The High Adventure of Mr. Randall

J. Monroe Thorington

MYSTERY clings to unconventional episodes in human lives, none more so than to the motives which drive certain men, otherwise orderly, to forsake creature comfort on sudden impulse and disappear in quest of adventure to which hitherto they have been strangers. Such souls now and again flit across the more sober existences of their neighbors, vanish and leave nothing except, perhaps, a house with drawn blinds, weeds in a dooryard, a few yellowed news-clippings and half-remembered queries as to "Why?"

The Atlantic cable has not always brought messages of good cheer. In Quincy, Massachusetts, there stood until recently a house which, three quarters of a century ago, echoed to a now forgotten tragedy. On that day in the autumn of 1870, when word came to Mrs. Randall that her husband had lost his life on Mont Blanc,* she went upstairs and stayed alone until evening, and never allowed his name to be mentioned again in her presence.

John Chace Randall was born in Newburyport in 1820, moving to Quincy in 1849. He had never been a wanderer, so it was a strange ending for one who had been the staid treasurer of the savings bank and the father of seven children. Yet he had read mountaineering books until his memory was full of Alpine anecdotes, none of which arose from his own experience, and all the knowledge of glaciers one could gain without ever having walked on one. Mont Blanc became a dazzling, enticing image in his brain, and at the age of fifty, when he could arrange his affairs, he took leave of his family and sailed across the Atlantic to feast his eyes on the great white mountain.

On August 26th, 1870, two British members of the Alpine Club, John Stogdon and James Marshall, came down to Chamonix after a narrow escape in storm. As they sat down to a late dinner, a servant brought a card, on which was pencilled: "John Randall, of Quincy, Massachusetts, requests permission to introduce himself."

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* Most of this material came to light after and as a result of the publication of *Early American Ascents in the Alps* (American Alpine Club, 1943). J.M.T.

As Stogdon stated later:[1] "On the night of our return, an American gentleman asked me to let him come into our sitting-room and talk over Mont Blanc. The consequence was that I did not get to bed till two. I found in Mr. Randall, in spite of his fifty years, the most intense mountain enthusiast I ever had the pleasure of meeting—fed, too, before this year, not on the mountains themselves, but on books.[2] To see, not necessarily to climb Mont Blanc had been the dream of his life, and he had come over at last to fulfill it."

But Mr. Randall was not deterred by their story of hardship, and the next thing the Englishmen heard was that he, along with ten others, perished close to the top of the mountain early in the following month.

It is quite evident that, if it was not Randall's original intention to attempt the ascent of Mont Blanc, his walks in the valley aroused his ambition to ever higher goals, from the usual tourist belvederes to the Grands Mulets, and finally to the summit itself. This is clearly shown in his diary, from which the following entries are taken:

> *Monday, Aug. 22.* (Geneva, Hotel Garni de la Poste.) Pleasant and forever memorable in giving me the first view of Mont Blanc, not especially clear but tolerably well defined.
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> *Aug. 23.* Spent the day in strolling about and making purchases—shoes, knapsack, strap, flask, etc.
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> *Aug. 24.* This morning, it being particularly clear, I had a fine view of Mt. Blanc—the sun shining fully upon it, I could see the shadow cast from some bank above the Grand Plateau. Secured a seat in the morning's diligence for Chamounix, did some errands and went to bed at eleven.
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> *Aug. 25.* A remarkably beautiful day. Left Geneva in the diligence, with two drivers and six horses at quarter past seven, Mr. Julius Dressel and myself outside (with one inside to Bonneville) being the only freight. Passed over a fine road in sight of the Grand and Little Salève, Môle, Brezon, and reached Bonneville at just ten, where we stopped to change horses. The square was full of soldiers and we passed many more coming into town. I saw the first and very strongly marked case of Goitre in a woman and cretinism in a man. The

[1] *A. J. 5*, 192. It should be added that, while Stogdon and Marshall, made their ascent by the Bosses route, first used in 1859, this was still an innovation to most of the Chamonix guides, who clung to the Corridor route. It was by the latter that Randall and Bean ascended, and on which the accident occurred in the descent.

[2] Randall's copy of Albert Smith's *Story of Mont Blanc* is still in existence, as well as his Baxter prints of MacGregor's ascent.

scenery which was fine all the way from Geneva had been gradually growing grander, though as yet we had seen no snow—till, on turning and entering Sallanches, at just noon, the vast snowy range of Mt. Blanc, its virgin whiteness illuminated by a clear sunlight against a background of intense blueness, instantaneously burst upon her vision like a grand revelation from Heaven. It was impressively grand—never shall I forget the supreme extasy of that moment. For some miles we had the Aiguilles of Chamounix with the Dôme du Gouté and Mt. Blanc towering up in serene majesty in our very faces. At one we reached the Baths of St. Gervais, where we dined and exchanged our diligence for a single two-horse team. Left St. G. at half past one and drove slowly along through magnificent scenery towards the village of Chamounix, which we reached at four P.M. and alighted at the Hôtel des Alpes. I at once selected a double-bedded room overlooking the Glaciers des Bossons, etc., deposited our luggage and, the weather being fine, started at half past four for a turn. Strolled through the village, onto and across the des Bossons, to the Cascade de Pèlerins, from which we saw a beautiful sunset, and back to the hotel at half past eight—dined—to our room, where I read aloud Coleridge's Hymn, Excelsior, etc., and to bed at eleven.

Aug. 26. I looked out at three or four A.M. and saw the Gl. des Bois and Mt. Blanc standing out white and ghastly in the darkness. The stars were shining sharp and clear. To bed again. Rose at quarter past five and breakfasted. Started at half past six precisely from the hotel, with Mr. Dressel and walked up to the Flégère, which we reached at ten. We staid on the summit two hours. A very cold wind was blowing and as I was somewhat heated I spent some time in looking over the visitors' book, which was very wise, silly and amusing. You have a very fine view of the whole Mt. Blanc range from here, more especially of the Mer de Glace. We descended to the valley about half past two, then went to the ice grotto—to the source of the Arveiron—from thence with guide through the Mauvais Pas, across the Mer de Glace to the Montanvert. Here the clouds which had been gathering since noon grew quite thick, and began to discharge moisture. We here discharged the guide and started to go down about six. Having on a new pair of shoes, which hurt very much, my progress down was necessarily slow. About seven it grew perfectly dark and began to rain. My *friend* hurried on and left me alone. As I could not see the path, I had to feel literally every step I took, with an alpenstock in each hand, so that instead of getting down in an hour or an hour and a half, I was something more than three and did not reach the hotel till after nine, having been on my feet fifteen hours. With a glass from the Flégère had seen a party of five [Stogdon and Marshall's expedition] slowly crawl-

ing up above the Grand Plateau about nine o'clock, who were soon hidden by clouds. Coming down I heard the guns from the hotel announcing that they had reached the summit and returned in safety. I dined with them and had an account of their ascent. They were enveloped in mist and cloud on the summit. It was fearfully cold, they could see nothing, did not stop a moment, were in doubt and fear as to the path of return, but finally succeeded in descending safely.

Aug. 27. Rose at half past six. Left the hotel at half past nine A.M. alone for the Brévent. Was told it was four hours, Baedeker says three and a half, but without much hurrying at all I reached the top at precisely twelve, in two and a half hours. I had clear views of Mt. Blanc all the way up. When I entered the hut I was cordially welcomed by Michael Irene Couttet, the old guide who had been up twenty times (with Albert Smith). He lent me a glass and his book of certificates. The room being cold, I had a fire built up and took some hot brandy. I sat by the fire looking through the visitors' book and at the mountains through the window until nearly four o'clock, when I began to descend. Oh, the glories of the descent! Across the valley, far below me, the whole chain of Mt. Blanc, flooded with sunshine, stood out sharp and clear against a clear blue sky, with overpowering sublimity. Everything seemed in harmony. I was slowly descending, taking in the influences of the scene till my overcharged soul found relief in a flood of tears—precious tears—and I stood with bared head and thanked God that after twenty years of toil and hope and fear I was at last permitted to stand amid the grand manifestations.

Aug. 28. A dull, cloudy day, the mountain tops shrouded in mist. At dinner tonight the mountain tops, which had been all day in cloud, were at sunset suddenly tinged with sunlight. Every seat was instantly vacated and a grand rush made for the windows and doors. Very glorious: the sunlight, not the stampede!

Aug. 29. A dull morning. I felt dubious about the weather, but wishing to make the most of the day, I started with my alpenstock and knapsack at ten A.M. for the Tête Noir and Col de Balme. I had hardly left the village before the rain began to fall and it soon came down plentifully. I hurried on and at noon entered the Hôtel de Belle Vue at the village of Argentière, and near Glacier de Argentière, kept by Michael Ambroise Charlet, a guide of Albert Smith. I at once went into the kitchen, where were a large family and quite a number of guides, and ate a hearty dinner of well flavored soup, bread, cheese and wine. I also had a sparring match with one of the guides and made myself generally jolly and popular. I then walked on, traversing a wild ravine, but the rain coming down, I stopped about two at a hut near Les Montets.

The old fellow gave me some milk and made up some fire in a little stove. I ate a lunch, smoked and made myself resigned and comfortable. About five, the rain slackened, I went on to the Hôtel de la Cascade de Barberine, which I reached about seven and halted for the night. Spent the evening with a party of very intelligent and agreeable ladies and gentlemen, Mr. and Mrs. Elliot of New York and two ladies.

Aug. 30. Morning raining. Elliots and all left at eight for Chamounix. I breakfasted on beef steak and potato, which I shared with four dogs. About nine, the rain stopping and the sun coming out brilliantly, I started first climbing the hill to see the Cascade de Barberine, I think the grandest I have yet seen. I then walked on through a grand ravine and about noon passed through the Pass of the Tête Noir and arriving at the village of Trient. At the last house in the village I made a plentiful meal of bread and milk and berries and sugar, then commenced the ascent of the Col de Balme. It was a steep and hard climb for two hours, with fine views of the Forclaz, which separates Savoy from the Vallais. The weather since nine A.M. to half past two had been glorious, warm and brilliant. About this time a dense cloud settled down and wrapped me in its chill embrace. I could not see more than a dozen rods around me. Coming at last to the Herbagères, two or three rude stone huts on a level knoll or plateau, where was quarter for the horses, and the path seeming to end, I supposed I had reached the top of the Col de Balme. I entered the principal building and was surprised at its barrenness and that no one was present to bid me welcome. I took off my rigging and looked about me. There was a bunk with straw, and wood to make a fire, and I had matches and about four ounces of bread and cheese. I at once resolved to pass the night here, and being tired and cold, placed a log of wood and my knapsack for a pillow, crawled into the bunk, covering myself with my coat and soon fell sound asleep. When I woke I thought I would reconnoitre, and soon struck a path which seemed to lead higher. Shouldering my knapsack I at once started, and following the path for an hour, the cheerful Hôtel de Suisse came into view and I entered about six without ceremony, found a friendly greeting, a comfortable room and a good supper. The occupants were a middle-aged woman, with a pretty daughter of eighteen, another young woman and three young men. After supper I joined them in the common room and we had a jolly time together. I knit on the old woman's stocking, shuffled and dealt the cards, smoked and sang and to bed at half past ten.

Aug. 31. Rose at half past four. My windows were covered with frost. The ground was stiffened and ice had formed in the tub outside. Still the morning was perfect, the wind somewhat keen, but the air perfectly clear and the sky cloudless. As the

sun decided not to rise for an hour and a half later, I went into the house, sat down to a good fire and, very politely, waited his motions. By and by, true to time, he came up, though it was some hours before I could see him. I was watching the summit of Mt. Blanc to see it catch the first beam. A brilliant spot of intense gold started and ran down the mountain. Then through a gorge a stream touched the Dome de Gouté, then started it into life, the sun gradually extending lower into the valleys. It was a glorious sight, and I thought I could fully comprehend Coleridge. I breakfasted, paid my bill, made an entry in the visitors' book and at eight A.M. started down the mountain for Chamounix.

A cozy night, a magnificent sunrise and a substantial breakfast. But what are all these to the comely lass with the piquante headgear, pearly teeth and honest hearty laugh who waited on me? and to whom I should most assuredly have "proposed" had not a wife of one hundred and sixty five avoirdupois and seven bairns at home seemed eight weighty reasons why I should not. A fine walk down the Col and through the valley with Mt. Blanc constantly in view. Arrived at the hotel at four, shaved and dressed, took a walk up to the pretty chalet where the lady invited me in, &c., and dinner. Spent the evening, till after ten, at Hôtel Mt. Blanc with Mr. and Mrs. Elliot.

Sept. 1. A perfectly magnificent day. Breakfasted at half past six and started with my alpenstock, a luncheon,&c., at seven A.M., as independent a feeling man as there was in all Switzerland. Ascended the Montanvert, which I reached at nine. There alone traversed the whole upper portion of the Mer de Glace, crossing the lower end of the Glacier du Tacul, striking and following up the glacier to near the foot of the valley at the foot of the Jorasses. Returned to the Montanvert about three and got to the hotel at half past five, dressed and dined. Spent the evening in the parlor of the hotel, Mr. Lucius Pratt (wholesale grocer of State St., Boston) and family and others being present. At half past ten to bed and sound slumbers.

Sept. 2. Weather perfect. Forenoon I took a long stroll through the southern end of the valley, where I had not gone before, studying the Glacier des Bossons and the boundaries of this end of the valley. It was a beautiful walk, full of deep quiet satisfaction and enjoyment. Afternoon I spent in my room, making up my journal and accounts. Finished letter number three for Patriot. Was happy in receiving a batch of letters from E., George, J.M.B. and the Duke of Sutherland. Evening in the parlor of the hotel. Mr. Elliot made me a parting call.

Sept. 3. A bright, fine morning, with very slight indication of change. Having decided last night to visit the Grands Mulets today, I waked and arose at four A.M., breakfasted at half past

five and started six precisely, alone and without a guide, to visit the Grands Mulets. I felt particularly well and vigorous and, without seeming to hasten, reached the Chalet de la Pierre Pointue at precisely quarter past eight. Being in quite a perspiration and the wind blowing cool, I procured some milk and made myself a generous bowl of porridge, divided my cold fowl with the occupants, smoked, looked at the views, etc. Soon after my arrival the weather changed, the wind arose, the clouds settled down and it began to sprinkle. The people said *mauvais* of the weather, so I had to make the best of it. I got fine views of the Grands Mulets and Dôme du Gouté, but the monarch refused to show his head. I left the mountain at half past twelve, after solacing myself with hot Eau de vie, and scratching this item in the book: "1870, September 3d. Left Chamounix at six A.M. precisely, alone and without a guide, intending to push on to the Grand Mulets. Arrived here at quarter past eight precisely. Soon after the weather changed and it began to rain; so my pet expedition went 'Up' and I went down." Before I got down quite a tempest arose, raining violently and I got pretty wet. Arrived home at three, changed my clothes and felt comfortable. Spent the evening in the parlor with ladies and Mr. Tunis G. Bergen, Jr., of New York, who is studying in Germany, France and England. To bed at half past ten.

This is the last entry in the diary.

On the next day, Mr. Randall happened to make the acquaintance of another American, Dr. James Baxter Bean, of Baltimore, who had been up the Brévent on September 3d, and they were joined by the Rev. George McCorkindale, a Scotch clergyman. Bean was thirty-six years old and McCorkindale forty, and none of the three had mountaineering experience. On the spur of the moment they decided to climb Mont Blanc, and set out on September 5th, with three guides and five porters, spending the night at the Grands Mulets.

The names of the guides were Jean Balmat, grandson of Jacques Balmat, Édouard Simond and Joseph Breton, none of them in the first flight of Chamonix men. The porters were Alphonse Balmat, Auguste Couttet, Auguste Cachat, Ferdinand Tairraz, and Joseph Graf, of Kandersteg, otherwise known as Jean Comte. The latter was an assistant at the Grands Mulets, replacing Olivier Gay, who had been killed with Mrs. Marke[3] on the mountain early in August. Graf had made his first ascent some days earlier with the English-

[3] Mrs. Marke was an American. See *Early Ascents, loc. cit.*, 58. State Department records contain no mention of this accident.

men, Stogdon and Marshall, who had for their leading guides Moritz Andermatten, of Visp, and Peter Taugwald, Sr.

The big telescope in the square before the church at Chamonix was much in demand next day (6th), for it became known that, due to a slight break in the weather, the party had started. They were seen about 2.15 P.M. in whirling snow and high wind near the rocks of the Petits Mulets, not far below the summit. It was noticed that from time to time they threw themselves down to prevent being carried away by the gale. A little while afterward all eleven could be seen through an opening in the clouds descending near the same place. *No one returned,* and thereafter the summit of the mountain was invisible for eight days.

Sylvain Couttet, an experienced guide in charge of the Grands Mulets, was at the Pierre Pointue chalet on the 6th and assumed that the tourists would remain at the Grands Mulets. On September 7th he went up on the nearby little Aiguille de la Tour with a telescope, but could see no tracks on the fresh snow. Becoming alarmed, he took a servant with him to the Grands Mulets, and at the same time sent the carpenter to Chamonix with a note to the mayor and the guide-chef, saying that if he found no one at the Grands Mulets he would plant a signal on the snow to the right of the inn, in which case a rescue party should be dispatched. Couttet reached his destination in two hours and found the place empty. He put out the signal and returned in all haste to Chamonix, where he found fourteen guides just setting out. Torrential rain assailed them at Pierre Pointue and snow fell as low as Pierre-à-l'Échelle, forcing them to descend to Chamonix. On the 15th Couttet and the justice of the peace, M. Mouchet, made an excursion toward the Flégère, and from Praz de Vialaz saw through the telescope five black points to the left of the Petits Mulets. These were the bodies of some of the victims.

Twenty-three men began the ascent on the 16th and on the following day found the bodies of McCorkindale and two porters, Auguste Couttet and Ferdinand Tairraz, 750 ft. below the summit, lying unroped with their heads uppermost, but their clothes somewhat torn as if they had fallen. There was a short but steep slope of ice immediately above them, and 300 ft. higher the searchers came upon Bean and another porter, Auguste Cachat, sitting down, the former with his head leaning on one hand and the elbow on a knapsack, ropes coiled up, alpenstocks, axes and knapsacks round

about them, one still containing meat, bread and cheese. Their location was between the top of the Mur de la Côte and the Petits Mulets, but far to the right of the usual route.

All five corpses, being frozen hard, were put into sacks and dragged down in three days to Chamonix. No trace of Mr. Randall and the other five could be discovered, but the guides, continuing their quest to the summit on the 20th, 21st and 22nd, found belts and gloves in the line of the great crevasse at the head of the Brenva Glacier on the Italian slope, where it is assumed that the climbers, becoming separated from the others, wandered in the storm and fell. The search was only abandoned after trenches had been dug and crevasses sounded.

At the Grands Mulets it was noted that Mr. Randall had left his compass behind, and while this did not prove that there was not another in the party, it was a question whether any use could have been made of it in the tempest. On Dr. Bean's body was a notebook[4] containing entries which make it one of the saddest documents in mountaineering history:

> Mont Blanc. Temperature 39 at 6 A.M. Monday Sept. 5th [at the Grands Mulets]. Tuesday Sept. 6th, temperature 34. At 2 A.M. ascended to the top of Mont Blanc with ten other men, eight guides and porters and Rev. Mr. McCorkindale and Mr. R. Arrd. at summit at 2½ o'clock when immediately I was enveloped in an awful snow-storm at some 15,000 ft. Dug a grotto and spent the night very uncomfortably—was very sick all night
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> Mont Blanc, Sept. 7th. If any one shall see this, they will please send it, this book, to Mrs. H. M. Bean, Jonesboro', E. Tennessee, United States of America.
>
> > My Darling Hessie: We have been on Mont Blanc in two days of awful snow-storm, we have lost our way, are in a grotto hewn in the snow 15,000 ft. above the sea. I do not think we will ever get down. If we do not, this may be found in some way and sent to you. Let Robert Hunter see it and have it published in the Baltimore papers. Have Robert close up the business. I hope he will do it right. We have no provisions and my feet are already frozen and I am quite exhausted. I have just strength to write these few words.

[4] Record of the Dept. of State, Consular Despatches, Geneva, Vol. 2, Jan. 1, 1870—Aug. 31, 1879. This copy in the National Archives differs from that given by Whymper in *Guide to Chamonix* (1911 edit., 55), and there are other printed versions, the variations being due to translation.

> Tell Chapin[5] I have left means for his education, and you must apply it properly. I will die in good faith in Jesus Christ and with many thoughts of you and Chapin. If I perish I bid you good bye and hope we will meet in heaven.
>
> Yours as ever,
>
> JAMES B. BEAN.

> Sept. 7th. Morn still very cold and snowing hard—much trouble with the men. Please write to Dr. A. H. Balderston,[6] Poste Restante, Paris, tell him of the accident and that my effects are on my body, at the Hotel de Mont Blanc, and two Portmanteaus sent by Post, Schweizerhof, Geneva, Suisse, and pay bills at the Hotel, etc. You will be remembered in heaven for your kindness.

These notes left several questions unanswered. As John Stogdon pointed out in his paper presented before the Alpine Club, it did not explain why, when the party began the descent at 2.30 P.M., they had descended so little by nightfall, or why they were not roped. It was curious that not one of the three guides was found, although two of the tourists were. Bean's notes do not state whether the six missing men were with them on that first night, and there is no information as to what effort was made on the 7th.

Early in 1879, John C. Randall, Jr., wrote to Edward Whymper, inquiring whether any further information could be obtained. Whymper immediately communicated with Stogdon, with Mr. Adams-Reilly,[7] and, through Mr. Freshfield (then editor of *A. J.*), with the Guide-Chef of Chamonix. Whymper also sent the younger Randall a copy of Reilly's newly completed map of the Mont Blanc chain, marking the position of the accident and other related points.

In Whymper's letter the following paragraphs are of interest:

> Mr. Stogdon replied that he had heard nothing subsequently to the publication of his paper, and Mr. Reilly also was without further information. The reply of the Guide-Chef has only arrived this day, and is enclosed herewith. The document is signed both by the Maire and by the Guide-Chef of Chamounix, who declare in the most explicit manner that the bodies of five persons alone have been recovered (two travellers and three porters); and that all rumors which may have been circulated

[5] Dr. Bean's son, who died in boyhood, was named for Dr. Chapin Harris, dean of Baltimore College of Dental Surgery.

[6] Dr. Bean's dental associate, with whom he had been travelling.

[7] A. M. W. Adams-Reilly (1836-85), a member of the Alpine Club, who made the first accurate survey of the chain of Mont Blanc.

to the contrary effect are entirely destitute of foundation . . . It is highly improbable that anything further will be heard for a long period of those who are missing.

At the time that the party were at the summit, Mr. Reilly was on the Col de Voza, watching Mont Blanc. He says that the weather was very bad, and was evidently much worse above. The mountain was almost entirely enveloped in cloud; but whilst he was watching it, between 3.30 and 4 P.M., the clouds broke and the summit became clear. Almost immediately, one of his guides called out "I see them" (meaning those who perished), and Reilly at once brought his field-glass to bear on the summit. He believes that he saw them; but, while he was looking, a thin streak of mist passed across the summit at a great rate, and shortly afterwards the whole mountain became covered again with clouds. The streak of mist passed across the summit. Mr. Reilly knew what this meant. It was a local whirlwind or tourmente, and he was at once prepared to hear that harm had come to the party. Shortly after these occurrences, Mr. Reilly returned to England, and told me what he had witnessed. I questioned him the other day to make sure that I had understood him alright.

When I first heard his story, it seemed to me not improbable that some of the party were actually blown away by the wind. It is much more likely than not that the wind eddied round the summit, and it would naturally sweep round to the Italian side, overlooking the Glacier de la Brenva. Even if not literally swept away, the members of the party would be involuntarily borne down the slopes towards the Brenva, which for some distance are not very steep. It is in this direction, in my opinion, the most vigorous search should have been prosecuted, especially after failing to discover them on the Chamounix side, or anywhere on the ordinary route up the mountain. Mr. Reilly concurs in this opinion.

Whymper continues with some speculation as to whether any traces of the missing would be found forty or fifty years later on the Brenva or Bossons slopes, and sends his correspondent an account of the Hamel accident, with a marked route showing the descent of the victims.

With this precedent [Whymper continues], you will readily understand why I mention the period of from forty to fifty years (from 1870) as one within which it is possible that the remains of Mr. Randall may be discovered. If you are able to do so, I would suggest to you the desirability of placing on record such details as would enable the certain identification of your father. His photograph, his clothing, his watch and any little peculiarities which you may be able to mention would all assist, though,

as all the others missing are guides or porters, there is not likely to be much difficulty in discriminating between them, if they should be found all together.

I desire to show you that upon this side we deeply sympathize with you; and recognize the fact that the circumstances which caused the death of Mr. Randall were beyond human control, and were almost beyond human foresight. Under any circumstances, the events of Sept. 6, 1870, would have produced a deep impression upon myself and upon my friends; and they caused a deeper impression because we felt that, had we been upon Mont Blanc on that day, our fate, in all probability, would have been equally unfortunate.

Mr. Charles H. Upton, U. S. consul at Geneva, sent the following report to the Hon. J. C. B. Bruce Davis, Assistant Secretary of State, in Washington:

Referring to my despatches 95 & 96 upon the subject of the accident at Mont-Blanc by which two of our countrymen lost their lives, I have the honor to report as follows, viz.:

I went to Chamounix on Saturday last, recovered such effects as were there, paid the debts of the deceased at that place, and learnt as much of the sad details of their fate as, perhaps, will ever be known.

On the 5th of September, 1870, John C. Randall of Quincy, Mass., Dr. Jas B. Bean, Dentist, 58 Saratoga Str., three doors from Charles Str., Baltimore, Rev. G. McCorkindale, of Gourock, Scotland, with three Guides and five Porters, set out from Chamounix for the ascension of Mont Blanc; they spent that night in the cabin of the *Grands Mulets* and were seen on the summit of Mont Blanc the next day, the 6th, at 2 o'clock P.M., where they were suddenly hidden from view by a dense fog which was followed by a furious snowstorm. They should have spent the night of the 6th at the *Grands Mulets* and returned to Chamounix on the 7th, but not returning on that day apprehensions were felt for their fate. The weather continued to be stormy so that the caravans sent in search of the party could get no farther for many days than the *Grands Mulets,* where they found the leathern bags of which the travellers had here divested themselves. Four several caravans were organized and sent up at different times, and finally, on the 17th, the bodies of Dr. Bean, Mr. McCorkindale and three Porters were found and their descent was commenced on that day, but it was not finished until the 19th—on the 20th they were buried at Chamounix.

Dr. Bean was found in a sitting posture with one leg further out than the other, with his left hand shading his eyes and the

right arm and hand extended, and in this posture—apparently that of one seized by a sudden reflexion, he was frozen stiff.

I enclose some extracts from a Diary found upon his person which were penciled by him in his last hours, showing a part of their suffering, and containing some directions for his family, and words of affection and resignation.

I enclose the diagnosis of the Physician at Chamounix.[8]

I enclose the burial certificate of the officiating clergyman.

Near Dr. Bean was found one of the Porters. About fifteen feet below and, over a precipice, were found the bodies of Rev. Mr. McCorkindale and two other Porters.

The last researches for Mr. Randall, the three Guides and two Porters were made on the 20th, 21st & 22nd Sept. The eleven men who were sent up slept at the *Grands Mulets,* and search was made in every direction without result. It is conjectured that Mr. Randall and those with him were blown over the mountain opposite from Chamounix and are lost in a glacier upon the Italian side; a knowledge of Dr. Bean's Diary may change this idea.

Mr. Randall did not, as intimated in a former despatch, make a Will, but what gave rise to this statement was a paper which he gave to his landlady on the eve of setting out, directing that, in case of accident, a friend of his in England should be written to and this was done; the friend, a Mr. Bradbury, replied to this letter, stating that were he not an invalid he would go to Chamounix, and that so soon as it was unquestionable that Mr. Randall was dead he would telegraph the sad news to Mrs. Randall.

I cannot close this despatch without mentioning with kind commendation the landlady of the Mont Blanc Hotel, Madame Cachat, where Dr. Bean and Rev. Mr. McCorkindale put up, and where their frozen bodies were prepared for the coffins by her own motherly hands with as much tenderness as if they had been her children instead of her guests. Among the last things she did, as I was leaving, was to place in my hands, while her eyes were blinded with tears, some hair which she had clipped from each of the deceased and carefully marked. Dr. Bean and Rev. Mr. McCorkindale are buried side by side in a neat walled enclosure, with shrubs and flowers upon the graves

[8] (Translation). The 19th September 1870 I verified the death of Doctor Bean, American. I found that Mr. Bean died in a sitting posture, the tongue between his teeth saying, perhaps, to himself—I am cold and here I remain. His death could not have taken more than a minute and a half. Finally it would seem that the Dr. reflected upon something deplorable. His death was rather while inhaling than exhaling. The right jugular vein was entirely empty of blood. The left arm broken at the shoulder, perhaps by the journey down. Hematosis not having taken place during exhalation was the cause of his death without suffering. One of his knees rested against a piece of ice.—Mauzett, C.

and a wooden cross at the head with only the names inscribed. It may be that their friends will desire a more permanent memorial.

In the war of 1870 so many thousands were losing their lives in France that the loss of a few more on a mountain attracted little attention. The tourists were unknown in the valley and no one was interested in writing a detailed account of the accident.

Dr. Bean was born on July 19th, 1834,[9] at the old Dunn place on Cherokee, in the eighth district, Tennessee. He was the son of Robert Bean and a great-grandson of Capt. William Bean, the pioneer, who built the first cabin in Washington County. After his medical education was completed, he practiced for several years in Micanopy, Florida, then entered the Baltimore College of Dental Surgery, from which he graduated in 1860. He practiced in Augusta and Macon, Georgia, and during the Civil War was Hospital Steward,[10] in charge of a ward in one of the Confederate hospitals devoted to the treatment of jaw fractures. After the war he settled in Baltimore, where he displayed much energy and was highly esteemed. He invented an interdental splint and an apparatus for manufacturing and administering nitrous oxide gas, and made valuable improvements in the method of working aluminum. He was one of the founders of the Maryland Society of Dentists in 1866. His wife, the former Hester Bovell, of Jonesborough, brooding over her husband's death, became insane and died not long afterward.

According to the *Pall Mall Gazette,* McCorkindale was the last of seven brothers, all of whose deaths were sudden.

Leslie Stephen, who had recently been President of the Alpine Club remarking on this tragedy,[11] said: "With a really experienced guide, I cannot but believe that the party who were lost must have been able to find their way. They might have suffered frost-bites, or even lost some of the weaker members of the party; but that eleven men should be so bewildered as actually to be incapable of discovering a route, implies a singular want of that instinct for

[9] This is the date given at the time of his passport application, Whymper being incorrect in stating that Bean was fifty-four years old.

[10] This was the rank held by dentists in the Confederate Army, but it is possible that Dr. Bean was acting merely as a civilian specialist. As late as May, 1862, he had requested exemption from military service.

[11] *A. J. 5,* 189.

which a good guide is generally remarkable, and which all tolerable guides ought to possess."

There had been other fatalities on Mont Blanc before, although none so extensive, and Americans had not been involved in any prior to 1870. In 1820, the guides of Dr. Hamel, a Russian official attached to the embassy in London, were overwhelmed by an avalanche. Many years later, Professor Forbes, while measuring the rate of flow of the Mer de Glace, estimated that the bodies would reappear in about forty years, which they did in 1861, the head of one of the guides being still recognizable after its long entombment. The remains of Captain Arkwright, who was similarly lost in 1866, reached the end of the Bossons Glacier in 1897, and it was rumored, however falsely, that his brothers, coming from England, saw the youthful countenance unchanged through preservation by the ice.

Randall's son, John C. Randall, Jr., went abroad in 1885, hoping for news of his father's body; a daughter visited Chamonix in 1891 and 1904 for the same purpose, and five of his grand-children have been in the valley. But all in vain, further confirming the probability that he had fallen on the opposite side of the mountain.

The *Quincy Ledger* of Sept. 22nd, 1911, stated that in 1909 a broken alpenstock with McCorkindale's name on it was found on the Bossons Glacier, together with a felt hat, a coil of rope and the ice-axe of Tairraz; and that in 1910 the ice-axe of Édouard Simond, the only relic to appear on the Italian side, was discovered at the foot of the Brenva Glacier.

The *New York Times* of Jan. 24th, 1927, carried a note announcing that a pistol belonging to Bean had been picked up at the terminus of the Bossons Glacier. It was quite customary for tourists of the time to take pistols to the summit for the purpose of testing the diminished sound of firing at high altitudes. More than this, however, it served to give an excusable scientific tone to an expedition which could not yet be referred to, at least in America, in terms of pure sport.

Shortly afterward a guide found an ice-axe with Bean's name inscribed on the shaft. These were the last evidences of the disaster and had taken fifty-seven years to descend 9000 ft.

Note—The writer has corresponded with three of Randall's granddaughters and his grandson, Mr. A. F. Arnold, Syracuse, N. Y., who have made available his portrait and diary, as well as letters and news-clippings relating to the accident. Members of the family were present in Boston and heard Edward

Whymper describe the disaster when he spoke before the Lowell Institute in October, 1900.

Data on Dr. Bean have been supplied by Dr. J. Ben Robinson, dean of the Baltimore College of Dental Surgery, Dr. W. N. Hodgkin, Warrenton, Va., and Dr. L. L. Schwartz, New York City. The latter furnished photostatic copies of the consular reports in the National Archives. Dr. Schwartz has included Dr. Bean's scientific work in "The Development of the Treatment of Jaw Fractures," *Journ. of Oral Surgery* ii (July, 1944), 193.

The best printed account is in Durier's *Le Mont Blanc* (1923 edit.), 447, where Sylvain Couttet's immediate recollections are given in full. Whymper, in his *Guide to Chamonix* (1911 edit.), 54, gives a good summary, but uses a translated version of Bean's diary. It is inadequately handled by S. d'Arve in *Les Fastes du Mont-Blanc* (1876), 280, and by C. E. Mathews in *Annals of Mont Blanc,* 233.

The *Boston Daily Advertiser,* Sept. 16, 1870, carried an account of the accident, as did also the *N. Y. Times* of Oct. 13, the *Anglo-American Times* of Oct. 22, and the *Journal de Genève.* The work of the search parties is described in *L'Écho des Alpes* (1870), No. 4, 266, and (1871), No. 1, 58, and an Italian statement will be found in *Boll. del C. A. I.* v (no. 17), 152. References to *A. J.* are given in footnotes (*5,* 189, 192; *11,* 80). Notices of Bean will be found in *Amer. Journ. of Dental Surgery* iv (1871), 287, and in Jonesborough, Tenn., *Herald and Tribune,* June 11, 1902.

Related articles appeared in the *Providence Journal* (Chamouni, July 20), 1883; E. Whymper in London *Graphic,* Oct. 13, 1894; *Boston Sunday Post,* July 24, 1910; *American-Examiner* (date unknown), 1911, but prior to *Quincy Ledger,* Sept. 22, 1911, in which the finding of McCorkindale's alpenstock is mentioned. The discovery of Bean's pistol is noted in *N. Y. Times,* Jan. 24, 1927, and in *McNaught's Monthly* 8:66 (March, 1927).

It is not possible to give the dates of various newspaper accounts, other than the dates given by the correspondents themselves. See London *Times:* letter from J. B. [irbeck] member of the A.C., dated Sept. 9, 1870; letters from ALP and A. W. Moore, dated Oct. 1, mentioning probable causes of the accident; letters from E. D. Burrowes, Sept. 9, and Robert Binnie, Sept. 30, stating that a total of 2335 francs was raised for relief of the guides' families. A note in the *Pall Mall Gazette* gives a brief biography of McCorkindale. The *Boston Evening Transcript* (European correspondence of) contains a long account from M.M.W., dated Sept. 7-9, 1870. There is also an article by Sterling Heilig, with many inaccurate details of this and other accident, dated Chamonix, Aug. 25, 1908, appearing in the issue of Sept. 17.

J. M. T.