

IN MEMORIAM.

HIATT C. BAKER.

(1863-1934.)

WITH a record of more than ten years of climbing in the Alps, Norway and the Balkans, Hiatt C. Baker joined the Club in 1891. When the time came for him to give up strenuous mountaineering, he combined plant-hunting with travel in the highlands of the Caucasus, Corsica and the Pyrenees. Baker had climbed throughout the Alps, making, in 1893 with F. W. Oliver, a noted botanist and member of the Club, the first direct ascent of Pic Bourcet from the Val des Etançons, while in 1894, with the same companion, he accomplished the first ascent of the S. summit and a new route to the N. summit of Punta di Lavina in the Graians. In the same range he effected also a new route on the Pointe de Garin and one of the early ascents of the Tour du Grand St. Pierre. He described a memorable walk in the Alps with Canon Henry Ellacombe in the memoir of that prince of scholarly gardeners. Then it was that he and I came together: we visited Crete,¹ Palestine and the Lebanon in search of new plants.

His roll of friends in the horticultural world who visited Almondsbury at his week-end house parties came to include most of the chief amateur gardeners of the British Isles. But, apart from his mountaineering and plant-hunting activities, Hiatt Baker was a great figure in the life of Bristol—commercial and academic. Educated at Rugby, he was big and strong, and a brilliant dashing forward at Rugby football: in 1887 he played for England against Wales.

Of his connection with the new University the Vice-Chancellor writes:—

‘He gave a large donation when it was founded in 1909, which was the first of a long series of benefactions, recorded and unrecorded, by which he enriched both the general funds of the University and also the athletic grounds, the Botanical Department, the Library, and the gardens. Officially, the series ended with the scholarship which in 1932 he and Mrs. Baker founded in memory of their son Michael for graduates from New Zealand, but in fact it continued until his death. Of his many public interests the University was nearest to his heart, and he regarded every member of it as having a claim on his friendship and affection. He was from the beginning a member of Council, and in later years was vice-chairman both of Council and of Finance Committee; he took an active part in all business affecting the welfare of undergraduates; and his well-informed advice contributed much to the growth of the University’s

¹ *A.J.* 40, 243-61.



H. C. BAKER.
1863-1933.

Agricultural Centres, of which in his last years he became treasurer. But it was to the supervision, improvement and adornment of the University's buildings and gardens and grounds that he specially devoted his time and thought. He undertook the responsibility for their maintenance in 1913, and carried out this exacting labour of love to the end with breadth of vision, minute attention to detail and admirable taste and judgment. In all he did his warmth of heart and his genial and generous temper drew and clasped friends to him, while his mere presence at a meeting brought colour into the routine of business. He was elected a Pro-Chancellor in 1929 and received the honorary degree of LL.D. two years later. His portrait was painted by Henry Lamb a year ago and hangs in the University.'

Hiatt's gardening enthusiasm often lost count of time, for Sir Arthur Hort recalls an evening prowl prolonged beyond the dinner hour when, electric torches not being yet in vogue, plants were pointed out by the light of matches till the box was empty.

A very old mountaineer and gardener tells me that one of his greatest pleasures in visiting the Shows of the Royal Horticultural Society was a talk with Hiatt Baker, which always acted as a stimulus to the maintenance of age's interest in plants and flowers. Kindness and geniality always attended his presence.

On my last visit to his home, when the time came to leave, for I was returning home to celebrate my golden wedding, he said, 'G. P., it will be my golden wedding next'; within three days he passed away in his sleep, a gentle ending to his kind, lovable and happy life.

G. P. B.

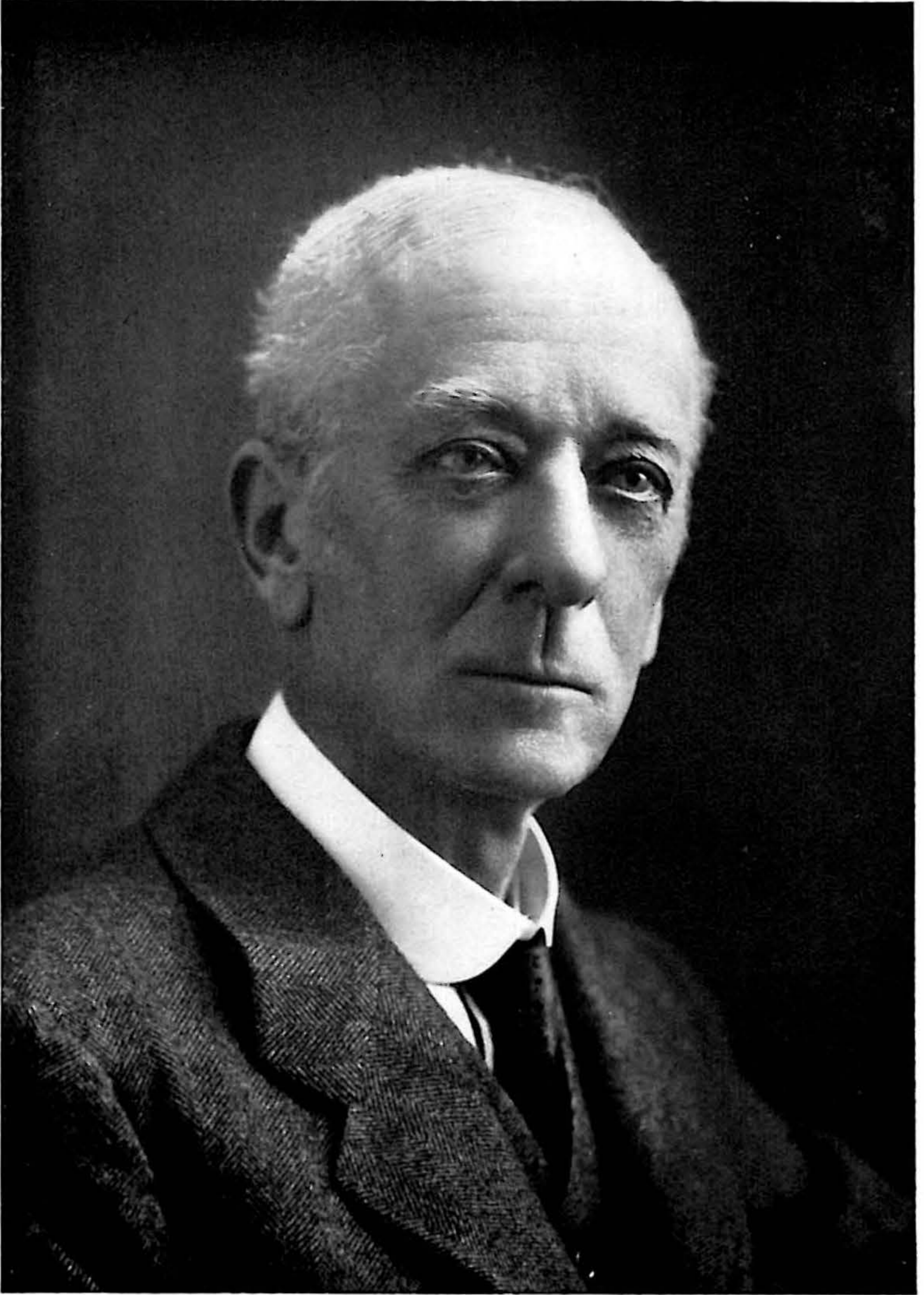
F. N. ELLIS.

(1855-1934.)

FRANCIS NEWMAN ELLIS was born at Leicester in November 1855. In August 1934 he returned to the Riffelalp, his favourite resort for many years, 'to see the mountains once more.' He left early in September, and died at his home in Mansfield on October 9.

Ellis's first visit to the Alps was in 1874, when he went for a walking tour of several weeks through Switzerland as far as Chamonix. Two years later, in 1876, he started walking with a small party and a guide—Alois Burgener²—for a three weeks' tour. That expedition began with his memorable walk in one day from Visp to the top of the Gornergrat and back to the Riffelhaus, he being the only member of the party who covered the whole distance on foot. He did not join the Club before 1898, because owing to the loss of his brother, one of his early companions, his climbs in the Alps were interrupted for some years; but his love for the mountains remained

² (1850-1934.) A brother of the more famous Alexander. His death occurred within a few days of the subject of this obituary.



F. N. ELLIS.

1855-1934

undiminished, and during the 'eighties and 'nineties he made numerous expeditions with his friend, Howard Priestman, to Scotland, the Lake District, Norway, Switzerland and Italy, of which, unfortunately, he has left few records.

Ellis was not apt to talk much about his climbs, but when recalling his earlier experiences he was wont to allude to the length of the walks which had to be undertaken in those days. One of these he did in 1879, when he ascended the Aletschhorn, leaving the Eggishorn Hôtel with a guide and porter at 1.30 A.M., reaching the summit at 10 A.M., and returning to the hotel at 3 P.M. It would be interesting to know what route was taken, but there are no notes to give any indication. He kept up his climbing till a late period. At the age of sixty-six he went up the Riffelhorn by the 'Matterhorn' couloir, and the following year he traversed the Mettelhorn from the Weiss-horn hut over the Hohlicht Glacier, an expedition previously unrecorded. In 1925 and 1930 he climbed in Skye in the spring, while in August of every year since 1919 he went to the Riffelalp, taking many walks, mainly on the glaciers, to which we owe the wonderful photographs of glacier scenery, so often seen at the Club Exhibitions. His knowledge of Alpine flora was also considerable and afforded him a good deal of pleasure and distraction during his later years. One of his friends, who knew him well, writes: 'It is pleasant to recall his unfailing kindness, his gentle humour, and his delight in watching and in ministering to the happiness of the very young, to whom Switzerland was making its first appeal.' All visitors to the Riffelalp can testify to the great interest he took in the Church there and its services, although himself a member of the Society of Friends; and he was regarded with esteem and affection by all who knew him—fellow-guests, guides and members of the staff.

At his own home at Mansfield, Woodhouse, Notts., he was well known for his numerous activities in public life. He had been a county councillor and High Sheriff of Notts., a magistrate and ex-President of Mansfield Hospital, and no greater testimony to his works and ideals could be given than the words used by the vicar of Mansfield at his memorial service when he said that Ellis had been 'a man who, without seeking praise, filled in a quiet way a very important place in the life of the local community. He was regarded with something far greater than esteem and honour. He was held in very real affection by all with whom he came in contact. His life represents an achievement in the art of living—a life governed by a great purpose and brought to a successful issue. It was a life of service, patiently and humbly wrought in the sight of God.'

Ellis's reticence is the reason why his mountaineering qualities have not become sufficiently recognised; he did a great many difficult climbs in various parts. He was a good mountaineer, a true lover of mountains and of all that pertains to them.

F. O. S.

EDWARD BRANSON HARRIS.

(1854–1934.)

IN the person of Mr. E. B. Harris another of the older members of the Club has passed away. He died on Christmas Day, at the age of 80, after a long illness. His ill-health, however, did not altogether sever him from the affairs of the Club, in which he had during a great part of his life taken much interest; and from its gatherings, down to a comparatively late period, he was not often absent. Elected to the Club in 1898, he served on the Committee in the years 1917–19.

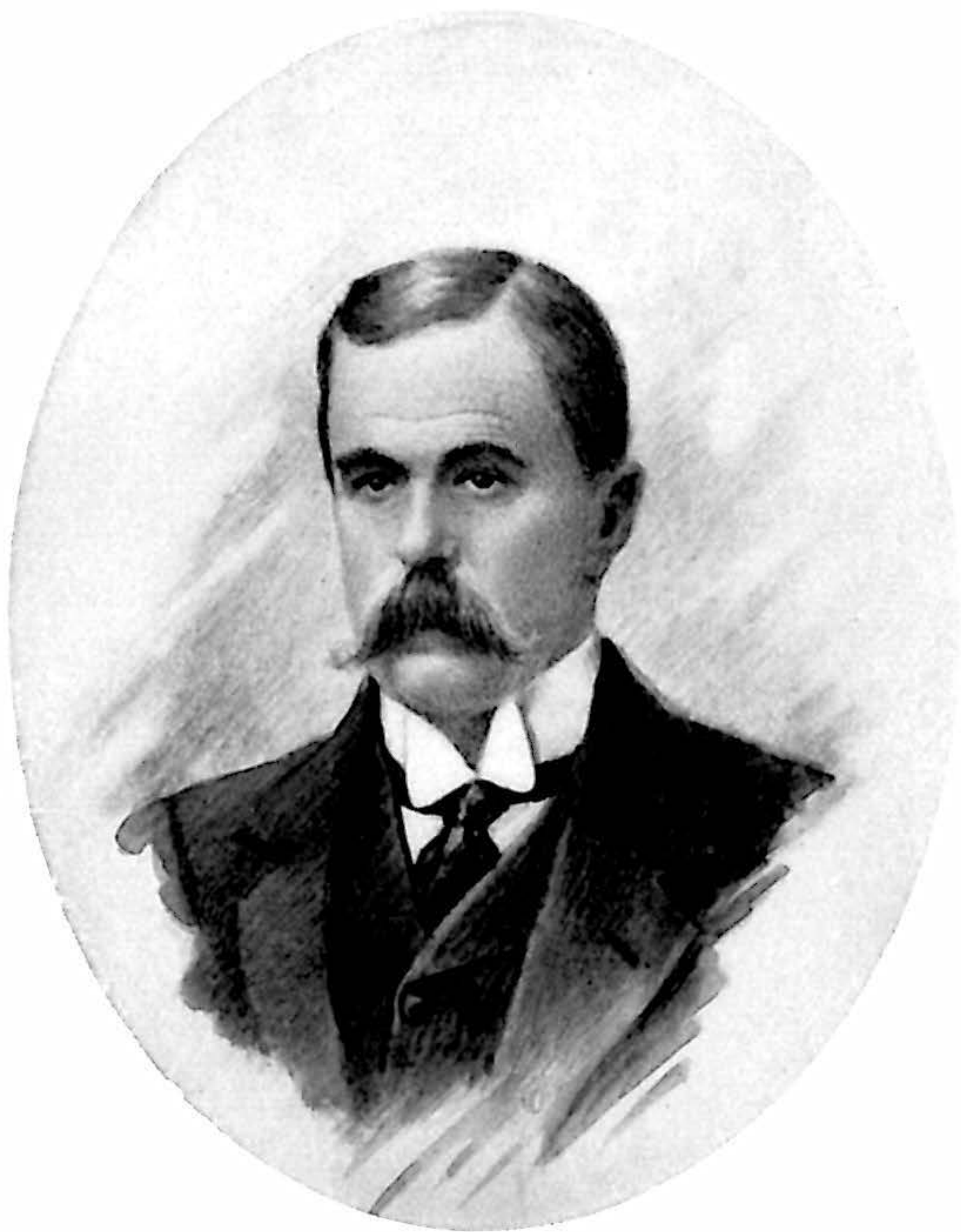
Like many other members of his family, he was closely connected with India, where he passed a considerable part of his life as a member of the Civil Service. It was only when he had reached middle age that he became attracted to the mountains; but, as with many others, when he had once begun to frequent the Alps during his homecoming visits to Europe when on leave, the attraction increased in force, and he was able to indulge in it to the full when, a few years before the beginning of the War, he finally retired from the Service. There were few regions of the Alps which he had not visited, and where he had not made ascents.

He was not, perhaps, from the physical standpoint, altogether well fitted for the mountaineer's job. He was built on a large scale—presenting indeed so remarkable a resemblance in general appearance to the late Lord Kitchener, that he was frequently mistaken for him—and his weight (which, to say the least, was considerably above the average) was naturally a great handicap, compelling him to travel somewhat slowly both in the hills and even on the flat. But his pace, though slow, was sure, and whilst his health lasted his enjoyment of the mountains remained very keen.

As the result of what has been mentioned, Mr. Harris belonged to that class of climbers, commoner in the generation of which he formed part than at the present day, who always remain to an appreciable extent dependent on the assistance of good guides, both before and behind them; and furnished with them (for the most part those excellent brothers Johann and the late Ferdinand Summermatter of Randa), he accomplished ascents of considerable danger and difficulty. Amongst them may be specially mentioned some rather fearsome climbs, not often done, in the Brenta and other groups of the Dolomites, and in the Val Bregaglia.³

His general character and outlook on life were in conformity with the qualities already described. Whilst perhaps a little wanting in initiative himself, he was always ready to respond to the promptings

³ Including what was possibly the first British ascent of the Campanile di Val Montanaia and a new variant on the Ago di Sciora—both in 1911, *A.J.* 26, 211–12.



E. B. HARRIS.
1854-1934.

[To face p. 132.]

of others on whose guidance and judgment he felt that he could rely. He was a true and firm friend, always ready to do acts of kindness to others, and disliking nothing more than being brought into the limelight himself. He was, too, a man of considerable culture and of wide reading—the principal resource indeed of his later years, by reason of the mental solitude which sprang from a great and growing infirmity of deafness. His disappearance will not perhaps, from the causes already mentioned, create a great gap in our ranks, but those who knew him will long cherish an appreciation of his sterling qualities, and gladly associate themselves with this short tribute to his memory.

E. F.

WILLY MERKL.

(1900–1934.)

(*Translated.*)

FROM his earliest years until fate overtook him, Willy Merkl had striven to attain the heights. His Alpine career was an unbroken series of successes. He had accomplished much, yet in his struggle to attain his highest point a sad destiny robbed him of life, as of proud endeavour, before attainment of his goal. Nanga Parbat, that shining mountain fated, he thought, to be the summit of achievement, has claimed him together with three of his best comrades, Willy Welzenbach, Ulrich Wieland, Alfred Drexel, and six gallant Darjeeling porters, Gay Lay, Pinzo Nurbu, Nima Dorji, Dakshi, Nima Nurbu and Nima Tashi.

As we evacuated the higher camps after the Nanga Parbat disaster, it occurred to me constantly that I had made my first ascent with Willy Merkl. What lay between those years is just a sunny youth, one long affection for the hills, begun with the overture in our home mountains, ending in the roaring finale of storm-swept Nanga Parbat. A hundred times were we joined by the rope, but a closer tie still was our common feeling, our common desire. It was ever Willy Merkl's well-considered plans that gave direction to our deeds. Every expedition was of a higher grade than the last, but never were our aims beyond our bodily powers or technical accomplishments. Merkl soon became a first-rate cragsman and his name achieved fame in the Wilde Kaiser mountains. In bygone summers followed repetitions of the Fleischbank (E. face); the direct W. face of Totenkirchl; Kleine Halt, N. and W. faces; *Dülferkamin*; Predigtstuhl, W. buttress, and the second traverse of the 'Schüle-Diem' route—to mention but a few.

The mountains which moulded so much of Merkl's life taught him truest comradeship, perhaps the greatest secret of successful leadership. Later, on his greater expeditions he proved himself as possessing both these gifts. His care in all matters, his intense



WILLY MERKL.
1900-1934.

[To face p. 382

concentration on careful and ceaseless preparations, his meticulous choice in the attainment of his aims, had long predestined him as a born leader.

Merkel, with his strong will and determined efforts for achievement, was of course a success in other walks of life. On the completion of his studies he entered the service of the State Railways, rising finally to the post of a Railway Inspectorship at Munich. By railway workers and staff he was equally liked and respected.

In spite of his work he remained true to the mountains. He was attracted by all the great faces of the Eastern Alps. A large number of first ascents in the Berchtesgaden, Lofer-Leogang and Tannheim Groups rewarded his efforts. Such were the climbs up the wall-like S. face of Kl. Mühlsturzhorn, the forcing of the precipitous N. ridge of Sauhorn, and the great N. edge of Rothorn. Ascents in the Wetterstein, Karwendel and Gosau ranges followed in quick succession in the long yearly descriptions of Merkel's climbs. Among these were the S. face of Schüsselkar Spitze, the N. face of Lalidererwand, the fifth ascent of Däumling, and the third ascent of the S. face of Gr. Bischofsmütze. In 1924 Merkel first visited the Dolomites. . . . Three summers in succession did Merkel wander to that southern land. Among his best exploits were the conquest of the *Preussriss* of Kleinste Zinne, the second clear ascent of Torre del Diavolo, the first ascent of Civetta's S. face and, incidentally, of its N. ridge. In 1926 he met with rich rewards in the Pala Group, where his most noteworthy climbs were the first traverse of the sharp Lasteitürme and the long-attempted N.W. face of Cima di Campido.

Merkel, ever striving after perfection, next turned to the great ice-expeditions—we had many fortunate leave days together in the Western Alps. The great massifs visited were Dauphiné, the Bernina, Mont Blanc Group, Pennines and Bernese Oberland. In 1927 he returned, delighted with his conquest of the mighty Meije. In 1928 he climbed Mont Blanc by the Péteret.

Merkel was a climber after the heroic-age pattern . . . he was no dreamer, he could not stand still and look back. In his reflections on rock and ice he could not think only of the Alps. In spite of professional duties and money troubles, he conceived a great scheme to traverse and study as far as possible the central chain of the Caucasus. In 1929, three German mountaineers, Merkel, Walter Raechl⁴ and I, started for Russia. It was a one-man undertaking, I can honestly say. All preparations, results, etc., were to Merkel's credit alone. All the peaks from Giulchi to Elbruz standing on our programme were climbed, including the first ascent of Koshtantau by the N. arête, and the third ascent of the tremendous [S. peak of] Ushba. . . .⁵

⁴ Herr Raechl's recent death, after his return from Nanga Parbat, is referred to on p. 151.—*Editor*.

⁵ *A.J.* 42, 102 *et seq.*, 116.

The main mountaineering objects for man are, however, the highest: the unconquered 8000 metre peaks of the Himalaya and Karakoram. The great deeds of British and German pioneers lay before us. In 1932 Merkl took over the 1930 designs of his friend Welzenbach and led seven mountaineers against Nanga Parbat, 8136 m., through Kashmir. In the sublime valley-head of the Rakhiot Nullah we beheld for the first time the mighty mountain with its terrific face. There lay a goal worthy of attainment.

The mountain rebuffed the expedition's efforts; storm and porter troubles drove us back from the 7000 m. high Camp VII. As a reconnaissance, however, the expedition was a complete success; the way to the summit was found and Merkl resolved to return.

An ever-increasing number of similar intentioned comrades and friends kept accruing. Merkl was a member of the D. u. *Ö.A.V.*, the *Ö.A.K.*, the Alpine⁶ and Himalayan Clubs. But the device on a man's jacket is not everything. Merkl was the very personification of a true mountaineer, great in resolve and action, retiring in social circles. Word and gesture he was sparing of—such were of no use to him. But when he did speak his words carried weight.

On his return from Nanga Parbat Merkl began at once preparations for another expedition, larger and stronger than the first. His great personality knew how to bewitch the German railway employees. The Sports Clubs of the State Railways collected their coppers and found the nucleus for the undertaking. Merkl's presence made itself felt in all circles of Germany.

Nanga Parbat has become Merkl's destiny. A catastrophe without parallel has overwhelmed him. Close to one another stand victory and defeat, fortune and disaster—while fate decides. He rests now with his comrades and trusty porters, there aloft on that gleaming ridge, higher than most men lie—like unto his great prototype, A. F. Mummery, in the will to achievement.

We could wrap him in no shroud, but deep in our hearts we will revere him as our best of friends, one who knowingly gave his life for the highest of goals.

FRITZ BECHTOLD.

[A portrait of Herr Merkl is given in *A.J.* 46, facing 382].

Illustrations (Expedition Photographs):—

1. View from Camp V towards the Chongra Peaks and the Karakoram; in the snowy basin lies Camp IV.

2. The snow-edge leading to the *Silbersattel*; Willy Merkl died in the lowest depression, the other Europeans higher up, towards the saddle.

⁶ Herr Merkl was elected on March 6, 1934.—*Editor.*



