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VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

By L. S. AMERY

Read before the Alpine Club, December 9, 1946

IT is now three years since you did me the honour of electing me to the Presidency of the Club. I accepted, rejoicing in the thought that I had attained to the summit of all mountaineering ambition, where I might repose in godlike ease aloft, in other words, take the Presidential armchair at your meetings and close your proceedings with a few well chosen words of thanks to the reader of the evening's paper. I was soon undeceived. A designing body of men, your then Committee, led by that arch-plotter, my predecessor, had for many months past been planning a revolution, and had fastened on me as one of the most respectable, essentially conservative and, above all, innocent-looking of your senior members, in order to see it through. I was to be set on the egg which they had laid and, in due course, by my proud maternal cluckings, to reassure all concerned that what had emerged from the shell was, indeed, a young phoenix and not an infant crocodile. There was no question of my figuring as a Napoleon to Geoffrey Young's Robespierre, or even as a Stalin to his Lenin. He was in no sense contemplating his own liquidation; the President of the British Mountaineering Council is, in fact, today a highly active force as well as a very tangible fact.

In any case, Geoffrey Young is a revolutionary of an essentially British type. It is characteristic of our British Constitution that all the most revolutionary stages in its development, from Magna Carta to the Petition of Rights and the Statute of Westminster, have professed to be merely the restoration of ancient rights, or the assertion of universally accepted principles. Most of you here tonight will remember that eloquent Valedictory Address of Geoffrey's, so artlessly persuasive in its preparation of your minds for the shocks that would be coming. How lovingly he dwelt on Rule 2 of the Club, as drafted by our founders long ago,

in which, as he pointed out, our objects are set out in terms so obviously foreshadowing all that he himself had in mind, and so clearly directing us to follow the course that he had planned for our good. Nor are you likely to forget the closely reasoned analysis of Rule 1, the rule which says that this Club shall be *called* the Alpine Club, not that it *is* the Alpine Club, drawing from that fact the very sound conclusion that we are in duty bound to take the closest interest in the scaling of British crags as well as in the opening up of the Himalaya.

But to be serious. How right Geoffrey and his fellow workers have been throughout. How necessary it is for us to realise the immense changes which have taken place and are taking place in mountaineering all over the world, not only in technique, but also in the part mountaineering can play in the physical and spiritual life of nations ; to recognise our responsibility for leadership in that development as it affects our own country ; to be alive to the danger, if we fail to do so, of being by-passed by the main stream of mountaineering interest and activity and of our great tradition petering out in isolation. When our Club was founded mountaineering was a sport essentially confined to one particular region of the world, and to Englishmen of the strenuous professional and industrial middle class. It has widened out in every direction and in every sense. Technically it has been extended, at one end of the scale, to embrace high levels undreamt of, and to overlap with the once distinct sport of skiing ; at the other to include the elaborate development of rock climbing in these islands. It has spread to almost every country in the world and become, not only a popular sport, but one recognised nationally as making an important contribution to national health and even more as a counteracting influence to the depressing effect of urban and industrial life on the spirit of adventure and exploration. Everywhere almost that recognition has led to the creation of some national organisation in a position to promote its well being and to speak with authority in the maintenance of its traditions and in defence of its interests.

With us, too, there has been a remarkable expansion both in the number of those climbing, in the clubs which they have formed, and in the understanding among educationists of the contribution which climbing and hill walking can make to the formation of character as well as to bodily health. But, characteristically, we have developed on individualistic and unorganised lines. All the better, up to a point. But in these last few years it was becoming increasingly evident that something more was wanted. There was no body that, within the climbing world,

could speak with authority for the maintenance of the right tradition, no body to whom the country as such could turn for help and advice, whether for mountain training or pre-service training for our forces, or for purely physical training as such, or in regard to the location and planning of a system of national parks. This Club had never laid itself out for that function. We had not regarded it as coming within the sphere of those responsibilities which were foreshadowed in the statement of our objects. We lacked the necessary widespread local basis of interest and popular support and contact. More serious still we were in danger of losing touch with the younger generation of climbers, alike more democratic and more disposed to be critical, if not contemptuous, of what they mistakenly conceived to be an old-fashioned institution, the 'crystallisation,' to use Geoffrey Young's phrase, 'of the first stage in mountaineering development,' a period piece rather than a driving force.

How was that misconception to be eradicated? How, above all, was the need for the effective national organisation or co-ordination of the new impulse and interest in mountaineering to be met? There could be no question of the Alpine Club abandoning either its high standard of technical qualification or the intimacy of its membership in order to merge itself in some general national association on continental lines. Equally undesirable would have been the formation of such an association outside the Club's influence and guidance. The typical British answer, the answer we have given in the wider field of Commonwealth relations, was for all the units concerned to come together in conference to see how the common interest could best be promoted without sacrifice of their individual identity and character, and for us, as the senior and more experienced, to take the lead. Accordingly, on February 5, 1944, representatives of nearly a score of clubs met in this room to consider the formation of a Standing Advisory Committee on Mountaineering. Not only did this modest suggestion commend itself to the clubs concerned, but in the course of developing it they very soon found themselves led on to the creation of a more regularly constituted and permanent body in the shape of the British Mountaineering Council.

It was not unnatural that these developments should create apprehension in the minds of some of our members. It was feared, on the one hand, that we might be giving our endorsement to a movement which might peter out; on the other hand, that we might be creating something which would encroach upon the position and prestige of the Club itself. We enjoyed a vigorous debate on the subject in April 1944. The subsequent course of

events has, I think, justified the confidence of the majority of the members present in the action of your Committee and has, I trust, allayed the anxieties expressed at the time. The British Mountaineering Council has certainly given every sign of increasing vitality and influence. It numbers over thirty clubs on its main body. There is a Scottish Committee on which a dozen Scottish clubs are represented, vigorous District Committees for the Lake Country, North Wales, and the Peak District, as well as Sub-Committees dealing with First Aid Equipment, Huts, and Publications. In this last field its first significant effort was the sponsoring, as a Pelican Book, of *Climbing in Britain*, by John Barford, who is Secretary of the Council. The fact that this excellent little work will soon be in its second fifty thousand is a striking testimony to the volume of the popular interest in mountaineering which exists today. The mountaineering side of the location and organisation of National Parks was worked out by a small Sub-Committee in consultation with the clubs and District Committees and an agreed statement submitted to the Ministry of Town and Country Planning. The Council has successfully carried on in North Wales the series of meets in conjunction with the Central Council of Physical Recreation which we initiated, through G. A. Dummett's energy as organiser and instructor, in 1945, at Langdale. It is in touch with the Boy Scouts Association, which has now included a Climber's Badge, with the Youth Hostel Association and with County Educational Committees. It has also taken over from us the work of the Pre-Service Training Committee, providing instructors for a very successful Easter meet at Aviemore for the Scottish A.T.C. The Army, I am sorry to say, has for the time being found it impossible to continue the cadet camps which we inaugurated so successfully in 1944 and 1945. The Council has also been actively occupied in considering the problem of increasing and improving hut and bivouac accommodation, in the expansion of First Aid work, in working out a scheme for the registration and testing of professional guides, and with the study of rope and equipment.

These are all well worth while activities. Nor can it be said that they have in any way encroached upon the proper domain or authority of the Alpine Club, or in any way prejudiced our own specific life and character. On the other hand, as the President and Secretary of the British Mountaineering Council *must* be, and a majority of its members, somehow or other, *happen* to be members of the Alpine Club, I am rather surprised that some suspicious Molotov has not yet discovered and denounced this flagrant instance of Alpine Club imperialism carried out by a

group of fascist reactionaries emanating from South Audley Street. We, for our part, can, I think, look forward with some confidence to a steadily increasing recruitment to our own ranks through the clubs that have thus been brought into closer and more understanding association with us. In any case, we have every reason to be grateful to Geoffrey Young, Bartrum, Barford and, indeed, to all those members of the Club who, through the British Mountaineering Council, are fulfilling the wider purposes for which this Club was first founded and are handing on to the ever growing rising generation of British climbers the great tradition which our founders created and which we have been proud to maintain during the years between their pioneer age and the nation-wide movement of the new era.

The grave deficiency of our Army in officers and men trained in mountain warfare showed itself as early as the short-lived Norwegian campaign, and again in Greece and Italy. It was only very gradually that the War Office began to take an interest in the subject. In the end relatively large bodies of troops received some mountaineering training in the Highlands, while a battalion of Lovat's Scouts received the best part of a year's training in the Rockies. A regular mountain warfare school was established as a part of the organisation of the Army in Italy, first at Sepino in Southern Italy, and afterwards in more truly Alpine surroundings at Terminillo in the high Abruzzi. Many members of the Club gave valuable help and leadership in all this work, but I might perhaps mention the names of Lt.-Col. F. S. Smythe and of Lt.-Col. E. A. M. Wedderburn, an outstanding figure tragically lost to the Club and to the Service by an accident in Italy. It was the realisation of the value of mountaineering as a training in leadership and initiative, as well as in fitness and endurance, that led the War Office early in 1944 to try the experiment of applying the same training suitably modified to selected boys in the Army Cadet Force. The first two camps were held at Llanberis in April 1944 and August 1945, and were an unqualified success. The work of organising the camps and recruiting the voluntary instructors was initiated by the Pre-Service Training Sub-Committee, and was most ably carried out by T. A. Brocklebank, who acted as Chief Instructor to both courses. This Pre-Service Training was, as I have already mentioned, turned over to the British Mountaineering Council who, I have no doubt, will take the matter up with vigour and success as soon as the War Office can see their way to the resumption of the camps.

I can only hope that in the broader sense the contact which has been established between the military authorities and the

mountaineering world will be maintained and developed. So long as there is the possibility of war an army that can operate in mountain country will be at an enormous advantage over one that can only move on the flat, more particularly if it can rely on close air support both in fighting and for supplies. Nor will the atomic bomb, deadly as it may be against cities, do away with the necessity of actually holding or winning positions on the ground. In any case if, as we may hope, we may escape war for many long years or even altogether, such training as our youth will get in mountain work will not be wasted so far as its effects both on bodily health and on character are concerned. The real difficulty is that of reconciling in this little island Army demands for training with the no less urgent need of our civilian population for fresh air and recreation. The success of Canada's generous gesture in the training ground lent to our troops in the Rockies during the war, not to speak of her great air training scheme, suggests that the right solution of the problem lies in some scheme on similar lines worked out in mutual cooperation between our two Governments.

So much for our contribution to the war effort and to the wider cause of mountaineering. But something should be said of our own life and activities as affected by the war. Looking back over those tremendous and difficult years I think it is really remarkable to what an extent the life of the Club has kept going. True we have had to adapt our hours to the exigencies of the blackout and to the dangers of the hours of darkness. Sad to relate, our informal dinners have, after valiant efforts to sustain them, petered out in face of the difficulty of finding accommodation anywhere at reasonable prices. But our main activities have never been interrupted. Somehow or other, with wonderful ingenuity and persistence, Donkin and Tyndale between them have conjured up out of the vasty deep an unfailing supply of papers and of material for the JOURNAL. Looking over the last few numbers I have been immensely struck by the wide range our members have covered in their papers and even more by the high literary quality of those evocative reminiscences in which members have gone back to the memories of their early climbing days.

Many of our members, too, have made good use of their enforced absence from the mountains in bringing out books which will have done much to kindle and sustain interest in mountaineering. I will not attempt to go through the list of more than a dozen works covering the Alps, the Himalaya, Alaska, and New Zealand, but I might, perhaps, mention Eric Shipton's *Upon*

that Mountain and Graham Brown's remarkable monograph on *Brenva*. Even your retiring President spent his spiritual convalescence, after a bad political accident in the summer of last year, in refreshing his memories of less treacherous rocks and snows.

All our high level thinking, in every sense of the word, has had to be carried on in austere—I will not say squalid—surroundings. Our books, our pictures, our furniture and our silver were all removed from the enemy's promiscuous rage to various parts of the country. We owe a sincere debt of gratitude to the late Lord Desborough, to the late Mr. William Bellows, to Mr. J. R. Jenkins, to Mr. C. H. Pasteur and to the Hertford County Library, through J. L. Longland's kindness, for housing them safely during these years. We now owe a fresh debt of thanks to our Honorary Librarian, Sydney Spencer, and more particularly to our Assistant Librarian, Mr. Oughton, for the painstaking and arduous work of restoring all our books to their appropriate original places. I might add, in that connexion, that a fair number of books has already been collected to form the nucleus of a lending library and will be available on loan to members as soon as the necessary cataloguing and other arrangements can be made. We have received many gifts from members too numerous to catalogue in detail, but I might mention Dr. T. H. Somervell's presentation to the Club of a picture of Nanda Devi which was shown in his recent exhibition here and is now in the Reading Room. To conclude this domestic review I am sure that we shall all wish to express our appreciation of the unfailing cheerful spirit in which, under very trying conditions, our housekeepers, Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell, have kept our house always open for us and in good condition and provided a welcome tea for us on the occasions of our Club or Committee meetings.

Household questions, in our family as in every other, inevitably raise the problem of the household budget. The continuance of rising costs and the decline of our membership through the war has resulted in a deficit during the last four years, and this is likely to continue for some time, until a growing new entry has increased our membership to well above our pre-war figure of 650. In April last the General Meeting appointed a Financial Sub-Committee, which has been closely investigating the whole problem, and whose report will I hope be in your hands early in the New Year. Whatever the result of their scrutiny it will be obvious that strict economy will be necessary for some time to come. To increase our present subscription would, I feel, be a step only to be resorted to if absolutely unavoidable.

A reference to the decline of our membership during these years naturally brings with it a reminder of many serious losses among distinguished climbers and good friends of all of us. I can only mention a few names of those who have gone in these last three years. Not least among them is that of a supreme all round athlete and true sportsman, Lord Desborough, who died in 1945, after 73 years' membership of our Club. Another old member whom we have only lost in the last few months is W. P. Haskett-Smith, one of the outstanding pioneers of mountaineering in these islands. I would add the names, too, of Sir William Lister, heir to a great name in science and himself a distinguished scientist, of Sir William Ellis, of Sir John Clapham who, not so long ago, read a delightful paper telling us 'How it all began,' of Dr. E. H. Stevens and Dr. C. S. Myers, and of Sir T. Fowell Buxton, most modest and kindly of men. Of the loss sustained by the Club in the premature death of Lt.-Col. E. A. M. Wedderburn I have already spoken. Among our foreign members I would note the death of that fine Alpine photographer Olaf Bloch, of J. Z. Bujak, a member of the Polish Nanda Devi expedition, whose paper on the Carpathians and High Tatra we listened to with such pleasure two years ago, and of our honorary member, that gallant soldier of the First World War, General Gouraud.

Two new honorary members have been added to our list by the Committee. One is Dr. J. Monroe Thorington, the former President of the American Alpine Club, an indefatigable pioneer both in the actual opening up of the Canadian Rockies and also in research into the early history of their exploration. The other is my one-time colleague as Vice-President, and now 64-years' member, Mr. G. P. Baker.

Even G. P. Baker, however, would not have been eligible, by a good ten years, for the special financial privileges still accorded under Rule 8 to senior members travelling abroad, provided always that they have been elected prior to March 1, 1872. A little modernising as well as general revision of our Rules has, in fact, been needed for some time past. In February 1945 the Committee appointed a Special Sub-Committee to undertake the task and their proposals have been published to the Club. A fair number of criticisms and suggestions have already been received and it is hoped, in the light of these, to present a final revision to the Club in the spring of 1947.

Throughout these confined years the Club has striven to keep itself in trim, both physically and spiritually, for the renewal of its wider activities. Alpine Club meets have been held every

summer in various parts of the country and have afforded pleasant opportunities for joint expeditions with members of local clubs. This year the meet was held for the first time in Scotland, at Kingshouse on Rannoch Moor, where our members enjoyed the conduct of combined operations with the Scottish Mountaineering Club on Buchaille Etive and inspected their new club hut at Laggan Garbh under Buchaille Etive at the head of Glencoe.

Now the gates of opportunity are opening again at last. Not full width, indeed, even as regards the Alps, except on terms of considerable financial austerity. These need be no deterrent to our hardy young members who thrive on bread, dried goat and maggi soups and only occasionally exchange their stern bivouacs for the luxury of a mattress in a hut. For the more effeminate older members who cannot do without the Capuan luxuries of modern Swiss hotels I can only recommend taking out as large a family as possible and sending all or most of it home at the end of the first week. They can then reflect in relative financial ease on the truth of old Hesiod's maxim that the half is better than the whole.

Even in Himalayan regions the track is not yet clear for ardent adventure. The Dalai Lama's horoscope is still being ascertained and while that is so the Tibetan authorities are particularly anxious that the spirits of the mountain tops should not be annoyed by gate-crashing strangers. There are delicate discussions over disputed frontier lines, while the general post-war disorganisation makes the authorities everywhere reluctant to encourage parties which might add to the shortage of local labour and provisions. There is thus no immediate prospect of permission being obtained to enter Tibet for a renewed attempt on Mount Everest. The Committee have, however, invited Eric Shipton to lead a small expedition for that purpose, as soon as the ban is lifted, and he has agreed to accept the responsibility. There are so many expeditions to all parts of the Himalaya in prospect that it has seemed both to ourselves and to the Royal Geographical Society that the time has come for broadening out the Everest Committee, which has so ably served previous Everest expeditions, into a Himalayan Committee. The new committee which is in process of formation, and in which we are, I hope, to be joined by the Himalayan Club as well as by the Royal Geographical Society, will be mainly advisory in character, giving information and advice to intending expeditions and also, if called upon, to advise the authorities on the merits of any proposed expedition.

Into the new era which is now dawning you will march forward under a new leader, an ever youthful leader whose first contribution

to the ALPINE JOURNAL (*A.J.* 21. 377) bore the superscription 'Afoot and light hearted I take the open road.' Well, the road is open once more and Tom Longstaff is as light hearted as in the days when his pirate beard first blazed red against Himalayan snows. Few of his predecessors have had such a range of mountaineering experience as his, more particularly in the great ranges on the Indian frontier. As far back as 1905 he was exploring the Nanda Devi basin and the approaches to Trisul. This he conquered in 1907 in an expedition which but for the veto of the India Office was originally intended for reconnaissance on Everest. I shall never cease regretting that excess of conscience about work on which I was then engaged prevented my joining him. In subsequent years he explored the Eastern Karakoram and, as Commandant of the Gilgit Scouts in the First World War, much of the Hindu Kush and the fringes of the Pamirs. In 1922 he was medical officer to the Everest expedition of that year. As for all that he has climbed since, is not the tale thereof chronicled in the 'Book of Jasher'? We look to him for great things, for inspiration and enthusiasm, for new fields to conquer all the world over, and we shall not look to him in vain. He is our Joshua to lead us into the Promised Land.

As for your retiring Moses, his first task is to thank those who have so patiently held his hands up for him and relieved him of so much of the duties of a President during these years, to MacRobert and Bartrum, Odell and Elliott as his Vice-Presidents, to Bryan Donkin, his unwearying helpful Honorary Secretary, and to all the members of a Committee which has, indeed, been the happiest of families. For the rest he finds Pisgah an admirable *Aussichtspunkt* on which he now proposes to take his ease in peaceful enjoyment of the fair landscape before him and watch his chosen people setting forth on their career of conquest with his blessing. For that blessing I can think of no better words than those in which the dying Moses of old blessed the heritage of Joseph: 'Blessed of the Lord be his land,' he begins, and then, after reciting various minor blessings, he continues, 'and for the chief things of the ancient mountains and for the precious things of the lasting hills.'

What are these chief and precious things that the ancient mountains, the lasting hills, can give us? They give to each of us what, consciously or unconsciously, we most need to find, be it the joy of exertion, the thrill of adventure, the sheer excitement of the beauty of the world, or, to quote Kipling, 'the making of one's blooming soul.' I can only tell you what I have found there for myself—you will forgive me if I use words I have already

used elsewhere. I have found much of health and strength with which to carry on through long years and heavy tasks. But I have found much more than that. I have found detachment. Not loss of keenness, I trust, or, indeed, of intense conviction. But a certain perspective, perhaps; and a certain philosophy. Public life is very much like mountaineering. It needs determination and endurance. It needs judgment of what lies ahead and skill in dealing with each problem as you come to it. It needs, not least, a steady head on exposed summits. It has its long lower slopes, its dreary moraines, its long spells of bad weather. But it also has its keen delights, its glorious days, its summits of achievement. Above all, one enjoys it for its own sake, whether one gets to the summit or not. Claud Schuster drew a similar parallel in his Valedictory Address to the Club six years ago :

‘Mountaineering is not life in the round, but it is a very fair emblem of life as it should be considered and as it should be lived. To aspire to and to attempt great achievement and yet to set out on the adventure after forethought, with due care and with a due adjustment of ends to means ; to endure toil and fatigue, and to find the reward rather in the performance than in the accomplishment ; not to court danger for her own bright eyes, but not to shrink from her unduly when she bars the path ; and above all and in all to preserve a high serenity of mind. These surely are the distinguishing marks of a happy mountaineer, as of a happy warrior. Thus tempered and thus attuned, he can go his way to whatever fate attends him.’

It is, indeed, serenity, above all things, that one can learn from nature and not least from the high mountains. They become our friends, and the more they do so the more we learn to judge things by their standard, to shrug our shoulders at passing changes of wind or weather and give time its due. To most of us, too, who visit the mountains there come moments, it may be at sunrise, or in the stillness of noon on a high summit, or in the fading light of the afterglow, when we feel something more, a sense that they are fellow worshippers with us of what lives and makes us one with them. It is for these most intimate things, no less than for strength and health, for strenuous hours of toil and blissful moments of victorious ease, for joy of discovery and conquest and for sense of beauty quickened, that we make our pilgrimage to the Delectable Mountains. Nor do we cease to be sustained by them when the days of our active wayfaring are over and we can only lift up our eyes to them from afar or in memory. For the time must come to all of us when certain things are no longer in our power and when we should resign ourselves with good grace

to more limited achievement and to the happy recollection of 'great days in the distance enchanted':

Resign yourself, old heart ; no more shall we go scaling
Our summits of desire. Farewell delights
Of ridge and face and cleft, the proud prevailing
To godlike ease aloft. Farewell dear heights.

Farewell. Yet still remain those shining ranges
Above the vale of years ensphered on high,
Where we're still free, despite all other changes,
To climb the golden peaks of memory.

INTRODUCTION TO THE HILLS

BY LORD MALCOLM DOUGLAS-HAMILTON

Read before the Alpine Club, January 7, 1947

SOME mountaineers view with abhorrence any considerable attempt to introduce people to the hills, fearing perhaps that their special sanctum will be invaded by unappreciative hordes. Although I appreciate fully the value of the hills for satisfying periodic desires to get away from the world, I do not share these views. There are times indeed when it is bliss to have the mountains to oneself, but throughout even Britain they are many and widespread, and I feel confident that even if two or three million more people became mountaineers, it would still be possible to find places, at any rate in Scotland, where one could wander for days without ever seeing a human being.

I do feel, however, that personal considerations apart there is a first class issue of importance involved in the introduction of youth to the hills. To take one fundamental point alone, I think that most mountaineers would agree that mountaineering develops in human beings an outlook of a kind that is badly lacking in the world today : an outlook which if it could be sufficiently widespread would preclude war. Lord Elton rightly tells us that one of our main problems is not so much to find a means of abolishing war as to find a substitute for war. For I am convinced that one of the mysterious currents making for war is the frustration of the young to be tested in danger and in need, aspirations which the bad peace between the two recent world wars left unsatisfied except in the case of the privileged few. It is not too much to say that the last war came to many young people actually as a relief, in that it provided them with opportunities of proving themselves which peace seemed to deny. I think that most people who climb find that mountaineering satisfies in themselves this particular craving, and at the same time gives them a clarity of vision which shows them the utter