

men, can hardly have been properly qualified to take a beginner up the Matterhorn.

Of accidents below the snow-line, the most noteworthy to Englishmen will, of course, be that by which Mr. Macnamara so unhappily lost his life. Mr. Cornish has given a full account of it. On June 24 the Abbé Lombard slipped and fell into a torrent-bed on the Croix de Belledonne, near Grenoble, while gathering flowers; and on August 3 Herr Ferber, a post-official of Pontresina, fell over some rocks on Piz Languard while running after his hat, which had blown off. Any of these three accidents might, as has been said, have happened in Wales or the Lake country.

THE ACCIDENT IN THE MADERANER THAL.

I FELT that it would be fit and proper that my version of this accident, whereby the Alpine Club lost a valuable member, and many of us personally a good and loyal friend, should be reserved for the pages of the 'Alpine Journal.' Several inaccurate and misleading accounts and comments have appeared in the papers, but, with the exception of a letter addressed to the 'Times' to correct some glaring misstatements, I have not taken any notice of them. Anyone who has been similarly circumstanced will know how peculiarly painful a discussion in the newspapers is at such a time. I regret, however, that I did not at once correct an unintentional error which occurred in the first announcement. The statement that we were 'running down a grass slope' unfortunately gave rise to the natural impression that the accident was due to carelessness on our part. This was not the case. We were working as carefully at the time of the accident as at any other time during the climb, and I can testify that Macnamara was a very careful climber. I am not writing as an apologist for climbing without guides, but I wish in the first place to distinctly disavow any idea of bravado on the part of my poor friend or myself in going without guides. Our original summer programme, settled long previously, was to attempt the aiguilles near the Montanvers with first-rate guides. The loss of our chief guide's services, when, as it seemed to us, it was too late to secure a good substitute, led us to abandon our more ambitious projects, and to entertain the idea of doing a little guideless climbing among the lesser peaks in the neighbourhood of the Maderaner Thal, which had been recommended to us for that express purpose. In the second place, I do not think that the warnings of the landlord have anything to do with the matter. His warnings, as far as I know, exclusively referred to the mountain proper, and especially the last part of the ascent, which we found particularly easy, and which in the case of experienced mountaineers, as we both were, presented none of the alarming difficulties into which we might be supposed to have wilfully and blindly entered. The accident by which my poor friend lost his life happened well below the snow-line, and was not specially 'Alpine.' From my experience, I should say that the same thing might have easily happened on the hills in Wales or the Lake district. In a

scramble among the latter the circumstances under which we found ourselves might be easily repeated. I will now briefly narrate what happened. Macnamara and I had left the Alpine Club Hotel in the Maderaner Thal at 6 or 7 A.M. on the morning of August 16 (it was not necessary to make an earlier start), our object being an ascent of the Dössistock, which was to be our first expedition in that neighbourhood. We took a 70-foot rope with us and a knapsack containing a few provisions. We had no difficulty in the ascent, and if we had struck the right line directly we should probably have been on the top at 12.30 or 1 o'clock; but a *détour*, in which we had to use the rope, and which proved an impracticable way, delayed us, and so we did not reach the summit till an hour or so later. We had brilliant cloudless weather, and anticipated a speedy and easy descent. As I have said, the rocks were perfectly easy near the top, and the snow part below them extraordinarily simple. After leaving the snow we determined not to return by the same way by which we had come up, as it involved a descent by some rocks which might have been difficult, but to strike straight down some grass slopes, which seemed to lead down to the beaten track now not far below us, and which appeared to present no difficulties. We worked carefully down these slopes, and finally got to an abrupt part, which necessitated our working our way in a sidelong direction along some grass ledges. These were easy enough, but at the end of one of them we found ourselves cut off, so that we must either return some way back or find a way straight down. This was about 5 o'clock, and we were about two hours from the hotel. The depth was too great to allow of a simple drop, though that seemed only just impossible, but a practicable way seemed open—viz. to work along the face of the steep part for two steps, and then to scramble down from a slightly lower point, where there seemed to be foot-hold and hand-hold sufficient. I led the way, and, with the exception of the first two steps, found no difficulty at all, as there was sufficient hold. When I was nearly down Macnamara followed, having previously rid himself of his knapsack, so as to be quite unencumbered. I watched him carefully during the first two steps, and pointed out the foot and hand holds; and when he had passed these all right I continued my descent. Suddenly he fell backward close by me with tremendous force on the rock just below, bounded from that rock on to another, and was hurled on to the top of a steep run of shale. Either he must have slipped or his hold must have given way, or he got entangled in his ice axe. It was all over in a moment. I could hardly believe my senses. The utmost danger that the place had suggested was a broken limb in case of a slip. I hurried down, and with some little difficulty was by my poor friend's side in a few minutes. When I saw him fall as he did, and the force with which his head struck the rock, I felt there was no hope, and when I arrived by his side my worst fears were realised. His face was terribly disfigured. I did what I could, and poured some brandy down his throat, but he showed no consciousness, and the doctor next day confirmed my own impression that death was instantaneous. One does not, however, like to give up hope, and I could not bear to leave him in case of any return to consciousness, however unlikely that might

seem. I therefore stayed by his body all night, shouting at intervals, in case of any help being near. Between 4 and 5 o'clock the next morning I made my way back to the hotel, the bearer of the mournful tidings to his mother and sisters, and afterwards accompanied a party of guides and others to the scene of the accident. It was, I repeat, an accident which might have occurred in any scramble down the hills in our own country. There were no difficulties of ice or difficult rocks to contend with. I myself had had no idea of danger while going down the same place. A few moments before we were chatting brightly and cheerily together, and then came this sudden and tragic end. He was laid to rest in the beautiful cemetery near Lucerne, in sight of his beloved mountains, a wreath of edelweiss and other flowers covering his grave. It is not for me to speak here of his brilliant course at Harrow and Cambridge, or of his career at the Bar, so lately begun but full of such rich promise, cut short by such an untimely end. The Alpine Club will mourn one of its most enthusiastic and devoted members; a host of friends will sadly miss a true and loyal-hearted man. A high-minded and pure soul has been removed from our midst; but his memory will for long be green, as of one of boy-like ardour and enthusiasm, hating all things mean or ignoble, a hearty and joyous nature. Many acts of kindness will be remembered, and many a conversation cherished. He remained unchanged to the last moment, and I never knew any man more fit to meet such a sudden summons. Those whom the gods love die young. The memory that Arthur Macnamara leaves behind him contains nothing but what is pleasant to dwell on.

THEODORE CORNISH.

IN MEMORIAM

JOHN BIRKBECK.

THE death, on July 31, of Mr. John Birkbeck, of Settle, makes another gap in the list of original members of the Club. His name is probably not very familiar to the present generation of mountaineers; but to some of us it recalls many pleasant memories of the early days of Alpine adventure. I owe to the kindness of his son, Mr. John Birkbeck, jun., the main facts recorded in the following brief account of his career. John Birkbeck was the son (eldest of five children) of a banker at Settle, where he was born on July 6, 1817. He belonged to an old Quaker family. Other descendants from the same stock were George Birkbeck (1776-1841), remembered as a philanthropist and the founder in 1824 of the London Mechanics' Institution, afterwards called by his name; and William Lloyd Birkbeck, for many years Downing Professor of Law, and afterwards Master of Downing College, Cambridge. He was educated partly at Giggleswick Grammar School, and afterwards, at the suggestion of an old family friend, Professor Sedgwick, a native of the same district, was sent to Trinity College, Cambridge. As a Quaker, he was unable to take a degree, and did not compete for