

REVIEWS AND NOTICES.

The Annals of Mont Blanc. By Charles Edward Mathews, sometime President of the Alpine Club. (London: T. Fisher Unwin. 1898.)

'THE old school,' says Mr. Mathews in his concluding chapter, 'will never think any mountain so interesting or so beautiful as Mont Blanc. Tourists can never spoil it. Huts can never wholly vulgarise it.' And he adds: 'Each new generation of men will find in it, as we have found, the same interest and the same charm.' This witness is true. Mont Blanc is still the point of central interest in the Alps. When we have climbed a peak it is always to his majestic summit that we first turn our eyes; and the better we know him the stronger is our desire still further to explore his glaciers and attendant aiguilles and to view him under new aspects. The early pioneers, no doubt, enjoyed special advantages. And yet, to say nothing of climbing without guides, it is still in the power of any lover of the mountains to recover something of their freshness of feeling if he will take competent 'foreign' guides to whom the mountain is new ground, and choose one of the less frequented routes. He may not succeed at the first attempt, and he will certainly spend more hours on the ascent than are set down in the Climbers' Guide. But in the course of it he will learn many things—this, possibly, among the rest: that Mont Blanc is still held in very high honour by the men who live in other Alpine valleys. For his guides, unimpressionable as he has found them elsewhere, will take as keen an interest in the success of the adventure as he does himself.

It was fitting that the Annals of Mont Blanc should be written for English readers by one of the Fathers of the Alpine Club, himself familiar with the mountain for more than forty years. And we may say at once that Mr. Mathews has done his work very well. And he has done wisely, too, in limiting himself to the history of the chief summit and the routes that lead to it. But from this point of view we think it hardly fair that among the fatalities should be included accidents on the Col du Géant that befell travellers who were simply crossing the pass, and not taking it as part of the route up Mont Blanc. Surely Mont Blanc 'has blood enough on those white snows of his' without being held responsible for eight lives lost on the Col du Géant, two on the Aiguille Blanche de Péteret, and one on the Aiguille Noire. Deducting these we reduce the total to thirty-six, though in fairness we must add the name of Dr. Jacottet, who died in 1891 at the Vallot Observatory. In dealing with this painful subject Mr. Mathews has taken exactly the right tone, and, as he points to the neglect of well-known rules, he speaks of 'the humiliation, and even anger,' that must be felt at a loss of life that was to so large an extent avoidable. With regard to the disappearance of Count Villanova and his guides and porters on August 18, 1890, he adopts the

commonly held view that they were blown off the arête connecting the Aiguille de Bionassay with the Dôme du Goûter. It should, however, be noted that M. Durier, who reached the Vallot Observatory at 1.30 P.M. on that day, and was held prisoner there by the storm till the morning of the 21st, gives some grounds for his belief that the disaster took place in the morning, on the Glacier du Dôme, far below.*

The rise of mountaineering in the modern sense, Scheuchzer and his dragons, and the history of Chamonix, are treated in the first chapter, and many will be glad to read the letters of Windham and Martel, which are given in *facsimile* in an appendix. In the chapter on the early attempts to ascend Mont Blanc we come to the author's most original contribution to the subject. He has brought to light Dr. Paccard's note-book (now in the possession of the Alpine Club), in which the Doctor was in the habit of recording particulars of the early expeditions down to 1825, and we confess that we approached this part of the book with some curiosity. In one sense Dr. Paccard's notes are disappointing. As regards the earliest attempts they are of considerable interest, often serving to correct a date or supply a detail, while the numerous botanical and geological entries bear witness to the scientific tastes and capacity of the writer. When, however, we come to the famous first ascent of the mountain by the Doctor himself and Jacques Balmat, on August 8, 1786, the diary merely gives a meagre statement in three lines. This is the more unfortunate because Dr. Paccard's printed account, published in 1786, has disappeared, Mr. Mathews says 'irretrievably.' But a generation that has witnessed the recovery of a lost work of Aristotle and the poems of Bacchylides need not despair, and the hint is sure to put many book-hunters on the alert. In the meantime Mr. Mathews has, we hold, made good his contention that the generally received account of the first ascent does grave injustice to the memory of Dr. Paccard. His name is well-nigh forgotten in his native village, while Balmat has a statue as well as a medallion in front of the church. Yet it was not always so. In the early references to the first ascent contained in the writings of de Saussure and Bourrit and Coxe, all published within three years of the event, Paccard and Balmat receive equal credit. It is clear, too, that Paccard, the village doctor and the son of one of the richest men in Chamonix, must have been a man of some scientific attainments, for he was a corresponding member of the Academy of Turin, and on the first ascent he took a barometer with him and observed it on the summit. He was twenty-nine years old (Balmat was twenty-four), and a competent mountaineer, 'fond of all hazardous excursions,' 'not a doctor only, but a philosopher and naturalist of no small repute,' to quote the words of Michel Carrier, a well known guide and the friend of Balmat, whose life he wrote. For some years he had been planning the ascent, and had three routes in view. From his note-book we learn that

* *Le Mont-Blanc*, par C. Durier, 1897, p. 451 sq. and p. 473 sq.

already, in 1784, he had attempted the mountain from the west, and to him belongs the credit of first prospecting on that side. Verses in Latin as well as in French were written in his honour, and M. Durier quotes the following couplet from a contemporary minor poet :—

De Saussure à la cime est arrivé trop tard,
Et déjà le Mont-Blanc était le Mont Paccard.*

and adds, characteristically, '*Le Mont Paccard ! Ah ! non, par exemple !*' Nay, more ; in the columns of the '*Journal de Lausanne*,' in February and March 1787, it was claimed for Paccard that the credit of discovering the *ancien passage* belonged to him, and the claim was supported by the publication of a certificate signed by Jacques Balmat. This strange document, to which Mr. Mathews refers, is printed in full by Mr. Whymper.†

How then has it come to pass that in the account now generally accepted Dr. Paccard plays a wholly subordinate and slightly ridiculous part ? Mr. Mathews suggests the explanation. The current account is derived from Dumas' '*Impressions de Voyage Suisse*.' In 1882 the eminent novelist visited Chamonix and had an interview with Balmat, then an old man of seventy. (Dr. Paccard had died five years before.) From his lips Dumas took down the account of the famous ascent, forty-six years after it had taken place. Another guide was present, Pierre Payot, father of the well known M. Venance Payot ; and, as we learn from M. Durier,‡ Pierre often told his son 'que le récit du célèbre romancier était le plus exact qu'on eût fait,' though he added that '*Balmat était sobre de paroles et que M. Dumas avait délayé.*' And this *délayage* will account for much. Balmat doubtless told his story to the best advantage, but it would have died with him had he not found in the famous writer a *sacer vates* to establish his fame at the expense of Dr. Paccard's. Mr. Mathews criticises Dumas' account in detail, and points out several misstatements and inaccuracies. As regards one point, however (see pp. 62 and 98), he has made a serious mistake himself, and completely misrepresents Dumas' meaning ; for *ils sont morts* does not mean *they had died*, and a reference to the original § shows conclusively that Balmat had *not* committed the almost inconceivable blunder of imagining that the Hamel accident of 1820 took place before his own ascent in 1786. One of the most notable misstatements in Dumas' account is that Balmat left Paccard on the Petits Mulets rocks and gained the summit alone, returning for him an hour and a half later, and almost by main force urging him to the top. From a careful examination of the evidence it is clear that they reached the top together, Balmat, it may be, a few paces in advance. It is, however, doubtful whether to Balmat belongs the credit of discovering the *ancien passage*,

* *Le Mont-Blanc*, p. 113.

† *A Guide to Chamonix*, by E. Whymper, p. 27.

‡ *Le Mont-Blanc*, p. 106.

§ *Impressions de Voyage Suisse*, par A. Dumas, tom. i. p. 123.

which was the only known route until, in 1827, Sir Charles Fellows' party mounted for the first time by the Corridor and the Mur de la Côte. Both at the time and afterwards Dr. Paccard claimed distinctly that he had reconnoitred with a telescope, and had assured himself that the *ancien passage* offered a possible means of reaching the summit. In apportioning the honour we may, perhaps, say, in modern phrase, that Dr. Paccard was the 'Herr,' long desirous of climbing the mountain and keenly interested in devising routes, but needing the help of an efficient guide. Such an one he found in Balmat, and the guide's just honour is surely not diminished by the fact that the 'Herr' who was his comrade in that memorable first ascent was also an enthusiastic and capable mountaineer.

Mr. Mathews has given particulars of all the ascents down to 1851, when Albert Smith made the mountain fashionable. Many curious details are recorded. We read how a glacier was crossed by the light of a candle held in a paper bag; how, in descending, Bourrit was held by one guide by his coat-collar while leaning on the shoulder of another; how they drank vinegar, and moved in huge caravans, as many as forty-three persons together; how they suffered from the 'rarefaction of the air,' and one traveller covered his chest with Burgundy pitch to defend his lungs. Costumes ranged from the 'white flannel jacket, without any shirt beneath, and white linen trousers without drawers' of Colonel Beaufoy, the first Englishman who climbed Mont Blanc, to the extraordinary accumulation of garments in which later travellers encased themselves, 'swollen by the reduplication of their dress to most unnatural proportions.'* Specially interesting are the references to the rough 'gîtes' of the early explorers, some of which may still be recognised, as, for instance, Bourrit's cabin on the Tête Rousse, which was occupied by Mr. Mathews in 1856, and again in 1896. Discoveries of a similar kind might yet be made on the now rarely visited Montagne de la Côte, the starting-point of all expeditions previous to 1819. Indeed, if the interest of novelty is gone, the many associations that have gathered round Mont Blanc are abundant recompense for the loss. It is this human side that is brought before us in the 'Annals,' and in reading them we feel how largely our interest in mountains depends on their associations with humanity. In this connection we are sorely tempted to quote a striking passage from Sir Martin Conway on the 'unnamed fastnesses and unstoried peaks' of the Upper Indus Valley, but must content ourselves with giving the reference.†

Finally, we have a clearly written account of the existing routes, which Mr. Mathews very reasonably reduces to seven, with variations, and a chapter on the huts and observatories. With our author's remarks on the Janssen observatory we find ourselves in complete accord, and we echo his wish that this 'observatory, in

* *Alpine Journal*, vol. xviii. p. 214.

† *Climbing and Exploration in the Karakoram Himalayas*, p. 123.

which it is impossible to take observations,' may before long vanish in obedience to the force of gravity, which, indeed, has already seriously affected its stability. The tribute that he pays to M. Vallot's scientific labours shows that he is no narrow-minded opponent of the claims of science among the mountains. Professor Bonney supplies a brief but clear account of the geology of Mont Blanc, and the volume is furnished with a bibliography from the 'Guide de la Chaîne du Mont-Blanc' of M. Louis Kurz, with additions. While acknowledging his debt to M. Kurz, however, Mr. Mathews has forgotten to insert his book in the bibliography. We have also the benefit of M. Durier's excellent map of the chain. The illustrations are well chosen and add greatly to the value of the book; some of the photogravures from Signor Vittorio Sella's photographs, are of quite exceptional beauty and interest. The only misprints that we have noticed are in the spelling of Bishop Burnet's name, and the omission of a figure on page 303, under 'Dumas, A.' We could wish that Mr. Mathews had told us more about his own experiences in the twelve ascents that he has made from 1856 to 1898; but he allows himself only the briefest allusions to his own adventures, keeping strictly to his part of annalist. May we express the hope that he will some day supply the omission—in another book?

SOME LOCAL GUIDE-BOOKS.

- Guida alla Serra dell' Argentera.* By Felice Mondini. (Genoa. 1898.)
Guide de l'Alpiniste dans la Vallée de l'Ubaye. (Published by the Barcelonnette Section of the Club Alpin Français. 1898.)
Guide du Touriste dans le Briançonnais. 'Guides Miriam.' (Paris. 1898.)
Monographie de la Vallée du Queyras (Hautes-Alpes). By J. Tivollier. (Gap. 1897.)
Itinerarium des S.A.C. für die Silvretta- und Ofenpassgruppe. By Ed. Imhof. (Bern. 1898.)

In the course of preparing the new edition of Mr. Ball's 'Alpine Guide' I have been much struck by the publication in recent years of a vast number of local guide-books to various districts of the High Alps, a great contrast to the state of things when Mr. Ball first compiled his great work. These local guide-books have naturally been of great service to me, though it is often hard to determine whether such and such a detail should properly be inserted in a general guide-book, or left to the more special work. But of course in a general work like 'Ball' only passing reference can be made to these local guide-books, so that I am desirous of saying a few words as to several such volumes which I have used, or hope to use later on, since any climber desiring to make a special study of the district treated in any one of them will find therein very many useful and hopeful hints.

The first on the list is by Signor Mondini, to whom we owe already a well known monograph on the Val St. Barthélemy, which, it is hoped, will soon be completed by another on the

whole of the Valpelline. This booklet of under 180 pages was prepared rather hurriedly for the inauguration last August of the new Genova Club hut, at the S.E. foot of the Punta dell' Argentera, in the Maritime Alps, and is devoted to a very detailed and careful account of the Argentera ridge. This ridge is not a very long one, but is important, for on it rise the highest points (3,290 m. and 3,288 m.) of the Maritime Alps. Full information is supplied as to various routes from Valdieri (the town or the Baths), the Ciriègia Inn, above St. Martin Vésubie, or the Madonna delle Finestre to the new Club hut. The ascents in this range which can be made from each of these three 'centres' are then described minutely. As far as I can judge these descriptions are very full and accurate, but it always seems to me that the scheme of the 'Climbers' Guides' (describing together all the routes up any one peak, and placing the passes in their topographical order amongst the peaks) is more practical than grouping the peaks and passes separately, and describing the routes up a peak according to the starting point. A map would give general information as to the proper starting point for any expedition, and the unit in a special mountain guide-book should certainly be the peak or the pass and not the 'centre.' Herr F. Mader contributes an article on the flora of the Argentera range, and Signor A. Viglino another on its geology. But to students of Alpine history Signor Mondini's chapter on the Alpine history of the range will prove the most interesting; this, though mentioned as early as 1784, was not thoroughly explored or mapped till 1879. The order followed in this chapter is strictly chronological, a course which in many ways is the most convenient when treating of a single mountain mass. But this plan renders it hard to ascertain at a glance the Alpine history of any one peak, a difficulty which is increased by the unfortunate omission of Signor Mondini to supply any index to his most excellent booklet. Some useful illustrations are scattered throughout its pages, and Signor Paganini's map is prefixed, though it is unluckily as illegible as his other map of the Cogne mountains, while attaining the same high degree of accuracy.

The second work on our list was issued on the occasion of the Congress of the French Alpine Club at Barcelonnette in the summer of 1898, and is due to the untiring labours of M. François Arnaud, the President of the local Section. The backbone of the book is formed by a translation (made by special permission of the Committee of the Alpine Club) of the portions of the new edition of vol. i. of Mr. Ball's 'Alpine Guide' relating to the Ubaye valley, particularly the Chambeyron group. The translation seems well done, though there are a few slips; *e.g.* my ascent of the Brec de Chambeyron took place in 1879, *not* in 1897. It is followed by a detailed bibliography (by the present writer) of the peaks of the Chambeyron group, a list that I was very glad to place at the disposition of M. Arnaud in acknowledgment of his kindness to me in 1879, and of his help in preparing the new

edition of 'Ball.' The book also contains full details as to the minor excursions in the neighbourhood of Barcelonnette, with notices of the history, geology, botany, and fauna of the Ubaye valley. There are a number of interesting illustrations and an index, but neither map nor table of contents. I am glad to learn that M. Arnaud has now in hand for speedy publication a very detailed monograph on the valley of Barcelonnette, a much wanted work which no one is better fitted to write than himself.

The two books just noticed deal mainly with the higher Alps, which are to a considerable extent neglected in the 'Guide du Briançonnais,' though I understand that this neglect is to be in part repaired in a forthcoming new edition. The 'Guide' in its actual form contains, however, a vast amount of information as regards districts which have never before been so fully described from a practical point of view. They may be roughly indicated as the French portions of the Viso, the Waldensian valleys, and Mont Genève sections of the new edition of vol. i. of 'Ball.' In particular the notices relating to the excursions and ascents to be made from the Névache valley, and in the region between Briançon and the Guil valley (or the Queyras), are very welcome. But the 'times' given are very long, while there are various strange statements—*e.g.* that the Viso has a French slope (an impossible bit of topography); that it has only once been ascended from the N., and that in 1886 (really there have been half a dozen ascents by this route, and the first was in 1879); that from La Grave the central summit of the Meije takes 1 hr. longer to climb than the higher W. summit, &c. There are the usual historical and scientific sections, while it is a real pleasure to find a table of contents, and an alphabetical index, and a special map. The illustrations and general get up of the book are better than those of the other Guides noticed in this summary.

M. Tivollier's work was to me at least a great disappointment. It starts with the false statement that the Viso is partly French, and gives a most imperfect and often misleading account of the excursions and ascents to be made in the ridges that enclose the beautiful Queyras valley. The author tells us that he knows the valley 'parfaitement,' but stress should be laid on the word 'valley,' as he certainly, to judge from his descriptions, can have had little personal experience of expeditions in the ranges that shut it in. But if the practical portion of the work is poor the historical sections are excellent, for here the author could draw on the splendid researches of M. Joseph Roman, while now and then (if I mistake not) he has been able to add very interesting and purely local details. The archives of the Queyras go very far back, and it is a consolation to learn that they escaped destruction by a lucky accident rather than through any special care in the recent terrible fire at Ville Vieille. This book has a poor map, but index and illustrations are wanting.

Herr Imhof's name will be known to many as that of the author of two previous volumes of the 'Itinerarium' of the Swiss Alpine

Club. In 1890 he described the Rhätikon range, with the Plessur district, and the W. spurs of the Silvretta district, and in 1898 the Albula district, or the ranges extending from the Splügen to the Fless Pass, and rising N. of the Inn valley. The Silvretta group was chosen as the 'Excursionsgebiet' of the Swiss Alpine Club as far back as 1865. But it was then only partially explored, and the maps were very inaccurate. Hence the S. A. C. selected it again as its field of action for 1898 and following years, and naturally entrusted the task of compiling the 'Itinerarium' to Herr Imhof, who lives close to that group. Wisely, in my opinion, the S.A.C. decided to include in its sphere of activity not only the Silvretta district in its narrow sense, but also the Fluchthorn group, together with the still less known district S. of the Inn valley, and lying, roughly speaking, between the roads over the Bernina and Stelvio Passes. Hence the new 'Itinerarium' comprises what may fairly be called the whole of the mountains of the Lower Engadine. Herr Imhof was fairly well acquainted with the N. portion of these regions when he accepted the task of compiling the new 'Itinerarium,' and it is within my personal knowledge that he made also a large number of ascents and excursions in order to complete his knowledge, and to extend it to the Swiss bits of the more southerly portions of the districts to be treated. As a whole he has done his work extremely well, having spared no pains to procure full and accurate information as to even the minor summits included in his districts. The information given strikes me as even more practical and useful than that supplied in his previous works, and represents a vast amount of labour, for Italy and Austria claim a share in these districts as well as Switzerland, a fact which greatly increases the number of books, articles, and maps that have to be consulted. The divisions between the different groups might have been more clearly marked in point of typography, in my opinion, and the lack of a table of contents is much felt, while the separate indices for each of the two divisions of the work are very confusing. Once again I must express my preference for the strictly topographical order of the 'Climbers' Guides,' which seems to me the clearest method of arranging a mass of complicated details. The list of 'Abbreviations' given by Herr Imhof should have been arranged in alphabetical order. As I had the pleasure of helping the author to a considerable extent with the special bibliographies given for the principal peaks, I may be allowed to express a regret that my complete list of the titles of the works referred to was not inserted. In two cases Herr Imhof's indications are quite wrong, so I venture to point out that in my bibliographies 'Sprecher' does not mean the A. von Sprecher's 1856 edition of Lutz's 'Lexikon,' but the 1688 edition of Fortunatus à Sprecher's 'Pallas Rhaetica,' while 'Campell' refers in my list to the Latin text of the 'Topographia Raetiæ' (Basel, 1884), not to the very imperfect German translations of portions of that work issued in 1851.

But, as a whole, Herr Imhof's book is fully up to the highest

standard, and it is to be hoped that some day he will crown his labours by writing a fourth 'Itinerarium' for the Bernina and Bregaglia districts, so that we may possess a detailed and up to date description (and that all by the same hand) of the whole region between the Splügen, Stelvio, and Reschen Scheideck Passes. Herr Imhof's book is accompanied by a most useful combination of several sheets of the Siegfried Atlas, which includes most of the Swiss portions of the districts described in his book.

W. A. B. COOLIDGE.

TWO PICTURE BOOKS.

A Travers les Alpes. Par Daniel Baud-Bovy. (Bâle et Genève : Georg et Cie. ; and Neuchâtel : Delachaux et Niestlé. 1899.)

Les Montagnes de la Grande Chartreuse. Par Henri Ferrand. (Grenoble : A. Gratiot. 1899.)

Both these splendid works appeared (despite the date on their respective title-pages) at the close of 1898, and both are essentially 'picture books' in the good sense—that is, the illustrations are accompanied by what in most cases is but explanatory letterpress.

M. Baud-Bovy's book pictures an excursion from Brieg to the Belalp, the Ober Aletsch Club hut, the Eggishorn, the Concordia Club hut (not then an inn), the Lötschenlücke, the Lötschenthal, and the Ferden Pass to Leukerbad. To those who, like the present writer, consider that the view from the Belalp is the most magnificent to be had from any inn in the Alps, and who are strongly drawn towards the quaint and as yet unspoiled valley of Lötsch, this book will be most welcome. Never before, probably, have the grand surroundings of the Belalp, and the primitive rusticity of the Lötschenthal, been more admirably set forth. Portraits of unmistakable Vallais men and women, interiors of their dwellings, and of Club huts, views of primitive Vallais hamlets, representations of some of the more striking glacier phenomena, little bits of *genève*, are scattered throughout its pages with a lavish hand, and in most cases admirably reproduced, often in bistre ink. In particular the scenes round the chapel of the Alpine hamlet of Bel and near the Concordia Club hut are very vivid and attractive in their realism. The text is enlivened by some curious legends, but contains some rather odd history. It would be hard to show that the Simplon Pass was traversed by the Romans, and that the village of Naters was founded at that period. My unfortunate friend Mr. Benecke and his comrade, wherever they may have perished, certainly did not disappear on the Lötschenfirn. It is quaint to omit all mention of the views from the Belalp and Eggishorn hôtels, the former being regarded merely as the residence of Amiel and Tyndall, and the latter as a sort of 'buffet;' nor did the syndic of Naters make the *first* ascent of the Aletschhorn in 1862, this being only the second, though the first from the Belalp side, while in a work published in the 'Suisse Romande' one does not expect to find Javelle's name misspelt. But after all the pictures are the main feature of this book, and *they* are delightful.

Some years ago M. H. Ferrand published an excellent guide-book to the mountains of the Grande Chartreuse, near his home, Grenoble, and in a way his new work may be treated as a pictorial companion to his Guide, for the letterpress in the new book is not much more than a running commentary on the illustrations. Of these there are no fewer than 165, all beautifully reproduced as phototypes. Few English travellers know much more than the monastery of the Grande Chartreuse itself, and the ordinary routes thither. Hence it will surprise them to find out what striking and picturesque bits of scenery are hidden in the upper valleys of the two streams which descend from this limestone plateau, the Guiers Mort and the Guiers Vif, with their affluents. The author tracks each from its source (in either case a most picturesque spot) to their junction at Les Echelles, and then the united stream till it falls into the Rhône not very far beyond the quaint town of Pont de Beauvoisin, which recalls that of Pont en Royans, in another limestone district. There are fewer *genre* pictures than in M. Baud-Bovy's book, but it is odd (and rather inconvenient) that in neither work is a list of the illustrations vouchsafed, so that one has to hunt through the text for any particular view that one remembers having noticed while turning over the leaves. As in duty bound, M. Ferrand ends his sumptuous publication by some views of the great monastery. It may astonish some readers to learn that the famous liqueur was only made known to the world at large in 1849 by some French officers, whose troops were then quartered in this region; previously it was only used (as it still is) by the monks themselves as a cordial in the case of weakness or illness. A still more unexpected fact mentioned by M. Ferrand is that when occasion calls the monks go to vote in local or political matters at the 'mairie' of the ancient village of St. Pierre de Chartreuse (formerly pronounced Chartrousse), which gives its name to the monastery. Perhaps the quaintest illustration in the book is that which shows us these solitary monks going, in their white habits, and almost in a formal procession, to fulfil their duties as citizens of the Republic, to which they pay such heavy taxes!

It is right to add that the illustrations in both books have been reproduced by the same house, the Société Anonyme des Arts Graphiques, of Geneva. W. A. B. COOLIDGE.

Through the High Pyrenees. By Harold Spender. With Illustrations and Supplementary Sections by H. Llewellyn Smith. (London: Innes & Co. 1898.)

Mr. Spender's pleasant book should serve as a reminder and a reproach to the majority of our members. The Pyrenees are in importance the second range in Western Europe. They abound in problems of rock-climbing, and if these are not mostly connected with their loftiest summits must not the same be admitted of the Alps? They are free from the mountain railways and sign-posts, the artificial aids to cripples, the personally-conducted huts and

crowds of tourists, of which in the Alps we read so many complaints. France and Spain have not yet set up any such monstrous system of frontier precautions as that which makes the mountaineer's excursions on the Italo-French frontier a perpetual game of hide and seek with the military forces of two nations. Above the Baths even in the French Pyrenees there are no hotels, only country inns, where the visitor does not live exclusively among his own countrymen, and where he has an opportunity of changing his company and his conversation as well as his climate.

Yet where are the followers of Mr. Packe and Count Henry Russell? We seem to hear a chorus of young climbers begin with one consent to make excuse; the Pyrenean peaks are stumpy, the glaciers are few and far between, the valleys are hot, good guides are rare, there are no convenient climbing centres. The true ground for the neglect of the Pyrenees, or one of the grounds, is suggested by Mr. Spender. They fall between two stools. They are not novel and difficult enough for the hardy explorer; they do not meet the requirements of the gymnast: he misses his atmosphere, the medium that gives heroic proportions to his climbs. In the Pyrenees the climber is nobody. There are no processional departures and returns at his hotel; no telescopes are fixed on him; no chief place is kept for him at *tables d'hôte*; the fair Parisians of Luchon or the Belgian *dévôtes* who drive up from Lourdes to Gavarnie would receive very coldly his offer of an escort over 'a nice bit of rockwork.' No 'Pyrenean Post' exists to glorify his high deeds. To climb unseen by men on peaks unknown even to geographers may be the fancy of a few; the reverse, despite their pretence, is the folly of the many. A better reason for the scarcity of our countrymen in the Pyrenees is the circumstance that the business or pleasures of life lead most of us to take our holidays late in the summer. From the middle of June to the end of July is the best season for the Pyrenees. Then the flowers—the daffodil meadows, the lilies, and the gigantic stonecrops—are in perfection; the heights are snowy; the waterfalls are at their fullest; every valley has its clear, brimming stream. In August the weather is often sultry and broken, and there is no glacier air to temper the heat and invigorate the climber.

Mr. Spender's volume is the record of two journeys along the central portion of the chain. He seems to have started with some intention of studying the institutions of the Republic of Andorre. He even tried to introduce 'interviewing' into that primitive community. But, happily, the President was equal to the occasion. He went to bed with a bad headache until the political student had departed. Mr. Spender, thus baulked in an ambition hardly worthy of an Alpine Clubman, was forced to turn his mind to higher things. He made tracks westward through the wild Spanish valleys to the base of the Maladetta. He climbed the Pic de Néthou, the Pic des Posets, the Vignemale and the Balaitovs. He camped out on the desolate pastures and ridges that surround

these crests. He visited many out of the way spots, and enjoyed several exciting rock-climbs. He has woven together his experiences into a very brisk and varied narrative, more akin to the earlier Alpine travels than to the technical notes of recent climbers. His pages give an excellent picture of the Pyrenees, their scenery and people, by no means an exhaustive picture, for he missed some striking spots, yet a sufficient one to enable his readers to decide for themselves whether the delights of the country are likely to suit their tastes. For those who may make up their minds to follow him he furnishes a good general map, a full bibliography, and much sound practical information and advice.

We ought to add that his companion, Mr. Llewellyn Smith, contributes a chapter on Andorre, and is responsible for several of the practical and scientific supplementary sections. The volume is adequately illustrated.

Il Biellese : Pagine raccolte e pubblicate dalla Sezione di Biella del Club Alpino Italiano. (Milan : V. Turati. 1898.)

This handsome volume is the memorial produced by the energy and taste of the Biellese section of the Italian Alpine Club of the Congress of that body held there in 1897. The district of Biella is subalpine, but the town is only a day's journey from Gressoney and Alagna, and the bold range of Monte Mars, which rises close to it, reaches the respectable height of 7,000 feet, while Monte Bo, Leonardo da Vinci's Mons Bosus, now a recognised view-point, with a hut, is accessible in a day. The region is one of many attractions, as yet known to very few of our countrymen. Above the vines and chestnuts the hill-sides are covered with birch and heather ; they command views extending from the Maritime Alps to the Monte della Disgrazia. Mediæval castles line their edge. In their recesses are found pilgrimage shrines. One of these, Oropa, is among the most frequented and the stateliest in North Italy. The villages add to the extraordinary picturesqueness of the landscape, which unites the charms of foreground with spacious distances framed by the curve of the Alps southward from the Levanna to the distant Apennine.

The letterpress, which describes the country, the people, their industries, is a series of sketches and monographs contributed by writers, one or two of whose names are known outside Italy. We can do it no justice here. But we must find space to call attention to a matter of special interest—the illustrations. Here we have some eighteen photogravures (one of them 'Dawn on Monte Rosa,' by V. Sella, of remarkable beauty), and over 400 process views, finer in quality and much more artistic in arrangement than those we are accustomed to in this country. The typography is admirable ; the paper and binding are both excellent. The cost of the book is 15 lire (12s.). One of our publishers would charge a guinea and a half. Why do we not all publish at Milan ?

Rock-Climbing in the English Lake District. By Owen Glynn Jones, B.Sc.
(London : Longmans & Co. 1897.)

It is no great number of years ago that the would-be rock-climber in the mountains of Cumberland and Westmoreland had to find his climbs for himself, aided only by certain passages in an ancient number of 'All the Year Round' and by the manuscript notes which tourists had left in the Wastdale visitors' book. All this is now changed, for in 1894 Mr. Haskett Smith published his pocket guide to the rock climbs of England, the bulk of which related to the Lake District; and now, in 1898 (though the title page bears the date 1897), we have given us, from the pen of Mr. Jones, an imposing 8vo. volume of 280 odd pages, dealing, from a different standpoint, with the same subject. Mr. Haskett Smith's book is a guide for the pocket, Mr. Jones's book is a tome for the library: the one aims only at being useful; the other claims, as well, to be graphic and readable even by those who have not made, nor wish to make, the climbs which are described. It must be freely owned that Mr. Jones has, to a large extent, succeeded, for he has produced a beautifully printed and splendidly illustrated work, which, being well arranged and for the most part clearly and readably written, gives an accurate and vivid picture of what rock-climbing in the Lake District is really like. Many comparisons might be drawn between these two books, but few of them could serve a useful purpose. It will suffice for us to say that Mr. Jones has evidently been at more pains to bring his book into line with modern Alpine literary usage, and the fact that his work bears traces of having been somewhat hastily compiled is perhaps no less evidence of this than is the size and thickness of the paper, the care which has been expended on the production of the illustrations, or the success of the author in avoiding the fault for which his forerunner was so properly censured of having failed to sufficiently emphasise the subjective in recording the exploration of the cliffs which he describes.

It is the illustrations which are sure to claim the first attention of any one who may chance to open Mr. Jones's book. They are thirty in number, and are reproduced in colotype from photographs taken for the work by Messrs. G. and A. Abraham, of Keswick. The author may be congratulated on the fact that he was able to secure the services of collaborators who, besides being excellent exponents of the art of photography, have so thoroughly entered into the spirit of the work, with the result that there is hardly a crag of any importance in Lakeland which is not here represented by one or more accurate and beautiful pictures, many of which show the details of rock surface with quite surprising success. Most, perhaps all, of the photographs bear evidences of having been retouched, and while by far the greater proportion are doubtless gainers in the process, one illustration at least, 'A Winter Afternoon on the Mickledore Ridge' (p. 52), appears to have been both faked and tilted, and presents sundry features which are very open to criti-

cism. 'Personally,' says Mr. Jones (p. 156), 'I should ask for information as to the treatment of any negative that has been employed for the reproduction of pictures,' a remark which may fitly be applied to this strange plate.

In addition to the photographs there are nine outline diagrams which enable the uninitiated reader to identify the various routes described in the text, and to locate the whereabouts of the 'Bottle-shaped Pinnacle Ridge,' and all the other 'ridges,' and 'pinnacles,' and 'pitches,' and 'gullies,' and 'chimneys,' and 'curtains,' and 'slabs,' and 'notches,' and 'ledges,' and 'noses,' and 'cracks' which bristle in the text, and which would seem, in these latter days, to have been submitted to a process of christening on an almost bewilderingly lavish scale. So great and rapid, indeed, has been the progress made in the space of a few years, by this system of nomenclature, that we may safely assume, in the case of some of the best known 'bits' at any rate, that every *step* will ere long be found supplied with some distinguishing designation. The system has obvious advantages, and must be of especial value to those who hope to rival in the power of recalling the details of their climbs the gifted author of this work, whose enviable talents can be gauged by his admission (p. 126) that 'to lie in bed and remember every foothold on the Matterhorn may require more ascents than one.' Should, however, so elaborate a system of labelling ever become applicable to the case of mountains in general, the Alpine literary output will become surprisingly extensive.

The text of Mr. Jones's work consists of an introduction and eighteen chapters. Four of the chapters (sixty-eight pages) are devoted to the cliffs of Scawfell (we follow the author's spelling), six (seventy-seven pages) to those of Great Gable, one (thirty-one pages) to the Pillar Rock, and shorter ones to each of the following: Pavey Ark, Doe Crag, Wastdale Scree, Coombe Ghyll (Glaramara), and Scawfell Pikes.

The descriptions of the climbs are almost uniformly clear, and if there is some sameness in the nature of the accounts perhaps it can hardly be wondered at. Has not the same criticism been applied even in the case of our own columns? Minor errors we expect to find, and select a few for comment. 'G.' instead of 'R.' Pendlebury (p. 254) is probably a neglected printer's error, but 'Dr.' Clinton Dent (Introduction, p. xix) is obviously intended, though it would hardly have been passed by that distinguished mountaineer or by any of his professional colleagues. 'Petty's Rift' (p. 31) was certainly not so called twenty years back, for the excellent reason that the Petty who climbed it visited the Lakes for the first time only fourteen years ago. The Pillar 'Nose' is not, as Mr. Jones supposes (p. 248), the short cliff below the terrace, but is an upright excrescence on the face of the higher precipice. The not infrequent use of Swiss phrases and words strikes us as needless and rather out of place: 'massif' and 'course' are examples. Then to call scrambles 'problems' appears somewhat pedantic; while to borrow from the high seas the word 'belay'

suggests the story of the commodore who singled out for comment the starboard leader of the coach. These are, however, very minor matters, and matters, too, on which opinion may very legitimately differ. The bulk of the work is excellent.

We have kept for final comment Mr. Jones's introductory chapter, which closes with a classified list of 'some sixty of the well known courses judged under good conditions.' These are divided into four grades, according to their difficulty, and it is probable—indeed, we understand it is well known—that the sequence of the 'courses' in this list has not only been adversely criticised by competent authorities, but that considerable indignation has been expressed by one or other of those who would themselves have arranged the list differently. In spite of this, and of the obvious criticism suggested by the fact that short *tours de force*, and long arduous climbs, find themselves in somewhat curious juxtaposition, the list is probably in our judgment as unexceptionable as that which any single individual would have produced; for it is certain that no classification of the sort would meet with universal acceptance. Different individuals find exceptional difficulty in different situations; a short passage, however severe, is to some less trying than a longer one of less intrinsic difficulty, and *vice versa*. Again, the height and length of limb of the climber obviously affect the matter considerably, as does also the method of climbing most affected by the individual, and those who, as Mr. Jones would seem to do, rely more upon the hands and arms than on the feet, will naturally find some places more difficult and others easier than they appear to a climber who, following the example of many at least of the Swiss guides, regards his feet as being the more important weapons of attack. Still there can be no doubt at all that, however taken, some of the rock-climbs here described will compare in the matter of difficulty with the 'difficult bits' which have rendered especially notable such mountains as the Grépon and the Fünffingerspitz. They are not climbs to be undertaken by beginners, nor yet by the best of mountaineers, unless in reasonably good training. In however good condition, though, it needs a good man to lead up the best of the 'bits,' and it would have been surprising if so acute a reasoner as Mr. Jones had failed to grasp this fact. That he has not so failed is, however, as obvious as it is satisfactory, and it is with feelings of sympathetic appreciation that we think we can trace—perhaps wrongly—in spite of the somewhat 'repulsive spectacle' (p. x) of the inactive crowds who watch a football match, some slight feeling of amiable and doubtless very legitimate regret that the expert rock-climber should be, by the nature of his calling, denied the even occasional opportunity of exhibiting his skill before 'applauding thousands' (p. x), instead of (as a maximum) the very limited number of critical experts who can be accommodated on a certain grassy ledge at the foot of a well known 'problem,' which has been nicknamed, we are told, the 'dress circle' (p. 165), because it is 'so popular for the observation of a performance.'

Den Norske Turist Forening's Aarboeg for 1898.

The high reputation of this Alpine Journal of the North is well sustained by this year's edition. Contributors describe in their papers mountain expeditions in Norway nearly 1,000 miles apart, all of which are well worth reading. The most delightful is undoubtedly a paper by Dr. Yngvar Nielsen, the president of the 'Forening,' 'Fra Nordland,' which deals with country made more or less familiar to us in days of childhood, when we read Miss Martineau's 'Feats on the Fjord,' and all lovers of that delightful book will be interested in seeing an illustration of Sulitelma. Herr Bing's paper on the ascent of Hornelen, where he emulated the deeds of that hero of old, King Olaf Tryggveson, shows yet once again that the spirit of adventure which urged the vikings to do great deeds is still present in the breasts of the Norskmen of to-day.

A paper in English, by Mr. Oppenheim, reintroduces us to the charming peninsula between the Hjörund and Sökely fjords, visited by Mr. Hastings in 1889, and a few years later by Messrs. Priestman and Barrow. Several short and modestly written papers direct our attention to the neglected Rondane, the now well known Justedalsbræ, and other interesting districts. Herr Hall again supplies us with a valuable list of ascents of mountains, by new and old routes, in 1897. A description of a so called 'new route' up Mjölmir is surely an unnecessary luxury, as this very route was used on the descent of the mountain by the party who made its first ascent,* though they climbed up the opposite side. The only bit of new ground, the easy slopes from the broad col between the Romsdalshorn and the Western Vængetind to the edge of the Rensdyrbræ, was new only to mountaineers, but certainly not to reindeer-hunters. This is, however, the dull side of Mjölmir, and the ascent by this route is not comparable with those from Kvandal.

The illustrations, as usual, are good, notably the reproduction of a photograph of the interior of a sæter by H. Bache, which is admirable, and must awaken many happy memories of bygone adventures met with by those who climbed in Jotunheim before the institution of the luxurious huts in recent years, and the present writer for one trusts that in the future he may see many more views reproduced from the work of this most artistic photographer.

WM. CECIL SLINGSBY.

Søndmøre. Af Kristofer Randers. Second edition.

Eight years ago Norsk and English tourists welcomed the appearance of a delightful guide-book which dealt minutely with all the then known mountain, valley, and fjord routes and general characteristics of this picturesque district in Norway, where lovely mountain forms are clearly mirrored on the smooth surface of two

* *Alpine Journal*, vol. xiv. p. 392.

of the most beautiful fjords in Norway, the Hjörund and Sökkely, and where the natives, who are descended from the Scotchmen who re-peopled this region, which, with the exception of one woman who survived, was completely depopulated by the 'black death' in the fourteenth century, are still, I am glad to say, delightfully superstitious, and are thoroughly acquainted with the romance and legendary lore which abounds in Söndmöre.

This new edition is undoubtedly excellent, and the enterprising editor, Herr Randers, deserves much success, as a more painstaking and faithful representation in guide-book form of the country which he loves so well could not easily be imagined.

It is copiously illustrated with most artistic pictures, though it is perhaps a pity that the view of Kjölaastind, or Gluggentind, is not taken from some point nearer Standal, where the 'glugge,' or hole through the southern arête of the mountain which was pierced by an arrow shot by St. Olaf when out 'troll'-hunting, could be clearly represented.

The name 'Kölaastind' is, we are glad to say, the only instance we have seen where the old form of spelling has been changed to the slipshod, or perhaps pedantic, form adopted nowadays by the modern University student, and we heartily congratulate Herr Randers on the vigorous conservatism which he has shown in retaining the ancient mode of writing in the words Hjörund, Slogen, Kvitæggen, Sökkelven, and many others.

Some of the excellent diagrammatic mountain sketches of the late Herr E. Mohn are appended, and we regret that others which appeared in the edition of 1890 are now omitted. The large map at the end is very good except in one respect, viz. it does not define the glaciers sufficiently well. For that matter, however, the 'Amts karter' are no better.

Finally, the book will be found to be a mine of wealth to all who wish to become intimately acquainted with one of the most fascinating districts in Northern Europe.

WM. CECIL SLINGSBY.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE ROPING OF MOUNTAINS.

To the Editor of the ALPINE JOURNAL.

SIR,—I doubt if most members of the Club are aware of the principles on which the mountains in some parts of the Austrian Tyrol are roped, or if the 'D.Ö.A.V.' itself appreciates the result of the latitude allowed to some of its sections. Everyone is, I suppose, agreed that on certain mountains (*e.g.*, the Aiguille du Géant) roping is an absolute necessity, and on others it may be desirable, whilst on yet other mountains it is both undesirable and unnecessary. In any and every case, however, it is suggested that some really competent and official body ought to decide the