

Climbing Source A

The separate Resource Material for use with Section A.

This source is from a non-fiction book on climbing written by Dorothy Pilley in 1890.

We arrived on the first of March, and what followed was four days of ecstatic climbing in perfect weather. Bluebells were in the woods and ranunculus in the swamps as we passed on our way up to the cliffs. They were lovely beyond belief; but my thoughts were mainly on footholds and handholds. Each pitch or passage of the climb seemed as important as the Battle of Waterloo.

Our guide gave a lesson which was to prove useful: it is a mountain with a bad reputation for large, loose, treacherous blocks. Just the year before, Anthony Stoop, the brilliant young Swiss climber was killed there.

He had been climbing with friends, and the weather had been much like how we had found it- pleasant and agreeable. Stoop had been lowering himself over a huge block that two men heavier than he had first descended without its showing signs of danger. He cheerily waved at the rest of his party, and as his head disappeared behind the great black of the block, it slid away without warning. Those that were left behind said that there was a crash, and the rock slid like a slice out of a cheese. It heeled out with him and carried him down helpless.

Knowing this story, we treated everything with our utmost care. Nevertheless, just as the party left a terrace of poised blocks, one of them, after a slight tremble, fell away from its hold in the side of the mountain, and teared its way down the mountain pulling all manner of nature along with it. We could only stare open mouthed, until the sulphurous smell shook us violently, and reaffirmed the need for caution.