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PROCEEDINGS OF THE CLUB.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND DINNER.

The Annual General Meeting of the Club was held on Friday, May 5th, at the Monico Restaurant, Piccadilly Circus, and was attended by about seventy Members. The principal business was the election of Officers and Committee in accordance with Rule III.

The President, Mr. C. E. Mathews, was promptly re-elected, as well as Mr. Frederick Morshead, one of the Vice-Presidents. Mr. F. H. Bowring, the other Vice-President, wished to resign his office on the ground of imperfect health, which had during the past year rendered it difficult for him to be present at any of the Meetings. This decision on the part of one of the earliest of English rock-climbers so intimately known to most of the founders of the Club gave rise to feelings of great regret. In Mr. Bowring's place, the Club elected Mr. R. A. Robertson, the head of the Scottish Mountaineers, and it is hard to see how it could have done better. Mr. Robertson was thus preserved to the Committee, from which the ballot had removed him as well as Mr. Roderick Williams. The latter gentleman could ill be spared, but Rule III., like all the others, is inexorable. Two new members of the Committee were elected, namely, Mr. A. O. Prickard of New College, Oxford, and Mr. William Ernest Corlett of Liverpool.

The re-election of Dr. T. K. Rose as Honorary Treasurer and of Mr. George B. Bryant as Honorary Secretary, followed.

The accounts for the year 1898 as audited, copies of which had been sent to all the members and which shew £73 2s. 6d. balance in hand, were then approved and passed on the motion of the President.

The dinner was, if anything, a greater success than that of the previous year, and on this occasion members had the privilege of bringing guests, among whom were:—

Sir W. Martin Conway, Dr. H. R. Dent, and Messrs. Sidney Lee and C. R. Canney.

After the toast of "The Queen," the President proposed "*Success and Prosperity to the Climbers' Club.*" He said that the Club, born only a year ago, was already a healthy and prosperous

bantling—that it no longer derived its sustenance from extraneous sources—and was prepared to get its own living in a vigorous and satisfactory manner.

A year ago he had stated that the healthy and aggressive spirit of the English character had discovered a new sport for our countrymen, and that during the last 40 years climbing clubs had been founded all over the world, having for their objects the study and the worship of the hills.

Our pursuit had not only public opinion in its favour, but even biblical authority. For surely the great Poet of Scripture was not poet only but prophet when he wrote those words, impressed upon our minds by one of the divinest melodies of a mighty musician, "Lift thine eyes unto the mountains, whence cometh help." He called the attention of his hearers to some of the reasons which made our sport superior, in kind and in results, to any other form of manly recreation for which the English nation was celebrated. A country is great, he said, not in value of its material prosperity, but in value of the greatness of the souls that it breeds. To be successful in business was good, but no mere business success would ever make a man.

The man who was a lawyer, or a merchant, or a manufacturer, and nothing more, was often the dullest and sometimes the most miserable of mankind. But the man who, while holding his bread-winning occupation jealously in the first place, yet took his fair share in the wider life of the world, in politics, in science, in literature, even in some form of manly sport; was not only the better fitted for the ordinary duties of his career, but lived a life that must contain some element of nobleness, and was often capable of rendering genuine service to mankind.

It was interesting to reflect that our sports had thriven and multiplied with the growth of the material prosperity of this country. Business and sport had counteracted and sustained one another.

In his younger days there was very little boat-racing; lawn tennis, golf, cycling, football, and mountaineering were practically unknown.

What was the case now! Boat-racing was practised by thousands, and had attained the dignity of a fine art. Cycling had hundreds of thousands of votaries; the very construction of machines had become one of the most important staple trades of the country; and this at least could be said of cycling, that it had been the salvation of the wayside inn, and that it had restored to the English people the beautiful roads and lanes of our common

country, which the railways had taken away. Football was not only popular, but its exhibitions were attended by millions.

But boat racing was after all for the few rather than for the many. Cycling, whether in rational or irrational costume, filled the earth with scorching demons who were not a blessing to society; and football seemed to attract almost as many blackguards as horse racing, where the comfort of the spectators was too often conspicuous by its absence, and the life of the referee was in jeopardy every hour.

How was it, he asked, that mountaineering was the noblest pastime in the world? How was it that of all sports it appealed most to the cultivated intellect? How was it that scholars and statesmen, bishops and deans, men of science and men of letters, senior classics and senior wranglers, had found the best solace and recreation amidst the gloom or the glory of the hills?

The reasons were not far to seek.

When we were "worn and hard beset," what better could we do than go back to the earth, our mother? When Antæus was wrestling with Hercules and was thrown again and again, he rose with renewed strength each time he touched the ground. So did we. We got renewed vitality from personal contact with our mother earth, in her best and noblest forms.

In the next place we were able to separate ourselves, at least for a time, from our daily avocations. Black care ceased to occupy his usual place behind the horseman. We began to feel what freedom meant when we caught our first glimpses of the hills. A new life seemed to open to us.

And the cares that infest the day
Fold their tents like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away.

The nature we sought was everywhere the most beneficent of friends.

If we could not reach the Himalayas, the Andes, or the Caucasus, the blessed Alps were within easy reach of us, pure, bracing and invigorating. And if even these were too remote from some of us, remember that Helvellyn and Scawfell were only a day's journey from London, and that God created Great Wales! Wherever we went our minds were expanded and our bodies restored, unhealthy tissue was replaced by sound muscle, and when we got to middle life and began to bulge beyond the boundaries of the beautiful, there was no specific to modify the protuberance of the human abdomen comparable to walking uphill! Again, their pursuit could be protracted to late periods of life. Dr. Clifford

Allbut, a member of the Club, and no mean judge, had told them "that theirs was a sport that might be pursued into later life, both with pleasure and safety." Of what other sport could such a statement be honestly made! What a future the younger men had before them, and what a blessed reflection for some of those who were no longer young, and whose hair was already beginning to be whitened by the silver of years!

The greatest blessings of life were health and friendship, and surely no form of sport ensured these blessings like theirs.

The most enduring friendships he had ever formed would have been impossible but for his love of climbing. The greatest prizes of his life had been owing to friendships formed in the Alps, with such men as Moore, Adams-Reilly, Hinchliff, and Kennedy among the dead, and Stephen and Morshead among the living.

He had spoken of material prosperity. A good thing no doubt, but not the only thing or even the best thing. No mere wealth ever gave a single human being any real happiness. If all our houses were built of gold, what then, they might cover as many aching hearts as hovels of straw!

What is wealth? asked the President. Not the so much per annum which we were all of us striving and struggling to obtain. Not the hoards of yellow metal stored up in the vaults of the Bank of England. A thousand times, no! But the fairy tales of science; the insight of the painter; the dreams of the scholar; the visions of the musician; the sweet fancies of the poet. These were true wealth, to attain which man has not to grovel but to climb, and before which the goldfields of Australia and the diamonds of Golconda must pale their ineffectual fire! Their craft was the antidote to much of that selfishness which material prosperity too often brought in its train. Their craft, unsullied by professionalism and unstained by cruelty, brought them face to face with nature. It combined the study of natural phenomena with beauty of which no painter ever dreamed.

"Let us," he concluded, "drink to the health of the Climbers' Club, both for its own sake, and for its infinite possibilities. For I look upon our men as the raw material out of which the explorer of the future will be evolved. The triumphs of mountaineering are advancing with rapid strides. Its literature is increasing by leaps and bounds. Let it be ours to uphold what is best and noblest in the traditions of our craft, and to determine that the future of mountaineering shall be worthy, alike of its present and of its past."

Mr. W. P. Haskett Smith responded in a lighter vein, especially commenting on the value of the statistics which he had intended to inflict upon the Meeting, had they been provided for him. The proposal of "The Alpine Club," by the Rev. John Nelson Burrows, received the welcome it deserved. Mr. Burrows, who coupled the name of Sir Martin Conway with the toast, stated that that great traveller and he were old climbing companions. "In the seclusion of my study," he said, "I have with Sir Martin travelled the Alps from end to end. With him also I have wandered in imagination among the snow-covered wastes of Spitzbergen, explored the enormous ranges of the Karakoram Himalayas, and ascended some of the highest volcanoes in the Andes." Sir Martin Conway, in his reply, held the attention of the assembled members for nearly half an hour, and general regret was felt when he resumed his seat. If anything were necessary to justify the action of the small party of climbers who barely two years ago conceived the idea of the formation of a club that, while paying special attention to the mountains of the British Isles, should be capable of expansion in every direction, justification was given by Sir Martin's statement that all his experiences point to one conclusion—that in the vast mountain regions which remain unexplored the chances of success rest almost entirely with the British amateur.

Mr. R. A. Robertson, our newly elected Vice-President, who is perhaps better known as the President of the Scottish Mountaineering Club, proposed "The Visitors." In the course of a humorous speech he remarked that since the government of England had fallen into the hands of his countrymen, the Southerners had sought to avenge themselves by repeated inroads into the wild fastnesses of the Scottish Highlands, where native enterprise now had to compete with the energy of intrepid English climbers who, not being tied down by the traditions of the Alpine Club, had no hesitation in attacking, unaided by guides, even the most difficult of 300 difficult peaks over which he presided. Such visitors were, however, always welcome ones.*

In replying, Mr. Sidney Lee suggested that although he understood ladies had not so far been considered eligible as members of the Climbers' Club, it might be advisable, if not too late, to consider the desirability of electing Queen Elizabeth, on account of the soundness of her views, as expressed in the well-

* We do not assume any responsibility for the report of this speech. We have no confidence in our reporter after 11.0 p.m.—ED.

known words with which she replied to the aspirant who "fain would climb did he not fear to fall:"

If thy heart fail thee, do not climb at all.

The toast of "The President," proposed by Mr. A. O. Prickard, called forth some closing remarks from Mr. C. E. Mathews, which concluded a most satisfactory and enjoyable evening.
