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THE EXPEDITION TO ACONCAGUA.

BY EDWARD A. FITZGERALD.

OUR work in South America was almost completely confined to the Argentine Republic. We went direct from London to Buenos Ayres, and then up to Mendoza by rail. Here we procured about twenty pack-mules and some native mule drivers; these we used throughout our work in the Cordilleras; we also bought five horses for riding. From Mendoza we went to Punta de las Vacas, the last station on the Transandine Railway. Here we made several expeditions up the side valleys surrounding Aconcagua, in order to determine the best route by which to attack the mountain. We decided that our best route would be by way of the Horcones valley; accordingly, on December 23, I started up that valley with Zurbriggen, four porters, two horses, and ten mules, to attack the mountain by the N.W. face. We gradually worked our way up, camp by camp, till we founded a bivouac at about 18,700 ft. Here we pitched two tents, and brought up supplies. The altitude of this camp was determined by boiling-point thermometers. The trigonometrical height has not as yet been worked out. I think, however, that it would be safe to say that this computation is correct within 200 or 300 ft. We met with very bad weather here, so, on December 27, we were compelled to turn back, mainly owing to the fact that our apparatus for warming food was deficient. Between December 30 and January 2 I made two attempts, but was obliged to turn back each time, owing to extreme weakness and nausea. On January 5 I returned to the attack, making a fourth attempt on the 14th. This time I reached 22,000 ft. Here I was attacked with severe mountain sickness, and was once more obliged to turn back; however, I sent Zur-

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briggen on, and he reached the summit two hours later, about 5 P.M. Next day we returned to our base camp at the Inca. On January 19 I started up again with Mr. Vines, a porter, a mule driver, and three pack-mules. Zurbriggen was then temporarily disabled by the hardships he had undergone on his previous and successful ascent. We bivouacked at 12,000 ft. that night. On the 20th we went up to our camp at 14,000 ft. Finding all our porters suffering from mountain sickness and severe mental depression, and knowing that our camp was well provisioned at 18,700 ft., Mr. Vines and I started for it alone on the 21st. I was, however, taken ill half-way up, and we both turned back. Next day, the 22nd, we again tried. This time, notwithstanding a tremendous gale, we reached our 18,700 ft. camp. Here Mr. Vines and I passed a miserable night in a small Mummy tent, the minimum temperature being 4° F. On the 23rd we were enveloped in clouds, and in the evening snow fell heavily. We were so completely disabled by these two nights of extreme cold and mountain sickness that we were compelled to return to our main camp at the Inca. On February 7 Mr. Vines and I made a fresh start. On the 8th we reached our 14,000 ft. camp. Here I was again attacked by illness, and it was not until the 10th that we managed to crawl up to our 18,700 ft. camp. The 11th and 12th we spent at that altitude, but as we were gradually getting enfeebled, I thought our only hope was to make an immediate attack on the mountain. Therefore, on the 13th, we started before daybreak for the final climb. We took with us Nicola Lanti, an Italian porter. At a little over 20,000 ft. I was completely disabled by mountain sickness, and had to return, but I sent Mr. Vines and the porter on to complete the ascent. They reached the summit late that afternoon, remaining there one hour, and rejoined me at the 18,700 ft. camp late that night, in an extremely exhausted state. On the 14th we returned to our camp at Inca.

On March 18 Mr. Vines left our 14,000 ft. camp to make the ascent of a high peak some few miles west of Aconcagua. He was accompanied by Joseph and Louis Pollinger. They had a difficult climb, and met with an accident that very nearly proved fatal. It happened thus:—Louis Pollinger was leading, Mr. Vines in the middle, and Joseph Pollinger behind. The leader, thinking he might save a long detour by negotiating a difficult rock-climb ahead of them, made for this nearly perpendicular face; but when the party had got about half-way up, Pollinger found it impossible to proceed

higher. In turning to descend he fell, at the same time dislodging large masses of loose rock, which only just missed falling on Mr. Vines, while he landed on the edge of a very deep precipice, just escaping a jagged pinnacle of ice, which must have killed him had he struck it. He was much shaken, but was able to proceed after a short rest, and they reached the summit at 1 p.m. without further mishap. I estimate the height of this peak at about 19,000 ft., but the calculations have not yet been worked out. The last part of the ascent was difficult and dangerous, owing to the ice cornices. The party got back to the 14,000 ft. camp late that evening. Pollinger was some days before he quite recovered from the effects of his fall.

Mr. Vines and Zurbriggen, Lanti, a mule driver, and three mules left Punta de las Vacas March 27, and reached the foot of Tupungato on the 27th, after 40 miles of very rough riding. They made a base camp at about 10,000 ft. On the 28th they pushed on, and slept under a rock in the open at 14,000 ft. On the 29th Mr. Vines, Zurbriggen, and Lanti started. Lanti returned at 17,000 ft. ill; the others, at 3 p.m., still 2,500 ft. from the summit, were forced to descend. They returned to main camp at Vacas for fresh supplies and more porters. On April 3 the same party, augmented by two porters and more mules and horses, reached the base camp on the evening of the 4th. On the 5th they started for the bivouac at 14,000 ft. On the 6th they made a second attempt, only to be driven back by storms and mountain sickness. On the 8th they made a new bivouac at about 17,000 ft. A hurricane destroyed their tent during the night, and forced them to retreat again. The cold was terrible, the thermometer standing at 5°. On the 11th they again bivouacked at 17,000 ft., and the next day Mr. Vines and Zurbriggen reached the summit at about 4.30. The porters were obliged to turn back ill at about 20,000 ft. The whole party returned to Vacas on the 14th, after nine days of great suffering and exposure. On April 29 Mr. Lightbody and Mr. Philip Gosse, with Lochmatter as porter, made the ascent of the 'Forked Peak,' as we call it, a mountain about 17,000 ft. S.W. of Aconcagua. They started from a camp 18,500 ft. high in the Horcones valley.

Many full plate photographs were taken, also some 60 yards of cycloramic film were exposed. Geological, zoological, and ornithological specimens were collected.

Our party consisted of:—Stuart Vines, A. E. Lightbody,

Alan de Trafford, Philip Gosse, with Mattias Zurbriggen as guide. Also Joseph and Louis Pollinger, Lochmatter, Nicola Lanti and Fritz Weibel as porters, besides several native mule drivers.

Of our climbing and exploration, of which the foregoing, of course, is but the briefest summary, I hope to give an account in a volume to appear in the autumn.

‘PROGRESS’ IN THE ALPS.

BY THE REV. H. B. GEORGE.

(Read before the Alpine Club, December 13, 1897.)

I FEEL that apology is due when a veteran like myself ventures to address the Alpine Club—nay, more than a veteran, for I am no better than a Chelsea pensioner, laid entirely on the shelf so far as mountaineering goes, and perhaps not altogether impervious to the temptation which is understood to beset such respectable old cripples, to

Shoulder his crutch, and show how fields were won.

Still, we who belong to the past have one advantage, perhaps one only, over you who belong to the present. We remember a state of things in the Alps which men, say under thirty, can barely imagine, and can form an estimate of what has been gained and lost by the change. I will say nothing about the greatest difference of all; the necessary loss, so far as the Alps go, of the many-sided pleasure associated with new ascents, of which I personally had but enough thoroughly to realise its charm. I fancy I hear the younger men grinding their teeth with vexation at the thought of what they lost by being born a generation too late, and I will give them no further pretext for tearing me to pieces. No; the changes I am thinking of are those of organisation, so to speak, of the conditions under which life is lived while we are among the mountains. The white peaks and the broken icefalls, the rocky pinnacles and ledges, are what they were forty years ago, though it is certain that the latter at least are now attacked with a skill and audacity which had hardly then dawned on the imagination. The differences are down below, from where huts begin to be found down to the lowest level attainable in the mountain land. And I think they may all be summed up in one phrase—the Alps have become popular. The founders of the Alpine Club rendered a vast service to the youth, not of this country only, but of the whole civilised