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An Address to the Alpine Club.

By DOUGLAS W. FRESHFIELD, President.

(Read at the Winter Meeting, December 16, 1895.)

For such accidents as baffle expectation, and are incapable of being accurately reckoned upon, are quite sufficient to bring us to great and frequent distresses—for instance, downpour of rain and rise of torrents, excessive frosts and snows, wintry and cloudy weather, and other things like these—but if we also neglect to provide for those which can be foreseen, is it not likely that we shall have ourselves to thank for frequent failures?—*Fragment of Polybius* (Shuckburgh's edition).

DURING my term of presidency I have more than once had occasion to acknowledge the obligations I have been under to my predecessors in this chair. Our Presidents, like the famous Priest of Nemi, know that they have but a short time to hold office, and that somewhere in the gloom, perhaps of the northern wolds, their successor is already sharpening his axe for the slaughter. You may slay them. But you cannot prevent their phantoms from haunting the scene of their past activity, and, unlike most of the ghosts known to Mr. Myers, these are really very serviceable apparitions. Indeed, so handsomely have our familiar spirits screened from public view the modesty of the present speaker, that two summers ago, while staying in an Alpine centre, I was called on to decide a bet whether Mr. Clinton Dent, Mr. Horace Walker, or Mr. Charles Edward Mathews was the President of the Alpine Club. The last-named was the favourite, on the ground that he always wrote to the 'Times.' Such ghostly supporters are invaluable, and I gladly take this last opportunity of recording my indebtedness to the departed whom I am so soon to join. I might possibly be even warmer in my acknowledgments, were I not, owing to the

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energy of some of my immediate predecessors in setting up the custom of a farewell presidential address, at this moment involved in a task which I feel too heavy for me.

To speak seriously, there are various good reasons why I should have been glad, at the present juncture, to evade the duty of delivering this homily. There can be few things more painful than to have to compose the epitaph—perforce the brief and inadequate epitaph—of a friend whom one had looked forward to meeting again on this occasion. I had never climbed with Mr. Mummery, but I regarded it as one of the greatest compliments ever paid me that he asked me to go to the Himalayas with him. I had been in communication with him for years; he had followed me in many of my spring rambles in the Maritime Alps, Algeria, and elsewhere. I knew something of the man, and, as we all did, I thoroughly liked and trusted him. He was not only fearless and brilliant as a climber; he possessed an original, strong, and keen intelligence. In his talk, as in his book, he carried you on, whether sympathising or disagreeing with his mood and dicta, by a certain vigorous enthusiasm and directness. He was a stimulating companion. His untimely death is a grievous loss to the Club; still more, of course, is it a loss to his colleagues on the Committee. Only twice before, in the cases of Mr. Hudson and Mr. Donkin, have the mountains been responsible for a gap at our table. May it be many years before another such event darkens this annual gathering!

The presence of John Ormsby has long been wanting at our meetings, but it was only the other day that his death was recorded in the newspapers. Almost, though not quite, an original member, Ormsby was one of the chief contributors to 'Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers,' and his name is permanently associated in Alpine literature with the beautiful peak of the Grivola. He was one of the many able men who caused jealous outsiders to describe the Alpine Club as 'the pet of Saturday Reviewers,' at a time when the 'Saturday Review' was the leading weekly periodical. He wrote an excellent book on Algiers. He knew Spain after the intimate fashion in which that country of few but earnest lovers has been known to a handful of literary Englishmen. He gave us a paper in the 'Alpine Journal' on its mountains. Of late years the affliction of deafness cut him off from all social pleasures, and his face can hardly be familiar to any but a few of our older members.

Only last week there passed away at Turin, in the fulness

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of years, and surrounded by the affection of the friends he had made in the country of his adoption, one of our Honorary Members. The President of the Italian Alpine Club telegraphed to me last Thursday:—'Our dear Mr. Budden died last night.' 'The Apostle of the Alps' they called him in Italy. Throughout the peninsula he was known as a generous friend and ready helper in every claim and in any detail connected with the promotion of mountain travel. The burnt village, the distressed guide, the struggling innkeeper—all came to Budden for help. His genial speeches were the standing dish of every Alpine entertainment. Sharing the belief of Quintino Sella in the part out of door pursuits might be made to play in the regeneration of Italy, he did all he could for the cause he had at heart. And he had the satisfaction to feel that his efforts were both successful and appreciated among the generous race whom he had made his second countrymen. I may be allowed to record that the last paper he was engaged on before his death was a statement of the grounds on which my name had been put forward as a proper person to receive the Honorary Membership of the Italian Club.

Two other names, not of members of our Club but of individuals who leave a gap that will be felt in all Alpine circles, must be mentioned. Émile Rey, a guide who stood in the first rank of his profession, has fallen a victim to a moment's carelessness, an unconsidered step in a place of no apparent danger. We sympathise as when a leader in the hunting field is killed in Rotten Row.

In Madame Seiler, who has not long survived her husband, Zermatt loses one of the few figures that still recalled the 'good old times' of the 'Monte Rosa' to its former frequenters. We have many of us benefited by her hospitality in days when guests were honoured friends and not 'numbers.'

I do not intend to furbish up for you a catalogue of the events of the past three years. Catalogues are dry reading at the best, and read aloud easily become intolerable. What has happened is fresh in most of our minds, or if it is fading away we can find it in the past volume of the 'Alpine Journal.'

You will excuse me if, standing in this handsome Hall, I reverse the usual order and deal first with the events affecting our domestic and social prosperity. In looking back on the—as far as the Club is concerned—not uneventful or unsuccessful record of the past three years, I see much to congratulate ourselves on. This time last year your Committee found itself in a difficulty which had been foreseen, the

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treatment of which had, indeed, been postponed as long as possible, but could not be postponed any longer. The problem before it seemed to many of us almost insoluble. We were called on to find for the Club suitable premises, including a Hall fit for its meetings, in a central situation and at a rent we could afford without so raising the subscription as to affect the old, simple, and unique character of the Club. Yet the urgency of the matter was obvious. Our old rooms had become incapable of holding our members at Meetings. The atmosphere was nauseous to all, and, to those who cannot bear tobacco smoke in excess, poisonous. Many old members complained, and some—even old Presidents—were driven away. We had tried hiring another and a strange hall, but this had proved but cold comfort. The remedy was almost worse than the disease. Not even the attractions of Alpine friendships and stewed tea could induce members to linger among surroundings more frigid than a crevasse in January.

The very essence of the Club's vitality was at stake; the friendliness and the homeliness of its gatherings was in danger of being frostbitten. We clung to our Penates; we wanted, not to wander in the wilderness of parochial whitewash, but to set up a new home where we could meet among our own belongings and make more use of them than in the limited space we had completely outgrown.

In this dilemma I suddenly heard that the Society that rented this hall—The Christian Young Men's Association—wished to leave. We entered into negotiations of a very protracted character; but at last our terms were accepted. An amusing incident attended the change of ownership. The Christian Young Men let the rooms for the last week of their tenancy to a theatrical company. On coming to take possession, Mr. Wicks, or his agent, found properties in the committee room and professional ladies in the library. Our predecessors had apparently satisfied their consciences by requiring us in the lease to thoroughly cleanse and purge the premises. We have done so; we have removed not only the stage properties, but also the texts which pervaded the walls, the initials which decorated the lamps, and the three young Christians who lodged in the attics. One of these attics we now reserve for the accommodation of a country president!

Our work, however, has been mainly constructive, and it has been necessarily somewhat extensive and expensive. The Committee have had a clear object in view—to do what was most essential well. We believe we have secured

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in this Hall sufficient light both by night and day and adequate warmth and ventilation. We have, further, been at pains to provide walls which may form an effective background, and on which pictures may be hung without destroying the covering. We have arranged a space for exhibiting lantern slides without the intervention of a screen. We hope that the small rooms and another good room upstairs, not yet furnished, may afford facilities for reading, consulting maps, and for meeting one another, which our members never had in the limited space up two stone staircases at Trafalgar Square. Members will now find a good fire and a cup of tea between 4 and 6 in the afternoon.

I see no reason why special times should not be arranged for informal gatherings. To keep the Club together on the old friendly lines, that, I trust, may be one of the main results of our move. This much we might have done in many places. The 'clou,' as the French say, of these premises seems to me this Hall. There are, I think, very few halls—I doubt if there is another hall—in Central London so exactly suited to our needs. A commodious second entrance in Conduit Street will be serviceable—so the Hon. Secretary informs me—to members who desire to evade the police or escape payment of their cabs. It may also be of use for picture and photographic exhibitions. I look forward to a series of such shows, each formed from some special point of view, perhaps, by which the artists among us and the whole Club will be the gainers.

One word more before we leave the rooms. You have, no doubt, noticed the singular architectural merits of the reading room. It is part of an old garden house belonging to and coeval with old Burlington House, and this Hall was also erected some time in the last century either as an auction room or with a view to the entertainments then in vogue. It was known as Cripp's Hall, and Horace Walpole records having been present at theatricals here. So after all the Christian Young Men had a precedent. Since then it has served for many years as an auction hall, a lumber room, and lastly as a meeting house.

We have now restored it and turned it to better purposes. If it looks none the worse for its chequered past, if it is not only thoroughly purged, but handsomely and appropriately garnished, the credit is largely due to my friend Mr. Brydon, an architect who knows as well as any man how to deal with practical matters in an artistic spirit, and who has a special affection for the period to which these buildings belong.

Some critical and financial member may, perhaps, suspect

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that I am about to evade what he looks on as the greatest change in my three years—the doubling of the subscription. As that change was made unanimously after full notice, and under conditions which prevent individual hardship to any present member of the Club, I feel under no obligation to defend it again at any length. I mention it mainly in order to repeat what I only suggested, I think, in bringing it forward, that the old subscription has not for years sufficed to allow the Club to live up to its position. In all literary and cartographical matters we have been badly hampered, and it has been impossible (even while living to some extent on charity) to make our publications equal in material respects to those of other Alpine Clubs. I feel sure that my successors will be able to give members of the Club their two guineas' worth, and I feel confident that so comparatively moderate a request will meet with very few refusals when the time comes to fill in our bankers' orders. One very satisfactory result is already obvious. The increase has had no deterrent effect on the flow of candidates.

Next to our change of quarters the most striking domestic incident in my three years of office has been the successful exhibition of pictures and photographs of mountain scenery held over the way in Conduit Street last December. I took advantage of the catalogue to write a prologue to the show. Let me now add a few words by way of epilogue. I preached juxtaposition between painters and mountains on the one hand, and painters and mountaineers on the other. How far did the exhibition justify this argument? Undoubtedly among the purely Alpine pictures exhibited there was a predominance of landscapes of the matter-of-fact kind, snows painted under a noontide glare, mountains drawn without any attempt at composition or selection; views that were some of them little better than well-painted physical diagrams or coloured photographs—portraits rather than pictures. There seemed a too general failure to recognise the dramatic effects of the heights, the capacities of clouds; there was a certain lack of imagination and some want of such delicacy of draftsmanship and appreciation of atmospheric effects as is shown in Walton's 'Peaks in Pen and Pencil,' or in some of M. Loppé's winter sketches. Of course there were many marked exceptions. But near or above the snow level we had, on the whole, more prose than poetry, and the facts given were often only the most obvious facts—there was much left out. There may be, I need hardly say, more than one way of leaving out facts. The topographical painter can be quite as limited in his vision

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as the young impressionist who, never having learnt to appreciate and copy with accuracy the structural lines of the mountains, gives us forcible arrangements of blots of colour in place of drawings.

An artist friend of mine, to whom I observed on this character in the Gallery, made a reply which is, I think, worth our consideration. 'What else,' he asked, 'can you expect? You Alpine climbers want pictures for topographical and personal ends, to show the peaks you climb and the cracks and chimneys you climb them by. You call for topographical diagrams, not for romantic landscapes.'

Now, if this were a true and complete statement, my position would be obviously false, in so far that having brought painters to the mountains we should have done so only to crush their efforts by our own blunt and perverse mode of perception. There is some truth in my friend's view, I think. No one but a climber could perhaps care for some of the Alpine pictures exhibited. But it is surely a half-truth! Many climbers, I believe, will be ready to appreciate any true Alpine artist who may in the fulness of time be born to us. If we cannot make an artist, a painter of the High Alps will find his first public in the Alpine Club. Not at once perhaps; we are all slow to see nature through another's eyes, as even Turner and Constable found. And there will always be a few athletes who will prefer to examine conscientiously, and explain exhaustively to the other sex, enlarged photographs of themselves and their conquests. Let me trust there are not many to imitate the visitor heard by Sir W. M. Conway last year to tell a lady that Masherbrum was 'somewhere in the Tyrol,' and, on being pressed as to whether he had climbed it, to reply promptly, 'No; but something close by.'

At any rate, this year we have debarred that visitor from his photographs, and forced him to look at the pictures. This step has been taken as much in the interest of the photographers as in that of the painters. If some artists and owners dislike the mixing of paintings and photographs, the photographers, on their part, demand an amount of space which cannot be given them in a combined exhibition. This year they will have their own show later on. Another year I should suggest the order might be reversed, the photographs shown in winter and the pictures in the brighter and longer days of the London season.

From art to literature is a natural step. The production of the Journal has occupied but a fraction of the energies of our industrious and illustrious colleague, Sir W. M. Con-

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way. He has added to our Alpine library two works, one of which was very aptly described by the late Premier as 'even more remarkable and monumental than the Karakoram journey it recorded.' In another book, almost equally monumental, my friend has recorded a walk from end to end of the Alps with two Ghoorkhas. It is an entertaining record of a vigorous journey. 'Brown, Jones, and Robinson' had some famous adventures among frontier fortresses, but they were never, like Conway and his Ghoorkhas, an object of pursuit to the forces of two nations. There is a fashion nowadays for little books by great men. Sir W. M. Conway has made a very proper protest by presenting to the world literary offspring of such aldermanic bulk that the author who would surpass him must produce twins. In my judgment Sir W. M. Conway's Karakoram map is a yet more 'remarkable and monumental' work for a private individual to have executed than even his books, and we owe some thanks to the Council of the Geographical Society for having gone to the considerable expense of reproducing it on a scale adequate to its importance.

Close in alphabetical and literary conjunction with our knight we find, as usual, Mr. Coolidge. He has not yet been made a bishop, but Grindelwald, that haunt of ecclesiastics, expects soon to see him in gaiters of a new cut and with his ice-axe turned into a crosier. With his usual untiring energy he continues to devote himself to accumulating and condensing, in the form of 'Climbers' Guides,' all the information that can help his fellow-members to enjoy the Alps to the full, to wander off to those delightful recesses where Cook's and Perowne's tourists cease from troubling, and the young climber can appreciate the charm of the mountains before they had been discovered by the clients of the circulating agencies, who, like the novels of the circulating libraries, are generally but poor company.

Mr. Coolidge has been, and is still engaged, with almost excessive care and conscientiousness, on the task the Club too lightly, perhaps, undertook—that of renewing the 'Alpine Guide.' The task is in many ways one of the most difficult and delicate that could have been found in Alpine literature, and Mr. Coolidge is one of the very few men among us who can carry it through with any hope of success. I trust it may not too long delay him from prosecuting those historical researches in Alpine regions, in which he has placed himself in the front rank of European scholars.

There has been no want of activity among our members.

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I do not, however, find traces in our literature of the increase there ought to be in the annexation of the out-of-the-way districts which still afford secure refuges from the madding crowd. Nor does there seem as yet to be any sign of the growth of that spirit of natural research, that habit of taking up a particular point of view and working it out, which is so common, even too common, abroad. The direction of English education doubtless partly accounts for this lack in our publications, which has perhaps been also accentuated by the somewhat excessive, if not superfluous, disclaimers of any scientific aim put forward by some of the most prominent contributors to our early literature.

One problem, the action and extension, past and present, of glaciers all over the world has been taken in hand by our Committee, with the help of the energy of Captain Marshall Hall. The results obtained will be chronicled from time to time in the 'Journal.'

Mr. Clinton Dent attacked a more practical problem, and one of some importance, in endeavouring to bring about the adoption of a uniform code of signalling between parties in distress on the mountains and the huts or valley stations. An accident on the Matterhorn this summer, in consequence of which a wounded guide was left for hours on the mountain, furnished an opportune answer to his critics. Had his system been in use the man might have been brought into shelter with far less delay.

Outside the Alps there have been two noteworthy expeditions by our members. First in order of time came Mr. Fitzgerald's remarkable and numerous exploits in New Zealand, where, not only did he carry through successfully some daring ascents, but also proved the practical utility of climbing by finding for the colonists the easy and direct pass they have so much wanted and so long sought to the West Coast. His companion Zurbruggen showed how much more rare is the judgment that recognises the right way up a new peak than the energy that forces the wrong one. For possibly, in consequence of the frequent opportunities he had had in his earlier expeditions of reconnoitring the mountain, he eventually found a line of ascent by which he could safely walk up Mount Cook alone! Its highest point had escaped Emil Boss and Mr. Green, and only been attained a few weeks previously, after repeated attempts, by the boldest climbers of the colony.

I trust that, when the mountains are better known and mountaineers are more abundant, travellers who follow Mr. Fitzgerald may not be called on to run the excessive risks he

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has described in the account of his explorations lately published in the 'Nineteenth Century.'

Of the expedition to Nanga Parbat it would be premature to speak to-night; doubtless you will in due course hear something more from Mr. Mummery's companions of its character and results.

Next to Conway's, undoubtedly the principal literary product of the past year has been the work by which our late and sincerely deplored colleague took us all by surprise. I refer, of course, to Mr. Mummery's account of his climbs. We all knew Mummery was a fine climber, but we had hardly suspected him of a style such as his book showed him to possess.

In that volume there are certain statements in which I cannot agree. I shall deal subsequently with some of these topics, for I knew Mr. Mummery well enough to be certain that he would have been the last man to wish a discussion on subjects material to the welfare of this Club and the future of mountaineering postponed on his account.

Moreover, the consideration that might have rendered such a reference too painful is absent. There is no reason whatever to think that the fatal accident on Nanga Parbat was the result of any rashness on the part of Mr. Mummery, or of any failure to act on the rules and with the precautions that have been in use among earlier explorers in distant lands from 1868 to the present time.

And now, in place of going into further detail, I will ask you to turn aside from the incidents of the day in order to look behind and forward, and to try to form some picture of the development and progress of mountaineering as a craft.

Last year I trod in the footprints of one of your earliest Presidents and your future President. I climbed Piz Bernina, and without guides. On my return I naturally looked with interest to the narrative of Kennedy and Hardy's expedition in 'Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers.' From an historical point of view it seemed to me a very curious and instructive record. It shows what unreal terrors the mountains were capable of inspiring even at a date subsequent to the foundation of this Club. It shows, also, how slow and gradual was the evolution of the craft of climbing among guides, as well as amateurs. Let me illustrate in detail these statements. The description of the rocks of the 'Gemsens-Freiheit' clearly refers to the identical route now followed. Even when the crags are snowy there is nothing to prevent moderate climbers moving in the ordinary way over them at a fair pace, perhaps tightening the rope now and then. Yet thirty-five years ago

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a President of the Alpine Club thought it a feat for a guide to climb these rocks and to be able to haul his 'Herrschaft' up separately after him. Again, the rock ridge between the highest snow of Piz Bernina and the stone-man seems very short and simple to modern eyes. The early mountaineer thought Jenni venturesome for crossing it while roped to a stationary party, and describes the guide as slipping in the transit. Again, on this famous expedition elementary rules of the craft were disregarded. A single guide ascended alone a really steep snowslope, while a traveller climbed it separately roped to another guide. Two of the party returned roped together over snows concealing large crevasses.

These facts are significant. I could add others from my own early experiences a few years later. I have seen three narrow escapes in one day, all arising from the neglect of a guide to use the rope where it was called for. The deduction is surely obvious. The art of climbing snowy mountains was not an inheritance from remote generations of Alpine peasants, but a new thing, in which the experience, or instinct, as some call it, of the peasant was only an ingredient. Guides and amateurs —Balmat and De Saussure—were both learners, but the guides had the start. They were for long the better men by virtue of the aptitude acquired from childhood, and the physical force coming of a life of labour. Their aim, and that of the amateur, were identical, to do as much as possible with as little risk as possible. The great novelty introduced by amateurs, climbers for pleasure, was the recognition of the solidarity of 'the party.' That it had its risks and drawbacks was obvious, but it was felt that its advantages turned the scale. It was felt, further, that the weaker brother, once accepted as a companion, must be accepted for better or worse, that he could no more be left to shift for himself than a comrade in the face of the enemy. And, on the whole, despite the terrible Matterhorn accident, the safety gained by the proper use of the rope was found in experience to more than counterbalance its inconveniences.

For many years the development of mountaineering, of its implements and its methods, went on, and always with the same view, that it was a pursuit in which danger was inevitable, but that by skill and care the dangers could be largely eliminated and reduced. The attitude of the climber was 'Attention!' As soon as he passed the snow-level he felt in the enemy's country, and was on his guard against surprises. The first lesson he was taught was that difficulty and danger were by no means necessarily connected, that

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the most perilous moments were those when no peril was obvious. He found sufficient excitement in the novelties of the snow-world, the passage of the *bergschrund*, or the cornice, or the protracted struggle in the ice-fall. To a younger generation eager for novelty these things seemed to grow flat. Ice-craft, having been perfected, was neglected while men set to work to develop rock-climbing with extraordinary hardihood and success. The gymnastic side of climbing was developed, perhaps with some loss on other sides. Attention was paid to the infinitely little. Variations became vexations.

Then in some independent minds a bold counsel of perfection was broached—to climb without guides. The first Englishman to put it in practice succeeded only in proving that for some people, including himself, the experiment was too rash. The conservatives among us chuckled prematurely over the indiscretions Mr. Girdlestone revealed to the world. For meantime another party, Mr. Charles Pilkington, Mr. Lawrence Pilkington, and Mr. Gardiner, were steadily setting themselves to be as capable as guides. The attempt, in my opinion, was perfectly legitimate, it has proved successful, and it has led to a great advance in mountaineering. It may be granted that in the very front rank of mountaineers there will always be two guides to every amateur. So much may be allowed for the inherited touch, the muscular force, the perfect patience of the born mountaineer. But I do not see my way to allow much more. I am conscious that this is indeed a change from the time—before 1885—when to whisper that an amateur might become nearly as good as a guide was held to be the mark of a vain boaster or an ignorant person. But, judging from recent experience, there are now members of this Club with whom I would rather go up a mountain than with any guide out of the first rank. In the present relations of guide and amateur it is not without amusement that mountaineers have seen within the last few days that typical representative of British middle-class intelligence, the 'Daily Telegraph,' calling on Sir Alfred Wills to see that no traveller be allowed to climb a mountain without a certificate from a guide that he is physically capable. If he interfere at all, Sir Alfred Wills will, I trust, secure that none but members of this Club shall be allowed above the snow-line!

Far be it from me to offer any encouragement in guideless climbing to raw climbers or to the public at large. It is in my opinion a luxury to be earned by a long and well-spent apprenticeship. No amount of athletic ability without mountain experience qualifies a beginner for it; athleticism may even

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be a disqualification! No one, perhaps, is in such danger as the gymnast who fancies he can perform the feats of the training school under the varying conditions of the mountains. The high rate of mortality among German mountaineers is, I fancy, in part due to their national craze for gymnastics, though it is still more due to the madness of solitary climbing. Travellers without guides have at present this advantage, that all are on their mettle. I fear there may be occasionally a certain amount of false security in the companionship of guides. With the Alpine peasant familiarity with the expeditions he frequently repeats—and the 'central' guide is forced into frequent repetitions—has bred, in some cases, contempt; he grows careless himself and in looking after his party. The accidents caused directly or indirectly by guides have not been, and never can be, catalogued; but they have occurred—I can speak from personal experience of one or two, happily not fatal—and are, I believe, likely to recur. How many chamois-hunters and hay-cutters are annually the victims of a moment's disregard of familiar risk? And these men are the raw material of guides. Yet, if the average guide is not infallible, he is still likely in a large majority of cases to be a better man than his employer. Few travellers ought to venture to do without guides, but all travellers can try to make themselves competent to exercise at times control, to check any remissness in the management of an expedition, particularly in the use of the rope, to insist on a resolute decision when weather or unlooked for difficulties make a change of plans essential, to take their fair share in the day's work and the day's responsibilities—in short, to act as part of the crew and not as mere passengers or parcels.

In this retrospective review I have now reached the date (only yesterday, as it were) when our craft having been developed its rules were laid down in various handbooks and treatises.

Now, to some minds, eager, inventive, paradoxical, the fact of the formulation of a code of rules is an incitement to criticism and revolt. Mountaineering without Guides had been successfully mastered; the next stage of progress sought was to mountaineer without precautions. It was really a retrograde step. The principle hitherto had been to give the mountains no spare chances in the game. Now, rules sometimes found irksome were voted superfluous. The abuse of the rope by men who are no climbers at all led to its contemptuous disuse by men of exceptional force. On two particular matters raised in Mr. Mummery's final chapter I

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feel bound to qualify his statements. Mr. Mummery writes 'that it would appear obvious that it is an error to assume that on steep slopes or cliffs three men are safer than two.' The following page, in which he endeavours to prove by illustration this thesis, is strangely unconvincing, to use no stronger expression. To my mind it only shows that the writer, brilliant climber as he was, probably because he was so brilliant, had failed altogether to understand the co-operative force of 'a party.' Two men can, and ought, in places of peril, to be able to combine their powers of resistance while the third moves, and they have larger opportunities of doing so. *Two* is not a proper number as a rule for difficult expeditions. As a rule, I say, for on certain rock peaks I agree it may be admissible, and on certain exceptionally dangerous expeditions two may be the less dangerous number, the lesser evil. On snowfields it is possible the adjustment of a double rope recommended by Mr. Mummery may diminish the risk. But for ordinary men or average ascents less than three is not a proper number. I do not speak without some personal experience. I have climbed myself with one guide or friend; I once very nearly fell a victim to doing so. As it chanced I just succeeded in holding up my companion. Had we been three, two to join in resistance, there would have been far less risk. The third man gives the party as a whole not only a double power of resistance wherever a bad place has to be climbed or crossed, but also a wider range of holding ground.

Solitary walking on the Alps is, I admit, an extraordinary temptation to any man of imagination, and the word *walking* may, in the case of one familiar with the mountains, cover much. But the old mountaineer abuses his privilege—I have had a personal lesson in this respect also—when he goes alone or unroped on snow. It cannot be said too emphatically that Mr. Mummery's belief that old climbers need never fall into crevasses is opposed to general experience and to innumerable recorded facts. On my first journey to the Caucasus we all fell into crevasses. Happily we were always roped. I have seen old François and his pipe frequently in a crevasse, and the pipe has perished. I have gone in myself when following in the exact footmarks of far heavier men. The matter does not admit of question: the evidence is overwhelming that no practice, not even the eye of a chamois, will always save a man from falling into a concealed crevasse.

Another source of danger, I believe, at the present time is carelessness. No one has emphasised this more strongly than Mummery. 'The first lesson,' he writes, 'the novice has

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to learn is to be ever on his guard, and it is one that the oldest climber hardly masters.' It is, he adds, 'the ridiculously easy rocks that swell the list of Alpine victims.' These sentences furnish a singular commentary to the subsequent statement that his pages are written for parties 'of which every member is absolutely certain never to slip.' The admission is significant. In point of fact, our friend was amusing himself by writing not for human beings but for that ideal climber, equally strong on rock and ice, never off his guard, who never was or will be, but to whom Mummery himself and Émile Rey were in many respects two of the nearest approximations that have yet been seen in the Alps.

It is among guides that carelessness is now chiefly prevalent. We have had two striking instances in a short space of time. Émile Rey himself falls after he has unroped; two of his comrades glissade with their employer into a crevasse on Mont Blanc. Last year a well-known Dolomite guide escaped by a hairbreadth Rey's fate under exactly similar circumstances. Beware of blind faith in guides—they are not infallible. As I have said already, we know not how many accidents have been due primarily to guides. I do know of narrow escapes due—not the escapes, but the risks—entirely to their carelessness or even perverseness in face of warning. An Engadiner, no longer living, many years ago took all my party into a *bergschrund*. Competent climbers without guides have this advantage at any rate, that they know their companions' capacities.

At the risk of being tedious, one more warning for that distant exploration which now forms so large a part of the Club's work. Let me implore you to remember the absolute necessity of being on your guard lest your Alpine experience become a snare to you. Under hotter suns, in moister climates, you will find the conditions of snow and ice, and even rock, very different and often far more dangerous, the variations in those conditions far more rapid, the mountains as a whole less stable. You must constantly adapt and readjust your action and course in view of local facts. You must not try to rush your peaks. Reconnoitre, reconnoitre, reconnoitre! Be discreet, considering that discretion is the better part of valour, and that the valour that is without it is not the truest kind.

A new rule or principle may be called for. My own experience inclines me to think—and there is an *obiter dictum* of A. W. Moore's recorded somewhere to the same effect—that among new mountains no pass should be tried of which the

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nature of the further side has not been previously ascertained —and carefully ascertained.

I have felt it my duty to testify to the faith as I hold it after a tolerably long and varied experience. The tradition of this Club has been to promulgate the principles and rules by which men may climb with a minimum of peril. We do not attempt to eliminate danger; we encourage new explorations despite their inevitable perils. But our object has been that our members may attain the maximum of success and enjoyment with the minimum of danger. We believe that a comparison of the Alpine death-roll of our own Club with that of the climbers of all nations outside it will show that we have to a great extent succeeded in this effort. To incur a maximum of needless peril for a minimum of results—that is the practical outcome of the tendency of the day among the common herd of climbers. If anyone thinks I speak too strongly let him read the analysis of this year's accidents in the Alps in our Journal and in foreign publications.

Weary of sermon-writing, I took down a classic I had not looked at for forty years, and there, opening on the story of the Fall of the Diablerets, I found—as by a *sors Virgiliana*—the conclusion of the whole matter. The book was 'Sandford and Merton.' I read as follows:—

'"Dear heart," said Tommy, when Mr. Barlow had finished his narrative, "what a number of accidents people are subject to in this world!"

'"It is very true," answered Mr. Barlow, "but as that is the case it is necessary to improve ourselves in every possible manner, so that we may be able to struggle against them."'

I am afraid you must have found me very much of a Mr. Barlow in this chair!

And now nothing is left me but, in bidding you farewell, to thank both my colleagues of the committee and the Club in general for the very great kindness and forbearance they have shown towards me on all occasions during my three years of office, and to wish the Club all prosperity in this new departure. If I believe in the Club's permanence and prosperity it is because it seems to me to be founded on two of the most primitive and deep-rooted instincts in mankind. It is connected, if modern philosophers will allow the distinction, both with the physical and the moral sides of human nature. Who can see street children at play without recognising that to climb, whether a heap of stones or 'the highest parts of the dust of the world,' and then tumble down

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the other side, is one of the earliest and purest forms of human pleasure? Who, again, has ventured far or often into the solitudes of the eternal hills without feeling once and again that imperfect perception of things not seen which is perhaps one of the nearest approaches to direct revelation allowed to a generation in which most of us.

> 'See all sights from pole to pole,
> And glance and nod and bustle by,
> And never once possess our soul
> Before we die'?

On the heights, if anywhere, we do possess our souls! The great mountains are more than playgrounds; they are the cathedrals of nature: under their walls we may lay down for a time most of the burdens of life, and even find some support or solace in its sorrows.

Climbing on the Nanga Parbat Range, Kashmir.

By J. NORMAN COLLIE.

(Read before the Alpine Club, February 4, 1896.)

AMONGST mountaineers who has not at some time or another looked at the map of India and wished for an opportunity to visit that mighty mountain range the Himalayas? Many are the books that tell us of the wonderful snow and ice worlds that lie hidden there. Nearly fifty years ago Sir J. Hooker (then Dr. Hooker) wandered through the eastern end of the Himalayan range. In his 'Journals' he gives us a most fascinating account of Sikkim and the mountainous country round Darjeeling, where Kánchanjangá is only second to the giant Devadhunga. Whilst Knight, in his book 'Where Three Empires Meet,' deals with the north-west corner of India, where the valleys of the Hindoo Koosh slope southward towards the great Indus; and only recently we have heard from Sir W. M. Conway about the inhospitable wilds of the Karakorams, and of glaciers larger than any outside the Arctic regions which lie hidden amongst stupendous peaks whose summits reach an altitude of 28,000 ft.

But still it is a far cry to the Himalayas, and although one may wish often and long that it may be one's luck to start on some particularly propitious day for India, armed with mountaineering boots, an ice axe, and Alpine rope, nevertheless the propitious day never dawns, and circumstances over

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