



EXHIBITION OF MR. DONKIN'S PHOTOGRAPHS.

THE exhibition of photographs by the late Mr. Donkin, organised at the Gainsborough Gallery, in Bond Street, in March last, by the committee of the Alpine Club and the council of the Photographic Society, must have opened the eyes of many people to a new world. Views from heights differ so extraordinarily from views in valleys, especially in a country of snow mountains, that they have to be seen in order to be believed. These exquisite photographs, nearly all well known to members of the Club, have enabled everyone who visited the Gainsborough Gallery to study at their leisure the secrets of the snows. In the absence of some such opportunity most tourists cannot ever form any accurate idea of the great, strange world above their heads, a world where every prospect pleases, without a touch of vileness, where sky as well as earth seem to open out into 'a nobler, purer air' in a never-ending succession of distance behind distance, and where each quality of light and colour seems more refined than it is below.

What the technical difficulties may be in producing, as Mr. Donkin did, such pictures as Mont Blanc, &c., from the Aiguille du Midi (No. 284), the subtly modelled plateaux swelling and bursting as they draw slowly on towards their fall, or the Aiguille du Géant (Nos. 143 and 118), the shadowed cliff lit up from beneath by reflected light, or the Schreckhorn, &c., from the Lauteraarjoch (No. 90), the shade full of unobtrusive detail, or the plunge of the eye from the Weisshorn (Nos. 232-3), or, yet again, the superb panorama from the Schreckhorn (Nos. 98-101), where cloud and sunlight have worked together so well—

what these difficulties may be a photographer alone knows. It is enough for us that they have been overcome ; while in views 'below the snow line' other difficulties, no less perplexing to the ordinary craftsman, have been successfully combated, *e.g.* the noble view from the Col de Voza (Nos. 80-82), which rivals a painting in its breadth of effect and sense of size.

As Mr. Freshfield points out, however, in the preface to the catalogue, Mr. Donkin's interest in the mountains was many-sided ; and he did not confine himself to trying to make pictures. Those who may go to the Caucasus in future years will have reason to thank him for his contributions to topography pure and simple ; and districts nearer home have been made still more familiar to us since he taught photographers how to depict for us the various aspects of old friends from various points of view.

Nor has the interest been confined to the comparatively few who have been able to buy examples of these photographs, or to see them at the Club's Winter Dinners, or in shop-windows. At soirées and lectures and free entertainments of all kinds, in London and elsewhere, and for the benefit of all classes, the magic of the lantern has brought them before the eyes of thousands who will never have the chance of seeing a real mountain. This is a matter in which photography has an advantage over painting, and Mr. Donkin's industry has, indeed, not been thrown away.

One word, in conclusion, about the clouds and skies in these photographs, though there are many other points about which much might be written. Unbelievers sometimes say that mountain views are uninteresting because there are no means of judging size ; and there is truth in the objection. But, apart from figures (which cannot always be placed so as to be of much use), it is often the case that nature herself in her large way supplies a rough scale by means of those clouds which we are accustomed to see from below and to think so far away. It is hardly necessary to say that Mr. Donkin has frequently seized upon these effects. He was ever trying to extend the scope of his art in this respect. And he would no doubt have succeeded more and more as time went on, though many skies must always be unphotographable. But he did secure some very fine specimens. In more than a dozen of the views shown the interest is enhanced by the magnificence of the cloud world ; and perhaps one of the finest is one of the last, the view from halfway up the north peak of Ushba, in the Central Caucasus (No. 306), though the negative has unfortunately somewhat suffered as well as the others recovered from Mr. Donkin's luggage. It is impossible to look at this and the companion views without emotion, when we remember that they are among the very last works of that hand and head to which we owe so much ; that he was not ever himself permitted to see the result of his skill ; and that after rejoicing in the beautiful things which he has thus preserved for us, he and his comrades never looked upon the face of a friend again.

Each evening, during the continuance of the exhibition, there was a magic-lantern display of some seventy of the photographs, explanations being given by a member of the Club. A considerable number of

spectators were present on these occasions, from first to last, and were well rewarded for coming. Photographs of snow gain peculiarly when thus shown as transparencies, the intense brilliancy of the lantern causing the snow in light to appear much more luminous than can possibly be the case with photographs seen in the ordinary way. If it were possible to combine on a large scale this quality with the advantages of the stereoscope, there would be little besides colour left to be desired. Altogether the exhibition was completely successful, having been visited by not far short of 3,000 persons. Copies of the catalogue can be obtained from Messrs. Spooner, price 6d.

H. G. W.

[The portrait of Mr. Donkin, which appears at the head of this notice, is from a drawing by Mr. Willink.]

MR. DONKIN'S ACCOUNT OF HIS 1888 JOURNEY IN THE CAUCASUS.

[The courtesy of Mr. E. H. Donkin enables us to place before the readers of the Journal the following most interesting letter, written by his brother a fortnight before the accident.]

Betsho, Wed., Aug. 15, '88.

I sit in a blazing sun at a rough wooden table outside a wooden sort of barrack called a Cancellaria, one room of which we have, in a small valley, which you may roughly compare with the Zermatt valley on a smaller scale, but with an enormously larger Matterhorn at the head of it, towards the left—the great Ushba. It is still unclimbed. We have been here nearly a week, 4 days of which we spent in camp high up by the moraine under the mountain, and had two hard tries to get up the two twin peaks, but were beaten; the first time we tried the N.E. and slightly higher peak, by going up the great snow couloir between them; the weather was fine but too warm, so the snow was not hard enough, and it became dangerous from avalanches. We had to keep upon the rocks at the side, which were very difficult, and at last it was a choice between the steep snow and its risks and a defeat; so, though you may imagine the disappointment, we turned back and came down again. Even then we were not free from risk; huge avalanches had already fallen, and we had to run and slide down the slopes as fast as we could, tumbling through the masses of ice and snow débris till we were clear of avalanche tracks and could take it easy. Even so we were out for 13 hours and hard at work all the time. That was Saturday last. On Sunday we rested, and on Monday we had a try at the S.W. peak, from the S. arête. This avoids all risk of avalanches and we hoped for success. The telescope had shown that most of the route was easy except one hard bit below the top. It was an enormously long climb over the lower rocks and snow gullies, nowhere very steep, but very tiring just because it was easy enough to go fast. At last however we were brought up against a cliff; the great cliff which guards the top, and such a tremendous wall of forbidding precipice I never saw before. It is