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Journal: 1898

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THE CLIMBERS' CLUB JOURNAL.

VOL. I.]

AUGUST, 1898.

[No. 1.

THE FORMATION OF THE CLIMBERS' CLUB.

BY GEORGE B. BRYANT.

THE issue of the first number of the JOURNAL offers the earliest opportunity of giving the whole of the members an account of how the Club came to be formed, and of what has taken place up to the present time, and I have been asked by the Editor to put such an account into shape.

The idea had, no doubt, its natural birth at Pen-y-Gwryd, amid surroundings familiar to many of us. In August or September of most years, men who rarely met anywhere else, spent days together on the hills, and found themselves at seven o'clock (more or less) round the well-provided dinner table, dried, clothed, and in their right minds. There, as the inner man got what was overdue to him, and later, when warmth and tobacco had completed his contentment, the work of the day passed into pleasant talk; the older men dropped an encouraging word to the beginners, difficult points were discussed and located, and suggestions made for the next day's climbing. In that congenial atmosphere, where conventionalities were not obtrusive, and the bishop or the man of law shared the sofa with the old shepherd and deferred to his opinions, men of various sorts, but united in their deep love of the mountains, grew to know each other; and there the sense of association, the germ of the Club, struck its first root.

Being of British origin, what else could be its first expression but a dinner? The suggestion thrown out that those who had enjoyed these haphazard meetings at Pen-y-Gwryd might bridge the long intervals by a dinner in London met with a warm response, and on the 19th May, 1897, about forty frequenters of the Welsh farm-house foregathered at the "Monico" to recall old times, with the familiar form of Mr. T. S. Halliday in the chair. At this time, doubts were felt whether anything in the nature of a Club would

be a success, but a strong desire was shown that the Pen-y-Gwryd dinner should not be dropped, and arrangements were made to repeat it in the following December.

As the time for the second dinner approached, it became abundantly clear that from many quarters an opinion in favour of the formation of a Club was setting in, and it was decided that a proposal in that direction should be brought forward. The dinner was fixed for the 6th December—a date which was not a fortunate one, about twenty-five gentlemen who desired to attend being compelled to absent themselves. Amongst them were several whose presence was much to be desired, such as Mr. C. T. Dent, Mr. Frederick Morshead, and Mr. F. T. Bowring, whose associations with Pen-y-Gwryd were of very long standing. The meeting was, nevertheless, a good one, and as it fell to its lot to lay the foundations of the Club, it may be of future interest to give the names of those who were present:—

Rev. J. N. Burrows (in the chair),	Mr. Roderick Williams,
Lord Coleridge,	” C. E. Mathews,
Mr. Arthur J. Gale,	” T. S. Halliday,
” H. G. Gotch,	” Thomas Rhodes,
” A. O. Prickard,	” C. C. B. Moss,
” A. F. Leach,	” L. K. Pagden,
” H. A. P. Genge,	” J. Fildes Pearson,
” E. W. Chaplin,	” G. H. Chaplin,
” Astley J. Morris,	” W. W. R. May,
” Marshall K. Smith,	” Charles Candler,
Dr. E. C. Daniel,	” Henry Candler,
” T. K. Rose,	” C. Hampton Hale,
Mr. Frank S. Pearson,	” George B. Bryant,
” E. R. Turner,	” William Ernest Corlett.

The resolution, “That a Climbing Club should be formed,” was proposed by Mr. Roderick Williams, and seconded by Mr. H. G. Gotch—both, as it happened, Alpine Club men, as well as keen British climbers. Before the chairman put the resolution, the meeting was placed in possession of replies from twenty of the absentees, who had availed themselves of the opportunity given them to state their opinions on the proposal. Of these, fifteen were distinctly in favour of the formation of the Club; four were neutral, or gave a qualified approval; and one expressed inability to join it, if formed. The resolution was then passed, without a dissentient voice.

The first business was to secure a President; and a proposal from Mr. Burrows that the post should be offered to Mr. C. E. Mathews (ex-president of the Alpine Club) was cordially acclaimed by the meeting, and accepted by Mr. Mathews. The Club thus had the good fortune to start on its way under the leadership of an eminent mountaineer, whose unsurpassed knowledge of the Alps had not blunted his keen appreciation of Cader Idris and of Snowdon.

To deal with the practical questions of detail which at once arose, a Provisional Committee was nominated, consisting of:—

The President,	Mr. W. G. Corlett,
Rev. J. N. Burrows,	Dr. T. K. Rose,
Mr. W. Cecil Slingsby,	Mr. E. R. Turner,
„ T. S. Halliday,	„ George B. Bryant;
„ Roderick Williams,	

and when the meeting broke up, the much-debated project was an accomplished fact, with about forty members practically assured. That this number might be increased in the first year to about one hundred seemed the prevailing impression.

The assembling of the Provisional Committee was delayed by various causes until early in February, when it took place in London, seven members being present. The result of its deliberations was the issue in March of the following circular:—

“THE CLIMBERS’ CLUB.

“DEAR SIR,

“It has been determined to establish a Club under the above title.

“The object of the Club will be to encourage mountaineering, particularly in England, Ireland, and Wales, and to serve as a bond of union amongst all lovers of mountain climbing.

“The qualification of members will be determined by the Committee, who will have sole power of election.

“The officers will be a President, two Vice-Presidents, an Honorary Secretary, and an Honorary Treasurer.

“The Committee will consist of the officers and nine additional members, all to be elected annually at the Annual Meeting.

“The first officers will be:—

President	C. E. Mathews.
Vice-Presidents ...	{ Frederick Morshead.
	{ F. H. Bowring.
Hon. Secretary ...	George B. Bryant.
Hon. Treasurer ...	T. K. Rose.

" The Annual Subscription will be half-a-guinea, and there will be an entrance fee of the same amount after the first hundred members are elected.

" The Annual Meeting will take place in London at the end of April in each year, and will be followed by a Dinner.

" The First Annual Meeting and Dinner will take place about the end of April next, on a day and at a place which will be duly notified.

" The Club will be in no sense antagonistic to any existing institution ; but will, it is hoped, gather together all those who are interested in Mountaineering in England, Ireland, and Wales.

" Should you be willing to join, will you be good enough to return the enclosed form immediately to Mr. C. E. Mathews, The Hurst, Four Oaks, near Birmingham ?

" At the First Annual Meeting the Formal Laws of the Club will be presented for adoption, and the First Annual Dinner will follow.

" Yours faithfully,

" C. E. MATHEWS.

" F. MORSHEAD.

" F. H. BOWRING.

" G. B. BRYANT.

" T. K. ROSE."

" 25th March, 1898."

This circular was sent out to all those known as climbers whose names could be obtained from various sources, with much assistance from those who had already joined. It is, nevertheless, possible that many climbing men have not yet been reached.

The response exceeded expectation. Exactly two hundred applications for membership had been received by the day of the first general meeting, and although this was double the number intended to be admitted without entrance fee, there was no other course, either desirable or possible, but to welcome the whole two hundred as original members of the Club.

Such a result, achieved in so short a time, and without the aid of any publicity, established beyond question the existence—hitherto only half suspected—of a large body of British climbers ready for an association from which the organisation and development of their sport might be looked for. No greater justification could be desired by those who had pressed forward the movement ; certainly nothing approaching it had been anticipated.

The first general meeting—for which purpose the Alpine Club had readily placed their rooms in Savile Row at the disposal of the Climbers' Club—was held on the 28th April, and the President took the chair in the presence of sixty-two members.

The proceedings of the Provisional Committee were approved.

The rules of the Club, as laid before the meeting by the chairman, were passed and confirmed, and the officers and Committee were formally elected, as follows:—

PRESIDENT: C. E. Mathews. •

VICE-PRESIDENTS: { Frederick Morshead.
 { F. H. Bowring.

COMMITTEE:

Rev. J. N. Burrows, M.A.	H. G. Gotch.
W. C. Slingsby.	E. R. Kidson.
Roderick Williams.	E. R. Turner.
Owen Glynne Jones.	George B. Bryant (Hon. Sec.)
R. A. Robertson (President S.M.C.)	Dr. T. K. Rose (Hon. Treas.)
W. P. Haskett Smith.	

The objects of the Club were discussed, and a suggestion was made that it should be kept in view to expand them in the direction of botany, geology, art, and natural history, as is done by the Scottish Mountaineering Club.

A proposal that the entrance fee should be 21s., instead of 10s. 6d., was not carried.

The business points having been satisfactorily settled, the scene was shifted to the Egyptian Room of the "Monico" Restaurant, where the President received in all about eighty members before dinner was announced. This was a fair muster, considering how the membership is scattered over the country; but there were again some regrettable absences, including Mr. R. A. Robertson, the president of the Scottish Mountaineering Club, whose presence at the inaugural dinner of the younger club would have been especially welcome.

It was necessary only to glance along the lines of the tables to recognise the great stride that had been taken since the December meeting, and the wide foundations upon which the Club could build up its future. But at this point I find it better to give place to the President, who proposed the toast of "Our Club" in words whose force and eloquence deeply stirred the meeting, and which it would be an injustice to the other members of the Club not to reproduce. He said:—

"I trust that this dinner may be memorable in mountaineering annals. Forty years ago—a period equal to that during which the children of Israel are said to have wandered in the wilderness—a Club was founded in a modest and unassuming manner, having for its objects the friendship and the worship of the great Alps. It numbered about thirty original members. Its first dinner was attended by twelve men. It published a series of ascents and adventures, and the Club, its members, and its publications received from an undiscerning public ridicule, disapprobation and contempt.

"The critics did not know much about it. There is a story told of a certain undergraduate, not very well up in his Greek, who told his tutor 'that he had a contempt for Plato.' 'I should presume, sir,' said the tutor, 'that yours is a contempt which does not proceed from familiarity.'

"Criticism is good for all of us, but it is really valuable in proportion to the honesty and ability and insight of the critic. That Club, with a steadily rising standard of qualification, now numbers over six hundred men; the great hall at the 'Métropole' is not large enough to accommodate the numbers that flock to its winter dinners; and it comprises within its ranks some of the best of the intellectual aristocracy of this country.

"It was found, too, that it supplied a great want, and it was shortly imitated all over the world. The time for ridicule soon passed away;

"The seed,
The little seed they laughed at in the dark,
Had risen and cleft the soil,"

and the children of the Alpine Club became as the sand which is upon the sea shore in multitude. The Austrians were the first to follow our example, then the Swiss, then the Italians, then the Germans, and finally the French, whose Club has over four thousand members, with a separate organisation in every department of France. Then came independent groups, such as the Société des Touristes de Dauphine, and the Society of Excursionists of Catalonia. Then we annexed far-distant countries, and started a New Zealand Club, a Caucasian Club, a Norwegian Club, and Heaven knows how many more.

"Well, it is said that a man 'who sees only what is just before his eyes loses always the best part of every view;' but we have neglected too long the binding together of the lovers of the beautiful scenery at our own doors. The Scottish Mountaineering Club first realised the situation; then the Yorkshire Ramblers;

and last year a Pen-y-Gwryd Club was suggested as specially representing Wales; but it seemed to some of us that union was strength, and so the Climbers' Club has been founded, which embraces England, Ireland, and Wales, and yet is open to all lovers of mountaineering in every quarter of the globe.

"And here am I, one of the few last surviving founders of the Alpine Club, but still, thank God, a practical mountaineer; here am I, rapidly falling into the sere and yellow leaf, officiating like a professional midwife at the birth of this new bantling, which is destined, I believe, to be as healthy and prosperous as any previous member of the great family.

"Why should it not be? There is magnificent hill-climbing in the British Isles. I retain as vivid impressions of Great End, of Lliwedd, and of Tryfan as I do of the Dent Blanche or the south side of the Matterhorn. The memories of West Dale and of Pen-y-Gwryd are quite as enduring as those of Chamonix or of Zermatt. At last our mountaineering ladder is complete, and the youth of England can be reassured. They can matriculate at the Climbers' Club, they can graduate in the Alps, and can carry off the highest honours in the far-off regions of the Caucasus and the Himalaya. We have begun well. The Climbers' Club has already 'caught' on. We begin two hundred strong. Eighty are present at our first dinner. I will not say that every original member has an ample mountaineering qualification. There must be original members, as there must be original sin. But we have no reason to be ashamed; one-third of our members are also Alpine Club men—a good and healthy sign. The University of Oxford contributes a Morshead, a Prickard, and a George, a Cookson, a Blunt, a Godley, and a Thompson; scientific Cambridge sends us Clifford, Allbut, Wherry and Wilkinson, Browning, Wilberforce, and Ewing. The Bar has joined us in great force, and among them is Mr. W. E. Davidson, the legal adviser to the Foreign Office. Thirty gentlemen have joined us who belong to what is erroneously called 'the lower branch of the profession.' The Scottish Mountaineering Club and the Yorkshire Ramblers each contributes its president. Climbing literature is represented by a Haskett Smith and a Glynne Jones; we have authors and journalists, clergymen, and members of the Civil Service, merchants, manufacturers, and inspectors of schools. I see undergraduates from Oxford and Cambridge here to-night, who, I trust have obtained the usual exeat from their tutors; and the best bowler in the Oxford Eleven has placed his services at our disposal. Of such excellent materials is the Climbers' Club composed.

“ Well, gentlemen, some of us know what hard work is in the various occupations of our lives. We must have some alternative, and we are all agreed that there is no alternative comparable to mountaineering. It is a sport which combines admirable physical exercise with pleasures of a purely intellectual kind. It is a sport which makes us young again; and, believe me, that writer had real insight who said, ‘ That country is the happiest whose people longest retain their youth.’ It is a sport which brings us face to face with Nature, and puts us in quest of the unknown. Who is there amongst us who does not share in the craving of the old Ulysses to discover something of the unknown—

‘ To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars ’ ?

It is a sport which enables us to throw off the cares and troubles of life, as Christian threw off the burden of sin in Bunyan’s famous allegory. It is a sport that from some mysterious cause appeals mainly to the cultivated intellect. ‘ Arry or ‘ Arriet would never climb a hill. A few days ago I happened to be staying with a fine old English baronet in a beautiful part of Wales. This baronet had a fine old English butler, and I asked him how he liked the situation. ‘ Well, sir,’ was his reply, ‘ there is nothing to be seen but sheep and scenery.’ But we have learnt lessons never to be forgotten from the music of the waterfall and the splendour of the hills, and that man should be the Club’s own poet who wrote :

‘ If thou art worn and hard beset
With sorrows that thou wouldst forget :
If thou wouldst read a lesson that will keep
Thy heart from fainting and thy soul from sleep,
Go to the woods and hills ; no tears
Dim the sweet look that Nature wears,’

“ Above all, it is a sport that makes a man. It teaches boldness, prudence, co-operation, self-control.

‘ Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates but men decay.’

“ And so, I give you ‘ The Climbers’ Club ! ’ Remember that a Club is an institution towards which every man must contribute his share. May it flourish and prosper !! May each one of us in his own sphere reflect credit upon the corporate body. May we continue to form and to cement those hill-born friendships which are the salt of life, and to enrich our lives with those sunny memories which sometimes swarm like bees, which no mere money could ever have bought, and which no possible after-misfortune can ever take away.”

Mr. Roderick Williams responded to the toast.

"Our Hills and Mountains," was proposed by the Rev. J. N. Burrows, and brought from Mr. Frederick Morshead a drily humorous account of an early ascent, "without guides," to one of the upper ledges of a jam cupboard, resulting in a catastrophe, to be attributed, like many others, to violation of the essential principles of mountaineering.

This "plain tale" ends for the present with the results of a Committee meeting in June, at which it was decided to publish a Journal at the expense of the Club once in every three months, Mr. E. R. Turner undertaking the editorship.

The Committee also agreed upon the steps necessary to promote, as far as lies in their power, the bringing together of members of the Club, in the autumn season in the climbing districts of Snowdon and Wastdale.

The membership has now reached 209, and there are several applications to be dealt with at the next Committee meeting.

Recent Publications.

- THE ALPINE GUIDE.—By the late John Ball, F.R.S., &c., President of the Alpine Club. A new edition, reconstructed and revised on behalf of the Alpine Club by W. A. B. Coolidge, Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, and formerly editor of the *Alpine Journal*. Vol. I. THE WESTERN ALPS: the Alpine region, south of the Rhone Valley, from the Col de Tenda to the Simplon Pass. With nine new and revised maps. Crown 8vo, 12s. net. (Longmans.)
- CLIMBING IN THE BRITISH ISLES.—By W. P. Haskett Smith. With illustrations by Ellis Carr, and numerous plans. Part I. ENGLAND: 16mo, 3s. 6d. Part II. WALES AND IRELAND: 16mo, 3s. 6d. Part III. SCOTLAND (in preparation.) (Longmans.)
- THE PLAY-GROUND OF EUROPE (THE ALPS).—By Leslie Stephen. New edition, with additions. With four illustrations. Crown 8vo, 6s. net. (Longmans.)
- THE GLACIERS OF THE ALPS.—Being a narrative of excursions and ascents. An account of the origin and phenomena of glaciers, and an exposition of the physical principles to which they are related. By John Tyndall, F.R.S. New edition. With 61 illustrations. Crown 8vo, 6s. 6d. net. (Longmans.)
- MOUNTAINEERING.—Second edition. Crown 8vo, 10s. 6d. By C. T. Dent. With contributions by Sir W. M. Conway, D. W. Freshfield, C. E. Mathews, C. Pilkington, Sir F. Pollock, H. G. Willink, and an introduction by Mr. Justice Wills. With 13 plates and 95 illustrations in the text by H. G. Willink and others. (Longmans.)
- A GUIDE TO ZERMATT AND THE MATTERHORN.—By Edward Whymper. 3s. (John Murray.)
- A GUIDE TO CHAMOUNIX AND THE RANGE OF MONT BLANC.—By Edward Whymper. 3s. (John Murray.)