

## RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS IN MOUNTAINEERING.

BY SIR WILLIAM MARTIN CONWAY, F. R. G. S.

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It is not now, nor will it ever again be, possible for many new expeditions of importance to be instituted and carried out in one year in the Alps. Twenty years ago, as the pages of the *Alpine Journal* attest, virgin peaks were being conquered by dozens, new passes crossed, and new routes up peaks already ascended effected in numbers that are the envy and despair of the climber of to-day. All the peaks of the Alps that amount to anything have now been climbed.

Most of them have been climbed by many routes, and it was only with difficulty and after much research that, in the year 1894, when I traversed the "Alps from end to end" with two Indian Gurkha sepoy, I was able to discover a little snowy mountain not far from the Tödi, no ascent of which was recorded, and which we were able to climb, as it were, for the first time, and name Piz Gurkha. I say "as it were for the first time," because veracity compels me to admit that a few hundred feet below the summit we found a piece of broken bottle, and that on the actual top the stones did not look as though they had ever been disturbed by human visitors.

Still, there are a few gleanings to be had in the Alps even now, and they are being rapidly gathered in. In the summer of 1895, for instance, the finest Alpine summer in the memory of the oldest inhabitant, two new and very difficult routes were traversed for the first time.

One of them led right up the narrow, battlemented, south ridge of the great Weisshorn, the peak which the late Professor Tyndall was so proud to have been the first to scale. Many a good climber had looked at that ridge and been content to leave it for some one else. The top bit of it was scaled some years

ago by a party which climbed up the face of the mountain to it, but no one ever went along the whole ridge till Mr. Broome did so, in August, 1895.

Most visitors to Switzerland have seen the Weisshorn; comparatively few know the Herbetet, for that is a smaller and, indeed, a minor peak amongst the beautiful mountains of Cogne, where the King of Italy has his shooting preserves and where a famous herd of bouquetin, the last in the Alps, is thus kept from extinction.

The Herbetet stands between the better-known Grivola and Grand Paradis. Mountaineers know it as the best peak for a scramble among the Graian Alps of Cogne. I was once on its summit with the lamented Mr. Mummery, the finest climber that ever lived.

It was on a glorious day and the views were superb. We sat on the top and talked of the Himalayas, which both of us afterwards visited, and where he lost his life. When the time came to descend he proposed that we should try and force our way down the south ridge, an extremely narrow rock *arête* in which were set a series of lofty and quite precipitous pinnacles. That *arête* was climbed for the first time last summer by an adventurous party, and quite recently I had the pleasure of listening, at the Alpine Club, to Mr. Oliver's account of how success was won.

I have spoken of Mr. Mummery, and to him I must now return, for he was the hero, or rather the victim of last year. He left England in the spring with two friends, Dr. Collie and Mr. Hastings, to adventure ascents among the greatest of the wondrous Himalayas. Their goal was the giant mountain, or rather group of mountains, called Nanga Parbat, which stand on the west frontier of the kingdom of Kashmir, and about which those who care to enquire can find more in my book on "Climbing in the Himalayas."

There is one remarkable peculiarity of the series of Himalayan ranges between the Vale of Kashmir and the Central Asian watershed—they are one after another cut right across by ridges. The reason for this is that the rivers were there before the ranges were formed, and as, by the crinkling of the earth's crust, the ranges were raised, the rivers cut gorges through them and maintained their flow.

Nanga Parbat is part of the true and principal Himalayan range and its summit rises to the stupendous altitude above sea-level of 26,630 feet. Close to its foot; not more than ten miles in horizontal distance from the peak, the Indus flows through a desert gorge, and here the height above sea-level of the river-bed is not much above 3,000 feet.

It is easy to conceive from these figures on how vast a scale nature's architecture is here set up. I have never been down this part of the Indus gorge, but a friend of mine, who was there, told me that the path along the side of the gorge is in places perilously narrow and carried across precipices of such appalling character that at one point a servant of his, who lost his footing, fell a mile in vertical height, and was, of course, smashed to atoms.

One side of Nanga Parbat sinks to this gorge by a series of ridges and ravines—that is the Chilas side. The other two sides of the mountain, for it is on a triangular base, are likewise defined by long valleys, one of which is filled by the great Tarshing glacier.

It was to this valley of the Tarshing glacier that Mummery and his companions bent their steps in June, 1895. They were joined there by my old travelling companion, Bruce, and two Gurkha sepoy of his regiment—not, I am glad to say, any of the boys who accompanied me either in India or the Alps. Towards the Tarshing glacier Nanga Parbat presents a mighty ice-draped wall, 15,000 feet in height and likely to be never ascended by man. Mummery passed along under this, and then round the end of the mountain, crossing by a snowy pass to one of the ravines running down to the Indus. From this they attempted to climb the mountain, but lack of provisions drove them back to the Tarshing valley.

They returned again and renewed the attempt, establishing camps and stores of provisions at successively increasing altitudes. At last they climbed one day to a height of some twenty thousand feet or more, but there illness overtook first one and then another, till they were all forced to descend.

But Mummery was not the man to yield. He determined to try the peak again from the next ravine further round. He said that he and the two Gurkhas would climb over the intervening ridge by a pass at a height, I believe, of some twenty thousand

feet, whilst the other members of the party took the baggage round by way of the Indus gorge and came up to meet him.

Taking a few days' provisions with him he bade farewell to the others and started. He and the two Gurkhas that went with him have never been seen again.

Their way led them at first across a steep mountain-side, down which avalanches of ice and rock appear often to fall. Doubtless it was here that ruin overtook them. They were probably overwhelmed by an avalanche and now lie buried in the depths of the river of ice below, which will slowly carry their bodies down, and years hence will discharge them into the Indus.

Thus ended the career of a man who was not merely remarkable as the most skillful mountaineer of his day, or of any previous day, but a man who was of remarkable character and great intellectual gifts. The mountains have claimed another victim, and they have chosen the first among the very *élite* of the craft.

There is a tradition among the natives of Chilas that a Crystal Castle stands on the topmost point of Nanga Parbat—it is a fairy castle, for all the places of eternal snow are fairies' land. They say that once in days long ago a huntsman climbed up to it and looked in, and lo! it was filled with a countless multitude of snakes. It will be a long time, I think, before anyone actually makes the ascent of Nanga Parbat and brings down a fragment of the Crystal Castle.

After Mummery's disappearance his friends spent the remainder of the season looking for traces of him and finding none. They tracked laboriously up various ravines, but autumnal snowfalls soon set in and ended the possibility of further researches. One by one they returned to England and left all that was mortal of the great mountaineer alone in the fairies' land.

As the Alps have been exhausted from an exploring point of view, and the climbing craft has been simultaneously developed and popularized, travellers have begun to pay increasing attention to the other snowy mountain ranges of the world.

The Caucasus has already received no inconsiderable amount of attention and most of its principal peaks have been climbed for the first time by members of the Alpine Club. The highest point of Ushba, the Caucasian Matterhorn, whose wonderful

form is already popularized by numerous widely-sold photographs, has never yet been reached.

Two parties went out from England last year to have a look at it but came home again without doing more. There was a third party of a more æsthetic character consisting of men who climbed indeed, and could climb well, but who had in view the enjoyment of beauty rather than mere gymnastic achievement. Amongst them was my old Himalayan companion, that admirable artist, A. D. McCornick.

But the Caucasus is now an old story. Remoter ranges are being sought with growing persistence. Observe that the world in all its main level areas is now explored. Africa begins to be a twice-told tale. Only the polar regions and the great mountain ranges are still for the most part unmapped, unpenetrated, and unknown.

To the explorer of the twentieth century will belong the world of ice, for the nineteenth century has finished the tropics and the deserts.

In the Southern hemisphere, where snowy ranges are few until you go very far south, the Alps of New Zealand form a very attractive group. The highest of them, Mount Cook, can be seen from the town of Christchurch, yet a very few years ago practically nothing was known about the range or its glaciers.

In the Southern summer of 1881-82 an Irishman, the Rev. W. S. Green, made these mountains the goal of an expedition. He climbed several of them and nearly reached the top of Mount Cook. The imagination of the New Zealanders was kindled by Mr. Green, and the young men of Christchurch and Auckland thereupon formed a New Zealand Alpine Club for themselves, and started scrambling in a bold and independent fashion.

The record of their doings is pleasant reading. They had no experienced guides to teach them; they had to teach themselves the climbers' craft with the help of books and hard-won experience. All these pioneers were young men of business, and their holidays were few. As surely as they reached within striking distance of some longed-for peak and a fine day dawned, so surely was their leave up, and they had to hurry back to their offices.

Nevertheless, as the years went by, they pushed forward the exploration of their Alps steadily and effectually. They aroused

the interest of their Government, with the result that one or two of them were appointed mountain surveyors, and a very admirable map of the glacial region has resulted from their labors.

Last year a second English expedition made the New Zealand Alps its goal. Its leader was my companion in the "Alps from End to End," Mr. E. A. Fitzgerald, and he was accompanied by the wonderful Swiss guide, Mat. Zurbriggen, whom I took to the Himalayas in 1892.

Rumor had preceded them, and the young men of New Zealand determined that the actual summit of Mount Cook should not remain untrodden for them. Accordingly, on Christmas Day, they organized a party and reached the point of the peak before Fitzgerald and Zurbriggen landed.

As Mount Cook was climbed, Mr. Fitzgerald turned his attention to other mountains and performed mighty feats, as will presently appear. When his season's work was done he heard that it was being said that they had not climbed Mount Cook, because it was too hard for them, so Zurbriggen one day walked up it, quite alone, by a new route.

It would not interest the general reader to be told a mere list of the names of the new peaks which Fitzgerald conquered. They were many and, as climbs, they were, without exception, of extreme difficulty and very dangerous; for, it must be admitted, the New Zealand Alps are amongst the most dangerous mountains to climb on the face of the earth.

To begin with, they are built of the most rotten rock conceivable. There is neither firm handhold nor foothold for yards together. The mountains crumble at a touch.

On one occasion a huge rock gave way beneath Fitzgerald's feet, and he was cast over a precipice of appalling depth, where he hung at the end of a rope, Zurbriggen only just succeeding in holding him up. To make matters worse, two of the three strands of the rope were cut through on the edge of the rock by the jerk of the fall. This was only one of a series of narrow escapes experienced by these adventurous climbers.

Other great dangers in the New Zealand mountains are caused by the extraordinary rainfall in that country. On the western slopes of the mountains the measured annual rainfall amounts to 140 inches. The weather changes with extraordinary rapidity and there are seldom two fine days in succession.

The result is that the mountains are overburdened with snow, and that the snow line descends much lower than in any corresponding latitude. Glacial phenomena are on a very large scale. The crevasses are big; avalanches are big; the movement of the glaciers is rapid. Everything is more unstable on the New Zealand ranges than in other countries.

Time after time Fitzgerald and Zurbriggen slept out on the hillside, only to be driven down next day by the first of a long series of almost continuous storms. They slept out on seven different occasions before they were able to ascend one important peak. When they gained its summit they received their reward, for from it they were able to overlook an unexplored portion of the range, and there they discovered the pass, since named Fitzgerald's Pass by the New Zealand Government, and about which a word must be said.

The agricultural portion of the South Island is divided from the bush-covered and gold-bearing western side, or Westland, by the snowy Alps. Westland is one of the most beautiful regions in the world, comparable for fiord scenery to Alaska, or Norway. Till now, however, a great part of it has been very difficult of access, for there was no known pass across the snowy range in a hundred miles and more of length.

The New Zealand Government greatly desired to find a pass over this barrier, and to that end sent out more than one exploring party without success. From the summit of the peak, with so much difficulty attained, Fitzgerald looked down upon the very pass that was wanted. Access to it appeared easy from both sides. On one side there was no snow, on the other but little.

A few days later the climbers set forth to traverse the pass they had seen and descend to the west coast. They had on this, as on other occasions, to carry all they required on their own backs. When the needful photographic and other instruments, the rope, and so forth, had been accommodated, there was only room for one day's provisions.

The actual crossing of the pass was accomplished in a few hours; then came the descent down the Copeland River valley to the habitations of men by the seaboard. Every yard of the way had to be fought for when once the scrub level was reached.

For two days and a half, without food or shelter, in down-

pours of rain such as only Westland knows, the explorers struggled along. At last, when almost at the limit of their forces, they tottered into a frontiersman's camp and completed their task.

The news of this success was welcomed in Christchurch, and the government immediately caused works to be undertaken to make a mule track over the pass. Presently there will be a carriage road, for once the scrub has been cut down, there are no engineering difficulties of moment to be overcome. Thus, in the new regions of the world, the climber may open highways, along which in years to come large populations and commercial tides may flow.

Here ends my chronicle of recent mountaineering achievement. It takes no account of what has been done on the American Continent, by my fellow-members of the Appalachian Mountain Club, by American and Canadian surveyors, and others, because, alas ! I have not been able to follow their doings.

As a continent of mountains America ranks only second to Asia, and far surpasses Europe. Along its great backbone much has already been done, but from a mountaineer's point of view much more remains to be done. The rising generation of adventurous youth have their work before them ; let us hope they will do it in the spirit of Clarence King, and record their doings in as charming and memorable a form.

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## THE EVOLUTION OF THE NAVAL OFFICER.

BY ADMIRAL P. H. COLOMB, R. N.

ABOUT five and forty years ago Admiral Sir Charles Napier published a book on the state of the navy, in which, through some pages, he deplored the decadence of the junior naval officers of his day. In 1847 the greatest admiral of his time, the nephew of Earl St. Vincent, and known as "the last of Nelson's captains," Sir William Parker, thus wrote: "I feel more than ever the necessity of judicious, steady and firm officers being kept afloat, who will, on the one hand, check the absurdities and presumption of modern innovations which are undermining the discipline of the service, and, on the other hand, avoid the severity and harshness which characterized the organization of some ships in former days. The midshipmen, mates, and junior lieutenants all require a strict but courteous control, and if a stand is not made determinedly against their flippant and conceited demeanor, we may witness a navy as brave, but in its efficiency lamentably degenerated from the days of Nelson and our successful leaders during the revolutionary war."

These two great officers only followed the fashion of their time in so regarding their juniors. Most officers of forty to fifty years' standing can easily recall how universal this sort of feeling was amongst the senior ranks, and how long it continued. But now there is not probably to be found one single officer of the higher ranks who could think, much less write, so of the rising generation. The feeling of the seniors towards the juniors is unquestionably one of respect. There is a tendency clearly marked to draw comparisons between what we remember of the officers who were our fellows in the gun-rooms and ward-rooms of the sailing ships, or of the steam and sailing ships, of our past, and what is now seen in those mess-rooms of the steaming present, to