so that if the snow had given way under Sylvain the shock would have fallen on us both as one man. Presently Sylvain called out that he was all right and ready to jump. I advanced near to the edge of the chasm, gave him rope, and saw him land in the soft snow. I followed, nothing loth, for the jump, though perhaps a little formidable in appearance, involved nothing more than a sousing in the snow. Pession joined us, and we made at a good pace for the big moraine between the Monciair and Moncorvé glaciers, two hours from the summit. There we found Anderson, had a little pleasant refreshment, and afterwards strolled into the Refuge, after a most enjoyable day. By taking the north ridge for the ascent, and descending by the north-east ridge, the Monciair becomes perhaps the most tempting of all the many climbs that can be made from the Refuge.

Lovers of the Alpine flora will be interested to hear that about half-way up the north ridge of the Monciair I found a plant of *Ranunculus glacialis*, with two lovely blossoms, smaller and with less pink in them than one usually sees, but the perfection of shape and symmetry, and with centres of the brightest gold. It was interesting to notice the difference between this and the large plant of the same flower which I found in 1879 close to the top of the Pointe de Ceresole on its *south* side. Though born in the teeth of the bitter north, the tiny blossoms excelled in beauty their brothers of the sun-favoured south.

IN MEMORIAM.

JAMES HEELIS.

THE news of the unexpected death of Mr. James Heelis from dysentery at Yokohama, on March 23, while on a tour of pleasure round the world, came as a great shock to a large circle of friends, to whom his genial character had greatly endeared him. He was a keen mountaineer, and one who did not confine his operations to great centres, such as Zermatt, but loved to visit the Eastern Alps, the Dolomites, and the at that time but little frequented Graians. Nor were his efforts confined to the Alps. The hills of Cumberland and Westmoreland, North Wales, and the Cuchullins, in Skye, all served as fields for his favourite pastime. Not the least sad part of his unexpected death lies in the fact that he had but a little over twelve months retired from practice as partner in one of the best known firms of solicitors in Manchester, and was looking forward to a future which, free from business cares, should allow larger opportunities for mountaineering and travel. His loss

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will long be felt by those who had the good fortune to enjoy his acquaintance, and he will be deeply regretted by the few to whom he was more intimately known.

James Heelis was the possessor of exceptional abilities; his advice was always shrewd, and he was not a man of words only. He was more given to do acts of kindness than to talk of them. The Committee and the Club generally have sustained a great loss by his death. He had been a member for twenty-one years, and had ever shown himself a staunch supporter of the best traditions of mountaineering. Amongst the mountains he was all that a climber should be, always considerate and genial, and ready to make the best of the troubles and annoyances which, though afterwards the cause of much mirth in retrospect, are at the time sufficiently irritating. His mountain tastes were catholic. As early as 1878, in company with Mr. G. Yeld, he made a month's tour through the Graians, during which the Levanna, Sassière, Granta Parei, Punta Galisia (first ascent), and Albaron (by a new route), not to mention other peaks, were ascended, and several new passes accomplished. He was also of those who never forget the risks to which guides are liable, and no one was more ready to help liberally in times of misfortune.

CHRISTIAN ALMER.

THERE passed away on May 17, 1898, one of the two men whom common consent places foremost among the pioneers of the Alps; the other, though slightly an older man, happily still survives. Christian Almer's mountaineering skill, like that of many of his contemporaries, grew out of chamois-hunting; there was no prospect in his young days of making a comfortable livelihood as a guide in the High Alps; in fact he was not enrolled as a guide until he was thirty years old. His first appearance chronicled in literature was as a voluntary associate in Sir Alfred Wills's classic ascent of the Wetterhorn; his last expedition was, as it happened, nearly on the same ground, being a passage of the Lauteraar Joch late in last summer. For some years Almer never went beyond his native district, though from the beginning he stood first among the Grindelwald men in reputation and in achievements among the Oberland peaks. To a man of his powers the chance of distinguishing himself on a wider field was sure to come sooner or later; as a matter of fact the year 1861 proved to be the turning point of his fortunes. In that year a casual meeting with Almer led me to begin mountaineering, and through me he became known to A. W. Moore, and so to the other Englishmen whom he led in the many great expeditions which established his fame as one of the greatest of guides. During the next few years he rapidly became acquainted with the high peaks and passes already known, and had a very large share in the new expeditions. Not that it made much difference to him whether he had seen a place or not. His

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first near view of Mont Blanc was with me in 1861; on that occasion he led a party, consisting of two novices and another Swiss guide who had never been on the mountain, straight up from Chamonix, without any help from old tracks above the snow line, to the great disgust of the Chamonix guide bureau. So too he had never crossed the Col du Géant till 1862, and some local guides with another party tried to show off and lead the way for us; but they were soon glad to let Almer steer them through the séracs, which happened to be exceptionally cross-grained. The same thing applied to many other expeditions. I hardly remember to have made one in that period, except common things like the Strahleck, which Almer had made before, and yet he certainly never had to play second fiddle for lack of local knowledge.

Christian Almer's list of new peaks may perhaps be equalled; it comprised the Mönch, Eiger, Ecrins, A. Verte, Grandes Jorasses, Jungfrau from the Wengern Alp, Lyskamm from Gressoney, besides many others of less note. But he also led the way over nearly all the great passes made in 1862–7; the Jungfrau Joch and Agassiz Joch in the Oberland—the Sesia Joch, Moming, Schallen Joch, Mischabel Joch round Zermatt—the Col Dolent and Tour Noire on the chain of Mont Blanc—the Brêche and Col de Pilatte in Dauphiné—these are but specimens. In the same period was included an expedition with Mr. Tuckett in Tyrol, full of new things; and the number of first ascents afterwards made by him with Mr. Coolidge, mainly in the S.W. Alps, is legion. It was in 1868 that he first travelled with Mr. Coolidge, who for many years employed him during a great part of each summer. Mr. Coolidge's record for number and variety of high expeditions is entirely unrivalled; and this is one reason why Christian Almer excelled all other guides in the extent of his practical knowledge of the Alps. A guide travelling with many different employers finds himself called on to repeat very often the favourite ascents; a single employer naturally tends to vary his experiences; it is the exception rather than the rule, that he makes a given expedition for a second or third time.

Christian Almer retained his vigour almost to the end. Several years ago he lost some toes by frost-bite, and it was supposed that he would never climb again, being then well past sixty, but he soon belied that prediction. Every one remembers how he celebrated his golden wedding in 1896 by taking his wife up the Wetterhorn. The last time I saw him, late in the same summer, at the end of a week in which he had ascended four Oberland peaks, he took my companion a round on the Eismeer and Zäsenberg at a pace (time happening to be short) which few men of half his age would have cared to keep up.

The men who led successfully the expeditions of the first age of mountaineering, when all was new, required many of the qualities of a great general—power of grasping thoroughly all the conditions of the task before him, prompt and decisive judgment, unflinching courage in pressing on, with an accurate perception how

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and when, if necessary, to retreat, besides the power of recollecting, when they were no longer visible, details ascertained by previous reconnoitring. Christian Almer possessed these gifts in a very high measure, especially the last. When he guided Moore and myself over the Sesia Joch in 1862, he had seen that long ascent through a break in the clouds for about ten minutes two days before; yet he led the way without hesitation, never turning back except once, when the great couloir, which looks from a distance the natural route, proved too icy to be feasible, and not being in the least disconcerted by having to alter his whole plan of operations. Three or four years later we were returning to Zermatt by the Schwarz Thor in cloudy weather, and Almer, who had crossed it for the first time a few weeks before, told me that he had then noted a different route on the Italian side, which he thought would prove shorter than the usual one, though it seemed to involve a great détour. We naturally assented, and sure enough we reached the pass very quickly, though for most part of the way we could not see a hundred yards. On another occasion he led us diagonally down a stony, featureless hill-side, in darkness so great that we could barely see one another at a few yards' distance, straight to the only spot where a chimney enabled the cliff below to be passed, and this on no further acquaintance with the locality than having come up the previous day.

Almer's daring on occasion was remarkable; there is, perhaps, nothing on record more audacious than his leaping across a gap in the final ridge of the Ecrins to clutch a rock which might have given way under him; and most of his habitual employers can recall similar feats not much less trying. The perfection of his balance enabled him to be secure, and to give others the impression that he was secure, in positions which, if they could be described, would suggest that a touch must be fatal. Difficulties were with him merely things to be conquered, and his fertility of resource was as remarkable as his personal strength and skill. At the same time he never wilfully faced danger which skill could not avert, or ran a needless risk in order to save trouble, or neglected to carry out the established precautions to the full. No one ever saw Almer slow to put on the rope or hasty to take it off. I remember his astonishing an unlucky porter by the energy of his rebuke for not keeping to the steps; we were returning down an extremely steep snow-slope that had grown soft, and Almer would not allow, for the sake of saving a little time and trouble, any careless going which might possibly lead to a slip. He was not specially quick at step-cutting, but his workmanship was simply perfect; up or down, straight ahead or round a corner, every step was placed as accurately as if all had been marked out beforehand, and every step was exactly of the size which the occasion required. He was unwearied in his exertions, always ready to take on himself any amount of extra work. I have seen him transfer to his own shoulders the load of a local porter who, half an hour before, had been boasting that he would show us all the way to go uphill, because he saw

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that the man did not know how to walk, and was suffering for it. Another time we were crossing the Lauteraar Joch late in the year, and found a yawning chasm where there should have been snow to descend from the rocks to the glacier. Almer not only discovered a way down, round a very queer rocky corner—that was his proper business—he went down the bad place with every man of a large party, including two heavily laden porters, telling each in succession where to feel for one finger- or toe-hold after the other. He was very ready to pick up new ideas—sharp, for instance, to find flowers, of which he knew nothing, for a traveller who was interested in them. He had never, I suppose, seen a photograph taken before Mr. Edwards accompanied me in 1865 to take the views for my Oberland book.* Almer had learned in a day or two not merely the requisites for setting up the apparatus—a much more serious thing in the days of wet plates than now—but also what sort of views were feasible, and was always ready to make the camera, and the photographer, firm in the most unpromising positions, if so only a desirable view could be secured.

A more equable temper, a kindlier nature than Christian Almer's have seldom been possessed by mortal. No *contretemps* ever put him out, no amount of fatigue ever made him neglectful of the slightest thing that could conduce to the comfort of his *Herrschaft*. No jealousy of another ever entered his mind. Many will remember Mr. Whymper's account of how he and Michel Croz worked together. I have seen him working along with a variety of guides, including some of the best of the old school; sometimes one or another would try to push himself forward, Almer never, unless it were to bear the brunt of the labour; and time after time I have heard them say afterwards that he was a better man than they. I don't know whether any other living man has seen what I saw once, Christian Almer and Melchior Anderegg together in a really tight place. They were not old associates, they had hardly ever been employed together before, each knew that the other was his only rival in reputation; and their co-operation was so perfect that one might have almost imagined one soul to animate the two bodies.

The younger generations have turned out some excellent guides; some of their performances have perhaps surpassed, as feats independent of the environment, the deeds of their fathers. But the first group, the veritable pioneers of the Alps, were a class apart. As one by one they pass over to the majority their place cannot be filled, and among them all there can hardly be a greater gap than that caused by the death of Christian Almer. H. B. G.

In the early morning of May 17 last 'Vater Almer,' as he was affectionately called at Grindelwald, passed away peacefully, at the age of seventy-two, after a long winter of suffering and failing strength. Three days later, on the morrow of the festival of the

* The portrait in the present number was taken on the Wengern Alp during this expedition.

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CHRISTIAN ALMER

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Ascension, he was borne to his last resting-place, in the little churchyard of Grindelwald. As the long procession left the house, and again as the body was being committed to the grave, the roar of avalanches, thundering down the precipices of the Mettenberg, seemed to some to be, as it were, the farewell salute of the great mountains to one who all his life had been engaged in a peaceful conflict with them. A large assemby of friends and relations gathered around while the 'Gletscherpfarrer,' Herr Strasser, said the last prayers over the grave of probably his best known parishioner. The Grindelwald guides were there in full force, as well as deputations from those of Meiringen (one being Melchior Anderegg) and Lauterbrunnen, representatives of the English and Swiss Alpine Clubs, and all the visitors then staying in the village; while by the graveside there clustered his faithful life's companion for nearly fifty-two years, his five sons, one of his three daughters (the others being in America), and a number of his thirty-one grandchildren. And then the throng melted slowly away, deeply impressed with the thought, often openly expressed, that they had just witnessed the closing scene in the earthly career of one whose name was a household word wherever lovers of his dearly-loved mountains are to be found.

In these pages his name occurs as early as the first and second numbers of the 'Journal,' and later on, it is probable, more frequently than that of any other guide or traveller, so that it is not necessary to describe his Alpine career at any length here, while I have elsewhere sketched its outlines up to 1885. But it is hard to realise that till within a few weeks back we had amongst us one who tried the Jungfrau as far back as 1851, and, save that fatal year 1885, went on climbing till in the late autumn of 1897 he made his last expedition, the passage of the Lauteraarjoch, so that at the time of his death he was probably the senior living mountaineer, whether professional or amateur. The list, too, of his early first ascents reads almost like a fairy tale, and carries one's thoughts back to the time when the Alpine Club itself was still unborn, or but an infant—Wetterhorn, from Grindelwald (1854), Mönch (1857), Eiger (1858), Gross Viescherhorn or Almerhorn (1862), Jungfraujoch (1862), Sesiajoch (1862), Pointe des Ecrins (1864), Aiguille Verte (1865), and so on almost to infinity, for his is undoubtedly the most prominent figure in the history of the systematic and complete conquest of the Alps. Later on he wandered from one end of the Alpine chain to the other, from the Dachstein (1866) to the Maritime Alps (1879). And even after it was supposed that his Alpine career was closed, in consequence of severely frost-bitten feet on the Jungfrau in January 1885, he astonished everyone by resuming to a considerable extent his former activity, the crown of his later Alpine achievements being perhaps the ascents (when seventy) of the Meije and of the Bietschhorn, both having been previously attained by him but once many years before, and his celebration of his golden wedding on the summit of the Wetterhorn in June 1896.

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It was my privilege and joy to travel with him from 1868 to 1884, both years inclusive, so that our unbroken friendship had lasted all but thirty years. I was only a schoolboy when we first came together, and it was but gradually that I learnt to appreciate his marvellous and unsurpassed qualities as a guide, particularly after we took up the exploration of little-known mountain districts, and so were brought together far more closely than is usually the case with a guide and an amateur. After his mishap our journeys had to be given up, as he could no longer climb continuously nearly every day for three months or so; but he was always most interested in what I accomplished among the mountains under the guidance of his second son and namesake, who from 1876 onwards had been our companion, and also one of his aptest pupils, and he was a capital if a somewhat severe and exacting instructor.

Looking back over the happy memories of the seventeen summers and three winters during which he was my companion—and no amateur ever had a longer experience of him in the High Alps—and trying to put aside as far as possible all natural prepossessions in his favour, I would dwell briefly on some of the characteristics which struck me most in my old friend and companion. First and foremost were his remarkable daring and courage in striking out a new line, controlled at the same time by his scarcely less remarkable prudence and carefulness, so that no accident of any kind ever befell any of those placed for the time in his charge. Who but Almer would have conceived or executed the notion of *voluntarily* bivouacking in the Silberlücke (1871), so as to combine the Silberhorn with the Jungfrau? or thought of a bivouac on the Sattel, between the two highest summits of the Wetterhorn (1872), in order to see the sun set from one and rise from the other? or carried out the *descent* (1872) of the Jungfraujoch to the Wengern Alp, with a large party, including a lady, several porters, a tent, and a dog? On the other hand, I have a most clear recollection of how he resolutely enforced retreat on the Aiguille Verte (1875), when his party was but 90 feet from the summit, but would have had to traverse a layer of fresh snow lying at a high angle on a smooth face of rock, this snow slipping off a few minutes later before the very eyes of the whole party, then marvelling at its narrow escape; and, again, on the Gabelhorn (1878), when but five minutes from the summit, from which we were separated only by a doubly-corniced upper snow crest, with precipitous couloirs descending on either side. If it requires pluck to achieve a difficult climb, it requires even greater strength of mind to acknowledge defeat, albeit only temporary, when so near the goal.

Yet on occasions when there was no unavoidable danger in making an ascent Almer's iron resolution and determination merged into what one must call obstinacy, in the good sense of the word. Neither I nor his son are ever likely to forget how, when an unclimbed though insignificant peaklet, the Pointe de la Mariande, in 1880, declined to yield to his first summons, he took his ice-axe and gave the obnoxious smooth rock wall that defied

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him such a sound thrashing that somehow or other, I never could quite make out how, it allowed its weak point to be discovered, so that victory was soon his. It was, too, a thing to see how, when by the aid of a map we had gained the foot of some virgin peak, he would sit down for a while, and stare the poor mountain almost out of countenance, and then get up and lead his party straight up to the summit, with scarcely any hesitation as to the choice of the route. That was instinct, not to be acquired by any amount of practice; and it was only when I had a guide other than an Almer that I fully appreciated his astonishing power of tracking out, with those marvellous blue eyes of his, a route up some untrodden face or slope.

Combined with all these manly qualities, he was most painstaking as to every detail that could contribute to the comfort of his companions in the case of a bivouac, whether voluntary or not; I had many opportunities of seeing this when my aunt was of the party, and yet he had never travelled with a lady before, while in later years I profited often by his *petits soins*.

Then, too, his love of the mountains was deep and genuine, quite apart from the fact that they enabled him to gain his livelihood; and those who never saw his face light up and his whole mien alter when he had once more attained the higher snow regions can have no conception of the extraordinary fascination which the mountains can exercise, particularly over a man like him, who knew them as few have ever done, whether as a hunter or as a guide. And now he sleeps among them, and as long as they stand will his name be held in honour as that of one of their most successful explorers, of their truest lovers, and of their worthiest sons.

W. A. B. Coolidge.

THE SUMMER EXHIBITION.

There seemed grave danger last year that, owing to the apathy of the members, the apparent want of interest of the artists of the Club, and the deplorable lack of visitors, these summer exhibitions were doomed to failure, notwithstanding the many advantages offered by the Club Rooms as a picture gallery. This danger was recognised and faced with vigour. To organise the Art Exhibitions of the Club a permanent sub-committee has been appointed, and on this the artist members are largely represented, and have given ready and loyal help. The present summer exhibition is the first-fruit of their efforts, and the committee is to be congratulated on the successful result.

To organise with success one of these pictorial exhibitions is a much more troublesome task than that presented by the photographic exhibition; it is more difficult to obtain adequate contributions and more difficult to secure a reasonable attendance. The impersonal record of the lens appeals to a much larger public than does the translation of a scene through the artist's individuality. There are, too, many reasons wholly unconnected with art which secure that the photographs shall not be neglected—a

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