



Elliot & Fry.

A. T. Dent

“First President of the Association of British Members
of Swiss Alpine Club.”

CLINTON THOMAS DENT,

M.A., M.C.CANTAB., F.R.C.S.

[From *British Medical Journal*, September 15th, 1912.]

To a wide circle of friends the news of the death of Clinton Dent, on August 26th, must have come as a painful shock, for he was apparently in his usual health when he began his summer holiday, and his fatal illness—a virulent pure septicaemia, possibly due to oral sepsis—lasted little more than a fortnight. He was the eighth child and fifth son of Thomas Dent, and was born on December 7th, 1850, at Sandgate. He was educated at Eton and at Trinity College, Cambridge.

As an Alpine climber Mr. Dent had so long been famous that the world at large thought of him in this, rather than in his professional, capacity. He made the first ascent of the Aiguille du Dru after eighteen unsuccessful attempts, the first ascent of the Rothhorn from Zermatt, and of other Alpine peaks, but his greatest achievements were in the Caucasus, where he not only climbed the peaks, but explored the range. He undertook in 1889 the sad duty of searching for the bodies of W. Donkin and H. Fox, who were killed on Koshtantau, in 1888; he had gone out with them and would have shared their fate had it not been that he was prostrated by illness. He wrote a charming book, *Above the Snow Line*, published by Longmans in 1885, edited and wrote a large part of the volume on *Mountaineering* in the Badminton Series (1892, third edition 1900), contributed largely to *The Alpine Journal*, and gave a Friday evening lecture at

the Royal Institution "On the Influence of Science on Mountaineering" (1895). He also gave two juvenile lectures on "How Mountains are made and Destroyed" before the Society of Arts in 1897. He joined the Alpine Club in 1872, was elected to the Committee in 1874, was Secretary (1878-1880), Vice-President (1884), and President (1887). It is curious that Sir Alfred Wills, who was the third President of the Club (1863-1865), also entered into the valley of shadows early in August. Dent was the first President of the recently formed Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club. He was an expert photographer, and often exhibited the fine effects which he had obtained in the Alps and Caucasus, especially at the Graphic Society of St. George's Hospital, of which he was at one time President.

AN OLD COLLEAGUE, writes :

In the death of Clinton Dent the profession deeply mourns the loss of a great personality—a personality which made itself felt in all that he said and in all that he did. Throughout the whole of his very active life Dent was always "up and doing." He was a man of great force of character, of wide and comprehensive views, absolutely unbiassed by petty jealousy or party spirit, both in his professional work and that—and it was great—which lay outside it. A voracious reader, he had acquired an extensive and accurate knowledge of many subjects connected and unconnected with his profession as a surgeon. All that he read he inwardly digested; in all that he did he was earnest, thorough, and scrupulously conscientious. To employ the expression

"a right judgement in all things" may be strong language in the case of any human being, but it may be truthfully averred that in a delicate or difficult question the greatest respect was invariably paid to Dent's judgement. His opinion never failed to carry weight, because it was universally accepted that he never spoke at random or expressed an opinion without careful consideration of the point in debate.

It was not all mere brain work with Dent. He was a man of many accomplishments. As a photographer he was unsurpassed; as a mountaineer he had few equals. His pictures of the High Alps and the Caucasus show him to have been a true artist; they formed an interesting and pleasing group in many an exhibition.

As an after-dinner Speaker Dent was peculiarly attractive by reason of his manner and his matter. The speeches he made sparkled with wit and humour; otherwise they gratified the more serious members of his audience.

Dent was in all respects a well-read man, and the results of his reading in conjunction with his originality illumined his conversation. But it was during the later years of his life that what may be termed his chief work was done—from the time, that is to say, when he was appointed Chief Surgeon to the Metropolitan Police. From the date of that appointment in 1904 his heart and soul were in his work in Scotland Yard, and most excellent work he did there. This office is no sinecure, but to Dent, so far as one could judge, it was almost child's play, so inexhaustible was his energy, so great his ability to solve a difficulty.

With his evenly balanced mind, he avoided mistakes arising from hasty conclusions. He was shrewd in matters of business, but scrupulously honourable in his dealings with men. As a consequence, he secured to himself the utmost confidence in his integrity of all with whom he came into contact. He was a clever, able, upright man, and he was a staunch friend. Echo answers *Qualis erat!*

The memorial service was held on Friday, August 30th, at St. Peter's, Vere Street, and was largely attended, and the burial at Kensal Green Cemetery was followed by hundreds of policemen who voluntarily came to show their respect.

Photographs of our late President can be obtained from Elliott & Fry, Baker Street, London, W.

CLINTON DENT.

From Echo des Alpes, October, 1912.

Nous avons le regret d'annoncer la mort, à l'âge de 61 ans, de Mr. Clinton Dent membre honoraire du Club Alpin suisse, survenue le 26 août 1912. Le défunt, outre qu'il était un médecin de talent, comblé d'honneurs, était peut-être le plus connu des grimpeurs anglais. Il fit, après 18 tentatives infructueuses, la première ascension de l'Aiguille du Dru, la première ascension du Rothorn depuis Zermatt et du Portjengrat, de Sass-Fee. Quand MM. Fox et Donkin disparurent au Caucase, il s'en fut à leur recherche.

Il fut élu président de l'Alpine Club en 1887, après en avoir été secrétaire pendant cinq ans. Il édita "Mountaineering" (Alpinisme), à la Badminton Library, et il était l'auteur de ce livre délicieux, maintenant épuisé et très rare "Above the Snow Line" (Au-dessus de la limite des neiges). Il fournit aussi à l'Alpine Journal différents articles sur les Alpes. En juin 1909, il aida à la formation de l'Association des membres anglais du Club Alpin suisse, dont il fut le premier président, fonction qu'il remplit jusqu'au moment de sa mort.

Le but de cette association était d'engager les Anglais à faire partie du C. A. S., et de donner une cabane aux Suisses comme gage de gratitude pour leur hospitalité. Il vécut assez pour entendre parler de l'inauguration de la cabane, la cabane Britannia, à Sass-Fee, le 17 août 1912, et il envoya une lettre originale qui fut lue à l'inauguration. Il était un orateur familier parfait; son brio et son ironie aimable ne

manquèrent jamais de plaire à son auditoire et de le captiver.

Le charme de ses manières et la bonté de son caractère l'ont rendu cher à tous ceux qui l'ont connu. Enfin il était un ami sincère de la Suisse.

J.-A.-B. BRUCE,
Section genevoise.

THE ALPINE JOURNAL, February 1913 (Longman, price 3/6), contains a finely written and appreciative "In Memoriam," by one of Mr. Clinton Dent's oldest friends, Mr. H. G. Willink.

We much regret that its publication in March, just as we had sent this account to be printed, prevents us quoting from it, but we recommend all the members of our Association to procure a copy.

Mr. Douglas Freshfield's touching tribute at the Annual Dinner of our Association on December 3rd was unfortunately not reported.

Memorial to Clinton Dent.

Our Committee recommend that a memorial be raised to our late President, and after consulting several of his friends have accepted the report of a sub-committee, who suggest:

- (1) A Memorial tablet at Zermatt, and portrait in Smoking Room, Monte Rosa Hotel, and in Cabane Britannia.
- (2) A memorial stone or obelisk outside the Cabane Britannia.

It has also been suggested that a new edition of "Above the Snow Line" might be published.

Subscriptions will be received by the Treasurer, J. A. BRUCE, Selborne Lodge, Guildford, and a maximum of 10/6 is suggested.