

THE ALPINE JOURNAL.

FEBRUARY 1902.

(No. 155.)

AN ADDRESS TO THE ALPINE CLUB.

BY THE RIGHT HON. JAMES BRYCE, PRESIDENT.

(Delivered at the Winter Meeting, December 18, 1901.)

TO-NIGHT I come to the duty of addressing the Club for the last time as President. It is a duty not untinged by sadness, because the occupancy of the chair has been to me full of enjoyment, since it has brought me into a closer contact than I ever had before with many members of the Club, has enabled me to renew old friendships and to make new ones, has given me many evenings spent in listening to papers and discussing subjects which bring freshly back the delights of old days among the mountains. I shall look back upon my term of office not only with unmixed pleasure, but with gratitude for the unvarying kindness I have received from all the members.

Regarding the history of the Club during the past three years I have but little to say. It has been a placid and uneventful history, as we are told the history of happy communities ought to be. Our numbers steadily increase and indeed make it less and less easy to provide accommodation for all who desire to be present and to bring a guest to the annual winter dinner. The attendance at our ordinary meetings is steadily maintained. Our picture exhibitions have by universal consent proved eminently successful, and have given pleasure to many of our friends who are not themselves members of the Club. We are under great obligations both to the Exhibition Committee and on the present occasion in particular to Mr. East and to Mr. McCormick for the services they have rendered in this department of the Club's activity. As regards income our pecuniary position is one which the finance ministers of most European States

might envy ; and our expenditure is conducted with an equal regard, to use the time-honoured phrase, to economy and to efficiency. Certainly no criticisms are ever passed upon it.

Among the members whom we have lost during the past year there are three of whom a few words must be said. Mr. William Mathews was not only an original member of the Club, and a former President ; he was also one of its founders, and did much for its success in its early years. So long as he retained the health and vigour of his earlier manhood, he was an ardent and skilful climber, and he always cherished the warmest love for Nature and the mountains. He was also an accomplished naturalist, a man of many tastes and interests, and no one inspired a more sincere regard as well as respect in those who knew him either in business or in social life. Though of late years he had seldom been able to attend our meetings his name remained familiar to us, and his departure is sincerely mourned. Mr. Charles Halford Hawkins also belonged to the older generation, and had not often been seen among us of late years either in the Alps or here ; but he was an enthusiastic mountaineer and a man of personal charm. Lastly I have to mention Mr. Viriamu Jones, Principal of University College, Cardiff. He was not known to most of us as a climber, nor is his name associated with any conspicuous exploits. But he is an excellent example of a fact which has often struck me, and has doubtless struck you all—the attraction which mountaineering has for men of remarkable capacity and intellectual force in very diverse lines of life. Principal Jones had dedicated his life to Wales and to the advancement of higher education there. By his energy and zeal and tact, and by the charm of his singularly earnest and elevated character, he had made the Cardiff College a centre of light and leading for the Welsh people. His early death is a loss to Wales which is probably irreparable for our generation ; and those of us here who knew him feel, even in the midst of our grief, a certain pleasure in remembering that such a man belonged to our fraternity and came under the spell of the mountains.

An event unprecedented in our annals which has this year occurred ought not to pass without mention. One of our honorary members has become President of the United States. Those of us who know Mr. Theodore Roosevelt know that he possesses in an eminent degree qualities which, as we like to think, belong to the character of the mountain climber—dauntless courage, untiring energy, the spirit of good fellow-

ship, and a steadfast loyalty to his friends. They are qualities which will prove helpful to him in discharging the duties of a post whose occupant may rank with the Pope and the Czar as being one of the few whose personal volitions may affect the great movements of the world. Mr. Roosevelt prizes highly his membership of the Club, and has written us a letter of cordial greeting, which I will read at our dinner to-morrow.

Regarding the Alpine accidents of this year, in none of which did any of our members suffer, there is little to say beyond the old remark that hardly one of them was due to unpredictable dangers. This is certainly true of the most serious mishap, that which befel on the south side of the Matterhorn. If a list were to be made of all the accidents that have occurred in the Alps during the last fifty years, the enormous majority would prove to be cases in which some ordinary and obvious precaution had been neglected. Either the party were unequal to the difficulties of the expedition or had one or two 'weak links' in their chain, or they had no proper guides. Or it may be that a man went alone, in lightness of heart, where he ought to have had company—it is in this way, I think, that most of us have run our greatest risks—or, perhaps, the climbers ventured into couloirs too late in the day, or passed across places swept by avalanches; or they failed to use the rope where hidden crevasses might have been looked for; or they had omitted to use such means as might have been used for learning the topography of the region, or they had taken insufficient supplies of food, or had in some way or other neglected what we all know to be the essential conditions of safety and success. Few, indeed, are the instances in which competent climbers have perished through that sort of rashness which the uninstructed public commonly charges upon us; and these instances may almost be reduced to those, of which we can all recall some few, in which experienced climbers have knowingly taken the risk of venturing into admittedly perilous spots, or have, in the ardour natural to an adventurous spirit, persisted with a difficult ascent in bad weather. In other words, one may say that no pursuit is really less dangerous than mountaineering, so long as courage and skill are accompanied by care and by a reasonable measure of prudence.

It used to be one of the most interesting and pleasant parts of a presidential review of the work of the Club to recount the new expeditions which had illustrated the three preceding years. But this has now become no easy matter so far

as Europe is concerned, for nearly everything that there was to do in the Alps and the Pyrenees has been done ; while even in Norway there remain few peaks unscaled save some of those savage pinnacles in the Lofoten Isles and along the Arctic coast on which Messrs. Slingsby, Woolley, Hastings, Priestman, and in the present summer Dr. Norman Collie also, have been expending their tireless energies. It is chiefly to the extra-European world and to the ranges of North and South America, Asia, and Africa, that we must turn for records of mountaineering exploration and adventure. During the last three years much has been achieved in all these regions. Several of our own best men, and a few of our American brethren, have opened up the valleys and ice-fields of the Canadian Rockies. Sir Martin Conway has ascended Illimani, and found the way up Sorata, besides exploring the remarkable glacier region of Tierra del Fuego. Mr. Mackinder has reached the summit of Mount Kenya in equatorial Africa, while Mr. Moore and others have explored the Ruwenzori group. Dr. Sven Hedin, one of our honorary members, has pursued his course of brilliant discovery in the lofty plateaux of Central Asia, and while Mr. and Mrs. Bullock-Workman have been doing good work in the north-western Himalayas, a party led by Mr. Douglas Freshfield has performed one of the most remarkable feats of recent years in penetrating through Sikkim to the north-east base of Kanchinjinga, and crossing into Nepal over the very lofty snow-ridge which connects that magnificent peak with the great Tibetan tableland to the N. Nor must I forget the achievement of the Duke of the Abruzzi and his Italian party, who have been the first to reach the summit of Mount St. Elias, and who have discovered that there lie beyond it to the N. and N.W. other masses even more elevated, among which we must seek the culminating point of the North American continent.

The mention of these explorations suggests the reflection— it is a melancholy reflection even to those senior members who are not likely to be any longer able to undertake arduous expeditions themselves—that the field for mountaineers is beginning to show signs of exhaustion. Let us consider what remains for the climbers of the next thirty or forty years. In South America some among the Greater Andes have not yet been ascended, but the rest of the southern hemisphere offers little, for Australia has no high mountains, and those of New Zealand and Hawaii have been pretty completely dealt with. Africa shows us only the Ruwenzori peaks and possibilities, not very promising, in the region that lies between

Lake Rudolf and the Red Sea. In Central Asia and the Himalayas there is doubtless much room both for exploration and for climbing; but it may still be some time before the political obstacles which close against travellers Nepal and Bhotan and the wild country east of Bhotan towards China can be removed. In North America, besides that far northern region in Alaska and within the adjoining British territory to which I have just referred, we have that part of the Canadian Rockies which lies along and to the north of the line of the Canadian Pacific Railway, where there are still a great many virgin peaks and unattempted passes. The rest of North America promises but little. In Oregon and Washington the highest peaks have been climbed. The mountains of Colorado, Utah, Nevada, and California, though many of them rise above 14,000 ft., and though they contain in their valleys some superb scenery, are not of great value to the climber, for they have extremely little snow and (unless we are to except Shasta) no glaciers; not to add that they nearly all rise from plateaux so elevated as to deprive them of much grandeur of aspect. Still further S., in Mexico, one finds still loftier summits. But, having just returned from that country, I am sorry to report that there is little work for the climber to do there. The three great snow-peaks have been ascended. The crater of one of them is used as a sulphur mine, and of the other two one only (Ixtaccihuatl) presents any difficulty. Mexico is well worth visiting, for it is full of interest to the geologist, the botanist, and the ethnologist; but the chief contribution I can make to the special interest which the Club feels in it as a field for adventure is to give you the correct pronunciation, in which I was instructed by a venerable Indian magnate who occupies the distinguished post of governor of Tlaxcala, of the names of Pōpōcātēpetl and Ixtaccihuatl.

The still not wholly exhausted fields I have described in Asia and North America may seem sufficient to provide occupation for climbers for as long as any of us here present are likely to be in climbing trim. But it must be remembered how few can avail ourselves of them. They are so far away that men whose vacation is limited to two months would have to spend at least half that time in going and returning. The journeys are costly. To explore in wild regions where there are no made roads, and probably even no tracks for horses, may require a pretty large body of porters, and makes progress slow. There are many other difficulties little present to the minds of those who know Europe only—difficulties of climate, difficulties in penetrating dense forests,

difficulties with natives. Sometimes, as in equatorial Africa and Sikkim, both of the two former obstacles are present, though in Africa the climate is even more formidable than the forests, while in Sikkim, as in Western Canada, the forests are more formidable than the climate. Native enemies are now not often dangerous, for fear of the white man has in most countries possessed the dark man's soul; yet the native is sometimes lazy, sometimes timid, sometimes thievish, sometimes gifted with a happy mixture and harmonious adjustment of all these qualities. So, taking it all in all, the path of the explorer in Asia, Africa, and America is not an easy one. It is not for that reason the less, but rather the more attractive, but the obstacles enumerated make it essential to have not only health, strength, and the love of adventure, but also plenty of time and plenty of money. Now, as all the world knows, we of the Alpine Club, like all tribes that have dwelt in mountain countries, are poor men, and indeed, following the ancient philosophers, we attribute to our poverty some of the virtues which adorn the character of the mountaineer, and enable him to spurn the luxury of those dwellers in the plains whom he has so often conquered. To few among us, therefore, is there a prospect open of undertaking these distant and expensive expeditions, and we envy the men of fifty years ago before whom the Alps and Pyrenees stood almost as little known as are to-day the Himalayas of Kumaon and Nepal.

These reflections open another problem which has pressed upon our present and our late Secretary in the form of the question, How are papers to be got? and upon recent Presidents in the still wider question, What is to be the ultimate future of the Club? Wherewithal shall we slake our thirst for novelty when the process of exhausting Europe has been absolutely completed, and the more accessible parts even of Asia and America have become familiar, if not to our eyes, yet to our minds?

This problem was discussed by Sir Martin Conway and Mr. Freshfield in two interesting papers submitted to the Club nearly a year ago. It was therein suggested that the Club should take for itself the position which no other institution in England fills, of a central authority on the whole subject of mountain exploration, as well as mountain-climbing, that it should accumulate information on all branches of this subject, should keep a stock of mountain maps, should be prepared to issue instructions to explorers, should record all progress made, should in fact endeavour to be for the science of

'mountain knowledge' (if one may use the term) what the Royal Gardens at Kew are for botanical science and what the Royal Geographical Society is for geography in general. This idea seems to deserve careful consideration. It opens up a wider field for the energies of the Club. It is in accord with our traditions and with the record of our recent action, which has tended to spread itself further and further beyond the bounds of Europe. Nor would it involve any departure from the principles on which the Club was founded or from the habits we have formed. It would, indeed, be necessary, in order to provide an income adequate for the larger scope of work we should be undertaking, that our membership should be increased. But this need not go so far as to make us depart from the principle of requiring proof of special qualifications for membership. You would not, I am persuaded, be disposed for the sake of larger pecuniary resources to abandon the requirement of a standard of knowledge or skill or interest in mountaineering beyond what is possessed by the ordinary tourist who visits the Alps. You could not wish that we should sink to the level of the societies which admit members on the payment of so many guineas. We should, indeed, were we to do that, lose the special authority which we may without vanity now claim for the Club in its own sphere, and which is due to the fact that it consists of men entitled to speak with the weight of actual experience. Should some traveller, for instance, tell the public that he ascended an ice slope 1,500 ft. high, let us say on Bogda Oola, at an angle of 51° in 35 min. with the aid of an umbrella only, such a statement would contain nothing surprising to the ordinary educated man—let us say, to a member of the Borough Council of St. George's, Hanover Square, or of the House of Commons—but there would be found in the Club persons qualified to appreciate the achievement and to provide the public with proper data for judging of it. Nor must we forget that we exist not merely for the cultivation of a particular branch of knowledge and skill, but also as a Fraternity, united by our common love of a pursuit, our common enjoyment of a pleasure which has a magic power of binding kindred spirits into a social organism. But these principles and these habits which we value as among our best traditions, do not seem incompatible with the plan suggested; and I hope that plan will not be forgotten.

It has sometimes occurred to me that the Club might usefully take action in another direction by endeavouring to secure the provision—I do not say, 'to provide,' for we

have no funds for the purpose—of high mountain quarters in the Central and Western Alps similar to those useful little mountain inns which, under the modest title of huts, have been provided by the German-Austrian-Alpine-Union in the Eastern Alps, and which enable the climber to enjoy days or weeks of delightful quiet close to the ice world, out of the way of the tourist crowd which now swarms over the Alps up to 6,000 or 7,000 ft. Though we could not ourselves build such inns as the Leipziger Hütte, at the head of Val di Genova, or the Düsseldorfer Hütte, above Sulden, we might, perhaps, by assuring English support, induce enterprising Swiss or Italians to build them in many places where no such quarters can now be had. However this is merely a notion which I throw out in passing, for its practicability would require a longer inquiry than I can now give it.

Returning to Sir Martin Conway's scheme for providing abundance of work for the Club when there will be no new expeditions to be made or discussed in the well-explored parts of Europe and America, let me add one more word. Whatever our sympathy with that scheme, we must all feel that it has been, and is, a sufficient function for the Alpine Club that it has brought us and still brings us, and will, as I trust, long continue to bring us together to talk over in congenial company the enjoyments we have had among the mountains, and to plan fresh expeditions from which we may expect a renewal of such enjoyments. Some of us now have to dwell chiefly in the past; others can still look forward to a long and active future. The pleasure of mountaineering is compounded of many elements. There is the strenuous putting forth of one's physical powers, with the consciousness of vital energy which the exertion of those powers evokes. There is also the exertion of skill, and how much skill does not the climber need who has to judge of the condition of the snow, of the character and structure of the rocks, of the prospects of the weather, of the capacities of each member of the party, of the comparative merits of various possible routes? There is the sense of danger, which, although a sensible man will not allow it to become unduly prominent, does seem to thrill the nerves and to stimulate all one's forces to their highest point of efficiency. There is the sense of companionship, and the sympathy which arises from and strengthens the feeling of reciprocal reliance—a feeling unlike that rivalry which is the note of most of our games, and one which touches deeper springs of emotion. And, finally, there is the delight of getting close to Nature, to Nature in those of her aspects which have been and can be

least spoiled by the intrusive hand of man. To many of us this circumambient wildness and solitude, this sense of coming back to the primal simplicity of the earth, before man had spread himself out over it and had begun to efface its original character, is one of the keenest joys and most entrancing charms of the high mountains. Our globe is becoming so crowded—I might almost say so suburban—that one feels inclined to envy primitive man with his chipped flints and obsidian lance-heads, for he had at least plenty of elbow room. Fifty years ago the population of the world used to be computed at eight hundred millions. Statisticians have now raised it to fourteen or fifteen hundred millions; but, be there a few hundred millions more or less, mankind is increasing at an alarming rate, and there will soon be little more than standing-room in the more level and better watered or better coal-supplied parts of this little planet. The change is one which, speaking strictly for myself, and not desiring to commit any one here to unprogressive ideas, speaking, in fact, as a person of old-fashioned conservative tendencies, I see with slender satisfaction. I am not sure if I am one of those who desire to make two ears of corn grow where one grew before, if that means that there will be two mouths instead of one to eat the corn. I do not wish to see Egyptian temples submerged for the sake of increasing the number of fellahin, unless it is clear that the fellahin are going to have a much better time in the future than they have had in the past. I did not rejoice to see the Fall of Foyers blotted out of nature in order that an aluminium company should have larger dividends, nor should I rejoice to hear that half the water had been drained away from the cliff of Niagara even for the sake of giving cheaper electric power to all the cities within one hundred miles of Buffalo. The great capitalists who most directly benefit from these large enterprises need receive little sympathy from this gathering of persons with limited incomes—for who ever heard of a millionaire member of the Alpine Club? It may, indeed, be doubted whether we ought to desire an increase in the sum total of human beings until we are more certain whether that means an increase in the sum total of human happiness. Let us do our best to give peace, comfort, and pleasure to those who are already here on the earth; and, since among the truest sources of pleasure we reckon the love of Nature, let us have Nature no more spoiled than some absolute necessity prescribes.

When we think on the future of the Club another thought

suggests itself. Will the love of mountaineering endure ? Will men a century or two hence enjoy those aspects of grandeur and loveliness in mountain scenery which we enjoy ? and, if so, will they seek to know them as we know them, by overcoming difficulty or encountering danger in scaling the crags and traversing the snowfields ? To this present generation it may seem extraordinary that a taste or passion now so strong should some day vanish. But things that have had a beginning may have an end. Taste changes in a way which no one ever has foreseen or ever can foresee. There was a time not so long ago when men preferred the style of architecture of which we have an example at our doors in the church of St. George's, Hanover Square, to the style of Westminster Abbey, and when they preferred the pictures of Carlo Dolci to those of Ridolfo Ghirlandajo. The taste for climbing is not a century old : and the admiration for grand and savage Alpine scenery not so very much older. Now and then in days long past some one ascended a mountain, like one of the lieutenants of Hernando Cortes, to get sulphur, or, like Petrarch, to moralise on the shortness of human life. But the vast mass of mankind never thought of so wasting their energies. Yet surely cultivated minds had as keen a sense of natural beauty as any modern can have, and many of them could depict natural beauty at least as well. Homer singled out Neriton waving with leaves as the characteristic feature of Ithaca ; Virgil delighted in the shadows that fell from the great peaks across the Lake of Garda and the plain as fully as we do ; Dante marked and described the tremendous rockfall in the Adige valley, at which we still wonder. Of the great masters of landscape in the sixteenth and the seventeenth century I need not speak. But neither in these poets and painters nor in their contemporaries did a mountain view inspire any wish to climb the mountain. So it is possible that in the future men will be content, like Gibbon and Rousseau, to gaze up at the great snow peaks from trellised arbours on the shores of Lake Lemman, or will resort to Arolla and Sexten only for the sake of the invigorating air.

It is possible. Everything passes, everything changes—even the mountains themselves. Everything is possible in the long future which seems still to lie before the human race. But in one reflection we may rest content and grateful. No future generation will find any pleasure more pure or more intense than that which we, in this our short and fleeting span of life, have drawn from the days and nights we have spent among

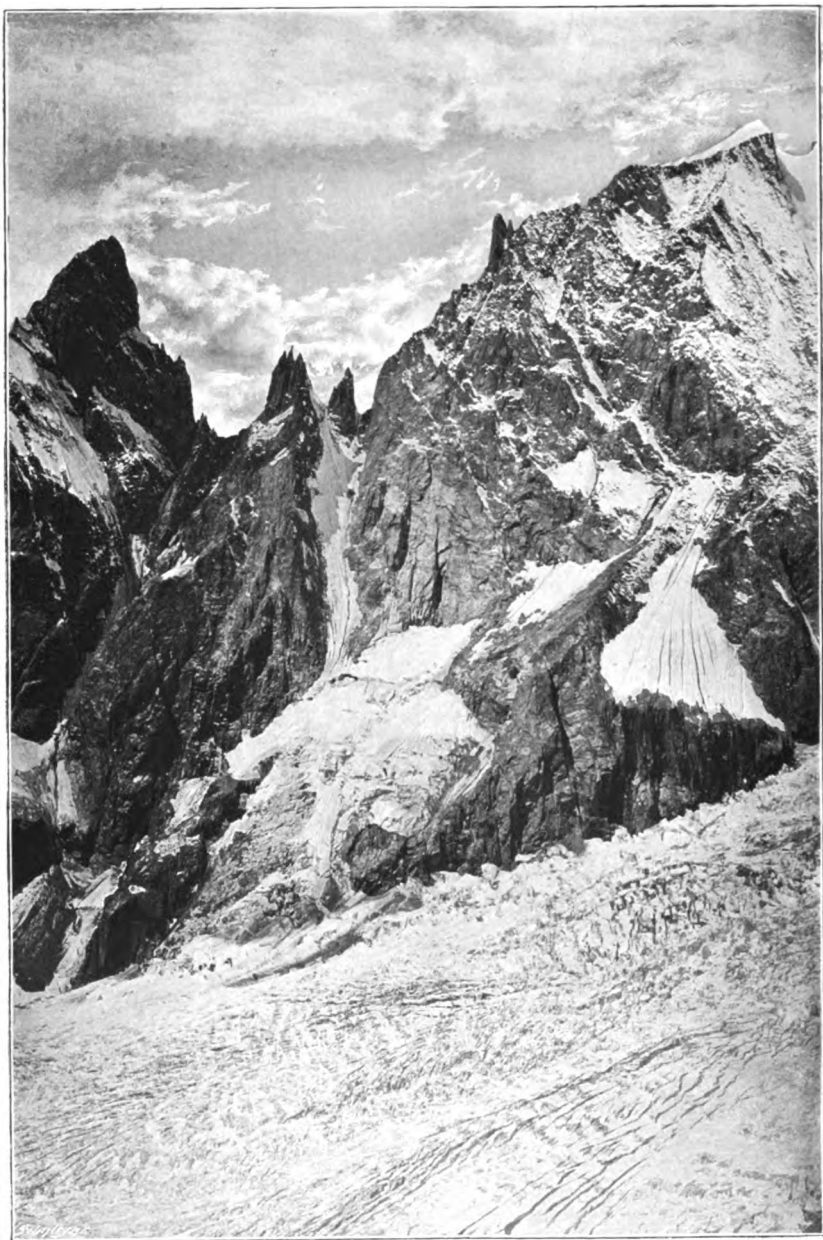


Photo by A. Holmes.]

LES DAMES ANGLAISES.

[Swan Electric Engraving Co.]

the mountains, with the silence of the snowfields around us and the waterfalls faintly calling from the valleys beneath, in the solemn presence of Nature.

FIRST ASCENT OF THE 'PUNTA JOLANDA' OF THE
DAMES ANGLAISES (3,604 m.).

By H.R.H. THE DUKE OF THE ABRUZZI.

THE ridge running from the Aiguille Blanche to the Aiguille Noire de Péteret forms two needle points in its most sunken part. The second point is subdivided at the top into four pinnacles, three of which are separated by not very deep gaps, and situated on a line with the ridge, whereas the fourth, which is separated from the rest by a deeper gap, lies on the side overlooking the Brenva Glacier. The part of the mountain including all these peaks is called 'Dames Anglaises,' its highest summit being the second pinnacle, starting from the Aiguille Noire.

The ascent, considered to be impossible and full of danger by the famous guide, Emile Rey, was attempted in August 1899 by Messrs. Adolf Hess and Oscar Leitz, members of the Italian Alpine Club, accompanied by the guide Lorenzo Croux. They encamped, the first time, on the rock shooting out abruptly near the Brenva Glacier, at the foot of the Dames, and returning on the side sloping down from them to the said glacier. They did not succeed in attaining the top, and stopped within 40 m. below. Their ascent was made on the side overlooking the Brenva Glacier as far as the pass between the Aiguille Noire and the Dames; then in the last portion they turned round to the side overlooking the Fresnay Glacier.

Happening to be this year at the Rifugio Torino, on the Col du Géant, with the said guide, Messrs. Hess and Leitz's attempt was spoken of, and Croux, replying to my queries, declared that there was no danger of stone avalanches, and that it would be safe to bivouac, before ascending, on the same spot where Messrs. Hess and Leitz had slept on their return. The uncertain weather and the new snow on the high mountains prevented our undertaking other ascents, and I, feeling much attracted towards these pointed summits, and reassured by Croux's reply, determined to attack them.

On August 6 last I set out with four guides and five porters. The night was very clear, without wind. Twenty nailed boots sounded on the stones of Courmayeur, and we