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THE ALPINE JOURNAL.

No. 171. FEBRUARY, 1906.

THE frontispiece of this number of the *Alpine Journal* is a photograph of our first president.

The first article is a delightful account of climbing in the Southern Alps of Japan, by the Rev. Walter Weston. In Japan the climber, sated with abundance of crowded huts, impatient of the plainness made of rough places, by the tread of countless predecessors on the better-known peaks, disdaining the route so scratch-worn by "boots—boots—boots—boots, movin' up an' down again" that to stray from the scarred and graven way argues a subtlety of imagination given only to the chosen few, can go back to the state of things existing at the time when *Peaks, Passes and Glaciers* was first published; and that in these days—when the queue system has to be adopted by an impatient public, waiting at the foot of the more popular climbs, when the mountain railway carries you to the bottom of your chimney, and awaits your breathless arrival at the top, is by no means the least important reason for fostering our alliance with that Eastern Power. When you want to climb your mountain, there you do not go into the market place to charter the services of the next guide who happens to be upon the roll, and who may or may not be worthy of his hire, you do as did your fathers that were before you. You seek out the most cunning hunter at the mountain's foot. Your difficulties indeed begin before this. You have first to get to your mountain, and to get there as best you may, even though this entail riding in a *basha*—a cross, as Mr. Weston explains, between a hearse and an ambulance.

"Its astonishing and alarming gyrations constantly promise the prospect of its use in the capacity of one or other of those undesirable, though necessary, conveyances. . . Its speed averages, under favourable conditions, $3\frac{1}{4}$ miles an hour, and a day out in it affords one of the most violent forms of exercise in which an active man of robust health and nerve is justified, if unmarried, in indulging in."

Ultimately, if fortunate, you reach the upper chalets.

"These chalets are highly picturesque, at a suitable distance, though neither of their most striking features can be either properly photographed or adequately described—their filth and their odours. One soon ceases here to wonder at anything one sees, and still less at anything one may smell."

If this caravansari does not appeal to you, you can bivouac higher up in a ruined woodcutter's shelter, and sling your hammock from a convenient beam. Your hunters will lie on the floor, and should you, in your excited dreams of to-morrow's peak, chance to roll out, and alight heavily on the slumbering face of one of them below, he wakes but to murmur a sleepy apology, "I am so sorry to have been in your honourable way."

Mr. Weston describes his climbs on Kaigane and Hō-ō-zan. This latter peak he trod for the first time, and trod alone. Two of his companions deserted him on the way, the sudden appearance of a particularly fine chamois stirring too wildly their hunter's blood. A ledge about 150 feet from the top was the limit of the third, who flatly refused to go a step further. A refusal perhaps not unconnected with the fact that Mr. Weston himself only reached the summit by tying a stone to the end of 100 feet of rope, and lodging it—after many attempts, in which it showed an obstinate pertinacity in descending upon the head of the thrower—in a notch. With this help, the climb was finished. On the way down the truants rejoined him with the carcase of the chamois, and a pressing invitation augustly to condescend to partake of its honourable inside.

The Japanese peaks, as indeed the student of Pococke and Wyndham would expect, are the homes of mighty and even vengeful spirits. On one of them, the leading hunter, stepped incautiously upon a wasp's nest, to the no small discomfiture of the whole party, who were wasp-stung most unmercifully. At least this was Mr. Weston's hasty impression. True, he did not stop long, or examine the matter with any particular nicety. He removed himself from the ill-omened spot with all convenient speed. So that his impression may have been mistaken, and after all the hunter may have been right—he was native there, and may be presumed to have known. At all events, that night the hunter turned towards the ghostly moonlit form of the mountain, and bowed his head in silent prayer. Wasps, Mr. Weston had said in his haste, really, as he afterwards learned from the hunter, they were “the embodied spirits of vengeance sent forth by the mountain god to wreak retribution on the first foreigner to defile his sacred precincts with an alien hoof.”

Japan has curious Pilgrim Mountaineering Clubs, the members of which, clad in white, make their way to the top of some peak, and there “bring down the gods.” The medium throws himself into a cataleptic trance, and becomes the mouthpiece of the divinity. Alpenstocks are duly branded with the name of each sacred shrine, as are the white garments of the mountaineers.

The paper is well illustrated. There is a beautiful photograph of Fuji-san from Lake Shōji, and a photograph of a Japanese Alpine valley shows a chalet of a curiously Swiss appearance. There is an appendix of Japanese Alpine plants found by the author.

After Japan, Bolivia; an account of a Journey in the Cordillera de Potosi. The editor writes of the Beichgrat. Dr. Workman has a paper on the Watkin Aneroid, which would have been more valuable had it contained tables showing the results of continuous experiments with the instrument, and had its author been aware of previous work—notably by the late Mr. William Mathews and Mr. Whympers

upon the determination of altitudes. The paper contains an illustration that has no apparent connection with the text.

No. 172. May, 1906.

In this number Mr. Freshfield begins his account of his expedition to Ruwenzori with Mr. Mumm. He had persistent and unremitting bad luck. When it did not rain it poured. He had been advised that November was the best month for the attack. It proved the very worst. Ruwenzori is apparently usually veiled in mist. There appear to be only two fine weather months on the mountain—January and July. Mr. Mumm and Inderbinnen—on what was intended as a preliminary reconnaissance—reached about 14,500 feet in the mist, and this was the only piece of climbing on the mountain the appalling weather allowed. The weather exhausted the explorers' patience before they had exhausted its spite. Fogs, rain and sleet were their portion. The damp affected their muscles and their morals. Inderbinnen grew rheumatic, and they had to retreat.

Dr. O. K. Williamson has a paper on the Breithorn Joch and the Dent Blanche from the west. The new pass seems a thoroughly sporting climb. It took the party 16 hours actual going from the Hotel Ober Steinberg to Ried. The Bergschrund presented considerable difficulty. Above it the slope was almost exactly 65 degrees. The pass is about 11,000 feet, and the climbers thoroughly recommend it. They say, however, that, taken in the reverse direction, the descent might involve extreme difficulty, particularly in dealing with the Schrund.

The Dent Blanche climb they cannot so enthusiastically recommend. It involves a slab climb, on which for several minutes the whole party are on the slope, with no possibility of satisfactory anchorage for the leader. The climb begins at the foot of a gigantic couloir near a horizontal shelf in the mountain wall, which strikes the west arête immediately below

the vertical portion near the junction of the middle and lower thirds of the ridge. The climb took $8\frac{3}{4}$ hours actual going, from sleeping place to the top.

Those who really enjoy a thoroughly long day are recommended to study Mr. E. T. Compon's climb on the Aiguille Blanche de Péteret. It involves at least two nights out on the mountain! not so much owing to the actual length of the climb as owing to the exceedingly short time that the mountain batteries condescend to Cease Fire. The party left Courmayeur at midnight, crossed the Bergschrund about ten, and sat with what patience they might under a rock till 2:40, while the stone volleys raked the mountain side. They slept in Dr. Pfannl's gîte. Next day they leisurely climbed their peak. They had indeed the whole morning before them, as they could not venture to cross the face again until the sun had gone off it. The second night was spent at the foot of the Mont de la Brenva.

Mr. Malcolm Ross describes the first crossing of Mount Cook. The party consisted of Messrs. Fyfe, Graham, Turner and Ross. They started soon after eleven p.m. for the North-Eastern Ridge, and were at the top of their mountain at one o'clock, after nearly fourteen hours' climbing. The descent was by no means plain sailing. The rocks were plastered with ice, and there was a bitter wind. Twice came pitches where there was nothing for it but to lower each man bodily down at the end of the rope. Then came 2000 weary feet of ice couloir, with step-cutting all the way down. They started at seven in the evening, and they got to the bottom at eleven at night, their couloir all the time serving the additional purpose of stone shoot. One of the party was struck on the head by a too curious stone. The whole expedition lasted thirty-six hours, solid going nearly all the time, with none too much food. The paper contains more than one unfortunate and unnecessary reference to the weakness of a member of the party. There is a magnificent photograph of Mount Cook, from a Tarn on the Sealy Range.

No. 173. AUGUST, 1906.

The outstanding paper in this number is Dr. Longstaff's account of Six Months' Wandering in the Himalaya. He attacked three main peaks—Nanda Devi (24,379 feet), Nanda Kot (22,530 feet) and Gurla Mandhata (25,350 feet). He did not get to the top of any, but had some magnificent climbing. On Nanda Devi the party's first bivouac was about 17,400 feet. The cold was intense. The cocoa froze in their flasks, even during the afternoon climb. Next day, with heavy loads and a cold wind whipping the snow up into their faces, they took eight hours to reach the col, some 1700 feet above their bivouac. There they pitched their Whymper tent, and spent a bitter night. Dr. Longstaff's boots froze, although he used them as a pillow. Tea was made somehow next morning, but the slops spilt on the floor of the tent froze almost immediately. They had reached a height of about 19,750 feet, when the utter impossibility of reaching the summit that day was borne in upon them. The men were willing to go on, but agreed that at least one, and probably two nights in the snow would be necessary. Dr. Longstaff, who had come out for pleasure rather than frostbite, decided on an immediate retreat. Next day they started for Nanda Kot. They climbed up the north-east ridge of the peak, which got steeper as the snow got worse. About noon Brocherel, the leading guide, stopped. It was absolutely unsafe to go on. The risk of starting an avalanche was too great to be faced, and they could not get off on to a comparatively easy shelf below them on the S.E., from which the ascent could have been made. They turned back at about 21,000 feet.

On Gurla Mandhata they had no better luck. On their first attempt they got to about 20,000 feet, only to discover that they were not on their real peak at all, but on one of its subsidiary satellites. However, from the ridge of this they were able to prospect their route up the big mountain. They started on July 22nd, and camped that night about 20,000

feet. Next day they struck camp about five in the morning, leaving their tent, sleeping bags and heavy kit behind, and, with two days' food and a few extra clothes, began the attack. About two o'clock they had reached a point some 23,000 feet high. In front a steep descent led to a gap in the ridge, from which rose the final arête leading to the summit. Tactics were discussed. If they went on they would probably have to sleep out on the rocks, at a height of 24,000 feet. They decided to spend the night among some rocks on the snow slopes below them. Down they started, with the usual precautions. Suddenly there was a sharp hissing.

" Henri, lying flat, and trying hard to stop himself, came down on the top of me, and swept me from my hold. As I shot down past Alexis, I felt his hand close on the back of my coat, and we went down together. The sensation was a very curious one. The mind seemed quite clear, but curious as to the end, rather than terrified. I found myself taking a dispassionately quiet and detached view of our proceedings. Time seemed annihilated, so slowly did thoughts appear to pass through the mind during the very short time we were falling. The glacier below, with the rocks just above it, seemed to be rushing up towards us at an incredible pace, just as the engine of an oncoming train grows bigger and bigger each instant as it approaches. I distinctly remember throwing off my snow spectacles for fear that I should damage my eyes when we reached the rocks! . . . Then somehow I got turned round, with my head downwards, and saw, a few yards off, a ledge of rocks, with a drop on the far side. I seemed to rise on a wave of snow, and dropped over a low cliff, with Henri mixed up in my part of the rope. . . . Then came a longer drop, which I thought must be the last from my point of view. The next thing I remember was that suddenly, to my intense surprise, the rope tightened round my chest, stopping me with a jerk, which squeezed all the breath out of my body."

They had fallen 1000 feet, and were practically unhurt. They recovered their axes, but only one hat between them. They slept—or rather tried to sleep—on a small rock platform

half overhung by a big boulder. Next day the guides wrapped jerseys and handkerchiefs round their heads for want of hats, and as a result one of them collapsed with sun headache about two o'clock. But for this the peak would probably have been theirs. As it was, they had to sleep at about 23,000 feet in a hole in the snow. They started again at half-past two the next morning, but want of sleep and want of food beat them, and they were forced to turn back about four at a height of something under 24,000 feet. They had spent a week on the mountain !

No. 174. NOVEMBER, 1906.

This is emphatically Mr. Winthrop Young's number. It opens with a fascinating account of two climbs of his on the Weisshorn, and "postcript" on the Furggen Ridge of the Matterhorn ; while the accounts of new expeditions in 1906 contain notes of his terrific ascent of the Täschhorn by the south face, and of the Dom by the south face. The former climb took 21 $\frac{3}{4}$ hours, of which some nine were spent on the last 900 feet !

The Rev. Walter Weston describes an adventure on the Eiger Joch, with such trifles as a raging thunderstorm and a panic-stricken porter thrown in. The Rev. W. C. Compton gives an account of the Finsteraarhorn, by the S.E. arête, as to the final slab of which a very pretty controversy has arisen. Mr. Coolidge has a paper on some early visits to Zermatt and Saas.

Each number of the *Alpine Journal* contains one feature that is conspicuously lacking in our journal, namely a list of new books added to the Library. Do new books ever find their way to our mysterious library in King William Street? Does our library still exist? Few if any members have seen it, and a certain Shipping Company are known to have had a particularly good year! Can it be that their profits are swelled by surreptitious dealing in climbing literature? The

suspicion is dark and hideous. Let the librarian dispel it. Let him publish a catalogue—the club will then at least know something of its hidden resources—and let each journal contain an increasing list of books recently added. For such a cause surely our hon. treasurer could forego something of his accumulated surplus.

