

## AN EASY DAY FOR A LADY

THE following letters have been sent by Mr. Benson Lawford. They were written to her family by Miss Lily Bristow, when she was climbing with A. F. Mummery in 1893. A parallel account of the ascent of the Grépon may be found in the closing pages of Chapter VI in Mummery's *My Climbs in the Alps and Caucasus*.—EDITOR.

Montenvers,  
6th August, 1893.

Rejoice with me, for I have done my peak! the biggest climb I have ever had or ever shall have, for there isn't one to beat it in the Alps (unless it's the traverse of the Meije, which they haven't done yet, but which Fred<sup>1</sup> doesn't believe is as good). Which you mayn't know it, but the expedition I'm referring to is the traverse of the Grépon. On the 3rd, Fred, Mr. Hastings and I tracked off from here, and camped at the same place on the Nantillons Glacier where Fred and I camped before, and where we were driven back by bad weather (*n.b.* I thought that night that three people in one tent 6 ft. × 4 ft. was a tightish fit; but await the sequel). Next morning Mr. Slingsby, Dr. Collie and Mr. Brodie joined us at the camp, having walked from Montenvers about 4.30 A.M., and soon afterwards Fred and I started so as to get the step-cutting done ready for the others when they had breakfasted. After about 1½ hours' going the others caught us up, they only having to walk in our steps, and Mr. Slingsby tied on to our rope, as we three were to go up the Grépon by the couloir and Fred's crack, and the other three were to cross the glacier to C.P. (a rock so called, I don't know why<sup>2</sup>) and work up by Morse and Wicks' route—their route was easier than ours provided they could surmount one very difficult obstacle, which Morse and Wicks had circumvented by rope-throwing. The two parties were to meet on the top, and we were each to descend by the route opposite to that by which we had come. We found our couloir, however, not in the very best imaginable condition, even at that early hour of the morning, so Fred and Mr. Slingsby immediately decided that the other party must be persuaded to return with us by the C.P. route. Well, it's no good trying to describe the climb; I have often felt, on the climbs, that if I had sufficient knowledge and pluck I could have done it by myself, but this climb was something totally different. It was more difficult than I could ever imagine—a succession of problems, each one of which was a ripping good climb in itself—you will understand well enough that in a climb of this kind there is not the slightest danger for any one except the leading man, the others merely follow in absolute safety with the rope, but certainly with vast exertion.

<sup>1</sup> A. F. Mummery.

<sup>2</sup> See note A.ŷ. 31. 120.

Fred is magnificent, he has such absolute confidence, I never once had the faintest squirm about him even when he was in the most hideous places, where the least slip would have been certain death, and there were very many such situations. It is really a huge score for him to have taken me (*and* the camera) on such an expedition. I took six photographs, and have developed two, one of which is a failure. Well, we got to the top but saw no signs of the other party—we jodelled, yelled and howled but heard no reply and Mr. Slingsby began to be seriously alarmed for their safety. However, we proceeded on our way, along a series of summits (for the Grépon has even more peaks than the Charmoz, which as you know has five). When we got to the final peak, our shouts were at last answered from below, the other party having been stopped by the obstacle I mentioned, where Morse and Wicks threw ropes. As Dr. Collie and Mr. Hastings had been up before, and as it was getting late in the afternoon (about 4.30) they remained where they were, while Fred and Mr. Slingsby hauled up Mr. Brodie with two ropes. Then we all descended to the other two, who had got some tea and bread and butter and other luxuries ready for us—then I took some more photographs, and as the situation did not admit of setting up a tripod Mr. Hastings made a support for me by wedging his head against a rock. By this time it was beginning to get dark and also heavy mists came up, which soon turned to rain. As I had been delayed by the photography, one party (Dr. Collie and Messrs. Slingsby and Brodie) went on, and the rest of us followed as soon as possible. Our party went on ahead, as it was rapidly getting dark and raining hard, while Mr. Slingsby's remarks drifted to us through the pauses in the wind. At last we failed to find the tracks by which the other party had ascended in the morning, so Dr. Collie's party who had a lantern, went ahead, and Dr. C. who is a marvellous pathfinder succeeded after about an hour in recovering the track. Everybody was wet through except myself, who was only partially so, as I was wearing Fred's short waterproof coat. We reached our camp soon after 11 P.M. and *now* is the sequel I mentioned. Imagine six people in a tent which had been tight for three! Sleeping-bags, tent and everything were of course sopping wet, but it was bliss and comfort after our experiences outside. Fred pulled off my boots and wormed me into a wet sleeping-bag, and I lay down in the shallowest part of the pool and felt heavenly comfortable and warm. The other poor devils all had to sit up, as there was no room for them to lie down, and they must have been horribly cold and wet. I actually went to sleep for a short time. We all of us got cramp more or less, and that ain't pleasant, when it is absolutely impossible to move. The wind was that rampageous, that I can't imagine how the fellows managed to hold the tent down at all. As soon as it was light enough we crawled down the wet slippery rocks, and traversed the bergschrund below, and I suppose we got to Montenvers about 8 A.M. faint yet pursuing. That was yesterday. I promptly went to bed after some hot milk and came to lunch with a gorgeous appetite, a very good temper, extremely sore hands, and a general

feeling of gratified ambition. I am perfectly fit today, and Mares<sup>3</sup> and I are going to track round with the fellows to their *gîte*, from which place they are going to make another attempt on the Aiguille du Plan.

Montenvers,  
10th August, 1893.

The day before yesterday we camped out for the Dru, as we have been having such perfect weather that it seemed wicked not to use our opportunities, although the gentlemen were all rather tired from their ascent of the Plan<sup>4</sup>—Fred, Mr. Slingsby and I had the tent, and Dr. Collie and Mr. Hastings camped under a rock, and all passed a most comfortable night. I am getting quite swagger at sleeping on stones. As for my ankle, thanks, it is almost as good as new again. I can now walk all right on a path or a glacier; and on loose stones, one or other of the gentlemen always gives me a hand. We left our camp for the Dru about 3 A.M., it was no good starting earlier, as all the ground was fairly difficult, so it was necessary to be able to see one's way. First we went over a stretch of glacier, and then took to the rocks—Fred and I on one rope, and the other fellows together—we had none of us ever been up before, but I had been fortunate enough to spot a party coming down from the col with guides the previous evening, and had very carefully noted their route, so I had some idea of the way; this being so, Fred let me lead, which I always enjoy, it is so much more exciting. We reached the col about half-past five, and breakfasted there; we had had some tea before leaving the camp. By this time we had come to much more difficult rocks, and though we remained in the same order for about half an hour, it soon became necessary for us all to go on one rope, as no one but Fred could lead up some of the places, and even he only with Mr. Hastings to give him a shoulder up, so he, Mr. H., came second on the rope, then I, and then Mr. Slingsby, and Dr. Collie last. The climbing was pretty stiff, I must say, though not nearly so difficult as the Grépon, which is a real snorker. When we got to the top I was a good deal tired, so Fred put me in a safe place and I had a snooze, and when I woke the fellows gave me a lovely drink of lemons and half-melted snow. By this time I suppose it was about twelve. Going down we took a great deal longer than we ought to have done, but we were all tired; however, we got back to the camp just before dark. Dr. Collie and Mr. Hastings had gone on ahead and had made me some tea, which revived me sufficiently for the rest of the journey. We had now some rather slabby sort of rocks to go down, and the only way we could find was along the track of a small waterfall, so we got drenched to the skin—however, in about half an hour we were down the slabs, and then we had interminable moraine. I should have been quite dead, only Mr. Hastings, the Hercules of the party, gave me a hand all the way, and got me along so quickly that we managed to reach the hotel by 11.30, and very glad

<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Mummery.

<sup>4</sup> *A. J.* 16. 513, and Chapter VIII in Mummery's book.

of our victuals we were when we got them. We all feel as though we deserved some rest, so we are lazing, and talk of leaving here tomorrow for the Chalet de Lognan, a sort of little mountain pub, where there are said to be three beds—I suppose the others will camp on the floor somewhere. After a couple of days there, at the outside, I expect we shall go on to Zinal; where my address will be Hotel Durand—after that we shall be at Breuil on the Italian side, and shall eventually return here for our baggage. We have just heard of the accident on the Matterhorn, Gentinetta (one of the guides here) has had a postcard from his brother at Zermatt—we get so little news here except what one picks up in that sort of way. There is a rumour, too, of an accident on the Grandes Jorasses,<sup>5</sup> but I hope there is no truth in it.

If you only knew how awfully good all those fellows are in taking care of me, you would not feel the least anxiety about my safety or comfort—they all try to see who can do the most coddling, and I am even more cosseted than I used to be when I was alone with Fred. Except a wholesome sort of laziness, I am just as fit as I can be today, and my appetite is large enough to make the chef shudder—I only had my breakfast about 11, but at one o'clock I repaired to lunch with quite unabated vigour. Fred's exploits here are causing a great deal of enthusiasm. His having taken a lady up the two most difficult peaks here, without guides, in the course of one week, and having sandwiched between these expeditions a totally new ascent of a very difficult peak,<sup>6</sup> is really worthy of some applause.

Zinal,  
14th August, 1893.

We left Montenvers with awful pangs of regret on Saturday morning, walked down towards Argentière and then drove over the Tête Noire and La Forclaz to Martigny. It was a most delicious drive, especially the first part, where we had splendid views of the Mont Blanc range, and more particularly of the Charmoz. We slept at Martigny, and next morning Mares, Fred and I came by train to Sierre and then drove to Vissoye—we all meant to have walked up from there, but Mares has not been feeling well for some days, and I think the hot air of the Rhone valley must have finished her, for soon after we left Vissoye she said she really felt too bad to walk, so Fred went back and fetched her a mule. She is better this morning, and will, I hope, be well enough to go over the Triftjoch tomorrow if the weather keeps fine. I hoped to have found a letter awaiting me here, but cannot discover any. Please write next to Poste Restante, Breuil, Italy. We shall probably reach there by Thursday, spend about a week there, and return home via Courmayeur and Montenvers, to regain our luggage, as we have only brought a very small amount with us. We expect to meet the rest of the party at either Zermatt or Breuil, as they intend travelling by the high-level route, traversing the Grand Combin on the way. We miss them very much already.

<sup>5</sup> *A.J.* 16. 502.

<sup>6</sup> Aiguille du Plan, reference as above.

Zinal,  
15th August, 1893.

On Monday evening, about 9 o'clock Fred proposed that we should go up the Rothorn next day, so we hastily made preparations and retired to bed. We got up at 1.30, but the natives were so astonished at our enterprise that, though we had ordered our breakfast beforehand, we had to wait countless ages, and only got off at a quarter to three. I had a moke for an hour and a half up the valley, and very glad I was of it, as there was a colossal distance to traverse before we got to the peak at all. About 7 A.M. Fred told me it was quite out of the question that we could get up, that the distance was too great, but I begged and prayed in my most artful manner, and he agreed to go on a bit and see—we made all sorts of little vows—if we didn't get to the col by 10 we would turn back—at 2 o'clock we would turn back, wherever we were—and so on. As a matter of fact we didn't reach the col by ten, but I concealed the fact from Fred, and at last we triumphantly reached the top 25 minutes to two. Then we scrambled down as fast as we could, and if the old fool of a rope didn't go and knock my very superior hat and my goggles down a quite impossible slope and so completely ruin my cherished complexion! I have preserved my skin hitherto with the utmost skill, but of course having no hat has brought my forehead up into the regulation blisters, and even the rest of my face smiles with difficulty. When we got in about 9 P.M. it was a great joke, none of the hotel people would believe we had been up the Rothorn: 'non, Mademoiselle, pas possible!' They are not used to non-guided parties here and the idea that Fred and I could calmly track up their most awesome and revered peak is quite beyond them—they think we must have mistaken some grassy knoll for the Rothorn.

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## IN MEMORIAM

GODFREY ALLAN SOLLY

1858-1942

THE death of Godfrey Solly at the ripe age of eighty-three leaves a blank in the roll of our veteran members.

He was a great climber, and his mountaineering exploits ranged over many countries during the last fifty years. The Alps, the Caucasus, the Canadian Rockies, Scotland, the English Lake District, all bear witness to his energy and skill, and in each of them he made a number of first ascents, many of them requiring a high degree of daring and efficiency. His first visit to the Alps was in 1885, and from modest beginnings he quickly went on to ascents of first class mountains, and in February 1890 he was elected to the Club with a formidable list. In 1890 he made a memorable ascent of the Dent Blanche, guideless, with Cecil Slingsby and Haskett Smith, when they were overtaken by a severe thunderstorm and had to spend the night on the rocks.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *A.J.* 15. 404 *sqq.*