

# DEATH ROLL OF ALPS.

## Fatal Accidents The Penalty of Mountain Climbing.

Dotted about all over the vast chains of Alpine hills which beset central Europe are tiny cairns and monuments which many a tourist passes by with no more than a glance.

Yet each one of these little monuments tells in brief words the gist of a terrible calamity, for they are the tributes of loving friends to the memory of those who have attempted to scale the fearsome heights of the Alps and who by awful falls or the overwhelming avalanche have paid the forfeit of their rashness with their lives.

Since the first of January of this year 118 accidental deaths have occurred in the Swiss Alps alone.

In the matter of Alpine feats it seems that women are no less courageous than men. Last year an English tourist, Miss Thompson, of London, essayed alone to scale the Engleberg, in Unterwald, Switzerland. For some distance her way led over a well defined trail, but at length the precipitous sides of the great peak had to be tackled. Rounding a ledge and perched at a great height Miss Thompson paused and the action no doubt cost her her life. The great thing in climbing is to keep at it and not let the mind or the eye dwell on the gulf below. Miss Thompson hesitated and was lost. She became giddy and fell with terrific speed on to the points of rocks below. She fell between two points and such was the force of the impact that her body was so tightly wedged in that it could not be removed without blasting away the rocks.

In the year 1900 no less than 2,000,500 sightseers registered in the Alpine districts of Switzerland between the months of January and October.

As if in warning each year the French Alpine club issues a list of the accidents that have occurred during the previous season, but the real Alpine enthusiast pays no heed to the hints of danger.

One of the last recorded deaths was on Aug. 23. Mrs. Wickham Smith of Brooklyn had started for a trip over the Eureka Pass. She longed to see the great ice cavern rising in a majestic blue arch above a rushing stream of the river Rhone. In this instance the accident that led to death was in no wise due to the carelessness of the victim, nor is it frequent in its happening in the Alps. It came unforeseen and unheralded. As Mrs. Smith, filled with enthusiasm and reverence, stood at the entrance of the grotto, she was struck by a huge falling sheet of ice. The force of the blow was tremendous felling her instantly.

The great, grim Matterhorn, with

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its icy needle, that rises 14,826 feet into the air, seems to hold forth more temptation to the defiant climber than any of the Alpine peaks.

Thirteen victims have surrendered their lives there in 36 years.

Perhaps one of the most harrowing accidents recorded is the tragic death of Mrs. Marke of Liskeard, Cornwall, in 1870. She, in company with a guide, had attempted to scale the heights above what is known as "The Corridor." Numerous crevasses had to be crossed, and it was while negotiating one of these that Mrs. Marke slipped and fell. For some time she hung suspended by the rope which was attached to the waist of the guide, but gradually the icy edges gave way. There was a sickening rush, and lady and guide hurtled to their doom. Yet the fascination of the snow capped peak still entices.

The last time it was a broken rope that hurled to destruction.

Only a few weeks ago Dr. Black and Miss Bell, both well known in England, started out with a party of seven jolly companions and a guide to do, as the saying is the great Matterhorn.

One can picture the scene without much difficulty.

A fine day, under a clear sky, and a small party of fearless men and women who had made up their minds to see all the beauty that the Alps can afford.

They had toiled well upward on their journey, singing and cheering as they went, happy and exultant, laughing at danger as one might in a quiet street of some suburban city.

After the most accredited manner of Alpine climbing there were some dozen strong ropes. Slipping and sliding they climbed for about four hours to what is known as the Fille du Lion and then on to the Grand Staircase, which is regarded as a point of safety.

There the exultant cheers rang forth.

All the way up to that cliff they had been perpetually looking down upon frightful precipices and cold, abyssal depths.

They started on the decent without a tremor. The ice on the rocks, the danger of slides and stone falls, the smooth, steep ledges, intimidated them not a whit.

With light hearts they were crossing an icy slope between what is known as the head and neck of the so called Lion when suddenly Miss Bell slipped, fell forward and clutched Mr. Black.

It was the beginning of the end.

The man lost his grip. The rope tightened and dragged the men and women above. For an instant it seemed as though the whole party would be hurled to the terrible abyss that yawned black and threatening below the neck of the Lion.

Then suddenly the rope snapped parted, and two inanimate bodies were hurled like pebbles down, down from ledge to ledge somewhere into the vast depth below.

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Yet to dispense with a rope in mountain climbing is set forth by connoisseurs as the most reckless of acts. Dr. Mosely tried the experiment. When his body was finally recovered, his friends were shocked to find one of his boots left without a single nail.

Frequent visitors to the Alps and those who have made a study of the accidents that have occurred there divide them into four classes, those due to carelessness, those due to unforeseen and unavoidable incidents, those due to ignorance and those due to foolhardy bravado.

On Aug. 5 of this year an accident of the latter sort was recorded.

A party started to climb the treacherous Cima di Rosso, a peak 10,043 feet high in the Engadine. They announced themselves as skilled mountaineers and, headed by Mr. G. P. Way of Yonkers, refused the assistance of any guide.

Mr. Way was an enthusiast, fond of mountain climbing and a man who believed, with the great Mummery, that "to toil up long slopes behind a guide who can lie in bed and picture every step of the way up, with all the places for hand or foot, is work worthy of the fiberless contents of fashionable clothes dumped, with all their scents and ointments, starched linen and shiny boots, at Zermatt by the railway."

Such mountain climbing Mr. Way held in contempt. He loved to go where no human being had been before, without a guide, to scale rocks that had never felt the touch of human hand.

From the Maloja hotel, in the Engadine, they started out. The dangerous peak lured them on step by step. Mr. Way and his young son, a boy of fourteen, urged the others on and on until finally the very summit was in sight.

Without warning or cry of any sort a sudden jerk of the rope brought the party tense rigid to a standstill. They clutched one another. Mr. Way, their leader, had slipped on a stone. The rope became taut. The others bore back on it. Suddenly it snapped, and the brave buoyant leader of the little party fell hundreds of feet to his death.

Endless are such accidents repeated.

Zermatt lies just at the foot of the Matterhorn. From there party after party, including almost as many women as men, plod up and down the mountains. From the hotels people watch for their return. Sometimes as this year, there will be a run of accidents. They come in the shape of avalanches, in a shower of rocks and blocks of ice in a blinding storm. Then, week after week, the Alps will lie quiet, peaceful, smiling in the sunlight. Again a foot slips, a rope breaks, and the little town is plunged in mourning.

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There are people who wonder why any one should seek such dangers. Probably only the man who returns can adequately explain.

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Subscriber—What! No fire in the stove this cold weather? Editor—None; but there is a creditor coming around this morning who has promised to make it hot for me.

Her first name is Lily. Good! Gracious! Is she as fat as all that?

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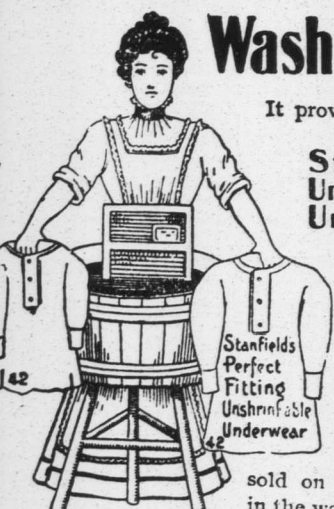
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