

THE MOUNTAINEER'S FIRST RULE.

MANY Club members, even those who have had some climbing experience on rock and snow, don't seem to realise the first standard climbing rule, which outweighs all other technicalities that come gradually with experience. The rule is :—*A roped climbing party must be guarded, from start to finish of a climb, in such a manner that if a slip should occur at any given moment an accident simply could not happen.* If a party participate in a climb and this safeguard is not in force, then the party is not mountaineering at all. They are only traversing a part of the hill on which they should not be on. This applies even though the members of the party have been ascending hills for many years. It does not matter what one may read in climbing books, this rule must be obeyed before any other. Every party consisting of not less than three persons must have a member in it who is capable of enforcing this safeguard and who knows how to bring it into play, otherwise it is not a climbing party. The descent by a snow route of any difficulty should never be adopted unless it has previously been ascended the same day, or is very well known to a member of the party. The person in charge of a party should have at least five or six winters' snow experience for Scotland and a great many more for the Alps. This climbing business must be taken more seriously. The giant in the Cairngorms is as a little child when first above the line of perpetual snow. At first the technique of step-cutting is not so important, provided the steps are made safe. The thing is the party's safety. In these days of "Scouts" and "Guides," the person who expects to be linked on to a rope and does not know the four essential climbing knots * and their purpose, should be ashamed, especially if a Cairngorm Club member. The people without proper boots and ice-axes reduce the strength of the party, and obviously the party is better served by these persons keeping to the tourist route. We must remember that the strength of a party is equal to its weakest link.—J. McC.

* *v. C. C. J.*, Vol. X, page 119.