



Les Alpes.
Vue prise depuis la tête de la Gemmenalp.
A Bâle chez Ottavien.

Reproduction of an old print from the collection of R. W. Lloyd.

THE
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VALEDICTORY ADDRESS.

By CLAUDE WILSON, President of the Alpine Club.

(Read before the Alpine Club, December 14, 1931.)

IT was Charles Edward Mathews, the eighth, and in some respects the best of all our presidents, who, on December 15, 1880—the first Annual Meeting of the Club which I attended—initiated the precedent which has imposed upon the Club and on all its subsequent presidents, seventeen in number, the triennial infliction of the Valedictory Address. I have heard most of them—perhaps all—and I cannot recollect having enjoyed them as I have enjoyed most of the papers I have heard read. They have tended to become stereotyped, more and more cut and dried, and the trend has been towards a mere epitome of the events concerning mountaineering in general and the life of the Club in particular, during what is called the ‘term of office.’

Yet this was not the idea that the founder of the Valedictory Address had in mind, which was rather that the retiring president should leave some message behind him; and he took for his text ‘The Growth of Mountaineering,’ followed roughly from what he called the ‘prehistoric epoch’ to the date of the address.

Two, at least, of his final comments may be appropriately

recalled at the present time : the unexpectedly slight amount of embarrassment felt in regard to respiration and exhaustion by practised and acclimatized climbers up to the height of something over 21,000 ft., the highest point then reached ; and secondly, the ' amazing reduction ' in the size and area of the ' Swiss Glaciers which continue their unfortunate retreat.' I must not attempt to follow up these alluring themes, either of which might occupy easily an evening.

Turning to my own duties ; my epitome will be short, and my message—interrupted—will be shorter. The former cannot be ignored nowadays, though events of great importance must be passed over in a line and many left out altogether. Practically every item to which I must refer cursorily has already received attention at the meetings of the Club, or in the pages of the ALPINE JOURNAL, or both, and as the first element of my message, I wonder if the whole of this inevitably inadequate précis is necessary or desirable.

Mountaineering.

Mr. Smythe's ascent of Kamet (25,447 ft.), the highest *summit* yet attained, and the exploration of the surrounding regions, which include the sources of the Ganges, are events of the first magnitude in the history of mountain exploration and adventure on which he and his splendid group of young mountaineers are to be most heartily congratulated. The exploration of the western side of Kangchenjunga and the ascent of the Jonsong Peak recounted in his *Kangchenjunga Adventure* are already matters of history, while Herr Bauer's two assaults on the tremendous N.E. spur and N. arête of this monarch of mountains are, I suppose, ' without parallel in the history of mountaineering.' To Herr Bauer and his party we extend our admiration for their achievements and our condolences on their misfortunes. Other explorations have been made in various regions of the Himalaya, and especially commendable is the first ascent of Lhonak Peak by Eversden and Gourlay with a tiny outfit.

In Alaska, the conquests of Mount Bona in 1930 and of Mount Fairweather in 1931, the latter after a two months' siege, by our transatlantic members, Allen Carpe, William Ladd (and Terris Moore), are very memorable successes. But were I to attempt to mention in detail the mountaineering feats and conquests, many of them by members of our Club, accomplished during these three years, there would be but little time left for anything else. In Greenland and New Zealand, in Canada and

the Nevadas, in Japan and Korea, in Africa and the Caucasus, new expeditions of the first importance have been made. A few fragments may perhaps be singled out for comment. Mr. Amery has been fortunate to capture his own (Canadian) mountain amongst other new ascents and routes, while Odell and Crawford's, Thorington and Cromwell's climbs are well remembered. Miss Kate Gardiner, the daughter of my old friend Fred Gardiner, one of the great mountaineers of Alpine History, has been extremely active; her climbs with Harold Porter in New Zealand are first-rate achievements, while her expeditions in Canada are, I understand, of equal importance. Messrs. Wordie's and Watkins's explorations in Greenland, of which some of the latter's partook almost of a subterranean nature; the fine traverse of Mt. Kenya and two new climbs in the Kilimanjaro area by Shipton and Tilman; Dr. O. K. Williamson's Drakensberg routes; and the Caucasian conquests of Giulchi and the S.W. ridge of Bashiltau by Count U. di Vallepiana and Mr. J. H. Bell respectively, must bring this short list of world climbs to a close.

Turning to the Alps, a vast amount of new work has been done and my references must be cut down to a minimum. But a note of the message type seems to me to be inevitable. The Alps have been the cradle and the nursery of mountaineers and mountaineering the world over. It behoves us as pioneers and as the doyen of the Mountaineering Clubs to do what in us lies to see that the sound principles on which mountaineering is based are both promulgated and fostered. The terrible death roll of these years is needless. It has been due in the main to two causes: the vast irruption of irresponsible and ignorant beginners venturing into areas of which they know nothing, and secondly the deliberate neglect by more experienced climbers of well-recognized rules of reasonable, safe climbing. Personally, I am convinced that at least 90 per cent. of the fatalities which have occurred in the Alps during these three years, and which run into hundreds, could and should have been avoided. The search for new routes and new records has been responsible for many fatalities, and that some of the successful ones have come off without mishap is a matter for congratulation. Some splendid achievements have resulted; yet many have been conducted under dangerous conditions, and others which, while indicating a degree of hardihood, intrepidity and technical skill not to be excelled, are inherently subject to unavoidable hazard far exceeding reasonable prudence.

Perhaps, as among the safest and best of the new or unusual expeditions, we may select Graham Brown's routes in the Bernina cirque, always presupposing that snow and weather conditions are propitious. Finzi's climb up the Wetterhorn precipice, Uramatsu's ascent of the S.W. arête of the same peak, and Miss Fitz-Gerald's traverse of the Grandes Jorasses ridge are splendid expeditions which have been or will be repeated, while Finch's find on the N. face of the Dent d'Hérens has already become a recognized route, capable indeed of being subjected to the indignity of variations. The Tour des Jorasses adds another to the many fine rock climbs around Courmayeur—while the conquest of the N.E. face of Mt. Blanc du Tacul by Ravelli and of the Argentière face of Les Droites by Lagarde are feats which were sure of accomplishment sometime. Bonacossa's ascent of the N.W. or Vallante side of Monte Viso is an example of another belated certainty. Blanchet's descent and Benedetti's ascent of the Matterhorn's Furggen arête are memorable performances, while Kagami's traverse of the Dent d'Hérens-Matterhorn ridge is one of the greatest *tours de force* ever accomplished. Blanchet's climb up the S.E. face of the Aletschhorn and the ascent by Welzenbach and Tillmann of the Grindelwald face of the Gross Fiescherhorn are well-remembered efforts, and it would seem that the great N. face of the Jungfrau can be ascended and descended almost anywhere provided that the parties are prepared to sleep out for two or more nights and to risk a change of weather.

Many of these fine climbs embodied a risk approaching the limits of reasonable safety, but some, which yet remain to be referred to, appear to me to pass that limit. Miss O'Brien's and (the late) Herr Winterberger's adventures on the N.E. face of the Finsteraarhorn can hardly be mentioned otherwise than, like all the previous routes made on this great precipice, fortunate escapes; while I am tempted still more to place in the same class the great and ever-memorable achievement of the brothers Schmid on the N. wall of the Matterhorn—a feat which has, in my view unfortunately, been responsible for the ascent on October 15 of the S. face by E. Benedetti.¹ Great danger from stonefall there must have been, as also admittedly on Blanchet's new climb on the Laquinhorn. But perhaps the worst examples of what may be called *adventure*—but certainly not *mountaineering*—are the terrible things that have been accomplished on the N. face of the Charmoz, on the S.E. arête

¹ See, however, p. 75.—*Editor.*

of the Péteret, on the Signalkuppe, and on the S. face of La Meije, yet the perpetrators, though they suffered, survived—some of them—for a year at any rate.

But all the great climbs above alluded to will live in the history of Alpine climbing; and it may well be that allusions to safety in mountaineering are regarded by the modern generation of climbers as the limbo of old fogeys, who, like myself, find but little allurements in the marvellous speed records on land, water, or in the air. Danger is inherent in all of these and seems to add a zest; and it may be the same with mountaineering.

Nevertheless, the message I must leave is one which regards Alpine climbing as a healthful and reasonable recreation based on the eternal lure of the mountains and which trusts that that sort of *competition* finding its acme in the making and breaking of records will never be admitted by us at least, even as a side-issue. The competitive spirit is of course elemental in many branches of sport. But mountaineering needs no such spur. Perhaps I may quote the somewhat hackneyed peroration of the 'Alpine Obituary,' the *chef d'œuvre* of the inaugurator of the Valedictory Address: 'Above all, *if he loves the mountains for their own sake* [the italics are mine], for the lessons they can teach and the happiness they can bring, he [the mountaineer] will do nothing that can discredit his manly pursuit or bring down the ridicule of the undiscerning upon the noblest pastime in the world.'² Victorian perhaps, the conception and the language. But it was written in that era: and the spirit of the thing rings as true now as ever it did.

Literature.

Alpine literature during these three years has expanded in all languages, and I must practically confine my few references to British, and chiefly to what has emanated from our own members.

The ALPINE JOURNAL under Colonel Strutt's guidance has dealt with every quarter of the globe, and these volumes have never been excelled. So full are they of good things that selection of any kind appears invidious: yet Dr. Stevens's pious labours in the reconstruction of Paccard's *Lost Narrative* may be singled out as perhaps the most brilliant and laborious historical research which has ever appeared in our pages.

² *A.J.* 11, 85.

The ALPINE JOURNAL will continue to be printed by Messrs. Spottiswoode, Ballantyne and Co., who have also taken over the illustrations, but the memorable connection with the firm of Longmans has, with mutual satisfaction and respect, been terminated. In future the JOURNAL will be published by the Club, and the economy thus effected is an asset to us, while relieving Messrs. Longmans of a trust in the first place largely sentimental, and which, to them, has never been sufficiently remunerative to be attractive. As regards the Swan Electric Engraving Co., the Club owes them a debt of gratitude extending over a period of more than thirty years.

Smythe's *Kangchenjunga Adventure* has already been alluded to ; his book entitled *Climbs and Ski Runs* is, or ought to be, on all of our shelves, while his forthcoming volume on Kamet is eagerly awaited. Spencer's translation of the de Lépiney brothers' adventures on the Chamonix ridges has been a work of love for which we thank him, while we may congratulate both ourselves and those delightful and accomplished mountaineers that they yet live to climb and write again. Rickmers's book *Alai ! Alai !*, Dyhrenfurth's *Himalaya*, and Borchers's *Berge und Gletscher im Pamir* are important additions to the rapidly growing literature of the great mountain ranges of Asia ; while the Journals of the Himalayan, Canadian and American Alpine Clubs, and those published by our kindred clubs both at home and abroad, all strike a high note of excellence, many of the articles emanating from our own members.

Mr. Freshfield's important share in the production of the centenary number of the *Journal* of the Royal Geographical Society is a monumental achievement on which both he and the Society are to be congratulated, as well as upon the fact that he was able to take part in the complete programme of those glorious but necessarily exhausting festivities in which we, as a Club, were invited to participate.

Turning to what perhaps may be called 'belles-lettres,' we have Sir Claud Schuster's new book, *Men, Women and Mountains*, issued in a gay coverslip on which a number of sombre men appear to dominate a larger number of women than the contents of the book would seem to account for. But many pleasant reminiscences, suggested by the title, will be found ; while *The Hills of Peace* adds yet another item to the already considerable and always artistic output of Mr. Laurence Pilkington.

Of the series of *Climbers' Guides*, it will be sufficient to mention Kurz's 'Alpes Valaisannes' and Lauper's 'Berner Oberland'—both most admirable works.

Finally we are looking forward to the early publication of Mr. Tyndale's English version of Christian Klucker's memoirs and reminiscences, and to Marcel Kurz's magnificent new map of the Kangchenjunga massif, an advance copy of which is exhibited in the Club to-night.

The Club.

It is now high time to turn our attention to our own immediate concerns, and while the losses we have sustained during these years have been phenomenal, it is satisfactory that our numbers have kept up. Excellent new blood accrues year by year.

Of our many losses a few must be mentioned here, though all have been lamented at our meetings, and justice has been done to many in the pages of the JOURNAL.

We have lost three presidents. Bishop Browne was a picturesque and distinguished figure-head on the occasion of the Club's Jubilee, while Captain Farrar and Sir George Morse will rank for ever among the great mountaineers of all time. Slingsby is of equal eminence, while Ellis Carr and V. A. Fynn approach this zone. Hugh Stutfield, H. V. Reade, Sir Alexander Kennedy, A. F. R. Woollaston, R. P. Hope, Seymour Hoare, Stafford Anderson, Alfred Holmes, and J. A. B. Bruce may perhaps be selected from among many other well-known members for the distinction they have earned in the various avenues with which their names are especially associated. J. B. Colgrove, who recently passed away at the age of ninety-one, was one of the trio who, with Cust and Cawood, made the first guideless ascent of the Matterhorn in 1876. Further, we have lost four from our small list of Honorary Members, two past presidents of the Club Alpin Français (Colonel Regaud and Baron Gabet), Professor Fay, and lastly the great explorer, statesman and philanthropist, Fridtjof Nansen.

To all of these, and other members deplored but not specified, good men and true every one of them, we pay a final tribute.

If we turn now to the *life* of the Club during these three years, we find it full of incident. The meetings have been well attended and have presented an exceptionally wide and varied programme. Efforts have been made to get more into touch with the kindred clubs, and to one or two of our meetings delegates have been invited, as well as to the annual dinner. The meeting upon the 'Technicalities' of climbing was an innovation and a great success, so much so that certain

members appeared to think that we might have an almost indefinite sequence of such gatherings. But others thought otherwise, and there has been a plethora of important papers ; so that the discussion on ' Accidents ' which I hoped to arrange before my swan-song has had to be postponed until next year.

By far the most important thing which has occurred to the Club during these years was the threat to our premises which broke upon us in my first year of office (1929). Our house was suddenly bought over our heads by a company who were going to turn it into offices and flats, and we were threatened with almost immediate eviction. The turn of events was kaleidoscopic and meetings of the committee with their co-opted members—financial, legal, and architectural—were called at least twice every month ; and, while the correspondence was overwhelming, the search for alternative premises was intensive. The purchasers enjoyed but a short life. The City of Westminster possessed rights which had for many years been held in abeyance, but with the ultimate object of joining up Savile Row with Conduit Street. The City of Westminster became our landlords ; and, as we had failed to secure a suitable abode, we were allowed to stay on at a much increased rental as half-yearly tenants, with a six months' notice of eviction continually hanging over our heads. Consequently a flat was rented temporarily to which our treasures could be transferred, to meet this ever-present contingency. That was our position a year ago when the wave of enthusiasm for spending public money, national and municipal, was at its height. The City of Westminster, the London County Council and the Ministry of Transport were working in unison. They controlled millions ; and we were warned that they were ready to tackle Charing Cross Bridge, St. Martin's Lane, Savile Row, and many other costly projects simultaneously : and that, with these three powerful bodies co-operating, millions of the public's money were of no account. ' As soon as the plans were ready our house would be pulled down.' Recent financial adversity has given pause to all this, and though we are still on sufferance we have lately been given the assurance that we may hope to enjoy our comfortable and convenient premises for two more years. What will happen then is in the lap of the gods. But the search for a more permanent home continues ; and if anything suitable should turn up the Club will be informed, and the pros and cons discussed at a general meeting.

One great good arose out of all this : it became evident to all, as it had been for long to some, that we were living far beyond our inadequate income ; yet, so far, secured from disaster by the fortunate, though precarious, increment derived from the letting of our hall for picture exhibitions. If we lost our hall this source of income would go ; and the chances of securing an equally lettable hall were negligible. Further, we should not get fresh housing at our previous very reasonable rental. We wanted more money : and, once this was realized, the Club responded. The subscription was increased and a capital sum was subscribed which has been put by to be held sacrosanct to accumulate at compound interest, so as to form a nucleus for the needs which will surely come upon us sooner or later. But when that time does arrive we shall need a larger capital sum than that which was realized by, in so many instances, very generous contributions. The list is still open, and there is another source which I hope that members of substance will keep in mind. Last year, by the lamented death of Colonel Tubby, the eminent surgeon, the Club benefited by a legacy of £100. Other members, far wealthier than he was, and who loved the Club not less, have passed without thinking of its needs. In future I hope that the little pink book of rules and members will contain among its preliminary lists of past officers the names of those who, like Colonel Tubby, have left legacies. Such a list would act as a reminder to all members, and would constitute a suitable memento to those who have served the Club in so useful and acceptable a capacity.

Well, gentlemen, I am concluding, however inadequately, my task, and I have delivered one item of my message. Had I been free, as C. E. Mathews was, to choose a subject for dissertation, I think it would have taken the form of an essay on the origins, ideals, constitution, development and functions of the Club to which we all belong and about which most of us know so little.

There is no time for anything of the sort. A mere history of the rules, which, since the early 'sixties, have increased in number from 16 to 47, would suffice for an evening. Why and when was Rule so and so altered ? Why and when was Rule so and so added ? Of equal interest is the evolution of the committee from less than a dozen to nearly a score, during the same period. The addition of the five 'extra members' in 1887, all of them relics of previous committees, and each elected for one year only by the committee of the

day, has been of inestimable advantage in strengthening deliberations and decisions, in keeping the present in touch with the past, and in the prevention of hasty or ill-considered judgments.

A word about the kernel of the committee, the nine elective members, may not be inopportune. There are a few general considerations which tend to keep this small body representative of the Club as a whole and of as many sections and special interests as is possible; and a generalized proportion as between London and the provinces, seniors and juniors, the North and the South, is always aimed at, while the claims of Scotland, kindred clubs, the Universities, the Himalaya and other occasional interests are ever present when the committee, at its autumn meeting, undertakes the duty imposed upon it by Rule 27, of proposing names to meet the vacancies occasioned by the retirement of those whose terms of office expire. Any member can, of course, make suggestions to the committee, and this right is freely exercised, often accompanied by cogent reasons why A. B. and X. Y. would be valuable additions to the committee. If several such recommendations are received and added to those emanating from inside the committee, it may well bring the number of names to be considered up to ten or a dozen. But as only two, or at the outside three, vacancies occur annually, and as one, or possibly two, of these may have to be filled automatically by obvious gaps in the balance above alluded to, it must be that many of these excellent suggestions cannot materialize. I have alluded to this matter as it does not appear to be self-evident.

But these and many other interesting questions must be left with these sketchy references, and if I conclude with some observations which may seem to many of us to be obvious, it is because my thoughts have been drawn thither by the existence in some quarters of what I think are misconceptions of the ideas on which the Club has ever rested; though this point may be debatable, as well as the question whether reform is desirable, and if so in what directions. For the rest—what I have to say as the final item in my farewell message merely reflects my personal views.

Very soon after I was elected to this dread office I became aware, chiefly through the medium of correspondence, that in the opinion of some of my fellow-members all was not well with the Club. Some of the suggestions that reached me referred to details, some of which have been acted upon. A little reflection showed that others would be likely to do

more harm than good. But some showed a genuine and reasonable concern as to our well-being, such as the idea that we were failing in our duties, failing to take the lead, browsing in a comfortable old age, and, like Lear, allowing the initiative that should be ours to be usurped by our juniors. Another idea, and one which surprised me, was that we possessed a mandate to assume responsibilities somewhat analogous to those exercised over kindred clubs by the M.C.C. and the Royal and Ancient of St. Andrews. Most of my correspondents seemed to be in agreement that we should show more signs of life. We should be up and doing. What an opportunity was mine. . . . What a lot of good I might do. . . . And, I thought, what a lot of harm I might accomplish!

If I now turn from what to me appear as ill-conceived ideas founded on shifting sands, to the bed-rock on which we originally built—What were the essential factors which, in the first few years of the Club's existence, raised it to a position of world-wide recognition, one which has not, I trust, been forfeited? Though the annual December gathering, the picture-show, the 'at home,' and the dinner are not negligible, I think that the essentials may be reduced to three. The founders were a fraternity who met on a common social and intellectual plane, from which things in general could be viewed from a common standpoint. They founded a CLUB and they elected new members by ballot. Otherwise, their one general interest lay in their love and their knowledge of the Alps; and as evidence of this they demanded from all newcomers a qualification sufficient to give earnest of an abiding interest, and of such elementary knowledge of mountain-craft as is implied by a moderate experience extending over not less than three or four years. Lastly, in the Club's publications and in the works of individual members was initiated that splendid galaxy of mountaineering literature adorning our history and continuing without break to this day.

If I may recapitulate my three points we shall find that the literary element occupies the place of honour. The first volume of *Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers*, with its maps and its colour-prints and its wonderful 'Series of Excursions by members of the Alpine Club,' was an innovation in the literature of travel and adventure. It proved a striking success with the public. It was published in 1859, and it brought immediate fame to the infant Club. It became a stimulus to climbing, and our membership was sought and gained by numbers of suitable candidates: but the fact that every Tom,

Dick and Harry who went up Mont Blanc or Monte Rosa found that he was not eligible gave the Club a *cachet* and an abiding distinction differentiating it from its *confrères*, some of which demand no qualification at all, while others are severely exclusive. This happily conceived character, inherited from our fathers that begat us, coupled with the priority which conferred on us our envied and simple title, has not only secured a constant flow of members from these islands, but has increasingly attracted the candidature of distinguished mountaineers of all nations.

In maintaining our simple and elemental premises, in eliminating side-issues, in avoiding outside entanglements and responsibilities, and in declining either to raise or lower our threshold, we have, in my view, held fast to that which is good. That we have not failed in advancing with the times, on well-considered lines, is evidenced by the Everest expeditions, and by many other less obvious activities ; but our happy position remains firmly based on the tripod : the qualification, the ballot, and the JOURNAL ; and of these the pivot is the JOURNAL. Out of the hundreds of publications issuing by week, by month and by year from the mountaineering clubs of the world, I expect it is the only one which is taken in, bound, stored and constantly consulted by all. Let the quality of the JOURNAL drop and, despite our other assets, we are done for. But our editors have never let us down.

Other clubs have come and they have multiplied exceedingly. Each has its place and each its specialized activities. All are welcomed as *confrères* : none are interfered with. And, if we enjoy a privileged position, it is one which has been accorded, and never sought or assumed. Any idea of competition or of seeking pre-eminence is, I am sure, as foreign to our ideals as a Club as it is to the ideals we have fostered in the field of mountaineering.

I cannot quit this chair without some reference to those with whom I have worked. To no one do we owe more than to the Editor. All editors are autocrats—they have to be ; and I personally owe them a great debt. They have never failed to alter my spelling and my punctuation, to modify my text and to cut out my choicest tit-bits. They do the same to everyone, altering or ignoring this and that, and alleging that they *will* have decent English. They have to. Of the Honorary Secretary all I need say is that he works like a slave and that his unique knowledge of the Club and its affairs is ever at the disposal of one and all. Mr. Oughton's services

continue to be invaluable. The committee mean well by the Club, and they do well. They have to—our 47 rules tie them up; they can do no harm, and if they are not more accommodating, it is simply because they cannot be. Speaking for myself and my two redeeming Vices, I am sure they will agree that, while we realize that our functions are chiefly ornamental, we greatly value the honours which have been conferred upon us.

Finally, to the members of this Club who called me to this high office and who have so uniformly and so generously supported me, I tender my warmest thanks. If the Club continues to hold the place which, fifty-two years ago, made me proud to be elected to its membership, it is due to the tripod to which I have alluded, and to the common sense prevailing always in times of stress.

‘In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.’

KANGCHENJUNGA,¹ 1931 : THE SECOND BAVARIAN ATTEMPT.

BY PAUL BAUER.

(*Translated.*)

WHEN we turned our backs on Kangchenjunga in 1929, I was inclined to say farewell to the mountain in an unfriendly spirit, but was sure that we should many times come again into contact. These relations for the future I would not spoil by any unfriendly actions. After us came next the International Himalayan Expedition of Dr. Dyhrenfurth. We had tried the only possible breach in Kangchenjunga's otherwise impregnable defences, the approach from the N.E. previously discovered by Freshfield, but Dyhrenfurth attempted to gain the same breach from the N.W. His party was, however, hopelessly beaten at the foot of the face at a height of only 6200 m. It is, therefore, almost certain that

¹ See Marcel Kurz's 1 : 100,000 map, an extract of which by the courtesy of M. Kurz and Dr. Dyhrenfurth is given at the end of this number. We are also indebted to MM. Kümmerly and Frey and Herr Scherl for permission to reproduce the same.

This map should be consulted by readers of the articles in *A.J.* 42, 73-7, 185-202, 202-26.—*Editor.*