



When the Alps Cast Their Spell: Mountaineers of the Alpine Golden Age

Trevor Braham

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The sport of mountaineering was pioneered 150 years ago by a diverse cross-section of Victorians, following in the footsteps of earlier local explorers who ventured into the upper regions of ice and snow in search of game and minerals. By the early years of the 19th century, a growing interest in the study of geological and glaciological phenomena attracted scientific interest in the origins of the Alps. It was only in the latter half of that century when, by the 1850s, interest in the largely unexplored Alpine peaks began to capture the public imagination, and a sharp increase developed in the numbers of those who tried to scale them. So intense was the level of exploration and achievement that the next decade was labelled the Alpine Golden Age. By the turn of the century the new sport had not only expanded vastly, but had begun to acquire a degree of respectability. The development of new skills and techniques resulted in greater accomplishments, whilst retaining the spirit and traditions of the pioneers. In this book the mountaineer and writer Trevor Braham illustrates aspects of the character and achievements of some of the early Victorian climbers, and their response to the unique attractions of mountaineering. These include Leslie Stephen (the father of Virginia Woolf), Alfred Wills, John Tyndall, Adolphus Warburton Moore, Edward Whymper (the first to conquer the Matterhorn), Albert Frederick Mummery and many more. Trevor Braham's comprehensive history on this period of Alpine mountaineering is essential to any mountaineer's bookshelf.

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