

京大過去問 1997年 第1問

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We were alone in this wet, misty world, and there was no obvious way out. Real mist is like a “white out” when skiing — (1)all sense of direction is lost, and one might as well be on another planet. One cannot even be certain if one is going up or downhill. It may sound ridiculous when on skis, but if the slope is only gentle one, you really cannot be sure. The world becomes a “blank,” and one is just a speck on the surface, floating in nothingness — it is frightening.

However, unless we were going to die of cold and exposure, we had to decide on a direction and keep walking — quite meaningless to stand still for any longer, struggling with the useless maps in the driving wind.

Then the miracle happened. Suddenly there was a fierce blast of wind on my right cheek — and (2)we all stopped dead in our tracks. Just as well that we did! As if a giant banana skin was being peeled back, the mist rolled towards us in a dense, solid mass — leaving in its wake a totally clear patch of air. There was the valley, several thousand feet below us, and we found ourselves standing within a few yards of the edge of the cliff!

We had to move fast. The armistice was a brief one, and more solid mist followed the clear air. (3)But it just gave us time to head down to the left, away from the cliff, and towards the safety of the valley and the road which would lead us home. Tired as we were, we strode off down the track as fast as we could. The light was fading and the family at home would be anxious by now.

About an hour and a half later, four cold, wet and exhausted figures tramped up to the front door, where various members of the family were anxiously waiting. There was no mist down here, but (4)they told us that the early promise of a glorious day had changed down in the valley as well — and they had thought that we would have given up the walk and come back much earlier.

We assembled in the drawing room to tell of our adventure. But even in that warm and cozy room, my whole body refused to stop shaking. Only a hot bath, a good meal, and a long night's rest could restore me nearly to normality. I think we all made silent resolutions never again to venture onto any mountain without a compass. We were really very lucky to be alive.