

## REVIEWS.

*A Climber's Guide to the Rocky Mountains of Canada.* By Howard Palmer and J. Monroe Thorington. Published for the American Alpine Club by the Knickerbocker Press, New York, 1921.

THE reflections which are at once suggested by the appearance of a book with this title are neatly stated by the authors in the opening sentence of their excellent Preface: 'Although the time is by no means ripe for the making of a complete Climber's Guide to the Canadian Rockies, a summary of the existing information can scarcely fail to be of service.' The first of these propositions is so obviously true that there is no need to dwell upon it; and we are in most cordial agreement with the second. Probably no other method of exposition could have set forth so clearly and effectively what has been accomplished and what yet remains to be done in the region under consideration. That region is the Rocky Mountains proper, the main range which forms the Continental Divide, with a few groups immediately adjacent to it; the book does not include the Selkirks, or the other ranges lying farther to the W. On the other hand, it takes in the whole of the main chain from the United States boundary to Mount Sir Alexander and Jarvis Pass, beyond which the range probably presents no further features of Alpine interest; in any case, no information concerning it is now available.

The whole distance covered is nearly 450 miles, about what the air-line of the Alps from the Col di Tenda to the Terglon would be if they were straightened out. More than 460 peaks are dealt with, of which all, except about twenty, have now received names, and all, except about a dozen in the near neighbourhood of the Canadian Pacific Railway, are over 9000 ft. in height. It is clear that very large additions will have to be made to the list as time goes on. More than 200 peaks have been climbed, between forty and fifty by two or more different routes. The range is divided up into twenty-four sections, and the general method of treatment is like that of our own Climbers' Guides, but two points of difference will be noticed. First, the peaks in each section are placed in alphabetical order. This was probably unavoidable in the present state of knowledge, but it is to be hoped that in future editions a topographical arrangement, in at least some sections, may be found practicable. Secondly, there is no mention of passes. The Canadian climber has as a rule no use for passes, because there is nowhere for him to go on the other side; still, this will not always be the case, and even now Abbot's Pass and one or two others in the Lake Louise section might well have been spared a few lines.

Sections 1 and 2, which extend northward from the U.S. frontier for 120 miles, apparently present only minor attractions, possessing but one small glacier and one peak over 10,000 ft.; the snow and

ice region begins with the three groups which were, one may almost say, discovered, a few years ago, by Mr. A. O. Wheeler and his colleagues on the Alberta-British Columbia Boundary Commission.<sup>1</sup> These groups have already (1919) received hasty visits from two climbers, and the highest peak in each of them has been reached, but they are still mostly untrodden ground, and practically all our knowledge up to this point depends on the Report and Maps of the Commission, without which this book could hardly have appeared in its present form. (It may be mentioned here that the authors have also had access to the still unpublished results of the Commission as far N. as the Forbes-Lyell group, a privilege the value of which they very cordially acknowledge.) In Section 6 (Assiniboine group) we reach much better-known country; nearly the whole of the region comprised in Sections 6-12 is within easy reach of Banff or Lake Louise, and of the 195 peaks contained in it 133, including all the most important ones, have been ascended, many of them repeatedly; in the Lake Louise section itself, out of fifty-one peaks practically none worthy of consideration remain unclimbed.

We come next to the Freshfield, Lyell-Forbes, and Columbia groups. Our authors write with enthusiasm of the latter as 'the scenic climax of the Canadian Rockies,' and the three form together an almost unbroken mass of glaciers, snow-fields, and lofty mountains to which the rest of the range can show no parallel. All this country was opened up by Dr. Collie and his companions in the great expeditions of 1898 and 1902, and surprisingly little seems to have been added to our knowledge of it since those strenuous days. It is noteworthy also that exploration on this line has not been carried any farther; the outlying Stephens range, mentioned in an earlier section, is still untouched, and—what is still more remarkable—so is the great area, here called the Wood River group, situated W. of the Columbia group and S. of Fortress Lake. It contains at least five peaks between 11,000 and 12,000 ft., but is still entirely unexplored, and 'constitutes the last block of *terra incognita* of outstanding interest to the mountaineer that remains in the Canadian Rockies.' Much new light should be thrown upon it by the maps accompanying the second Report of the above-mentioned Boundary Commission, which we may hope to receive shortly.

It is impossible to deal in detail with the complicated regions which follow. The district between Fortress Lake and the Yellowhead Pass has been the scene of much recent activity, but is still imperfectly known. The sections dealing with it owe much to Mr. Howard Palmer's personal knowledge, and contain many valuable hints which would well repay following up. Beyond the Yellowhead Pass our knowledge, except in the immediate neighbourhood of Mount Robson, is even more disconnected. It has

<sup>1</sup> *A.J.* xxxii. 398.

been well and carefully summarised. Here, again, we must look forward to the maps of the Boundary Commission to give it coherence. We cannot help thinking, by the way, that the authors in their division of the book into parts would have done well to follow the Commission, and make the Yellowhead Pass the dividing line between Parts II. and III. Their reasons for making the division at Fortress Lake seem inadequate. However, this is a matter of form rather than of substance.

Such a book as this is written with the very object of making itself obsolete as quickly as possible. It is a standing challenge to ambitious climbers. The formula 'No information,' which proved so magnetic when our own Climbers' Guides were appearing, is not employed in this volume, but the invitation is scattered broadcast throughout its pages. 'Mt. Alberta, 11,874 ft. . . . As yet unclimbed, but will probably turn out to be one of the most difficult rock peaks in the Canadian Rockies. Its appearance is extraordinarily grand and forbidding from all sides.' 'Mt. Geikie, 10,854 ft. . . . This mountain has the appearance at close quarters of being exceedingly difficult.' What could be more alluring? Let us hope that there will be capable climbers forthcoming to supplement the further work of the Boundary Commission, and that by the time the third Report of that body is ready our authors will have abundant material on hand for a second edition. In the meantime we heartily congratulate them on having produced a work of the greatest value to all who are interested, from any point of view, in Canadian mountaineering.

*Alpine Ski-ing at all Heights and Seasons.* By Arnold Lunn. Methuen. 1921. 5s.

This little book is an admirable attempt to convert ski-runners into mountaineers, but it is also well worthy of the study of the ordinary summer mountaineer. Mr. Lunn is himself an energetic combination of the two, and is an eloquent apostle to both. He claims that ski-running is an all-the-year-round sport; for instance, that Monte Rosa should never be climbed on foot, since you can run down from the Sattel to the Bétemps in 20 minutes on ski.

He very rightly points out that for the ski-runner the danger zone begins almost at the hotel door, and that it takes as much snowcraft to pick the safest and best ski-line up the Faulhorn as to find the way in summer up Mont Blanc.

Mr. Lunn devotes a chapter to the much disputed point whether one should rope on skis. Some fatal accidents have occurred recently to unroped parties. Mr. Lunn appears inclined to look for excitement (p. 95), which may possibly be justifiable to a master like himself. Generally speaking, winter mountaineers of experience incline to keeping off crevassed glaciers until the winter is so far advanced that one may reasonably count on the bridges being thick enough.

A carefully considered chapter is devoted to what is the great danger of winter expeditions—viz. snow avalanches. During his investigations he has had to consider the reasons underlying the merging of snow into ice.

The whole chapter should be read with the closest attention, for there is scarcely a mountaineer who has had the all-seasons experience of the author.

The whole book is written with a very refreshing enthusiasm, and should make many disciples.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

THE LATE ALFRED G. TOPHAM.

*To the Editor of the ALPINE JOURNAL.*

DEAR MR. EDITOR,—In the issue of November 1920, a succinct notice of the work achieved by this enthusiastic and accomplished climber was given, but exigencies of space precluded many personal touches and characteristics. May I be permitted to supplement your remarks with some information, gleaned from the best authority?

Alfred Topham, at the age of 18, fresh from Harrow, by chance found himself at Chamonix in 1880. On seeing Mont Blanc, he went up it next day. The remembrance of this ascent was often a source of amusement to him later. Thus, the joys of mountaineering were revealed to him, and love of the mountains and a passion for them became marked features of a strong character and striking personality. After climbing many of the well-known mountains, he was elected to the Club in 1886.

The years, however, of his notable achievements were from 1889 to 1895, and a list of new ascents and new routes is given in your obituary notice. The work that Topham then did was mostly in a district less well known than it is now—the Valpelline and the important ridge which lies between it and the Valtournanche. Thanks to him and his pioneering efforts, it is well mapped out.

Being impressed with the importance of photography, he took it up in 1887. At that time it was in its infancy for amateurs, and he carried a 28-lb. camera with him. In those days glass plates alone were in use, and snapshots were things undreamed of. Developing, printing, and enlarging his photographs himself, he constructed laboriously those excellent panoramas which were published in the 'A.J.' vol. xvii. pp. 551–555. He always carried an aneroid barometer, and made careful notes of the heights he reached. So authoritative were Topham's results that they proved invaluable when the new Ball's Guide was published, and to the Italian Alpine Club when revising the N. Italian map for the Italian Government. His work was gratefully acknowledged, and he was warmly thanked