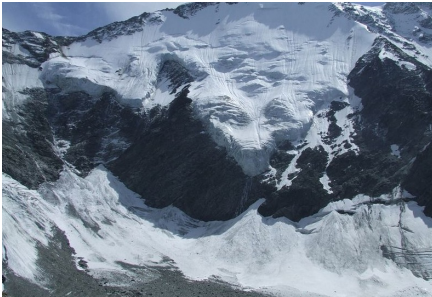


11th July

Memory Verse:

If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Romans 8:31b-32

An adventure to read¹



Five British mountaineers, with two local guides, set off on the morning of **June 11th**, 1861, on the second stage of an attempt to climb **Mont Blanc**.

They had spent the previous afternoon climbing the lower slopes of the mountain and faced the formidable task of scaling a steep mountain wall, about 600 metres high. At the top was the Col de Miage which you can see in the picture,² a high pass between

Italy and France from which they hoped to find a way to the summit. On each side of the **col**, steep rocky slopes fell away to the **glaciers** below.

The team was led by three of the best mountaineers of their day: Rev. Charles Hudson, who had already made the first ever ascent of Mont Blanc without guides, Leslie Stephen and Francis Fox Tuckett, both very experienced climbers. They were accompanied by two young and less experienced mountaineers, Frank Mather and John Birkbeck, the latter only nineteen years of age.

They successfully negotiated the mountain wall and the flat surface of the col. The guides began to prepare breakfast while the others wandered round admiring the view.

Suddenly they realised that Birkbeck was missing. The guides picked up his tracks and followed them to the edge of the mountain wall. There the footsteps stopped abruptly and far below, on the glacier, could be seen a tiny black speck. Birkbeck had slipped over the edge and fallen over five hundred metres. Could he still be alive? Could any man slide down the side of a mountain for nearly a third of a mile and still live?

When his friends reached him they found to their joy and amazement that he was still breathing, and a quick examination revealed that though he was scratched and bruised from head to foot there were no broken bones.

The great danger was from delayed shock which could kill the boy unless he could be got to hospital very quickly. Fortunately they had a sledge with them, divided into sections distributed among the party. This was assembled and Birkbeck was strapped on, covered with a rug and coats.

The journey back was a nightmare. The sledge stuck in the soft snow, caught itself on projecting rocks and was always in danger of falling into a **crevasse**. Birkbeck was shivering violently as the shock began to work on him and the men knew that every minute could make a difference between life and death.

One of the guides went on ahead to bring help and by seven o'clock that evening the boy was in bed under the care of a doctor. His condition was serious at first but in the end he recovered fully. Later he returned to finish the job he had started and climbed Mont Blanc.

1 Adapted from Owen, Evan, *What Happened Today?* Book 2 available on the *Mothers' Companion* flashdrive <https://motherscompanion.weebly.com/>

2 By MuTiN - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=5807224>

Something to plan

Do you enjoy walking in the mountains? Have you ever climbed a Munro? If you did the lesson for June 18th you will remember that these are the mountains in Britain that are over 3000 ft./914.4m high. Accidents can happen in the mountains even in Britain and if you do go mountain walking or climbing you need to know some basic safety principles. You will find a guide produced by the Mountain Rescue Service in today's optional resources files.³ Did you know, for instance, that the recognised emergency signal for alerting other parties to an emergency or directing a mountain rescue team to your location is six blasts on a whistle (or six torch flashes) repeated every minute? Learn the safety rules and you might be able to plan a mountain adventure of your own – perhaps in the holidays.

Dictionary work

I have highlighted some specialist mountain related words for you to look up in your dictionary. Write down what you think they mean before you look them up. Guess from the context of the story if you do not know. Were you right?

Activity for small children

If it is practical, younger children might like to do an indoor mountain rescue today. (Lots of imagination and “pretend” needed!) You are going to climb Mount Holme. (This is the inside of your house.) The team that sets off to do the mountaineering must be well equipped and have a whistle and some means of telling the time that will let them know when a minute has elapsed. Some sort of map and a simple compass would be good too. Spend some time discussing what is needed – use the leaflet in the optional resources files. Some first aid stuff including something that can be used to make a sling or bandage a “broken” leg to the “good” one is required for the game. If you don't have the items you can *imagine*. You also need a group (or child) to represent the Mountain Rescue Service. They need to be well equipped too and stationed as far away as possible from the scene of the action. If the MRS post can be somewhere where they have to listen carefully to hear the whistle, so much the better.

The climbing party sets off. It is easy going through the ground floor but make a big deal of the stairs and decide how you are going to ascend the Great Stair rock face. Put on your crampons use your ice axe – and your imagination. Once up on the Landing Summit you can pause to describe the magnificent view. Now (making sure no one actually falls down stairs) someone can sustain an injury. Bandages and sling can be applied and the six whistle blasts every minute will alert the Mountain Rescue Service. The MRS officials can carefully time and count the whistle blasts thus recognising a true emergency. The MRS should not rush pell-mell to the scene but proceed with realistic caution and the climbing party should continue their set of six blasts every minute until the MRS *actually arrive* on the scene. Discuss the condition of the casualty – can he walk? – and assist him down to safety and a drink and a biscuit for all concerned.

You can easily adapt this to outdoors especially if you have a climbing frame or similar item.

Something to think about

Nicole Oresme (1320 – 1382), famous for the saying, “I indeed know nothing except that I know nothing,” died on 11th July. He was, in fact, a very knowledgeable man, one of greatest scientists and thinkers of the middle ages.

3 By kind permission of Mountain Rescue England and Wales.

One of the things that held science back in the middle ages was a belief in the teachings of the pagan philosopher Aristotle. Even when the Bible contradicted Aristotle's ideas the Roman Catholic Church preferred Aristotle. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)⁴ had taught that since the Bible was not written in technical philosophical language it should be taken as figurative or poetic when it contradicted Aristotle's ideas.



Nicole Oresme was one of the scholars who did not accept Aristotle's ideas unthinkingly. In his day, Aristotle's model of the solar system with the stationary earth at the centre and the planets moving in an orderly way round it was the view of the scientific consensus. Aristotle's theory that the earth is stationary seemed obvious. After all, if you shot an arrow into the air it would fall down again to the same place. If the earth was moving the arrow would land wherever you were when you shot the arrow up. Not so, said Oresme for the air is moving with the earth. He went on to explain what happens in terms of someone on a ship:

...if a man were in a ship moving rapidly eastward without his being aware of the movement and if he drew his hand in a straight line down along the ship's mast, it would seem to him that his hand were moving with a rectilinear motion; so, according to this theory it seems to us that the same thing happens with the arrow which is shot straight down or straight up. Inside the boat moved rapidly eastward, there can be all kinds of movements – horizontal, criss-cross, upward, downward, in all directions – and they seem to be exactly the same as those when the ship is at rest.⁵



The insistence on viewing the world through the lens of Aristotle led to problems with which Christians are all too familiar today. Nowadays it is not Aristotle's theories that are held to be sacrosanct, even when they flatly contradict the Bible, but those of Darwin. Arguments not unlike those of Aquinas are also used to assign the opening chapters of the Bible to some literary form – poetry, allegory or even myth – that will not get in the way of the evolutionary hypothesis. Clinging to Aristotle held back science. Clinging to Darwin also has a harmful effect.⁶

The strange looking black object in the foreground of the picture is an armillary sphere. This is a kind of map of the heavens showing the track of the planets visible from earth. In Oresme's day the earth was in the centre of the model. Later on armillary spheres were made with the sun in the centre. They are still popular today as ornaments and you can sometimes see a sun-dial version in a park or garden. Keep a look out and see if you can spot one.

⁴ See lesson for 28th January.

⁵ Quoted in Fritz Allhoff, Marc Alspector-Kelly, Timothy McGrew (Eds.) *The Philosophy of Science: An Historical Anthology* (Oxford, 2009)

⁶ See the lesson for 29th April for an example.