THE

ALPINE JOURNAL.

FEBRUARY 1899.

(No. 143.)

Address to the Alpine Club.

By CHARLES PILKINGTON, President.

(Read at the Winter Meeting, December 12, 1898.)

IN the good old days the President of this Club, after he had served his term of three years' hard labour, was allowed to retire gracefully and modestly into the mists of the past, through which, like objects seen amongst the mountain clouds, the former heroes of the Alpine Club loom indistinctly; their rough angles and faults smoothed and softened; their size and importance mysteriously magnified. No account had then to be rendered of the stewardship, nor had any candid statement to be made of the shortcomings of the Club. But, when Charles Edward Mathews was President, that able reformer, instigated by the intrepid originality of Mr. Dent, ordained otherwise, and now you will have to bear with me while I try to lay before you as shortly as possible that which you may already know, and to indicate, however faintly, the paths along which the Club may have to move in the immediate future.

We have lost some of our members during the last three years, as must needs be the case in so large a community; and others, who, though not of us, were closely linked in our memories with many a bold deed and happy hour, have also been called to their rest.

Some have drifted quietly away on the stream of life; others have been snatched suddenly from our midst in all the health and strength of vigorous manhood. Captain Marshall Hall now rests from his labours on the movements of glaciers. He was an enthusiastic lover of the Alps, and threw himself heart and soul into the work of establishing a system of

observations to embrace the whole of the glacial world. Charles Packe, a well-known figure amongst us, a typical Alpine traveller of the old school, has also gone to his rest. Though his knowledge of the Alps was wide, his name will ever be associated with the Pyrenees, for, in the days when huts and stones were often the only shelter to be had, he explored the chain from end to end, and although he was the first traveller to set foot on many of the peaks, he climbed them more for the sake of topography and exploration than of making new expeditions or overcoming a difficult passage. Mr. Cunningham, author of 'The Pioneers of the Alps,' Mr. Hunt, Mr. Holt, and Mr. Stone, all members of over thirty-five years' standing, and two of my well known and well tried friends, Frank Hartley and James Heelis, the latter a member of our Committee at the time of his death, will be seen amongst us no more.

Our greatest loss is that of Mr. E. S. Kennedy, and although many of our younger members may never have seen him, all know that he was the Father of the Alpine Club. He it was who, at the suggestion of Mr. William Mathews, issued the first circular, calling together those who were interested in the Alps, and to him, more perhaps than to any man, we owe the social, friendly spirit which animates our members and has become a distinguishing characteristic of our Club. That brilliant cragsman, Mr. Norman Neruda, once one of our members, was killed under most distressing circumstances on the Fünffingerspitze, the accident being due to sudden illness, and not to any rashness or neglect of precautions. By the death of Mr. Philip Stanley Abbott on Mount Lefroy, America has lost her most enthusiastic climber, and she has our sympathy in this, the first fatal accident that has befallen any member of her newly formed Mountaineering Clubs.

Christian Almer, that prince of guides, who for so many years led the fathers of the Alpine Club to victory, and never to disaster, and who, even in his old age, was able to guide their sons and show them how boldness could be allied with discretion, and that determination and experience were two of the greatest factors in mountaineering success, has made his last ascent. Andreas Anderegg, a worthy son of a well known name, was swept away on a slope apparently safe, and always traversed when the snows of the Jungfrau are soft and deep. Roman Imboden, a good guide, failed, as others have failed, to gauge the size of the Lyskamm Cornice and perished with his party.

I would that these were all the losses we have to mourn,

but this season, for the first time during our tenure of office, the mountains have claimed victims from our ranks.

Mr. Aston Binns, a well known Balliol scholar, a popular master of Sherborne school, and a most energetic member, was killed with his guide, Xaver Imseng, on the Aiguille de Charmoz, and Dr. John Hopkinson, one of our finest rock climbers, with two daughters, and a son who promised soon to be an ornament to our Club, perished on the Petite Dent de Veisivi. You all know what little there is to know of this, the saddest calamity in the annals of climbing, and we all deeply regret the loss his family, this Club and the country has sustained by his premature removal from that world of science which he so much adorned.

And now that we have paid a passing tribute to those who have gone before, we must glance shortly at the record of the Club during the last three years.

We seem to have settled so quietly and comfortably into these new rooms that we almost forget the long stone steps of No. 8. St. Martin's Place, and the dimly lit picture shows of former days.

Strangely enough, some of the early exhibitions in this hall were not so well attended as we expected them to be, and a mistaken idea arose in consequence that Alpine art, or rather the interest of our members in it, was declining. It was also rumoured that with a view to economising the finances of the Club, the Committee tried the experiment of abolishing the necessary tea at the private views, and that this might be one of the causes. If so, we forgot the lesson taught us by the various little buildings along frequented Alpine paths, i.e., that every mountain view is always worth a drink. Be that as it may, the tea and expenditure now flow along the old channels, and the Alpine public will never again be defrauded of their rights.

In the spring of 1896 we had an exhibition of Mr. McCormick's characteristic Caucasian sketches, and in the winter one of photographs and coloured Swiss prints lent by Mr. Gardiner, some of which were unfortunately lost in transmission. In 1897 another representative collection of pictures was shown in the spring, and in the winter one of photographs, including many views of Alaska by S. Sella, illustrating the Duke of Abruzzi's expedition to Mount St. Elias, and a large series of the Canadian Rocky Mountains by Messrs. Collie, Dixon, and G. P. Baker. These exhibitions were all excellent, and this summer Mr. McWhirter and Mr. Alfred Parsons tried the experiment of a two-man exhibition,

the result of which was successful in every way. Not only was the number of visitors extremely large, but their admiration of the pictures took a form satisfactory to the artists.

There has been much discussion lately as to whether it is better to hold our principal show of pictures in the spring, during the London season, when the light is good, or at the time of our winter dinner, when, as one of our ex-presidents would say, 'the Tribes have assembled themselves together from the utmost parts of the earth to the great feast at Jerusalem.' The latter date seems to have gained the day. For this winter we have a second collection of Alpine paintings instead of photographs, and, though these pictures would well have stood the test of the brightest sunlight and the most critical crowd, we must congratulate ourselves that they are on the walls to light up the dulness of these winter days. I am sure our warmest thanks are due to the artists and to the Art Committee of the Club who have worked so hard to make it a success.

There is, however, one branch of art, or, if you are rude and candid, call it industry, which seems to wither under the new conditions. I mean Amateur Drawing. Perhaps the successful advance of photography may be one of the causes, but I believe many are modestly afraid of hanging their drawings in such a room as ours. Perhaps the light may be too good, and the criticism severer than of old, when given after our annual dinner and in the kindly shade of Willis' or the Whitehall rooms.

I do not say that this is a loss to the world, but it is a loss to the Club, for those who draw the peaks for themselves, with many details—far too many, as a rule—and much rubbing and scratching, not only rub the views and architecture of the mountains into their memory, but become, through their own failures, better able to appreciate the work of others, who by long and intelligent study have successfully grappled with the difficulties of mountain drawing and become Alpine artists in every sense of the word. It is to be hoped that this modesty, for which we get so little credit in the daily papers, may not stifle our amateur efforts; and, though it is true that professional and amateur work should not be exhibited side by side, I think a place for amateur attempts might be found at some of our photographic shows.

The literary work of our members during the last three years at one time threatened with financial ruin all those who pride themselves on the completeness of their Alpine libraries;

but there was quality as well as quantity. In 1897 and 1898 we received Professor Bonney's 'Ice-work, Past and Present,' a most valuable and interesting addition to our sources of glacial information; Mr. Whymper's excellent guide-books to Chamonix and Zermatt; Sir Martin Conway's 'Spitsbergen'; Mr. FitzGerald's 'Climbs in the New Zealand Alps'; Mr. Harper's 'Pioneer Work' in the same district; Mr. Weston's 'Mountaineering and Explorations in the Japanese Alps'; 'Sport in the Alps,' by Baillie Grohman; and last, but by no means least, that beautiful book, 'The Exploration of the Caucasus,' by Freshfield and Sella.

Mr. Coolidge's unrivalled knowledge of Alpine literature and his various contributions to it are universally recognised, and this year he has at last been able to give us the first volume of 'Ball's Guide,' and I feel this address would be incomplete if I did not acknowledge, on behalf of the Alpine Club, our indebtedness to him for this splendid guide to the Western Alps, a work to be followed in due time by the second volume, 'Ball's Alpine Guide to the Central Alps,' and it is to be hoped that our younger members will give us some of the financial help required to make this work a fitting memorial to our first president and to our Club, without touching funds required for other purposes.

Amongst the other books presented to us this year, Sir Martin Conway's article on mountaineering in the 'Encyclopedia of Sport' is an excellent and readable summary of the whole subject, with the exception of climbing without guides, and his advice on distant exploration, coming from so successful an explorer, must be of great value.

'The Life of Man in the High Alps,' by Dr. Mosso, is the result of many experiments on this important question; and, lastly, Mr. Mathews has produced his 'History of Mt. Blanc,' written with the completeness of an encyclopedia, and the knowledge to be expected from one of our 'original members.' In it he has reinstated in his proper place Dr. Paccard, whose claims have been somewhat forgotten; with laudable reticence has suppressed his own personality, and has made so excellent a monograph of the mountain that the 'Daily Chronicle,' that most Alpine of papers, need not have arrayed it in so personal a garb.

Our members have shown no lack of mountaineering zeal, except that due to the bad seasons of 1897 and 1896, and this has been amply atoned for by the numerous expeditions made this year during the exceptionally fine months of August and September.

It is almost impossible within the limits of this paper to notice the numerous expeditions made in the Alps, but the traverse of the Pala di S. Martino and the ascent of the Antelao by the Cadore face—two of Messrs. Raynor and Phillimore's many remarkable climbs of the Dolomites, and the ascent of the Aletschhorn from the Mittel Aletsch Glacier over the S.E. ridge by Messrs. Kesteven, Bradby, Wilson and Wicks—seem to me of most general interest.

The Duke of the Abruzzi has proved to us that complete organisation and exhaustive preparation are two of the greatest factors in conquering those higher summits of the earth whose bases even are so difficult of approach. He had means at his command which ordinary climbers do not possess, but this need not discourage our adventurous members, who are generally able to provide themselves with what is usually considered the necessary outfit, and they will do well to study the object lesson in careful preparation and complete organisation that is so strongly set forth in the chronicle of the ascent of Mount St. Elias.

Mr. FitzGerald's successful expedition to the Andes, with the grand first ascent of Aconcagua by Mr. Vines, is the greatest feat of mountaineering achieved in the last three years. The pluck and determination displayed in their many attempts, under great hardships and difficulties, deserves, as it has received, the fullest recognition by the Alpine Club.

Messrs. Collie, Dixon, G. P. Baker, Woolley, and Stutfield have been establishing a new centre of mountaineering in the Canadian Rockies, and apparently would have welcomed there some of the railways and mule paths which grow too freely in Switzerland.

Since Conway's rediscovery of Spitsbergen a side current of Alpine exploration has pushed its way towards the North. Conway and Garwood in Spitsbergen, Woolley, Hastings, and Priestman in the Lofoten Islands, Mrs. Main with the two Imbodens, and Slingsby Hastings and Haskett-Smith in the Lyngenfjord, have all traversed fresh ground. In the Himalayas Captain Bruce, with fourteen Gurkhas from five different battalions, has explored the glaciers of the Nun Kun range east of Kashmir, and made sixteen peak climbs between 16,000 and 19,000 ft., and crossed three passes between 17,000 and 18,000.

And now, at the close of the year, comes a Christmas greeting from the Pacific shore, for we have just heard of Sir Martin Conway's splendid ascent of Illimani, 22,500 ft., and his bold and determined bid for the summit of Sorata, where he was

stopped at an altitude of 23,000 to 24,000 ft. by a huge crevasse which effectually barred the way. But this is not all, for this morning we learn that he has succeeded in making the second ascent of Aconcagua, and is even now on his way to Tierra del Fuego, where we hope fresh conquests will reward his untiring energy.

At the present time a wave of English mountaineering seems to have set towards America; perhaps it is a result, perhaps, indeed, the cause, of that *rapprochement* which has lately sprung up between the two countries; but whichever way the tide sets, towards America or India, to the East or the West, the great question with which we shall be confronted is the rarity of the air. This name may not be a scientific one, but if it is good enough for Mr. Freshfield it is sufficient for this address; it may have many medical names and many symptoms, but the result is always the same. What this evil influence may be, or whether, as is most likely, it is the collective result of many causes, remains for our physiologists to prove; but the thing is there, and ever obtrusively prominent at the height of from 18,000 ft. to 20,000 ft. above the level of the sea. We cannot evade or remove it, we have to fight it. There has already been much discussion as to what is the greatest height to which man can climb; but the question is still in its infancy, and there are so many conditions entering into it that no definite answer can as yet be given. The component parts of the air are not always constant. A gentle breeze helps us to breathe more easily, but it must not be strong enough to impede our movements. The state of the mountain, the temporary condition of the climber on the day of the ascent, the amount of barometers and other instruments carried by the party (in this matter the mètres climbed varying inversely with the mètres carried), and last, but not least, the strength and constitution of the climber himself must all be taken into consideration.

As only about twenty or thirty men, all of them good, but not specially picked or scientifically selected, have ever been above 22,000 ft., and there are some 1,500,000,000 other persons on the face of the earth, it is reasonable to suppose that there are men with constitutions better fitted to resist the rarity of the air than any who have hitherto essayed the task. We do not yet know the best age. Mr. Vines, when speaking of his ascent of Aconcagua, remarked that young men were not best fitted for these exploits. I saw from my post of vantage a glow of hope and renewed youth flush over

faces now surrounded with the snows of many winters, and, doubtless the mighty and historic calves of some of our ex-presidents quivered with the joy of the coming battle, but alas! Mr. Vines's idea of mature manhood was a youth of 30 years.

Twenty-four thousand feet has been given to us as about the limit to which man can climb, but if we could bring the six best men in their best condition to 'the final camp' on a high snow peak of easy gradient, and with the snow in perfect condition, I believe a much greater height could be attained with favourable atmospheric conditions on the morrow. The question is most important, and one which our physiologists and explorers will have to take up in the immediate future. It is a difficult problem, and the Club must give what aid it can towards its successful solution.

We hope that our members will push their way into distant lands, and return with useful and reliable information. To further this end, Mr. G. P. Baker has urged us to gradually acquire a few scientific instruments and camp appliances; we cannot be expected to keep in this building a general store and supply of tents, pots, and sleeping bags, but we could have a few good theodolites or so and other surveying instruments of different sizes, especially some of those more easy and simple to work, which could be lent to members contemplating distant exploration, though I am afraid it might be too much to insist on our Secretary learning their use and undertaking to teach general and scientific surveying to any member who contemplates such a journey.

Another object we might legitimately help in carrying out is the establishment of small ambulance stores (especially suitable litters and slings for various emergencies, not to mention splints, bandages, &c.) at some of the climbing centres, such as Fee, Zermatt, the Riffel, &c. This year at the Montenvers there were no appliances of any kind when they were sorely needed for the accident on the Col du Géant. Surely this is not a creditable state of affairs, though whether the various Alpine Clubs are to blame or not is a matter for consideration. We are glad to see that the efforts of this Club, under the direction of Mr. Dent, in establishing a system of danger signals in the mountains, are now meeting with general approval, and have already been attended with success.

The history of Switzerland during the last three years is merely a chronicle of new mountain railways and hotels, from which radiate mule and foot paths, carrying the bustle

of civilisation into the remotest valleys; faint foot-tracks in some districts, marked by splashes of paint, lead upwards to well-provisioned Alpine huts. From one Tyrolean Hotel, I saw that no less than five differently coloured paths started, and perhaps the passing of the test for colour blindness will soon have become a necessary part of a guide's qualification. All these changes lead to larger gatherings in the higher inns and mountaineering centres, and though attended by many good results, have also brought evils in their train on which the influence of this and other Alpine Clubs might be used with good effect.

By placing the steeper parts of the country and the glaciers themselves within easy reach of a vastly increased crowd of ordinary tourists, the liability of accidents to solitary wanderers is gradually increased. The Eastern Alps abound in *bewirtschaftet* Alpine huts and marked paths, and it is in the Eastern Alps that most of these semi-Alpine accidents occur; thus, the very aids to mountaineering prove a source of danger to the inexperienced traveller. On the Rax Alp alone in 1896, there were twenty-six fatal and eleven other accidents, and this year thirty-one deaths are recorded in the list given in our November 'Journal.'

Crowding often encourages a little theatrical display, sometimes by good climbers, though seldom by members of this Club. It takes many forms; for instance, in starting for a bivouac in the middle of the day, something is left upstairs at the last moment, necessitating a return through the crowd at the front door, from which the climber again makes his exit to overtake the party with the long swinging gait of the mountaineer on his own mountains. On these occasions, your axe should never be handed to a companion, but the passage forced in full fighting trim.

This crowding of the mountains makes it all the more necessary that we should observe the strictest rules of justice and courtesy to our neighbours. A mountaineer is as jealous of some new route or particular expedition as a game-preserving landlord is about the right of way along a favourite covert side.

It is never right to gain knowledge of some projected ascent, and steal it from others; nor should we attach ourselves to, or follow, a stronger party bent on some difficult climb, which otherwise would have been beyond our powers. Nor, indeed, is it courteous to change one's mind at a hut and go with others for an expedition to which we have not been invited. A little racing, where none of those axioms are

interfered with, may be allowed, simply because it is no use trying to prevent it, as long as man is man. Mr. Leslie Stephen condemns the practice as 'an utter abomination' and never to be indulged in; but even he was forced to break the rule in one or two instances; in fact, it is doubtful whether he ever observed it. But it should only be indulged in on easy places, or when no danger to others may be the result. The unsportsmanlike and offensive form it may take, is to allow the front party to do the arduous step-cutting and, when the road is made, to race past and reach the summit first. This Club long ago formulated an unwritten code of Alpine honour, the observance of which is nearly always a distinguishing characteristic of our members, and we must do our best, by example, and even precept if necessary, to induce other mountaineers to work under the same laws.

A little display on the return from a big expedition is to be excused in the novice, and we cannot expect all young men to be absolutely free from a little elation at the sight of a crowd of idlers in front of the inn. Nor do the onlookers object to it, for it is a part of the picture which they expect to have thrown in gratis for their 10 francs a day, and a part of the whole performance; but to sit outside an hotel on an off day in extremely rent and dirty garments which look as if another sense than that of sight might be offended by a nearer approach, especially when other clothes are available, is an unjustifiable and offensive piece of snobbery for which there is no excuse.

How is the character of the Alpine guide influenced by all these changes? History has recorded how he was evolved from the chamois hunter and woodman, how he gradually increased in efficiency till he gained the proud position of the finest climber in the world, and, though he still maintains that position, I am inclined to think that, of the younger generation as a class, though they are a fine, strong set of men, excellent rock climbers, and some of them magnificent cragsmen, only a limited number attain to the highest standard of snowcraft of the old Oberland guide, and that most of them are indifferent icemen.

The causes that have led to this are, to my mind, not far to seek. A great taste has sprung up amongst climbers for sensational rock-climbs, and many young guides find they make most money by remaining at some well known centre, and climbing the same peaks over and over again.

The routes up these fashionable mountains are almost marked out; at any rate, every stone and trickle of water is known

to the man who often makes the ascent. The dangerous places are as well known and obvious as the poison bottles in a chemist's shop. The more difficult passages are hung with ropes and chains, or made easy by iron holdfasts; nay! the very routes themselves are often marked with patches of red paint. What need is there for him to examine the route, or note the places where stones or ice may fall? It has all been decided for him long ago, and he works by rote.

Do not think that I am decrying fine rock climbs; far from that, I confess that they give me the most pleasure, but the way in which they are now often climbed, and their increasing popularity over snow peaks, is detrimental to the education of the guide. And we can well believe that, to some extent, those characteristics, habits of care and keen observation, that were at first thought to be instincts, bred by generations of mountaineering, are becoming less conspicuous amongst the guides.

The numerous accidents that have happened in these three years have raised in some minds the question of the use of the rope on rocks.

The dictum of the Club was given years ago on this point, and we can only endorse it. To say that because a man slips on a certain place and carries others away, the rope should not have been used, is equivalent to saying that lifeboats should not be built because they are occasionally upset. The fact is, we necessarily know of all the accidents, but we do *not* know of those slips when the rope has prevented one, for men do not publish their own mistakes, and it is certain that, were it not for the rope, half the tourists who go up the Matterhorn would not reach the bottom, except in pieces. True, many men go up that peak who have no business there at all, and they would learn more of mountaineering and become safer companions if they practised climbing on less dangerous places unaided by the rope.

We do not lay down cast-iron rules, whose extreme rigidity causes them to be broken, neither do the best guides, for I remember that Melchior Anderegg, that safest and most prudent of men, took me up the Laquin Horn from Saas a few years ago, and never used the rope during the ascent; but on any difficult peak, whether it be snow or rock, the rope should almost always be worn continuously from the time it is put on in the morning, till it is taken off when the easy ground is reached once more at night.

No one has ever questioned the necessity of the rope on snow-covered névé, but apparently it is sometimes thought

that two persons on it are enough for safety. If we believe that this number is insufficient for rocks, how much more, then, must we condemn the practice on snow? The accidents that are constantly happening in the Eastern Alps, so often the result of this practice, confirm our judgment, and ought to impress it on all climbers.

This year, for the first time in my life, I fell completely through the soft snow covering into a deep crevasse. We were a party of four, and had a long rope out, as we were crossing a wide snow-field, every undulation and mark in which was obliterated by the freshly drifted snow of the night before. The difficulty of the situation, had there been only one man above me roped in the usual way, was deeply impressed on my brain, as well as on my ribs; and I urge you all, most emphatically, to avoid a risk which is so obvious and which can be avoided.

If we think this of two, what shall we say to the solitary traveller over snowy glaciers? The argument that he kills only himself is answered by higher laws than those of our Club; but I think, without entering further into the question, we may say that any member of this Club who goes alone on such a glacier, unless it be for some obvious duty, runs the risk of bringing the sport he pretends to honour into dishonour, and commits an offence against the Alpine Club.

There is one form of mountaineering which in past years was spoken of with some hesitation, lest it should be too rashly adopted. I refer to climbing without guides. At first it was thought that a dangerous precedent had been established which might prove disastrous to the Club. Mr. Freshfield spoke so plainly on the subject in his address that I need not give you a sermon on the subject.

On whose shoulders the blame for the innovation ought to fall I cannot tell. Our second President climbed Mont Blanc with Mr. Hudson and the two Mr. Smyths in 1855.

Mr. Ball had often to take the rôle of leading guide, and Mr. Morshead certainly dispensed with professional assistance on more than one occasion; Mr. Girdlestone for many years showed a contempt for danger which some admired but others condemned; and Messrs. Colgrove, Cust, and Cawood ascended the Matterhorn in 1876. But whoever was the first offender, guideless climbing gradually came to be recognised as a necessary evil, and the older members of the Club slowly yielded their assent.

But they only did so with many protests and much good advice, recognising that in this matter we should move

cautiously if we were to ensure safety. They were very wise in the position they took up, and, in justice to those who then climbed without guides, I may truly say that they appreciated the situation, and did their best to emphasise and enforce the advice of the elders. If some few have sinned, we must all admit that the Club at large has shown itself strong in restraint, and able and willing to hear the voice of reason, and that, as a rule, men have not rushed into this form of sport without due training and forethought.

It was at first thought that however good a climber an amateur might become he could never acquire the path-finding power or snow-craft of the good guide.

But we are now faced with the fact that only a few Alpine peasants can acquire these qualities, and that the demand for good guides is larger than the supply.

It is unnecessary to enter into any comparison between amateur and professional climbers; but any youngster who tries to dispense with experienced assistance will find the answer, though he may never learn his craft, nor live long enough to recognise his own shortcomings. But those who wish to learn to make their own way amongst the mountains will find that though the peasant, living in the open air most of his life, can endure hardships and carry loads better than any amateur, he has few other advantages over the trained Englishman.

The habit of observation, the faculty of finding the way, even if the route has only been seen years ago, though very difficult to acquire late in life, can be acquired by anyone with what is called a decent head for locality who begins to learn while he is young, and always takes the trouble to observe, and I can see no reason why a youth so trained, and having the advantage of map and compass, should not in time equal the best guides in this respect.

The knowledge required to avoid dangers, and to become a good judge of snow, can be learned *far* more quickly, perhaps in four or five years of careful training under a good guide; but though the amateur may become as competent a judge as most professionals, he can never quite acquire in this matter of snow-craft the touch of the greatest masters of the craft. I believe that it is in the direction of path-finding and snow-craft that the energies of the individual clubman should be turned; for if the highest summits of the world are to be climbed, the way will lie amongst unknown mountains, and up vast slopes of ice and snow, and we look to our younger

British climbers to maintain the Club in the position it now holds in the mountaineering world.

Those who at first undertook the responsibility of the guideless movement were generously trusted by the Club. From what I have seen I have every confidence that our younger members will also deserve our trust and act prudently and wisely in the future; that the dangers of the mountains will always be most fully recognised; that they will ever strive to follow the true laws and precepts of mountaineering, and will never forfeit by rash acts or careless omission that trust and confidence of the Alpine Club which cost their predecessors so many years of hard and careful work to obtain.

I am afraid this has been somewhat of a sermon after all; but these things were on my mind, and I felt constrained to speak of them on this the last occasion on which I can address you from the chair. When you elected me your President three years ago I accepted the honour with much reluctance, feeling that I was hardly equal to the task. My feelings remain the same on this point, and had it not been for your kindness and ready help I should have been unable to carry out my duties. As it is my work is done, and I would my part of it had been better done; but at any rate that of my colleagues will bear the closest examination, and it deserves your best thanks. I can hardly express my own gratitude to my brother officers for the way in which they have all pulled together, and for their steadfast kindness to me in every way.

At home I had your Vice-President, Mr. Gardiner, and your ex-President, Mr. Walker, to consult with, but for a man living in Lancashire it is somewhat difficult to keep in touch with the Club in London, the centre of all Alpine information. The ever-ready and unselfish help of Dr. Savage and Dr. Wills, the kind advice and hospitality of Mr. Dent, and the constant work of Mr. Freshfield, prevented this pressing too heavily on me. As I gratefully accepted so now I gratefully acknowledge their kindness to me, and their services to the Club. And now let my last official act in this room be, to thank you all for your support and help, which has made a hard task a pleasant duty, and which, by bringing us so closely together, has, at any rate for me, cemented old friendships and created new ones, and made my future life the more happy and valuable by the remembrance of three years' generous and unbroken comradeship.