## Address to the Alpine Club.

By CLINTON DENT, late President of the Club.

(Read at the Annual General Meeting, December 16, 1889.)

SOME years ago a former excellent Secretary of the Club came to me in distress, occasioned by the fact that he had been unable to find any member to read a paper at the December meeting. I suggested that the retiring President might fitly be invited to come forward with a review of all that had occurred during his term of office. The idea was carried out with the happiest results, and, thrice repeated, appears now to have, somewhat rapidly, established itself as a tradition. I had no conception at the time that I had devised something which was ultimately to fall on my own head, as the guillotine is, erroneously, supposed to have on that of its inventor, and that I should ever be hoist with mine own petard. I perceive now all the objections most fully. Not only is your retiring President constantly reminded of his approaching demise, not only has he to arrange matters for his impending dissolution, but he has actually to pronounce his own funeral oration. Three years hence I anticipate that my views will have wholly changed. For the moment I can but face the task to the best of my ability. Like the gladiators of old, I may say before I set to work, 'Morituri vos saluto,' and feel that as you held up your hands just now for my successor with one accord, so you will extend mercy when I have done, and at least hold up your thumbs for me. In one respect I am fortunate. Three years ago my predecessor in this chair found occasion to lament that he had too little to dilate upon. But Mr. Grove had the skill, like the ingenious artisans in Hans Andersen's fairy tale, to weave a brilliant fabric out of nothing. No dilatation is wanted now. My difficulty is one of compression, not of expansion.

In turning over the pages which chronicle our progress the first impression borne in upon the reader is a sad one. It would be out of place now to make more than passing allusion to the gaps made in the ranks of the Club. Yet a history would be but imperfect if no mention were made of men who contributed so largely to construct it. We miss the face of F. J. Church, so faithful an attendant at the meetings, and of J. F. Hardy, an original member who never ceased to take a warm interest in the Club. Two veterans



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whom we shall always be proud to have numbered among our honorary members have passed away in Bernard Studer and Ivan von Tschudi, but their names will be remembered as long as science is held in honour or exhaustive and accurate guide-books to the Alps are valued.

Some losses are still so fresh in our recollections that I need but glance at them here. It is only a year since the Club was startled by the news of that terrible disaster in the Caucasus which took from us W. F. Donkin and Harry Fox. This is not a matter to dwell on now. At the last annual general meeting in this room the undertaking was given that a search should be organised, and I ventured to predict that it would not be fruitless. What was then felt to be a certainty is now proved to be such. We have lost, too, A. T. Malkin, one of the veterans of the old guard; Count Paul de St. Robert, a most distinguished man of science; Sir Francis Adams, who of the many honours he deservedly won did not, I think, value the honorary membership of this Club among the least; and Lieutenant-Colonel Eustace Anderson, one of our few remaining original members.

It will not be thought out of place here to pay a passing tribute to old associates in the mountains, although not actually members. The stalwart figure of a great mountaineer, Emil Boss, will be seen no more. From the ranks of leading guides have passed away the veteran Ulrich Kaufmann, Kaspar Streich, Johann Fischer, and Peter Taugwalder the elder.

Two names I have purposely withheld to the last—those of John Ball and A. W. Moore. They may well be associated in our retrospective sketch. We may never replace John Ball, who, as the first President, may be looked upon as almost the father of the Club, and who ensured for it a reputation of which we cannot be too jealous; nor A. W. Moore, who nursed the Club through a dangerous illness (tending to atrophy), and who laid down the main lines on which our society has been conducted ever since his time. The Club has suffered from slight attacks since, but, thanks to a healthy and vigorous constitution, which was chiefly due to Moore's fostering care, has been able to withstand these transient derangements.

We may turn with a feeling of relief to other matters, and note how far the Club has progressed in its several departments. For several there are. I have seen the Alpine Club spoken of in print—by that type of moderation and sound impartiality, a criticised author—as a mutual admira-

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tion society. Not entirely. The term has less sting than its employer imagined. Even if it were true the condition is more heaven-like, though less common, than a state of mutual detraction. Some, also outside the pale, think it a mere gymnastic body. But, as we all know, the uniting bond is forged of far more complex materials, for association with the mountains draws men out in many directions.

Some of the energy accumulated in the Club is given off in artistic shape. Of this we have had the happiest proofs at intervals during the past three years. Not only abroad but at home also, at the Winter Meetings and in our own rooms, has the art of mountaineering been exemplified. Through the kindness of our artist members many works have found a home where they can best be appreciated, while our collection has been further enriched by many of Signor Sella's superb views and the magnificent set of Mr. Donkin's photographs.

Some energy, again, is given off in literary form. In concrete shape this is shown in Mr. Coolidge's admirable 'Swiss Travel and Swiss Guide Books,' and the bovril-like 'Guide du Haut-Dauphiné,' of which he is part editor with MM. Duhamel and Perrin—a happy instance of the correlation of literary forces. We have too Dr. Emil Zsigmondy's 'Im Hochgebirge,' edited, though not actually written, by a member, a book that owes no little of its charm to the illustrations provided by Mr. Compton's graphic pencil. For the most part, of course, our Alpine doings are recorded in the pages of the 'Alpine Journal.' The Club has formally recognised the ability with which this has been conducted, but it will not be thought out of place for me to add a word on a topic that should be fraught with interest. It should be, I say, for the 'Alpine Journal' is a work that the Club will hereafter look back to perhaps with more pride than it sometimes manifests at present. Seeing that the materials for this brief paper have been chiefly drawn from its pages, I should indeed be ungrateful were I not to acknowledge the extraordinary accuracy and thoroughness which has characterised the Journal throughout its late editorship. For more than nine years—since August 1880—Mr. Coolidge has, with unremitting industry and most conscientious labour, been slowly piling up a monument of which the credit is too much apt to be absorbed by the Club. As the sphere of our activity has enlarged so has his work increased and he has ever shown himself more than equal to it. No comparisons are permissible or needed, but this much I may say, that we

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have never had an Editor who better deserved the grateful recognition of the Club.

Mr. Grove found occasion to lament that, during his tenure of office, climbing was undergoing what physiologists term a latent period of activity, but he spoke hopefully of a possible revival. This hope has, I think, been more than fulfilled. Such indeed has been the awakening that it might fitly be described in the language of the Revivalists as 'glorious.' For years the Club had seemed to look upon the reports of the Caucasus as mere travellers' tales. For years the preaching of Mr. Freshfield and others had fallen upon barren soil. Then came an abrupt change. Straightway the Club behaved even as larger bodies sometimes do and having discovered that the property was of value proceeded, in a mountaineering sense, to annex the new country. For it is only since 1886 that climbers have begun really to appreciate the Caucasus. Some members of the Club, deaf to all precept, were not slow to follow example, and the example was a brilliant one. I am glad to think that Mr. Donkin and I did something towards setting it. But the real impetus came in 1887, when Tetnuld, the Jungfrau of the Central Caucasus, fell before Mr. Freshfield's determined onslaught, while the smaller but yet considerable peaks of Ukiu and Shoda-tau were also brought into subjection and trampled under the iron-shod heel of the conqueror. As might have been expected, Mr. Freshfield was keenly alert in matters of mountain topography. The dead white of the Central Caucasus group was not indeed to be wholly changed in a single season, but the old mistakes and imperfections of the 5-verst map began to be shown up and cleared up. The topographical mists that had veiled the great mountains for so long melted away in great measure, and in this one district the peaks and glaciers began to take the definite shape and positions that the Russian surveyors had so long denied them.

In dealing with Orientals the well-known rule is always to follow up promptly an advantage. The rule may apply to mountains as well as to men, and I am glad to think that it was acted on in this case. The very next year—1888—a whole row of giants fell before the attacks of our members. Indeed, an almost clean sweep was made of the great peaks of the central group. The history of the conquest of the Alps in the early days of the Club repeated itself. I think that a volume of Caucasian 'Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers' that contained accounts of Shkara, Koshtan-tau, Djanga-tau,

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Katun-tau, and the Saluinan Chiran Peak need not fear comparison with any book of mountain ascents. The Club had indeed woke up from its slumbers, for, in addition to the ascents already named, I must not omit to mention Mr. Cockin's remarkable success on Ushba, and Mr. Mummery's double pass over the Thuber, Gvalda, and Bashil Glaciers. Nor should we forget the solid results of Donkin and Fox's expedition. Witness the ascent of the eastern point of Dongusorun, their exploration of the Ullu-auz Glacier, and their last climb to the summit of the Ullu-auz Pass. Very noteworthy and valuable too was the new pass by which they crossed from the Adyr to the Bashil valley, as being one of the first high passes made across a spur dividing the lateral valleys, and thus a contribution to a high-level route between Urusbieh and Bezingi, the Chamonix and Zermatt of the Caucasus. As an instance of how rapidly mountaineering possibilities have been extended in these regions, I may mention that little more than three years ago Mr. Moore warned me, with characteristic emphasis, against attempting any such expeditions. The time was far distant, he then thought, when exploration of this nature would be feasible or judicious. Again, within the last few months we have been enabled to add to our list the ascent of Leila-tau by Mr. Freshfield and Capt. Powell, of Mala-tau by Signors Vittorio and Erminio Sella, and the crossing of at least four passes of the first rank by members of the Club.

Finally, Mr. Hermann Woolley has shown that there is no run of bad luck that cannot be turned by pluck and perseverance. The grand Aletschhorn-like peak of Koruldu has been won by him. Only 50 feet of Mishirgi-tau remains to be climbed by the next visitor to the central group. Kasbek has undergone the humiliation of a 'variation' ascent; Elbruz has met with similar treatment, while as a crowning achievement the giant Dych-tau has been gathered in. A pretty good record this for a Club whose limbs, if not its members, were thought to be waxing feeble, and of which the degeneration of premature senility has been predicted.

But, though all this has been done, let me beg of you not to suppose for an instant that nothing yet remains. As an instance—one only out of many that might be given—the Adai Choch district, the first great mountain mass west of Kasbek, offers an immense field for mountaineering of the first rank. Let some one go out and devote his energies to this group alone. Let him ascend the double-headed peak (miscalled Skatigom Choch) marked '3' in Mr. Freshfield's

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sketch map,* lying between the Ceja and Karagam snow-fields, just behind the point on the watershed first climbed by M. de Déchy. Close by he will then find another point, higher still, the Russian Adai-Choch (15,244 feet). Let him ascend this too, if only to see how much yet remains to be done; next cross from the basin of the Ceja to the upper snow-fields of the Karagam Glacier, and then climb Burdjula-tau, and he will probably be rewarded by as fine a panorama as any to be obtained in the whole chain. I trust that these magnificent peaks and glaciers will continue to attract, not merely for their own beauties, but also for reasons to be presently mentioned.

Yet remember that in the Caucasus, as compared with the Alps, the snow and ice conditions are more varied, more prone to rapid changes, and seemingly more treacherous, because less perfectly understood. Remember that the traveller has to depend infinitely more on his own judgment, and less on that of his guides, than in the Alps. Remember that for years to come, in countries such as the Caucasus, mountaineering skill will not be the sole qualification needful. Unless possessed of some of the attributes necessary for the successful explorer the climber augments the difficulties, and possibly the dangers. I am not now thinking of the past, but rather pointing out what I believe to be the sum of the experience gained by those who have visited and climbed among these unique mountains. For I feel assured that the good start already made will be followed up, and that the Club will maintain its pride of place in the Caucasus, as elsewhere.

But I may not dwell longer on a subject which has as yet no wide interest among our members, though the distinguishing feature of the past three years of our history has been the exploration of the Caucasus. You must have thought that those who go to that country do even as the Caucasians do, and pour out unending streams of watery verbosities. Do not suppose that I would have the old haunts abandoned, or the Alps, that we have made our own so much, deserted. It is a pleasure to come back to them, whether with the pen or the axe, for, however other mountains may attract, the Alps will never lose one iota of their charm. Nor have they been neglected during the past three years. In Dauphiné and elsewhere, in districts which he has almost made his own, Mr. Coolidge, the indefatigable, has pursued

* *Alpine Journal*, vol. xiv. p. 453.

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his way with a perseverance that can only be described as relentless, and has won a place among mountaineers that is unique. I know not how many fresh peaks and passes he has still in store, or how many more 'grandes courses' have to be added before he reaches the limit he has prescribed for himself; I do not like to call it the seventh century, for that suggests too strongly the Middle Ages. The word 'impossible' has long been banished from the Alpine dictionary. The term 'exhausted' must follow suit. And let me say, parenthetically, if such words as 'arête,' 'couloir,' 'gendarme,' 'col' (the verb), and the latest-born monstrosity, 'Gratwanderung,' were to go also, the sacrifice of these foreign importations would be a gain to English Alpine literature.

It is somewhat startling to learn that in the year of grace 1887 a member of this Club was able to make—and to discover—three new ascents in the Oberland. Yet such was Mr. H. S. King's good fortune. Excellent climbs as they were the actual finding of the novelties was not the least meritorious part. As a motto at the head of Mr. King's paper might have been fitly inscribed, 'Inveni, vidi, vici.'

It is not, however, in districts like the Oberland that the best work has been done in the Alps. Far away from the too seductive centres mountaineering, sometimes amid 'new,' usually among too little known scenes, has been recorded. Mr. Yeld in the Graian Alps, Mr. Gardiner and Mr. Coolidge in the same district, Dr. Scriven and Mr. Gardiner again in the Dolomites, Mr. Butler in the Oetzthal have all striven to keep the climbing fraternity free from the charge of becoming too gregarious in their Alpine habits.

A former President, Mr. C. E. Mathews, in his swan song, which took the form of an admirable address to the Club, traced the growth of mountaineering from its inception to the year 1880. I have no intention of attempting any continuation of his paper, but will ask you only for a few minutes to consider in what directions Alpine mountaineering has tended, during the last decade, to change in character.

In 1880 the Club had come of age. By the present date, therefore, it should have reached that laudable period of life which is always vague and sometimes conspicuously absent, and is spoken of as years of discretion. Let us see how far the term is justified.

Although I have been able to point to good and valuable exploration in the more outlying Alps, it is yet to be feared that the number of our countrymen to be found in these districts does not increase. The tendency of the Alpine fraternity,

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as of other bodies, is to centralise. Now I do not wish to preach against the modern growth of the two mountaineering centres, for practically there are only two at present, namely, Grindelwald and Zermatt, but only wish to note what I believe to be facts. I have nothing to say against these mountaineering centres, provided only they justify their title. But is such the case? Are not the centres more obtrusive now than formerly and the mountaineering less conspicuous? Such at least is the burden of the lamentation now often made by the guides, who complain that they are spoken of as leading but not so frequently employed in that capacity. We can hardly, however, accept the guides as wholly unbiassed witnesses, and I should be glad to learn that the growing disfavour with which they view the centres is but due to personal prejudice. It may be doubted, at any rate, whether the luxury and splendour of these mountain palaces is altogether healthy—I am not making any allusion to the drainage, for I will not speak ill of the absent—from an Alpine point of view. Some already hold that the superficial comfort and ease have dulled the keenness with which mountaineering was formerly pursued. Austere disciples of the old school are inclining to the opinion that the code of social ethics dictated of fashion is but a poor substitute for the ancient goodfellowship born of the mountains and thriving best under simple conditions.

Still, even though the centres may gradually cause some forgetfulness of the obvious purpose for which mountains and glaciers were primarily intended, the very centralisation enables the reviewer to estimate with more facility any changes that may have crept in. Of one, I think, there can be little doubt. Rock-climbing and rock peaks are more in favour now than formerly. The snow mountains no longer attract as they did of yore. Different terms are applied to them. People talk of the one form of mountaineering as a rock climb while they stigmatise the other as a snow grind. The change of opinion cannot but react on the guides. Some proof that such is the case is to be found in their little testimonial books. These are rather monotonous reading, but it is surprising to note how in their pages the owner is always described as possessed of transcendent ability on rocks and how seldom that best of qualities in a guide, ice-craft, is even alluded to. It cannot be that the writers of these panegyrics are slow to appreciate or unable to judge. Then we are forced to the conclusion that ice-craft must be a rarer quality than formerly. Perhaps the field of

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mountaineering is narrowing, or, in other words, tends to specialise, but it is never safe to do that until some knowledge of the whole subject is attained, and this may be carried too far and become, so to speak, a specialism *in excelsis*. Indeed, the travellers of to-day seem to me to gauge the excellence of a guide almost entirely by his powers as a rock-climber. Yet rock-climbing is often mere gymnastic skill and soon wears out, while proficiency in ice-craft grows slowly, requires far more experience, much wider knowledge of the mountains, greater variety of source and sound judgment, in short, demands imperatively all the best qualities of the finished mountaineer. Possibly these may be but prematurely middle-aged croakings, for all climbers pass through what may be termed a stone age. This much is certain, however: that the traveller who goes out to regions such as the Caucasus, unable to rely to a very large extent on his own judgment and experience in matters of ice-craft, runs a very great, if not an altogether unjustifiable, risk.

A curious freak of development is to be seen in an odd familiarity common now in the mountaineering centres, in speaking of the mountains, such as extremely young men are wont to exhibit in alluding to celebrities—usually feminine. I was informed once in the Alps, by a quite juvenile person, clad in a polychromatic lawn-tennis costume, in answer to an enquiry, that 'Papa had strolled off to the Fingerhut. He then meant just to do—(hateful word)—to do the Steinmannspitz, put a new face on, or at any rate col, the dear old Darnennadel, and bag the Katzenhorn on his way back.' I can only trust the familiarity may not be the precursor of contempt.

It may be observed that mountain expeditions have now, for the most part, fallen into two categories; one the ridiculously easy, the other the most difficult ever achieved. Between the two there seems to be no degree. The climber who describes a given passage as the hardest thing he ever accomplished in his life is usually the more accurate; certainly he is the more judicious. People are apt to laugh to scorn early Alpine writings, and to point out, complacently, how expeditions once considered formidable have now ceased to be so estimated. It does not follow that they have in the least degree altered in character. Possibly the old descriptions showed not so much want of skill as sense of responsibility. Such responsibility every member of this Club incurs, in virtue of his membership, every time he goes on a mountain. If, gifted with special powers, he describes, with

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perfect truth, an expedition as easy which to others would be difficult; or if, favoured with special conditions of weather and the rest, he speaks lightly of a climb which might usually or often be formidable, he may show himself to be a capable mountaineer, but he does so at the expense of proving himself an unreliable, if not an incapable, judge. Instances are not far to seek. Let me take the one important mountain Ushba. From this Mr. Donkin and Mr. Fox were forced to turn back twice. On the first occasion a great rock avalanche fell across the track they intended to follow. The snow in the great gully was not in a state to justify perseverance. Again, Mr. Hermann Woolley this year, starting from a high bivouac, after fourteen hours only reached the ridge connecting the two peaks, and a second attempt was also frustrated. Mr. Cockin in 1888 succeeded only at the third attempt in making his memorable ascent of the northern peak. On the first occasion his party had to turn back, owing to the illness of a guide. On the second, after five hours' continual step-cutting, they had again to acknowledge defeat. Finally the ascent was made with tolerable ease, the snow in the great gully being in an exceptionally favourable condition. But can such conditions often be counted upon, or can a mountain which occupied nineteen hours of hard going to such a skilled and determined mountaineer, led by a guide of the first rank, be classed as easy because it was on one occasion out of seven found so by exceptional men? I prefer to explain the term easy by the fact that the intrinsic difficulties were at a minimum, and even then had to be overcome by a combination of pluck, energy, and skill such as is given only to a few. A mountain often impossible, usually very formidable, and only under very favourable circumstances easy to highly skilled climbers, must rank as an expedition of great difficulty. We may not always speak of mountains as we are often told to speak of men—as we find them. There is nothing new in all this. It has all been said before; but it appears to me to require saying again.

This drift of thought leads me to allude to a form of mountaineering that has, not unnaturally, of late tended to develop: I mean guideless expeditions. On this matter the Club has often, and with no uncertain voice, expressed a decided opinion. I have no intention of reopening the question. As so constantly happens, the rules are laid down with admirable clearness and precision. The difficulty is to get people to refer to and act on them.

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The truth is that the number of amateurs really competent to undertake serious expeditions without guides is considerably less than the number who think that they can do so. There must be no weak spot on such occasions, and no mountain party, certainly when amateurs are concerned, ought to consist of less than three. Perhaps the best guideless expeditions of late have been achieved in Norway, and by one of our members who, as all will agree, is more than qualified to undertake them. I would gladly specify some of Mr. Slingsby's exploits, but a brief paragraph in the 'Alpine Journal,' referring to some and containing more unpronounceable names than I ever saw before collected into six lines, deters me. I must ask you to take them as read; it is so exceedingly hard to take them as spelt.

A tendency has sprung up of late—I will be merciful and not term it a craze—to solitary mountaineering. This unwholesome product of climbing development I cannot regard with any favour. It is not one that should be in any way countenanced by a club that has the best interests of mountaineering at heart. Whether right or wrong, and in my opinion it is always wrong, the example set is one to be deprecated. It is mere gambling with the mountains. What argument, worthy the name, can be urged in favour of expeditions necessarily fraught with risks so obvious? Whatever the objects men have in climbing mountains, these objects are prejudiced under such conditions. Can a view be finer because there are none by to share it? It may be doubted whether the acrobat who crosses Niagara on a tight rope appreciates the grandeur of the waterfall as much as the man who gazes at it in security. The necessity of mutual reliance is not the least of the many lessons taught in the mountains. I may speak plainly, for a President, like an Editor, may be impersonal if he believes he is but giving expression to the general feeling. I know that solitary expeditions are no novelty. There is not even that much to be said for them. Precedents may be quoted in justification. But ofttimes when we seek for a precedent we but search for a covering excuse. Solitary expeditions on minor snow mountains are selfish, on more considerable peaks or passes unwise or worse, and on the great rock or snow mountains unjustifiable. They may be magnificent, but they are not mountaineering. For expeditions of other kinds, but undertaken in a similar spirit of disregarding well-known rules, the 'attractive force of nature' has been pleaded. I know not what the conveniently vague phrase

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may mean. The attractive force of the earth as exemplified by gravitation is more practical, and if dangers are deliberately incurred which can be minimised or obviated altogether, the physical laws that govern the momentum of falling bodies run no slight chance of being illustrated.

There is something to be said on the other side in favour of the mountaineering centres. Increased facilities have led to a larger number of winter expeditions, and many of these have been of the first class. I need only mention such ascents as the Schreckhorn, Mönch, Wetterhorn, and the Jungfrau, the crossing of the Lys-joch, and the remarkable traverse of Mont Blanc from the Aiguille Grise to the Grands Mulets to show that winter mountaineering opens up a wide field of possibilities. The fact that some of these expeditions were made by a lady is not without its significance. Indeed, one of the best climbs recorded in the Alps of recent times, the ascent of the rarely visited Aiguille de Bionnassay and the traverse of its entire eastern ridge, was also achieved by a lady. The Alpine sisterhood has been busy, too, in Norway and elsewhere. So much the better. It is a good sign that the popularity of mountaineering is not diminishing and that the revival is not a mere flicker but has really, as the theatrical people say, 'caught on.'

The evidence is finished, and I may sum up in a word. I have endeavoured to point out how of late the field of mountaineering has extended, far indeed beyond the limits already mentioned, as Mr. Green's exploration of the Selkirk Mountains and Mr. Topham's attempt on Mount St. Elias, in distant Alaska, show. The standard nearer home has at least been well kept up. So mote it be, for the Alps will ever remain the best training ground to be found. The old expeditions, or their variations, should attract no less in the future than in the past. Nowhere can mountaineering be so easily or so safely learned if only all due precautions are observed. Switzerland might almost be advertised as a scholastic *pension*. 'A large staff of first-class professors always in attendance. Lifts provided to many of the minor summits. Home comforts. Terms moderate. Wine also moderate.'

On a subject which I would gladly pass over altogether I feel constrained to say a few words. The list of accidents in the mountains occupies year by year, in the November number of the Journal, a large and, it is to be feared, an increasing space. No doubt some calamities have been recorded in these pages which can only remotely be classed as 'Alpine'

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accidents. But our Editor, with, I think, a wise discretion, has not drawn too sharp a line and has thus allowed people to judge for themselves. With the rarest exceptions the moral to be drawn from each grim recital is only too obvious. And this moral is as easy to gather as it is certain to be neglected. I confess to agreeing with those who believe that mountaineering can never become wholly free from peril. The greater the experience and the more that experience is utilised the less will be the risk; but some risk there will ever be. Unfortunately the peril has not yet nearly reached its minimum point. It can hardly be gainsaid that a small proportion of the accidents that occur are a reproach to mountaineering. Such as these it is the especial duty of this Club to guard against to the utmost of its ability. There is room for further efforts. By discouraging mountaineering which is but flashy athleticism, by bearing constantly in mind that a wholesome responsibility attaches to our Society which is at once a burden and a privilege not to be thrown off, and by maintaining a respect for a sport which even a golf-player has been known to admit to be in some points superior to that seductive game, we may not indeed wholly eliminate what is ineradicable, but we may whittle the element of reproach down to vanishing point. And this brings me face to face with the question so often asked by unbelievers—Is the game, then, worth the candle? To that my answer is, unhesitatingly, Yes! and still yes! even when the question is asked of mountaineering which can neither plead the excuse of scientific alms nor the justification of new exploration.

And now it is time that I should bring to an end an address the length of which can but feebly be excused by the difficulty I find in speaking the last few words; for

> 'Parting is such sweet sorrow,
> Though tempered by the thought we meet to-morrow,'

that I have deferred unduly what must yet come.

I have to thank you for much, for more, indeed, than I dare seek to express in words. Consider what a true and acceptable reward the present prosperity of the Club and of mountaineering generally is to one whose term of office, with all its attendant responsibilities, is nearly over. I can but say, paraphrasing the homely eloquence that Bret Harte put into the mouth of Tennessee's partner, 'It ain't the first time that you have borne patiently with me, as you have this evening. It ain't the first time that you have supported me in this chair. It ain't the first time that you have en-

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couraged and helped when help was needed, or condoned when shortcomings were only too obvious. And now that it's the last time, why—it's a sort of rough on a man.' And now, gentlemen, my address is over; and my thanks and your President's thanks to you for all your indulgence and all your attention.

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## John Ball.

THE notice of Mr. Ball which appeared in the November number of this Journal told what was necessary, and all that under the circumstances was then possible, with regard to the main facts of his Alpine work; but it was generally felt that some fuller commemoration was due to one who, though he was not, strictly speaking, among those to whom the Club immediately owed its inception, was nevertheless felt to represent so pre-eminently the spirit in which the Club was formed that he was at once fixed upon as the fittest person to be its first President, and to edit those first records of mountain adventure put forth under its auspices, out of which the long series of this Journal has grown. The natural and obvious form of commemoration would have been a detailed biography; but it was found that this had already been undertaken, on behalf of the Royal Geographical Society, by the person who of all others was most competent for the task, and it was clearly inexpedient to do anything savouring of rivalry or emulation in such a matter. Consequently it was decided to ask certain among the older members of the Club to contribute independent reminiscences of Mr. Ball, and more particularly appreciations of his scientific work in connection with the Alps. This they have most kindly done; and it is hoped that what they have written may be accepted by the Club as a fitting tribute to the memory of its first President, and may serve to show to those of us who never enjoyed personal knowledge of him, and to members yet to come, 'of what sort our patriarch was.' EDITOR.

Mr. John Ball became President of the Alpine Club in 1858. One of the first literary works connected with the Club in which he was engaged was editing the first series of 'Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers,' which appeared in 1859. He contributed to this volume chapter vi., entitled, 'Zermatt in 1845,' with a description of the passage of the Schwarz

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