THE

ALPINE JOURNAL.

FEBRUARY 1893.

(No. 119.)

Address to the Alpine Club.

By HORACE WALKER, late President of the Club.

(Read at the Annual General Meeting, December 19, 1892.)

IF I appear before you to-night in the part of a blessed Glendoveer, it is, I assure you, from no wish of my own, but in obedience to the orders of our Honorary Secretary, the suavity of whose manner conceals, as you have no doubt found out, a good deal of the *fortiter in re*. He insists that it is the established duty of a retiring president to deliver a valedictory address. Well, 'when a duty devolves upon an Englishman,' as Cousin Feenix observed at Mr. Dombey's wedding, 'he is bound to get out of it in the best way he can,' so I will now proceed to review, to the best of my ability, the proceedings of the Club during my term of office.

Before, however, entering on the subject of our performances during that time, it is fitting that I should refer briefly to those comrades who have been removed from our ranks by death. If we have during the past three years not lost men so intimately connected with the history of our Club as Ball, Moore, and Donkin, nevertheless many names memorable in our annals have disappeared from our list of members. In Birkbeck, one of the first party to reach the Höchste Spitze of Monte Rosa; in Coleman, the author of 'Scenes from the Snowfields'; in Ames, a contributor to 'Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers'; and in Dr. Hort, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, whose death was recently reported, we have lost four of the sadly-reduced list of our original members. Of but little later standing in the Club were John Murray; Nichols, who had served as vice-president, and took a leading part in the preparation of the Alpine Club map; and Blackstone, my earliest Alpine friend,

who served more than once on the committee, to the great advantage of the Club. In Barnard we lost a sincere lover of the mountains, and one of the most regular contributors to our winter exhibition; and in Gilbert, one of the earliest explorers of the Dolomites, and joint author of the charming work in which those fascinating mountains were first made known to many of us. The club lost an old member and a good friend in Sir William Hardman, the editor of the *Morning Post*, and in Dr. C. Handfield Jones, F.R.S., one of its most distinguished scientific members.

The only fatal accident to a member of the Club which we have to record was that in the Maderaner Thal, by which the valuable life of Mr. Macnamara, full of promise, was lost in descending the Düssistock, far below the snow-line.

Among our honorary members we have to record the death of Herr Gottlieb Studer, who set a brilliant example, which we might all strive to follow. He climbed for seventy years, and even at the age of 79 was able to ascend the Mettelhorn and the Pic d'Arzinol. We cannot all begin to climb at the age of 7, but we may all learn a lesson from Studer, and not give up climbing altogether when we are no longer able to reach the highest summits.

Outside the ranks of our Club, but closely associated with us, there are several losses to chronicle of men known to us all. The tragic fate of Carrel is fresh in our memories, and Val Tournanche lost another of its veteran heroes by the death of Maquignaz on Mont Blanc. Peter Jenni, too, once the leading guide of Pontresina, and Christian Lauener, are familiar names to the older generation of mountaineers. Alexander Seiler is another well-known figure who has disappeared from the scene; and Mr. Stephen has well said that Zermatt has lost one of its attractions in the absence of the genial welcome from Herr Seiler, which awaited the traveller on his arrival at Zermatt.

And now, gentlemen, I will turn to a more cheerful subject; but before entering on a consideration of the doings of the members of the Club during my term of office, I should like briefly to remind you of an expedition which was made during the reign of my predecessor, and to which he could not for obvious reasons do full justice. I refer to what is known as the Search Expedition to the Caucasus. The very success of that admirably conducted expedition is perhaps likely to lead us to overlook the difficulties of the problem which the leaders of it had to solve, and the foresight and sagacity which led to such a successful issue.

The Alps. to which we owe the formation of our Club, are clearly entitled to the first place in a review of our proceedings, but here, at the outset, a difficulty suggests itself. Your late president declared, three years ago, that the word 'exhausted' must be erased from the Alpine vocabulary. I regret to say that I have arrived at an opposite conclusion—that the Alps are exhausted. Thank goodness! I have not exhausted them. Mr. Coolidge, by his 700 'grandes courses,' has not exhausted them. Mr. Mathews, who has nine times ascended Mont Blanc, would probably say that he has not exhausted the infinite variety of that one mountain; nevertheless, I fear that, except from the point of view of the editor of a 'Climber's Guide,' the Alps are parlously nigh to exhaustion.

I do not mean that there are no new expeditions to be made. Those prolific mines of novelties, the Gabelhorn and Mont Colon, may yet yield further variations to the ingenious searcher; other peaks will doubtless provide more new routes when subjected to the same microscopic survey, and there are numerous rock pinnacles which have not felt the foot of man; but such novelties as these, though interesting, difficult, and sometimes dangerous to those who try them, are not of a very general interest.

I am, however, far from wishing to discourage the pursuit of such novelties if undertaken with that due regard to safety which should be the first consideration in all expeditions, whether new or old. It is only by trying variations, which may lead to improvement on established routes, and such points as remain unclimbed, that the mountaineer of to-day can, in the Alps at least, enjoy the charm of novelty and uncertainty which fell to the lot of the early explorers. Such ascents, however, do not, as a rule, require much comment on an occasion like this, and unless the Conways and Holders of the day come to his rescue, the president of the future may have to address the Club in the words of the Knife-grinder: 'Story! God bless you! I have none to tell!'

I must, however, admit that I am not reduced to that extremity. The ascent of the Pic Sans Nom by Messrs. Carr, Morse, and Wicks after it had repulsed an attack by a party comprising two experienced guides, the brilliant ascents by Mr. Norman Neruda in the Bernina chain, the traverse of the ridge of the Meije by Mr. Gibson, who reversed the Zsigmondy route, would all have been worthy of mention at any time of our history. The ascent, too, of the Aiguille de Grépon by Mr. Morse and his companions was a remarkable

exhibition of skill, pluck, and perseverance, which well deserved to be crowned by the success eventually achieved. Other expeditions which deserve notice are the descent of the Schreckhorn to the Lanteraarsattel by Mr. Macdonald, by a safer route than was taken by the brothers Pendlebury on their ascent from that side, and a useful variation on the ascent of the Grand Combin by Mr. O. G. Jones, by which that peak was reached from By, in the Val d'Ollomont. Explorations were made in the Valpellina district, which has been rather neglected by English mountaineers, by Messrs. Conway, Leaf, Prothero, and others. Mr. Coolidge continued to snap up unconsidered trifles in the Dauphiné, Graian, and Lepontine Alps, and the Eastern Alps attracted some attention, though, perhaps, hardly as much as they deserve. Winter climbing, too, went on merrily, and the Grandes Jorasses, the Viescherhorn, the Piz Palu, and the Presanella must be added to the list of peaks which have no close time allowed them.

Guideless climbing, which, under proper conditions, has received the approval of the authorities on mountaineering, has been increasingly practised, and on more than one occasion the amateur has succeeded in wiping the eye of the professional climber. There is one form of it, however, which has been unsparingly condemned from this chair, of which, I regret to say, sporadic cases still occur. I refer to solitary climbing. It is to be regretted that the highwayman who waylaid Mr. Gribble on the Arolla Glacier did not come across a solitary climber rather than an inoffensive tourist taking a stroll, as such an occurrence would probably go further to cure this particular form of lunacy than any exhortation from this chair.

This activity in the Alps did not prevent more distant chains of mountains receiving attention, and in 1890 in particular a remarkable amount of exploration in widely distant regions is recorded. In Colorado, Mr. Percy Thomas ascended Mount Wilson, a peak of the Rocky Mountains, over 14,000 ft. in height. Further north, in the same continent, Mr. Harold Topham represented the Club in the Selkirk Range, where he succeeded in carrying out a considerable amount of exploration and some interesting ascents. In Daghestan, probably never visited before for climbing purposes, Messrs. Baker and Yeld ascended the highest point in the district, Basardjusi, 14,722 ft. in height, besides another peak, Shalbruz, of a lesser elevation. In the Caucasus, Messrs. Holder and Cockin were successful in reaching the

highest point in the Adai Choch group, a peak rather higher than Monte Rosa. An attack on Janga, which remains unvanquished, failed for want of time. Signor Sella, too, again visited the Caucasus, and ascended Boordooil a day or two after it had been climbed by the gentleman just named by a different route.

In New Zealand Mr. Mannering, who is a member of our Club, in company with Mr. Dixon, nearly succeeded in reaching the summit of Aorangi, or Mount Cook, and Mr. Harper, whom we have the pleasure of seeing here to-night, made some interesting exploration on the Hooker Glacier.

And here I may appropriately mention that the mountains of the Antipodes have been in labour and brought forth no ridiculous mouse, but the New Zealand Alpine Club, to which body I may, I am sure, offer in your name our hearty good wishes. A very interesting account has been published by Mr. Mannering, one of the founders of that Club, of explorations of the New Zealand Alps. The mountaineer in that distant region has many difficulties to contend with of which we know nothing. He finds no sturdy race of peasants living on the very edge of the glaciers—the raw material from which Almers and Andereggs have been manufactured; he must be Herrschaft, guide and porter all in one, and the long distances through the bush make this last branch of his work a very trying one. There are other dangers, too, to which a climber in the Alps is not exposed, and a perusal of Mr. Mannering's book suggests that it might be well for the New Zealand climber to be born to be hanged, as, unless his life is protected by some such charm, he seems to stand a very good chance of being drowned.

In 1891 the adventurous spirits of the Club seem to have given themselves a holiday, as no outlandish expeditions are recorded in that year; and the same may, I believe, be said for the present year, with the one brilliant exception which is in all our minds. It is probably difficult for most of us to form any estimate of the value of the explorations which Messrs. Conway and Bruce have carried out in the Karakorum range, as more minute geographical knowledge is necessary for that purpose than I at all events, and I dare say a good many others, possess, but we can all appreciate the completeness of the preparations and the skill and courage with which the expedition was conducted; and, thanks to Mr. Conway's admirable letter, published in the Royal Geographical Society's Proceedings, we can picture to ourselves every step of the ascent of Pioneer Peak from the end

of the Baltoro Glacier to the summit of the mountain. We shall doubtless have other opportunities of discussing the results obtained by this remarkable expedition, but I may say that it would seem, from what we have already heard, that the answer which Mr. Dent gave to the question which he recently propounded—Can Mount Everest be ascended?—an answer which agrees with the opinion expressed in this Club by those most competent to form an opinion—has received striking confirmation from the experience of Mr. Conway and Mr. Bruce on Pioneer Peak.

The literary side of our work has not been neglected, and during my term of office several notable books by members of the Club have appeared. Mr. Whymper's journey to the Andes is ancient history, but it was only in the early part of this year that his splendid work appeared in which the results of that expedition are recorded—a worthy companion to 'Scrambles in the Alps.' The 'Zermatt Pocket-book' has developed, under the fostering care of Messrs. Conway and Coolidge, into the series of condensed guide books which now cover the country from Dauphiné to the Lepontine Alps, with the exception of the Graians, a gap which I understand will soon be filled up.

The republication of 'Ball's Guide' is, indeed, still among the 'agenda,' but we have read with pleasure the statement of the editor, that one volume is almost ready for the press, and I do not doubt that my successor three years hence will be able to refer to the appearance of the new edition as removed to the 'acta.'

A very useful index to 'Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers,' and the first fifteen volumes of the 'Alpine Journal' has appeared, and the Club is much indebted to our vice-president, Mr. Wallroth, for the care which he has taken in editing this valuable addition to our library.

The report, too, of the Special Committee on Equipment, which was circulated among members, and afterwards republished in the Journal, belongs to this category, though probably the attention of most of its readers has been more directed to its practical conclusions than to its literary merits. I take it that there are few among us, however great their experience, who have not profited by a study of this report.

Last, but not least, there remains to be noticed the work on 'Mountaineering' of the Badminton Library, by Mr. Dent and his associates. My duty to-night is to chronicle the appearance of such work rather than to criticise it, but I

may perhaps be permitted to express the general feeling of the admirable manner in which this handbook to mountaineering has been composed. The novice will not be able to climb from a study of 'Mountaineering' alone, any more than he would take wickets by merely reading Mr. Steel's hints on bowling, but it will certainly be a great advantage to him in learning to have the principles of the sport laid down and codified by such competent authorities as Mr. Dent and the other writers. With regard to Mr. Willink's share in the work, it is not too much to say that the view of the Wilderwurm Gletscher would alone justify the publication of the work.

And now, gentlemen, having reviewed what we have done, I should like to say a word or two about what has been done, not by us, but in spite of us. I refer to the invasion of our favourite Alpine haunts by the railway. The mountaineer of to-day does not, I believe, as a rule, take his training, if he requires any, as old fogies like myself did and do, on green peaks or passes. He goes straight out to Zermatt or Grindelwald, and trains on the Wellenkuppe or Wetterhorn. His withers, therefore, are unwrung at the thought that Monte Generoso, Pilatus, the Brienzer Rothhorn, and other beautiful peaks of that class, have been climbed by the iron horse. But when the railway is extended to our chosen resorts of Zermatt and Grindelwald, all mountaineers surely must wince at the innovation. We know that the mischief does not stop there.

As the funicular railway to Mürren has followed on the opening of the line to Lauterbrunnen, so the same thing will happen to the Riffelberg and other points near Zermatt.

But more saddening to me even than these is the line now in course of construction over the Wengern Alp. It is not the damage done to the beauty of the scenery which is chiefly to be feared. A heavy line like the St. Gothard railway, which has spoilt the lovely valley of the Reuss, is indeed a gruesome sight, but the light mountain railways do not necessarily mar the beauty of the scenery which they traverse. It is the vulgarising associations, the hordes of tourists who would be as happy at Interlaken or Lucerne, the refreshment booths which we shall find on the Lauberhorn and Guggi Gletscher, which are to be deprecated. However, all we can do is to feel grateful that we at all events have seen the fairest scene in the Alps in all its beauty, and perhaps to wish for the tongue of Sir Alured

Denne to express our views about those who have promoted this desecration—

> He'd consign them, when once in a humour to scold,
> To a place where they certainly would not take cold.

It is possible, however, that some change, some desirable change, may result from this extension of the railway as a slight compensation for the evil wrought by it. The magnificent mountains of the Oberland and of the Monte Rosa chain can never lose their attraction for the mountaineer, but Grindelwald and Zermatt will be less agreeable sojourning places, and we may fairly expect that the lovely valleys of the Graians and of the south side of the Penmine Alps will no longer suffer from the neglect with which they have of late been treated. Seeing that the Lago Maggiore can be reached as easily as Zermatt, and that Aosta is no further in point of time than Zermatt was before the opening of the railway, it appears odd that there should not be more English tourists now in the valleys between those points than there were five-and-twenty years ago.

There is another movement, which I personally view with disfavour, which has lately been developed by our foreign brethren in a remarkable manner. I refer to the mania, as it seems to me, for building huts in all sorts of positions on the mountains. Some huts—that on the Grands Mulets, for instance—are, if not necessary, at all events highly desirable from the distance of the nearest chalets; the most consistent praiser of bygone times would hardly prefer the wet cave by the side of the Aletsch Gletscher, in which Mr. C. E. Mathews and I spent a night over thirty-two years ago, to the comfortable Concordia hut. But what is to be said in favour of the huts, completed or in process of construction, on or near the tops of Mont Blanc and Monte Rosa? I am not expert enough to pronounce judgment on the value of the scientific work which may be executed in these huts, though I have my own opinion on that point; but looked at from the mountaineering point of view, they would appear to constitute a danger, not a safeguard. There can hardly be a doubt that, but for the Vallot cabane, the valuable life of Mr. Nettleship would not have been sacrificed on Mont Blanc; while there is something more than a possibility that the death of Count Villanova and his companions may be ascribed to the same cause.

Well, gentlemen, I think that I have now trespassed sufficiently on your time, and I will bring my sermon to a

close. This is my last appearance as your president at a meeting of the club, and I feel that I ought, like the merry monarch, to apologise for being such an unconscionable time in dying. The fact is that I am sorry to go. Those who know me best are aware that it was with genuine reluctance that I accepted the honour which you were good enough to confer upon me three years ago. My *nolo episcopari* did not mean, as Mr. Mathews once translated it, *Barkis is willin'*. And now, gentlemen, that my term has expired, I am just as sorry, I confess, to lay down my office. That I should look back upon the last three years with unqualified pleasure is due entirely to your kindness, for which I return you my most sincere thanks.

An Ascent of the Western Aiguille du Dru.

By J. WALKER HARTLEY.

(Read before the Alpine Club, April 1, 1884.)

VISITORS to the Zoo will probably have noticed how the inmates of the monkey-house divide themselves into two sets. While the stouter and more sedate remain comfortably on the floor, intent on stray nuts and biscuits, and disdainful of the frivolities of the more agile, the latter prefer to scramble to the highest spars and branches they can find. A parallel may not inaptly be drawn between the monkey-house and this Club. Some of our members are content to revel in the Capua of subalpine hotels, and if they visit the mountains at all, go no further than to stroll up some slight acclivity in company with an umbrella, and a guide whose day is past. They look with wonder on the unquenched ardour of their younger friends, who still believe that the *raison d'être* of the Club is to encourage climbing, and who are never so happy as when they have conquered, if not a new peak, then an old peak by a new route. With the latter my sympathies will always be; and though I am conscious that my wind grows short and my knees stiff, yet I hope the day is far distant when I shall cease to enjoy a good rock climb, if not in person, at least in the account of some more agile mountaineer.

I do not mean to imply that all new climbs are necessarily admirable; far from it. There are many already accomplished that nothing would induce me to repeat, and of which, had I been one of the original party, I would be