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EVENING MEETINGS.

THE fortunate few who heard Mr. Harold Young's lecture, "A Wayfarer in Rural Japan," on 11th February, spent a most enjoyable evening, tempered by modified disappointment. It is also a satisfaction to reflect that those members who could have come, and did not, have been punished for their disloyalty by missing a rare treat.

We all knew that the Japanese are intensely patriotic, but we did not realise how patriotic till Mr. Young's slides enlightened us. We thoroughly appreciated the spirit that erected, in a conspicuous position on one of the main passes, a monument to an unknown hero, the one body recovered from a transport that went down fighting rather than surrender to the Russians. We appreciated, though perhaps in a less degree, the fuss made over soldiers coming home from the war. When Johnny comes marching home from the war, even if it be all on his lonesome, a triumphal arch, something like a nightmare Rugby goal, is erected to him, and all the village turns out in his honour. Occasionally, however, their patriotism takes a less pleasant shape, that of the gentle taradiddle. That was where the disappointment came in.

The most unkindest cut of all was administered with the Japanese lady. We had all our own idea of the dear little Jappy-jap-jappy, a cuddlesome little creature, with bonny face and bright almond eyes, attired in a brilliant and artistic kimono. Mr. Young's slides and lecture wiped this picture out. Kind, hospitable, amiable, and everything else that is nice, he admitted the Japanese woman might be, but, he maintained, she was not beautiful. Even a pathetic, almost passionate, appeal from Mr. Haskett-Smith could not induce him to unsay his words. After this, our numbed senses were

hardly affected by the revelation that the artistic kimono is rare. In most cases, the garment bears a close resemblance to the snuff-coloured habit worn by St. Modard on the occasion of his historic encounter.

In like manner the cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces, the solemn temples did dissolve. They exist, indeed, here and there, and very beautiful they must be, to judge from the pictures. For the most part, however, they are ramshackle, unsightly buildings, made of unpainted wood.

Now, all this is accounted for by the ardent patriotism of the Jap. His country is the finest in the world (in his opinion), his men the bravest and strongest, his women the fairest and best-dressed, his buildings the noblest, and, as his patriotic brain dictates, his patriotic brush paints, and so patriotism and picture post-cards go forth hand in hand, deceiving the nations.

A minor jar was an insight into Japanese notions of cleanliness. They certainly tub every day, but, when you learn that if there are thirty people in the same hotel, they all wash in the same bath in the same water, you are apt to modify your ideas. There is a kind of competition to be last man in, as the water is supposed to gather strength from those who had been there before. Mr. Young was not a keen competitor. The water certainly did gather strength, but not the sort of strength that appealed to him. When, in addition to this, we learned that he had once caught his landlady washing his rice for dinner in the stream that ran through the village, and that the stream was also the village sewer, we were resigned to be content with our effete old habits.

The details of Mr. Young's itinerary, which lasted many months and covered many hundred miles, can be easily given. Starting from Nagasaki, he proceeded north till he got So Far. Then, passing the inland Sea, he went on till he got to Somewhere Else, and thence he penetrated to Somewhere Else. Then, turning over That Pass, he arrived There, and so back over Another Pass to Another Place, eventually landing out at Tokio. Perhaps all these names are not geographically

correct, but, so far as we were concerned, they convey the same amount of meaning.

Mr. Young does not appear to have done much actual mountaineering on this trip. He ascended the volcano Asama, which seems to be a dull wearisome grind over barren snow-fields and interminable ridges of lava. A magnificent photograph of the active crater of the volcano, together with the lecturer's narrative, seem to suggest as an appropriate description of this climb—*Difficilis ascensus Averni*.

He then tackled another mountain which stands by the shore of a lake. He was first turned by an impracticable pitch in the shape of a Buddhist priest, who forbade access. Circumventing this difficulty, he climbed a considerable height, but was eventually hung up in the thick timber with which the sides are clothed, and had to retreat. This mountain, though reputedly extinct, is very active at its base, hot springs, etc., being abundant. If so, it must closely resemble Bandaisan, which was similarly constructed. Now, a good many years ago, Bandaisan, without warning and with an explosion that flattened out everything in the neighbourhood, blew its beautiful green head off, and distributed several million cubic feet of mountain, lava, and boiling mud over the surrounding country, wiping out every living thing within range. If Mr. Young was acquainted with the history of Bandaisan, he must have been acutely conscious of it during every minute of his expedition.

He next tried Fuji Yama, but it was too early in the year, and the conditions rendered the ascent impracticable. He made a gallant effort and reached a high shoulder of the mountain (if an exceptional steep cone can be said to have a shoulder), when he was turned back by a long ice-slope. Mr. Young thinks a strong party might have reached the summit, but, however good a man may be, the assistance of a coolie, an improvised ice-axe, and a few feet of rope does not constitute a strong party. This, too, was something of a revelation. Fuji has generally been reported as easy. The photograph assured us it was not so, at any rate not at that

time of year, and we could readily believe the lecturer's statement that, in case of a slip, you would never stop slipping till you reached the bottom of the cone, where your end would be pieces.

We learned many other things from this delightful lecture, for which we desire to record our thanks. Amongst them :—

That there are four methods of travelling through rural Japan—1, Most comfortable, comparatively, a jinriksha ; 2, less so, a jerry-built van that looks as if it had escaped from a travelling show ; 3, still less so, a palanquin of sorts ; and 4, detestable, a Japanese pony, which seems to be an equine reproduction of Mr. Kipling's "commissariat camuel."

That it is a beautiful country, in spite of sundry disabilities, such as those mentioned, besides rats and other live stock at the hotels.

That the front of the hotels are at the back (or the back at the front), that you take off your shoes instead of your hat when you go in, and that you can judge of the class of the hotel from the shoes outside. These shoes vary in price from 1/-, the cheapest, to, O my Bond Street patents ! 4/- a pair, the dearest. A shilling pair signifies a wayside inn, and so on up the scale till, when you come to an array of four shillingers, you are at a Japanese Ritz. Mr. Young recognised that the one pair of boots he had would not last the trip, so he tried these shoes, but the great toe string galled his feet. At length he hit on the ingenious device of wearing them over his boots, and this answered very well. As soon as one pair was worn out, it was discarded and replaced by a new one, the boot being comparatively untried all the time.

That, if you want to travel 30 miles at an average speed of 7 miles an hour up and down hill, all you have to do is to eat a handful of rice and wash your mouth out with a little tea. Members of the club, who may here see a chance of cutting Doctor Wakefield's record, are hereby warned that, although Japanese diet is admirably suited to O Mimosa San, it entirely disagrees with Little Mary. It made Mr. Young very ill. In fact he was driven to occasionally, strictly by

accident, knock over a sacred Buddhist chicken in order to secure a square Christian meal.

That our apple blossom puts the much vaunted cherry blossom to the blush.

That in Japan the doctrine, erstwhile nightly preached by the late Mr. James Fawn, holds good, viz., If you want to know the time (or anything else), ask a policeman.

ON the 27th February, at the Inns of Court Hotel, one of our newest members, the Rev. H. E. Newton, gave an extremely interesting account of mountaineering during the last ten years among the New Zealand Alps; and exhibited a series of lantern slides that bore ample witness to his comparison of the difficulties and hardships of climbing there to those met with in the European Alps. The peculiar patience and tenacity demanded of adventurers among the snows of Tasman and Mount Cook, served the lecturer in good stead in facing the depressing influence of a large room nine-tenths empty. The chilliness of his reception by the Club must have reminded him of the climate on the West Coast, where the snow-line is only five or six thousand feet above sea-level. Might it be suggested to the Committee that the atmosphere of our lecture-room would be rendered a little less glacial were an interval arranged for coffee and other thawing beverages, and likewise for a friendly chat? Other features might easily be introduced to make our club life more cheerful, more what it is, for instance, among the Yorkshire Ramblers and other clubs, where a truly fraternal spirit reigns. A complete programme for the winter, with the lectures fixed well in advance for a regular club night, would not be a bad idea.

Mr. Newton had the felicitous lot of being, for ten years, in charge of a parish with the biggish peaks in New Zealand as the ecclesiastical boundaries. He may or may not have been a climber before he went out; but, at all events, he felt compelled by the exigencies of parochial work to pay as frequent visits as he could to the summits on the Great Divide. His efforts seem to have been nobly seconded by his flock, and

also, so we gathered, by the members of another congregation in a distant part of the diocese. The latter gentlemen, good churchmen as they undoubtedly were, would, when they set out to climb Mount Cook, have failed ignominiously to fulfil the qualifications required for admission to the Climbers' Club, with the single exception of an unquestionable taste for exposure, fatigue, and all the other hardships that are such a stimulus to mountaineering. Innocent of experience, and very inadequately equipped, they set out, however, to ascend the highest mountain in New Zealand—then a virgin peak. The ascent took them three years, but they did it, and probably displayed the finest example of pertinacity in modern climbing. Incidentally, they made themselves efficient mountaineers, and their later exploits did not take up so much valuable time. For, in New Zealand, time is valuable. Holidays appear to be short, and the journey to the foot of the mountains is a good deal longer than that from London to Switzerland, not to mention the obstacles created by the dense bush at the base of the hills, the enormous tracts of moraine, and the frightful uncertainty of the weather.

Mr. Newton had much to say about the weather, which ranges from extreme heat and dryness to the paroxysms indicated by a rainfall of 140 inches. Food has to be transported, when it can be got, for immense distances, over the roughest ground. Water, as well as beverages of better repute, has also to be carried, or the tortures of thirst will be often experienced. Mr. Newton's account of a thirsty man squeezing moss, suggested possibilities to an old member of the Climbers' Club, with a vivid recollection of the large balance lying idle in the Treasurer's hands; but, as the Chairman, Mr. Haskett-Smith, observed, the familiar figure of pressing blood from stones would be more apposite in the case thus brought before the imagination.

The absence of hotels, of bridges, roads, and the other facilities proper to a good tourist district, and the preliminary ordeal of a long sea voyage, or a railroadless journey from any civilised centre, will doubtless continue to keep this southern

playground, for many years to come, a preserve for the select few. In spite of the perseverance of our lecturer and other colonials, and of foreign invaders, like Mr. Fitzgerald, there still appear to be many good peaks unclimbed, and a vast region of glacier and snowfield unexplored.

THE last evening meeting of the season was held on 13th March, when Mr. Samuel Aitken gave us some Alpine reminiscences, and showed a series of very fine photographs of Vittorio Sella.

