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ADDRESS TO THE ALPINE CLUB.

By F. C. GROVE.

(Read before the Alpine Club, February 1, 1887.)

‘**H**OW many hours a day did you do lessons?’ said Alice to the Mock Turtle.

‘Ten hours the first day,’ answered the other; ‘nine the next, and so on.’

‘What a curious plan!’ exclaimed Alice.

‘That’s the reason they’re called lessons,’ the Gryphon remarked. ‘Because they lessen from day to day.’

‘Then the eleventh day must have been a holiday?’ observed the heroine, after some thought.

‘Of course it was,’ said the Mock Turtle.

‘And how did you manage on the twelfth?’ Alice went on eagerly.

‘That’s enough about lessons,’ the Gryphon interrupted in a very decided tone; ‘tell her something about games now.’

Well, I am very much in the position of the Mock Turtle without having a Gryphon to aid me with his singular facility in non-committal answer; and without having any games whatever to offer the Alpine Club, I have to explain what happened on the twelfth day. It so fell out that my accession to the office in which I have been but a very weak successor to those who preceded me, occurred at a time which, figuratively speaking, corresponded with the eleventh day above indicated. The Alpine Club after many years of hard work, which had lessened latterly, not on account of any want of zeal in the students but because there was less and less for their faculties to work upon, gave itself a whole holiday; and now a rule which it were impious to dis-

obey, because it rests on inspiration and on nothing else in particular that anyone knows of, compels the expiring, or rather the now defunct, president to give an account of what occurred during and after the whole holiday.

That is his plain duty and he must perform it. I can best illustrate the position by reference to a well-known American story. 'And then,' said the narrator of a hunting legend, 'the beaver climbed a tree.' 'But a beaver can't climb a tree,' observed a matter-of-fact listener. 'By gosh, sir,' said the other, 'he *had* to climb a tree! the dog was crowding him so.' As with that beaver so with the late president of the Alpine Club. He is called upon to do what at first sight seems impossible, but a dog in the shape of duty crowds him, and he must strive to perform the task. Grand repose is something noble to contemplate, but a retrospect of repose does not seem likely to be a stirring and varied history, such as the Alpine Club justly expects, mindful of what two former presidents have done. An attempt must be made to deal with the subject. Happily the repose, though tolerably complete at times, was broken at others, and at the end there was some promise of a splendid awakening.

It will be remembered that my predecessor, in the admirable address which he delivered at the conclusion of his term of office, spoke sympathetically of the want of new land to work upon from which the Club was suffering during his time. After his retirement from the post he had filled so well, things got yet worse, and the Club was at its wits' end—having taken twenty-six years to accomplish the journey. The members were very much in the position of junior members of the Bar, or of the ten cream-coloured horses who drag a moderately sized car. They were full of zeal and energy, but there was nothing for them to bring their zeal and energy to bear upon. It was found that even the wrong routes up mountains were not infinite in number, and that there was a limit to the signification of the word pass, although undoubtedly it is one of the widest in the English language. These painful truths forced themselves upon unwilling minds, and, all undesired, rest was taken; but to some men rest is impossible, and I need not say that to such men the Alpine Club has hitherto been the most congenial of all places of union, and that we number not a few of them amongst our members. Repose being to them a thing abhorrent, they determined to find work, and much study, much burning of the midnight Edison, much micro-

scopic observation of the map, enabled them to discover some places in the Alps which had not yet become haunts for invalids, or strolling grounds for interesting young ladies.

There exists in this much-abused universe, where men seem to take singular pleasure in proving to Providence the mistakes made in creating them, a peculiarly detestable class called statists or statisticians—I know not which word is the more ugly and unmouthable—who are always informing us of facts which no rational being can by any possibility care a dump to know. One of them, for instance, will take some unpleasant land and inform us how many inhabitants there are to a square mile there; he might just as well tell us how many fleas there are to a square yard of Dauphiné blanket. But there is one sort of work to which a member of this order might have applied himself with advantage to his kind, or at least to those few amongst them who stand in the front ranks. A statist might have told us, in the beginning of 1884, how many expeditions there were to any given peak or ridge. The result, I believe, would have surprised the world, and yet more would it have surprised the world to know that, despite this *opus reticulatum*, there were some tracks not yet macadamised, some points unreached, and one considerable peak still unimpressed by man's foot or any other portion of his frame.

Such was the case, however, in the beginning of 1884. Work was found on the eleventh, and even on the twelfth day there was not complete repose. That indomitable mountaineer who, after labouring in the Alps in the summer, finds time, despite his grave avocations, to edit with such admirable knowledge and thoroughness the literary work of those who are willing to tell of their rambles, discovered in 1884 a variety of new expeditions in the Cottian and Graian districts, and in the Dauphiné. In company with the younger Almer, Mr. Coolidge scaled heights and crossed passes showing, as he had often done before, his extraordinary powers of endurance and his minute topographical knowledge. In the same year some variations of established routes were made; and it is worthy of note that men were not alone in energetically seeking work to do in the Alps despite the fact that they had been born a trifle late, and that two remarkable expeditions were made by ladies; one ascended a new peak considerably more than 13,000 feet high, which, overshadowed by the Weisshorn, seems strangely

enough to have escaped notice ; and the other made a new and very difficult descent of a great mountain without 'giving a chance,' to borrow a phrase from cricket—gravitation in this case representing the field. It is pleasant to speak of these achievements, and latterly there has been another considerable one, as a lady has ascended the Aiguille du Dru ; so let it be hoped that ladies will continue to climb the Alps. With women, as with men, it has been found that the best of the sex take very naturally to mountaineering, and if they come in increased numbers to the snow-line, their presence will, I am sure, be welcomed by all whose welcome they will care for.

In a field which it is to be feared ladies will not reach for some time, as it is considerably further than the Alps, and somewhat trying when reached, a great mountaineering feat was performed in 1884 ; but though the mountaineer who accomplished it is a member of our Club, we cannot unfortunately call him a countryman. Herr Maurice de Déchy's ascent of Adai Choch will always rank high amongst mountain expeditions, as will also his recent ascent of Elbruz, made in circumstances of extraordinary difficulty. Of another feat of a very different kind it is, if possible, still more pleasant to speak, as in this case the successful performer was an Englishman. In 1884 Mr. Dent, now our president, showed us that it was still possible to write a most interesting and amusing book about the Alps, to discourse with infinite wit and humour on what must be admitted to be a well-worn theme, and to convince a world which still remained sceptical how much the finer faculties are stimulated by the laughing gas which is inhaled by the ardent above the snow-line.

The season of 1885 was, to use the language of retail trade, decidedly quiet, but Mr. Coolidge continued his systematic exploration of the Cottian Alps, the Dauphiné, and the Graians ; and Mr. Seymour King ascended in brilliant style a real indisputable peak which, marvellous to say, had never previously given accommodation to any traveller's person. His climb of the Aiguille Blanche de Peuteret, which he described so well in the pages of the 'Alpine Journal,' will, perhaps, be remembered in the same way that the last shot in a great action is remembered. Otherwise there is not much to speak of so far as regards our own Club. Some remarkable expeditions, without guides, were made by members of the Austrian Alpine Club, but I prefer to allude to these merely on account of the terrible accident in which

their young and daring leader lost his life. It is impossible, however, in a paper of this kind—a retrospect of three years' work on the Alps—together to pass over the subject of accidents, and I much regret to say that with regard to them I differ from some of my predecessors whose superior qualifications for judging the question I desire to acknowledge in no conventional speech. I believe myself that accidents are not altogether avoidable, and that they will continue to occur in the Alps. Whenever mishaps come there is an attempt, invariably a very skilful and honest attempt, to show that they might have been avoided, and the necessary inference from all these able arguments is, that there should be no catastrophes on the great mountains. Does not forty years' experience prove the contrary? It has been shown again and again that accidents should not happen, need not happen, cannot happen, if proper precautions are taken; but nevertheless accidents continue to happen, and in 1885 again there was unhappily no lack of them. I think it best to look facts in the face, and while fully recognising that many misfortunes in the Alps have been due to heedlessness and incompetence, to admit that perfect freedom from misfortune cannot be hoped for. Seeing what has happened during these many years, can it be maintained that mountaineering not only ought to be, but may be, rendered absolutely free from danger? The danger is very remote where there are due knowledge and skill, but it is, to say the least, doubtful whether it can be completely eliminated. Perhaps no really great sport can be quite free from peril. Is this to be lamented? One may well hesitate before answering the question in the affirmative.*

With 1886 came the uprising after rest that I have spoken of. Our senior vice-president and our honorary secretary betook themselves to the Caucasus, and another member of the Club would, to my certain knowledge, have gone had not his companion at the last moment been detained in England, and very naturally he did not care for a solitary expedition in those lonely valleys. The two who went did passing well amid trials which would not only have taxed the patience of Job, but would have caused a jury to return a verdict of justifiable homicide if he had killed his comforters. They camped on the borders of the great ice-valley of Djanga, and then, with mighty un-

* When writing this passage I was unaware that an Australian poet had expressed the same idea much more aptly.

trodden peaks close to them, they had, during the chronic black tempest of the Caucasus, to pass many days in forced inaction, with no consolation save each other's speech and the thought that they were doing their duty, and setting a good example to their fellow-creatures living in ease and dryness in the cities of the plain. At last, however, the celestial water-service got out of order for a brief space, and during some abnormal fine weather they were victorious on that extremely beautiful mountain Tau Tetnuld or Totonal; but they narrowly escaped the honour of being martyrs to their cause, for had it not been for their own remarkable presence of mind and that of their guides, they might have 'become subjective,' to use Auguste Comte's expression, on the tremendous slopes which rise above the great glacier which forms the base of that strange Djanga valley. Of their expeditions, however, you will hear from themselves,* and therefore I will say no more of them save to congratulate them and the Alpine Club on what they have achieved.

And now, like the Vicar of Bray, I turn, a change of view being desirable, from that which is past to that which is to come, or which may come, to what is hidden for us in what has long been known with somewhat realistic imagery as the womb of the future. A German once said of a distinguished Englishman that he had a great behind but no before—a noble past but no future. Have we too nothing but a great collective past to look back upon? Have we done all that can be done, and is there no prospect of serene and happy labour for us in days to come? The question is more easily put than answered, a peculiarity which it shares with other questions. There are some, not cynics or unbelievers, who think that the Alpine Club, having fulfilled its mission and, unlike any other English institution, having been imitated all over Europe, must now rest content with its many laurel garlands, and enjoy a green old age, until it is wafted to that peaceful haven where the troubles of corporate existence are over; the limbo, in fact, where good clubs go to when they die—a place which has hitherto escaped the exploration even of the Society for Psychical Research. By the younger and more energetic members of our Club these views are, I much fear, regarded as painful but indisputable signs of premature old age. I am far from

* Mr. Dent's paper on the 'Ascent of Tau Tetnuld' was read at the next meeting of the Club, and Mr. Donkin's, on the journey generally, at the May meeting.

agreeing with this; but, on the other hand, though I at one time rather inclined to the despised ideas, I have now entirely abandoned my opinion, and am inclined to think that there is a great future for the Club if only they will do what is recognised as the first duty of all mountaineers, and look facts in the face. Let me be pardoned for using the expression a second time, but we must look them in the face, however much we may desire to avert our gaze. There is no doubt that, for those who are not content with routes of great beauty, but undoubtedly well worn, who desire big expeditions savouring of novelty, something satisfying a desire for enterprise, the Alps are absolutely played out. They are frequented, and will, I believe, continue to be largely frequented, by men who are content to gratify their love for mountain scenery and for the finest form of bodily exercise, and do not desire untrodden ground, and do not despise expeditions because they have often been made before. But for those who have a more fervent ambition, the Alps are no longer a fitting place. They are exhausted and have been exhausted for long, and they are not now a field for men who are perhaps the least exhausted of any to be found on the face of the earth. It is with the Alpine Club as it is with an Indian tribe. The young braves want work. At present our most capable members find themselves, if they do not care for a form of mountaineering in which dulness alternates with unnecessary danger, condemned to sit with, so to speak, their legs folded in hopeless inaction. Any amount of mental and physical vigour but no vent for it. The case is a sad one. Here as elsewhere we find ourselves confronted with the grave question—what is to become of the unemployed?

Well, I think I can answer it so far as we are concerned. Politicians must deal with its other aspects; but to make my response intelligible I must ask you to take a look back, or rather to contemplate at once the past and the present. How extraordinary does it seem, when we think of the year 1857, to contrast the facilities for world travel which then existed with those that exist now? There is no need to give you a long comparative list of deep-sea steamers and railways in distant lands; but it may broadly be said, with no fear of exaggeration, that in that year a journey to South Italy was thought nearly as big a business as a journey to East India is now; and as facilities for going far have increased, so has it become cheaper and cheaper. It has been said, I believe with substantial

truth, that to take a long voyage on board a great ocean steamer is a very fairly economical way of passing a holiday. World travel, in fact, is no longer reserved for a few rich and adventurous men, but has become a recognised pursuit. Not long ago I met abroad an American lady who had herself been to most places, and asked me if I was fond of travel? I answered, that in a humble way I was. Europe or globe-trotting? she simply inquired. Well, now that globe-trotting has become so common, is the Alpine Club to ignore it and lag behind? We must not look upon the St. Gotthard, the Chemin de Fer de l'Est, and the Paris-Genève or Paris-Lausanne, as the sole roads to happiness. There are other routes leading to ranges higher than the Alps, and it is now comparatively easy and not enormously expensive to traverse them; and along these lines our younger and more daring members must thread their way. Your president, gentlemen, and Mr. Donkin, both very busy men, have, as I have pointed out, shown you what can be done, and I trust that their example will be followed and enlarged upon, and that other members, with more time at their disposal, will not only seek the snows of the Caucasus, but will make more degrees longitude, east or west, as the case may be. The time has now arrived when it is absolutely necessary to break fresh ground; and unless this is done we shall cease to be the leading body of mountaineers; and have to be content with an honoured but effete old age, leading to extinction. As the youthful fox learns from the thoughtful and benevolent cub-hunter—we must go far afield or perish.

THE ASCENT OF TETNULD TAU.*

BY CLINTON DENT (*President*).

(Read before the Alpine Club, March 1, 1887.)

A STRONG inclination to follow good advice has ever actuated me, and it has been matter for constant regret that opportunities for so doing seldom if ever occurred. No great while ago I put myself in a literary position to receive much wise counsel; and I got it. Being desirous, when engaged on this paper, to profit by lessons inculcated, and anxious to frame something that might be worthy of perusal, I

* I preserve the title under which the paper was read before the Club for the reasons mentioned below (p. 232, footnote).