'On the western side, however, we have had reserves made under a different department, and these are now a real National Park in which we can camp, or, if we like, can work it from hotels just outside the reserve. The result is that on the west we have practically secured 187,620 acres, an area of some 30 miles north to south, and covering the country from the base of the ranges back to the Divide.

'Further north there is a large area reserved at Arthur's Pass, the headwaters of the Waimakariri River, containing a big group of secondary snow peaks and several sizeable ice fields. Between this and the big southern reserve is a stretch of some 60–70 miles of snow ranges and several very fine glaciers at the heads of the Rakaia, Wanganui, Wataroa and other rivers; and my object now is to continue to "peg away" until I can get the whole into one National Park. But we have done pretty well in getting this last block, 125,000 acres, reserved in South Westland, and must let it rest at that for a time.

'Our Central Alps reserve now takes in Godley and Classen Glaciers (Tekapo River), all those round Mt. Cook and the corresponding Western district, making in all practically one block of 341,430 acres, which includes no less than nineteen large glaciers and sixteen peaks over 10,000 ft., and probably upwards of a hundred and fifty good peaks above the snow-line in addition.

'As Amery in his Canadian paper in the last "A.J." referred to our New Zealand policy of making reserves, you may think it worth while extracting a "Note" from the above for the next.'

ACCIDENTS IN 1930.

FOLLOWING a summer almost unprecedented as regards bad weather —there were but a few fine days at the end of August and beginning of September—the list of accidents is again terribly high. More than 120 persons are reported as having perished during the summer and autumn. But in the frequented resorts the weather, bad or indifferent, has little effect in preventing numbers of inexperienced or irresponsible persons from starting on expeditions. Many appear to enjoy climbing in rain or snow, although sooner or later liable to pay the extreme penalty. So numerous were the accidents that reports appear in the press of meetings of the Continental Clubs to consider preventive steps, while their official journals publish leading and extremely pessimistic articles.

The Eastern Alps, as usual, have provided the greater number of catastrophes, many of which have been due to exposure. When such accidents occur, as, for instance, in the Wilder Kaiser, of 7000 ft. and under, where a party of four persons is stated to have perished in one day from cold, it does not require a vivid imagination to picture the kind of weather prevailing when a start was made.

In the course of some six weeks spent in the said Eastern Alps during the last summer, we can vouch that not 5 per cent. of the visitors to huts or mountains are even half equipped for mountaineering. Men and women appear to consider that a pair of crampons provides all the special equipment—or clothing—required. Leather shorts, stockings without feet, *shoes*, braces and zephyrs, sometimes not even the latter, are considered ample for a snow peak or glacier pass, while thin canvas knickers and coat more than suffice for a rock peak. Add to this a Fulpmes constructed axe of preposterous length, shape and balance, and we find the complete and heaven-born mountaineer.

The accidents of 1930 are far too numerous to classify, and we must be content with giving the details of those few from which some lessons may be learned. None of our own members have lost their lives, but the sad tragedy of l'Évêque has affected deeply the person and family of one of our best-known mountaineers. Great loss of life has occurred, among other peaks, on the Pointe de Méan Martin, Le Râteau, Dent Parrachée, Mont Blanc, Engelhörner (in which Herr H. Winterberger and another first-rate climber perished), and in the Ortler, Zillerthal, Kaisergebirge, and Tauern districts.

Two Viennese have disappeared mysteriously on the Zinal-Rothhorn. They had stated their intention of attempting the great and partly overhanging E. face. Their other plans included the N. face of the Matterhorn, E. face of Monte Rosa, N. face of Dent d'Hérens and S. face of the Täschhorn. Nothing has been heard of them since July 26, and not the slightest trace has been found. According to the *Allgemeine Bergsteiger Zeitung*, the doctrine of one of these tourists was that no party should recoil before impossibilities [*sic*].

The Accident on Les Droites.

Herren Hans and Karl Schmiedl, two brothers of Austrian nationality, were descending from the E. peak when they fell and were killed. It was evident that the fall took place while they were in the act of lowering their sack on the rope. The latter was unbroken and had stopped their fall of round about 1000 ft., by hitching itself over a small projection of rock. One watch had stopped at 8.15. As they were descending, it was presumably 8.15 in the evening. The victims were wearing crampons, of course highly dangerous in soft snow.

We publish the translation of some letters which have passed between Mr. C. F. Meade and the Presidents of the C.A.F. and Chamonix Section :—

To the President; Chamonix Section, C.A.F.

I have the honour to submit a report on the death of two Austrians killed on Les Droites under circumstances tending to raise difficult

but urgent questions as to the future and even the honour of mountaineering as regards the organization of rescue parties in the Alps—

Wednesday, July 30 [1930]. The Austrians left the Couvercle for Les Droites.

Thursday, July 31. With my guide, Pierre Blanc, of Bonneval-sur-Arc, I arrived at the Couvercle. The hut-keeper, M. Joseph Ravanel, informed us that the two Austrians had not returned from their expedition, and that he had that same evening, July 31, sent word to Chamonix by an acquaintance, a Russian, named M. Williamov. Later, on the same evening, M. Lagarde and a friend arrived: they had traversed Les Droites from the Argentière Glacier. They stated that they had found two ice-axes on the S. arête of the E. peak of Les Droites, and that the owners of the said axes had evidently been descending the E. peak. A French gentleman, whose name is unknown to me, stated that he intended to traverse Les Droites from W. to E. with the guide Etienne Payot and a porter and would look for tracks. Blanc and I decided to accompany them on the search.

Friday, August 1. On this morning M. Ravanel asked M. Lagarde, who was proceeding to Chamonix, to make a report of the occurrence to that Section. This was the second report sent to Chamonix. Our two parties had meanwhile started for Les Droites and reached the Col de l'Aiguille Verte. On arrival at the Col I dropped my ice-axe and was consequently obliged to turn back with Blanc. It was already obvious that the Austrians had not made the long traverse passing over the W. peak, but that they had doubtless taken the ordinary route to the E. peak. Had I known that the spot where the axes were found was so far from the W. arête, I should have recommended the ascent of the E. peak by the said ordinary route. That same evening Herr Paul Schermann, a friend of the Austrians, arrived at the Couvercle.

Saturday, August 2. As there was no news of any rescue party from Chamonix, two search parties were organized as follows: *First* party, my guide, Pierre Blanc of Bonneval-sur-Arc, myself and a porter. Our duty was to search the W. slope of the S. arête of Les Droites. *Second* party, the guide Alphonse Blanc (kindly lent by M. Boucher, who abandoned his expedition in consequence), Herr Paul Schermann, and a young porter, Emile Folliguet. This party intended to search the E. slope of the S. arête of Les Droites.

The two porters were allowed to accompany us by permission of the party of twenty-four Swiss who had come up to transport the bodies of the two climbers killed on the Aiguille Ravanel.

The first party reached the bergschrund at the base of the S. arête in about an hour. The porter was sent back from this spot; he had no crampons, and would have been a source of danger higher up on the steep slopes.[1] Having searched the entire W. slope

[1] Mr. Meade informs us that he was quite useless as a mountaineer—in fact, a source of much danger.—*Editor*.

of the arête, Blanc and I went up to the crest, where we found Alphonse Blanc. His search on the other slope had been successful. He had left his two companions by the bodies of the Austrians (some 150 m. lower than our meeting-place on the S. arête).

Thanks to the well-known skill of the Blancs, father and son, the transport down the vertical rocks was as successful as possible, and the bodies were eventually brought to the level surface of the glacier. That night the weather became bad and snow fell very low down.

The special significance of this disaster consists, to my mind, in the fact that the two climbers, starting on Wednesday, remained out, without any help, until Saturday, although it was already obvious on the Thursday evening that an accident had occurred. In spite of M. Ravanel's prompt warning to Chamonix, no attempt was made to call on rescue parties. Had death come slowly, the sufferings of the two mountaineers during this long delay would have been terrible.

In conclusion, as a member of the C.A.F. of twenty years' standing, I venture to inquire what organization exists in the Alps for the formation of rescue parties? It should be possible for the Clubs of the several nations to constitute some financial scheme to prevent mountaineers suffering the worst tortures of a slow and dreadful death, and thus put an end to a situation which is simply dishonourable to mountaineering in general.

I am of the opinion that the guides would welcome such a scheme.

(Signed) C. F. MEADE.

August 13, 1930.

(Copy to the President of the C.A.F.)

The President, Chamonix Section, C.A.F., to Mr. C. F. Meade.

For many years the C.A.F., both at the General Meetings and sectional assemblies, has endeavoured to find a *practical* solution for the organization of rescue parties. Only at *Grenoble*, where good mountaineers are *numerous*, has an organization, since proved satisfactory, been brought about.

At Chamonix the rescue organization is in the hands of the Municipality and the Association of Guides.

This association, formed fifty years before the foundation of the C.A.F., is completely independent, and has always refused to receive any instructions from the Club Alpin.

Moreover, mountaineers, members of the C.A.F., coming to Chamonix are only birds of passage on their holidays. They rarely furnish us with their addresses. It would be quite impossible to collect them so as to form a body capable of acting together, especially in our district, where first-class mountaineers would be needed.

You will understand that such conditions are impossible of solution.

Moreover, except on the very rare occasions when friends of the victims have formed a rescue party—without, I may add, notifying our section of the C.A.F.—the said parties were organized by the Guides' Association, and the results have been satisfactory to all.

As soon as our hut-keeper's letter, brought without delay by our colleague Oulianoff [*sic*], had reached us, I informed the Association of Guides, which, following the ritual, took the necessary action as soon as disengaged guides, capable of salvage operations, could be brought together.

Without collecting a considerable fund, it would be impossible to hold present and ready in Alpine centres parties of guides or mountaineers sufficiently trained to sally forth and bring help at the first alarm, like the Fire Brigade of Paris.

The question will again be brought up at the meeting of the C.A.F., but the most competent members of our section, who have many times studied it, are much afraid that no practical solution can be found.

(Signed) BERNARDET,
President, Chamonix Section, C.A.F.

August 20, 1930.

Mr. C. F. Meade to the Acting President, C.A.F., Comité Central.

I beg to forward to you a letter addressed by me to the President, Chamonix Section, C.A.F., together with the reply, which he has authorized me to transmit to you. I would request you to read this correspondence dealing with the question of rescue parties when mountaineering accidents occur.

Monsieur Bernardet states categorically that search parties have acted to the general satisfaction ; this statement is in contradiction with the facts as described by me in my letter to him, now enclosed. As I have pointed out, the news of the accident to the two Austrians who had started on the Wednesday, was sent to Chamonix on the Thursday evening ; no rescue party had arrived from Chamonix, nor had any news from there reached us prior to the finding of the bodies by ourselves on the Saturday.

As to the statement that a rescue party had accomplished everything needful, I can simply declare that everything needful had been accomplished before its arrival, since the said party was far too late both for discovering whether the victims were dead or for the transport of the bodies out of the zone of difficulties.

As to the possible remedies mentioned by the President, I venture to state that an understanding between the C.A.F. and the Guides' Association is perfectly feasible. (I presume that the concern of the Municipality, mentioned in the President's letter, is very restrained in the matter, as a Municipality by itself is unable to organize rescue parties.) If the C.A.F. were to feel obliged to provide all the necessary funds required for the payment of good guides

as well as porters to accompany the said parties, and if the Club were to leave all organization details for such parties in the hands of the Association without assuming more than an indirect control, I venture to hope that, under such conditions, a practical solution could easily be realized.

I grant that such a solution would involve, as the President points out, a question of possibly considerable expense, but is it too much to hope that the members of the C.A.F. would consent to a slight diminution of the rebate which they now enjoy in the Club huts ? This would be nothing but a kind of insurance against the costs of possible accidents occurring to climbers whose relations find themselves unable to provide the necessary sums.

I venture to hope that such a solution is feasible. The necessary good-will has never been lacked by the guides, but funds and organization have been wanting hitherto.

Although a foreigner, I depend on the good-will of my comrades of the C.A.F. not to suspect me of interfering in matters of no concern to me ; the question of rescue parties in the mountains is simply one of common humanity.

I might add that it never occurred to me as practicable for mountaineering visitors to organize rescue parties. It is on the guides that we must depend, and their devotion has never been found wanting yet. It should be noted that the alarm from the Couvercle was not transmitted to the Bureau des Guides but to the President of the Section, whose duty it is to forward the information to the Guides' Bureau, where, according to the statement of the said President, the latter has no authority whatever. A direct appeal would save time, surely ?

Finally, and in conclusion, let me state that my aim has been to maintain that the failure of the responsible authorities in Chamonix to answer the distress calls from the Couvercle proves a want of all organization capable of present remedy, and that if there were no guides available in Chamonix at the time of the accident, the hut-keeper and guides at the Couvercle should have been called on themselves to do their utmost.

Naturally, I am not writing now of the transport of the bodies—of those already known to be dead—but I am thinking of the necessary steps that should have been taken when there was a chance of saving life or at least of lessening suffering.

(Signed) C. F. Meade.

August 23, 1930.

[These letters, and especially the reply of the President of the Chamonix Section, prove clearly that anarchy reigns in Chamonix. The railway accident at the Montenvers in 1927, followed by the tragedies of the Petit Dru [2] in 1928, had already drawn attention

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[2] *A.J.* **40,** 420–3.

to the condition of affairs. In the latter case it is notorious that, rightly or wrongly, little was done by the professional parties in the way of a rescue until the return of Armand Charlet to Chamonix from an expedition. Everything, practically, achieved up to that moment was due to the unselfish devotion of some amateur parties. Moreover, no stretchers were available to transport the railway victims of 1927, and the same was the case in the Dru accidents of the following year.

Many of our members belong also to the C.A.F., and, in our opinion, the remedy appears to lie in the *compulsory* insurance [3] against accidents of all members of Alpine Societies. This is now done in the S.A.C., when for the yearly sum of 5 francs 50 cents. —in some sections less—members are insured for 10,000 francs, or £400.

Other matters to be remedied are the extortionate tariffs demanded for the use of search parties, and especially the exorbitant charge for provisions. This abuse prevails in the Swiss as well as in the French Alps. Serving with a search party—'in the interests of common humanity'—should not be considered as a means of earning money; the out-of-pocket expenses alone should be claimed.[4]

Up to the moment of going to press Mr. Meade has received nothing but an acknowledgment of his letter of August 23.—*Editor*, 'A.J.']

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[3] We understand that an insurance proposal has been rejected recently by the C.A.F.

[4] 'Pour le transport des corps du lieu de l'accident au refuge du Couvercle et de là au Montenvers, 12 guides et frais de chemin: 4489 francs, 30 cents.'

Such is the account, sent to the relatives, by the Guide Chef of Chamonix for bringing down the bodies of the victims of the Les Droites accident of July 30. We make no comment on the sum demanded, but the wording of the *note* is entirely fallacious. 'Le lieu de l'accident' is nowhere near the scene of the said accident, which occurred thousands of feet above; the 'lieu' mentioned is a short 2 hours above the Couvercle on the nearly level surface of the Talèfre Glacier, from which spot there is not the slightest difficulty of transport. The dangers and difficulties were confined to the search for and lowering of the bodies from the *real* 'lieu de l'accident' to the said glacier's surface. All this was accomplished by the unaided volunteer search parties of Messrs. Meade and Schermann, led by the Blancs, father and son. For their services the Blancs have not received even the odd centimes quaintly claimed in the *note*. We are aware that Pierre and Alphonse Blanc are the last guides to request or require remuneration for their disinterested services, but the facts should be published as indicating the spirit in which salvage parties are officially conducted in Chamonix.

The Accident on the Aiguille Ravanel.

Two young Genevese, MM. Marcel Briffod and Robert Bouvier, were, on July 31, descending *en rappel* from the peak, while a party led by Arthur Ravanel, having crossed over from Les Courtes, was ascending the Aiguille. Ravanel suddenly perceived the two Swiss flying through the air close to him; the rope-ring fixed by them had broken. It was a very narrow escape for the guided party and also for others who were on the mountain. The Swiss were of course killed instantaneously.

We are informed that the young pair were brilliant exponents of what is known as *le système genevois* of descending *en rappel*. This consists, every time a *rappel* is formed, of gathering in some extra yards of the spare rope, thus enabling the climber to let himself fall sheer down the first yard or two of the *rappel*.[5] The 'terrific speed' of these unfortunate youths made a great impression on Ravanel and Georges Charlet, also an eye-witness of this senseless tragedy.

The bodies were recovered by a party of twenty-four Swiss, who came for the purpose. Local professional assistance was not called upon owing to the prohibitive charges made on a previous and similar occasion.

The Accident on the Col des Droites.

MM. W. Brunschwyler and O. C. Schaub, aged respectively 29 and 22 years, together with another party or parties, having accomplished the ascent of Les Droites on August 17, were descending from the col of that name at about 09.00 hrs., when they trod an avalanche loose, and Schaub was carried away. Brunschwyler, planting his axe in the snow and looping the rope over it, held on to his companion till his axe broke and he also was carried away. Schaub was swept down some 2000 ft., emerging from the avalanche, which was about 300 ft. wide where it had broken off above the party, still alive and not seriously injured. He searched for his companion for eight hours, but found no trace of him. A search party on the 19th met with no better luck, and it was not until some days later that an Alsatian dog with another party found the body buried very slightly in the remains of the avalanche.

Owing to the bad weather all steep snow-slopes were in a most dangerous state at the date of the accident. The avalanche was of a 'winter' nature, so we are informed.

A party of two, MM. M. Azéma and J. Rey, who, on July 22 and in bad weather, had climbed the Aiguille de Bionnassay by the *N.* face (!), were overtaken by a storm on the Dôme du Goûter, where Azéma disappeared and the other was found frost-bitten and half dead.

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[5] It was the resulting jerk that broke the ring.

The Accident on l'Évêque.

[At our request, Mr. Irving, the leader of the party, has furnished us with the following account of the tragedy.—*Editor*, 'A.J.']

We left Arolla soon after 4 A.M. on August 21. We were a party of eight, myself, my sons Francis (aged 20) and Robert (not quite 17), my daughter Mary (19), John Hurst (just leaving Cambridge), Gerald Palmer, his sister Miss Elizabeth Palmer, and Vincent O'Connor, who was a master at Eton.

As to the competence of the party, I myself have had a great deal of experience as leader of guideless parties since 1903. My two sons have climbed with me in the Alps and in Wales since 1926, when they both went up Mt. Collon. Miss Palmer has also climbed with us since then. My daughter Mary was in her third Alpine season. Mr. Gerald Palmer has only been able to join us for short spells, but his ascents include the Bietschhorn, Aletschhorn and Finsteraarhorn, the last two in an icy wind. Mr. Hurst had a full climbing season with us at Belalp in 1927, and has done a good deal of climbing with myself and others in Wales; he is a very good, and with me certainly a very safe, climber. Mr. O'Connor joined our party last year at Fafleralp, where his expeditions included the Bietschhorn, Lauterbrunnen Breithorn, and Tellispitzen. He was the only member of our parties who had not begun his climbing with me. He had done some climbs at Chamonix with one of the Ravanels, and had made ascents in Wales and Corsica at Easter with experienced men. He was well built and athletic, with a good balance. I had every reason to regard him as a strong member of the party, and I am quite sure he was.

With the exception of Mr. Palmer, who came out on August 12, and Robert, who came out on August 6, all the party had been climbing since August 1. The previous Monday had been spent in a glorious day on the Douves Blanches and Tsa (left Arolla at 6.30 A.M., back at 6.30 P.M., with long halts). Tuesday was a completely slack day, Wednesday a picnic expedition to the Arolla Glacier.

We made a long halt at the upper Arolla Glacier, and went round the foot of the E. face of l'Évêque, to the small col (north of the actual Col de l'Évêque), where the S.W. ridge begins. It was then nearly 10 o'clock, the snow that had fallen some days before being still deep enough to make the going heavy in places.

We were on two ropes: myself, Robert, Miss Palmer and Francis in that order on an 80-ft. Frost rope; O'Connor, Mary Irving, Hurst and Palmer in that order on my 100-ft. Frost rope, bought last April and used a few times in Corsica.

There was a short but steepish bit of ice to cut up before we reached the easy lower rocks of the ridge. These were followed to a great step in the ridge. We tried the edge overhanging the S. face, but did not persist in our attempt, not knowing what might

be beyond an obviously severe bit. I traversed away to the left and cut part way across some steep snow to look at the rocks beyond, but they were obviously very steep and difficult, and small icicles came down to remind us of the possibility of worse things. We went back and tried the steep face under which we had traversed—the S.W. face it would be. It was steep, but the rock was good. The second rope waited some time before following us, for we remained almost directly above them for a considerable distance. Bearing to our right, we rejoined the ridge overhanging the S. face, and followed it to the summit. A flake of rock, very steep but sound, was difficult. My rope reached the top of the mountain at 1.30. Both Robert and Miss Palmer said they had greatly feared I was going to give it up. All were fresh and very hungry. The second rope arrived in splendid spirits at 2.25 and made an excellent meal.

All expressed a wish to return by the ordinary route, down the N.E. face. It was clearly a far quicker route, for I saw that below a small col less than 50 yards down to the north there was enough snow on the slopes to make the descent easy.

By joining our two ropes, making 180 ft., it seemed to me that at least one man would be on the small col (which was broad, with rocks standing up on its W. side) before the last man had left the summit rocks. Accordingly, I told Palmer, Hurst and Mary to shorten the intervals between them, so as to leave a convenient amount of rope free at the end which Francis was to tie on.

There was still a good deal of snow on the ridge; it had fallen on the night of the preceding Friday, and was therefore more than five days old. This short bit of ridge is sharp. On the E. was very steep snow, on the W. was a short vertical wall of snow and then very steep, slabby rocks which fell for 100 ft. or so to a still steeper drop, far below which we could just see a slope of snow and another drop, apparently to the bergschrund at the foot of the precipice, which must be at least 1200 ft. in all, if not more.

On beginning to cut steps in the edge, but slightly on the E. side of the ridge, I felt at once that there were remains of old steps. These cleared out well and gave excellent foothold. The axe shaft could also be driven in some distance in the snow on the E. face, enough to give good steadying hold, if not more. Besides clearing the large steps in the crest, I made footholds for the right foot (facing inwards), in the snow wall on the W., where the snow was good, so that the distance moved at each step was small. The lower part of the ridge seemed to me steeper than the upper, but I do not think the angle exceeded 40°.

Myself, Robert and Miss Palmer had all reached the col; Francis was above us on the ridge separated from us by a few steps in the snow wall. No one saw the movement that caused the accident; from where we were the curve of the ridge made it difficult, if not impossible. O'Connor must have fallen almost directly after leaving

the summit rocks. He fell on the W. side down the short snow wall and the steep slabs below, followed by Mary; Hurst and Palmer were dragged from their steps and began falling down the slabs. I feared the whole party were going, and was in the act of passing the rope round a big rock in the col when I saw that two of those falling had been stopped and that Francis had not fallen from the ridge. But two continued to fall, and I realized the rope must have broken.[6] Almost at once all hope of their being saved vanished. We saw them still falling on the snow far below and knew they had perished. They made no sound and must have lost consciousness at once.

Hurst and Palmer rejoined us on the col almost at once; the rope between Palmer and Francis had jammed in the snow of the ridge, and they must have swung towards us on the col in their fall. Hurst said the rope had broken between himself and Mary; as he felt no pull, it must have caught on a rock, for the strain on him would have been tremendous with the impulsion of O'Connor's fall and in a lesser degree of Mary's.

It will be noticed that the rope that broke was part of the same 100-ft. rope that held up Palmer and Hurst. It took Francis some time with an axe to free the rope in front of him. By throwing his weight on the opposite slope he may have prevented a still worse catastrophe.

We continued the descent in the same order. In places the snow was thin and an occasional step in the ice had to be cut, but it was sometimes deep enough to drive in the axe up to the head and belay the rope. No one broke a step, and we must have reached the almost level glacier in less than an hour. My two sons went on with Miss Palmer to leave some things at the Jenkins hut[7] in case we others were late: they reached Arolla about 7 o'clock.

Palmer, Hurst and I turned southwards under the N.W. face of l'Évêque. In half an hour we had arrived under the part of the precipice where the accident happened. We saw at once where they had fallen. Mary's body was lying on the snow a little below the bergschrund, and close by, on the back wall of the schrund, we saw unmistakable evidence of where O'Connor had disappeared. In a great deal of its length the bergschrund was not open, but just here it was.

We buried Mary there.

Those who do not know what these two were to one another, and what mountains meant to them, and who have not seen, as I have, in the shop-windows of an Alpine centre the sort of publicity that may accompany the recovery of bodies, may think it strange that we did what we did. But they can imagine the simplicity and the reverence with which that place was consecrated.

We removed as far as we could any traces that would indicate the

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[6] I think the rope *broke*; it was certainly not a clean cut.

[7] On the Col des Vignettes.—*Editor.*

spot and returned by the Jenkins hut to Arolla, which we reached just after 8 p.m.

The explanation of the accident must be merely guesswork. A movement of over-confidence or a movement of haste, of looking to the safety of others and forgetting the need of his own; at any rate a moment of relaxation of attention to his own actions such as came to Émile Rey on the comparatively easy rocks below the Dent du Géant, or such as might cause the death of a motorist any day of his life.

With the exception of O'Connor, whom I did not, and perhaps could not see, owing to the curve of the ridge, all came down the ridge facing inwards. It may be amateurish [8] and it is not a possible method for a guide who has to watch an employer every moment, but it makes for individual security. I mention the matter because O'Connor had once told a member of our party that a guide had instructed him to descend ice facing outwards. To the best of my remembrance, he generally did as we did, and I think it most unlikely he attempted to do otherwise on this occasion. We had not brought crampons with us; and considering the amount of snow on the ice, I doubt whether they would have added anything at all to our security.

A moment of giddiness *might* have caused a slip, but that again is extremely improbable and entirely conjectural.

In view of an article which appeared on September 23 in the *Gazette de Lausanne* and other Swiss papers, I feel obliged to add something further to what I have already written.

On returning to Arolla I at once told M. Anzévui, director of the Hôtel Mt. Collon, what had happened and where the bodies lay, and that search was not only unnecessary, but would be painful to me. He behaved like the true friend he is and fully understood my wishes. At his request I made a report in French and signed it. This report was sent to the tribunal at Sion, and a copy was sent to the *Nouvelliste Valaisan*, which published it on August 26; the account which appeared in *The Times* was mainly a translation of this report. The peculiarly private nature of Mary's burial I could not tell and I saw no reason to do so.

The place where the bodies lay is some distance from the route to any pass or peak, the bodies were completely out of sight and at an unknown depth to any but the most persistent and morbid curiosity; to us, as we knelt on the edge of the schrund, they were quite invisible. We never saw O'Connor's body, and my daughter's body was, as far as we knew, as irrecoverable as his. If I had known they had actually been arrested a few metres below the surface, I should have had myself lowered into the schrund to

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[8] The best iceman we have ever seen—Josef Pollinger—invariably adopts this procedure on steep snow or ice, and *insists* on his party doing likewise (*A.J.* **37,** 119).—*Editor.*

displace them the few feet necessary (as I heard from M. Anzévui) to make them absolutely irrecoverable. I do not cease to blame myself for not having done this. But in such moments a man must be more than human to think of the persistence of sensation-hunters, and perhaps I might have been afraid to risk the loss of what, even as Mary's body lay on the snow, had been wonderfully kept for us, the memory of her face only in the full beauty of life.

I was aware of the responsibility I was taking in leaving O'Connor's body there, and it was an immense relief to find that what I had done had the most grateful and sympathetic approval of his parents.

I went down to Evolena on August 23. On the following evening I had a long interview with the 'brigadier,' M. Favre, who came up from Sion. He had my report with him and asked me several questions in regard to it. He expressed some surprise at my wish that no attempt should be made to recover the bodies, but he made no suggestion whatever that such an attempt must be made if they were recoverable. I also saw the President of the Commune of Evolena, who acts as registrar, and obtained from him copies of the 'actes de décès.' On August 26 a telephone message came from Arolla that some guide had found the bodies 4 metres below the surface of the schrund and inquiring as to my wishes. I said that I wished them to remain undisturbed, a wish that was already well known. The reply, as far as I remember, was 'Bien.' I left Evolena on August 27, and Switzerland on the following day, assured that they could rest in peace.

The first intimation I had to the contrary was a midnight press inquiry in England, on Saturday, August 30, to ask my views on a statement which appeared next morning in the papers that the bodies had been recovered and buried at Evolena.

On September 2 we heard from Mr. Martin, the chaplain at Arolla, that he had officiated at the funeral, and he gave us some details as to the graves.

I wrote to M. Anzévui for some information, and he replied expressing his sympathy and saying that the Swiss authorities had sent 20 guides to recover the bodies on August 29, and had found them as stated above and close to a point where they would have been irrecoverable. It was clear to me that nothing would have been easier than to carry out my wishes, but that those who found the bodies had other motives.

No intimation whatever as to the intention or the result of the finding of the bodies reached me from the Swiss authorities. On September 17 I wrote to the President of the Commune at Evolena, to inquire as to the funeral expenses at Evolena, and the possibility of purchasing the grave. I have just had a letter from him answering my inquiries, expressing his sympathy, and explaining that any part he had taken had been in obedience to a higher authority.

Up to this day, September 28, I have received no communication of any sort from the authority responsible for the arbitrary measures taken.

I need not mention the libellous statements made in the article in the *Gazette de Lausanne* of September 23, and which was brought to my notice two days ago. Anyone who has read them will be able to form his opinion of them from the facts given above. It is a task I would have gladly avoided to have to make this addition to my account of the accident, but the nature of the article made it necessary to remove the stigma such a widely circulated slander had laid upon the Club through a member.

R. L. G. Irving.

[We very deeply sympathize with Mr. Irving and the relatives of the victims of this tragic event. In all the circumstances we think it best to leave Mr. Irving's full narrative to tell its sad story without any further comment.—*Editor*, 'A.J.']

The Accident on Elbruz.

Die Allgemeine Bergsteiger Zeitung (of Vienna), August 15, 1930, is responsible for the following confused and almost incredible story of the fatal misadventures of a large party of Austrian tourists on Elbruz in the course of last summer. No dates are supplied with the deplorable narrative here reprinted. In many of its details it is unintelligible, and we must hope, therefore, largely inaccurate. Elbruz is, for *mountaineers*, an easy mountain, but the great volcano, with its vast glacier fields, can never be a suitable or safe playground to the 'Proletariat Excursionists' for whom the local government has provided shelters.[9]

Several parties of Viennese reached Tegeneklis [*sic*], at the foot of the mountain, by car, whence they attained the hut situated at 4400 m. Two parties started thence for the ascent, of which the first (Herren Schott, Kolb, Sperlich, Fuchs and Heilinger) bivouacked at 5100 m. On the following day four members of this party attained the (5633 m.) summit at 08.30. Kolb made the final ascent alone, and rather later than the remainder of the party, meeting them on their descent about 15 minutes below the top. The weather being perfect, no one paid much attention to Kolb, beyond fixing a subsequent rendezvous with him. Fuchs appears to have been with Kolb, but 'this part of the story is very confused.' At all events, Fuchs seems to have tripped up over his crampons and pitched head foremost over a steep snow-slope. He appears to have broken his glasses and, having incurred grave injuries, lost all sense of direction. In any case he died there.[10]

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[9] See Count di Vallepiana's paper, p. 280.

[10] A later report (*loc. cit.*, August 29) states that Fuchs, 'somewhat clumsily,' stuck a spike of his crampons through his wind-proof overalls, pitching on his head on to some ice blocks and being killed on the spot.

The weather, meanwhile, had become very bad. Kolb, descending from the summit, lost his way in storm and mist. Knowing nothing of the fatal fall 'of his companion,' he hurried down 'to lower altitudes trusting to luck'—as the compass 'had remained in the rucksack left 1000 ft. below the summit.' For two entire days Kolb wandered about 'over great névés and lava,' eventually 'attaining a valley,' from which a five days' journey was necessary before joining up with the remainder of the party.

These others, 'after the fatal fall of Fuchs,' and after 'waiting uselessly on the saddle at about 5300 m. for his return from the summit,' were, after giving signals and calls, compelled to descend owing to the oncoming storm. They were under the impression that Kolb had passed them on the saddle. Two members of the *second* party, Krenek and Kakuska, started with Schott for a second high bivouac in order to search for Kolb on the following day. After a useless search they were so overcome by cold and altitude that they were compelled to descend, 'bringing with them the body of their fallen companion' [Fuchs].

The Viennese party was well looked after in the hut by two foreign guides and some Moscow 'mountaineers.' The body of Fuchs was buried near the Kongosor hut (3200 m.).

'The members of the expedition have continued the journey in order to resume their mountaineering activities in the previously determined-on district.'

The Accident on Kangchenjunga (1929).

(Reprinted by courtesy of the Editor of the 'A.A.J.')

'One day towards the end of winter there walked into my office a tall, clear-eyed, square-jawed, young man. He was from Virginia. He had lived in New York City for years working in one of those great down-town beehives, but rarely able to escape from Manhattan Island to enjoy the beauties of our environs. Five years ago he had conceived the desire to climb Kangchenjunga. He kept this desire and read and studied and planned the trip. Few details escaped his attention—food, clothing, footwear, mountaineering equipment had all been carefully purchased. He sailed from New York alone and expects to reach the summit of Kangchenjunga and be back by August (1929). He has never been on snow or ice other than that of our streets. Nor has he ever been up a hill of more than 3000 ft. What nicer experiment in the problem: Can book-knowledge suffice where actual experience is usually held to be so necessary? Will he get there? I shall not forget the eye nor the jaw nor the simple faith in himself. He has my wish for success.'

At about the time of the publication of the foregoing note,[11]

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[11] *Mountain Magazine*, vol. vii, No. 4, July 1929.

word was received from India that Mr. Farmer had not returned. Of course we could not regard this outcome as a complete answer to the hypothetical question raised in our first paragraph. It is but one more bit of evidence to add to that which accumulates year by year in every line of endeavour—that 'experience is the best teacher.'

When he arrived in India, Mr. Farmer proceeded to Darjeeling and there met Mr. G. W. Wood-Johnson, a climber of experience in the Himalayas. He and others helped Farmer to secure excellent porters—several of them being well-known men of experience and veterans of Mount Everest expeditions.

The story of what befell Mr. Farmer is best told by the testimony of the porters before the Indian police, which follows :

Statement of Lobsang, son of Dawa, Tibetan, of Patual-Sho, Lhasa ; age thirty-three, of Bhuti Bosti.

'Mr. Wood-Johnson, Assistant Manager of Geille T. E., went to Guicha La last year in October, and I went with him as his headman. There were twenty coolies. I was with General Bruce, of the Mount Everest Expedition, on two occasions, and it was for this reason Mr. Wood-Johnson took me with him. He had a successful trip. In April, on a Wednesday, I went to Geille T. E. on the call of Mr. Wood-Johnson, who told me that Mr. Farmer was going to Jongri for one month and six days, *i.e.* nine days each way to Jongri and back, and he would halt eighteen days at Jongri and take photos. He would be going up to Kang La. On my question I was told that Mr. Farmer was not going to do mountain climbing, and being such a light job, he arranged to give us Rs. 1-4-0 per day for me, and to Sonam Tangay and Nima Tundrup and seven other coolies, annas 12 per day. He also promised that rations would be provided from Yok-San onwards.

'On May 6, 1929, we started from Jongri at 7 A.M., taking with us five days' rations for six of us, leaving our reserve ration at Jongri with a yak-herd. We halted at Aluk-thang. On May 7 we arrived at Chematang at 4 P.M. Mr. Farmer alone climbed Guicha La. He told us to stay at camp. At nightfall I sent Nima Tundrup with a lantern, and Mr. Farmer returned at about 7.30 P.M. There was a little snow on the way to Guicha La. Mr. Farmer told us that he was returning after an hour, and therefore we did not go.

'On May 8, at 6 A.M., Nima Tundrup, Sonam Tangay and myself accompanied Mr. Farmer. We went about half-way to Guicha La, when he said he had been on the top of Guicha La the previous evening and turned towards Kangchenjunga. We walked in that direction up to 11 A.M. When we reached the Lap-tse (cairn) heavy cloud intervened and we could not see the Kangchenjunga. We halted there for one hour, but it did not clear, so we returned to Chematang, and halted the night there. On May 9, at 6 A.M., we got ready to start, when he suddenly said that he must go towards Kangchenjunga, the same direction where he went the previous

afternoon, and would return in half an hour. We waited there and he returned at 10 A.M.—that is, four hours after. He left Chematang at 10 A.M., and came to Jongri at 5.30 P.M.

'On May 10, on my suggestion, Mr. Farmer sent Nima Tundrup and Dam-du to purchase flour, vegetables, eggs, etc., at Yoksam and Pemingchi. Mr. Farmer, myself, Sonam Tangay and Sonam Chompe halted at Jongri. On May 11 Mr. Farmer told me to take five days' rations, and four of us left for Kang La, where he said he wanted to see the road. We halted that night at Tre Kyaplak cave, near Chu-rang Chu. On May 12 we went further towards Kang La and halted at Cho-kar-Pang. On May 13, at 6 A.M., Mr. Farmer, myself and Sonam Tangay went towards Kang La. We crossed Kang La and went about one-fourth mile. There was heavy snow on the Pass Q. I did not know that Kang La was the boundary line of Nepal. We returned that night at Tre Kyaplak.

'On May 14 we came to Jongri, where we halted on May 15. That day Mr. Farmer went alone towards Ke-pur mountains. I objected to his going alone, but he refused to take any one of us. That night Nima Tundrup and Dam-du returned from Pemingchi with one maund flour, potatoes, eggs, beans, onions, and a seer of butter. On May 16, morning, Mr. Farmer instructed me to take fourteen days' rations, and we started for Kang La at 10 A.M. We halted that night at Tre-Kyamla. On May 17, at Chu-Kar-pang. On May 18 we halted near Tse-ram on a grassy place. It was a bad and cloudy day. On May 20 we came to a village. I thought we were in Nepal, and asked Mr. Farmer whether he got a pass to enter Nepal. He replied "I know, I know." We then returned back about one fourth-mile and turned towards Kangchenjunga, and halted on a hill.

'On May 21 we went down into a valley and here we made our base camp. There were small or dwarf rhododendron trees available for firewood. On May 22 Mr. Farmer, myself, Sonam Tangay and Nima Tundrup went up for about one mile, and on account of snowfall we returned to base camp. On May 23 Mr. Farmer ordered me to take four days' rations, and about 10 A.M. we started, *i.e.* Mr. Farmer, myself, Nima Tundrup and Sonam Tangay. We halted at the glacier till 2 P.M., then we crossed the stream on the left and halted there for the night We were on the lowest portion of the glacier. Mr. Farmer called this No. 1 camp.

'On May 24 we were actually on the glacier. We saw an avalanche falling near our camp. We left at about 7 A.M., and came to our camp at 5 P.M. and halted there. Mr. Farmer called this as No. 2 camp. On May 25 he started at about 7 A.M., and reached at the foot of Kangchenjunga mountain at about 4.30 P.M. We made our camp on the glacier. It was a difficult place, and we made the camping place. We halted there. It was a cold night. In a few minutes our hot tea got frozen. We walked very slowly from

camp No. 1 to this camp which Mr. Farmer called camp No. 3. That night he told us to prepare to leave the camp at 6 A.M. the next morning.

'On May 26 at 6 A.M. we all started. Mr. Farmer took coffee, some dry biscuits and ham. He kept no food of any kind in his pockets. He took a small camera, a pair of field-glasses, ice-axe and two films. He wore three shirts, two coats, three pairs of drawers, three pairs of socks. The nails of his boots having worn out, he used a pair of crampons. He took no rope. We walked up together on the mountains, but very slowly as we were getting difficulty in breathing. It was 9 A.M. then. I suggested to Mr. Farmer that as the sun was up and the snow melting, we may get trouble if we go further and suggested him to return to our camp. Mr. Farmer insisted that we must climb the mountain up to 12 noon. We went on. Then we came to a difficult place on snow and ice, sometime down and sometime up. It was like an ice corridor. Then came to a rock, and when climbing I slipped and fell down about 6 or 7 feet and injured my back. Mr. Farmer told us to wait here for him. He would return at 12 noon after taking some photographs. He gave his Cine camera to Sonam Tangay to let the spring go when he climbs up. As he started climbing up the mountain Sonam Tangay tried to operate it. We saw him going up to 5 P.M. As he walked he looked at us several times ; and we all called him back, but he paid no heed. At 5 P.M. he sat down on the snow. Just then heavy cloud set in and intervened. We waited on the spot till 6 P.M. We thought that he would be returning, and we returned to camp No. 3 and cooked food and waited for him. He did not return. We used his torch light just to show him the camp. On May 27, at about 7 A.M., we got on the top of an ice hillock and we saw all the way that Mr. Farmer went up. We saw Mr. Farmer climbing up on the steep snow. This time he was a long way up. It was a small figure. He was climbing up. The peak of Kang-chenjunga was on his left-hand side.[12] He got on the top of a mountain, when the sun struck the ridge. He crossed that mountain and we never saw him again. Heavy cloud intervened. There were other mountains behind the ridge that he crossed. We waited for the Sahib at No. 3 camp. He did not return. We had no food—all exhausted. There were some dry biscuits of the Sahib, which we eat. About 300 ft. from our camp we found an old camp for two tents. [Probably the camp of Raeburn and Crawford, who are known to have gone up to Yalung in September 1920.] We thought some Sahibs came here before. There were two empty tins of kerosine oil and also a broken clay pot. There were two heaps of stones (cairns) which we thought were graves.

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[12] The description given shows that he went up towards the Talung Saddle (22,130 ft.). The party had been working on the Yalung Glacier.—*Editor, A.A.J.*

'On May 29 [? 28] we waited for the Sahib. As he did not return we left the camp at about 9 A.M., and came to No. 2 camp, where we left some food on the up journey. We reached there at about 5 P.M. For want of food we nearly lost our lives. I thought as the Sahib did not return for three days, he must have met his death.

'On May 29 we came to the base camp, where we met Sonam Chompe and Dam-du, and halted there. That night our food was exhausted, as we took food for only fourteen days.

'On May 30 Sonam Chompe went to a "Gote" [cowherd] and there exchanged his "Chupa" [Tibetan coat] for one pathi "Indian corn." With this food we came to the hill near Tse-ram, and halted there.

'On May 31 we camped near Kang La. June 1 we came to Chu-Kar-pang, and I sent Sonam Tangay to Jongri and told him to proceed at once to Mr. Wood-Johnson, and hand over the Cine camera, so that he may be able to develop the films and show the places visited by us and give information about the Sahib.

'When we reached camp No. 3, Mr. Farmer had for his food three bundles of pea soup and half a paper box of biscuits, about two spoonfuls of sugar. We took them as we had no food to eat.'

W. S. LADD.

[Lobsang, who gave the above statement, has been mentioned in the current despatches from the International Kangchenjunga expedition.—*Editor*, 'A.A.J.']

The Accident on Mt. Robson.

'The press reports the death of Mr. Newman D. Waffl[13] during the first week of August. We have no particulars as yet, but competent people were in the vicinity, and there is no doubt about the fact. He was climbing *alone* on the N. face, and the theory is that a section of the huge corniche from above broke off and started an avalanche that overwhelmed him. He was a very good climber, and there seems no excuse for this kind of thing in his case.'—*Communicated.*

REVIEWS.

Tableau littéraire du Massif du Mont Blanc. By Ch. Vallot and C. E. Engel. Librairie Dardel, Chambéry. 25 francs.

THE aim of this book—which is to rank as the first in order of the eleven volumes of M. Vallot's 'Description du . . . Mont Blanc'—is to give 'a complete inventory and critical study of the pages

[13] The name is given as Waffls in some American publications.