

REVIEWS

The Swiss and their Mountains, a Study of the Influence of Mountains on Man.
By Sir Arnold Lunn. Allen & Unwin, London, 1963. 25s.

THE appearance of a new work by the author of so many that adorn our shelves and are entered in my bibliographical lists under 'Lunn, A.', is an event to which all his known and unknown friends look forward with relish. They have not forgotten the magical spell with which, forty years ago, he wove a thread of personal experience and imagination through tragedy and triumph in and out of peaks and snowfields, leavened by his whimsical wit with permissible puns such as the Lunn-adorned truth, shamateurs, etc., enlightened by his inimitable style, and impregnated with his personal charm.¹ He conditioned his readers to expect a high standard, and if he does not always reach it, it is really his own fault.

The present book, *The Swiss and their Mountains*, is made up of a number of chapters and paragraphs on Swiss climbers, writers, artists, scientists, mountain guides, etc., and their mountains. All have appeared before, in works which are now out of print, and it is nice to have the memory of these men kept green and available again. But some of these thumb-nail sketches seem rather lonely and we miss the flowing groundswell of emotion tempered by artistry and the balanced periods that characterised 'The Oberland from end to end', 'The end of a chapter', 'The Eiger on ski', or 'The undiscovered country'.

Most of the chapters of *The Swiss and their Mountains* raise questions of wide interest, perhaps even wider than the reader realises. One of the most charming of its chapters is that relating to a whole swarm of minor Swiss painters of the eighteenth century whose attractive and agreeable little works did duty for picture postcards and constituted what I elsewhere² described as a lyrical expression of art. Lunn himself once put forward a theme, to the effect that whereas today literature is recognised as a more adequate medium for expression of feeling about mountains than art, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries this situation was largely reversed. The minor artists of the eighteenth century seem to provide the stage of overlap between the two reversed tendencies of expression, before alpine art in the nineteenth century degenerated to a level from which it can hardly be said to have risen. And this introduces another point, the opinion held by that great

¹ *The Mountains of Youth*, O.U.P., 1925; *Mountain Jubilee*, London, 1943.

² *Escape to Switzerland*, Harmondsworth, 1945.

art critic Théophile Gautier, that art goes no higher than vegetation. Is this true? I am interested by the support given to this view by Sir Alexander Carr-Saunders in a recent number of the *Alpine Journal*,³ that the Alps have not yet inspired great pictures, though he enters a caveat in the case of Oskar Kokoschka.⁴ However this may be, it is a pleasure to pay unreserved tribute to the selection and reproduction of several works of the minor artists in the colour plates that adorn this book, reproduced thanks to the generosity of the Swiss Institute for Alpine Research, which commissioned the book in connexion with the Centenary of the Swiss Alpine Club.

In the section dealing with Louis Agassiz, I have a fear that, on a smaller scale, there is danger of injustice to another man analogous to that which deprived Dr. Michel-Gabriel Paccard for a century and a half of his credit for being the instigator, planner, leader and executor of the first ascent of Mont Blanc. I refer to Jean de Charpentier, to whom, and not to Agassiz, is due the credit for laying the sound practical foundations of our knowledge of the Ice Age in his book on erratic blocks, which is as valuable today as when it was written.⁵ While Charpentier, a German brought up in Werner's school whom Lunn mentions with honour, patiently and systematically collected the evidence that proved the former extension of the glaciers from the Alps to the Jura, whither they transported boulders and deposited them, and after Charpentier had himself shown Agassiz all the evidence, Agassiz rushed into print ahead of his teacher with a book⁶ containing theories and assumptions that can only be qualified as absurd. Agassiz denied that the erratic blocks on the Jura were similar in nature and transportational history to the boulders that could be seen transported on actual glaciers; he asserted that the refrigeration of Europe occurred before the uplift of the Alps, and claimed that after the Alps had been uplifted loose boulders then slid down the now tilted ice to their destinations and present positions. From the fact that crevasses in glaciers point downhill away from the centre, Agassiz concluded that the sides of a glacier moved faster than the centre. He had to retract all this nonsense later,⁷ but the fact remains that today it is Agassiz and not Charpentier who is generally credited with the discovery and establishment of the theory of the Ice Age. The reason is that Charpentier was a modest man of science whereas Agassiz was an inspired, hasty and noisy enthusiast who combined in himself the extravert nature of a Balmat and the journalistic gifts of an Alexandre Dumas, who travelled about and, in so doing, was

³ 'The Club's Pictures', *A.J.*, 63. 96.

⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 64, 1959, p. 129.

⁵ *Essai sur les glaciers*, Lausanne, 1841.

⁶ *Études sur les glaciers*, Neuchâtel, 1840.

⁷ *Nouvelles études et expériences sur les glaciers actuels*, Paris, 1847.

able to find evidence of a former Ice Age in Britain, which was an important achievement. I am sorry to have to speak in such terms of Agassiz, for I was a personal friend of his grandson Alexander Henry Higginson who lived for fox-hunting in Dorsetshire and used to call his servants at table by blasts on a hunting horn, traits of a strong character that he had surely inherited from his grandfather. As Darwin regretfully remarked,⁸ 'I have always suspected Agassiz of superficiality and wretched reasoning powers', and the real monument to his work is the lasting effects of his energy and enthusiasm reflected in those splendid institutions, the Museum of Comparative Zoölogy at Harvard, the National Academy of Sciences, and Cornell University, which bear witness to his remarkable gifts for inspiring interest in natural history and soliciting financial support for the prosecution of its study.

While on the subject of glaciers, I do not know why Lunn maintains that little is known of Bernhard Friedrich Kuhn (not 'B.J.Kun'), for the biography⁹ of this son of a Grindelwald pastor is fairly well documented. Further, it is not correct to attribute to him the discovery of the former extension of glaciers out of the alpine valleys into the plains. Whoever takes the trouble to study Kuhn's own writings¹⁰ can satisfy himself that Kuhn knew of no evidence to justify him in believing that glaciers formerly extended more than a few hundred yards down the valleys below the points where the glacier-snouts ended. Indeed, he believed that the glaciers never had extended further than these modest limits. As for the man who first deduced that glaciers were the vehicles that carried erratic blocks, it was not John Playfair but his great master, James Hutton,¹¹ the founder of the principle of uniformitarianism (as opposed to catastrophism) in geology, in 1795.

On more than one occasion, Lunn asserts that Rousseau was deeply influenced by Haller in promoting a feeling of appreciative interest in the Alps which had previously been shunned. From the point of view of the history of ideas and the origin of the romantic movement as it affected the development of alpine travel and ultimately climbing and skiing, this is of sufficient importance to warrant more extensive treatment and analysis. It has been studied many times but doubtfully solved. The problem can be approached from three angles: how and why Haller acquired this feeling for the Alps; how Rousseau reacted away from the town towards the countryside; and the relations between the two men.

⁸ *More letters of Charles Darwin*, vol. 1, 1903, p. 104.

⁹ B. Studer: *Geschichte der physischen Geographie der Schweiz*, Bern & Zürich, 1863, p. 454.

¹⁰ Gavin de Beer: 'Bernhard Friedrich Kuhn's investigations on glaciers', *Annals of Science*, vol. 9, 1953, p. 323.

¹¹ *Theory of the Earth*, Edinburgh, 1795.

Haller, heavy, moral, orthodox, very German-minded (incidentally, when did he have 'meetings with Gibbon'?), got to know the high alpine pastures of Switzerland and their inhabitants by making numerous long journeys among them. His tour of 1736 was not his second as Lunn thinks, but his fifth.¹² Haller, F.R.S., himself one of the greatest scientists of the eighteenth century, was no enemy to science and its application for the benefit of humanity, but as a good Swiss he felt that the pristine virtues of honesty, industriousness and good fellowship that characterised the rugged founding fathers of Canton Berne had been blunted when Berne became a powerful oligarchic state, dominating its neighbours by military might, while its leaders were demoralised by mercenary service, the manners of the French Court and effeminacy. His poem, *Die Alpen*, published in 1732 was translated into French by Vincent Bernhard von Tschärner in 1749, and it is quite certain that Rousseau read it (Rousseau read everything) because he copied out a verse¹³ from 'L'homme du siècle' in which Haller expressed his regrets of the 'good old days', a historical and definable stage in the history of his country, of which he found the best surviving traces among the alpine peasantry.

Rousseau, on the other hand, as Lunn rightly says, never knew the alpine peasants at all. He crossed the Mont Cenis twice, the Simplon once, and the Jura a few times. In spite of his youth spent in Geneva and his adolescence at Annecy, he had no interest in mountains. Once he went to Cluses,¹⁴ but never mentioned Mont Blanc. The poor figure that he cut in society produced in him a feeling of inferiority that led him to espouse the paradox that the progress of the sciences and the arts has produced society itself which led man down the slippery slope of depravity. Therefore, society and its necessarily urban manifestations are evil. Therefore it was when man became social that all the trouble started. Therefore the countryside into which the poison of social organisation had penetrated least far is blessed. But the only countryside that he knew well was the shores of the Lake of Geneva. At Vevey he spent,¹⁵ not 'a great deal of time' as Lunn thinks, but two days in 1731 (the date on the plaque on the former Hotel de la Clef is wrong) and one night on September 24, 1754. For some time he hesitated on where to place the scene of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*; it might have been on the shores of Lago Maggiore which he had seen in passing in 1744, but he

¹² Gavin de Beer: 'Albrecht von Haller's alpine journeys', *A. J.* 58. 96.

¹³ F. Jost: *Jean-Jacques Rousseau Suisse*, Fribourg, 1961, vol. 1, p. 389.

¹⁴ C. Vallot: *Tableau littéraire du Mont-Blanc*, Chambéry, 1930, p. 79.

¹⁵ J.-L. Courtois: *Chronologie critique de la vie et des oeuvres de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, Genève, 1924, p. 17. *Oeuvres complètes de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, édition de La Pléiade, tome 1, 1962, p. 152; note 2, p. 1178 & p. 1868 (texte établi et annoté par Bernard Gagnebin et Marcel Raymond).

finally decided on Clarens,¹⁶ and from the moment of its publication in 1761 the sentimental reader found himself pitch-forked onto the foot of the Alps because Clarens is at their feet, and the hero (Saint-Preux) made a journey to the Valais and described the view from the Jura. It was therefore chance that the *venue* of this epoch-making novel was in Switzerland; its subject-matter, construction and development were the products of Rousseau's own recollections, imagination, and sense of moral purpose.

How much of all this was due to deep influence by Haller? To begin with, Haller sternly repudiated the whole basis of Rousseau's thesis. Referring to the latter's incrimination of the arts and sciences as responsible for man's degradation, Haller wrote¹⁷ in February, 1753 'There is much fire and wit in this satire against the sciences . . . and as much inconsistency and contradiction'. As for Rousseau's opinion of Haller, it is to be seen in his letter¹⁸ to Moultoy of June 11, 1763: 'Haller fait son métier en diffamant un opprimé, et moi je fais le mien en prenant patience. Qu'aurois-je à dire à cet homme-là?' Haller extolled the alpine peasantry because of objective historical reasons; Rousseau extolled them on the basis of a preposterous assumption about prehistory: that man was non-social before he became social. The reader must decide for himself what Rousseau obtained from Haller, but anyone knowing Rousseau's character, method of working and extreme individualism can hardly avoid the conclusion that *La Nouvelle Héloïse* would not have been any different from what it is if Haller had never written *Die Alpen*.

There is another reason why *La Nouvelle Héloïse* is fascinating. It has sometimes been said that it is autobiographical in the sense that the character of Julie was based on that of the Comtesse d'Houdetot, for whom Rousseau fell so heavily, and that of Saint-Preux on himself in that episode. The reverse is true¹⁹: Rousseau had written his novel before he lived it and played Saint-Preux to the Comtesse d'Houdetot's Julie. This curious case of fiction preceding and providing the blueprint for subsequent fact is well worth further study: Oscar Wilde proclaimed it as a paradox, but it was also verified when Alfred de Musset in *Andrea del Sarto* anticipated an experience that he was later to live through himself, and the same is true of Gerard de Nerval with his *Aurelia*, the Abbé Prévost with *Manon*, Balzac with the *Médecin de Campagne*, and Proust in an article in *Le Figaro*. Such were the circum-

¹⁶ *Oeuvres complètes de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, édition de la Pléiade, tome 1, 1962, p. 431.

¹⁷ L. Hirzel: *Albrecht von Hallers Gedichte*, Frauenfeld, 1882, p. CCCLXXIV.

¹⁸ *Correspondance générale de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, tome 9, Paris, 1928, p. 346.

¹⁹ *Oeuvres complètes de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, édition de La Pléiade, tome 2, Paris, 1961, p. xlix (texte annoté par Bernard Guyon).

stances attending the birth of the novel which played so important a part in bringing the Alps into fashion.

While still on the never-ending subject of Rousseau, I find it hard to understand why Lunn gives hostages to fortune when he makes negative assertions that are so easy to controvert. He says that 'Rousseau made history but never read it'. Here, in the words that Huxley spoke to Owen, I am obliged to give a direct and unqualified contradiction. Rousseau was brought up on Plutarch, Tacitus, and Old Testament history and like many self-taught men he was extremely well and widely read. It is necessary only to study the whole corpus of his works and the twenty volumes of his correspondence to see how painstaking was his avid search for accurate information. In order to provide a sound factual basis for one episode of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* he borrowed a copy of Anson's *Voyage*. His polemical works in defence of his *Emile*, the *Lettre à Monseigneur de Beaumont* and the *Lettres écrites de la Montagne* show that he was even better documented than his opponents. It is a travesty of the truth to say that he made no attempt to collate the facts of history and Lunn has been misled by the technique that Rousseau adopted in his *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*. Rousseau was familiar with Plato, Grotius, Puffendorf, Macchiavelli, Hobbes, Malebranche, Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, Addison, and Montesquieu, and then began his analysis in the *Discours* with the words 'Commençons par écarter tous les faits', but he goes on to say why: 'car ils ne touchent point à la question'. It must be immediately admitted that by discarding 'the facts', he was making no sacrifice because nothing was then known about the matters of which he wished to treat: the primeval state of man. Of course he was wrong in his premise that the depravity of man was due to the poison of civilisation and social structure. He had no means of knowing that man's ancestors had a social organisation before they evolved into man; and so he imagined a pre-social state in which man's assumed ingrained goodness had not yet been corrupted by society. It would be interesting to know the ingredients that went to make up this idea which flashed on his mind in October, 1749, when he went to visit his friend Diderot in prison at Vincennes. In addition to his personal record of failure in society, I am inclined to include his Calvinist upbringing with its emphasis on the Old Testament. If mankind sprang from one man, Adam, then clearly man preceded society. A reasoned estimate²⁰ of the size of the population one million years ago, when man-like apes were evolving into ape-like men, is 125,000, and their social organisation must have been a corner-stone of their survival, without offensive or defensive organs but with a brain. Nevertheless, with his view of pristine pre-social bliss Rousseau

²⁰ T. Dobzhansky: *Mankind evolving*, Yale U.P., 1962, p. 299.

combined a refreshing state of sinlessness, and this was what he projected into the alpine valleys, as far away as possible from the towns.

When referring to Woodley, the second Englishman to make the ascent of Mont Blanc, Camper the Dutchman who accompanied him nearly to the summit, and Hill the first Englishman to reach the Col du Géant, Lunn adds a defeatist note that their initials are not to be found in the scanty references to their exploits. Not only their initials but their full Christian names and their dates are known and have been published²¹: William Woodley (c.1762–1810); Adriaan Gilles Camper (1759–1820); Thomas Ford Hill (d.1795). Of course this detail is trivial and utterly unimportant from the point of view of general principle or broad synthesis, and it gives point to Voltaire's definition of detail as 'the vermin that destroys great works'; he did not mean to condone faulty and inaccurate detail but to suggest that where it has no particular point to make, support, or refute, it is best omitted altogether. I shall therefore take a leaf out of Voltaire's book and refrain from harping on the subject of faulty dates, transcriptions, or titles of books quoted, even if the latter include my own.

The Swiss and their Mountains has a sub-title: *A study of the influence of mountains on man*. This is a grand subject which was first treated by Montesquieu in *L'Esprit des Lois*, one of the great books of all time. Montesquieu had visited Switzerland in 1728 or 1729 and spent eighteen years in writing it, from 1731 until 1748 when it was published in Geneva. In it, and first to do so, Montesquieu showed that human nature, and therefore laws and history, are affected by physical factors such as heat, cold, air, wind, soil, climate, food, geography, and by the results of these factors operating on the human nature of neighbouring peoples. In other words, Montesquieu traced for man the principles of ecology which Darwin applied to the entire living world and in which he found the key to evolution. The splendid demonstration of multi-causal determinism for which Montesquieu's work is so justly famous led it to be placed on the Index in 1751, in spite of Cardinal Passionei's efforts to avert it.

In Book XVIII, Chapter 1, which is devoted to how the nature of the ground affects and influences law, Montesquieu notes that the sterility of the soil in Attica established popular government while the fertility of Lacedaemonia led to the establishment of aristocracy. Continuing, he notes that fertile countries are plains where the will of the strong cannot be disputed and the spirit of liberty cannot thrive. In mountainous countries, on the other hand, it is possible for the inhabitants to preserve what they have, which is little more than liberty itself, worth defending

²¹ *The First Ascent of Mont Blanc*, O.U.P., 1957; T. S. Blakeney: 'Early ascents of Mont Blanc: some biographical notes' (*A.J.* 66. 316.); *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 66 (Part I), 1796, p. 127.

because this can be done with hope of success. This masterly exposition of general principle agrees with what Lunn says about Switzerland, though he never mentions Montesquieu, and it basically confirms Lunn's opening paragraph where he maintains that it is not a mountain barrier that maintains Swiss independence today, for there are no mountains between Geneva and France or Basle and Germany. This is quite true and the facts must be seen in historical perspective: Geneva and Basle were protected by Switzerland because mountain barriers had enabled the Forest Cantons to maintain their independence, and they formed a nucleus on which, like a snowball, the surrounding cantons and territories became affixed, maintaining the independence of all provided that they did not let down their guard. When they did, during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic periods, Switzerland was quickly mulcted, not only of Geneva, but also of Neuchâtel and the Valais. It was because of the mountain barrier of the Réduit, which Lunn describes so well, that the territorial integrity of the whole of Switzerland was so steadfastly and successfully maintained.

Montesquieu developed his argument further, and referring specifically to Switzerland (Book XIII, Chapter 12) he remarked that the Swiss pay to nature four times as much as a Turk pays to his Sultan. This is the sort of thing that is so interesting and of which one longs for more. In the mountains of the Vivarais where, for centuries, the countryside had been littered with murders so foul that Sweeney Tod and the Schwarzenbach inn in Werner's *Twenty fourth of February* were by comparison nothing, Firmin Boissin²² was driven to consider the geology of the region as possibly providing a thread of continuity and explanation. As for Switzerland, to raise a few of the many points made by George Soloveytchik in a work²³ that is too little known, why is the divorce rate in Switzerland among the highest in the world, why has one Swiss woman in eight a foreign husband, why do Swiss women not vote, why is there a bank for every 1,300 inhabitants, why, where private enterprise is ardent, is more than half the banking business entrusted to state banks which borrow 'short' and lend 'long', why, where cowsheds were the first in the world to be illuminated by electric light, do the peasants refuse to introduce hygienic methods into farming? How are these features correlated with the mountains, which one feels that they must be? It would be fascinating to study these problems, but not easy, because correlations can only be established by detailed evidence in the field of human ecology which Montesquieu first cleared, and correlations are not always capable of rational interpretation. For instance, J. Ranke²⁴

²³ J. de Montgros: *L'énigme de Peyrebeille*, Privas, 1958, p. 28.

²² *Switzerland in perspective*, O.U.P., 1954.

²⁴ 'Die Schädel der altbayerische Bevölkerung', *Revue d'Anthropologie*, 1882 & 1884.

observed that in general the inhabitants of mountainous regions tend to have rounder heads than plain-dwellers regardless of the race to which they belong. This is all part of the study of the influence of mountains on man.

This influence works strongly through strategic factors, and I cannot make out why Lunn is so intent on denying that the St. Gotthard Pass was 'opened' in the twelfth century A.D., and on insisting that it was known in Roman times. Here it is necessary to be precise. The St. Gotthard Pass proper, leading from the Ticino valley to the Urserental was certainly known to and used by the Romans, as also were the Furka and Oberalp Passes which united the two portions of the Roman province of Raetia which included the Valais as well as most of the modern territory of the Grisons. I have no doubt that a track over the Bözberg from the Urserental to the Göschenental was known in the La Tène period of the Iron Age; but Felix Staehelin's²⁵ masterly studies have established beyond doubt that in Roman times there was *no* South-North route connexion over the Gotthard (and this is what 'the Gotthard' means) between Italy and the plain of Switzerland. This is supported by the fact that a hoard of gold treasure of La Tène date has been found at Erstfeld in the Reuss valley, and another of Roman coins on the Bözberg. Hoards were not hidden on trodden tracks, either trade routes or military roads, but in out-of-the-way unfrequented places, which these then were. As past masters in the art and practice of developing communications, the Romans were not likely to have missed an opportunity of opening the Gotthard for reinforcing the Watch on the Rhine, on which their security so greatly depended, if it had been practicable. Not only is there no evidence that the Romans used the Gotthard for South-North communications, but there is presumptive evidence that they did not, because of the positions of their customs stations controlling entry into the Helvetic territory at Saint Maurice and Zurich. If the Gotthard had been 'opened' before the twelfth century, history would not have had to wait until then for the territory of the Forest Cantons to acquire the strategic significance which, as Lunn himself says, it then first did.

I have experienced so many kindnesses from Lunn that nothing could possibly afford me greater pleasure than to give a hearty welcome to his latest book. While expressing it, I am going to venture the hope that he will before long return to the field in which he is inimitable, invulnerable, and unique, as when he writes about himself, as he does but not enough, in part of this book. It is not everyone of whom I should say this. I long for his own adventures and unparalleled experiences, mischievously spiced by the spirit of controversy in matters of opinion if need be but with a declared close season on the use of the

²⁵ *Die Schweiz in römischer Zeit*, Basel, 1948; also *Repertorium der Ur- und Frühgeschichte der Schweiz*, Heft 4, *Die Römer in der Schweiz*, Basel, 1958, p. 4.

words nazi and communist, inspired with a flair for the absurd and an unquenchable sense of fun. That is the real Lunn. He, more than anybody, has added a new dimension to the calendars of mankind by showing them what to do out of doors in mid-winter. Will he not give us a *Mountains of Maturity* and take a leaf out of Rousseau's book by discarding the stuffy facts of history and of science in a work of personal experience, achievement, and imagination in the Alps?

GAVIN DE BEER.

La Montagne dans la Peinture. By Ulrich Christoffel. (French translation by Henry-Jean Bolle.) Published by the Swiss Alpine Club, 1963.

THIS short survey, in 140 pages, of mountains as seen through the eyes of European (mainly Swiss) artists over the last two thousand years has been written and published to mark the centenary of the Swiss Alpine Club, and is to be distributed as a gift to its members. A charming plan, most happily carried out. There are fifty-seven plates, about half of them in colour; they begin with a mural from Pompeii, showing little hummocks of Apennine against a blue sky, and they end, of course, with a creation by a living artist, Zermatt and its Matterhorn in all the colours of the rainbow.

We feel that the author has devoted rather too much attention to the long ages before (say) 1600, when mountains meant so little to mankind in general; a number of the early illustrations have very little to do with mountains, for example, Peter Breughel's famous 'Winter', a landscape which might almost do for the valley of the Mersey, with Helmsley Crag and the Welsh hills in the distance. For us the lovely drawing by Leonardo in the Queen's collection at Windsor, and the de Momper's fine landscape in the Museum of Art at Vienna, which has a touch of the Lake District about it, would have quite adequately covered ancient times. This might have allowed the mountaineering age of mountains to be more fully represented; space might thus have been found for the work of men who loved to live among the mountains and to climb them too. Few pictures have been selected for reproduction which were painted from viewpoints which only an active mountaineer could have seen, like Baud-Bovy's 'Bütlassen'. There are too many romantic valley scenes, with theatrical over-emphasis of the mountain gloom, like Bocklin's 'Devil's Bridge'. The accent on Switzerland has prevented Mont Blanc and the Aiguilles from appearing at all.

If one of these pictures of the last two hundred years were given us to take home and live with, which would the majority of our members now select? Perhaps de Meuron's 'Eiger' in the cold light of a lovely summer dawn, or Caspar Wolf's 'Totensee and the Rhone Glacier', an unusually mountainous landscape for an eighteenth-century artist. Or would it be the famous Turner from our own National Gallery, as fine

a vision of Paradise as one could wish to gaze upon when the busy world is hushed and the work of the day is done? H. R. C. CARR.

A Winter in Nepal. By John Morris. Pp. 232. Illustrations. R. Hart-Davis, Ltd., London, 1963. Price 30s.

IT is a pleasure to read a book about Nepal by an author who writes so well as John Morris does and who gives so realistic a picture of Kathmandu and of the foothills.

To John Morris, who had looked at Nepal from India with longing during his days with the Gurkhas, the experience of living and travelling in the country is a mixture of pleasure and disillusionment: the delays and uncertainty caused by officials in a bureaucracy created too suddenly out of despotism are irritating and frustrating, even now no one in valleys removed from Kathmandu itself seems to know or care about events which take place in the capital, the villages are filthy, privacy cannot be found, there is extortion and poverty; but the officials are sometimes endearing, old countrymen emerge as sages, some camps, if they are away from villages, are in beautiful surroundings, and always in the background are the big mountains, Himal Chuli, Annapurna, and Machapuchare.

Except for two short but interesting visits to Kathmandu in the days of the Ranas, John Morris had no opportunity to travel the country until the winter of 1961-2. Then he lived for some months in a cottage at Chobar, outside the capital, and in the company of Denys and Bette Galloway completed a journey westwards from Kathmandu to Gurkha, Pokhara and Tansing. Much of the book is taken up with a detailed account of the customs of the Magar and Gurung tribes compiled, so we are told, from information obtained by the author when he was a regimental officer and later checked in the villages.

The book makes it clear how much must be missed by any traveller in Nepal who has not John Morris's command of the language of the people; it also vividly recalls the joys and irritations which are shared by all who travel there: who can forget the reply 'dwi kos' to any question about the distance to the next halt, or the wayfarer who attaches himself to the traveller and interrogates him about his private life, or the plunge into a cool mountain stream after a sweaty, dusty day, or the light on the far snows at dawn? All these things John Morris shares with us in this delightful book illustrated with many of his own excellent photographs.

CHARLES EVANS.

Conquistadors of the Useless. By Lionel Terray. (Translated by Geoffrey Sutton). Pp. 351. Illustrations. Victor Gollancz, London, 1963. Price 30s.

THIS book of mountain adventure—a mountaineering thriller in the true sense of the word—is about as good as such a book can be. It

describes more and greater climbing than is to be found elsewhere, or is likely to be found hereafter, and it is written with vigour, fluency and clarity. To add 'with modesty' would be nice but untrue; the only period of his life with which Lionel Terray appears in the least dissatisfied is the period of the war. The interest is well sustained and in 350 pages there is hardly a dull line. Thanks to Geoffrey Sutton the book has not suffered by translation and it is copiously illustrated.

Two thirds of the book deal with the great climbs of the Alps and Alpine guiding, and this is the most exciting part. The ascents of the Walker Spur and the North face of the Eiger with Lachenal are described in detail and lose nothing of their fearsomeness in the telling. The reader feels the mounting tension and apprehension and breathes a sigh of relief when the party is safely down. After this, when Terray felt that the Alps had no more to offer that would test his nerve, skill and powers of endurance, comes the 1950 Annapurna adventure which called for less skill but even more endurance. Though the remaining climbs are dealt with only briefly the interest is maintained: FitzRoy (which Terray reckons the hardest of all), two Peruvian peaks, the Makalu reconnaissance and the climbing of Chomolönzo in the autumn of 1954, and Makalu itself the following spring. In 1956 three more high and difficult Peruvian peaks are climbed. The story ends with the failure on Jannu and the subsequent successful attempt in 1962. Apparently on this 25,000-ft. peak oxygen was used and this must surely in his eyes have detracted from the achievement.

In the Himalayan section, Terray's few remarks on Everest seem to betray some bias. The first Swiss attempt which failed at 28,000 ft. is compared with pre-war British attempts which three times reached the same height, but it is not pointed out that in the latter no oxygen was used. Of the 1953 success, in which John Hunt is not named but referred to only as 'a high-ranking officer', he writes: 'Thanks to the large scale of the supporting pyramid and the efficiency of the oxygen apparatus . . . the giant succumbed almost without a struggle'. As easy as that! This will be news to the party concerned, who will hardly agree that *they* had not to struggle. But Terray is accustomed to victory and is something of a connoisseur. Of Makalu he says: 'Victory must be bought at the price of suffering and effort, and the clemency of the weather combined with the progress of technique had sold us this one too cheaply to appreciate it at its true value'. He values more the dashing, hastily organised and dearly bought success on Annapurna about which we are given a whiff of French bombast: 'Herzog and Lachenal have set the coping-stone of the great arch of endeavour, showing the world that our much decried race has lost none of its immortal virtues'. If the world indeed needed to be shown this, the climbing of a 26,000-ft. mountain by two Frenchmen would hardly suffice. And for the sake of

the record, it was a party of British climbers, not Swiss (p. 234), who were the first to enter the Nepal Himalaya.

Terray is a dedicated mountaineer if ever there was one. For him mountaineering is a way of life, 'job, passion, and torment all in one'. In Russia they would have to invent a new title, Master of Sport being quite inadequate for a man of so many great achievements. 'Outside the really great climbs', says Terray, 'mountaineering is only a sporting form of tourism'. The expert has a right to be arrogant but we sporting tourists, while peeping about between the legs of this climbing Colossus to find ourselves dishonourable graves, may feel that what may be contemptuously easy for a man with years of schooling and practice behind him may be desperately hard for the average performer who, when achieving his modest climbs, may be as severely tested, relatively speaking, as the virtuoso on his 'grande course'. As Terray justly remarks: 'The naturally gifted man who frequents mountains from boyhood on . . . gradually becomes more sure-footed, acquires stronger fingers, steadier nerves, more stamina and more refined technique. Thus he may eventually reach such a degree of mastery that even on ascents of extreme difficulty he has plenty in reserve and runs no great risks.'

The title of this book is a little absurd. Apart from 'Conquistadors' which is neither French nor English, and possibly not even Spanish, mountains are far from useless whether as sources of water and power, as playgrounds, as monuments of beauty and grandeur or, as the Psalmist long ago discovered, as an inspiration to man. Nor are Lionel Terray's many conquests of them useless. In reading his book climbers young and old will feel the urge—not to do likewise, for that would be hardly possible—but to do what they can to catch something of Terray's fervent spirit, indomitable will and boundless courage.

H. W. TILMAN.

On Snow and Rock By Gaston Rébuffat. Translated from the French by Eleanor Brockett, with technical assistance from J. E. B. Wright. Foreword by Sir John Hunt. Pp. 188. 280 photographs. Nicholas Kaye, 1963. Price 42s.

THIS is a fascinating book. In form it is a technical manual on Alpine climbing, with the usual chapters on clothing and equipment, rock climbing, snow climbing, and so on. The written text is concise, here and there so brief as to be perhaps superficial, the precepts orthodox, covering the same ground as many similar works. What gives this one its quite special value and interest is the truly magnificent collection of photographs. So copious are these that the book is as much a picture book as written text. Most of them are chosen to illustrate points of technique, but there are also some glorious views of Alpine scenery and

many of the technical pictures show Rébuffat in action on particular named climbs.

A few of the pictures are a little unfairly sensational, but in general not only do they serve their immediate purpose of bringing to life the text, but they constitute a fascinating record of the technique of a master climber of his generation. As such they will remain of continuing historic value, long after the climbing fashions and methods that they illustrate have been superseded. How fascinating if we had a similar record of the technique of Alexander Burgener, of Franz Lochmatter, of Josef Knubel, in their prime.

A book for enjoyment as well as instruction. And in his instruction Rébuffat makes plain his fundamental message, that technique is always and only a means to safe and happy enjoyment of the mountains.

A. K. RAWLINSON.

Guide Book to Mount Kenya and Kilimanjaro (2nd Edition). Edited by Ian C. Reid. Pp. 192, illustrations, diagrams and maps. Mountain Club of Kenya, Nairobi, 1963. 16s.

THE first edition of this guide book appeared in 1959; the new edition is completely revised and enlarged. It covers a good deal more than an Alpine guide book, dealing also with travel conditions, flora, fauna, geology and much else. Now that climbers are prepared to fly from England for a climbing holiday on these mountains, a book of this sort will be invaluable. (It is good news, too, that the Mountain Club of Uganda is at work on a guide book to the Ruwenzori.) The editor has had the assistance of such authorities as P. A. Campbell, R. A. Caukwell and J. W. Howard (to name only a few) in preparing this volume, and their names are a guarantee of the value of the book.

T. S. B.

Red Peak. By Malcolm Slesser. Pp. 256, illustrations. Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1964. 30s.

THIS is a highly personal, and very interesting, record of the British-Soviet Pamir Expedition of 1962. Readers of the *Alpine Journal* already know the main lines of the expedition, and it achieved, indeed, a melancholy notoriety by the deaths of Noyce and Robin Smith. It is welcome, however, to have a detailed narrative of the climbing of Peak Patriot, and to learn of the reasons why only a Russian pair reached the summit.

In the main, Slesser's book deals less with the actual climbs than with the organising of the party as a whole; the trying negotiations, at various stages, from start to finish, with the Russian authorities; and the reactions of the different members—eighteen in all, English, Scottish and Russian—to the stresses and strains that such a venture imposes. Fortunately, Slesser, the head of the Scottish team, had travelled with Hunt before,

so the question of leadership solved itself; nevertheless, it seems that discord was engendered at times; the author did not entirely agree with Hunt about the need to sink nationalist feelings in order to make a coherent British party, and it becomes clear that he (as perhaps others) was less strongly influenced by a pro-Russian outlook. Slesser conveys the impression that the Scots would have preferred being on their own, but he provides no evidence that the English members reciprocated that feeling.

The author gives one a sense of strained relations with the Russians; certainly Soviet officialdom treated the expedition rather badly, but differences did not remain at that level. Instances are given of tension existing between the British and Russian climbers also; the anxiety of Soviet climbers to acquire sufficient summits to qualify for their *Master-ship of Sport* clashed with the easier-going outlook of the British—one chapter of the book is simply entitled 'A Different Point of View'. In fairness to the Russians, it must be said that the causes of tension were by no means all on one side.

Though the aim had been stated very early on (p. 33), when composing the British party, that it must be a friendly lot, and not in the tradition of a recent Himalayan expedition, whose members had nearly come to blows on their mountain, yet it would seem that greater care might have been taken to ensure that the members of the party had more than mountain expertise in common. In Moscow, Slesser says he was not the only one who blushed at the behaviour of some of his companions; one is left wondering if 'the universal adjectival present participle of the British Army', which cropped up so liberally in their conversation, made a good impression on the Russians—it possibly caused irritation to the more fastidious of the British climbers; whilst we are left in no doubt that some of the British were a disagreeable lot with whom to share a tent. Hunt, for purposes of integration, had decreed that British and Russians should, as far as possible, share tents; once Hunt had left the expedition, this practice was abandoned, and one's sympathies are entirely with the Russians when (p. 202) they protested against the repellent habits of some of their British companions. After the expedition was over, the Russians produced a questionnaire (p. 225) for the British, asking for opinions on Soviet climbers and climbing methods; it is perhaps as well that we do not hear of a similar questionnaire on what the Russians thought of their visitors.²⁶

Eighteen is a large party, too large perhaps when composed of people of different nationalities, outlooks and cultures. The impression made

²⁶ One may surmise that the detailed enquiry into personal qualities of climbers at high altitudes, that was sent out in December, 1962, by the Mountaineering Federation of the U.S.S.R., was occasioned by experiences on the Pamir expedition.

by this book is that the expedition, though interesting, was not very enjoyable—this indeed one had gathered from conversations with some of its members. The volume is dedicated (by initials) to the two who lost their lives and (one presumes) to the leader; one may, perhaps, regret that no Russian climber is included, for they had, after all, endured quite a lot. But it would seem that, by the end, even the amiable Eugene Gippenreiter had had enough of this effort in furthering British-Soviet relations.

Sufficient has been said to indicate that this is an unusually frank book, and the author admits that he has been warned that he may lose friends because of it. One trusts not, for there is much that is valuable (as assuredly it is readable) in the way he dissects and examines the expedition. Mountaineers have always been a contentious lot, from the Paccard-Balmat controversy down to the present day; but in most cases friction is soon forgotten, and one hopes that the British-Soviet Pamir Expedition will prove no exception.

T. S. BLAKENEY.