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BLACKWOOD'S
MAGAZINE.

No. MCII.



Contents for August 1907.

The Alpine Club.

By H. Preston-Thomas.

An Umpire at Irish Manœuvres.

By Col. G. K. Scott Moncrieff, C.B.

The High Tops of Black Mount.

—V.-VII. By the Marchioness
of Breadalbane.

In Purple Bay.

By Edward A. Irving.

A Lady of the Old Rebellion.

By Lydia Miller Mackay.

The Sundarbans.

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A Subaltern of Horse.

Book I.—Chaps. XI.-XIII.

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Heels of De Wet.'

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Twain's Message of Mirth—The
Limitations of Humour—The
Example of the Eighteenth
Century—'Life on the Missis-
sippi'—The Talent of Mark
Twain—Pageants and Sports.

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FRIDAY,	16th " 6 "	SATURDAY,	17th " 5 "
SATURDAY,	17th " 6 "	TUESDAY,	20th " 10 A.M.
WEDNESDAY,	21st " 10 "	WEDNESDAY,	21st " 11 "
FRIDAY,	23rd " 1 "	SATURDAY,	24th " 1 P.M.
SATURDAY,	24th " 2 "	TUESDAY,	27th " 3 "
WEDNESDAY,	28th " 4 "	WEDNESDAY,	28th " 3 "
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BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE.

No. MCII.

AUGUST 1907.

VOL. CLXXXII.

CONTENTS.

THE ALPINE CLUB. BY H PRESTON-THOMAS, .	161
AN UMPIRE AT IRISH MANŒUVRES.	
BY COLONEL G. K. SCOTT MONCRIEFF, C.B., C.I.E.,	176
THE HIGH TOPS OF BLACK MOUNT.—V.-VII.	
MAKE FOR THE ROCK—"LET GO CAPTAIN"—A WALK ROUND THE FOREST.	
BY THE MARCHIONESS OF BREADALBANE, .	189
IN PURPLE BAY. BY EDWARD A. IRVING, . . .	204
A LADY OF THE OLD REBELLION.	
BY LYDIA MILLER MACKAY,	216
THE SUNFARBANS. BY EDMUND CANDLER, . . .	251
A SUBALTERN OF HORSE BOOK I. CHAPS. XI.-XIII.	
BY THE AUTHOR OF 'ON THE HEELS OF DE WET,'	255
MUSINGS WITHOUT METHOD,	279
THE HILARITY OF LONDON—MARK TWAIN'S MESSAGE OF MIRTH —THE LIMITATIONS OF HUMOUR—AN OBVIOUS INCONGRUITY— THE EXAMPLE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY—COTTON AND BRIDGES—'LIFE ON THE MISSISSIPPI'—THE TALENT OF MARK TWAIN—THE SIN OF EXAGGERATION—PAGEANTS AND SPORTS.	
DISAFFECTION IN INDIA.	
BY SIR EDWARD FITZGERALD LAW, K.C.S.I., K.C.M.G.,	287

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THE ALPINE CLUB.

BY H. PRESTON-THOMAS.

THIS year the Alpine Club celebrates its jubilee; and during half a century of existence it has seen its particular pastime take a prominent place among athletic pursuits throughout the world. It is the parent of at least a score of vigorous associations of the same kind, having in the aggregate many thousands of members; and every season witnesses a constantly increasing number of ascents of all degrees of difficulty, from the, say, five thousandth trudge up the snowfields of Mont Blanc to the conquest of some previously unassailed giant of the Himalayas or the Rockies.

It is curious that up to the middle of the nineteenth century the mountains had as little charm for athletes as for artists. It was Ruskin who then set himself to show that the Alps were not, as they have been called, "ugly ex-

crescences on the beautiful face of nature," and it was a small band of enthusiasts (of whom Mr Justice Wills is one of the few survivors) who at about the same time invented mountaineering. They had to face an immense amount of ridicule; there was much talk of "greasy poles" and of a "suicidal combination of monomaniacs." Even classical quotations were thrown at their heads, the heaviest missile of this kind being Juvenal's celebrated apostrophe to Hannibal,—

"I, demens, et sævas curre per Alpes,
Ut pueris placeas et declamatio fias,"

which a cockney wit translated, with perhaps undue freedom, as "Tuppence more, and up goes the donkey." In the first edition of 'Murray's Handbook to Switzerland' we read that "the passion for climbing mountains, so ardent in a young traveller, soon cools—

and they who have surmounted the Righi, the Faulhorn, and the Dôle may fairly consider any further ascents a waste of time and labour." And the third edition tells us, in reference to Mont Blanc, that "it is a somewhat remarkable fact that a large proportion of those who have made this ascent have been persons of unsound mind: those who have succeeded have for the most part advised no one to attempt it."

But gradually people found that the men who devoted themselves most keenly to mountaineering were neither fanatics nor fools; that although, like most sports, it involved some risks, the notion of climbing a peak with its attendant excitement and adventures was not necessarily more insane than that of galloping across country after a fox; and, as a matter of fact, the hard-worked barristers, the men of science, the Cambridge tutors, who were among the leaders of the new pastime, found in it the best possible recreation for mind and body. Perhaps Albert Smith contributed a good deal to its popularity. In August 1851 he joined three Oxford undergraduates in going up Mont Blanc; and his story of the expedition, which appeared in 'Maga' in the following January, set a new fashion in travellers' tales. It was a graphic and thrilling piece of description; and we cannot wonder at the marked success which it attained, although, with the experience of half a

century, we see that most of the appalling dangers, were conjured up by fright and exhaustion working upon a vivid imagination. Thus Smith says that on the Grand Plateau (where one might almost drive an active cow) "every step we took was gained from the chances of a horrible death." At the foot of the Mur de la Côte he sat on the snow and declared he would go no farther. But the guides (of whom there were sixteen!) dragged him on; and here is his impression of the Mur: "It is an all but perpendicular¹ iceberg. . . . Immediately after you begin to ascend it obliquely, there is nothing below but a chasm in the ice more frightful than anything yet passed. Should the foot slip or the baton give way, there is no chance for life,—you would glide like lightning from 'one' frozen crag to another, and finally be dashed to pieces, hundreds and hundreds of feet below, in the horrible depths of the glacier." As to this, the late C. E. Mathews (who made the ascent over a dozen times) drily remarked that the Mur, though steep, is quite safe; and that if a traveller slipped, he would be landed on soft snow at the bottom, and merely have the trouble of climbing up again. Still, these exaggerations did no harm to Smith's story, and a month or two later he expanded it into what proved to be the most successful entertainment of the early 'Fifties. His "Ascent of Mont Blanc," with

¹ According to a matter-of-fact clinometer, its slope is only 45°.

excellent pictures by William Beverley, patter songs, and St Bernard dogs, was produced at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly, on the 15th March 1852; it attracted all London; the run actually continued for no less than six years, and brought Smith a profit of something like £30,000. The performance was not one of a high class, but it undoubtedly had the effect of making some of the charms of mountain-climbing known to the world at large. If its author was a thorough cockney, with no claim to be considered a mountaineer, if his conceit was overweening (even the good-natured Dickens said of him, "We all have our Smiths"), if his narrative was not strictly fettered by fact, it was decidedly amusing and dramatic, and it certainly drew public interest in a new direction.

•The original suggestion for the formation of a club of climbers was made on the 1st February 1857 by Mr William Mathews, of the Leasowes, Worcestershire, and appears in the collected correspondence of Professor Hort, which was published a few years ago. It ran as follows:—

"I want you to consider whether it would not be possible to establish an Alpine Club, the members of which might dine together once a year, say, in London, and give each other what information they could. Each member at the close of any tour in Switzerland, or elsewhere, should be required to furnish to the President a short account of all the undescribed excursions he had made, with a view to the publication of an annual or biennial volume. We should thus get a great deal of useful information in a form available to the members."

In the autumn of the same year the project was put into definite shape, lists were made of men likely to join the Club, and a circular was addressed to them signed by Mr E. S. Kennedy. The first meeting was held at "Ashley's Hotel," Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, on the 22nd December 1857, when the Club was definitely established, and the rules were settled. It started with 31 "original members," but the number increased steadily, and now, after half a century, has reached nearly 700. Its first President was John Ball, whose knowledge of the topography, the botany, and the geology of the Alps was amazingly wide, and who was one of the most ardent mountaineers of the day. For a short time the meetings were held at the chambers of Mr Hinchliff, the first honorary secretary, but, at the beginning of 1859, the Club obtained a suite of rooms at 8 St Martin's Place, where they remained until a dozen years ago, when they were fortunate enough to secure the quaint old house which they now occupy in Savile Row.

The first volume published under their auspices was 'Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers,' which appeared early in 1859, and went through four editions in less than twelve months, while a year or two later a second series in two large volumes was also received with considerable favour. It is not wonderful that the public discovered this new branch of literature to be delightful. Among the writers were men like Tyndall and

Leslie Stephen, John Ball and Mr Alfred (now Mr Justice) Wills. They were equally skilled with pen and ice-axe, and they had the enormous advantage of having found a perfectly new field for description. Many of the summits which they reached had never previously been climbed, and it is undeniable that the narration as well as the achievement of a first ascent has a special charm of its own. Those old stories palpitate with vigorous individuality. Some, it is true, are too plentifully peppered with adjectives, some dwell to excess on the trials of the commissariat, a few dilate on the dangers and difficulties of ascents which familiarity makes us class as very simple affairs; but, on the whole, those early pieces of writing about expeditions into the vast unknown are admirable alike in style and in substance. Modern climbers of the Finsteraarhorn may fail to recognise anything like the "infinitely narrow ridge of rock, with an everlasting vertical precipice on one side and one longer and steeper on the other," which Hardy found in his celebrated ascent; nor is it common for them to be accompanied on that mountain by a guide who, like Hardy's, refuses to use the rope, on the ground that "any unfortunate who slipped would certainly drag the others down"; yet the account of that expedition is one of the most vivid in Alpine literature. Still better is Leslie Stephen's description of his conquest of the Schreck-

horn, this paper being the precursor of many others by one of the most brilliant mountaineers of the early days of the Club. The ascents of the Dom by the Reverend Llewellyn Davies, of the Aletschhorn by Mr F. F. Tuckett, of the Grivola by Ormsby, of the Bernina by Hardy and Kennedy, of Mont Pelvoux by Mr Edward Whymper, were among those described in these delightful volumes; and the editor of the second series even ventured to assert that "the Matterhorn is now (1862) nearly the only giant in the great central mass of the Alps who still remains unconquered."

In 1863, however, when the Club started its '*Alpine Journal: A Record of Mountain Adventure and Scientific Observation*,' the preface declared that the Alps were not nearly exhausted, that the Himalayas and other mountain-ranges in all parts of the globe remained to be climbed, and that the new publication was not likely to starve for want of matter. Certainly the prophecy has been abundantly fulfilled, for the operations of the Club have been world-wide, and its Journal continues to flourish, having now reached the twenty-third volume and the 177th quarterly number.

It may probably boast with truth that its members have climbed every peak in the Central Alps, and it has to be admitted that mountaineers whose playground is limited to Switzerland have now to

content themselves, if they despise tracks already trodden, with finding new routes, or, in other words, with substituting the inconvenient and perhaps the dangerous for the obvious and the comparatively safe. It is curious to think how many mountains which long enjoyed a reputation of being absolutely unclimbable are now considered as almost ordinary excursions. For example, the Matterhorn for many years repulsed men who were among the foremost mountaineers of the day. Professor Tyndall was persistent in his attempts, which had begun as early as 1860, and Mr Edward Whymper was foiled on more than a dozen occasions. But on the 15th July 1865, with Lord Francis Douglas, Hudson, and Hadow, Mr Whymper eventually reached the summit, and it was in descending that the fatal slip occurred which cost the lives of his three English companions, as well as of Michel Croz, one of the most competent of Swiss guides. Nowadays the peak which Ruskin likened to a rearing horse is constantly ascended (with the help of well-paid guides, be it understood) by tourists who have no pretensions to be mountaineers at all, and there are certainly a dozen, if not a score, of other mountains which exceed it in difficulty. No doubt it must always be one on which it would not be safe to be caught in a storm, and which is extremely dangerous when the snow is in a bad condition. But when the weather is good

the ordinary route to the top presents no serious obstacles, and although it defied many vigorous assaults in olden days, it is now a peak up which novices, old men, and ladies climb or are dragged as a matter of course.

Very different from such performances is the guideless mountaineering of which the Rev. A. G. Girdlestone was a prophet and pioneer some forty years ago, thereby exciting tremendous denunciations from newspapers which acted on the principle of the ancient map-makers, "Where you know nothing place terrors." As time went on, a good many amateurs acquired ability, both in ice-craft and in rock-scaling, very nearly approaching that of professional guides of a high class; and many of the toughest climbs have of late years been accomplished by parties of Alpine clubmen alone. Nor in their case has the practice been attended with the terrible results which used to be predicted, although it has undeniably caused many fatal accidents among novices (mostly young foreigners), who, without experience or skill, have recklessly adventured themselves among the snowfields.

It is long since the Alpine Club began to explore various mountain-ranges other than those of Central Europe. Nearly forty years ago they attacked the Caucasus, despite the fact that the 'Standard Dictionary of Geography,' published in 1860, had asserted that its mountains were "either flat or cup-shaped,"

and added that the existence of glaciers was uncertain. It is true that the Russian Government were aware that Elbruz was not "flat,"—a flat mountain being indeed an unusual phenomenon,—and had once organised a military party for its ascent; but unluckily neither the general in command nor any of his staff were trained mountaineers, and their highest point was some thousands of feet below the top. However, the general looked through a telescope, fancied that he saw a Cossack in the clouds above, and reported that though he himself had stopped somewhat short of the summit, one of his followers had been successful in reaching it. He therefore congratulated the Government on the achievement. Afterwards, questions arose as to the cloudy Cossack, and in the year 1868 Mr Douglas Freshfield, then editor of the '*Alpine Journal*'; Mr C. C. Tucker, Fellow of University College, Oxford; and the late A. W. Moore, Honorary Secretary of the Club, had the proud distinction of making what was undoubtedly the first ascent of the easternmost of its twin pinnacles, and of robbing Mont Blanc of its reputation as the highest mountain in Europe. For Elbruz, which used to be considered as being beyond the Asiatic frontier, is really well within it, and its height exceeds that of the so-called Monarch of Mountains by nearly three thousand feet. Some six years later Mr F. C. Grove, Mr Horace Walker,

and Mr F. Gardiner, with a Zermatt guide, reached the top of the western peak, which is rather the higher of the two, and since that time the range has been the happy hunting-ground of many mountaineers. But a terrible catastrophe occurred there in 1888, when Mr W. F. Donkin, Honorary Secretary of the Club, and Mr H. Fox, one of its most active members, with two Swiss guides, were swept away by an avalanche in an attempt on Koshtantau (16,880 feet). This, at any rate, is the most probable explanation of their disappearance; for a party led by Mr Douglas Freshfield in the following year was successful in finding the place of their last bivouac, at the edge of some huge snow gulleys, evidently raked often by tremendous downfalls. The account of the search expedition, in Mr Freshfield's book, is full of pathetic interest, and there is something touching in the gratitude shown by the native chiefs for the removal from their shoulders of certain suspicions that the travellers had been the victims of foul play.

In 1879-80 Mr Edward Whymper made his famous explorations in the Andes, ascending Chimborazo (20,475 feet) and Cotopaxi (19,613 feet), as well as seven other giants of Ecuador, of which the lowest was about the same height as Mont Blanc. He had to suffer a good deal from the trickiness of the Ecuadorians, whom he characterised as a particularly "promising" people; and he

came to the conclusion that the phrase "my word is my bond" had to be construed with a remembrance of the value of South American bonds in the money market. But he certainly succeeded in investing the country with more interest than it has afforded to investors in general. In 1897 Mr E. A. Fitzgerald, who had already distinguished himself in the New Zealand Alps, successfully attacked the tremendous peak of Aconcagua (23,080 feet), and the scarcely less imposing Tupungato; while in the following year Sir Martin Conway scaled Illemani (21,200 feet), and attempted the still higher pinnacle of Sorato, in the Bolivian portion of the range.

In the Himalayas Mr W. W. Graham, an active member of the Club, with two Swiss guides, made an expedition to Sikkim as long ago as 1883, and claimed to have ascended Kabru, a peak of about 24,000 feet; but considerable doubts have been thrown on the authenticity of this achievement, there being some ground for supposing that he was mistaken as to the point which he had attained. However this may be, a large number of mountaineering expeditions in the Himalayas have since been made by Mr Douglas Freshfield, Sir Martin Conway, Dr T. G. Longstaff, and others. Probably the greatest height incontestably at-

tained on this earth's surface before the present summer¹ was that of 23,394 feet, gained some four years ago by Dr William Hunter Workman on the so-called Pyramid Peak in Baktistan; and it is worth notice that Mrs Workman reached the summit of a mountain only about a thousand feet short of that tremendous altitude.

This success suggested the possibility of the ascent of Mount Everest itself, and the Royal Geographical Society and the Alpine Club recently combined in promoting an expedition for the purpose. It was to consist of Major the Hon. Charles Bruce, who has done wonders in training the Ghurkas of his regiment as climbers; of Dr Longstaff, who has had much experience of Himalayan exploration; and of Mr Arnold Mumm, late Hon. Secretary of the Alpine Club. But although Lord Curzon had actually initiated the project, Mr Morley peremptorily prohibited its execution, on the ground that it would involve crossing the frontier, and "it was inexpedient to raise the question of facilities for travellers in Tibet with the authorities of Lhasa." As Mount Everest is about four hundred miles from Lhasa, and in an almost uninhabited region, it is difficult to understand why, despite the opinion of the late Viceroy, Mr Morley should have considered it an act of undue presumption even to ask the Tibetan Government

¹ A Reuter's telegram has lately announced that this record has been beaten by Dr Longstaff's ascent, last June, of Mount Trisul (23,406 feet), in the Samsag range. But details are not yet available.

whether they had any objection. However, as long as this diplomatic delicacy prevails, so long will it be impossible to solve the problem whether the 29,000 feet of the highest mountain in the world can be regarded as practicable for human thews and sinews, and, what is more, for human hearts and lungs.

A very distinguished member of the Club, namely, the Duke of the Abruzzi, has succeeded in two of the greatest mountaineering achievements of recent times. The grandson of Victor Emmanuel is a hereditary cragsman. About a dozen years ago he made the ascent of the Matterhorn up the tremendous precipices of rock which rise from the Zmutt glacier, and he has accomplished various other stiff climbs in the Alps. In 1897 he led an elaborate expedition for the conquest of Mount St Elias. Of this peak little was known till lately, though it made a strong impression on early explorers of the Alaskan coast as a colossal beacon of ice visible from the sea at an enormous distance. It used to be regarded as an active volcano, and Mr Douglas Freshfield was told by Tennyson that he had it in his mind when he drew the picture of landscape in "The Palace of Art":—

"And one, a foreground black with stones and slags,

Beyond, a line of heights, and higher
All barr'd with long white cloud the
scornful crags,

And highest, snow and fire."

It towers up to a height of rather over 18,000 feet, and

its summit is wholly British, being about two miles east of the frontier between Canada and the United States. Previous assaults had for the most part failed in consequence of the vast expanse of snow and ice which separated it from the base of supplies. But the Duke of the Abruzzi, who seems personally to have made all the arrangements, and to have planned each day's route, must be regarded as the Carnot of mountaineering, and his success was complete.

Last year the Duke turned his attention to Africa, journeyed through Uganda, and climbed no less than fourteen summits of the Ruwenzori range, including the highest of all (16,815 feet), to which he gave the name of the Queen of Italy, and another, of almost equal altitude, which he gracefully christened after the Queen of England. The Duke described his journey in an admirable paper which he read before the Royal Geographical Society, in the presence of the King and the Prince of Wales, at the beginning of this year, and he was able to show that geography and science had largely profited by his expedition, and that, in the words of Mr Freshfield (himself a climber of numberless peaks in Europe, Asia, and Africa), "mountaineers had succeeded after many experienced travellers who were not mountaineers had failed, in lifting the veil of centuries and giving the world accurate knowledge of a most interesting and fascinating region, the snows of the Nile."

Among the other ranges

which have furnished occupation for the climber may be specially mentioned the Rockies, and the Alps of New Zealand, as well as those of Japan—which now possesses a vigorous Alpine Club of its own. And it is worth remembering that Mr Bryce, at present H.M. Ambassador at Washington, and lately President of the Alpine Club, was Noah's immediate successor in the ascent of Mount Ararat—from which he proudly brought down a piece of wood bearing evident traces, according to a distinguished Admiral, of exposure to sea water. So at least he once informed the Club, though with a suspicious twinkle.

There is, however, one mountainous portion of the earth's surface which still awaits the explorer. New Guinea is said to possess some magnificent ranges, but owing to the presence of various tribes of particularly aggressive and hungry cannibals, the traveller's difficulty in procuring food would be supplemented by the danger of being converted into it. This risk has not yet been faced.

Some of the most thrilling narratives of adventure in the whole range of literature have been given to the Club at its monthly meetings. One that happens to stand out among my old recollections must have been read more than thirty years ago, and described the first ascent of Monte Rosa from the Italian side. Everybody knows that the climb from the Gorner Glacier presents no particular difficulty or danger. But from Macugnaga

the rosy peak is separated by huge cliffs of ice, which rise for a sheer height not far short of nearly 10,000 feet from the valley, and are perhaps the most imposing sight in the Alps. Some of the boldest guides in Switzerland were asked to try the ascent, but when they saw that on each summer afternoon the whole mountain-side was raked by discharges of hundreds of tons of snow and ice and rocks they declined to subject themselves and their employers to the prospect, which in their opinion almost amounted to a certainty, of being under fire as dangerous as that of the most deadly artillery. However, a local guide named Im-seng believed he had thought out a route which would be fairly free from avalanches, and three members of the Alpine Club (one of them a distinguished Senior Wrangler) were ready to make the attempt. On the 26th July 1873 the party, consisting of Messrs W. M. and R. Pendlebury and the Rev. C. Taylor, with Gaber, Im-seng, and Oberto as guides, spent the night on some precipitous rocks just below the great icefall, and started at 2 A.M. From five o'clock onwards their course was eagerly scanned from the balcony of the Macugnaga Hotel. Deviously and slowly they ascend; but their guide has chosen his track with consummate wisdom, and the avalanches fall elsewhere. They are seen to stop for their morning meal, and a shudder runs through the watchers below, who note

where the halt is made. For just above the party there is a huge *serac*, containing perhaps 1000 tons of ice, which is being rapidly loosened by the summer sun, and is evidently tottering to its fall. Will they be swept to swift destruction? It is a mere question of time, and with a feeling of relief the spectators see them deliberately continue their course. It is not till they are far out of the way of danger—so far, indeed, that they are not aware of the escape which they have had—that the huge mass slowly heels over, detaches itself from the mountain, and plunges down, breaking into countless fragments in its descent to the glacier below. Along narrow ledges of rock with little resting-place for foot or hand, over crags so steep that the first man seems to wriggle up by enjoying a special immunity from the ordinary laws of gravitation, although by judicious use of the rope progress is made possible for his successors, up *coulloirs* of hard ice in which each step has to be laboriously hewn, across crevasses thinly bridged, and along ridges of snow with a yawning gulf on each side, they make their way, and at last their boldness is crowned with success. They attain the topmost peak of Monte Rosa, make a tedious passage over snowfields soft with the afternoon sun, and finally reach the Riffel Hotel in the evening after one of the most risky expeditions on record.

It was, indeed, a great deal

too risky. The merits of mountaineering as a manly pastime are unquestionable; but one must draw the line somewhere, and most of us are inclined to draw it at avalanches. Every mountaineer must often be in a position where, in the old guide-book phrase, a single slip would hurl him to destruction. On many mountains, one step may lead from the sublime, not to the ridiculous, but to the tragic. Still, there is no reason, with ordinary care, why that step should be taken; whereas if you are clinging for six or eight hours to the side of an ice-cliff on the mere chance that the avalanches which are falling all around may not happen to come in your direction, you are courting a danger against which you are perfectly helpless, and are giving your heirs an undue chance. It is true that this particular ascent has since been accomplished on several occasions—once or twice even without guides. But the conviction that the risk was unjustifiable is confirmed by the fact that Ferdinand Imseng, already mentioned as having planned the original route and led the first expedition, perished some years later in an attempt to repeat the exploit, being swept away by an avalanche, which also engulfed Signor Marinelli and a Tyrolese guide.

Another ascent to which, if to anything, the abominable adjective "sensational" might well be applied, is that of the Aiguille du Dru, to all appearance the most absolutely in-

accessible of all the gigantic spires of rock which tower up near Mont Blanc. It long defied all assailants, and although a Chamonix guide once announced to his credulous village that he had reached the summit alone and unaided, and was even allowed to describe in the 'Annuaire' of the French Alpine Club how he had crossed impracticable crevasses, scaled impossible rocks, let himself down by a rope from crag to crag, and frequently had to repeat this last performance (presumably climbing up again each time to untie the cord), the mountaineering world unanimously pronounced him to be an inaccurator; and I fancy that "terminological" was not precisely the adjective generally applied to his "inexactitude." The Dru was actually first climbed by Messrs C. T. Dent and J. W. Hartley, with two Oberland guides; and nothing could be more delightful than the paper in which Mr Dent described the ascent, with its thrilling incidents, and the extraordinary difficulties which were overcome only by a splendid combination of boldness and skill. No more pleasant mixture of graphic narrative and jovial humour was ever given to the Alpine Club.

But more important than the monthly meetings of the Club are its annual dinners, of which, as I have only missed a couple in a good deal over a quarter of a century, I may claim to have considerable experience. They were first held at Willis's Rooms; then

there was a migration to the Hôtel Métropole; and of late the large hall of the Hôtel Cecil has been utilised; but the change of the *genius loci* has not prevented a high standard of post-prandial oratory from being habitually maintained. Leslie Stephen was always particularly amusing, and used to take delight in making attacks upon the wretched people who were unable to enjoy mountaineering for its own sake, and must needs be perpetually trying to carry inconvenient scientific instruments into inaccessible places in order to record inaccurate results. He deplored the sadness of seeing a person sitting painting in a valley who might otherwise be making a magnificent ascent, although he once congratulated Sir Robert Collier on being able to turn from barristers and solicitors and the dark side of human nature to depict the sunlight beauties of the Alps with an artist's pencil.

At one dinner Mr Grohmann, who was an early explorer of the Zermatt Valley, gave a graphic account of the earthquake which wrought such devastation there many years ago. He had just crossed the bridge that spans the torrent, when there was a trembling of the ground, the cliffs on each side seemed to close in, huge trees torn up by the roots slithered down the mountain side, enormous blocks of granite were detached from the main mass, and the whole air was filled with missiles of every sort and size. This wild scene was watched by Mr Grohmann

from the fortunately safe shelter of an overhanging rock under which he had crept, and his description gave his audience a vivid notion of nature breaking out into universal avalanche.

For many years Mr C. E. Mathews, known in the Midlands as Mr Chamberlain's chief henchman at Birmingham, was pretty sure to enliven the dinner with a speech full of humour. Few men were better qualified to speak on Alpine subjects. His passage of the Col de Trélatête, which involved the climbing, *à cheval*, along the crest of an ice-wave only a few inches wide and flanked by unfathomable crevasses, is still remembered among mountaineers as a notable exploit; and the account of his ascent of the Jägerhorn and the Lyskamm from the Italian side is a model of graphic narrative. His great delight was to break a lance with the Philistines who scoffed at mountaineering owing to their invincible ignorance, and he once told for their benefit the story of the Oxford undergraduate who, when driven to desperation in a *vivâ voce* examination on the "Dialogues," at last declared that he had "a contempt" for Plato. "Sir," rejoined the examiner, "it is plain to me that your contempt has not been engendered by familiarity, and your *testamur* will be refused."

Mr F. C. Grove figured prominently on various occasions among the after-dinner speakers; and once, in describing some special experiences, he suggested that if ordinary

mountains do not afford sufficient excitement there are always the volcanoes. He declared that his most vivid recollection of the heavenly feeling "Thank goodness I am down again" was after having been on the top of a volcano showing signs of an imminent eruption; and the thought that, if he were projected into the air, he would at least begin his post-mortem career in the right direction, had afforded little solace to his agitated feelings. *

Mr C. F. Dent also frequently enlivened the proceedings, and it may have been at one of these dinners that he described his bed-covering in an Alpine hut as "a collection of second-hand holes which they called a blanket," and that he referred to the "flea in his ear," with which an unwashed and incompetent guide was dismissed, as "an addition which was probably superfluous."

Mr Edward Whympster, too, whose mountain exploits have perhaps been more brilliant and more varied than those of any other living man, has often sketched his adventures with dry humour for the benefit of the Alpine Club. A sentence of his which dwells vividly in my memory is one in the prelude to the account of his Greenland journey, when he told us how a Bishop commissioned to convert the Eskimo was prevented by a broad belt of ice from landing. This was represented as the saddest possible case of ecclesiastical disappointment. The Bishop could see the fat flocks and herds, but could not tithe them; he could distinguish the natives,

but could not preach to them; in fact, he could see his See but could not say his say, and was thus hindered from exposing himself to the risk of being converted, like Bishop Colenso, from the errors of Christianity.

Many celebrities have figured at the Club dinners. The late Lord Coleridge once charmed us by his silver-tongued eloquence, making, however, the confession (singular in the mouth of a relative of the poet who was one of the first to celebrate mountain beauty) that he had never set eyes on a snow-peak or a glacier. On the same occasion, Matthew Arnold made a speech of which the quaintness and the poetry more than atoned for the awkwardness of its delivery. Mr Birrell, always admirable as an after-dinner speaker, has several times elicited much hearty laughter from lungs fortified with Swiss air; and the same may be said of Sir F. C. Gould, who is as happy in his verbal witticisms as in the products of his pencil. Mr Justice Wills, Lord Justices Bowen and Stephen, and at least a dozen other judges, Professors Tyndall and Huxley, Sir Martin Conway, Mr Bryce, Mr Stutfield, the Bishop of Bristol (now President of the Club), and many other well-known men *quos dicere longum*, have also taken a large share in contributing to the joviality of these annual celebrations.

On one occasion Mr Ruskin was present as a guest, and was so well satisfied with his company that he joined the Club, and continued a member

(from 1869 to 1882) until his long illness overcame him. In 1878 he wrote to the Editor of the Journal proposing to contribute to it a paper on Alpine Art, his opinion being summed up in the words that "if an artist could paint an icicle or an opal he might in time paint an Alp [? a snow-peak]; but if he will first try a branch in hoar-frost and succeed, I shall like to see it." Unfortunately the progress of his malady prevented him from carrying out his intention. He had previously said, "the Alps are meant to be seen as the stars and lightning are, not painted." Against this utterance, however, may be set the well-known passage in 'Modern Painters,' in which he expresses a hope that Alpine scenery will not continue to be neglected, as it contains "a fountain of feeling yet unopened, a chord of harmony yet untouched by art," and although "we do not want chalets and three-legged stools, cow-bells and buttermilk," yet we are longing to have "the pure and holy hills treated as a link between heaven and earth." In Turner's time the upper Alps were not painted, because they were unknown regions rather than because they were unpaintable. Nowadays artists spend long summers among the glaciers, and some men of the modern school of landscape can faithfully reproduce even the rosy flush of the snows at dawn or the unearthly blue of the great crevasses.

The Club may fairly claim an important share in the marked advance in Alpine

art which has taken place of late years. Everybody recollects the old kind of picture of a Swiss mountain, with crags which recalled the gingerbread of our youth, snow which reminded us of the sugared surface of the wedding-cake of our maturer years, and glaciers apparently composed of wisps of cotton-wool, while spikes of rock stood up naked and unabashed, with no more atmosphere than surrounds Fujisan on a Japanese tea-tray. But early in its existence the Club established annual exhibitions of Alpine pictures, and a good many of the finest landscape-painters of the day were found willing to be represented. It was not unnatural that a high standard should prevail, for these works had to run the gauntlet of expert criticism. The painter who evolves a mountain out of his inner consciousness, who constructs conventional clouds in his studio, and gains his notion of glaciers at second-hand, will not pass muster with men who habitually devote themselves to making acquaintance with the strength of the hills, who are familiar with the broken crags of the Dolomites, who have seen wild storms among the spires of the Oberland, who know the blue haze of the icy depths and the sunrise tints on the snowy heights. It was at one of these exhibitions that Watts first showed his great picture of "Chaos" as "an example of the place of mountains in the poetry of art"; and also the highly imaginative work which he

described as "a reminiscence of a vision of one of the peaks of the Mont Blanc range," and in which the magnificently painted clouds formed themselves into huge brooding figures reclining on the mountain. Other Academicians like Professor Herkomer (who has given some vigorous scenes in Tyrol), Alfred East, and Richmond, have been among the contributors. It is not too much to say, however, that M. Loppé, the well-known Chamonix artist, retains his long-unrivalled supremacy in the depiction of snow and ice; while Mr Colin Phillip has often succeeded in the difficult feat of combining accuracy of detail with poetical effect in his rendering of rocks, and Mr E. T. Compton has shown with excellent effect the sunny side of Swiss landscape. Artists in black and white, too, like Mr E. Whymper, Mr M'Cormick, and Mr H. Willink, have found in mountain expeditions striking subjects for their pencils.

Of photographs the Club has also annually brought together a collection, and this branch of art is making rapid strides. Time was when the brothers Bisson of Paris possessed almost a monopoly of Alpine photography, and there is a marked contrast between their early works, produced in spite of the drawback of having to transport huge apparatus from place to place, and the really artistic representations of all sorts of mountains, from all kinds of positions, which are now obtained by anybody who chooses

to carry a pocket camera. A comparison between the illustrations of the books published thirty or forty years ago and those of the present day (such, for example, as Mummery's 'Climbs,' or Mr Freshfield's monumental work on the Caucasus) shows how much the advance in the so-called "art-science" has done for the literature of travel.

The Club has also had exhibitions of various kinds of specialities—tents, ropes, photographic appliances, Alpine antiquities, and the like; and has investigated particular subjects of practical or scientific importance, such as the breaking-strain of ropes, the methods of map-making, the measurement of heights, and the effect of rarefaction of the air. On this last question much evidence has been accumulated, but no definite conclusion seems yet to have been reached. Sceptics declare that the term is only a scientific name for want of training, and that aeronauts have ascended far higher than any mountaineers without suffering inconvenience. On the other hand, wide experience shows that strenuous exertion at a height of, say, 20,000 feet¹ is at any rate difficult, and is often attended with nausea, palpitations, nose-bleeding, and similar symptoms.

I have left myself no room to give illustrations of the

very considerable influence which the Club has exercised in all sorts of matters relating to mountaineering; nor have I space to say anything about the Club-house at the top of Savile Row, which was built by Lord Burlington early in the eighteenth century, or of its particularly convenient picture-gallery (described by Horace Walpole after going to some amateur theatricals there), or the library, which contains a comprehensive collection of books and maps, old and new, relating to mountain-ranges throughout the world.

Next December will witness a notable gathering of mountaineers. By the kindness of the Benchers of Lincoln's Inn, the dinner will be held at their hall, undoubtedly one of the finest in London; and the committee have decided to mark the occasion by inviting a representative of each of the leading foreign Alpine clubs, and various persons prominent in art, science, literature, politics, &c., as special guests. An exhibition of Alpine pictures will be held, and the Jubilee will be worthily celebrated. Despite the assertion that "a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things," it is scarcely likely that visitors will be unduly depressed by the memory of the sunlit glories of the great ice-world, even when contrasted with the fogs of a London December.

¹ At a far lower altitude, namely the top of Monte Rosa, two of my guides' noses bled rather copiously. When, however, I mentioned the fact at the *Riffel table d'hôte* its scientific significance was unkindly ignored by a lady who asked, "How many noses had your guide?" I had to explain that she had put the apostrophe in the wrong place.

AN UMPIRE AT IRISH MANŒUVRES.

BY COLONEL G. K. SCOTT MONCRIEFF, C.B., C.I.E.

THE mimic warfare of peace manœuvres is more dependent than the uninitiated would imagine on the accidents of country and climate. Readers of 'Maga' will hardly need to be reminded of the graphic description in a recent number¹ of a "Camp of Instruction" in Northern India; and one might suppose that, with slight modifications, such a description would apply to similar operations in any fairly open country. Yet, though the object is the same, the directing staff guided by the same rules, and to a certain extent the troops drawn from the same sources, a camp of instruction is as different from the same institution (albeit called by a different name) in Ireland as the chase of the mighty boar differs from fox-hunting. Both are of the nature of a game, both aim at instruction, both have certain features in common, but in all details there is every difference.

Climate, of course, plays a most important part. In India, in the glorious cold weather, clear and sunny skies are the rule, not the exception, though the nights may be bitterly cold and dust an ever-present nuisance. In Ireland one is fortunate if a week passes without rain, and that,

too, of a steady, soaking character. Dust, indeed, is usually absent, but the moisture from the firmament above and the dews of the ground are such that tents which now in India are the privilege of the few, are at home a necessity for even the humblest. In India, too, the country is fairly open. Fields are divided from one another by low mounds, which do not form an obstacle even for artillery, while village roads, or cart-tracks, are unfenced and open. The chief obstacles in an Indian manœuvre area are irrigation distributary channels, always very conspicuous, and ravines or nullahs, generally very inconspicuous, and often so concealed as to be a source of danger to mounted men. In India, also, metalled roads are few and far between.

Ireland is a country of green pastures,—small fields which, in Leinster at least, are defined by formidable banks, with a ditch on each side, locally called "doubles." These are sometimes surmounted by a thick thorn-hedge, the whole forming a formidable obstacle even for a trained hunter. On the other hand, there is probably no country in the world so lavishly provided with metalled roads. The state of repair of these often

¹ March 1906.

leaves much to be desired, but at least they intersect the country in all directions. They are bordered, as a rule, with thick straggling hedges, high enough often to conceal a mounted man, and always with a margin of turf between the hedge and the metalled part of the road. And where the metalled roads are not in evidence there is sure to be a country track, locally called a "bohireen,"—a narrow sunken lane, wild and picturesque, secret and hidden as any Indian nullah, but unlike the latter in having a sound bottom and a definite object. Finally, there is in Ireland a race of natives who are always enthusiastic in their interest, and sometimes willing in their assistance.

With these preliminaries in mind, the reader is requested to imagine himself at the rendezvous of one of the sides at the manœuvres of an Irish division a few years ago, at a small county town in the province of Leinster. The general idea is that a "Blue" force has invaded Ireland; and its advanced division has pushed its way, the point of a wedge, into the heart of the country. The "Red" force has, like Sir John Moore at Corunna, conducted (in imagination) a masterly retreat, blowing up the bridges (in imagination) over the river whereby the county is intersected, and is now (in reality) occupying another county town some twenty miles distant. The manœuvres are to begin on a certain Monday morning, and on the previous Saturday

both sides are to assemble. Neither side is to make a start till Sunday midnight; but although the actual bridges over the river are impassable, there are certain breweries and factories in the town from which Blue may be supposed to have commandeered sufficient material to form a floating bridge over the river. Instead of actually commandeering such material, a sufficient amount of casks, baulks, spars, and ropes had been collected beforehand, much to the interest of the natives, who could not at first make out why so many empty casks had been brought together. Had these been full of any known potable liquid, there would have been some reason for bringing them, and this would have appealed to an Irish public. Under the circumstances there was much interest displayed in the proceedings.

The little railway station on the Saturday was a scene of continual bustle and activity. The obliging and capable stationmaster was nearly worked off his legs, and the staff of porters was necessarily supplemented by relays of soldiers shifting baggage in transport waggons to the Blue headquarter camp, situated in a field not far off. Here it must be remarked parenthetically that the terms "Blue" and "Red" had no reference to the actual colours worn by the troops. Time was, not many years ago, when the autumn manœuvres in Ireland took place mainly on the rolling downs of the Curragh,

when dragoons in scarlet fought against hussars in blue, when guns came openly into action, scorning to hide their doings, and when the day's operations ended (always in time for dinner) with a picturesque review. We have changed all that. The opposing sides are both clothed nowadays in the ugly, but invisible, service dress, and the terms "Blue" and "Red" are terminological inexactitudes, convenient, however, for purposes of nomenclature.

Umpires were gathered together from all parts of the country, selected from troops who were not engaged in this mimic warfare. The strings of horse-boxes conveying their chargers were being deftly dealt with by the station officials, accustomed to the management of such vehicles on a hunting day in winter, while the officers themselves, their servants, and horses were consigned to a separate umpires' camp under charge of a commandant belonging to the depot of one of our most famous Irish regiments. In addition to his other duties he managed the mess for the umpires' camp, thus relieving the officers of the umpire staff of a detail which might have been a matter of some trouble. In India, by the way, this is less difficult, with servants trained to camp work constantly, than it is at home.

In addition to the umpires, there were also officers attached for the special duty of settling claims for compensation, a duty which is by no means a sine-

cure. Altogether some dozen officers gathered round the umpires' camp mess-table. They were mostly strangers to one another, but all, without exception, had served either in South Africa or in some other of our recent wars, and the camaraderie of the profession of arms speedily dispelled formality. Among many amusing story-tellers the camp commandant held a conspicuous place. Gifted with excellent powers of imitating the Irish brogue, his best stories were about the men of his own corps. One of the best of these is such a charming example of an Irish bull that it will bear repetition.

A private in the regiment, who had fought with conspicuous valour in South Africa, obtained, after his return home, a situation in the service of a lady in his native county. One day his mistress was talking to him about his military career, and asked him, "In all your experience in South Africa, what was it that struck you most?" After some cogitation he answered, "Well, ma'am, the thing that shtruck me most was the number of bullets that missed me."

Sunday, a day of most welcome rest to the private soldiers, most of whom had done a hard week of marching, was to the townspeople a day of much flutter and excitement. All day long they came trooping in to the camping-ground, peering into the tents in a manner somewhat embarrassing to the inmates. At the

church parade, when the service was conducted by the venerable rector of the parish, with a drum for reading-desk and pulpit, the congregation consisted quite as much of the beauty and fashion of the town as of the troops. And if gate-money could have been levied, the expenses of the manœuvres would doubtless have been substantially reduced. Fortunately the day was beautifully fine. Motor cars, containing generals and umpire staff, whirled through the narrow streets of the town and scoured the country round. Groups of mounted officers rode to examine the possibilities of the next day's operations. But, interesting as these sights were in the eyes of the people, they were ~~as nothing~~ compared to the anticipated bridge-making at night, and it would be safe to say that practically the entire adult population betook themselves at an early hour of the evening to the banks of the river in order to secure a good place for viewing the proceedings after midnight.

By ten o'clock the last trumpets and bugles had announced "Lights out," and the retiring to rest of the warrior host; but there were two notable exceptions. As midnight drew near a squadron of hussars mounted and a company of sappers paraded. The hussars had to get across the river as best they could. There were one or two boats, but the majority of the officers and men and all the horses had to swim. The middle of the night in autumn is often chilly, and

hardly the time one would choose to swim a river; but when a certain cavalry brigadier gives an order, no excuse of discomfort can be admitted. If that squadron of cavalry had not got across in time to stop the Red cavalry and horse artillery from getting within artillery range of the proposed bridge, the whole of the subsequent operations would have been futile. With the squadron went one umpire, while two others mounted guard over the actual bridges (supposed to be destroyed), so as to prevent any troopers or baggage from slinking over, contrary to rules.

At the bridge site, as soon as midnight chimed, the sappers set to work. The river was about fifty yards wide and fairly deep, with a strong, steady current. At one side a tow-path with a low wall, and a road leading at right angles to the stream, gave an excellent site. The opposite bank, however, had a thick belt of willow bushes growing in the water and on the bank, and beyond this a broad ditch and about fifty yards of most uncompromising bog — by far the most difficult part of the whole crossing. Beyond this were stubble fields. The scene was weird and picturesque. Two huge torches flared and spluttered at each end of the proposed bridge, the red glare reflected in the eddies of the stream. Groups of men in shirt-sleeves pulled rafts of casks into position, or lashed together trestles of heavy timber. Hardly a sound was

heard except the crashing of axes cutting through the dense willow bush, or the dull plunge of an anchor mooring one of the rafts. Orders were given sparingly, for the men knew their work and each man did it, and the directing officers had carefully organised all duties beforehand. On the tow-path, at a little distance from these busy workers, stood a huge throng of silent, motionless spectators, the torch lights illuminating their white faces. Usually an Irish crowd is full of conversation and witty comment, but the darkness of the night and the unusual nature of the scene had combined to reduce speech to the lowest of tones. The night was dark and cloudy, and the moon had set some hours before.

About four o'clock the bridge was practically ready, and the hard-worked sappers wrapped their greatcoats round them and proceeded to cook some breakfast. Streaks of dawn were now visible, and day was ushered in by the blast of bugles and trumpets sounding the "rouse." Instantly the sleeping camp became all alive. Cooks set to work to get fires lighted and breakfast ready, baggage was packed, tents were being struck, and the tapping of tent pegs all round the field must have been even more effectual than the bugles in awakening the drowsy. Soon cavalry, artillery, and infantry are filing out of the camp and crossing the bridge, to be followed later by strings of country carts full of tents and other baggage, the whole taking hours to cross, so

that it was not until 9.30 that the last of all had finally got over, and the major of sappers could relax his personal attention.

Meantime the sun had risen to usher in a glorious autumn day. Men and horses were fresh and fit. The country was looking lovely. Harvest had mostly been gathered in, though the last sheaves were being brought from some fields. In connection with this a ludicrous incident occurred. An old woman, driving a donkey-cart well laden with harvest store, met the advancing columns, among whom were certain field-batteries of artillery. Now the troop-horse is a pretty knowing "old soldier," and has no notion of allowing any opportunity to ~~let~~ slip whereby he can supplement his daily rations by ~~bringing~~ on the produce of the country. Consequently each off-horse of the battery, as he passed the old woman's cart, helped himself to a mouthful of the contents. The old dame becoming conscious of the theft, owing to sundry tugs at the cart, was very irate, and determined to make an example of an offender. Abuse of the men only met with laughter, but this laughter was redoubled when the justly indignant matron, swinging the cudgel with which she usually belaboured her ass, smote with a sounding whack the broad back of a sergeant who was riding in rear of the battery, and whose horse was innocent of any petty larceny.

Meantime cavalry scouts had been in touch with those of the

other side, and there had been some skirmishing. But the position of the Red force was still unknown, and the undulating nature of the country, broken into hills and valleys and with much cover in the shape of plantations and parks, made the problem of discovery by no means easy. The main body of the force, therefore, was ordered to halt after marching six or seven miles, in order that the position and disposition of Red might be more definitely ascertained. It was no unwelcome order this, for although the distance marched was trifling, the sun was already getting hot, and a rest by a grassy roadside is not disagreeable. The hedgerows, too, were full of brambles, and luscious fruit thereon was to be had for the picking.

It was some time before the Blue commander was satisfied as to the Red position, and then gave orders for his troops to be again set in motion. It appeared from a careful study of the map and of the appearance of the country that a flanking movement was possible, and that if only Blue could reach a certain place where several roads diverged before Red could discover him, the retreat of Red would be seriously embarrassed, if not actually imperilled. Accordingly, making as much demonstration as possible with cavalry, artillery, and a small force of infantry on his left and centre, the Blue commander sent the main body of his infantry to accomplish the turning movement on his right.

A winding road, well-provided with tall hedges and grass margins, favoured this advance for some distance; then came a country track leading to some farm buildings, beyond which about a mile, across cultivated land, intervened between the farm and the point to be reached.

The Blue infantry reached the farm buildings in excellent order, very quietly, and without exposing themselves in the least. Then the companies were formed up and the object in view pointed out. The leading troops emerged from the cover of the buildings, spreading out like a pack of hounds drawing a covert. Across one field they advanced without opposition, but as they passed into the next the crack of rifles at about 400 yards caused the umpire to order a halt, which was reluctantly obeyed. Going forward to the place whence the rifle shots proceeded, the umpire found a company of the Reds snugly lying behind the bank of big "double," and barring the way of the Blue advance.

"We have been here over an hour, sir, and have entrenched ourselves," sang out in triumph the young officer in command.

"Have you got tools?"

"No, sir; but we are supposed to have them."

"Then don't talk nonsense about entrenching yourselves. However, you have quite a good enough entrenchment without any work, on your part, but you are being attacked by about ten times

your strength, so you can only hold out for a short time. I'll give you half an hour, and after that you must retire. Do you understand?"

So the opposing forces were halted opposite to each other for half an hour. But that half-hour's delay was fatal for the execution of Blue's little game. The subaltern whose company had checked the turning movement sent word to the main body, further alterations in the disposition of Red forces were made, and the turning movement was sufficiently delayed to be practically frustrated.

A time comes in most manœuvres when a deadlock arises. In actual war the issue would either be decided by the valour of one side or other, or else the battle would be decided by collateral issues. In mimic warfare the umpires must allow time for possible alterations in tactical movements, and in such cases individual officers may find opportunity to improve the chances of their side by skilful leading, but as a rule nothing further can be done after both sides have fully developed their plans. After due time has been allowed, the Director of the whole operations orders the troops to cease fire, and officers are summoned to a conference, known as a "pow-wow."

Those ignorant critics who aver that the British officer does not take his profession seriously, have surely never been present at a pow-wow.

So serious, indeed, is the matter that men who in ordinary life are patterns of courtesy will, in the exercise of their professional opinion, not hesitate to give the "counter-check quarrelsome," if not the actual "lie circumstantial," to their most intimate and honoured friends. Thrice happy is he who has the rare gift on such occasions, and in an atmosphere so highly charged with electricity, of expressing briefly and intelligibly what he has seen or what he has intended to do. Rare, too, is the umpire who has the gift of entirely detaching himself from partisan feeling with the troops he has accompanied in their varied fortunes. Rarest of all is a Director who can hold the balance absolutely true, who can detect and in well-chosen words expose the defects of training brought to light, who can praise without adulation and rebuke without severity, unless such is really deserved. In the manœuvres in question there was such a Director in the person of the General of the Division,—one who, alas! is now no more, one whose dignity and courtesy were as conspicuous as his high military capacity and experience.

The pow-wow was over, and the officers rode off to their respective camps, fixed by the Director in accordance with his views of the day's operations, whereby Blue had succeeded in crossing a river and driving Red back to a certain extent, far less than Blue and far more than Red considered was a

logical sequence from the morning's work.

It was now well on in the afternoon, and luncheon was a necessity for men who had breakfasted at 5 A.M. The troops were now peacefully slumbering, except those on outposts; but the staff and the umpires were busy, the former with orders for the next day, the latter with reports of the recent operations. The sappers marched into camp late in the day, having dismantled and packed the whole of the bridge material—a matter demanding some care, for every rope and spar had to be accounted for, if an unpleasant "War Office observation" on missing stores was to be avoided.

The compensation officers, too, were busy all day with claims, some of them quite preposterous, from the inhabitants. However, as evening fell all work was done, and the usual cheery party gathered round the mess-table in the umpires' camp. There was no sitting up late, for all were fairly tired, and there was an early start next day. In the stillness of the night a voice was heard, apparently that of an Irish farmer, inquiring, "If ye plase, sor, are you the compensation officer?"

"What do you want?" replied that worthy, from inside his tent and apparently from his bed, in very gruff tones.

"If ye plase, sor, I want to see you about some compensation for me hay."

"Oh, come to-morrow and I'll settle."

"If ye plase, sor, I'm afther seeking ye for the whole evening. Me name's Murphy, sor, and me farm is ten miles distant," *et cetera, et cetera, ad lib.*

"Oh, go away, and don't bother me now."

"But, sor, I've a letter from the officer of the artillery," *et cetera.*

Badgered and worried, the compensation officer got out of his bed and unlaced the door of his tent, emerging into the moonlight to be greeted with a view-halloo from the pseudo-complainant, who turned out to be that admirable mimic, the camp commandant.

Then in the moonlight the sentries saw two flying figures, pursuing and pursued. The first was in the ordinary uniform of the British officer, and his countenance was triumphant; the second was clothed in pyjamas, and his countenance indicated a desire for blood. Round the tents they ran like the Greeks and Trojans, till finally they disappeared into the mess tent, whence sounds of laughter arose, followed by the opening of soda-water bottles.

On the following day the operations were much of the same character as the latter part of the first day. Red had retreated into a more difficult country, while the advance of Blue was more than ever hindered by thorns and briers. The operations, indeed, illustrated the military advantages and disadvantages of a "bo-hireen," and the spectacle of an

entire battalion of brave men struggling with adversity.

Red had established himself in a strong position on the top of a hill, to which all approach seemed so open as to render any attempt to get near impossible. The attack had been entrusted to a battalion of Highlanders, who had only succeeded in approaching to what is known as a "long range" when an enterprising subaltern discovered a "bo-hireen," sunken and invisible, which led almost to the summit of the hill in question. Up the secret path thus conveniently provided for them the Highlanders advanced; but a time came when the "bohireen" had to be left, and an advance effected through the thorny hedges which had hitherto proved so valuable a screen. Beyond the hedge was a thick belt of gorse. Words fail to depict the difficulties of the gallant Highlanders, first in scrambling through an entanglement of thorns and brambles, and then in executing an advance, chiefly in bounds which recall the advance of the Zulus in bygone days, through the belt of furze. All secrecy was wholly at an end, and the Red sharpshooters completed the discomfiture of the brawny Scots.

One day's manœuvres, however, is much like another, except when some special feature is practised. We would therefore omit some of the other days, and turn to another separate phase of manœuvres with the same

division, and with much the same *personnel*, though at a different time.

The Red force, still on the defensive, had been driven back to occupy a position on ground which had been hired for digging, and a series of well-planned entrenchments were constructed on the edge of a gorse-covered plateau with open fields in front.

These trenches were occupied by one of the Red battalions, while another on their left occupied a rounded hill surmounted by a prehistoric Celtic fort. At the other edge of the plateau—which was about 400 yards wide, covered with gorse, bracken, and rabbit-burrows—a trench was being made by the sappers of the Red force as the shades of evening fell. This trench was a reserve to be occupied if those in front were taken. Close to it, a battery of artillery had unlimbered and directed their guns on a rising ground some two miles away, which the Blue guns might be supposed to occupy, as it was the best artillery position in the vicinity.

The Blue force was known to be in camp about ten miles off, and it was expected that a night attack would be made. The Red outposts occupied a line of roads in front of the plateau and Celtic fort, about half a mile from the camp of the main body. This camp was in a hollow behind the plateau, the commander's tent being immediately behind a

steep gravel bank. Along the ground past this tent lay a thick red cord. This was the telephone line to the commander of the outposts, the receiving end being in a tent close to the Red brigade-major's.

It was a lovely, peaceful autumn evening. The men had finished their evening meal, when the Red commander and umpire staff returned from a tour of the entrenched position, and the last orders for the night and for eventualities next day had been issued. As darkness fell, telephone messages kept coming in from the outposts whose scouts were patrolling the roads leading towards the enemy. There were two main roads leading in his direction. It seemed probable that he must come by one or other, as the country between the two was difficult, chiefly cultivated land, and intersected with ditches and banks. But the outposts were alert, and it seemed improbable that a surprise would be effected. However, the improbable is the one thing that generally happens.

As the Red commander and his brigade-major were smoking their after-dinner pipes prior to retiring to rest, suddenly three figures and a bicycle came tumbling down the gravel bank in front of the tents. "By the dim light of a camp lantern these figures appeared to be armed men, and as they extricated themselves from the ruins of the bicycle

they appeared to be a corporal and a private leading a somewhat crestfallen representative of the Blue force.

"Prisoner, sir," says the corporal; "we captured him on the road."

"Have you searched him?"

"Yes, sir" (with emphasis).

"Find anything?"

"No, sir."

The prisoner was a pitiable object. Streaming with perspiration, with knuckles bleeding and clothing torn, he was evidently determined not "to give the show away," and cross-questioning elicited no reply from him. The Red commander ordered refreshment for him, which caused a more cheerful expression to come over his stolid countenance, and he was led away.

About midnight a message came to the Red brigade-major to say another scout had been captured with an important message. He had been riding along a road when he suddenly found he had run into a Red patrol. He turned and tried to flee, but in doing so fell. Inside his cap was a message to say that the orders for frontal attack had been changed, and that a flank movement was in contemplation.

"All a plant," murmured the Red brigade-major; "he did that rather too well. We shall see."

About 3 A.M. a message came to say the outposts had been rushed in the dark and the telephone instrument abandoned. Further news from

the front was therefore cut off. Instantly the camp was roused, tents struck and loaded, and further developments anxiously awaited.

The Red outposts had been completely overwhelmed. The Blue columns had come straight across country, achieving in the dark a wonderful march. They had rushed *en masse* on the Red pickets, who had scarcely time to fire a shot. Then silently in the dark a Blue column had scaled the old Celtic fort, and after a brief struggle had, in the umpire's opinion, gained possession.

Viewed from the main Red camp only a few flashes of fire could be seen, but presently a straggling crowd of defeated warriors arrived to say they had been ordered back by the umpires. They wished to know whether they could now be allowed to lie down and have some sleep; but this was sternly refused. They were ordered to occupy the rear trenches excavated recently. Probably daylight would soon be coming, and then they would be able to see the enemy coming over the plateau. Meantime a fierce fusilade was going on at the front trenches. From these also the umpires decided that a retreat must be made. The defenders retired by the flanks, and occupied a well-chosen position farther in rear, to which the guns and reserve had already retired.

Just as day was breaking the victorious Blue troops came leaping over trenches and

bushes, charging across the plateau. There was no mistaking on which side they were, for they were in kilts, and the only Highland battalion in the division was on the Blue side. But the fire from the rear trench checked them. The umpires decided that, considering the losses they must already have sustained, they could not possibly capture another entrenched position, now that daylight enabled the defenders to shoot with moderate accuracy. Soon the operations reached the deadlock which, as we have seen, occurs in almost all manœuvres sooner or later.

The pow-wow took place at an hour when most of His Majesty's subjects are still in bed. The sun was not far above the distant hills, and the morning mists hung about the hollows. The men were lying about on the dewy grass, mostly sound asleep, some of them having marched about twenty miles. Officers were unwashed, unshaven, and hungry. The conference did not last long. The umpires gave their views briefly, and commanding officers were too tired to be argumentative. The Director decided that the position had been captured, but that, owing to the stubborn resistance of Red and his arrangements for retreat, no further advance on the part of Blue could be permitted. And so the proceedings terminated for the day.

The next day was the final wind-up of the operations. Red

had been driven to his last resource for the defence of Ireland—viz., the holding of the main railway from Dublin to Cork. The position selected was a long curve on the line, concave towards the enemy, with an open rolling country in front, and impassable ground on either flank. Behind the railway the ground rose gently, crowned by a fox covert, which seemed an ideal position to screen artillery. For that very reason, however, Red did not put his guns there. He put instead a row of dummies, sticks placed at the intervals of guns in a battery, and concealed behind bushes, &c., and each having a charge of cordite tied at the end. The real guns were cunningly concealed on the extreme flank, in a position whence they could sweep the whole of the ground opposite the railway and over which the attack would come.

The attack was long in coming. Blue had, as usual, to feel his way carefully, and to drive back the Red scouts and outposts. The latter kept steadily sending information back, and Red was expecting them long before any signs of the advancing hosts appeared. An army marching to battle nowadays is not a serried phalanx with trumpets blowing and colours flying. Far in the distance one sees lines of men in extended order scurrying across any open spaces and pausing behind hedges, rocks, or any form of cover. But for the regularity of the intervals between them, and

the rapid motion from point to point, they would be unnoticed, such is the adaptation of colour to the background. And as for guns, they are rarely seen till smoke and noise betray their position. Sometimes one may detect their coming by the dust raised, or see groups of men "running up" the guns from behind cover, but the battery that now comes into action in full view of an enemy is deservedly censured by the umpires.

The warm sunny hours of the forenoon passed away with the Red troops in position, basking in the sunshine. At last, however, in the far distance signs of an artillery brigade appeared—twelve little groups of men, in number equal to two batteries, running up their guns—on the skyline far away. Red at once fired his dummies, with the result that the distant brigade at once replied. Meantime the real Red guns, like Brer Fox, "lay low."

Supported by the guns, the Blue infantry next appeared in waves of skirmishers threatening the right of the Red position. The Red infantry replied with vigour, and in view of the numbers attacking, the Red reserves were ordered to reinforce the firing-line. On came Blue, however, apparently in immense strength, and then the Red guns poured forth imaginary showers of shrapnel, sweeping the lines of the Blue attackers.

Red began to think he was having the best of it, when, to his discomfiture, on his left

flank a fresh brigade of Blue came pouring in. The Blue commander had skilfully kept touch with both component parts of his force by means of field telephones, and had so kept one in rear as to be able to hurl it at the weakest part of the Red line when the latter was hotly engaged with the first attack. Thereupon ensued the usual deadlock, and after an interval the "stand fast" was sounded and the officers summoned to the last pow-wow of the season.

It was soothing to Red, after his discomfiture, to find that his *ruse* of dummy guns had been entirely successful. The Blue artillery had never found out where his guns really were,

and had pegged away at the dummies all the time.

After the summary of the day by the Director, a few kindly criticisms were spoken by the Commander-in-Chief, who had been present as a spectator. He gave his opinion as to the advance in military science that had been shown, and gave directions as to the outlines of training for the winter.

Then the troops marched past him. There were no spectators except the Headquarter Staff and the umpires, but the spectacle, though not full of glitter and colour, was at least an impressive one for those who can see below the surface and judge of the fitness of men and horses for any eventuality.

THE HIGH TOPS OF BLACK MOUNT.

BY THE MARCHIONESS OF BREADALBANE.

CHAPTER V.—MAKE FOR THE ROCK.

It is my host at Altcharunn, M'Innes, and I who make for the top of Corrie Caolain to-day. To my mind a perfect combination, for the first is the very best of comrades for such a day's outing, and the second not a whit inferior as a stalker.

Slowly we crawled up to the ridge,—those ridges which in the morning appear so insurmountable and endless, but which are gradually achieved by steady plodding and dogged perseverance.

I have long ago discarded taking a coat or a cape out on these stiff beats. No matter how it rains, one cannot be encumbered with anything extra, and I now find by far the best thing to take is a woollen jersey, which slips into the man's pocket, and is quite as efficacious as a coat in the event of sitting about on the Tops. If it rains you must be wet, if it freezes you must shiver and shake; but to toil about in a heavy coat or cape which blows over your head, or becomes so sodden with water that it weighs you to the very ground,—particularly if you have missed a beast or made some other humiliating blunder,—is to my mind a great mistake.

I have often contemplated with amazement the "lug-

gage" some inexperienced sportsmen think necessary to load on to the unfortunate ghillie's back,—a perfect wardrobe of comforts, a larder and cellar of food and drink. I know one instance where a shooting-stick was suggested, though it never transpired what use it was proposed to make of it.

How amusing, also, are the ladies' fashion-plates which generally appear before the shooting season commences,—the garments supposed to be suitable for "le sport": the high-heeled, narrow-toed shooting-boots; the immaculate tight-fitting gaiters; the absurdly short skirt bound with leather, which of all things in the world is the most impractical,—leather absorbs water from the skirt, and in wet weather hangs like a chain round the feet; the faultless stock and tie, surmounted by a jaunty Tam-o'-Shanter from which an eagle's feather courts disaster at the first puff of wind. Do our neighbours across the Channel really believe that this is our idea of practical, neat, workmanlike dress for any kind of outdoor sport? How very different is the reality, as it ought to be. No absurd extremes are necessary; but to stalk deer, above all things clothes must be of such sen-

sible fashion as will enable one to walk, crawl, and lie about with ease and comfort, impervious to wear and tear in a very literal sense.

•Grey is the "sealed pattern" of cloth at Black Mount. In a well-made coat and skirt of the lighter web, with good square-heeled shooting-boots, loose flannel shirt, and grey cap, I have found myself able to cope with all the necessary exigencies of the High Tops. In very hot weather I have often worn a grey felt hat, which adds immensely to comfort under a scorching September sky.

In no case is there any reason for *outré* dress, or that the love of outdoor life should necessitate wearing anything but what is naturally simple, comfortable, and without extremes. Due regard to neatness and care is as necessary wearing the plainest tweed suit as in sumptuous ball attire. Though one may not adopt the style of the Parisian fashion-plate, one can be just as particular and careful of details in the homely grey tweed and comfortable flannel shirt as in the choking stock-tie and the aggressive eagle's feather.

On this occasion we were not hampered by many luxuries: a piece in our pockets, our telescopes and staffs, and hearts light as the air we breathed. We saw nothing till we reached the very end of the corrie, when, cautiously peeping over the edge, M'Innes espied deer in the rocks right below us, quite inaccessible unless the men

could be sent round to move them up. After some discussion it was decided to do this. The Master went to one pass, I to another, M'Innes with me. This is one of the wildest corries in the forest. Sheer perpendicular rocks from top to bottom, in places intersected by narrow little ledges made by the deer themselves on their way up and down. It was rather a comfortless wait on a narrow ledge of rock, with hardly room to move, but if the stags came below they would give easy chances stringing along in single file.

Considering the distances they have to traverse sometimes, it is wonderful how fast the sturdy young ghillies get round the corries for these moves. Still, for those who wait the time seems very long, particularly if an insinuating wind creeps in at all the vulnerable corners. This is the occasion for the woolly jersey, and I turn up my collar, crouch as near to the rocks as possible, try to pass the time in spying the opposite side of the corrie, or watching for signs of uplifted heads or quick movements below us denoting that the men are coming on.

In due course we see that the deer are on the alert and beginning to move slowly, creeping gradually up the rocks to the passes below us. We notice one or two fair-looking beasts, and keep our glasses on them to make sure which will do. To our annoyance, when fairly on their way they take a turn up,

and it seems likely they will pass higher before reaching us, or, at any rate getting within shot of the other rifle, whom we can see a few hundred yards beyond us,—a dearly familiar grey figure ensconced in some sheltering rocks.

It is now evident the stags mean to make for the top by one of the side passes; but they give the chance of a long shot before going out of sight, and we see one drop and disappear. For some time the others are lost to view, when suddenly, right above us, a stag comes walking quietly along. I spring to my feet and realise what an awkward position I am in, standing on a narrow plateau with the steep declivity immediately behind me, feeling the kick of the rifle may just turn the balance. However, there is no time for such considerations, and I take the shot without a moment's hesitation. The stag falls inert, but before we can grasp our predicament he commences to roll over and over straight for us. For the first and last time in all my stalking experience I omit to put on the stop of the rifle, for M'Innes's breathless words are in my ear—"Make for the rock." A large boulder juts out just to our left. With one jump we are both below it; the next instant the rolling stag comes bounding over our heads, dashing down and down into the abyss below, carrying stones and rocks

with it in rattling confusion to the very depths of the corrie. It was a really awful moment, and we were transfixed as we stood, hearing the stag crashing down to the limitless depths, shuddering to think what might have been but for that timely shelter.

Very quiet were M'Innes and I for the rest of the day, and for long after I used to wake in startled dreams, fancying I was being whirled into space with the body of that rolling stag.

It was my habit in returning to the lodge to pass by the pleasant home and relate the day's doings to the gentle wife and give my remaining piece of lunch-cake to the children: Johnnie, who as a tiny boy would plead to go to the hill, and was taken on easy days to hold the dogs; Mary, flitting about the doors with her long fair hair; and little curly-headed Angus, who was born during one stalking season, and dubbed the "little ghillie" when an hour old. Never a day did I come home with good news or bad but I put my head inside the door to tell how "John" and I had fared. It was a grave tale I told on this occasion, and I was thankful it was no worse.

Since those days the children are motherless, and the kindly genial presence has passed all too soon from the quiet glen, the home of her youth and also of her married life. The children are now grown into sturdy lads

and lasses, but in their hearts and ours the mother remains a memory of tender regret. A year or two before her death the family moved to Ardmacaddy, on Loch Etive, which was thought to be a better place for croft and hay, also more accessible to school for the children. But the happy home was soon clouded by a great sorrow, for in giving birth to twins the mother passed away.

These are the shadows of pathos and pain which can be shared in deep sympathy with our neighbours in the lonely glens, teaching us always to remember that "kindness in another's trouble, courage in our own," is the one touch of nature that makes the whole world kin.

CHAPTER VI.—"LET GO CAPTAIN."

We are still at Althacorunn, and once more starting up the face of Aonachmore one bright September morning. Ourselves, M'Innes, one or two of the ghillies, and—the two dogs, Captain and Trimmy. Captain's home was at Althacorunn. He was fleet of foot, and sure, too, to "keep" a beast he once put to bay,—a bold and courageous dog, without so many wiles and cunning calculations as Trimmy. But the two were a matchless pair on the hill, and I am sure in their own mute language understood each other in an almost human way. We went up the very steep face of Corrie Ghiubhasan, I as usual speechless, with my coat off; B. talking and laughing under his breath, and urging me to make one more effort, and yet another, till we reached the ridge.

No particular plan had been made for the day: we were just to be looking for deer on any part of the ground. Once at the top of Aonachmore there is a good stretch on either side

into two long, steep corries, which always provide a chance of finding stags feeding among the rocks. We walk the whole way along the top, peering carefully into all the likely places on either side, the men occasionally taking a spy of the opposite sides of the corries, where I was almost inclined to pray no beast might be found. For is there any one who, having once reached the top of one high ridge, does not sigh at the prospect of going all the way down, only to puff and pant and struggle up again on the other side?—and the second pull is always so much stiffer than the first!

"The ground is very bare," says M'Innes, as we still plod along and peep over ledges and ridges in the delightful expectancy and anticipation, so far not realised, of seeing the tips of horns or a patch of unmistakable red-brown hair in some unexpected corner. I assent, but remark, "The day is young,"—a stereotyped phrase which serves to answer such a palpable truth as M'Innes has

just given utterance to. Before the day is old who knows where we shall have got to? for my own sad experience is, if beasts are not seen, at least on this high ground, fairly early in the day, it ends in one of those long, limitless tramps round ridge after ridge, and perhaps even then not the chance of a shot.

We had now come to a jutting rock from which a view could be got right up and down Corrie Caolain, — a splendid panorama of rough precipitous rocks sheer from top to bottom of the corrie, or grassy slopes almost as perpendicular, but shimmering like emerald velvet in the sun. We can spy the ground well from this point, and every glass is now raking the corrie from end to end in the dead silence which usually attends such proceedings. I think it was B. who suddenly and laconically remarked, "I see him." The natural question is, "Where?" And then follows one of those maddeningly involved descriptions of locality which baffle every attempt to identify: "In the deep scars right away to the left" (there are hundreds of deep scars); "Below three black rocks underneath the green patch" (there are dozens of such rocks below such green patches); "Do you see the burn with the white stones? Well, carry your eye down to the foot of it and you will see a beast feeding there." You try to follow all these directions, and carry your eye and your glass up and down, round and round all the scars, the

black rocks, burns with the white stones, and yet are no nearer the object of your search. It may happen even that the finder of the beast, in trying to describe his whereabouts, suddenly loses his own bearings, and searches wildly about to find what he was anathematising you a moment ago for being so idiotic as not to see. These are the little humiliating incidents which occasionally give the inexperienced such as I a chance to smile inwardly at the more proficient sportsman who is perhaps found wanting at a crucial moment.

At last we all find the stag, and make out two others with him, far away near the foot of the corrie, a mile or two behind us. It was impossible at this distance to see what they were; the only plan was to retrace our steps along the ridge and crawl down the face of the corrie till we could get a proper view of their shape and make. Our course was a bare, steep, slippery green declivity, frighteningly perpendicular, with no sort of foothold or even tuft of heather which one might clutch to avoid a headlong fall. It soon became necessary to assume a sitting posture, and this we all did, dragging the dogs along with us in docile resignation. M'Innes went first, I next, B. and the ghillie behind.

Oh, ye shades of stately Holyrood, where "His Grace" is the personification of dignity and ease, could ye but see him now, sliding along flat on his back with Trimmy's head

tucked under one arm, his coat half up his back, oblivious to the cares of Church and State, but withal fitted to represent both in the very best sense by his love of the High Tops, his boyish revelry in sport, and his simple tastes and pleasures, which make for what is genuinely dignified and courteous without pose or affectation. But I may be forgiven for thinking, just in passing, perhaps the "Lord High Commissioner" would not be recognised by some could they but glance at him now. We wriggle and slide our tortuous way down and down till we come to a large boulder overhanging a rather deep burn. From this place we are within 150 yards of the deer, and no nearer can we get. M'Innes crawls to the stone and cranes cautiously round the corner of it. "Three stags—all will do; the best is the light one on the left." It was agreed in the morning that I should have the first chance. I devoutly wished it had not been so; for here was a horrible place to shoot from—lying on a slippery rock with a feeling that you might topple quietly into the burn if you lose consciousness of yourself in concentrating attention on the shot. However, there was nothing for it but to do one's best, and this time it was luckily successful: the stag fell at the shot, and never moved.

I was hardly aware what was happening behind me when I heard B. say in an agitated whisper, "Quick, M'Innes, out with the rifle!" and to me, "Here, hold the

dogs." I sank down where I was, with an arm round each dog and my fingers 'twisted in their collars. Off went B., followed by M'Innes and the ghillie, and disappeared in a moment, as happens so strangely on rough ground, when figures seem to vanish like ghosts. From where I was I could see and hear nothing: I could only conjecture that the remaining stags had taken a turn for a possible chance of a shot lower down. But instinct of all I had learned on the hill was too great to allow me to move. I sat there with every sense strained to sight or sound which could convey knowledge of the others. The dogs were shaking, with ears cocked and noses twitching, alert and eager as was I. Suddenly—Boom!—a sound which always sets my heart galloping with intense excitement, the report of that unerring rifle which has waked the echoes a hundred times and more up those wild corries, which I have so often heard and loved in the hearing. Still I must not move. Implicit obedience is the first lesson we are taught at Althachorunn, and I have learnt my lesson well. If I could only see what is happening down below; if only one of them would come back and wave me on; if only I had not been stuck down in this hole behind the rock where vision and even hearing are impeded! The moments passed, and still I sat hugging the dogs.

"Let go Captain!" I hear the ringing call come out of

space and reach me so distinctly that there is no mistaking the voice. "Let go Captain!" No use to answer or call back: I know what to do now. I crawl to the first ridge, dragging the dogs with me. Both have heard the voice, both are straining every nerve to get away, but Captain only is to go. I take off his collar and say, "Go, good dog!" He is off like an arrow. Trimmy gives way to a despairing yelp, which I quell by holding her nose. I tie her firmly to my knee and get out my glass. Yes, there is the stag, badly hurt too, going slowly downhill. The men are standing out of sight waiting for the dog. B. is looking up to see if I have heard the call. I keep my glass on the dog as he starts direct for the stag. It is very misleading to watch from above a dog making up a deer. One always feels sure the dog must be in sight of the stag long before he really is so, the inequalities of the ground keeping him out of view till almost at the deer's heels. On goes the good Captain, faster and faster, the stag quite unaware of danger, limping feebly down towards the burn at the foot of the corrie. Suddenly the stag leaps in the air and dashes forward as if unhurt: it is the dog close to him. The vitality of the stag seems to revive; as the chase continues he goes harder, and the dog makes up little on him. The grey figures below me crawl forward and anxiously watch the chase. I can see them through my glass discussing the situation and

preparing to move on. A bark from Captain: all glasses are levelled on him. The stag has turned down the burn-side and is distinctly gaining on the dog. "Let go Trimmy!" I knew this call would come at the right moment, and Trimmy knows it too: she has been watching the whole scene, and making her wise calculations through it all. I stand up and wave assent, and Trimmy is away, not straight down after Captain, but along the face of the corrie on one of her dearly-beloved short cuts. She knows well enough no use losing time in Captain's wake; she will make to head the stag and save herself a long run. All this she does, and picks her dainty way among the rocks till she is above and down on him, and holds him there sure and fast till Captain comes to keep vigil too, and at last her master. Then all is soon over with a shot through the neck. Two good beasts there are for the larder this night. But where am I? High up the corrie, realising suddenly it is drawing to twilight, with the grey figures below having quite forgotten me, and the rifle-covers and odds and ends thrown off in the wild chase down the hill. I gather up all these things and my own rifle, and start towards where I see the party below me. I know of no more desolate sensation than to find oneself alone in one of these wild corries, daylight already failing and the presence of man far away. It is in these moments one learns the value of self-reliance, the confidence

in oneself to get out of a difficulty. It is very steep, bad walking, and before I reach the burn it is closing into gloaming, and we have still many a mile to cover before we reach the lodge. I get scant sympathy as I join the others: it is assumed as a matter of course that I shall take care of myself and turn up at the right moment,—indeed if it were not so I should have no right to share in such a day. We leave the men to gralloch the stags and make all fast on the ponies, and at B.'s suggestion start along the face of the corrie homewards. What a walk that was, across slimy shelving burns, looking as if one missed step would precipitate you into space; through deep peat-hags, by stony ridges, and, through all, such a smell of whisky! Between saving myself from heavy falls and trying to keep within touch of B. in the gathering darkness, this strong smell pervades everything. Sometimes, if rather tired, I have found myself walking along with thoughts always lingering in one channel, incessantly thinking of

one thing, however unimportant or trivial, and this time my mind could not sever itself from the overpowering smell of whisky. It could not come from myself—of that I was convinced,—and never in life had I known my companion emit such an extraordinary essence of spirits as now seemed to grow stronger and stronger with every step we took. At last we reach the pony-track and the burn about half a mile from home. B. stops, strikes a match to locate the stepping-stones, and says it is time for a drink of water with a dash of something in it. He takes out his flask, utters an exclamation, and discovers the bayonet-catch has come undone and the whole contents are in his pocket! So this is the reason of the nightmare that has led me all the way home, and permeated the evening air with the odour of so-called "mountain dew"!

It was with many a joke and laugh we stumbled the last bit of the way home, assured that to all of us, including the dogs, was added another red-letter day to the annals of Althaorunn.

CHAPTER VII.—A WALK ROUND THE FOREST.

In 1904 I was not for the hill. A long sojourn at Bad Nauheim in the summer tells its own tale, and the tale told me was that I should never go to the Tops again, though I confess of this fact I always retained a sneaking doubt. It was very strange at first,

during the early days of September, to see the rifles starting for all the familiar beats, and to be always the one left behind. But I soon got used to it, and I honestly believe in a way I enjoyed that season as much as any other, sharing in imagination

every one's sport, and following every hour of days which, though unable to take part in by actual presence, I could enter into and sympathise with to the full. So in the pleasures of others I found a panacea for my own enforced idleness. Towards the middle of the month I began to feel that indescribable longing for the solitude of the glens and corries, for the "awayness" from society and sound of humanity, which becomes at times a necessity to those who love best Nature in her never-changing companionship and solace. I conceived a plan to start away by myself, and, by carefully restricted distances, to walk round the whole forest, stopping for a night or so at a time at the delightful little lodges and bothies, situated here and there in Glenetive and Glen-
inglass. I was not quite sure how far I could carry out my project, for I had walked very little for the last six or eight months, but for a week beforehand I gradually extended my walks on the flat without much fatigue or difficulty.

On a certain Thursday morning, not without some qualms and misgivings as to how I should feel once away on my lonely route, I set out for Althaorunn in Glenetive, which was, as usual, occupied by B. The van had been in that day for forage and provisions, and took my kit-bag back with it. It is a long piece of lonely road from Black Mount to Kingshouse inn, only two solitary cottages

in all the nine miles. About four miles on the way one gets a grand view of Coiriohe Bà, the "sanctuary," and Clachlet, the highest peak in the forest, 3602 feet, rearing a proud head above all its neighbours. To the right, below, stretches the familiar gleam of Loch Bà. Beyond, and rising on the first shoulder of Benachallander, appears the deep purple canopy of Crannach Wood, one of the few existing remnants of the ancient Caledonian Forest. To lovers of forestry a deep interest is attached to these grand Scots firs, and I cannot do better in description than quote from the pen of the Rev. A. H. Malan: "The interest lies, first, in this wood being the sole surviving remains of a forest which once covered the whole moor of Rannoch; and secondly, in the probable extreme age of many of the trees. There is, of course, nothing here in size comparable to that fine Scots fir in the Lady's Linn, at Inverary, 125 feet high, 13 feet 10 inches in girth, at 5 feet from the ground (1898), or to those wonderful great 'bushes,' all branches and scarcely any stem, one comes across here and there in the Abernethy Forest; but then size has little to do with age. A root cut, for instance, from Abernethy Forest, from a tree known to be over 200 years old, is only about three inches in diameter, but some of the rings are as close together as the leaves of a book. It would therefore be some indication of age if sections could be cut and polished from some of the Crannach trees as they