

ENGLISH BRANCH OF THE LEAGUE FOR THE PRESERVATION OF SWISS SCENERY.

THE ANNUAL MEETING was held at the Society of Arts, on October 21, under the Presidency of Sir MARTIN CONWAY, when an audience of about three hundred filled the hall. The following brief summary of the speeches will once more make clear that the English branch exists not to attempt interference in Swiss affairs, but solely to express English sympathy with the aims of the ' Vereinigung für Heimatschutz ' and to refute the assertion that schemes of desecration are desired by tourists and are necessary to attract them; that, in the words of a Swiss patriot ' it is for you English that these things are done.'

The CHAIRMAN moved the adoption of the report, accounts, and rules for the election of the Committee, and urged the preservation of natural beauty as essential to a country's well-being and prosperity. It was the greed of man that was the greatest enemy of the beauty of the world, and if this prevailed, it would drive holiday travellers to seek Alpine beauty in other countries. The Ligue was a Swiss movement, and English people were only doing what they could to support it and to further its objects.

Mr. HERMANN WOOLLEY, President of the Alpine Club, said that it was the extravagance of the schemes that were being put forward that removed his doubt as to the expediency of an English branch to support the Ligue by the evidence of English public opinion. So far from its being true that Switzerland could never be spoilt, that the ' puny work of man did not diminish the grandeur of the mountains,' everyone who was able to appreciate the beauty of the Alps must deplore the injury that had been done already, for instance, on the Kleine Scheideck. Yet he would be tolerant of such railways as that to the Schynige Platte, which made a glorious view accessible to even the least vigorous, provided that only one such railway was made in each locality. It was the multiplication of such lines in the same district which was injurious and unnecessary. On the other hand, railways and lifts up the High Alps were without any justification whatever. Most of his fellow-travellers on the trip which in the spirit of inquiry he undertook this summer on the Jungfrau Railway soon showed that they preferred snowballing and the pleasures of the buffet to views of the scenery, and he did not believe that they would care to repeat the journey. The audience present that evening proved that it was not mountaineers alone who objected to such schemes, but, as a mountaineer and the representative of mountaineers, he felt very grateful for the help which the English branch was trying to render to the Swiss Ligue.

Lord MONKSWELL dwelt on the higher motives of the Swiss in opposing the desecration of the mountains, not as a matter of pecuniary interest, immediate or remote, but because they were

inspired by a love of their beautiful land for its own sake, and it was to this principle that appeal should be made.

The Dean of NORWICH proposed the following resolution:— 'That this meeting of friends of Switzerland learns with great satisfaction the large measure of support which has been accorded to the petition against the mutilation and desecration of the Matterhorn, and congratulates the Ligue on the very warm response of the Swiss people to its appeal for the preservation of the sublimity of the High Alps.' Like every other speaker who referred to mountain railways, the Dean was careful to distinguish between those which served as means of communication, placing the splendours of the Alps within reach of thousands who could not otherwise enjoy them, and speculative schemes which desecrate the High Alps and glaciers themselves. The Matterhorn Railway was an outrageous example of the latter type. It would not only mutilate the mountain but destroy the summit.

Mr. DOUGLAS FRESHFIELD, in seconding the resolution, dealt with the criticisms of certain press-writers, and said that English people had not been wanting in efforts to preserve British scenery—for instance, earnest endeavours had been made by prominent members of the Alpine Club to save Snowdon. English and Swiss scenery alike was threatened by the inroad of vulgar architecture, in the form of hideous villas in England, and of barrack-like hotels in the Alps. Some objectors might say, 'Would you fight against the age, against the results of the growth of population, the better distribution of wealth and the development of the means of travel?' No, but we would direct the tide. Houses and hotels need not be hideous, and the Swiss Ligue was doing good service in striving to resuscitate a national architecture for modern uses. But the preservation of the mountains themselves was an even more necessary and important work. It had been unjustly said that the aims of the English branch represented the selfishness of the few and were opposed to the interest of the many. This was untrue, for large districts had already been sacrificed to those who preferred to rush through the noblest scenery in a railway train. He admitted that such persons should be allowed opportunities of gratifying their tastes within limits, but not that they should be given a monopoly of the Alps, or be allowed to spoil the enjoyment of everybody else. As well might some newspaper demand that all theatres should be turned into music halls, and every park into a bear-garden. With 64,000 signatures against the violation of the Matterhorn, the Swiss had proved that they did not mean to be penny-wise and pound-foolish, and to allow their country to be turned into a series of merry-go-rounds and flip-flaps.

Mr. RICHARD WHITEING also spoke.

A vote of thanks to the Chairman was proposed by Mr. G. DIMIER, ex-President of the City Swiss Club, and seconded by Mr. J. EBERLI. Mr. J. W. WESTERN then showed a series of beautiful and much appreciated lantern views of Switzerland.

N.B.—It is hoped that this summary will be of use in enabling

Members of the English branch to correct misconceptions and to gain fresh adherents. The Hon. Secretary will be glad to supply copies on receipt of a post card addressed Burton Bank, Mill Hill, N.W.

CORRESPONDENCE.

‘FIVE YEARS WITH RECRUITS.’

A DISCLAIMER.

WE, the undersigned members of the Alpine Club, desire to place on record that we disclaim responsibility for any encouragement which the publication of Mr. Irving's paper may give to expeditions undertaken after the manner therein described:—

G. W. PROTHERO.

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CLAUD SCHUSTER.

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TOM G. LONGSTAFF.

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EDW. A. BROOME.

W. E. DAVIDSON.

A. W. LLOYD.

GEORGE L. STEWART.

SYDNEY SPENCER.

DOUGLAS W. FRESHFIELD.

The College, Winchester : February 4.

To the Hon. Secretary of the Alpine Club.

DEAR SIR,—I should like to express my gratitude for the courtesy which permitted me to see Mr. Prothero's communication before my paper went to press.

When Mr. Yeld offered to have it printed in the ‘Alpine Journal’ I accepted willingly, and I can see no reason whatever for altering my decision. At the same time I should like to add my name to the list of gentlemen who ‘disclaim responsibility for any encouragement which the publication of my paper may give to expeditions undertaken after the manner therein described.’ I regret very much the lengths to which the discussion has been carried. The reasons for my choosing such a subject were, firstly, that it was a controversial one; secondly, that the method of my climbing was the only aspect of it that appeared to be either novel or adventurous. My paper is a record of my climbs, and the impressions I have received from them during the last five years, and therefore seems to me very legitimate material for the ‘Journal.’ In no sense whatever do I wish to pose as a general advocate of my methods. But, while admitting the greatest respect for the opinion of the climbers whose names accompany Mr. Prothero's protest, I maintain that the risks attached to climbing, whether with novices or with experienced men, can only be correctly estimated by an accurate knowledge of the ground covered, of the conditions prevailing at the time, and, above all, of the capabilities of the