IN MEMORIAM.

WILLIAM FREDERICK DONKIN.

THERE are some losses which, sweeping down on us suddenly, as a rock falls into a mountain torrent, check the current of life for a moment: there results an overflow, the reaction comes at once, and the stream runs on as before. Other calamities there are of which even the full appreciation is not the climax but the commencement of sorrow; deeper griefs, which bewilder and daze at the onset, then gradually increasing in intensity as time rolls on, affect in some measure the whole course of existence. Of this latter nature, to all who knew the man, must the loss of the Honorary Secretary of our club be. This is not the place, nor is there need to hazard conjecture of the nature of the disaster that laid our friend to rest. Enough that there is the certainty now that a brave and true heart beats no more, and that the mountains have claimed a dear life that we who remain can ill spare.

William Frederick Donkin was born on December 2, 1845. He was educated at Eton, and, in 1864, two years after leaving that school, entered at Magdalen College, Oxford, obtaining a natural science demyship. He took his degree in the natural science honour school in 1868. He remained at Oxford and held several appointments; among others he was assistant demonstrator in the University laboratory for a time, and lecturer in natural science at Keble College. In 1877 there fell on him the shadow of a loss the depth of which none may estimate. Within a year of his marriage he became a widower: his infant child lived only two days. The depth of affection of which natures such as his were capable is almost terrible to contemplate when we think of the risks of life. His health failed. Time, the great healer, seemed to have no power. Yet at length a measure of relief came. It is by no means fantastic to assume that while wandering in the Alps 'all at once Great Nature spoke to him,' or to believe that the love he had for the mountains was deepened by an ever-present sense of gratitude. In 1880, on the advice of his friends, he came to London, finding an opening as Lecturer on Chemistry in the Medical School of St. George's Hospital: and it was then, eight years ago, that our acquaintanceship began. It seems but a few days since, for the time was too short, far too short, to learn all the beauties of his nature. We who were associated with him in work knew him to be the most patient and conscientious of teachers; unassuming almost to a fault; impressed in every act of his life with that earnest craving for truth which is the very essence of scientific work; with a simplicity and unselfishness of character that scientific habits and surroundings could only develop, and failed wholly to warp, as happens at times to minds of more narrow calibre. There was all this; there was also a charm that never failed to attract, especially to those who could see a little beneath the surface of a naturally reserved nature. Some may realise the influence the more now that he can exercise it

no longer. Such a character made itself felt at once, but more than repaid study. Would that words could be set down which might adequately portray it.

Donkin was attracted by and had a wide knowledge of many subjects besides chemistry; he delighted in the study of any branch of physics. In working at the modern developments of lighting, electrical and other, he found scope for his beautiful dexterity of manipulation, and it was in this branch of his professional occupation that he promised to do his best original work. His opinion was highly valued by a well-known electrical firm, to whom he acted as scientific experimenter. Indeed, in the opinion of one well qualified to judge, he was rapidly making his mark as a leader in experimental investigations requiring high chemical and electrical knowledge. He loved to take in hand a delicate piece of mechanism, such as an aneroid or watch, when it was out of order. It was characteristic of him that, intent on the contemplation of the main object to be attained, in taking the apparatus to pieces he invariably mislaid the little detached parts. All were put carefully away in different places; and desperate searches resulted. But when found all the several parts were fitted together with an ease and certainty and happiness of result that were surprising.

Of his ability as a musician it is for others to speak, and it is mentioned here only to illustrate one marked phase of his nature. His power of attention—a rare quality—was remarkable in all matters, but when playing his favourite instrument became so intense as to absorb him utterly. Music spoke to him with a depth and clearness of expression denied to most of us, and reserved only for her chosen disciples. Yet more: for I think it was only when under the influence of music that he gave rein to the memory, and allowed the saddest episode of his life to float for a while in his mind.

As in music so also in photography, he was a true artist. That much-abused term is not misapplied in this instance. The field of Alpine photography had been well worked when he took it up and developed it to the point it has now reached, or, in other words, the point which he reached. So accustomed have we become to regard his Alpine views as pre-eminent that it is difficult to realise they have for so few years been before the public; yet it was only at the Winter Dinner Exhibition in 1880 that he exhibited his panorama from the summit of the Dom, a work that excited the admiration of all who knew the Alps, and must have almost revealed a new world to those who did not. In his photographs he regarded the mountains more from the sculptor's than the painter's view-point. The massiveness and solidity of the peaks and glaciers, their symmetry and grandeur of form and line appealed most to him. Witness such plates as the Matterhorn from the Hörnli, the famous view of the Aiguille du Géant and Mont Blanc, or the Dent Blanche from the Italian side of the Cervin. Yet there was no phase of the mountains which came amiss to one who, in his own quiet way, was so ardent a lover of the Alps. It would scarcely be possible to surpass in delicacy the views of the Bietschhorn from the Petersgrat, or of the Aiguilles Verte and du Dru

from Trélaporte, while to my mind the most perfect snow photograph yet taken is that of Mont Blanc from the Aiguille du Midi. Such works must live, and will form the most fitting memorial of the man. Improved methods (and he was never fully satisfied with results achieved, but was constantly seeking to improve on previous work) may yield still better results, but he must ever have the credit of having been a pioneer in Alpine photography and of having raised it to the level of a distinct art. The secret of his success was simple enough; he had the refined perception of an artist, the special training necessary, a constant desire to do better, and an unlimited capacity for taking trouble in the work which was his chief pleasure. Of the work of others in the same line he had the most honest appreciation, for there was no shred of narrowness in his character. He rarely showed enthusiasm openly, but I can well remember the terms of boundless admiration in which he often spoke to me of the photographs of a well-known Italian member of our club, and the rapt way in which I have seen him studying their delicate beauty.

In 1885 he undertook the duties of Honorary Secretary of the Alpine Club, though not without some natural reluctance, for he was a man of many occupations, and had little leisure for the work. Although he had not been many years a member, his name was so familiar to all that his accession to the office seemed almost natural. It is no secret that the work entailed was uncongenial, and it was only the warm interest that he had in the club that prompted him to undertake it. Not that he was one to shirk responsibility, but he shrank characteristically from putting himself forward. At times, I fear, the work pressed heavily on him. The labour of organising the winter dinner and picture exhibition increased every year. His very conscientiousness and faculty of concentration were unfavourable to what is spoken of as business-like habits of mind, and the labour was thereby increased. With what unfailing sweetness of manner, and with what benefit to the club he conducted its business, we all know: perhaps those know best who were chiefly associated with him in the work, and can estimate the innumerable calls made on the time and patience of an Honorary Secretary who has to bear also the responsibilities of a treasurer. Donkin was a fine example of a rare combination—a man of character and without enemies. He won the esteem of all, while never seeking for popularity. 'I met him only on a few occasions,' one writes, 'but each time left me indebted to him for some service rendered, some act of kindness.'

As a mountaineer he had wide experience and sound judgment, and at critical moments, when the occasion demanded, would speak with a decision that would have surprised those who knew him but little. Though not particularly robust, he could husband his strength so well as to be always ready when wanted. Animated by an object beyond that of mere climbing, he never suffered his attention to relax, and at the end of a long expedition was as careful and safe as at any other time. Mountaineering was with him greatly a means to an end; but he studied to perfect himself in the means, as he studied everything he took up. It was no act of carelessness or inattention that cost him

his life. It was through no want of foresight that this dark shadow has been cast over the mountains.

He is gone. But his influence remains. The work of his Alpine life remains. So may we recall him as it were at will. The pictures, it has been said, that are drawn in our minds are laid in fading colours. But the shock of a great calamity or loss can strangely stimulate the memory, and enable us to reproduce in startlingly perfect focus the dormant image of what has taken place long ago. The picture of the open valley of Betsho one August day rises up before my eyes, perfect in every detail. The events of that morning revolve again and again in an unceasing order in the memory. Unbidden the recollection comes of the busy preparations for the start, and the merriment over the morning meal, for by tacit agreement we would not anticipate even for an hour. Of a sudden we seemed to realise that the moment had arrived, and that all was ready for departure. Little was spoken. A silence seemed to gather around us. Strange that nothing was said of meeting again soon, yet so it was. The time had come. A shake of the hand, a pressure on the shoulder that meant more than words could express. The guides and then Harry Fox moved on a few paces. Donkin was before me—ay, as he is now as I write. I can see him, I can almost feel his grasp. God bless you, old friend. Good-bye. C. T. DENT.

The following details of Mr. Donkin's Oxford career will be of interest to his numerous friends in Oxford and elsewhere. He was the eldest son of the late Mr. W. F. Donkin (from 1842 to 1870 Savilian Professor of Astronomy in the University of Oxford), and was himself born in Oxford. On October 15, 1864, he was elected and admitted a Demy of Magdalen College, Oxford, having obtained his scholarship for proficiency in Natural Science. After four years of study at Magdalen he was placed in the second class in the Final Honour School of Natural Science in Michaelmas term, 1868, there being but one man that time in the first class. He had taken up chemistry as his special subject for examination, and he continued to study it after taking his B.A. degree. In 1872 he proceeded to the degree of M.A. In Michaelmas term, 1875, he was appointed Lecturer in Natural Science at Keble College, and in Michaelmas term, 1877, Tutor at the same college. He held both appointments till Trinity term, 1880. In 1879–1880 he served as one of the examiners in the Final Honour School of Natural Science.

He was for some time assistant to the late Sir B. C. Brodie, Professor of Chemistry in the University of Oxford. He also held the post of County Analyst for the county of Oxfordshire, with a private laboratory at the New Museum. His neatness and dexterity in making complicated apparatus in glass was unrivalled, and some specimens of his work are to this day preserved in the Museum.

After ceasing to reside in Oxford in 1880, he often came down to take part in the concerts of the University Musical Society, and to attend the meetings of the Oxford Alpine Club, of which he had been a member since November, 1879, being elected into the London

Club a month later. The Oxford A.C. has this year given up its usual autumn meeting as a mark of respect to the memory of one who generally came down at that time to tell us of his doings in the mountains, and to show us his marvellous photographs.

W. A. B. Coolidge.

HARRY FOX.

Harry Fox, who was the chosen companion of Mr. Dent and Mr. Donkin in their second expedition to the Caucasus, became a member of the Alpine Club in 1885, but in a comparatively short period had not only won for himself the reputation of a bold, skilful, and enthusiastic climber, but numbered a host of warm friends amongst our members who will, I feel sure, bear me out in saying that not mere community of taste and pursuit, but a feeling of hearty affection, united them to him in no ordinary degree.

He was born on September 30, 1856, and was the second son of the late Mr. Dilworth Crewdson Fox, of Woodlands, Wellington, Somerset, where he was actively engaged as a partner in a large manufacturing business, and, as such, as well as by his geniality, public spirit, and wide usefulness, acquired much influence, and the respect and love of all classes of the community. It was not till the summer of 1884 that he tried the great mountains for the first time, and at once lost his heart to them for ever, as many others of us know what it is to do. He first acquired proficiency in climbing under the auspices of Mr. Graham, and he always gratefully regarded that brilliant mountaineer as his original model and instructor in the craft, though his skill and powers were subsequently still further developed in company with Mr. Slingsby, to whom he was deeply attached. Alone with guides, or in company with relatives or other friends, amongst whom I may specially mention Messrs. R., H., and L. Powell, in addition to those just named, he accomplished a very considerable number of expeditions, many of them of first-rate difficulty. The Fletschhorn, Rimpfischhorn, Mischabel Joch, Mont Collon, Aiguille de la Za, Ober Gabelhorn, and Aiguille du Dru were all climbed by himself and various friends without guides—a porter, however, being of the party in the case of the Ober Gabelhorn, and poor young Fischer (in the same capacity) in that of the Dru. Not to name minor excursions, he had also ascended in the orthodox fashion the Eiger, Aletschhorn, Jungfrau, Mönch, Finsteraarhorn, Wetterhorn, Gspaltenhorn, Schreckhorn, Matterhorn, Dent Blanche, Aiguilles de Blaitière and des Charmoz, Dents des Bouquetins, Zinal Rothhorn, &c.

I am indebted to Mr. Slingsby for the following very interesting remarks on his characteristics as a mountaineer and comrade, a subject on which no one is so well qualified to speak:—

'It was my privilege to make with Harry Fox, during the summers of 1886 and 1887, many good mountain expeditions in the Alps, principally without guides. I have no hesitation in saying that he was the best amateur climber I ever met. He was as equally at home on difficult rocks as in forcing a way on an intricate glacier or in step-cutting upon a steep snow-slope, in plan-

ning a difficult expedition as in executing it. In physical strength and endurance, which were largely owing to his extreme temperance and perfect self-control, few were his equals. He had great powers of organisation, and hardly ever neglected even the smallest detail. His perfect unselfishness made him ever anxious for the comfort of others. He was a born leader, and his intense enthusiasm, quickness of observation, and sense of humour made him at all times a most delightful companion. He was both brave and gentle, and, when occasion required, was the tenderest of nurses. His brightness was unfailing, whether revelling in the sunshine on Mont Collon, descending the Aiguille du Dru in a snow and thunder storm, or cooking our supper at the camp-fire. His naturally eager nature had been tempered by prudence, and as an illustration I may mention that, when we were descending the Gabelhorn, we noticed a steep couloir below the Unter Gabelhorn which a novice might easily think might be crossed with safety. Fox said, "Nothing could ever persuade me to cross such a place." Directly afterwards the couloir was swept by an avalanche, and yet, a few weeks after this, a Zermatt guide led an English tourist over this very place, and had a very narrow escape. Fox was an immense favourite with guides, and never failed to gain their confidence.'

This is not the place in which to lay bare the sacred recesses of private sorrow. What desolation, borne with conspicuous patience and submission, such a loss has caused in his family circle can well be imagined by all who knew Harry Fox's bright affectionate nature, his ever ready sympathy and helpfulness, his practical capacity for work and organisation of every description, and the warmth of as loyal and unselfish a heart as ever beat.

I may, however, be permitted to say that in his county, and indeed far beyond its limits, he was widely known and, where known, admired and beloved by troops of friends. His bright eager face and the cheery ring of his voice were warmly welcomed in the cricket or football field, whether he appeared as a player, umpire, or keen onlooker, no less than in ordinary social intercourse. His range of interests, in duty and pleasure alike, was wide, and 'nihil tetigit quod non ornavit' is no exaggerated expression as applied to him, whether the deeper or the lighter phases of life were concerned.

Combining prudence with boldness and skill in his mountaineering achievements, I cannot for a moment attribute his early death to any excess of daring or rashness, still less to ignorance or carelessness. I must sorrowingly be content to believe that, with his and our valued friend Mr. Donkin and their trusty guides, whose loss we likewise deplore, he has fallen a victim to some sudden and unforeseen—perhaps unforeseeable—swift form of destruction, such as an avalanche, which no general experience or care can absolutely guard against, especially in only partially explored districts, where dangers are, to some extent, hidden from pioneers, and can only be fully appreciated and avoided as knowledge increases.

Few such events—shrouded, too, as this is, in a mystery which may long defy solution—have caused so painful a sensation since the tragedy of the Matterhorn, and there are some of us who feel that, however inaudibly to others, an added note of sorrow will blend henceforth with the undertones of life,

'and the veil of our heads will be grief, and the crown will be pain'

for many a year to come, as we think of such a bright and useful career cut short, whilst

. . . . . 'our tears
Thaw not the frost that binds so dear a head.'

F. F. Tuckett.

KASPAR STREICH.

The disaster in the Caucasus which has cost our Club two valued lives, including that of our gifted secretary, has also plunged into mourning a little home at Williegen, near Meiringen, and has left to us the sacred duty of coming forward to comfort and assist the young widow and children of poor Kaspar Streich.

It is some years ago now since Streich joined me as leading guide. He had done a good deal of work, under the well-known guide Hans von Bergen, with Mr. Seymour Hoare, and it was on Mr. Hoare's recommendation that I first engaged him.

I have never since had cause to regret my confidence in him. For several consecutive seasons we have worked together in the Oberland, and I have found Streich ever steady, ever brave, ever true.

Had human skill been of avail to avert the sad disaster on the lonesome peak or glacier in the remote Caucasus which has pained us all so deeply, it was there in Streich. He had studied long in the best school for mountain guides—the Swiss Oberland—with such companions as Johann Jaun and Hans von Bergen, until he came to combine in himself all the qualities of a first-rate guide—daring with caution, experience with great strength and endurance.

Notwithstanding his merits as a leading guide he was modest and self-sacrificing. Calm and steady, he inspired confidence into others; and I have always felt, when with him on many a difficult enterprise, that I had by my side a firm friend who would be faithful and true even unto death.

In whatever circumstances it may have been that disaster overtook poor Donkin's party, of this I feel convinced, that Streich never faltered, but did his duty to the end like a brave and loyal man. Streich was about thirty-eight years of age. He has left a widow and four young children, the youngest but a few weeks old.

F. J. Cullinan.

JOHANN FISCHER.

Johann Fischer was a native of Zaun, near Meiringen, and a son of Johann Fischer who was killed on the Brouillard Glacier in 1874. He was about twenty-one years of age. He was a fine, strongly-built young man, who appeared to have a happy and brilliant future before him. There is little doubt, that had he not lamentably been cut off at so early an age he would have become one of the leading guides in the Oberland.

He spent the winter of 1886–7 with Emile Rey at Courmayeur, where he worked as a carpenter and learned French and the duties of an Alpine guide. He remained with Rey through the spring, and accompanied him as second guide in most of the expeditions which the latter made last year. Amongst these were the ascents of the Aiguille des Charmoz and Aiguille de Blaitière by Mr. Harry Fox.

As I have only made one mountain expedition with Fischer, I am well aware that I cannot personally testify to some of the rarer qualities possessed by a first-rate guide, which I have little doubt that Fischer was already endowed with, or would soon attain to. This expedition, however, the ascent of the Aiguille du Dru, was of an unusual character. Four amateurs met on a certain day at the Montanvert, by previous arrangement, for the express purpose of attempting the ascent of the Aiguille du Dru without guides. At the last, Harry Fox and I agreed that it would be advisable for us to have a porter as a reserve of strength, as one of our party was not in very good training, and we feared that he would probably not reach the top. Accordingly Fox suggested Johann Fischer, who had made the ascent once before. After Emile Rey had added his persuasive powers to ours, Fischer consented to go. Though Fox and I were the actual and responsible leaders, the bulk of the work was done by Fischer. He did everything that we required of him as well as it could have been done, and he and Fox cut all the steps that were required up the icy wall of the bergschrund, which was peculiarly difficult to surmount last year. Shortly after leaving the summit we were overtaken by a very heavy snow-storm, which was soon succeeded by a most terrific thunderstorm. This would have unsteadied many a poor guide, yet Fischer was perfectly cool and collected, and when he was holding the rope, one felt that he was almost as firm as the rocks upon which he stood. He carried our food, and cheerfully shouldered a cruel burden from the gîte down to the Montanvert.

We were so well satisfied with Fischer that we paid him the full guide's tariff of 100 frs. Rey was delighted at the success of the expedition, and was extremely proud of his pupil.

To the reputation he brought from the Alps he added in the Caucasus. Mr. Dent tells me that he was always willing, thoughtful, and attentive: and that as a companion he was invaluable in camp, while steady and sure in the mountains. He adds that the diary Fischer kept in the Caucasus shows him to have been possessed of an intelligence and power of observation far above the average run of guides.

The Oberland has lost one of its most promising sons, mountaineers have lost a capital young guide and most cheery companion, and the cold shadows of the Alps have fallen darkly for the second time on a little Alpine home and a widowed head. WM. CECIL SLINGSBY.