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**WALTER GORST CLAY.**

## WALTER GORST CLAY.

CLAY was born in 1866.

In 1878 he won a Classical Entrance Scholarship at Cheltenham College, thus beginning a wonderfully successful career under Dr. Kynaston. He obtained another Classical Scholarship in 1880, and a Mathematical one in 1881. In 1883 he won the Old Cheltonian Prize of £9 for the best English Essay on the Classical side, and obtained the silver medal given by the College Council to the best mathematician on that side. For three years in succession he was Greek Testament Prizeman. In 1884 he was Silver Medallist for classical knowledge.

In 1882 he won a mathematical exhibition at King's College, Cambridge. He gave it up, and the following year won a Mathematical Scholarship at Trinity College. In 1885, he obtained the Bell University Scholarship and a Major Scholarship of his own College, and in the Tripos List of 1889, he was 9th Wrangler.

He was called to the Bar by the Benchers of the Inner Temple in the year 1902, and went the North Eastern Circuit.

He took a great interest in politics, both National and Municipal. He was one of the two Progressive Candidates for the London County Council at West Marylebone in the election of 1901, when he was defeated by about 200 votes. He was also a Candidate for the Marylebone Borough Council on two occasions. He was a prominent member of the Executive Committee of the London Reform Union, and the Chairman of its Finance and Organizing Committee.

He was also an active member of the Eighty Club, and it is probable that he would have been a Parliamentary Candidate at the next General Election.

Clay's Alpine experience began in 1897. In that year he climbed the Cimoni della Pala and the Cima di Rosetta. In 1898 the writer met him for the first time at Arolla. He was not then climbing, although he had previously ascended the Rothhorn from Zinal. Next year he climbed the Wetterhorn, Mönch, and Schreckhorn. In the year 1900, he was again at Arolla. This time he was climbing steadily, making ascents of well-known peaks, such as the Aiguilles Rouges, Dent Perroc, Petite Dent de Veisivi, and Mont Blanc de Seilon. He finally ascended the Dent Blanche from the Bertol Hut, going down to Zermatt, whence he climbed the Weisshorn, and traversed the Matterhorn to Breuil.

In 1901 he began guideless climbing in the Pennine Alps (making among other ascents that of the Dent du Midi, the Combin de Corbassiere and the traverse of the Grand Combin), afterwards going to the Graians, where he did a number of climbs, including the Grand Paradis, the Grivola, and the Herbetet.

The following season, as one of a guideless party, he traversed the Rosa Blanche, and the Tournelon Blanc, and made a traverse of the Western Oberland from Bex over the Diablerets and Wildhorn, and so eastwards, finishing with the Füsshörner, and down to Bel Alp. Next year he climbed again without guides in the Tarentaise, and afterwards, his party having left, ascended the Charmoz with a guide. His scheme, as he often said, was from year to year to extend his knowledge of the Alps, rather than climb from well-known centres.

Clay had meanwhile done an immense number of climbs in the Lake District, including those from Rosthwaite, Buttermere, and especially from Wastdale Head. He also knew Dow Crag, Coniston, and some scrambles near Keswick.

In North Wales he had done a great number of mountain walks, also climbs, such as Craig-yr-ysfa on the northern slope of Carnedd Llewelyn, and the Tryfaen gullies and buttresses. As a frequent visitor to Pen-y-Gwryd he naturally knew the climbs on the Glyders and the Snowdon horseshoe well.

He had also visited Cader, but the writer has no particulars of any climbs.

In Scotland he had made many Easter expeditions, particularly in Glencoe, while on Ben Nevis he had climbed the Tower Ridge, ascending the lower tower by a special route.

Some years back, he paid a short visit to Skye.

He became a member of the Climbers' Club in the year 1899, and was elected to the Alpine Club in 1902. He was also a member of the Swiss Alpine Club.

As a companion, Clay was a great acquisition to any expedition. He was cheerful, and ready to take his full share, or more than his share, of the work in hand. When there was step-cutting to be done, he was always willing to do it. He liked to take charge of the expedition of which he was a member, and when he had once formed an opinion, he regarded a question as settled. Of placid temper, he never appeared to suffer from the irritability of fatigue. Even the loss of his boot heel during the traverse of the Aiguilles Rouges did not perturb him. Although keen on reducing the weight to be carried to a minimum, he was willing for the sake of saving time on a long expedition to burden himself with crampons.

He was over six feet in height, and a figure impossible to mistake. One likes to picture him as he walked over easy ground holding his axe behind his back in one hand, and grasping his wrist with the other.

The writer well remembers being benighted with Clay on the rocks beneath the Füsshörner. It was worth spending a night out to hear him recite, one might almost say intone, lines from Homer or a favourite passage from Dante, such as the Last Voyage of Ulysses :—

Noi ci allegrammo, e tosto tornò in pianto ;  
Che dalla unova terra un turbo nacque,  
E percosse del legno il primo canto.  
Tre volte il fe' girar con tutte l'acque  
Alla quarta levar la poppa in suso  
E la prora ire in giù com 'altrui piacque,  
Infìn che il mar fu sopra noi richiuso

Averse as he was from anything like display of feeling, his kindly and sympathetic disposition was recognised by all his friends, one of whom has a lively recollection of the care Clay took of him while laid up after an operation. Although out of his direct way from his flat to his chambers, in the Temple, for over a month Clay never failed to pay at least one daily visit to the Nursing Home, often spending a whole evening there.

Clay was a keen yachtsman, and part owner of a yacht in which he spent days together, cruising off the South Coast.

