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ADDRESS TO THE ALPINE CLUB.

By HERMANN WOOLLEY, President.

(Read at the Winter Meeting, December 5, 1910.)

FOR three years it has been my privilege, in presiding at our meetings, to have the pleasure of listening to a series of excellent papers, contributed by my fellow-members, in the happy consciousness of my own exemption from any obligation to appear at the reading-desk ; but this evening the period of immunity ceases and the triennial summons must be obeyed. The time has arrived when your President must bid you farewell and observe the time-honoured custom of reviewing the chief events of interest that have occurred during his term of office.

About this time three years ago the Alpine Club had arrived at a most important stage in its history ; we were in the midst of the Jubilee celebrations. Old records were unfolded, old exploits were recalled, old faces, long unseen and almost unknown to our younger members, reappeared ; we had a brilliant address full of delightful reminiscences from my able predecessor, and the historic banquet in Lincoln's Inn Hall will be remembered by those who were present as the most impressive and interesting occasion in their experience of the Club's existence.

But the echoes of the Jubilee celebration had scarcely died away before we were reminded that it is an inevitable consequence of the Club's attainment of the age of half a century that we must part, from time to time, with one of the veterans

to whom it owes some of the brightest pages of its early history. On the first day of my first year of office we lost one of our oldest and most popular members, Horace Walker, our twelfth President; although not an original member he might well have been one, as he began his remarkably long and brilliant climbing career four years before the Club was established.

Among other veterans whose names have disappeared from the roll were Dr. Hornby, Provost of Eton, who during the 'sixties made a number of first ascents in the Alps, including the only recorded ascent from the N.W. of the Silberhorn; and Count Russell of Killough, the enthusiastic explorer of the Pyrenees, to whose memory a monument is now being erected at Gavarnie under the auspices of the Club Alpin Français. Both these gentlemen became members in 1864.*

Of those who joined the Club in the 'seventies we have parted with two old friends whom we were always glad to see in this room: Sir Henry Bergne and Henry Pasteur, a former Vice-President; also Dr. Chas. Taylor, Master of St. John's, Cambridge, who took part in the memorable first ascent of the E. face of Monte Rosa; and Sir Maurice Holzmann, a former Vice-President, in his younger days an ardent explorer of the Dolomites, and always keenly interested in the Alps and mountaineering.

I have also to mention the name of one who entered our ranks at a later date: Arthur John Butler, Editor of the 'Alpine Journal' from 1890 till 1898, and a most devoted friend to the Club. It was characteristic of his earnestness and courage that, in spite of failing strength, he worked at his book 'The Forerunners of Dante' till the last, and completed it only twelve days before his death.

Three years ago, the Bishop of Bristol had the satisfaction of congratulating you on the fact that, for four years, not one of our members had met with a fatal accident. I deeply regret not to be able to make a similarly cheerful report, since two of our younger members have lost their lives, in one case during a perfectly feasible winter expedition in the Alps, in the other case—probably owing to sudden indisposition—on the crags of North Wales. Each of these distressing accidents happened, as all accidents are wont to happen, at a moment when least expected.

* The death of the Rev. H. B. George, who joined the Club in 1861, occurred on December 15, 1910.

Looking beyond our own immediate circle, the German-Austrian Club has lost the veteran Paul Grohmann, the last survivor of the three founders of the Austrian Alpenverein, and one of the earliest explorers of the Eastern Alps; while the Italian Club has been deprived of its President, Comm. Antonio Grober, who had held that office for no less than nineteen years.

No one who has been a regular visitor to the Alps can hear, without a feeling of peculiar sadness, that a well-remembered guide has dropped out of the ranks, and it is evidence of the strong attachment that grows between those accustomed to climb together that the death of a good guide invariably calls forth expressions of sincere sorrow and warm appreciation either at our meetings or in the pages of the Journal. During the last three years several well-known pioneers of the Alps have passed away: Peter Dangl of Sulden; the octogenarian Heinrich Elmer of Elm; Giovanni Siorpaës, of Dolomite fame; Daniel Maquignaz, foremost among Italian guides; the ever cheery and enterprising Alois Pollinger; and, lastly, a great career was brought to a sad conclusion when Alexander Burgener fell a victim to the Bergli avalanche.

Having referred to these losses—but briefly, since they with others have been more fully dealt with elsewhere—I may pass to a more cheerful side of my subject. When my predecessor resigned the chair, he left the Club in a most flourishing condition; we may, I believe, safely say that this position has been fully maintained. Our numbers have increased at about the average rate of previous years, the attendance at the general meetings has been most gratifying, and although last February 17 was the fiftieth anniversary of that memorable occasion when the members of the Alpine Club assembled to listen to their first account of a new ascent, there has been no difficulty in obtaining a satisfactory supply of interesting papers. Our financial condition not only relieves our Honorary Secretary of all economic anxieties, but also allows us to make some provision for the contingency of our eventually outgrowing or being evicted (*absit omen!*) from this convenient abode.

We have had the pleasure of adding to our list three new Honorary Members: Dr. Paul Güssfeldt, in recognition of his services to mountaineering and mountain literature; Dr. M. A. Stein, on account of his valuable explorations in Central Asia; and Mr. Arthur O. Wheeler, the explorer and surveyor of the Canadian Rockies and Selkirks and founder of the Alpine

Club of Canada, whose enthusiastic efforts to excite greater interest in the mountains of the Dominion have so soon borne excellent fruit.

I may here allude to certain events that have afforded us the deepest gratification. Our ninth President, Dr. Bonney, whose name has been on our list of members for fifty-one years, has this year had the distinction of presiding over the British Association; and no one will be more able to appreciate the views on ice-sculpture expressed in Dr. Bonney's interesting address than his fellow-mountaineers with their unequalled opportunities of observing the work that glaciers are doing to-day and that they have done in the past. During my tenure of office, also, the University of Bern has signified its estimation of Mr. Coolidge's many works on Swiss history and the Swiss Alps by conferring on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Philosophy; and Dr. T. G. Longstaff's important exploration work in the Himalaya and Tibet has earned the Gill Memorial of the Royal Geographical Society.

One other event is also worthy of a place in our chronicle. It is a subject for congratulation to the whole English-speaking race that our highly-esteemed member, the British Ambassador at Washington, has virtually completed his splendid work of clearing away all contentious issues between the United States and Great Britain. When we reflect on the harmonious relations now established between the two countries, we may remember with no small pleasure that two of our members have contributed in a large measure to this satisfactory result: our Honorary Member, Theodore Roosevelt, and our former President, James Bryce.

In looking back on the mountaineering work of the Club, it is unnecessary to enumerate the new expeditions in the Alps; the record in the pages of the 'Alpine Journal' plainly reflects the activity and enterprise of our members. The list, which would have been still longer but for the exceptional prevalence of unfavourable weather, naturally consists chiefly of new routes or variations, with a few first traverses and only an occasional first ascent; but it shows that ingenious climbers have not yet come to the end of their resources.

When we hear that the pursuit of novelty has driven Mr. Broome and Dr. Corning on to the forbidding W. face of the Rosengarten Rotwand, we may be inclined to shake our heads and say 'The sands are running out; the end is near'; but when, a fortnight later, Mr. Withers surprises the climbing world by discovering a new pass between the Argentière and

Talèfre glaciers, our hopes revive ; and on learning later still that our Editor has been building cairns on hitherto unscaled summits of 10,000 and 11,000 feet in the Eastern Graians, we feel that there is still fruit on the old tree. The Oberland, the Pennine and Mt. Blanc ranges, the Bernina, Bregaglia and Silvretta groups, and the more distant Dolomites, have all been laid under contribution, and in each district success has rewarded the faithful.

It may be safely said that at no time in our history has climbing without guides been more popular than at present. In days of yore the words 'guideless climbing' have often been the prelude to a note of warning ; but a glance over the names associated with recent guideless expeditions suggests that the time-honoured admonition may now be withheld. I believe, moreover, that we all, young and old, fully recognise that experience, judgment, and moderation are indispensable qualifications for this fascinating form of mountaineering.

Some of the guideless expeditions in the Alps have been new, many brilliant, and there has been a gratifying absence of regrettable incidents. Specially noteworthy were the ascents of the E. ridge of the Dent Blanche and of the E. face of Monte Rosa by Messrs. Ling and Raeburn ; nor was their expedition on the Aiguille Verte less creditable to them, when they found themselves unexpectedly and involuntarily officiating as honorary guides to an ambitious but unskilful stranger, and loyally discharged their share of the one-sided and perilous engagement. Two of our guideless climbers, Messrs. Ouston and Jones, have explored the recesses of long neglected Corsica ; in Norway, Mr. C. W. Patchell has helped to dispose of some unclimbed summits in the miniature Norse Oberland, Söndmøre ; and this summer Mr. Rubenson and his companions have scaled several exceedingly difficult rock peaks within the Arctic circle, including that singular caprice of Nature the smooth and naked Stedtind.

Turning to the Club's record in extra-European countries, we remark, in addition to some interesting expeditions made in New Zealand by Mr. C. A. Macdonald, the discovery by Mr. M. L. Earle of a new route up Mt. Sefton, a summit that had not been revisited since the first ascent in 1895.

In 1909, seven of our number accepted the generous invitation of the Alpine Club of Canada to be the guests of that Club at the summer camp at Lake O'Hara in the Canadian Rockies, where they were most hospitably entertained by the President, Mr. A. O. Wheeler, and his fellow-members. The

visit was most successful and enjoyable, and, to the uninitiated of the party, formed a delightful introduction to the attractions of a region that is destined to be a most important mountaineering resort in the future.

This year we have been well represented in three different sections of the range, and are able to congratulate Dr. Longstaff on finding a second route up the Canadian Matterhorn, Mount Assiniboine, Mr. J. E. Eaton on his new expeditions in the Freshfield group, and Professor Collie and Mr. Mumm not only on their discovery and ascents of new peaks to the N. of Mt. Robson, but also on their important topographical work on the head waters of the Smoky and Stony rivers and in the unmapped and unknown country N. and N.W. of Jasper House.

The 'Abode of Snow' has engaged the attention of our members in an exceptional degree. Last spring Mr. C. F. Meade visited the Garhwal Himalaya and succeeded in making the first ascent of one of the twin peaks of Balbala (ca. 21,000 ft.); but it is to the Karakoram that we must look for the most important mountaineering results. This chapter of Himalayan exploration opened in 1908, when our indefatigable member Dr. W. H. Workman, with Mrs. Workman, spent five weeks on the Hispar Glacier, obtaining a detailed survey of its tributary ice-streams, and making a careful investigation of glacial structure and surface-forms.

The particulars of the expedition of H.R.H. the Duke of the Abruzzi in 1909 will be fresh in your memories, as it is but a few weeks since we had the pleasure of hearing from Dr. F. De Filippi one of the most interesting papers ever read before the Club, and of seeing the marvellously beautiful views taken by the prince of mountain-photographers, Cav. Vittorio Sella.

Not the least interesting point in the narrative is the fact that the ascent of the Bride Peak was arrested at the record height of 24,580 feet, not by any diminution of physical powers, but by bad weather and the dangerous state of the snow; and among other important results was the discovery that Sir M. Conway's Broad Peak has the surprising height of 27,133 feet. The experiences of this party fully confirm the impression conveyed by the accounts of the previous expeditions to this part of the Karakoram: that the higher peaks are extremely difficult and that the period of weather suitable for climbing is very short. We are left with slender hope that the summit of K2 will be attained by ordinary mountaineering methods.

While the Duke of the Abruzzi was making mountaineering history on the Baltoro glacier, Dr. Longstaff and Dr. A. Neve with Lieut. Slingsby were similarly engaged thirty or forty miles to the S.E. The discovery of the Saltero pass led to the more important discovery of the upper basin of the Siachen glacier. It enabled Dr. Longstaff to correct the position of the watershed between India and Central Asia, and to add to the map not only the greatest glacier in the Himalaya but also a new peak, Teram-Kangri, which there is good reason to believe ranks sixth in height among the mountains of the world, if it does not take a still higher place.

This most interesting piece of exploration is a striking example of what can be accomplished by mountaineers even without professional assistance, and it is gratifying to learn that the Indian authorities, recognising the importance of Dr. Longstaff's discovery, intend to have the height of Teram-Kangri accurately determined.

The literary activity of our members has, as usual, been devoted mainly to mountain travel, exploration, topography and history; there has been no attempt to provide thrilling tales of adventure with pictures of sensational climbing episodes; the general public is fairly well supplied from other sources with this class of literature:

‘The moving accident is not *our* trade;
To freeze the blood *we* have no ready arts.’

In the first place we have had another instance of Dr. Coolidge's extraordinary industry and minute knowledge of the Alps in his surprisingly comprehensive ‘The Alps in Nature and History.’ Mountaineering and travel in Central Africa have yielded material for Dr. F. De Filippi's excellent history of the Duke of the Abruzzi's brilliantly successful Ruwenzori expedition, and also for Dr. A. F. Wollaston's exceedingly interesting ‘From Ruwenzori to the Congo.’

The list of important works on Himalayan and Tibetan exploration includes Sir Sven Hedin's ‘Trans-Himalaya,’ and Dr. and Mrs. Workman's three books: ‘Ice-bound Heights of Mustagh,’ ‘Peaks and Glaciers of Nun Kun,’ and ‘The Call of the Snowy Hispar.’ Sir Francis Younghusband, in addition to his ‘India and Tibet,’ has given us a delightful volume on Kashmir; Mr. A. L. Mumm's admirably written ‘Five Months in the Himalaya’ is devoted mainly to the narrative of the expedition of 1907 to Garhwal; and Major Bruce's ‘Twenty Years in the Himalaya’ presents a most

attractive and graphic description of his numerous journeys in several different sections of the great range from Chitral to Sikkim.

We have received welcome additions to the Climbers' Guides series in the form of six new volumes from the pens of Dr. Coolidge, Dr. Dübi and Captain E. L. Strutt; and among other useful handbooks for climbers are those to North Wales by Messrs. Thomson and Andrews, and 'The Arolla Guide' by Mr. W. Larden, who has also pleasantly recorded his Alpine experiences in 'Recollections of an Old Mountaineer.'

Lastly I must mention the important paper by Professor E. J. Garwood on 'Features of Alpine Scenery due to Glacial Protection,' printed in the 'Geographical Journal' of September last. Its appearance aptly coincided with that of Dr. Bonney's address at Sheffield, and it deals very lucidly and convincingly with a subject peculiarly interesting to ourselves: the disputed question as to the erosive power of ice.

At one period of our history fears were not unnaturally entertained that as the Alps became completely explored, when every peak had been climbed and every pass crossed, the 'Alpine Journal' would decline in interest and importance from lack of material. The contrary has really been the case. As the tale of its years increases and as its line of volumes lengthens on our shelves, the more valuable and even indispensable to us does the 'Journal' become. During the last three years its level of excellence has been worthily maintained, and Mr. Yeld, whose loyal services have placed the Club under so great a debt of gratitude, may well look with satisfaction on the fruits of the fifteen years of his editorship.

For several years the labour of conducting the 'Journal' has tended to become more exacting in consequence of the steady development of mountaineering and the ceaseless growth of the literature of climbing clubs, and in these circumstances the committee decided, last year, to appoint an Assistant Editor. We had in our Senior Vice-President a gentleman eminently qualified by his intimate acquaintance with the Alps and Alpine literature to undertake the duties; fortunately for the Club, Captain Farrar was able to accept the appointment, and his assistance is invaluable to the Editor.

We must, however, recognise that our 'Journal' has developed a disquieting tendency to bulkiness. Latterly, each successive volume has increased in size by about forty pages, and if this rate of expansion continues your committee may sooner or

later have to consider the expediency of issuing an annual instead of a biennial volume.

The winter exhibitions of Alpine paintings and drawings held in this hall have proved as attractive as ever; and on the present occasion we are indebted to Mr. C. W. Nettleton for undertaking the management. Two exhibitions held in 1909 also deserve special notice: Mr. S. Spencer's experiment of showing a selection from the photographic work of the last ten years or so was signally successful, and the series of Alpine prints and engravings arranged by Mr. G. Ellis was, by common consent, the most interesting collection of its kind ever hung on our walls.

The success of our general meetings has already been mentioned. Just a word about the informal meetings that were inaugurated four years ago. These social evenings owe much of their success to Mr. C. H. Wollaston's useful work in organising the preliminary attraction of the 'Blenheim' dinner, and have well fulfilled their original purpose of enabling our members to meet each other more frequently. It is to be hoped that, without in any way losing their informal character, they may continue to gain in importance and popularity.

You will probably agree that the foregoing review—however hurried and imperfect—indicates that the Club has entered on the second half-century of its existence with undiminished spirit and vigour; it may be of interest to consider the directions in which its energies may be put forth in the future. Nine years ago Mr. Bryce, in the course of his valedictory address, summed up the various mountain groups, outside the Alps, in which the enterprising climber might still find new peaks to conquer. The result of this survey was not specially encouraging to the man of average means and leisure, and since that time serious inroads have been made on Mr. Bryce's list. By the end of 1907 Ruwenzori had been explored and its highest peaks climbed; between twenty and thirty additional first ascents had been made in the Central and Western Caucasus and a similar number in the Canadian Rockies and Selkirks; the list of unclimbed summits in Norway had also been considerably reduced, and among other countries where virgin peaks had been ascended were Bolivia, Bokhara, Japan and even Iceland.

During the last three years the work of conquest has continued. Mount Erebus has fallen to Professor David and his companions of Sir E. Shackleton's Antarctic expedition, and the N. Peak of Huascaran in Peru to an American lady,

Miss A. Peck ; Mount Robson, the highest known summit of the Canadian Rockies, has been climbed by Rev. George Kinney of the Alpine Club of Canada ; and, unless there is an error as to identity, four Alaskan miners have succeeded in ascending Mount McKinley.

Attention has recently been called to two mountainous countries which still offer an untrodden field for enterprise : Northern Abyssinia with summits estimated to reach 15,000 feet, and the region near Lake Van in Kurdistan whose snowy peaks are described as being nearly as high. The former may possibly tempt the exploring mountaineer, but in the case of the latter difficulties of access and transport seem to present serious obstacles, and the same may be said in a greater or less degree of South America, Central Asia, and New Guinea. As for that exclusive state Nepal and the Tibetan borderland, their lofty peaks are still ' out of bounds,' and, for mountaineering purposes, might just as usefully adorn the recently discovered ranges on the Antarctic continent.

At the present time, therefore, the most attractive fields to which we may look are the Caucasus, Canadian Rockies, and Selkirks, and, for those who are able to travel so far, the Himalayan chain west of Nepal. In the Central Caucasus alone there are still at least forty unclimbed summits of from 13,000 to over 15,000 feet, and he who visits the great glaciers and snowy peaks on the north side of the chain, or camps amid the lovely birchwoods of Suanetia, will feel that which cannot be described in words : the mysterious charm that has led so many mountaineers to repeat their journeys to that magnificent range.

The southern section of the Canadian Rockies has by no means yielded up all its secrets, and the new transcontinental railway will soon give access to a great unexplored area to the north, and to the still little-known mountains to the south of the Yellowhead pass. Indeed, if, since 1901, the number of unclimbed peaks has been greatly reduced in the more accessible section of the range, this diminution has been more than counterbalanced by the discovery of additional and equally attractive mountaineering areas farther afield. In the Selkirks even less exploration has been done than in the Rockies, and in both ranges there is the same want of reliable maps. Those mountaineers who will continue Professor Collie's valuable work by adding to or filling gaps in his map of 1902 will be justly entitled to the gratitude of future climbers. But apart from the fascination of exploring new ground and climbing new peaks, the Canadian Rockies and Selkirks will, for years

to come, offer the attractions of a vast mountain region free from the unwelcome but inevitable accessories of a great tourist-industry.

Within the last nine years a considerable amount of exploration work has been accomplished in the Himalaya ; a number of peaks of from 19,000 to nearly 24,000 feet have been climbed, and one party—admittedly a very strong one, excellently equipped and admirably led—have attained a height of nearly 24,600 feet without reaching the limit of their powers.

It has taken, then, twenty-six years to raise the altitude record by 600 or 700 feet. How much higher will it be possible to ascend ? Those who have climbed at great elevations are not unanimous on the question, but the majority appear to be of opinion that diminished atmospheric pressure will not be the most serious obstacle, and that the greatest elevations can be attained, provided that no special technical difficulties are encountered. Whether any of the higher mountains, approachable on British territory, fulfil the desired conditions remains to be ascertained. The problem is exceedingly interesting, but we may have to wait a long time for its solution. In the meanwhile there should be sufficient material available for experimental purposes, as we are told by Col. S. G. Burrard that the Himalaya has no less than seventy-five summits which attain or exceed a height of 24,000 feet.

About a year ago a review of our Journal in a Continental periodical contained the following remark :—‘ One receives more and more the impression that the Alps have become to the Alpine Club only a training-ground for other unknown mountains, and that they no longer occupy the first place of interest.’ This comment can hardly apply to the majority of our members ; there are many who have the desire but not the opportunities of visiting the remote ranges we have been considering ; there are many, also, whose fidelity to the old playground is too deeply rooted to be shaken by the dismal phrase ‘ exhaustion of the Alps.’ To the mountain-lover the Alps can never be exhausted. The more we are able to see of that wonderful zone of mountains extending from the Mediterranean to Vienna, the more we are charmed by its infinite variety and the more clearly we realise that life is too short to exhaust its wealth of interest and attraction. It is true that some of the old climbing centres have lost much of their former charm, owing to the ruling passion for multiplying mountain railways and for appropriating the most beautiful situations for the erection of huge and often unlovely hotels.

Fortunately the great tourist stream rolls along well-defined channels, still leaving many sweet solitudes where the lover of Nature may worship in peace.

And now, my last pleasant duty, before leaving the chair, is to thank all my fellow members for the kindness and consideration always extended to me during my term of office. My gratitude is specially due to the past Presidents and older members for welcome and helpful advice, ever willingly given, and to the Vice-Presidents and other colleagues for their hearty co-operation in the work of the Club. Lastly, I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to the two successive Honorary Secretaries with whom it has been my good fortune to be associated. It has been obvious to me that, when the President resides at some distance from London, much additional correspondence and work must, at times, fall to the share of the Honorary Secretaries, and I cannot be too grateful to Mr. Bradby and to Mr. Withers for their unvarying patience, sympathy, and cordial support.

As long as we have members equally ready to work loyally for the common good, and as long as the present active interest in mountaineering exists, we may look forward with confidence to the continued prosperity of the Alpine Club.

SOME EXPERIENCES ACROSS THE OBERLAND IN 1910.

By J. W. WYATT.

THE climbing season of 1910 will long be remembered as one of the worst and most unsatisfactory ever known, both for persistent unsettled weather and for the troublesome condition of rocks and snow.

Throughout the months of July, August, and the greater part of September the Clerk of the Weather rang the changes, with scarcely any intermission, between snow-storms, rain, thunderstorms and heavy floods, and probably the larger number of climbing expeditions consisted in the ascent, which we all know so well, to a hut for the night and a return to the valley the next morning more or less disgusted and wet.

There is nothing new or sensational in these notes; all the ground we went over is well known and well trodden, but some of our experiences during a short holiday may be of