

culminates not far above the point where the path traverses the stream by a rude but broad plank bridge, and ascends the opposite bank to join the track of the Col de la Rinella. Instead of following the northern side of the ridge, after crossing the Forcadella Laccia, as far as the Bergeries d'Alzo—near to which Compton subsequently pitched his tent, and devoted several days to hard work—we struck off to the right, and descended in a N.E. direction, hoping to hit off the path which leads down from the Bergeries; but keeping, I suppose, rather too much to the right, we did not do so until within a few hundred feet of the river, though the line of descent followed by us presented no difficulty and led through exquisite scenery.

Not unduly to spin out these notes, I will merely add that we proceeded on June 1 to Morosaglia, crossed right over the actual summit of Monte S. Pietro (1,766 mètres) to Stazona on the 2nd, reached Cervione *viâ* Carpineto, Pietricaggio, and Ortale on the 3rd, and, travelling through that night by diligence, arrived on the morning of the 4th at Bastia. Starting thence the same night by steamer, François and I reached Leghorn in 5½ hours, whilst Compton remained to paint—how diligently and successfully we shall, I trust, have ample proof before long.

THE DECLINE OF CHAMONIX AS A MOUNTAINEERING CENTRE. By C. D. CUNNINGHAM.

(Read before the Alpine Club, February 5, 1884.)

FOR some years past it has been the custom in what the newspapers call 'climbing circles' to run down Chamonix. It seems to be the fate of every one who has ever been there to meet with some unfortunate *contretemps*, which leaves on their minds the impression that no good thing ever comes out of it. One cannot be in the Alps, even for a few days, without becoming aware of the unpopularity of this particular district. It is one of the stock subjects discussed at *tables d'hôte*; and on going to Chamonix, few of those faces are to be seen which are so familiar at the other great mountain centres. Yet if we look at Chamonix from a purely 'climbing' point of view, we must admit that in all the ranges of the Alps there are no peaks to be compared to its sharp *aiguilles*, and nowhere does the climber find such favourable conditions for testing his skill either on ice or rocks. We should remember, too, that the three great peaks in the Alps which remained longest

unascended were near Chamonix—the Dru, the Charmoz, and the Géant. It must then surely be something more than a mere passing fashion which prevents those who go year after year to the Alps from making Chamonix one of their headquarters. The reasons differ so widely from those which usually decide the popularity or unpopularity of a tourists' resort, and are so intimately connected with the interests of climbers, that it may not be out of place for me to try and point out what they are.

The first reason of the unpopularity of Chamonix is undoubtedly the *Compagnie des Guides*. There is probably no member of the Alpine Club who has not been compelled, at one time or other, to acquaint himself with some of the rules of this society. These rules, or *articles* as they are called, are seventy-one in number. By the average Chamonix guide they are looked upon with the same blind reverence with which people in this country who are ignorant of theology are wont to speak of the Thirty-Nine. To outsiders they generally appear as a compromise between the selfish instincts of the baser part of the population and the checks and suggestions of a fussy officialism. Article I. states that the society was instituted in order to 'diriger les voyageurs;' and if I am rightly informed that this word *diriger* means to 'regulate' or 'manage,' it is certainly the key-note upon which the whole of the remaining seventy are struck. Every possible contingency is provided for. The guide who lights his pipe without asking leave is subject to lose two *tours de rôle*. Even the little lads who lead the return mules from the Montanvert are not forgotten, it being expressly 'défendu aux personnes du sexe féminin de remplir ces fonctions.' The case of the unhappy tourist who has the misfortune to be killed or wounded *en route* is taken into account. And guides who are found the worse for drink, who lose their way in fine weather, or who have persuaded their *voyageur* to discontinue the ascent, 'dans le but de s'éviter des fatigues,' are severely dealt with. We would hope such episodes to be of but rare occurrence, it being apparently a *sine quâ non* for admission to the society to be a person of a *moralité notoire*. Nowhere is the official idea of the attributes and virtues of the Chamonix guide better set forth than in Rule VIII., which provides that a list of the guides shall be printed, and opposite each name the special attainments of the guide, whatever they may happen to be, whether in mineralogy, botany, or foreign languages; the most remarkable *courses* he has made, 'ainsi que ses titres et décorations.'

I pass over the rules which refer to the working of the

society, and come at once to those which more directly affect the *voyageur*, and relate to his power of choosing a guide. There are six cases in which travellers have the right to select any guide they please: if they are going on scientific expeditions, or do not speak French and wish for a guide who is able to speak their language; if having previously employed a guide they wish to have him again, or if they are bent on a *course extraordinaire et dangereuse*, or are members of any Alpine Club; and lastly, if they are ladies 'qui veulent faire seules les courses.' In any of these cases the traveller has the right of selecting his own guide, but the guide can only accompany such traveller on the condition of forfeiting his next *tour de rôle*. Though not stated in the rules, the *guide-chef* has the privilege of granting two additional *tours de préférence*, as they are called; a courtesy which the present *guide-chef* has always extended on my behalf in the most liberal and obliging manner. In the event of a *guide-chef* being appointed who had not the same knowledge of mountaineering as Frédéric Payot, or who wished to indulge a petty spite against another guide, this privilege would cease to be of any practical use, either to the traveller or to the guide. Those who have taken their two turns of *préférence* can under no circumstances accept employment out of their regular *tour de rôle*, under penalties varying from suspension for a term to expulsion from the society. The only way of evading this rule was suggested last season in all seriousness by the *guide-chef* to a well-known member of the Club—to engage all the intervening guides on some pretext or another, and thus bring the *rôle* round to the name of the man whom he really wanted.

No better instance could be given of the working of this system, and of the repressive influence it has upon the young guides in the valley, than the following circumstances which came under my own observation. Last August a porter called Michel Savioz, who has been spoken of in these pages as 'not only a capital cragsman, but in all respects a most promising and rising guide,' was engaged for the Aiguille du Géant. He was the only porter in Chamonix who had 'done' the Géant, having twice made the ascent. But go he could not. It was the old story; he had taken his two turns of *préférence*, and his name was still low down on the *rôle*. He thus lost not only a good engagement, but the opportunity of showing his powers to a very well-known mountaineer, who would probably have engaged him again, and made his name known to many friends. Here was a case where skill as a climber, and special knowledge resulting from good, honest work, were valueless to the

guide, owing to the Mede and Persian-like laws of his valley—laws made by men the majority of whom are in reality mule-drivers, and who apparently imagine, by some strange process of reasoning, that if the skilled guide can be prevented from going on the Géant, the Dru, or the Verte, the *voyageur* will go through the farce of engaging one of themselves for a climb they well know they could never accomplish, even if they had the pluck to attempt it.

Under such constantly recurring circumstances as these, can we wonder that the young guide should drift into the same groove as his elder neighbours, with no ambition to gain a reputation or desire to distinguish himself in his profession? Each year he sees a greater number of Oberland and Zermatt guides brought into his own valley, who diminish his chance of first-class employment. On the other hand, the stream of tourists is on the increase, and from them he can always reckon on obtaining a certain number of days' work, sharing though he may with one of Cook's or Gaze's agents the responsibility of leading mules to the Montanvert, or personally conducting the tourist across the Mer de Glace, well knowing that after a few hours he will see no more of his employers, unless he can persuade them that the dangers of the Mauvais Pas are infinitely greater than those incurred in the ascent of Mont Blanc. Surely such a traffic as this gives but poor encouragement to the guide to perfect himself in his profession, or to cultivate those qualities and lead that life which make the mountaineer look upon his guide as a friend he esteems and respects.

It is impossible that this system should have been in existence for more than two generations, without producing most deleterious results upon the guides. I will only mention the most conspicuous—the ignorance of the average Chamonix guide with respect to his own mountains. We may say that in the district there are six first-class and nineteen second-rate peaks. I do not believe that there are to be found ten guides out of the whole 250 who have ascended more than three-fourths of these. There is certainly no Chamonix guide at the present time who has ascended *all* the peaks in his own district, or even as many as several members of this Club have done. Yet at Zermatt, or in the Oberland, it is rather the rule than the exception for guides of even the second rank to have 'done' at least the majority of the mountains in their own neighbourhood. The most difficult of the Chamonix peaks were all ascended for the first time by guides from other places, with the exception of the lower peak of the Aig. du Dru and the Aig.

de Bionnassay. For instance, the Aig. Verte, the Blaitière, the Charmoz, the Dru, and I may be allowed to add the Géant. Nothing reveals more clearly to what the capabilities of the Chamonix guide have sunk, or the number of first- or second-class peaks for which he is engaged, than the results of last year's climbing season, which I have tried to put before you in a tabular form. In the first column are the ascents made mainly with foreign guides by some fifteen Englishmen at the Montanvert, eleven of whom are members of this Club. The next column represents the united achievements of the 13,000 visitors to Chamonix and the 250 representatives of the *Compagnie des Guides*.

List of the First- and Second-Class Peaks ascended at Chamonix during the Season of 1883.

	By 15 Englishmen at the Montanvert Hotel, with Foreign Guides with the exceptions stated below *	By the 13,000 Tourists and 250 Guides in Chamonix
Aig. du Midi, Lower Peak	1	—
Aig. de Blaitière	1	—
Aig. du Dru, Higher Peak	2	—
” ” Lower Peak	1	—
Mont Blanc du Tacul	1	—
Mont Mallet	3	—
Mont Maudit	1	—
Aig. du Moine	3	—
Aig. du Plan	1	—
Aig. de Rochefort	1	—
Pic du Tacul	2	—
Aig. Verte	2	1
Aig. d'Argentière	1	1
Les Périades	1	1
Aig. du Géant	7	2
Aig. du Midi	3	5
Mont Blanc	1	53

Nothing is better calculated to show the results of the Chamonix system than a careful study of the foregoing table. Indeed, this year Chamonix guides had most exceptional opportunities for adding to their list of ascents, owing to the C. A. F.

* In addition to the brothers Cupelin and Payot, I have the names of but two other Chamonix guides who took part in the ascents recorded in the Montanvert column.

fête held there in August, which brought to the valley *clubistes* and *intrépides* of nearly every nationality in Europe.

It was while collecting the material for this table that a peculiarity of the Chamoniard was manifested on several occasions, a singular trait of character which is not to be found in any other mountain centre. It never enters into the mind of the Meiringen porter that he must necessarily possess as high a reputation as guide as Melchior Anderegg, because Melchior is a native of the same valley. But should the capabilities of the Chamonix guide be called in question, and plain, indisputable facts be brought forward to his detriment, the most incompetent mule-driver in the valley will point to the statue of Jacques Balmat, the figurehead of their frail craft, and try to persuade you that he is a sample of the rest of the crew. Placed as if in sarcasm, it stands within a stone's throw of that institution the rules of which have prevented Chamonix from rearing scores of men of similar energy and perseverance to explore her aiguilles and snowy peaks. The average Chamonix guide has little or no intercourse with what we might call, for want of a better name, 'real mountaineers;' he is seldom, if ever, on the same rope with one of the universally acknowledged first-class guides. I except, of course, such well-known names as the two Payots, the Cupelins, F. J. Dévouassoud, and a few others. At the same time, he has so much foolish adulation poured upon him by tourists who are utterly incompetent to form an opinion as to what his powers really are, that it is not to be wondered at that he should form golden opinions about himself. We have all read, again and again, how the Misses Simpson (shall we call them?), after a five hours' acquaintance with their guide—

Have much pleasure in testifying to his many good qualities. He conducted them safely over the Mer de Glace and the Mauvais Pas. He is perfectly honest, sober, steady, and obliging, and a first-rate guide in every respect. They confidently recommend him for *any* glacier expedition.

This, of course, is pure invention, but I quote a certificate which was actually written in a Chamonix guide's book by a lady well known for her poetic and religious proclivities. It runs—

Careful and gentle, respectful and steady,
 Always obliging and watchful and ready;
 Pleasantly telling, as children say,
 All about everything on the way;
 Good for the glaciers, strong for the steeps,
 Mighty for mountains, and lithesome for leaps;
 Guide of experience, trusty and true,
 None can be better than *Dévouassoud!*

I should be sorry if these laurels were reaped by any one for whom they were not meant, so I will say that this eulogy was not written for either of our old friends François or Henri, but for some less known individual of that clan. Can we wonder that during the winter months, as page after page of such fulsome compliment is translated to him by some ex-waiter, the guide should come to look upon himself as a second Melchior?

Another section of the community has aided in the downfall of Chamonix. Some years ago the hotel-keepers came to the conclusion that Mont Blanc and the Col du Géant were practically the only two *courses* for which the local guides were engaged. As Mont Blanc could be ascended from Cormayeur, and the Col du Géant crossed from the same place, the Cormayeur guides were much more to be feared as rivals than the Oberlanders. Now no member of Sir Robert Peel's Cabinet was ever a stronger supporter of protection than the Chamonix hotel-keeper. So it entered into their heads that the best way of excluding these dreaded rivals from the valley was to make things as unpleasant as possible for them whenever they came into it. We all know of the agreement made among the hotel-keepers, by which they bound themselves not to receive any Cormayeur guide into their hotels under certain heavy penalties; how a member of this club insisted on his rights, and demanded that Emile Rey should be received if not as a guide as a *voyageur*; and how that worthy individual dined in the *salle à manger*, and slept in his *voyageur's* bedroom. I cannot dismiss the subject without speaking in the warmest terms in praise of the conduct of the Cormayeur men during these years of petty persecution. Though they often arrive late at night, soaked to the skin, after a hard day on the Col, and have to go in search of quarters in the town, they have never made the slightest change in the reception which the Chamoniard meets with at Cormayeur. The Chamonix hotel-keeper has never taken the part or supported the interests of the men who are really guides, as distinguished from the mule drivers of the valley. We have never heard of a young guide of good promise who has been 'brought out' by an hotel-keeper, as often has been done elsewhere, except in the case of the men known in the place as '*les guides des hôtels*,' who are not usually people of great promise. During the season the privilege of conducting a party to the top of Mont Blanc may be bought, as a rule, from any head waiter for 20 francs, though in times of great competition as much as 30 to 35 is often paid. The guide has

to pay 15 francs to the Bureau, which, deducted from the tariff, leaves but a small remainder for himself. The question of tariff is one which has little personal interest to the members of this Club. Most of us engage guides for regular fixed periods, and arrange with them accordingly. But it is hard for any one who wishes to see the grandest and most beautiful forms of nature, and to enjoy, if but for once, that pursuit which we place second to none, to be prevented by an absurdly high tariff from gratifying his desire. It is said that M. de Saussure paid 100 francs to Jacques Balmat for Mont Blanc, and since then the tariff has remained the same. The persistence with which even the men who may really be called guides have stuck to the tariffs, is another reason for their being so seldom engaged for any length of time. Last season I received a letter from a climbing friend of mine, asking me to procure him a guide for six weeks, and offering the same terms as he would to Melchior, Almer, or Jaun. But the guides to whom I spoke refused, though they had no previous engagements to prevent them, the sole reason being that they would not accept anything less than the tariff in the *Règlement*.

As to the manner in which punishment is awarded, and the many pains and penalties of the *Règlement* enforced, I will only say that where an administrator of justice is chosen by popular election, it is useless to expect the same unbiassed decisions as when the judge is in a position altogether independent of those around him.

It is not my place here to speak of the *cochers* of Chamonix, a body who seem well able to look after their own interests. I would, however, point out the absurdity of a commune which lays down the most elaborate system of rules and regulations for one class of public servants, the guides, but allows a set of men almost as numerous to conduct themselves as they please. Even in the case of ladies and small children, the unfortunate public are absolutely without redress, unless it happens, as was the case last year, that they be the relatives of a well-known and equally determined office-bearer of this Club.

Thus far I have attempted to point out some of the reasons which prevent Chamonix from taking the place it might have done among the other great climbing centres. No matter what changes may be made, it must be long before the mischievous results of the present system disappear. There is good material in the valley, which it requires but one act on the part of the authorities to bring forward and develop—the abolition of those rules which prevent a guide who, by skill in

his profession and good conduct, has gained a reputation, from accepting any number of engagements, whether his name be second or fiftieth on the register, and force him to resign to others the reward of the hard work he has undergone. In a Commune like Chamonix, which is visited annually by some 13,000 strangers, I doubt if the tourist would gain any real advantage by the abolition of the entire system of rules. We must not forget the interests of our old friends the Misses Simpson, and their vast following, who are not always chaperoned by Cook or by Gaze. No doubt it is a great convenience to be able to tell the waiter to have mules and guides ready next morning, and to feel perfectly certain that they will be at the door. Travellers of the pre-Albert Smith period tell us how their bedroom doors in the hotels used to be besieged by guides, clamouring to take them to les Possets or the source of the Arveiron. If there is one thing which the Chamoniard prides himself upon, it is his superiority in deportment, shall we call it, compared with what he sometimes styles the 'savage peasants' of Grindelwald or Zermatt. Yet I have never heard of such scenes taking place in the corridors of the 'Bär,' or in the 'Monte Rosa.' Still we must respect our neighbours' weaknesses; it would be a pity to have a revival of those lively old times. Let therefore the *tour de rôle* remain in force for one-day excursions below the snow level, but for all longer and loftier expeditions let free choice be the absolute rule.

There are few climbers of any nationality who do not concur as to the truth of the state of matters I have tried to put before you—the increasing incompetency of the Chamonix guides, and the absurdity of their rules. Whatever may be said in favour of the system by those who only make short excursions or climb Mont Blanc—and, looking at my table of 'courses,' it seems we must class most of our French friends as such—still even on the Mauvais Pas I should prefer having my waterproof carried by a man whose breath I had reason to believe would not reek of cognac, to spending the day with the No. 1 on the *rôle*, who might chance to be the greatest *mauvais sujet* on the whole list; still more in a storm on the Calotte should I prefer a companion chosen otherwise than by natural selection!

Members of the English Alpine Club have every right to speak out on this subject; for so long as the field was open they neglected no opportunity to deliver both travellers and Chamonix itself. It is Chamonix that would profit most by the deliverance from the incubus of the guide system. Our

efforts have been so continuous that it would take too long even to recapitulate them. They began with the discovery by Messrs. Hudson and Kennedy of the St. Gervais route up Mont Blanc, an expedition undertaken with the express object of breaking down the Chamonix monopoly. They ended (in 1874, the year of the formation of the French Alpine Club) by the presentation to the French Government of an elaborate 'Memorial with reference to the Guide System of Chamonix,' which was supported also by the Swiss Alpine Club.* We did all we could for the protection of travellers while the duty lay on us. It has now passed into other hands.

There is one man at least who has taken active steps in the way of reform—Léon Régius, Procureur de la République Française at Bonneville. Whether M. Régius considers it desirable that the Rules should be changed or not, I do not know. He has, however, like a sensible, practical man, taken up one branch of reform, which even the most bigoted upholder of the *Règlement* could not possibly object to. He has endeavoured to raise the standard of examination which guides must pass before they receive the certificate of the *Compagnie des Guides*. I was present at one of these examinations which was held last spring. Among the examiners were M. Régius, M. Joseph Tairraz, the *guide-chef*, a representative of the Maire, and an ex-guide of the name of Charlet. Perhaps I may be allowed to count myself of the number, having been asked to examine one of the candidates in English. The questions asked by M. Régius were of a thoroughly practical simple nature. Joseph Tairraz and the *guide-chef*, from their long experience as guides, were able to put questions such as the traveller is almost sure to want answered. What these examinations must have been before M. Régius took them in hand may be judged from the following answers made by a successful candidate which were noted down at the time by myself:—

- Q. Is Switzerland a Kingdom or a Republic?
 A. A Kingdom.
 Q. Where does the sun rise?
 A. In the North.
 Q. Suppose you came to a *crevasse* which you could not jump, what should you do?
 A. Make a bridge.
 Q. But if you had nothing to make a bridge with?
 A. Turn back.

* See 'Alpine Journal,' vi. p. 421; vii. p. 42.

Q. Suppose your *voyageur* arrives at the hotel very much tired, what should you offer to do for him?

A. Ask him for his stockings, and hang them up to dry.
etc. etc. etc.

During the last three seasons a larger number of climbing Englishmen have made a lengthened stay in the valley than has been the case for some time. To many of them Chamonix has been associated with nothing but cannon-firing and bouquet-giving. They had almost forgotten, while taking the mote out of their Chamonix neighbour's eye, the horn-blowing, edelweiss-selling, and jödelling of their own beloved Oberland. And *à propos* of this, I cannot resist making a reference to the subject of cannon-firing, which is so much associated with Chamonix. Though nothing connected with the place has been more ridiculed, I only know of one individual who ever gave orders, before starting on an expedition, that no cannons were to be fired on his return. And none were fired. The majority of people seem to have a secret hankering after cannon-firing, which they are half-ashamed to own to. A Colonial Governor once referred to his nineteen guns from a man-of-war as a 'sad noisy business.' And, as one sees the tourist draw himself up to his full height, and rearrange his wide-awake as he approaches Couttet's garden, I always seem to recognise in his gait a faint imitation of my friend the Colonial, with his cocked hat and sword; the strange thing about it all being, that the tourist really seems to enjoy his mimic dignity, like a volunteer who unexpectedly finds that he has to return thanks for the Army and Navy. Personally, I like cannon-firing, though I should be sorry if it was the cause of such a tragic scene as that which took place last year, when two gardeners nearly lost their eyesight from looking down the bore of a cannon to find out the reason why the charge had not exploded.

This recent influx of English climbers to Chamonix may be accounted for by several reasons, but what probably had more to do with it than anything else, has been the opening of the new Montanvert Hôtel. There is no visitors' book in any hôtel in the Alps, in which more willing testimony is given to the great comfort and excellence of the establishment, or which contains a more grateful record of the attention and kindly courtesy of the MM. Tairraz, the hosts. Never having before described an hôtel, I may be pardoned if I fall into the conventional formula, and say that it is 'magnificently situated, facing one of the grandest panoramas in Europe.' This, how-

ever, is perhaps hardly the place to quote the many praises which have been bestowed upon it.

Such an establishment could not exist for any length of time near Chamonix without arousing fears among the hôtel-keepers of that ilk that it might prove a too formidable rival for them. So, with their usual want of foresight and knowledge of what really is for their own interests, they set about 'boycotting' the Montanvert, and spreading injurious reports about it. The Commune, too, began to annoy the proprietors in petty trifling matters, as only municipal authorities know how to annoy. Nor was the *Compagnie des Guides* to be left behind, and last season they commenced a dispute as to the rights of the proprietors to send their employés as guides on the Mer de Glace. The result of all this has been just the very opposite to what these worthies intended. It has been an admirable advertisement for the hotel, and has had the effect of bringing it into notice, and awakening a very general feeling of sympathy for its proprietors.

When I commenced this paper, it was my intention to give some details of the ascents made in the Chamonix district last season. But I now find myself without time or space to do more than merely mention what the principal ascents were. The earliest was in June, when Mr. J. Walker Hartley ascended the Aiguille du Géant. The highest point of this peak has been made familiar to us by one of Mr. Donkin's photographs, where three figures are seen standing on the summit. Beautiful and artistic as Mr. Donkin's plates always are, this is, in one respect, liable to convey rather a false impression, for the few feet of rock which in the photograph appear to be inaccessible, are in reality the only part of the whole peak where it is possible to 'go easy.' An ascent of the lower peak of the Dru was also made by Mr. Hartley last August, which will be shortly described in these pages.

During eight consecutive days of fine weather in August Mr. W. E. Davidson made what has since been referred to as a '*tour de force exceptionnel*,' ascending the Géant, the Verte, and the Dru—the last from the Montanvert and back in fourteen hours, including all halts.

During four of these eight days, a *tour de force* of a very different kind was going on in the vicinity of the Jardin. Those who care to know how it is possible to spend ninety-six hours in an ascent of the Aiguille Verte, in perfectly fine weather, with steps made by another party who have just made the ascent, may do so by referring to the '*Journal de Genève*' for

October 22, 1883, or the 'Globe' of the 7th of November following. This absurd effusion has been effectively dealt with in the 'Saturday Review' for January 12 last, and I should not think for one moment even of noticing it, were it not that the writer has attempted to shelter the incompetent vagaries of himself and his friend by most unfairly laying the blame upon his porter, Ed. Martin, better known in the district as 'Garibaldi.' This porter has been with me on various expeditions, and ascended the Aiguille Verte with Mr. Donkin and myself in 1882, and I think it is only due to him, under these circumstances, that I should take this opportunity of testifying to his courage, great strength, and general excellence, all of which qualities, I am certain, he must have been called upon to display in no moderate measure during this most eccentric of all expeditions.

Of those ascents which are not frequently made, I may mention Mont Maudit and Mont Blanc du Tacul as 'falling 'to my own gun.'

Nor can we forget that great 'social,' if not altogether quite 'mountaineering' event, the C. A. F. fête, which will be long remembered by all those who saw the unwonted spectacle of an ex-president of this Club, and one of our most popular office-bearers, parading about the streets of Chamonix behind a big drum.

But I must close this brief record of a most successful season—a season which many of us will always look back upon with pleasure, a season of some triumphs, of much keen enjoyment of all that makes mountaineering so fascinating a pursuit, of much good-fellowship and *bonne camaraderie*, which together invest each of those great peaks and their surroundings with many a pleasant recollection and association, making us look forward to seeing them once more, as we look forward to meeting again the friends we have made amongst them.

HINTS FOR CAUCASIAN EXPLORATION. BY DOUGLAS W. FRESHFIELD.

THE northern base of the Caucasus can now be reached by railway *via* Warsaw and Moscow, or Vienna, Kieff, Koursk, and Rostof, in a week from London; 48 hrs. from Vienna to Kieff, and three days from Kieff to Pätigorsk. The highroad through the Dariel pass will be traversed this summer for the first time by Messrs. Cook's tourists, who also propose to visit Mount Ararat. Is it not time for the Alpine Club to bestir itself? The high mountain districts can be explored without risk from the inhabitants, or from fever. Convenient bases