PROCEEDINGS OF THE ALPINE CLUB.

May 4.—Mr. T. W. HINCHLIFF, *President, in the Chair.*

Mr. T. Hamond was elected a Member.

Mr. T. MIDDLEMORE read a paper on the passage of the Col des Grandes Jorasses.

At the conclusion of the paper some discussion took place as to the propriety of undertaking the expedition described in it, and other expeditions of a similar nature.

Mr. MOORE remarked on the dangerous character of the enterprise, shown by the loss of the ice-axes of the whole party. He considered that the distinction between what was dangerous and what was merely difficult should always be kept in mind, and characterised places liable to be swept by falling stones as dangerous, inasmuch as the element of skill was exhausted.

Mr. GEORGE regretted the passion of the younger members of the Club for accomplishing something new, which led them to choose increasingly dangerous routes in preference to the really useful passes which, though old, often afforded scenery of greater magnificence than these new but aimless scrambles.

These views were opposed by Mr. DENT, who said that if they had been acted upon by the Club in former years, the finest expeditions in the Alps would never have been effected. Many ascents which had in the first instance been condemned as foolhardy had since been recognised as both practicable and safe. The Matterhorn was a glaring instance of a mountain which was once thought unscaleable being found comparatively easy when the ground to be traversed became better known.

Mr. HEATHCOTE and Mr. STOGDON warmly supported Mr. Dent's views.

Mr. ECCLES, who had formerly attempted the pass, made some remarks upon the difficulties (chiefly consisting of falling stones and rocks glazed with ice) which compelled him to abandon the expedition.

The PRESIDENT said that it was impossible to dictate beforehand to members of the Club what they ought and what they ought not to attempt. They must use their own judgment, and he would be the last to wish to fetter it. The moral to be drawn from the discussion was, that experienced climbers should freely attempt that which in their judgment was feasible, but should neglect no known precaution in the course of the expedition. He resented, however, the view that a pass often crossed or peak often ascended was, if fine in itself, less interesting or attractive on that account. The finest peaks and passes of the Alps were all old expeditions, and members of the Club could not do better than ascend them and cross them again and again.*

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* *Note by the Editor.*—The remarks in Mr. Middlemore's paper (see p. 231), which gave rise to this discussion, seem to have been elicited by the editorial note appended to the 'New Expeditions' in the November number of the Journal.

For this note I am solely responsible; but I had ascertained before inserting it

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June 1.—Mr. C. E. MATHEWS, *Vice-President, in the Chair.*

Mr. J. H. Wainwright was elected a Member of the Club.

Mr. MAUND read a paper on 'An Adventure on the Meije.'

Mr. MOORE could quite understand the correct line of descent from the Brêche being missed in a fog. The proper way was by the eastern of two ridges of rock which divide the glacier, and is not difficult provided the rocks are taken and quitted at the proper points.

June 18.—The Summer Dinner took place at the Crystal Palace: the President, Mr. T. W. Hinchliff, in the Chair. Seventy-two members and their friends were present.

A large panorama taken from the Gross Glockner, painted in oils by an Austrian artist, Herr Pernhaut, is on view for a short time at the Alpine Club rooms.

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that the feeling expressed in it was shared by several of the leaders of the Club. It was not, I should like to add, drawn forth by any particular expedition, but by observation of a tendency shown in the climbing records, public and private, of the last few seasons. Mr. Middlemore has entirely misread this note, if he fancies it was intended as a general recommendation to members to give up looking for any more new expeditions. Such preaching could scarcely have come from me, and I am rather surprised to be suspected of it. Readers, if they will take the trouble to turn back, will see that what I did offer was a strong warning against a particular danger—that arising from falling snow or stones.

In arguing against an opponent of all further new expeditions, Mr. Middlemore is, I think, attacking a dummy of his own making. The only 'New Expeditions' I, or any other members of the Club, wish to condemn are those which involve a breach of the rules we are accustomed to consider as constituting mountain-craft. To cross a crevassed névé without a rope, to ascend deliberately a series of snow-slopes in a very dangerous condition would, we shall all probably agree, be an unwarrantable risk of life. To climb a peak or pass by a route, easy or difficult, habitually swept by avalanches is surely equally bad mountaineering.

To this danger Mr. Middlemore's proposal to climb 'tentatively' does not apply. You might as well go for a tentative walk across the targets at Shoeburyness during big gun practice, as up an avalanche-swept slope or gully.

It appears to me, however, that in principle we are all agreed, since Mr. Middlemore also advises new expeditions being undertaken with due care. An exact definition of 'due care' would be hard to arrive at. But it certainly excludes all ascents which a climber's conscience will not afterwards allow him to recommend in cold blood to his friends. In cases of ordinary difficulty each climber and his guides may be trusted to judge for themselves. But unseen dangers are in moments of enthusiasm apt to be too lightly regarded, and an occasional reminder of their reality is, I believe, expedient.

Further, as it seems to me, Mr. Middlemore takes a wrong view of the object of the Alpine Club's existence. I do not think its members will be at all prepared to consider its mission fulfilled, and to dissolve when the last possible Alpine climb has been accomplished. There are other mountains besides the Alps. But even if we were confined to that range the Club would justly continue to exist for the fulfilment of its true 'raison d'être' as a pleasant bond of social union between those who have a taste in common, the love of the Alps. To create such a bond, not to promote scientific pursuits, fill the pockets of guides or innkeepers, or encourage bold adventure, was the object of its founders, and although the Club in its long life has naturally produced effects other than those at first contemplated, there is no reason to believe it has changed its original character.

I should have preferred to say thus much at the Club, where my remarks would have been open both to general comment and Mr. Middlemore's reply. For the latter, however, these pages are always open.—D. W. F.

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