

IN MEMORIAM.

THE REV. JOHN SOWERBY.

THE Rev. John Sowerby, one of the oldest and most consistent of mountaineers, and one of the most regular contributors to the 'Alpine Journal,' died at Bozen, on December 8, at the age of 79.

John Sowerby was a northerner and a climber born and bred, on the father's side a Cumberland dalesman, on the mother's a Johnstone of Annandale. He was familiar with his native mountains in his youth, and in his middle and old age returned to his first love, whenever the chance offered, in winter, though sore distressed by the modern institutions of big hotels and evening *tables d'hôte*. As recently as the winter of 1897, when 74 years old, he walked with his knapsack from Patterdale over Striding Edge, on Helvellyn, to Wythburn. 'There seemed to be more stones on Striding Edge than there used to be,' he said to a friend, who adds, 'I can hear him saying the words now, and see the kink of his eye.'

John Sowerby was a scholar of Trinity College, Cambridge. He went up as a classic, but in his second year he practically gave up Latin and Greek for mathematics. In 1847 he was 41st Wrangler, and in the second class of the Classical Tripos. A letter to his name shows that he also passed with credit the theological examination. His contemporaries considered that, if he had specialised earlier in mathematics, he would have come out near the top of the list. He had excellent abilities of an all-round order, a quick apprehension, and a fine memory, good for words and facts, prodigious for figures. He was rarely idle. Besides his special Alpine pursuits he was often busy with mathematical problems. He could quote his Vergil and Horace, he devoured French and German fiction, had a fair knowledge of Italian, and quite late in life taught himself some Hebrew.

In 1849 Sowerby was appointed Assistant-Master at Marlborough College, then recently founded, from which he retired after twenty-three years' work. He did valuable and characteristic service in helping on the ill-organised games of the young school; characteristic because, with his natural sympathy for those who needed help, he formed an eleven of presumable duffers, and enlisting the co-operation of other masters besides himself, taught them to love the game. 'Sowerby's Eleven' became a training school for many of the best of Marlburian cricketers. Another service, the value of which will be appreciated by those who understand public school life, was his presidency of the common room of masters. Well informed on many subjects, humorous, kindly, and imperturbably genial, he kept his colleagues together. Some of his best work intellectually was his teaching of geography, his knowledge of which was very wide and accurate. He prepared an excellent set of maps, called 'Facts in Geography,' sketched by himself on a plan of his

own. John Sowerby, as he was always called, was a general favourite with boys and masters. On hearing of his death an old Marlburian wrote, 'I have the *most* kindly recollection of John Sowerby's kindness to me, but then he was kind to everybody.' What better epitaph could man desire?

He did not go to the Alps until 1860, when he was already past the heat and elasticity of youth, though very strong and enduring. But from that date until his death, a period of forty-three years, he regularly spent his summer holidays in the 'playground of Europe,' and since 1872 the best part of each year from spring to late autumn in Switzerland or Tyrol. In the winter he for some years retired to the Riviera or the neighbourhood of Lucca, but recently his summer home was at Gries am Brenner, his winter home at Bozen. Few mountaineers probably were better acquainted with the Central and Eastern Alps. His happy hunting-grounds, however, were the Maderaner Thal, with its neighbouring districts, and the lateral valleys of the Brenner. Of the Maderaner Thal he may be called the discoverer. With considerable loss to an income which was never large he assisted the landlord of the White Cross at Amsteg to erect the Alpen-Club hotel near the foot of the Hufi Glacier. His earliest companion was that well-known botanist, the Rev. T. A. Preston, of Leicester, who first infected him, as he did many others, with his own enthusiasm for wild flowers. Another early companion was Professor W. Grylls Adams. But for several successive seasons of the sixties Mr. Waldemar Mansell and I, his colleagues at Marlborough, accompanied him. Our regular guide was J. M. Trösch, of the Etzli Thal. Mansell was alone with him for one or two seasons, I think. I joined him three times in the seventies and twice in the eighties, each time in the Brenner. The last occasion on which the three friends were together was in 1889, when our chief climb was the Olperer. Sowerby was sixty-five, but still going strong and steadily. For several seasons he was alone, but latterly he was often joined by his nephew, the Rev. W. H. Milner. If I speak most of his expeditions with Mansell and myself it is because of personal knowledge of facts; Sowerby's experience and knowledge were far greater than ours.

We have the happiest recollections of those good times, for John Sowerby was an excellent mountaineer and the best of companions. He was not imprudently adventurous; he came to the work too late in life for that, but he was sturdy and very enduring, good for sixteen hours and more at a stretch. He was of the intelligent order of climbers; he was familiar with the speech of guides and porters; he had a good working knowledge of geology and meteorology, and had an extensive and minute acquaintance with the Alpine flora. He could sketch fairly, and make neat and correct maps. He had also a considerable knowledge of general and local history. Added to these qualifications he was uniformly good-tempered and content, and, best of all, he had that sympathy with nature and with man without which travel is mere letter

without spirit. His observation of flowers deserves special mention. Year by year for many years he worked up N. from the Italian side, noting and collecting. He would go far afield in search of a particular specimen. I remember the exultant description he sent me of a fine patch of the *Wulfenia* which he had come across in Carinthia. And what a comrade he was, as ready with a quip as Falstaff himself, and, like that immortal hero, not only witty in himself but the cause of wit in others. Ah! those were *noctes ceneaque deum* when, after a good outing and a good dinner, the evening was spent in sorting specimens, or a friendly rubber, or a sociable chat with the landlord and his family, with the curé, or with the peasant in his hut. I remember how in 1888 I went out to Tyrol to hunt him up. Not knowing his exact whereabouts, I inquired at Unterberger's in Innsbruck. The shopman did not know Sowerby by name, so I resorted to description. He was easy to describe—a tall, big man with grey hair, but originally ruddy, and a quick light blue eye. The description quickly told. 'Oh, ja, ja! Ein grosser Herr! ein passionirter Bergsteiger.' Taking the next train I reached Aigner's comfortable inn at Gries while the midday meal was going on. There was John Sowerby at the head of the table, surrounded by admiring German guests who regarded the *englischer Herr* as an oracle, a kind of *genius loci*. Wherever he went he was equally at home with young or old, male or female, learned or simple, by dint of a perfectly natural character.

I do not like to leave off without a word of remembrance for J. M. Trösch, of the Maderaner Thal. I believe that after our time he regarded himself as necessary to that district, and asked too high fees for his services. Be that as it may, we had no such complaint against him. He accompanied us year by year in expeditions reaching from Turin to Innsbruck. He was past his youthful prime, but he was very serviceable, strong, and willing. He had a good eye for an unknown peak or pass, saved us from many a wrong course, and got us out of many a hobble. Once, it is true, he fell home-sick, and left us in the middle Engadine—a blessing in disguise, for we worked our way round independently by the head of the Oetzthal, and after making some ascents there came down into the Brenner.

John Sowerby's contributions to the literature of the Alps were continuous from the first. On looking through the volumes of the 'Alpine Journal' I do not think that I have found one in which he is unrepresented either in lists of expeditions, or notes, or reviews, once or twice in longer papers. In vol. i. at p. 383 there is a signed note on Alpine byways, 'From Gadmen to Guttannen,' and in the May number of 1902 there is (pp. 143-147) an unsigned review by him of the 'Zeitschrift des D.Oe.A.-V.' For many years he reviewed the Swiss 'Jahrbuch' as well as the 'Zeitschrift' for this 'Journal.' Vol. vii. contains a paper, 'Round the Maderaner Thal,' illustrated by a map. What memories does that paper recall, among them his descending into a fissure of the Hufi

Glacier, like a disappointed genius in the pantomime. There he stuck, jammed against the icy sides. Vain were the efforts of Mansell and myself to hoist him. 'He's too big,' we exclaimed with Mrs. Ford, until with a deep monotone emerging from his sepulchre he issued directions. At p. 941, after describing the ascent of the Gross Spannort, he speaks of a remarkable atmospheric effect as happening to Trösch. Most certainly Sowerby was himself the subject. The top of the Spannort is a rocky table or altar. We had spent an hour on it making sketches, for it was a first ascent. I was the first to descend. When at the base of the rock I looked up, and never shall I forget the sight that met my astonished eyes. 'Don't move,' I called to Sowerby, and summoned Mansell to my side as a witness. There stood John Sowerby's big form on the top against the deep cobalt sky of a hot July day. Like some other climbers he was not a dandy in his dress. He had on an old felt hat, an old suit once grey, but much discoloured, an old pair of wash-leather gloves; the fringe of his beard and whiskers were white, the rest still ruddy. But at that moment all the grey shone like beaten silver; the yellow and the ruddy were burnished gold; the complexion, delicate to the last, was like a fresh peach. I am not romancing. It was a transfiguration; I can use no other term. Returning to Sowerby's literary contributions, he was a regular correspondent of Swiss and Austrian year-books, being a member of their Alpine Clubs; he had much to do with the proposed new edition of Ball; indeed, he has left a great deal of material for the 'Eastern Alps,' destined, alas! not to see the light, and he published, with Rivington's, a delightful little book on 'The Four Forest Cantons.'

Peace to his memory. 'I will look unto the hills' might be written on his tomb. If, *quod Di faxint*, Alpine climbing is long to be a delight, a refreshment to body and mind, a revelation of some of the finest mysteries of nature, this will be mainly owing to the intelligent and genuine enthusiasm of mountaineers like John Sowerby.

F. E. THOMPSON.

THOMAS BROOKSBANK.

THERE passed away on June 8 last one of the oldest and most devoted of our members, one who, although owing to his retiring nature he never took a prominent part at the meetings or in the management of the Club, was ever proud of his membership, and in its earlier days was a frequent contributor to the 'Alpine Journal,' in the pages of which, therefore, some memorial of him is most fitting.

Several years of his boyhood having been passed in Germany, he early acquired a love of Continental travel, but his affections soon centred in the Alps, of which his experience was very considerable before he joined the Club in 1863. Between 1861 and 1877, as mentioned in his touching obituary notice of Kaspar Blatter,* he

* *Alpine Journal*, vol. xvi. p. 455.

made thirteen long 'mountaineering journeys,' accompanied by that well-known guide. The phrase quoted accurately indicates the character of his proceedings in Switzerland. He did not care to dash out to a 'centre' with the object of attacking the peaks around it, but long in advance, with the Dufour map before him, his delight was to plan out a 'journey' through a considerable district. Few men had so exact and comprehensive a knowledge of the geography of the whole country.

His name is not associated with any new ascents of great mountains—indeed, he was rather averse from going up a peak and coming down on the same side—but passes and glaciers were a joy for ever to him, and there are few of any importance in the main chain of the Alps which he had not crossed. In vols. ii. and vii. of the 'Journal,' under 'Alpine Byways,' 'Alpine Notes,' and 'New Expeditions,' will be found several interesting accounts of more or less important passes which he was the first to make, while his longer papers, such as 'About Engelberg,' in vol. vi., and 'The Laquin and Rossboden Passes,' in vol. vii., show the minute observation, the accurate and exhaustive description, and the love of his subject which were eminently characteristic of him.

He was an enthusiastic mountaineer in the best sense of the term. A genuine worshipper of the beauties of nature, great and small, and keenly sensitive to form and colour, whether as he so often saw them in the brightness of the new-born day, or when the shades of evening were falling, he would still maintain that 'joy's soul lies in the doing,' and would take the greatest interest in every step of the climb. So while no one could be more impressed by

The silence that is in the starry sky,
The sleep that is among the lonely hills

(words he was fond of quoting), or feel more of the exaltation of spirit that comes to us in their presence, which of his companions can ever forget the nights passed in chalets, usually cheerless enough occasions, but which his wit and merriment transformed into veritable *noctes ambrosianæ* alike for guides and herdsmen and themselves?

He was indeed the most charming of companions, and he had moreover the gift of imparting no small share of his ardour to his fellow-travellers, especially to those somewhat younger than himself, who had reason to feel grateful to him for, we may almost say, revealing to them the 'splendour of the hills.' Too many of those who knew him thus during his active climbing days are, alas! no more, but some remain who, on reading this slight tribute to his memory, will join with the writer in sincere regret that one more of the truest lovers of the Alps has left us.

Thomas Brooksbank took his degree at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1847, was called to the Bar in 1849, and practised for many years in Lincoln's Inn. Widely read in literature, an accomplished linguist, and poetically gifted in a high degree, he at

various times and as a labour of love translated Dante and Heine, although he could only be prevailed upon to publish the 'Inferno.' The 'Buch der Lieder,' of which his MS. remains, may, however, yet see the light. Of the arts, more especially music and painting, he had a keen appreciation, and when his climbing days were long over he turned with all the enthusiasm of his nature to Italian travel. For Rome in particular he cherished an absorbing and intense admiration, as deep and vivid as that which he felt for his first love—Switzerland. This is not the place to refer further to his strictly personal qualities. Suffice it to say in conclusion that a warmer-hearted friend never breathed, and that as such he will be long and deeply mourned. A. J.

H. G. S. LAWSON.

- By the death of H. G. S. Lawson, on the 25th of October last, the Club has lost one of the most valued of its younger members. An all-round athlete from school days, with great powers of endurance, he took to mountaineering in Scotland about ten years ago, and soon became one of the most enthusiastic members of the Scottish Mountaineering Club. He was librarian to the Club at the time of his death. As in so many cases, love of the Highlands led to a love of the Alps, and by 1899 he was qualified for and elected a member of the Alpine Club.

The writer first met him in 1898 at Zermatt, where he was laid up with water on the knee. His pluck and good spirits, while bearing the disappointment of seeing his companion and guides going off on the expeditions he had hoped to share, led to the formation of a friendship which deepened at every meeting. He was in the Alps again in the summer of 1899, and every year since, and his record of expeditions was a proof of his enthusiasm as a climber. Last summer he crossed Mt. Blanc and made other expeditions, and seemed in perfect health, but in the beginning of October, after his return to his home in Edinburgh, he was attacked by typhoid fever, which proved fatal. He was not known to very many members of the Club, but by those who had met him in the Alps and the Highlands he was looked upon as a true and valued friend. G. S.

THE HIMALAYAN EXHIBITION AT THE ALPINE CLUB.

THE Committee were well advised in arranging for an exhibition of Himalayan landscapes. We might beforehand have anticipated that there would have been some difficulty in filling the Hall; on the contrary there was an overflow. Yet there were several artists and amateurs whose work was not represented. Amongst these we may mention the Russian Verestchaguin—whose enormous picture of the Vale of Akluthang under Kangchenjunga hung