

## THE ACCIDENT ON THE BROUILLARD GLACIER.

The following letters with reference to this accident have been received from Mr. T. S. Kennedy :—

*'To the Editor of the "Alpine Journal."*—Dear Sir,—It may be worth while to recapitulate the circumstances of this misfortune to the readers of the "Alpine Journal." On Sunday morning, August 30, about 9 or 10 o'clock, Mr. J. A. G. Marshall, of Leeds, with his two guides, Johann Fischer, of Zaun, near Meiringen, and Ulrich Almer, of Grindelwald, left Bertolini's inn at Courmayeur, to ascend Mont Blanc by way of the Brouillard Glacier. The way lies along the Alleé Blanche to the Fresnay châteaux, and along the Miage Glacier until nearly below the termination of the Brouillard Glacier. There an opening in the crags and slopes of rocks, grass, and rhododendrons lead up, leaving Mont Châtelet finally on the right hand, to the Alp dividing the Brouillard and Fresnay Glaciers, and considerably higher than their termination. Then comes a grassy slope with a pleasant spring of water, and tenanted by sheep; then a wilderness of rocks and stones, and then the old deserted moraine of the Brouillard and Châtelet Glaciers. Above this latter small glacier the Alp becomes a rocky ridge presenting an abrupt face to the south, but it is easily turned by taking to the Brouillard Glacier, on the left hand. When I passed in July this part of the glacier was crevassed at one place a few minutes' walk from the moraine, and it was at about that point that the snow-line seemed to be. We made one or two doubles among a small system of crevasses, leaving the rocks perhaps one hundred yards on our right. The accident happened in one of these crevasses. Continuing for about an hour up a glacier of the ordinary description brought us to a place where the ice and the rocks are nearly at the same level. These rocks are covered by loose stones, but there is no grass on them, and it was here that Mr. Marshall bivouacked, at a height, I believe, of about 10,000 feet.

'From this place, where my party halted to dine, the rocks again presented a steep lofty face to the south, and we could see a herd of 13 chamois looking at us from the summit. We continued our course up the Brouillard Glacier to a point not far from its head, and crossing in the way a small rocky promontory which projects into the glacier from the main ridge. The whole of the steps from our dining-place had to be cut with the axe, partly in snow, partly in ice, and before reaching the promontory we crossed one avalanche-track. We sat on the promontory for a quarter of an hour, and then went on up the snow-covered glacier. It began to rain; the snow was deep and anything but coherent, and Fischer had much labour to make a safe passage for us. Just at nightfall we turned to the right to gain the rocks above on our right, and as we did so stones seemed to break loose from the whole hill-side. Down they went by dozens, raking the very course up which we had slowly toiled, and one rock flew down and burst into fragments upon the promontory on which we had been comfortably sitting a couple of hours before, when nothing could

be seen to awaken distrust of the place. We gained a spot a couple of yards below the summit of the ridge, made it level, and bivouacked on it, at a height of about 12,000 feet. The party consisted of Fischer, Jaun, a couple of Courmayeur porters, Mr. T. Middlemore, and myself. Next morning, being prevented by bad weather from going farther, we extricated ourselves from the place without more risk than is generally caused by a too numerous party on unstable rocks. Fischer noted the movements of the chamois, and said to me, "Next time we come here we will sleep lower down and try to find the chamois-passage up these rocks; it will never do to come up the glacier again." I believe he carried out his plan with Mr. Marshall. No doubt he gained the top of the ridge by the chamois-passage, the searching for which may account in some measure for the lateness of their return. He would then descend slightly upon the head basin of the Fresnay Glacier, and then, according to our previous plans, instead of crossing that basin and gaining the snowy ridge which runs downwards from Mont Blanc de Courmayeur to the Aig. Blanche de Pétéret, he would ascend almost directly up the main rocks, aiming for Mont Blanc de Courmayeur. About 4 P.M., or a little after, the party came to a place where they could not pass, and as it was too late to look for a passage they turned back, and reached the ridge at the head of the two glaciers about nightfall. There they waited an hour or more for the moon to rise, and then proceeded slowly downwards. They were aiming for their bivouac at 10,000 feet; and had just reached the point where they would have left the glacier when the accident happened. Mr. Leslie Stephen, who, with Mons. Loppé and Melchior Anderegg, has visited the spot, writes me that the crevasse into which they fell was not five minutes' walk from the moraine. Fischer was leading, and Almer was last, and just after a question and the answer that it was almost midnight, a bridge of firn or névé broke below their feet, and all three fell almost simultaneously into the schrund. The bridge, according to Mr. Stephen, must have been 20 feet wide, and presented no sign of its presence beyond a small hole by which Almer afterwards escaped, and it would not suggest to them any doubt of its stability. Mr. Marshall and Fischer fell about 30 feet into the lower part of the crevasse, which may have been 5 feet wide, and upon hard ice. Mr. Marshall's skull was fractured and his death instantaneous; and Fischer's injuries were such that he could not have lived many minutes. Almer seems to have fallen a less distance upon a kind of bank or shelf, which made up the greater part of the profile of the schrund and upon snow; possibly too his fall was broken by the fragments of the bridge which fell under him. Then he was probably dragged by the rope into the deeper part after the others. No doubt he (very naturally) exaggerated the time of his unconsciousness. When daylight came he easily escaped by walking up the shelf which sloped up to the surface. He went down to Courmayeur, and, though much bruised, returned shortly after to the scene of the accident, riding on a mule as far as the Fresnay châteaux, and accompanied by Mons. Bertolini and a number of men. The dead bodies were recovered the same evening about 7 o'clock, the party bivouacking during a very cold night on the moraine; and on Wednesday they were brought

down to Courmayeur. Fischer was buried on Thursday, and Mr. Marshall on Sunday. On Monday Almer had sufficiently recovered to ride on a mule to Martigny.

'Of the capabilities of the party I think no one who knew them would raise a doubt. Mr. Marshall was young in the Alps; it was his third season. He had been accompanied in the earlier part of his journey by his cousin, Mr. Frank Marshall, and Fischer had, without farther assistance, guided them over the Sauren Joch, the Clariden firn, and a new pass from Geschenen, between the Damma and Rhone Stöcke. Then Almer joined them, and the party ascended the Aletschhorn by a new way from the north, and descended by a new way to the south. They then went to Zinal and crossed over the Rothhorn to Zermatt in about 10 hours. From Zermatt they went to Chermontane by the back of Mont Collon; the next day over the Col de Sonadon, where Fischer found a descent to the west which avoids the stony place usually passed; thence to the châteaux at the head of the Italian Val Ferret, Mr. Frank Marshall going on to Courmayeur. The three ascended the Aiguille de Triolet from the Dolent Glacier, climbing all the peaks which constitute its top, and descended to Courmayeur. The whole of these passages were over ground new to Fischer, though with a guide of his calibre that made little difference. After a few days' rest at Courmayeur they started on their last and tragical journey up Mont Blanc. I am, dear Sir, yours very truly,

'T. S. KENNEDY.

'Meanwood, Leeds.'

'Dear Sir,—The guide Johann Fischer, who, together with his employer, Mr. James Aubrey Garth Marshall, was killed on September 1, on the Brouillard Glacier, has left a widow and five children ill provided for. The eldest child is not 10 years old; the father of Mrs. Fischer is nearly 70 years old, and too weak to do much work, and their house and land is burdened with a mortgage. Mr. Marshall's brother intends to make a weekly payment to Mrs. Fischer until such time as her children shall be able to support her, and I propose to apply the sum which a few kind friends have subscribed to reduce the mortgage on the house and land. I hardly expect any more subscriptions than those detailed below from members of the Alpine Club, since Fischer was not known to them; but I write in the hope of this letter catching the eye of some of the scores of people whom he used to guide up the Oberland peaks, during the years that he was the professional guide of the *Æggischorn* inn. Should anyone feel that he owes a successful and pleasant day's walk to Fischer's strong arm and skilful guidance, and be inclined to give something for his widow, I shall be very glad to take charge of the money, and to see to its proper application.

'The subscriptions I have hitherto received are these: F. F. Tuckett, 5*l.*; T. Middlemore, 5*l.* 5*s.*; A. Wills, 20*l.*; Mrs. T. S. Kennedy, 2*l.*; Baron A. de Rothschild, 10*l.*; W. Longman, 5*l.*; T. Birkbeck, 5*l.*; J. Birkbeck, Jun., 2*l.*; P. Kennedy, 5*l.*; T. S. Kennedy, 20*l.*

'Yours very truly,

'T. S. KENNEDY.

'Meanwood, Leeds.'