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MUSINGS BY THE SEA.

"CENSOR" ON LOCAL TOPICS.

IN PERIL OF HIS LIFE.

In the letter printed below Mr. Crowley takes to himself the general criticism I passed on those who risk their lives by useless and dangerous climbs at Beachy Head. I cannot agree with him that hacking away at the Pinnacle and other picturesque parts of the promontory is unlikely to cause any marked damage. The exact contrary is the case. Moreover, a serious mishap at Beachy Head would be detrimental to the town from a commercial point of view:

Sir,—My attention has been called to a paragraph in the Gazette, describing me as possessing in a marked degree the quality of "insensate folly." This, by name, and in my absence, is of course the acme of good taste; but putting that aside, I should like to defend myself and my brother mountaineers from this sweeping condemnation.

The climbing of chalk or anything else is utterly foolish where persons unaccustomed to, and ignorant of their task, undertake it. Criticism of such climbing by persons ignorant of the subject seems to me equally so.

The photographs in Mr. Gibbs' window may appear to the uninitiated as representing perilous positions—to the mountaineer they are by no means of such a character. Thousands of people consider cycling suicide and football *felo de se*, but even "Censor's" eloquence would hardly convince the cyclist or the footballer.

The suggestion that the cliffs are marred by our "pick-axes," as our weapons are quaintly misnamed, is surely rather grotesque if not puerile. Chatsworth is hardly defaced by the fall of one tree, nor is the midnight sky irretrievably ruined by the fall of one meteor. Besides, the weather, in a week, destroys more

of the cliff than the united Alpine Club could possibly do in twenty years.

I must thank "Censor" for terming me adventurous, even though in scorn. A study of history might reveal the fact that there was a time when a spice of British pluck was not held as either a vice or a folly. But I write, perhaps, of long-past ages.

However, as "Censor" truly says, there is a limit at which pluck becomes foolhardiness. It is, in the case in point, when men without properly nailed boots, without ice-axes, without a rope, and without any experience of rotten rock, attempt passages where there is the least danger to life or limb. But for those properly equipped I must maintain that climbing on Beachy Head is a most healthful exercise, and one—beyond its physical effects—teaching pluck, nerve, coolness, steadiness, prudence and experience. It is the best possible training for the Alps, &c., since the chalk climber has to use such extreme care.

In conclusion, I regret that others should have been made so anxious—as I believe, unnecessarily—also that others should have been led to imitate my climbs without suitable precautions. Mountaineering undertaken lightly, and without a serious conception of the responsibility incurred, is alike insane and criminal.

Trusting you will afford me space for this defence and warning.

I remain, sir, yours very sincerely,

E. ALEISTER CROWLEY.

Hotel Sulden, Tyrol, Austria.

Monday, Aug. 27th.