

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES.

*Indische Gletscherfahrten, Reisen und Erlebnisse im Himalaya.* Von Dr. Kurt Boeck. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt.

SOME years ago Dr. Boeck contributed to a German magazine some papers on a tour in the Caucasus. In the Himalaya, as in the less distant range, he shows himself rather as a pioneer of travel than as a climber or an explorer. As an author he has considerable recommendations, with, for English readers, some obvious defects. His narrative is lively and picturesque, but its merit is impaired by frequent self-glorification, by, as far as I can test it, habitual exaggeration of the difficulties of the road, and by occasional lapses from what is held in this country at least to be good taste. Dr. Boeck, I understand, began life as an actor. At any rate, he seizes on the situations of travel with dramatic instinct. He has not quite the imagination of a Landor, he does not rack us with tales of certificated tortures, or excite our envy by the narration of unprecedented pedestrian performances at high altitudes. His talent lies rather in comedy, which at times verges on farce. His countrymen compliment him on his 'true German humour.' It is occasionally very German, as, for example, when he tells us how he and his Tyrolese guide repulsed at the point of their alpenstocks a native messenger sent to warn them against entering Independent Sikhim without a permit, and then drank under the table a British official despatched on the same errand. Whence Dr. Boeck got, at Sandakphu, 'the Hungarian wine' by aid of which he won his second victory, he has omitted to inform his readers. Dr. Boeck's 'humour' knows no bounds. It is difficult to understand a gentleman of any nation repeating in print the hearsay story he tells on p. 410 of a lady traveller. Dr. Boeck's personal tales need not, however, be taken very seriously. He has, I find, entirely misrepresented what passed between him and myself when he called on me during my secretaryship of the Geographical Society.

In his Sikhim tour Dr. Boeck went up to Jongri and Akluthang, the pasturages at the southern base of Kabru, by the Singalillah ridge, returning by Pamionchi to Darjeeling. In order to estimate the traveller's 'subjective' standpoint fairly, I have compared his experiences with my own and those of other recent travellers on the same not unusual route. It must be premised that Dr. Boeck travelled at the time of year that is best for the region below 14,000 ft. - late autumn. Yet he seems to have been uniformly unlucky. His pages abound in 'break-neck leaps among thundering waterfalls,' 'unspeakably dangerous and difficult hours.' They swarm with snakes and leeches, fevers and venomous insects; he quite outdoes M. de Déchy or myself, and almost rivals the Apostle Paul in the variety of his perils and misadventures. On my own experience I should recommend no one in good health, man or woman, to be dissuaded by his narrative from taking the enjoyable and, with the exception of one afternoon's march, by no

means difficult tour here described. A small party of Darjeeling police carried large tents and ample provisions last autumn along the whole round; it can obviously be accomplished without any serious hardship. It is to be hoped that the Indian Government may be induced to carry out the project attributed to it by Dr. Boeck, and to make the path practicable throughout for four-footed beasts between Pamionchi and Jongri. Dr. Boeck is mistaken in thinking that it has been already done.

It would be easy, were it my purpose, to accumulate slips in detail from Dr. Boeck's pages. Jubonu is always mistaken for Nursing. It is quite clear from his narrative that he did not cross the Guicha La, as his map indicates, or in fact go far beyond Akluthang. The top of Kanchinjunga is more nearly 15,000 ft. than 12,000 ft. above the point from which the illustrations opposite pp. 406 and 408 were taken. He criticises a passage where Sir M. Conway is talking of drawings as if it referred to photographs. Captain Harman was frost-bitten not near Jongri but on the Donkia Pass. The march along the Singalilah spur is by no means the novel feat here suggested. In a portly volume, published some years ago, a lady gave an account of a trip to the snows made along it in the depth of winter.

The second excursion recounted in this volume is a tour of Nanda Devi by passes of (for the Himalaya) moderate elevation. That this considerable undertaking was successfully accomplished, despite all difficulties of transport, speaks well for Dr. Boeck's patience and perseverance. He has himself to thank if we give him less credit for it than he deserves.

The volume is lavishly illustrated from photographs by the author. To those of the inhabitants of the mountains it is possible to give unrestricted praise: they are lifelike and effective. The landscapes are less successful; many of them have been so much doctored that the peaks lose their characteristic outlines and the views their topographical value.

The two district maps share the defects of the Government Surveys from which they are taken. Indian draughtsmen have not yet learnt what constitutes a glacier or how to depict one.

D. W. F.

*Chemin de Fer des Houches au Sommet du Mont-Blanc: Projet Saturnin Fabre; Etudes Préliminaires et Avant-projet.* Par Joseph Vallot et Henri Vallot. (Paris. G. Steinheil. 1899.)

In recent years we have heard a good deal about various projects for a railway up Mont Blanc, and this elaborately illustrated book shows that some people consider it a practicable scheme.

The Alpine Club can hardly be expected to sympathise deeply with Monsieur Vallot's idea; it remains to be seen whether the investing public will back his project with their money. Fortunately for mountain lovers, apart from mountain trippers, summit railways are not rewarding the enterprising investor very liberally, and the extremely slow, not to say halting, progress of the piercing

of the Eiger for the Jungfrau railway can hardly prove an encouragement to the promoters of the Mont Blanc scheme. For the Jungfrau railway had the advantage of starting from the Scheidegg at a height of 6,788 ft. to reach a height of only 13,670 ft., whereas the Mont Blanc railway would have to rise from 3,252 ft. to 15,785 ft., approximately double the height. The expense must be enormous, and though the number of tourists visiting Chamonix is shown by Monsieur Vallot to be increasing very rapidly, from 10,000 in 1882 (before there was any railway) to 39,000 in 1899 (railway to Le Fayet), yet it would require a very large percentage of these visitors to undertake the journey up Mont Blanc, if the scheme is to be remunerative.\*

There is no doubt that the Alpine tourist will put up with much discomfort in the faithful carrying out of the instructions given him by Messrs. Baedeker & Cook; but will they submit to the dreadful dullness of these long tunnel journeys, which are involved in these mountain-top schemes? At Monsieur Vallot's hopeful estimate of 80 metres a second train-speed the 11,380 metres of line would involve a four hours' journey, and this without making any allowance for stops. Quite three-quarters of this time would be spent in a tunnel, which it is stated will have peep-holes at some half-dozen points; but seeing the time required for the actual journey, it is obvious that only a few minutes could be spared for the unfortunate traveller to take in the beauties of the mountain, to which the author so eloquently refers.

Dwellers in cities may be broken in to subterranean electric railways by the time the Mont Blanc line is finished, but they will have so much of them in their working life that they will hardly wish to renew their experiences during the holidays.

It appears to us an entire fallacy on the part of the promoters of these tunnel railways to compare them for the purpose of estimating traffic with open-air rack-railways, from which there is a beautiful view and where there is plenty of fresh air to be obtained. They may, however, know the weaknesses of their tourist better

\* Monsieur Vallot's figures are --

Total cost of construction of line to summit of Mont Blanc : 21,000,000 frs.

Estimated receipts on travellers carried to the stations of --

|  | Frns.     |
|--|-----------|
| Gros Bèchar, 20,000 at 20 frs. each . . . . .                              | 400,000   |
| Aiguille du Goûter, 4,000 at 50 frs. each . . . . .                        | 200,000   |
| Dôme du Goûter, 2,000 at 60 frs. each . . . . .                            | 120,000   |
| Les Bosses, 1,000 at 80 frs. each . . . . .                                | 80,000    |
| Petits Rochers Rouges and Mont Blanc, 20,000<br>at 100 frs. each . . . . . | 2,000,000 |
| Receipts on merchandise . . . . .  | 50,000    |
| Rent of terminus hotel and station restaurants . . . . .                   | 150,000   |

3,000,000

A total of 47,000 travellers per annum, of whom nearly half must be prepared to pay a lump-sum of 4*l.* The traffic to Chamonix has indeed need to increase if these figures are to be realised.

than we do. That remains to be seen. Monsieur Vallot speaks of the continuation of the railway from Chamonix to the Rhône Valley as an event that is at hand. Such does not appear to be the opinion of the inhabitants, from inquiries made this summer; for the concession, which has been already renewed some six times, will very shortly again lapse, owing to the work on the line not having been even commenced.

We need hardly point out that until this line is completed Chamonix is a *cul-de-sac* as far as railway travel is concerned; a fact which must tend to restrict the number of visitors considerably, and on a great increase in the number of visitors it is clear that the financial success of the undertaking would depend.

M. Vallot throws out the usual sop to the mountaineers, just as Herr Guyer-Zeller did in respect of the Jungfrau railway. He suggests that the stations will be convenient points of departure for mountain expeditions, and that the love of mountains induced by going up Mont Blanc in the 100-fr. tube will result in many fresh recruits to Alpine-climbing. The Alpine Club will have to protect itself by giving out publicly, 'No ascent of Mont Blanc by the tunnel may be entered on a candidate's qualification paper.'

M. Vallot treats of the physiological aspect of the question in an equally optimistic way. We believe the real difficulty in this direction to lie in the effect of the greater altitudes upon the *workmen*—not the travellers. M. Vallot makes light of the difficulties which were experienced in getting the labourers to work for any length of time on the Jausen Observatory, owing to the exhaustion produced by any prolonged effort, but there is no doubt that they were considerable, and it is reasonable to expect a somewhat similar difficulty in the construction of the tunnel. M. Vallot considers that the use of compressed air for blasting will supply the men with such abundance of oxygen that they will suffer no discomfort. But this is a point as yet undecided, and the success or failure of the project, as far as mere labour is concerned, appears to depend largely upon the ability of the men to work continuously. On the other hand there is no doubt that the labourers would be mainly Italians, and it is well known that they will work under conditions which would be insupportable to men of other nationalities.

If, indeed, this scheme never gets any further than the *avant-projet* it will have resulted in an interesting survey of a portion of this great mountain, and for that we may thank M. Vallot, even if we do not sympathise with him in his endeavour to plant a series of restaurants on the rocky prominences of the north-west slopes of Mont Blanc, and to provide the unathletic tourist with a means of easily getting up to them.

W. A. W.

*In the Ice World of Himalaya : among the Peaks and Passes of Ladakh, Nubra, Suru, and Baltistan.* By Fanny Bullock Workman and W. Hunter Workman. With 3 maps and 67 illustrations. London: Fisher Unwin, 1900.

Thanks to the kindness of Mrs. Bullock Workman readers of the 'Alpine Journal' are already acquainted with three\* of the chief ascents effected in her campaign of 1899, when 'by the ascent of the Siegfriedhorn, Mount Bullock Workman, and Koser Gunge three successive world-mountaineering records for women—viz. of 18,600 ft., 19,450 ft., and 21,000 ft.—were made.' We heartily congratulate Mrs. Bullock Workman on her well-earned triumphs, though we must own that we wish she had, when branding her two first conquests, given them names like her happily chosen 'White Fates,' rather than those which she actually bestowed upon them.

Though we have, on the principle 'place aux dames,' given Mrs. Workman the place of honour, her husband, Dr. Hunter Workman, shared the whole of her campaigns, and the book is written in the plural throughout. They were accompanied by the famous Matthias Zurbriggen as guide. The mountaineering story of the book will commend itself to climbers. The authors do not indulge in any sensational extravagance of style, and difficulties are never exaggerated, though there is no lack of liveliness in the narrative. The coolie is the *crux*, if we may so say, of Himalayan travel. He is like—we need not quote the full description—the 'commissariat camuel' of Mr. Rudyard Kipling; and will, we anticipate, in future 'bulk largely' (is not that the modern phrase?) in Himalayan mountain story. We can sympathise heartily with the authors in their disappointment at having to give up their visit to the glaciers of the Kanchinjanga, owing to the trouble with their 'valiant hirelings.'

The scene of the authors' best work was round Askole, in the Karakorams, but for the details we must refer our readers to the book itself.

If hardships from cold and wind, to say nothing of the difficulties of the ground and trouble with coolies, be necessary to give a proper flavour to mountaineering recollections the authors will have many a pleasant hour in what they themselves term 'memory's reminiscent halls.'

The numerous illustrations from photographs add largely to the value of the book, and the maps are very good. We miss an index, but find a glossary of Anglo-Indian terms. The chapter (xii. pp. 182-198) on 'Personal Experiences with Rarefied Air, and some Deductions, for which the Authors are separately responsible,' gives particulars of their physical sensations at over 15,000 ft., and will be found of interest and value.

\* See *Alpine Journal*, vol. xx. pp. 3-17.

*Alpine Plants.* By W. A. Clark, F.R.H.S. London: Upcott Gill. 3s. 6d.  
With eight illustrations by Clarence Elliott.

If the poet speaks truth when he tells us what the scent of violets poured back into his soul, we may conceive what happy memories a bed of *Gentiana verna* or a tuft of *Myosotis rupicola* is likely to awaken in the breast of the mountaineer, and we may further conjecture what an overflowing measure of gratitude will be won from us by the man who enables us to grow these Alpine gems in our own gardens. This unpretentious little book teaches the secret how to attain so desirable an end. The author, who has for many years had charge of probably by far the largest and choicest collection of Alpine plants in England, at the famous York Nurseries, gives directions, suggested by his own experience, for growing those Alpine plants which are rarest, as well as those which, though not rare, are yet often found difficult to manage in English gardens.

Success with many of them depends upon giving the plant the special soil and aspect which it loves, and upon a careful attention to such points as drainage and top-dressing in spring or autumn or in both. One point to which the author directs attention which he emphasises by *italics* is that '*every Alpine should be planted firmly*,' and our own experience agrees thoroughly with his statement. 'Error is a hardy plant; it flourishes in every soil,' wrote the clever parodist, if we remember rightly. It is curious how persistently one comes across the statement that Edelweiss (*Gnaphalium Leontopodium*) cannot live in English gardens. The author demolishes this fable by saying: 'I have seen it used for edging beds in the way anyone would use *Alyssum* or *Arabis*. It likes a nice light sandy soil in a dry sunny position, and can be raised freely from seed.'

The author's thorough acquaintance with his subject may be inferred from such remarks as the following (with reference to *Saxifraga oppositifolia*): 'Nearly all the *Oppositifolia* section die away in the course of a year or two: they should be taken up and pulled to pieces as soon as decay commences, which it does generally in the centre of a large clump. It is no use leaving it in the hope of preventing the spread of the decay by top-dressing, for the plant will grow worse each season, and will gradually die away. The clump should at once be taken up and replanted in fresh compost or on some other portion of the rockery (pull into small bits before replanting), where it will soon take hold and grow as vigorously as before; this should be done directly it ceases flowering. A little grit and leaf-mould may be used as a top-dressing, working it well amongst the shoots. If this cannot be done directly the flowering is over, it should be left until the end of August, which is a very good time. River sand must not be used for top-dressing, as it will cause a rust to come on the foliage.'

Full information is given as to the management of that most beautiful though most difficult plant, *Eritrichium nanum*, though

the directions are too long for reproduction here. It is some compensation to be told that the *Soldanella*—the ‘slender, pensive, fragile flower’ so lovingly described by Ruskin \*—is ‘of quite easy culture’ if the needful precautions be taken.

We have found this little book full of interest, and can recommend it warmly to all lovers of the Alpine garden.

It should be added that the author gives full lists of plants suitable for ‘sandstone or gritstone rockeries facing full south,’ for ‘limestone rockeries facing full south,’ and for ‘north-west and south-east aspects.’ Mr. Clarence Elliott’s illustrations deserve a word of praise.

*Le Tour du Mont-Blanc.* Par Emile Daullia. 8vo, pp. vii, 307; ill.  
(Paris: C. Mendel. 1899. Fr. 7.50.)

This pleasant, appreciative, and humorous account of a tour round the range of Mont Blanc is the very book that one would wish to have at hand by the fire-side on a winter’s night, to provide a gentle stimulus to the imaginative memory in recalling the charms of scenery, the smaller pleasures and annoyances of peaceful travel over well known ground. The tour was new to the writer, and he is able to convey to the reader the freshness of his own impressions. The photographs by the author add to one’s pleasure, representing as they do old scenes from new points of view.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### ACCIDENTS.

*To the Editor of the ALPINE JOURNAL.*

SIR,—Owing presumably to the terrible increase of late in these fatalities, it has not been the custom for the ‘Alpine Journal’ during the last two or three years to give much space to accounts of accidents in which no English climber has been concerned. I venture, however, to send a few remarks on the disaster which occurred on the Königsjoch on July 18, when I was staying at Sulden, since it seems to me to forcibly illustrate a local custom of the Tyrol guides, and the dangers of which that custom may be the cause.

Somewhere about 1893 † complaints began about the custom of the Ortler guides (though not confined to that district of Tyrol) of roping in parties of two, even on crevassed névé. It was then stated ‡ that the D. u. Oe. A. V. ‘expressly recommends guides not to go alone with a single traveller on to névé.’ Nevertheless in 1896 § we find Mrs. Dickinson Berry writing to complain of the same

\* *Froudes Agrestes*, 6th edition, 1882, p. 129.

† *Alpine Journal*, vol. xvii, p. 452.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 510.

§ *Ibid.* vol. xviii, p. 135.