

THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN CLUB.—The Americans are about to follow the example of the principal European nations and to found an 'Alpine Club' of their own under the above title. We do not know why the Rocky Mountains rather than the Sierra Nevada, have been chosen to give a name to the new body. But its object is to explore and open up both the great ranges of the North American continent. It is desired by its founders that the Rocky Mountain Club should be brought into close connection with the parent Alpine Club, and they will be most happy to receive the names of any A. C.'s who, as a mark of sympathy, or with the hope of travelling among American mountains, are willing to join their body. The seat of the Club is Philadelphia. Among its promoters are Messrs. Cyrus Field, Bayard Taylor, Bierstadt, and Dr. Hayden. The annual subscription is 1*l*. Names may be sent to Dr. Appleton, 'Academy' office, 43 Wellington Street, Strand.

ALPINE DANGERS.

The following letters have been received:—

EDGBASTON: *January 17, 1876.*

SIR,—The remarks of Mr. Leslie Stephen on 'Alpine dangers' in the last number of the 'Journal' will justly have great weight. Will you, therefore, as he has strangely misconceived the drift of my paper on the Col des Grandes Jorasses, favour me by inserting this letter in reply.

My argument was just this: The few remaining new expeditions involved more difficulty and more risk—if such a term can properly be applied to Alpine ascents—than those which had already been done. The policy of the Club in regard to this residuum of 'agenda' was not to refuse advice, since our past history had robbed us of the right of silence. Nor should we counsel the eschewing of further expeditions since we should damp the ardour of our younger members, and forego our fair share in the credit of successful achievement. But it was our duty to control a stream that we could not stem, and when prudence gave the club no future then we had only one thing before us—'Euthanasia.'

The gist of Mr. Stephen's criticisms can be pretty much thrown into one sentence. He says, 'Is a man justified in exposing himself and his guides for six hours to incessant falls of stones in order to effect a new passage?' I explained that our only danger from this source was of *our own making*. It was only the stones loosened by us that struck us and carried away our axes. Our real peril was the return journey, if we failed to get to the top.

Mr. Stephen asks what I think is adequate for the risk encountered. I reply at once, novelty. This confessedly stimulates the savant, the inventor, the poet, the artist, the traveller, and why not also the man who climbs? Am I going too far in saying that every adventure which has been deemed worthy of record in the 'Journal' has been prompted by this feeling alone?

I am at a loss to understand on what ground Mr. Stephen credits

me with the remark that 'if we don't run risks now we can't make new expeditions, as the earlier members of the club used to do.* I never dreamt of instituting a comparison between the exploits of the later and of the earlier members of the club. They worked a virgin soil, we labour on a ground that is well nigh used up, of which there is scarce a feature which has not lost its freshness by the fair 'wear and tear' of the honest pedestrian, or by the odious defilement of the 'tourist,' whose passport to the mountain is perchance an abominable coupon.

Mr. Stephen calls in question my opinion that if the club has nothing fresh to do it ought to dissolve. I need hardly say I stick to my opinion. The grand field of adventure, the unexplored Alps, called our club into existence. It has ever since lived on adventure, and when this is taken from it, and there is left nothing new to be explored, the club will, like everything else in life that has fulfilled its mission, die, and give place to some fresh form of human endeavour.

Mr. Stephen's last paragraph contains a mere verbal criticism. He does not like the mountains being spoken of as things to be 'done.' I must confess I like the word as much as he hates it. Perhaps the reason is that my Alpine life is nearly made up of meagre 'agenda,' whilst his is a magnificent budget of 'acta.'

Now that I have commented seriatim on Mr. Stephen's strictures, I may add in conclusion that, with the view to satisfy myself of the soundness of my opinions, I have fortified myself by a reference to the acknowledged authorities upon Alpine matters. In the June number (1866) of the 'Journal' I find in an article on 'Alpine Dangers,' by the then president, the following apposite remarks:—'The danger from falling stones, on the other hand, appears to me to be greatly exaggerated. A shower of stones coming down a mountain side impresses us in the same way as a shower of bullets in a battle-field. We cannot help exaggerating their numbers until we come to inspect the lists of killed and wounded. I was once exposed for two hours to such a cannonade, and was surprised to observe the facility with which they missed me. I was equally surprised at another fact, one of the said stones at length struck me on the leg, and I discovered the momentum to be as much below my expectation as the frequency of the missiles. I believe that, as a rule, it will be found that the mountain artillery is by no means so effective as we naturally fancy.' These sentiments are healthy, they are also cheerful. Does Mr. Stephen recollect them? However much he may preach endaimonistic doctrines, and thus make shipwreck of the Stoical mountaineer's faith, Mr. Stephen has written himself too indelibly as one of the most daring of Alpine adventurers to make it possible for us ever to regard him in any other light.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

THOMAS MIDDLEMORE.

* Mr. Stephen had sufficient ground in the following passage:—'The question is just this: nearly all the best things in the Alps have been done. What remains is stiff and possibly risky. How then shall we deal with this residuum? . . . The advice of dissuasion cannot be justified' (p. 231).—EDITOR.

SIR,—Mr. Middlemore might have continued his quotation for two sentences further, he would then have included these words: 'I, of course, do not intend to hint that either this or any other danger should not be avoided by every possible precaution.' My whole article was in favour of caution.

I am glad, however, of the opportunity of saying explicitly that my opinion has been changed by experience since I wrote the passage in question. I now think falling stones more dangerous than I did, for I have known men killed by them. I may add that I omitted this part of my article when republishing most of it in the 'Playground of Europe.'

The question, however, between Mr. Middlemore and myself was not (as I understood it), whether certain places were dangerous, but whether, after conclusive proofs that they were dangerous, they ought to be tried.—Yours, &c.,

LESLIE STEPHEN.

[We are very glad to give Mr. Middlemore full opportunity to explain his opinions, although we must confess that after careful comparison of his last letter with his former article, and Mr. L. Stephen's comments thereon, we cannot see any single point in which he can justly complain of having been misunderstood or misquoted.]

The continuation of the correspondence has, however, had this good effect; that as to the difference between the principles of the old school of climbers, and those of Mr. Middlemore—who, for the sake of climbers in general, we sincerely trust does not represent any new school—there can no longer be any mistake.

His principle Mr. Middlemore has restated in cold blood and with perfect plainness. He holds that the personal gratification obtained by some mountaineers from 'doing a new thing,' is a good and sufficient reason for knowingly and wilfully putting three or four lives in imminent peril, and disregarding the misery their loss must cause. This he names, with some humour, 'the Stoical mountaineer's faith.'

We hold, with Mr. L. Stephen, that a man may do in the Alps all that to the best of his own and his guides' judgment he believes he can do safely. This we assert to be the principle hitherto upheld by the Alpine Club, and generally acted on by Alpine clubmen. That their judgment has often been wrong, or that they have now and then forgotten their principles, and by one or the other means been brought into peril, is nothing to the point in the present discussion.

Mr. Middlemore is of course at liberty to amuse himself by setting up any theory he likes as to what ought to be the *raison d'être* of our Alpine Club. But until his theory has supplanted in the minds of a majority of our members that which they at present hold it is premature to argue upon any action, suicidal or otherwise, it might logically involve.

In so far, however, as he has asserted that our founders looked on the Alps solely as a field for adventure, we must meet the imputation on their intelligence with an unqualified denial. Does Mr. Middlemore really believe that men like Professors Forbes and Tyndall, Mr. Wills, Mr. Ball, Mr. W. Matthews or Mr. Tuckett, would have given for a day the sanction of their names to such a clubbing together

of monomaniacs as he has imagined? A reference to the preface to the first number of this Journal, or to any other volume in alpine literature, would have shown that his fellow-clubmen take a wider view of their relations to mountains than that into which his argument has for the moment betrayed him.

Happily for ourselves and for posterity the love of the Alps has its root in cravings other and higher than that which Mr. Middlemore is at present alone disposed to recognise. As an expression of these cravings it will endure when all passion for novelty has been taken from it; and, while it endures, the body to which we belong will scarcely consent to commit suicide at the bidding of a prophet who has confessed himself so little of a seer. But if the day ever comes when the mountains are looked on by our members simply as 'acta' and 'agenda,' when a 'feeling for novelty alone' inspires the feats recorded in these pages, the Alpine Club will deserve, and more than deserve, all that has ever been said against those who make 'greased poles' of the noblest objects in Nature—and the sooner it is dissolved the better.

The discussion here concluded has excited much interest abroad among the numerous bodies which look up to the English Alpine Club as in some way their parent. It seemed well, therefore, that all who have taken part in it should say their last word at the same time.]

REVIEW—'THE FROSTY CAUCASUS.'*

We endorse to the full the unanimous verdict of the reviewers that Mr. Grove's book is a most entertaining sketch of the life and manners of Caucasian mountaineers, and we can add from personal experience that it is as truthful as it is entertaining. The volume has doubtless already been in the hands of every member of the Club, and it is needless here and at this time to follow Mr. Grove step by step in his journey, or to make a selection out of the many amusing incidents which he has so well told.

It only remains for the 'Alpine Journal' to consider from the professional point of view, whether Mr. Moore and his followers did all the things they ought to have done, and omitted only those which, under the circumstances, they ought not to have done.

It must be confessed that, when first reported, the mountaineering, we do not say the travelling, performances of the second Caucasian expedition scarcely came up to the expectations of those who had calculated on the strength of the party, and the energy and experience of their leader. But it was no fault of the climbers that the persistent indisposition under which Caucasian weather seems too often to suffer in June and July frustrated to a considerable extent their plans and our hopes. Mr. Grove might well have applied Mr. Tennyson's denunciation of the Lombard plain to Caucasian localities, and have exclaimed, 'At Gebi, at Kutais, rain! At Chegem, rain! Bezingi, rain,' and still

* *The Frosty Caucasus.* By F. Craufurd Grove. London: Longman & Co. 1875.