The cause of the accident can never be

* Joseph Dévouassoud, with a large party, had already tried this pass on August 17, 1876, but had been beaten back by 'a regular cannonade of stones.' (*Annuaire du C. A. F.*, 1876, p. 583.)