

twenty years ago. The first passage of the Col Dolent was a feat to be proud of, but the climber who showed that the col could be readily crossed by help of the rocks, and need not involve several hours' step-cutting, was the man who really did the most useful work. He actually opened the way. The only object of recording ascents at all is for the help and direction of aftercomers. The credit due to explorers can only be measured by the utility of their work to others. The first ascent is therefore the first recorded ascent—the first ascent so recorded that others are enabled to follow easily where the first man forced his way in doubt and perplexity. An unrecorded ascent is nothing; one badly recorded is little more. The man who merely ascends a peak and contents himself with stating the fact can only be regarded as swaggering. If he records his route in plain language he deserves thanks. If he so records it that readers can discover its interest and beauty compared with the interest and beauty of other ascents, he deserves much more credit. Many routes long ago followed, many peaks long ago ascended, await the coming of an open-eyed man to describe and value what others have merely boasted about. To the present writer it seems that so far from there being no longer any need for an *Alpine Journal*, the next twelve volumes might be quite as interesting and valuable for the criticism they should contain as the first twelve for their records of adventure.

THE RECENT ACCIDENT ON THE MATTERHORN.

It was announced in the '*Schweizer Alpenzeitung*' for December 15 last that Professor F. O. Wolf had, by direction of the '*Staatsrath*' (or executive) of the Canton of the Valais, drawn up a report on this lamentable accident, and that it was to be procured from Gessler, at Sion. We were, however, only able to obtain a copy on January 20, and hasten to lay a summary of it before our readers.

The title runs thus: '*Die Katastrophe am Matterhorn (am 16., 17. und 18. August 1886). Offizieller Rapport im Auftrage des hohen Staatsrathes von Wallis, verfasst von Professor F. O. Wolf. Sitten, Buchdruckerei K. Gessler.*' A short preface, signed by A. de Torrenté, chief of the Department of Justice and Police of the canton, explains that immediately after the accident a judicial enquiry was held by the Visp district authorities (on whom Zermatt is dependent), which resulted in a declaration 'that no one could be further judicially pursued and that none of those who took any part [in the accident or rescue] could be accused of any offence (which was punishable at law)

in the matter of the accident.' However, as further public complaints were made with reference to the skill of the guides concerned, the 'Staatsrath' thought that an administrative investigation should take place into all the circumstances of the case, in order to vindicate the good reputation of the local guides, and gave instructions that three points were to be specially cleared up—the behaviour of Messrs. Borckhardt and Davies's guides, the accusation made that two guides had altered the position of a rope on the mountain, and the conduct of the rescue party of guides. Herr Wolf (who is the president of the commission for examining and licensing mountain guides) was entrusted on September 10 with this task, and his report is printed to answer newspaper accusations and to enable a correct judgment to be formed of the conduct of all parties on this unfortunate occasion.

It is thus quite certain that the report is as official as possible, though it is to be borne in mind that it is not the report of the inquest, not containing therefore the sworn evidence of the guides and others concerned in this sad matter, but a report of a later enquiry undertaken to clear the guides of certain charges brought against them by newspapers and climbers.

Mr. Mercer's party reached Zermatt as early as 5 P.M. on August 17, while the next party (the Dutch gentlemen) arrived at the lower hut only at 11 P.M. that night. Two statements of the Dutch gentlemen are given, speaking in the very highest terms of their guides, Peter Taugwalder and Jos. Moser. The slow progress of Mons. de Falkner's party is attributed to want of minute acquaintance with the Swiss side of the Matterhorn on the part of the guides and specially to the great nervousness and awkwardness ('grosse Angstlichkeit und Unbeholfenheit') of the elder Mons. de Falkner, as reported to Herr Wolf by the leading guide of that party, Daniel Maquignaz.

Finally Mr. Borckhardt's death is accounted for by the two great faults committed by his party: he himself was far too lightly clad (for proof of this statement we are referred to the report of the medical man on the state of the body) and the number of guides was insufficient. 'In any case these are the *only faults* with which Aufdenblatten and Kronig can be reproached. They ought to have told their two travellers that two guides were not enough, and to have remonstrated as to their attire. Otherwise their conduct was *above all praise*; they struggled like heroes, devoted their best energies to the rescue of those entrusted to their care, and were ready to sacrifice their lives for them and to die with them.'

All this takes up nearly fifteen pages; the thirty-five remaining deal with two matters.

(i.) (Pp. 15–31.) *The various statements made by Mons. de Falkner in his letter to the 'Journal de Genève' (reprinted in our last number) as to the conduct of the guides in the hut the night before, &c.**

* Mons. de Falkner, in the course of a letter addressed to the *Rivista Alpina Italiana* for December 1886, makes certain trifling corrections relating to facts mentioned in the letter by Mr. H. Seymour King and Mr. J. T. Wills published in our last number. It was Kronig, *not* Aufdenblatten, who called

These matters are rather personal than public, and there is no need for us to enter into them, save in one case. This is the grave accusation brought by Mons. de Falkner against Taugwalder and Moser of having moved a certain rope which is fixed between the shoulder and 'Moseley's Platte' from one place to another, and of having thus, despite the track they made in the snow to draw attention to the removal, greatly delayed both the Italian and English parties. It is best answered by the voluntary statement made in writing by Daniel Maquignaz (Mons. de Falkner's leading guide) as to the effect of this action on his party, which we reproduce *verbatim et literatim* after Herr Wolf. 'Moi sousigné déclare librement que le déplacement de la corde au Mons. Cervin par les guides Taugwalder et Moser nous étaient d'ocun préjudice au contraire elle était plus nécessaire de la mètre à l'endroit ou il ont mise. Zermatt, 14 Septembre. Maguignaz, Daniel.'

It may be well to add that the rope was moved from a steep couloir used of late to shorten the way, but that day dangerous by reason of the fresh snow, to a spot on the old disused and more roundabout track. Herr Wolf adds that Taugwalder and Moser declared on August 22, at the judicial enquiry, that the removal of the rope was necessary because of the state of the snow, and Moser added that the Italian guides had thanked them for their act. He strongly condemns the action of Mons. de Falkner's party on the morning of August 18, meeting Mons. de Falkner's statement (sworn to at the judicial enquiry), 'il ne nous fut jamais demandé du secours,' by the counter-statement (presumably taken from the evidence of the two guides) that Mr. Borchardt's guides through the night and next morning were calling out 'Help! send us help!' He also blames Taugwalder and Moser for not having started up that morning, after some hours' rest, to help the Italian and English parties, and to bring up the store of provisions left by them in the lower hut, considering as quite insufficient the excuses made by them at the judicial enquiry that they 'had not enough provisions and were too tired and wet through to go up again.'

(ii.) *The accusation brought against Aufdenblatten and Kronig of having abandoned one of their 'Herren.'* This section (pp. 33-45) is taken up with the reproduction and minute criticism of a statement by Herr Lorria (one of the rescue party), which embodies in writing the charges he made *vivâ voce* to Herr Wolf, and in the course of which he puts three questions: Why did they wait in the same place till noon without making an attempt to start? Why did they not wait a little longer when they had heard the shouts of the rescuing party? Why did not they leave Mr. Davies in the upper hut and return to Mr. Borchardt with food and blankets, brought up thither by Imboden and Aloïs Kronig, whom they met there, and who declared that they

out to the Italian party in the morning; the door of the old hut was not burnt by the party, and the old hut was full of snow, so that they were neither warm nor sheltered; they were not aware that the other party was then in difficulties. Mons. de Falkner also gives further explanation of the reasons which induced him to adopt the course of action described in his letter of August 28.

wished to go on to Mr. Borckhardt, but had no rope? It is impossible for us to reproduce or even summarise all the twenty-nine notes of varying length which contain Herr Wolf's comments on Herr Lorria's statements; and this partly through want of space, and partly because they contain a deplorable number of personal remarks, quite out of place in a dry recital of facts, such as a report ought to be.

In No. 3 it is admitted that the earlier and later stories of the guides did not quite tally, this being accounted for by the wish of Aufdenblatten and Kronig to spur on the three guides of the rescue party—Knubel, Chanton, and Brantschen—to do their very best to save Mr. Borckhardt, for these three were rather unwilling to go on, as they thought they would be too late to do any good and feared the approach of night. Herr Lorria's three questions are answered as follows: the first by the fact (for which we are again referred to the evidence given by Mr. Davies and his two men at the judicial enquiry) that they *did* try to go on earlier, but could not; the second, that they were not quite sure whether the shouts came from the rescue party or from the Italian party, and had heard nothing for an hour before they started. The story of the relief parties is given thus: Aloïs Kronig (brother of Fridolin) and Imboden (a servant of Aufdenblatten's uncle) started of their own accord to help their friends, and met Mr. Davies's party *below the old hut*; but the two had only provisions and some articles of clothing with them, and no blankets or rope, as they expected to find their friends in the lower hut. They then turned back with Mr. Davies's party, in order to help them, never having had the intention of going up to Mr. Borckhardt, and knowing that a strong and well equipped rescue party was close behind.

This task was undertaken by Knubel, Chanton, and Brantschen, whose narrative we translate from the apparently textual version printed by Herr Wolf, presumably that sworn to at the inquest.

'They reached the lower hut at 2 P.M., and met there Daniel Maquignaz, who was making a fire. Very soon after them there arrived the guides Graven, P. A. Biner, P. Perrin, and Gentinetta, and a Mons. H. Thévoz, a photographer from Geneva. The three spent fifteen minutes in the hut eating and resting. During this time Mons. de Falkner and his party came in. He was very much fatigued and so weak that he could not drink without help. The three guides changed Mons. de Falkner's clothes, putting on some things belonging to Mons. Seiler, and he then went to sleep. The Italian guides asserted that the English party behind could not reach the hut that evening, but that they were all still alive. For this reason Mons. H. Thévoz, Graven, and Biner returned to Zermatt to procure a fresh store of provisions. The others proceeded on their way up the mountain, and in about an hour (that is, after they had crossed the glacier) met Mr. Davies's party with Kronig and Imboden, but Mr. Borckhardt was not with them (3 P.M.). Learning that Mr. Borckhardt was still alive, and yielding to his companions' earnest request, Knubel, Chanton, Brantschen, and Imboden pushed on, and sent back Gentinetta to procure clothing, for they were all wet through, as it had snowed all day long. They took Imboden with them to clear out the upper hut, which they reached at

4 P.M. At 4.55 the three others reached the dead man, who was lying on his back, covered with snow, and had apparently slipped a little way down. They placed the body in a secure position and took his watch with them to prove that they had been up to him. At the old hut they found, on their return, Mr. King, with Ambr. Supersaxo and Al. Anthenmatten of Saas; they handed over the watch to Mr. King, and all of them descended together to Zermatt, which was reached at 10 P.M. that night.'

Herr Wolf then (pp. 46-50) gives us the conclusions he arrived at and his recommendations for the future. The most important of the former are—

(1) The sole causes of the accident were the sudden change in the weather; the insufficient number of guides (under the circumstances), particularly of those with Mr. Bockhardt's party; and the facts that neither Mr. Davies nor Mr. Bockhardt were fit to climb such a peak, were insufficiently clad, and badly provisioned.

(2) In other respects the conduct of Aufdenblatten and Kronig was above all praise ('über alles Lob erhaben').

(3) Mons. de Falkner and his guides are to be publicly blamed for not having in any way helped the party in distress, and Mons. de Falkner especially for having tried to shelter the ignorance of his own men by recklessly accusing Taugwalder and Moser of want of conscientiousness (*Gewissenlosigkeit*).

(4) Taugwalder deserves blame for having done nothing to help either the Italian or English parties, but praise (as well as Moser) for bringing down the Dutch gentlemen safely.

(5) The conduct of the guides of the rescue party deserves all praise.

The recommendations are that the printed 'Règlement des Guides' should be hung up in all inns and huts, and that the following additions should be made to it:—

a. In case of certain specified first-class ascents two guides are to be required for one traveller, or at least three for two.

β. To secure that the huts are properly cared for and cleaned out on leaving, travellers are bound to give their leading guide a certificate describing the state of the hut when they reached it and when they left it. Guides (foreign as well as local) and travellers ought to take great care of the huts, the use of which is given *gratis* by the S. A. C.

γ. The local authorities are charged to enforce and superintend the carrying out of the 'Règlement des Guides,' and should, in case of need, organise parties for the aid of distressed travellers and recovering the bodies of those lost, paying in each case a small remuneration, and depriving a guide of his certificate if, without good reason, he refuses to start with such a party.

Herr Wolf considers the provisions summarised under γ to be *necessary* in order to prevent disputes, to relieve as soon as practicable parties in distress, and to avoid excessive charges, such as were made on Mr. Davies for the services of the rescue party; and he adds (in the original MS., but not in the printed version) the bill sent in, remarking that it only contains a *part* of the expenses incurred.

Herr Wolf held his enquiry on September 14, and dates his

pamphlet on October 6; it is countersigned by a government official at Stalden on the 8th of the same month, and Mons. de Torrenté's preface is dated November 24.

The publication of this 'Rapport,' which we have not thought it necessary to do more than summarise, does not seem to us to serve either of the two purposes for which an official publication might have been made. It does not help us much, if at all, to solve the painful questions which are forced on our minds by the occurrence of which it treats; it does not, at least in our judgment, clear Mr. Borckhardt's guides from the serious blame which, as we have before thought it our duty to say, appears, from such evidence as we have, to rest upon them. To be of any real service for either of these purposes the 'Rapport' should have been accompanied by a full statement of the sworn evidence of all the witnesses at the judicial enquiry, the speedy publication of which seems to us to be urgently called for.

NEW EXPEDITIONS IN 1886 (*continued*).

Bernese Oberland.

OLMENHORN (3,318 mètres = 10,886 feet). *August 27.*—Messrs. Charles E. Groves and Charles H. Townley, with Louis Zurbrücken (del Ponte) and Fritz Graf junior, ascended this peak. Starting from the N. end of the Mürjensee they crossed the Gross Aletsch glacier to the grass slopes of Im Olmen, which they mounted at first S.W., then nearly due W., to the mouth (recognised by the great accumulation of screes) of a well-marked couloir S.W. of the summit. They climbed up this couloir to the base of the lower or W. peak, traversing which on its S.W. side, the snow ridge connecting it with the higher peak was gained. Following this ridge to the base of the higher peak, its summit was reached by a scramble over loose rocks (four hours from the Aletsch glacier, including some time lost on the grass slopes). After building a cairn (for the peak seems to have been previously untouched) the party regained the W. peak by the same route, traversed its S.W. flank, and then crossed over the rock ridges to the N.E. side of the mountain, which was descended by the ridge between the second and third snow couloirs (reckoning from the summit). When this ridge became too steep the party crossed the third couloir and turned over the dividing ridge to the snow, descending to the Aletsch glacier (rather N. of the point 2,531 mètres, and nearly opposite that marked 2,522) by a small glacier which may be called the Olmen glacier. On this face of the mountain, the rocks are rotten and the couloir steep. ($3\frac{1}{2}$ hrs. from summit to Aletsch glacier.)

TIEFENSTOCK (3,513 mètres = 11,526 feet). *September 25.*—Herr A. Lorria, with J. Gentinetta, starting from the Rhone Glacier hôtel, at 4.30, reached by a short cut the Hôtel Belvedere, and followed the usual route to the Rhone glacier, by which (in fresh deep snow) they gained, at 9.45, the Tiefsensattel, between the Galenstock and the Tiefenstock. The latter peak was then climbed in twenty-five