

Readers of Eugène Rambert's 'Ascensions et Flâneries' will remember his charming description of the Salanfe basin, and how he pictures the gradual evolution of the alp from the glacial epoch. He continues: 'It has gazed upon the past. If, towards the end of June, before the herds arrive, you walk at evening on the wonderful turf, hitherto untouched, while twilight prevents you from seeing the chalets, and you can hear nothing but the murmur of innumerable streams, that, hurtling down through the ages, pursue their eternal labours on the farther side of the moraine, you can imagine yourself transported to that period of time when the plain, first rising above the waters, was adorned with its primeval verdure; and the silence of the alp is as that intense quiet, which preceded the coming of man upon earth.'

Perhaps I have now said enough to rouse fresh interest in the glances which may be thrown at the Dents du Midi when next you cross the Lake of Geneva by boat, or round the head of it by train; but I have taken this particular mountain as the chief *motif* of my theme, as much out of the sheer affection I have for what an old guide of mine contemptuously called 'ein Kuhberg,' as to bear witness, with all the energy that in me lies, against the heresy recently advanced, within the walls of the Club, that a certain mountain was 'worth climbing, *if only* for the view'!

## CLIMBING AND LONGEVITY.

BY W. W. NAISMITH.

**N**OTWITHSTANDING an ill-informed popular notion that mountaineering is dangerous, most Alpine Clubmen are probably convinced that their favourite pastime is conducive not only to health and happiness but also to long life.

Evidence in support of this conviction may be welcome, and the lists of Alpine Club members who died during the three years since the armistice—1919, 1920, and 1921—supply some information on the subject.

They record 50 deaths of members, who lived no less than  $35\frac{1}{2}$  years each on an average after joining the Club, or 1782 years of aggregate membership. I exclude a member killed on active service in 1919, but include one who perished in the Himalaya 10 years after his election.

At what age did the 50 deceased members join the Alpine Club? The obituary notices in the Journal state the ages in the case of 16 members, and if we isolate these from the rest, we find that they joined the Club at an average age of 37, and lived 32 years afterwards. As the Institute of Actuaries (Healthy Male) Mortality Table gives only 29.6 years of expectation of life to a man of 37, there was an average gain of about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years on each of these 16 lives.

Taking the whole 50 members, however, it is clear that, with an increased average survivorship of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  years over the above 16 members, we are warranted in assuming a somewhat younger age at entry for the others; and so we shall likely not be far wrong in taking 35 as the average age of entry for all our deceased comrades. Now, the expectation of life of a man of 35 by the h.m. table is exactly 31 years, so that there has been apparently an average *saving of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  years* on the individual life, or about 232 years of usefulness (let us hope) on the whole 50 lives.

It would, of course, be wrong to say that when anyone is admitted to the Alpine Club he adds  $4\frac{1}{2}$  years to his life, but at any rate the conclusion is justified that mountain climbing, begun in youth and continued up to and even sometimes beyond middle-age, is an exceptionally healthy pursuit, and one that, humanly speaking, tends to longevity.

Some Insurance Companies discourage proposals for accident insurance from mountaineering devotees, but the above figures, so far as they go, seem to establish the fact that Alpine Clubmen are specially good subjects for life assurance, although distinctly hazardous risks as annuitants!

The Scottish Mountaineering Club has not existed long enough to furnish any mortality experience of value, but one circumstance is worth mentioning in that connection. In 1904 a commutation scheme for life membership, based on the general expectation of life, was started and largely taken advantage of. The next 10 years proved the life members to be so unreasonably tenacious of their club privileges, that not a single death had occurred among them! The result was that, in order to prevent the threatened exhaustion of the commutation fund, it was found necessary to revise the scale of future payments.