Kesteven and myself by leading up the Mummery chimney, and we traversed the mountain, returning to Montenvers in twelve hours.

The later history of this fascinating peak with variations of the two routes above described, and especially the ascent in 1911 from the Mer de Glace side by Mr. Winthrop Young's party, are all noted in the ALPINE JOURNAL and the Vallot Guide, so there is no necessity for me to recite them.

How are the mighty fallen! There is a constant stream *via* the Mummery chimney over the Grépon nowadays, but I believe that few, if any, of the *voyageurs* declare that the expedition has failed to fulfil their expectations, and the Grépon of old is THE Grépon to-day.

[On July 31, 1922, Sir George Morse made his sixth ascent of the Aiguille de Grépon, accompanied by his daughter.—*Editor.*]

ILLUSIONS.

BY GEOFFREY E. HOWARD.

(Read before the Alpine Club, May 3, 1927.)

WHEN our Honorary Secretary commanded me to write a paper on what he was pleased to call an abstract subject, my first mental comment was that it was a pure illusion on his part to imagine that the Club likes, or even tolerates, papers without slides. Indeed I have a ghastly remembrance that when once before I essayed something of the kind in this room, while seated nervously during the Presidential preliminaries, my natural agitation was hardly allayed by overhearing several eminent Members expressing the opinion that papers without slides were a great mistake and calculated to produce the nadir of boredom.

But anyhow, the idea of Illusions in general wove into my mind a somewhat disorderly train of thought on the subject of the remarkable number and variety of illusions connected since the dawn of time with mountains and mountaineering. Undoubtedly there is something about mountains which

stimulates the latent love or fear of the mysterious in every human mind.

History, from the earliest times, teems with mountain illusions, many of which survive to-day among primitive peoples. Even highly cultured races like the ancient Greeks peopled their mountains with gods and nymphs. The Tibetans make the summit of Everest the seat of a hairy demon monster. The Children of Israel obviously had an illusion that it was especially in mountains that holy men could most easily commune with Jehovah. Instances could be multiplied almost *ad libitum* and might well form the subject of a separate paper by an ethnologist.

The Swiss peasant, familiar though he was with his mountains, peopled them with monsters: and so strong was the illusion that even within the last few centuries he was so far convinced of an occasional encounter with a real live dragon, that he would descend with sufficiently circumstantial descriptions of the pterodactyl to enable local artists to engrave lively portraits thereof. Are they not written and portrayed in the Book of Scheuchzer?

And though to an enlightened audience like ours, this seems to be the height of absurdity, can we wonder when men like Lord Rothermere or Lord Beaverbrook, heirs to all the knowledge of the ages, show day by day in their newspapers that any event which is not of daily occurrence in their own immediate environment 'astonishes, astounds and amazes' them—I use their own favourite expressions; that any person or matter which happens to be unknown to them is a Mystery, and any form of social intercourse involving either dialogue or action is a Drama? The Press being excluded this evening, they would probably describe this Meeting as 'Mountain Mens Mystery Meeting: Amazing Drama.' When, I say, matters in the slightest degree unusual impress themselves thus on the naïve and timid minds of men with all the educational advantages of the modern Press writer—can one wonder that in the Boeotian intelligence of the mediæval Swiss peasant or of the remote dwellers in mountain regions in more primitive places to-day, the grandeur and aloofness of the mountains inspired and inspire illusions productive of terror, awe or worship?

Perhaps, at first sight, especially to uninstructed minds, the mountains do give an illusion of aloofness and repulsion, and it may be that they themselves faintly marvel at our passionate embraces, as the maiden who has hitherto considered herself

a singularly unkissable entity marvels at the caresses of a lover. The outside world gazes in faint astonishment at the ecstasies conjured up in a friend by the unevident charms of his mistress. They know nothing of her spell, of the delicious secret places of her heart and soul. These are reserved for the chosen one. And so the mountains, awe-inspiring and even definitely repulsive to the uninitiated, reserve their darling joys for votaries, who, undismayed by the illusion of a frown, woo their mistress with devotion of body, soul and spirit. The black chasm hides a jewelled nook of moss and flowers ; the unclimbable precipice, a perfectly delightful chimney ; the impassable bergschrund, the most cunningly contrived snow-bridge ; the seemingly endless snow grind, the fierce joy of refreshment at the end.

Of the secret pleasures of the mind it is harder to speak. These, perhaps, *are* illusions, but if so they are of the texture which gives us glimpses of the divine. Some are faintly startling, but more are blessed, if momentary, releases from the hard facts of material existence. We have all experienced that strange and stimulating illusion on the summit of a high peak whence nothing meets the eye but snow, ice and rock, that we are in a new world, almost a new planet, cut off from the hurly-burly of the old life. And have we not sometimes, at such moments, stranger, more inexpressible illusions ? Was the ancient belief regarding the proximity of gods and spirits on mountain tops wholly a delusion ? Can we not at least give so much latitude to the feelings of awe which sometimes come to us in the vast loneliness of mountain summits, as to allow us to believe that transcendental minds such as Moses or Elijah possessed could actually commune with the Great Unseen in places where even we, with all our limitations, feel a strange sensation that the mysterious veil which the eye of human reason cannot penetrate is perchance a little thinner than elsewhere ?

Even lower down, lying among flowers of delicious beauty, beside some splashing stream, in the shade of pine or rock, do we not sometimes lose ourselves in a heavenly illusion within an illusion—that those haunts of the plains, familiar, but sordid, garish or hectic as the case may be, have no real existence ; that Fenchurch Street Station, the moving staircase at Oxford Circus, Wall Street, the Moulin Rouge, the Hull Docks, are in fact merely the fantastic imaginings of an H. G. Wells or a De Quincey, born in a lunatic asylum—that life in its exquisite reality is here ? The mountains framed in drifting clouds against the blue sky, the age-old pine slowly growing

to maturity through the years and slowly decaying, the annual renewal of the flowers, the ever-flowing stream, seem at such moments to be the only eternal realities. Men toil and sweat, excite themselves over ephemeral trivialities, collect their little bank-notes, talk endlessly about nothing, and read each other papers to show how clever they think they are. All illusion! The stream splashes eternally down in gentle mockery.

That is why mountains provide the greatest of all recreations, in the literal sense of the word. We return from them not only strengthened in body, but with our minds and souls laved in a beneficent stream of that refreshment which comes from throwing off the illusions which torment and weary, and bathing in those which delight and purify. While this does not vindicate or even excuse the adorable but dangerous practice of solitary climbing, it is certainly one of the causes which adds to the pleasure of being alone. Even the most perfect companions will sometimes choose the psychological moment at which one's mind is caught up on the wings of breathless beauty to indulge in an outburst of awful heartiness. Nor do I for a moment doubt that everyone of us is at times equally guilty. In solitude we can suit our programme to our mood. Sometimes it is sheer delight, suddenly and from shameful reasons of laziness, to abandon the pleasure of conquest in exchange for a bathe or a contemplative pipe. It is unlikely that a party of climbers can ever be simultaneously seized with the same impulse, and, if that impulse is for inaction, that they should all have the moral courage to admit it. How often, on a summit, some of us would choose to spend an hour in silent happiness, but the eagerness of a companion to ' bag another top ' is too obviously laudable to be resisted. Indeed in mountaineering it is hard to say whether Mary or Martha finds the other the more irritating. But Martha holds all the cards ; she shakes *Ball's Guide* in her sister's face, and poor Mary must abandon her dreams and illusions and get to work again.

Coming perhaps nearer home, I cannot avoid mentioning that touching illusion which steals over all mountaineers as they approach middle age and persists and increases till at last it melts into reality. I allude to the dreadful and persistent illusion that young climbers take the remotest interest in our early performances. Many a strong youth wilts at the words ' I recollect in '89.' There are, of course, notable exceptions. Historic feats of daring, adventure and endurance are eagerly

listened to and always will be; but the heroes of such are generally the last men to breathe a word on the subject. I refer to the ordinary climber who happened to ascend the Matterhorn a number of years ago. The state of the snow, the personality of the guides, the condition of the hut, while of vivid interest to the man who did the climb in the '80's or '90's, fills the youthful listener with a feeling akin to the depression of the audience of the lady who informs her nieces that in her young days gentlewomen never showed their ankles!

There is another exception. As time goes on, survivors of remote periods become links with the past, fascinating historical survivals. To-day survivors of the great pioneering '60's need be under no illusion. Their remembrances of those days are eagerly sought for and treasured by anyone with imagination and historical sense. And the '70's: what of them? I think the '70's are hovering in that hush of twilight which precedes the dawn. Happy, hopeful '70's! Your time is coming. Soon through the dark clouds of illusion will break the glorious sense of reality. Soon, respectful youth will hang upon your lips and treasure your recollections. '80's and '90's, you are still wrapped in your mists of illusion. Be strong to bear it; and you, young men, be stronger to bear it too! Yours, O youth, is the greater burden, and for your infinite patience and courtesy, we of the '90's, and even '80's, tender you our gratitude.

It goes without saying, however, that it is the young who live in a complete world of illusion as regards mountaineering. I have far too great a respect for youth to do more than sketch a few of the most prevalent delusions under which they labour. One, of course, is that all guides are super-climbers. How rude is often the awaking! I remember one instance in my own early wanderings. (There, you see, the 'I recollect in '97' complex is irresistible!) In Granada a kindly Spanish gentleman recommended me a guide for the Sierra Nevada; honest, attentive, and a marvellous climber. Of the first two attributes, I will say little. Of the third I will only remark that the first time we found ourselves on a ledge—it was under the summit of the Veleta and quite 4 ft. wide—he turned to me with ashen face and shaking limbs with the naïve remark 'I do not love the mountains; I prefer city life.' After that *I* preferred to lead.

Continental youth apparently believes that a *Gratwanderung* is mountaineering. Steeplechasing over the greatest possible number of peaks in 24 hours may be an exacting form of

'physical jerks,' but its connection with true mountaineering is about as close as the Lama's prayer-wheel is to the pure teachings of Gautama. Another illusion of youth seems to be that to select the inaccessible cliff face of a mountain, and, burdened with vast stores of ringed pitons, which are, over a period of days, laboriously driven into the rock, to link them by a threaded rope till the summit is reached, bears some relation to climbing. This morganatic union of Vulcan and Penelope may exercise the muscles, but its votaries can obviously only class themselves as amateur steeplejacks, and by the same token not nearly such useful members of the community as those intrepid gymnasts.

In passing, I must remark that there are men and women who have told me that the first hour from the hut gives them an illusion of hell. Stumbling by lantern light up the moraine, face, hands and feet freezing, while the body perspires miserably —half asleep—the digestive organs in perplexed confusion plaintively wailing to their sympathetic and unhappy owners in involuntary borborygmic ejaculations. I cannot agree with these friends. For my part I can find no illusion about this: it *is* hell!

And lastly there is the passing of a 70-year-old illusion among the public, that mountaineers were strange eccentrics who risked life and limb in the pursuit of nothing! Sane men would climb, gun in hand, to kill living creatures, or would wander in mountain regions to find gold—but for nothing? A foolish form of meaningless endeavour. To-day the illusion is passing—passing owing to two widely different causes. First, the profound impression made on the public mind by the epic of Everest, which at last stirred their imaginations to realize that there is something in high endeavour among mountains even where there is no material reward; and, secondly,—I believe I am right—the enormous popularity of winter sports.

It was the English, with their infinite capacity for the incongruous, who set the example of creating one of the most absurd but productive illusions in the Alps. Realizing the timid and unimaginative temperaments of our great middle-classes whose vision is bounded alternatively by their native suburb and Gleneagles, Bournemouth or Sheringham with an occasional wild and dangerous dash to Dinard, some ingenious persons conceived the idea of luring young men and maidens to the alarming pinnacles of the centre of Europe by creating an almost perfect illusion of home-life in the winter hotels.

Nervous and diffident, these young persons begin to set forth on the novel experiment in little coveys, to discover to their delight that the hotel, the band, and the company are an exact reproduction of their own Wimbledon, Edgbaston, West Didsbury, and all the rest of the dwelling-places of the more solid portions of Britain's vertebræ, with an American bar thrown in. Free from the painful necessity of speaking a foreign tongue or mingling with foreigners, they begin to venture outside into the snow. They come to jazz, they stay to ski, and in many cases, gripped by that strange and exquisite spell which the mountains know how to weave round the hearts of their votaries, return again and again, winter and summer; and in a constantly increasing band of enthusiasts, constitute one of the most fertile recruiting grounds for mountaineers. For do not let us foster another illusion, namely, that ski-ing and mountaineering have little or no connection. On the contrary there is often a true love match between them, and there are few who really mountaineer on ski who are not equally enthusiastic summer climbers. That again is the inevitable spell of the mountains.

Indeed I believe that few Alpine travellers, even among those firmly seated in a funicular, with no concrete vision in their minds beyond a bottle of beer at the top thereof, have not somewhere in a remote corner of their souls an unuttered wish to be up among the snows and glaciers. They will deny it hotly if you suggest it, but it is there all the same, and therefore even funiculars are not wholly to be despised, for in their iron womb is often conceived a passionate longing which is brought forth, nurtured and finally developed into a perfectly matured and completely bald A.C.

But if the public are beginning to take a more intelligent view of mountaineering, do not let us lay the flattering unction to our souls that they are even remotely interested in the small individual achievements of a Whitsun holiday. Here is illusion *in excelsis*! Unless these achievements are unhappily varied by 'The broken leg, the frequent fall,' the newspaper reader turns drearily on to the more earth-shaking topics of Mary Pickford's toilet and Dean Inge's considered views on the Decay of Communism. The precise manner in which Jones disported himself on Bank Holiday, even though he made the 593rd ascent of Smith's Chimney, on the N.N.W. Buttress of Tryfan, leaves John Bull unmoved. Such efforts to secure a niche in the Temple of Fame are perhaps due to forgetfulness that it is, after all, only a temple and not a skyscraper.

If there is a universal tragedy of life, it is, I think, that we spend the first half of it in crushing our passions, our ideals, all these delicately illusive emotions, longings and ambitions which are the halo of youth—and we spend the second half trying to recapture them. We are schooled and drilled to believe all such things to be illusions. We diligently pack them away and allow ourselves to be turned into tidy little machines which catch the morning train, perform clerical and similar income-producing functions, make suitable marriages, and compel our offspring to perform the same cramping evolutions. In middle life we shake ourselves—were they all illusions? We are more than doubtful; but, gripped in the vast machinery of convention, we carry on the conventional routine. We turn, however, more and more eagerly to the mountains. There, in solitude, we can nurse our souls back to youth and to the realization of its joys. And I think that to the old, mountains must be the perfect recompense, for even to a very advanced age they can be enjoyed. You take longer to get into training, you can only climb one or two in a season, but once again your body glows with vigour, and you rest on the summit bathed again in the illusion of youth. Turning your eyes inwards you distinguish with undimmed clarity of vision, lighted by experience, between illusion and truth. The trappings of convention fall from your mind; you sort the gold from the dross, and seem to hover in spirit between the real and the Delectable Mountains. An illusion of age perhaps: or perhaps the very essence of Truth. Who can tell?

Mount Tasman and its Satellites.

By H. E. L. PORTER.

(Read before the Alpine Club, November 1, 1927.)

MY first two visits to New Zealand, satisfying as they were, left a large number of objects of desire unattained, by far the most absorbing of which was the queenly Mt. Tasman (11,475 ft.), the highest peak on the main divide of the Southern Alps. Of all the mountains that I have ever seen in reality or even in dreams, Tasman is the most faultlessly beautiful, with the one possible exception of the Weisshorn. Though it has not the latter's pyramidal regularity, it yet displays a curiously