

REVIEWS

Rocky Mountains. By Frank S. Smythe. Pp. 149, with 64 illustrations from photographs by the author, including 16 in colour. Adam & Charles Black, 1948. Price 30s. net.

THIS book is a pictorial account of Mr. Smythe's visit to the Canadian Rockies in the summer of 1946. It covers the range from Assiniboine to Robson and gives an accurate impression of both valleys and peaks, of great value to a prospective visitor. It will, moreover, be of nostalgic interest to the relatively small number of climbers who have had the good fortune to travel among these mountains where, as Mr. Smythe makes it clear in a useful preface, the time spent on a rope is a very small fraction of the week. It is no country for the gymnast and the peak-bagger.

The black and white illustrations are more than up to Mr. Smythe's usual standard, but the colour photographs, reproduced in a smaller size, are not uniformly successful. Some are good, but others are spoilt by such defects as too vivid a sky and imperfect registration of the printings. Their inclusion has apparently led to difficulties with the sequence, for narratives of expeditions to Bridgland and Robson are intermingled.

As is usual in this series of volumes, an opening of the book commonly reveals a picture on one page, and to fill some of the space on the other the author supplies a few relevant sentences. This is a difficult task, and Mr. Smythe, being more skilled with the axe and the shutter than with the pen, does not always avoid a descent to the banal. An illustration of a locomotive is as much out-of-place as the chapter on the Mt. Cenis railway in 'Scrambles,' and to English readers the description of a marmot as a mountain mouse gives a false notion of its size.

A. M. BINNIE.

Mountains of Memory. By Arnold Lunn. Hollis & Carter. 15s.

THE task of the reviewer of a book by Mr. Arnold Lunn has never been easy. With most mountaineering books one looks to see whether they describe some new climb, or some new district, whether they do so with reasonable clarity, whether they are written in English, and, perhaps, whether they make some fresh contribution to the consideration of the eternal problem—climbing man's attitude to and in the face of, the hills. On this last matter Mr. Lunn never fails us. He has never failed to find a new attitude. He has always been convinced that it was the only possible attitude. And, being convinced on this point, he has seldom failed to convince others. On the other points he has in the past been, on occasion, less convincing, probably because he has always been ready to find in every incident and accident of mountain travel or adventure thoughts that do lie too deep for the

ordinary sensual man whom he must expect to find reviewing his book. Now in this book we have pure Alpine adventure at its best. In some of these collected papers we have the 'young light-hearted master' of the hills, particularly of those hills which stand about Grindelwald, his holy city. For the moment—or almost for the moment—we forget the Arnold Lunn who is the Pope of Mürren, and down hill ski-ing and international ski politics, and have the authentic article—the lover of the high snows in summer, in winter and in spring, who, not forgetting all that he has taught and learnt, has come back to his essential love.

Naturally he will still have his fun. He appears to quote fifty-four identifiable philosophers, poets, essayists and historians, besides some who are not identifiable, or, if one may say so, scarcely worthy of identification, in English, French, German, Italian, Greek, Latin, and, in translation, Hebrew. He quotes Mr. H. K. Lunn describing Leslie Stephen as 'a hard-headed agnostic,' and only faintly rebukes him. He describes Ruskin as 'an accurate scientific observer'; and he permits himself a jeer at Tennyson which is scarcely worthy of him. His history and his political economy illuminate his mind rather than his readers'. But he possesses, and in this book displays, even beyond his wont, an intense power of appreciation of things which are lovely and of good report and an amazing skill in arousing interest and appreciation in others. He is sincere, even in his most fantastic paradox. And every now and then he sums up his and our secret. 'How frequently,' he says, 'the reward of beauty is associated with the dignity of toil, as if nature consciously reserves her noblest effects for those who take some trouble to earn them.' Every mountaineer knows that that is profoundly true; and none the less true because Mr. Lunn calls on the 'materialist' (at present his abomination) to explain it.

And that naturally brings us to Mr. Lunn's theology; but there a reviewer in this journal cannot follow him. We can admire his boundless versatility, and sympathize with his unquenched desire for controversy; but the conflict which he seeks to provoke cannot find its arena here, even if a reviewer could be found competent to accept the challenge. He must be content, if he cannot find an opponent worthy of his steel, once more to have made many friends. When we are with him, we, to use as he does Stevenson's phrase, 'travel hopefully,' and are not disappointed, for, unlike him, we think that is better than to arrive, and, with him, we know that 'the true success is to labour.'

SCHUSTER.

Parlano i Monti. By Antonio Berti. Pp. 552. Ulrico Hoepli, Milan. 1948. THIS is an anthology, collected by the author from the works of most of those who have written about mountains, from Isaiah and King David downwards. The author tells us, in a brief preface, that if this book succeeds in increasing the love of mountains in any reader's breast, he will have attained the summit of his ambition.

There is a dedication to his son, Lieut. Alessandro Berti—his mountaineering companion—who fell a victim of the Gestapo on April 18, 1945, and the labour of producing this work served to turn the author's mind, for a moment, away from his sorrow.

A pleasant bedside book, but not soporific.

J. E. C. E.

Le Cervin. By Charles Gos (Hon. Member of the A.C.). With illustrations. Published by Victor Attinger (Mountain Collection). Preface by G. W. Young.

THIS book in two volumes, entitled respectively: *The Heroic Period*, and *Faces and Great Arêtes*, forms a most valuable addition to Matterhorn history.

It brings that history down to 1948, which, as far as this reviewer is aware, cannot be said of any other work on the subject. As the title suggests, the first volume gives detailed descriptions of the early attempts on the mountain, some of which are very little known.

As was to be expected, a great many pages are devoted to the successful, but tragic, ascent of July 14, 1865, and to the controversial disputes and contradictions which followed that ascent. The author, in his laudable desire to protect the Swiss guides' reputation is, perhaps, a little hard on Whymper. It is worthy of note that no less than three accounts of the drama by Whymper are given:

- (1) Appeared in *The Times* of August 8, 1865.
- (2) In Whymper's *Scrambles*.
- (3) In the *Journal de Zermatt* (August 1895).

This volume brings the history down to 1889, with descriptions of attempts and ascents to that year. Very strange is the Coolidge incident, which involves Conway and Bishop Browne, in which Coolidge claims to have received (at second hand) a 'confession' by Whymper to the effect that the rope *was* cut on July 14, 1865.¹

Letters from Guido Bey and from Geoffrey Young very properly scout the idea, and suggest that Coolidge imagined the whole thing. It should not be forgotten that the very thorough enquiry by the Valaisan government into the whole question resulted in the following verdict: That no criminal act was committed, and that no one can be accused either of a fault or of a crime, that it is unnecessary to carry this inquest any further, and that the costs are to be charged to the public authority.

Of interest, too, is a chapter entitled 'A solitary attempt on the Zmutt ridge in 1864.' This quotes various statements (in the *S.A.C. Journal* of 1846, and elsewhere) referring to an alleged attempt (by Melchior Anderegg) in 1864. The author examines the evidence for and against the truth of this, and concludes, no doubt correctly, that it is all a myth.

The second volume, as was stated above, deals with the mountain's

¹ See the note at the end of this review.

faces and great arêtes, and it begins with a list of ascents from 1865–1874, with comments thereon.

The last ascent in 1874, the 103rd,² was that of E. Hornby, with Aloys Pollinger (the father), who took with him, as porter, his own father, Franz! The latter had never ascended a great mountain before, and on reaching the summit, he exclaimed: Is that all there is to the Matterhorn? ('Comment le Cervin, ce n'est que ça!')

The author goes on with the history of the mountain from every possible angle, the attempts, successful and unsuccessful, joyous and tragic, on every face and every ridge (we are even treated to an account of a spiral ascent), together with much that relates to the mountain, but at a distance.

There are even a few pages dealing with an alleged intervention by H.M. Queen Victoria, who was shocked at the loss of life due to mountain climbing. The author tells an amusing tale of a local storm provoked by one Gabriel Maquignaz, the owner of some pasture land at the foot of the mountain, who claimed, in consequence, that it was his property up to the summit, and granted a nine-year lease thereof to three of his Valtournanche fellow citizens. This lease was, however, soon cancelled.

It is of interest to note that Winston Churchill in 1893, after ascending Monte Rosa, was most anxious to climb the Matterhorn, but was prevented from doing so. They would have been antagonists well worthy of one another!

The author writes with proper scorn of the various projects (which have fortunately proved abortive) to desecrate the Matterhorn with railways, promenairs, and what not. He likewise deplures the vulgarisation of the mountain by the large numbers of incompetent persons who climb (or are pulled) up the peak, and he concludes: Alas! the Matterhorn-tourist will continue to be a public danger greater than falling stones or storms.

We are told of Théophile Gauthier's admiration for the Matterhorn when he visited Zermatt (? in 1885), and M. Gos asks whether Gustave Doré ever saw the great mountain, but neither Doré's biographies nor Mr. F. S. Smythe (Whymper's biographer) offer any answer to this question.

Pages 258–298 are mostly devoted to Whymper, beginning with a fantastic article from the *Feuille d'Avis de Vevey* of October 14, 1911.

Our author himself describes it as an 'article étrange,' with its misstatements about Whymper and the 1865 accident. The article is followed by a letter of protest, addressed to the editor, by Monsieur O. Nicollier, of the Yaman section of the S.A.C., who complains bitterly of the injustice of the said article towards the famous English climber.

The volume, after sympathetic accounts of Whymper's last days and

² There is some error here, as the last ascent in 1874 took place on August 28, and is shown as the 86th, while that of August 16, is called the 103rd.

death, ends with a list of fatal accidents 1865-1947 and of the different routes. There are a few minor slips to be noted.

E.g. Vol. II, p. 70. The author states that of the nine persons who ascended the Zmutt ridge in September 1879, only one, Louis Züsbrücken, died in his bed.

But surely Augustin Gentinetta (not Kentinetta) did so likewise?

P. 179, l. 7: Edward Douglas Freshfield should read: Douglas William Freshfield.

P. 210, ll. 31-32: L. S. Amery was Secretary (not Under Secretary) of State for India.

It is also to be regretted that there is no regular index.

J. E. C. E.

[NOTE.—In 1932, the late Lord Conway told me that what Whymper is supposed to have told Bishop G. F. Browne was as follows (I quote from a note made at the time): 'On their descent after the accident, Whymper heard the Taugwalders plotting together to kill him—as the only remaining evidence as to the real cause of the accident, Whymper "drove them down in front of him".' As Lord Conway said, Whymper cannot have understood the patois of the guides, but it is now known that he did commit this absurd story to paper, although that had not yet come to light in 1932. There was no substance in Whymper's suspicions, and his accusation is mentioned here only because it has already been published elsewhere.—EDITOR.]

The Splendid Hills. The Life and photographs of Vittorio Sella. By Ronald Clark. Phoenix House Ltd. 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ " × 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". Pp. 118, with 86 illustrations. Price 35s.

THE greater part of this book is occupied by large reproductions of Sella's photographic work, and the publishers are to be congratulated upon the excellent quality of the half tones, many of which show the photographs to better advantage than was possible in the years when they were made. The author hopes that his book will bring 'the star of Sella's work before a few more appreciative eyes,' and we feel sure this hope will be realised. These reproductions deserve the careful, indeed respectful, study of all who are interested in the photography of great peaks from viewpoints worthy of the subjects.

Mr. Clark is an enthusiastic admirer of Sella and has energetically sought out many facts available in published works. He has also visited Biella, and with the co-operation of the Sella family brought to light many new and interesting facts, in spite of a lack of data on some aspects of Sella's work. He writes well, and this 'authorised record' is thus an interesting and readable story.

It is, perhaps, not quite the right story. The author is inclined to write for effect when he is driven to conjecture, or attempts a summary judgment, and what he says is not always consistent. For instance, in his preface, he emphatically excludes comparison with modern work,

yet on the next page he suggests that Sella may be judged 'more by the standards of to-day than by those of the Victorian era.' The latter is the sounder opinion in the limited field where Sella worked—the great set pieces of mountain landscape, the panoramas, the imposing telephotographs. Excluding the period before 1890, when the elementary type of dry plates, sensitive only to blue and violet, placed too heavy a handicap even on the master craftsmen of the age, Sella's work is completely modern. With the nineties came orthochromatic sensitivity, yellow screens of a sort, and from that time Sella was working with equipment that, in all material respects, would be acceptable to-day for photography above the snowline. His results were correspondingly excellent. Before that time, his photographs were marvels of craftsmanship, of topographical detail, but the values of light and shade were often wrong. For instance, he could not show, in those early pictures, the impending darkness of interstellar space that comes so near to men standing at great heights, looking up beyond the mountain crests, such as he shows in his later work.

Sella's work began with experimental wet plates and single lenses, and it ended in the era of panchromatic films and anastigmats. He adopted many inventions as they came along, and his work improved accordingly. Mr. Clark, in his enthusiasm, is disposed not merely to render unto Caesar those things that were Caesar's, but the entire property of the S.P.Q.R. into the bargain. Even with Sella, something is owed to photographic chemistry, to the anastigmats that helped to reduce the need for a large camera, to the films that were so good in Alaska, and to Mr. Dallmeyer's telenegative lenses.

It is not correct to say, as on page 13, that Sella's pictures were 'incomparably' better than those of his contemporaries. He lived in a great age, and had great rivals. Not rivals in the commercial sense, for most of them were content to produce pictures for friends and for mountaineering clubs, whereas Sella was better known because he sought, by his sales, to be better known. But the work of Donkin (above all), Kennedy, Holmes and others in England; of von Déchy, Wundt and Benesh in Austria and Germany; of Boissonnas and Brégeault and many Swiss photographers, was also technically splendid, though more restricted as to geography. Sella was often better than most of them because of his wider range, his larger camera, his concentration on photography rather than on mountaineering; but not incomparably so, nor always so. Yet Sella is a greater figure *because* his contemporaries were good and not because they were insignificant.

The author suggests that in Sella's day the lightest camera weighed as much as a fourteen day pack. But long before Sella's day, the Rev. H. B. George had described a 'miniature camera' used by him, weighing about three pounds (*A. J.* 4. 402). In 1881 Donkin had, to Sella's knowledge, written of his own equipment weighing about twenty pounds (*A. J.* 11. 63) and capable of division between his guides and himself. So that Sella's choice of the huge Dallmeyer was a

deliberate one, made for sound technical reasons—the poor lenses satisfactory in small sizes only for contact prints, the need for contact printing rather than for projection printing, and the possibility of controlling development or even retouching in the large size to an extent impossible in the small.

We agree with many points Mr. Clark makes when analysing Sella's success on pp. 12–13, but his photographic skill would have come to less than it did had he not been what he was, a man of substantial means and adequate leisure, able to employ the guides and porters necessary to transport his equipment, and a brave, tough, skilled climber. The trick of using figures, placed second in the author's analysis, was, of course, an old one, used constantly in the drawings of Alpine scenery before processes of direct photographic reproduction had been invented. It can be given too much importance. Figures do not account for the grandeur of the panoramas or the telephotos, rather is the effect built upon an infinity of minute detail—the curl of a snow cornice or pattern of scree miles away. Always the large camera wins the day.

Mr. Clark devotes considerable space to the facts about Sella's sales of photographs, which apparently formed the principal records at Biella. Whilst anxious to stress that Sella did his dealing in the most gentlemanly way, he still leaves us with the impression that Sella covered his expenses at least. We doubt if this was so. Having regard to the enormous expense of obtaining a few pictures, and to the prices he asked, it seems clear that he sought little more than the cost of making each print. He was concerned, as the author points out, to establish his prestige in England, and later internationally, by producing work for geographers and mountaineers rather than for the general public. The American interest in his work was flattering, but if a complicated arbitrage calculation in francs, pounds and dollars, with due allowance for the changes in price levels in the last sixty years is correct, 440 dollars and 13 cents for 435 prints (p. 23) or, in 1909, 500 dollars for 300 prints (p. 29), suggest that the purchase of Alaska was not the only good bargain our American friends secured. In fact, Sella was probably no more obliged to sell his work than the King is obliged to sell his prize cattle. Thanks to an established and comfortable financial background, he could devote much of his time to photography—just as Freshfield, Mumm and others did to exploration and mountaineering and writing—and made the whole community his debtors by his enrichment of the books he illustrated, and the knowledge he transmitted. He was part of that great, almost Elizabethan (or Venetian?), group that was the finest by-product of nineteenth-century mercantile success. We may never see their like again, in a world given over to the elimination of a leisured class.

Perhaps as a result of the large space given to these transactions, the author has been compelled to reduce the tale of Sella's mountaineering. It must have been a severe operation for a man of Mr. Clark's evocative powers to dispose of the Matterhorn traverse in the colourless

summary that it is given on p. 6. Yet what a subject is missed. The ascent begun from the valley at eleven on a winter's night ; hours of hard steady work in powder snow, then onwards in the dawn from the point where the moderns begin in summer. At a later hour even *Il Bersagliere* himself, discouraged, declining to go on ; the indomitable Sella taking the lead (' let the gentlemen haul and draw with the mariners and the mariners with the gentlemen for we be of one company ' as Drake had it, on another dangerous expedition) and the great Carrel actually letting him do so until Pic Tyndall was reached. The tricky descent over The Roof, and from the Shoulder . . . tired men moving down across the verglas, chipping away icicles, cutting steps or clearing handholds for hours before the old Swiss hut is reached.

So with the later expeditions, though few could compare with this one. They are mentioned, almost incidentally, as if Sella had not the double reputation—that of the great photographer, and that of the Alpine winter pioneer, whose expeditions were notable entirely apart from photography.

Lack of space must also be blamed for the absence of an index ; of a bibliography of Mr. Clark's source books ; of a systematic list of Sella's ascents ; of a list of his published work ; or of a reference list of the works he illustrated in whole or part, some of which are mentioned in the text.

Not all the prints are dated, though many of them can be identified from other sources, notably the invaluable Mumm's *Alpine Club Record* (Vol. 3). The early series can also be identified by the tone renderings, but some border line cases would have been clarified by a date, *e.g.* No. 26, which is apparently not the print used for the *A. J.* lithograph (p. 8). No. 27, of the Matterhorn, is not, as stated, the Italian side, but the Tiefenmatten face. Mont Blanc *du* Seilon (No. 2) is an obvious misprint.

No. 6 is superb, and the author's comment that ' it shows the mountaineering clothes of the period ' enhances the entertainment. Customs change not and in 1882, as in 1948, any old clo's seem the correct wear. No. 37 of San Martino is presumably the picture of August 1891, and for one recent visitor at least, the scene is indeed ' Glion, but not the same.' The Palazzo Sass Maor, the Grand Albergo delle Alpi, the street of shops have all obscured the simple foreground. *Misurine* (No. 38), is an unnecessary anglicisation, whilst as for *Drei Zinnen* ! Sella's lifelong distaste for German (p. 21) which we can understand if not share, suggests that he would have preferred the name by which these peaks were known from the S., for at least as long as he had lived—the Tre Cime di Lavaredo.

Though we have felt compelled to make these comments, we should prefer them to be regarded less as criticisms of the author than as an expression of our high regard for a great Italian ; a gallant mountaineer ; and a superb craftsman in photography who for fifty years was a member of, and an ornament to, this Club.

C. DOUGLAS MILNER.

La Nature Alpine. By René Godefroy. Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1948. Pp. 484, 80 diagrams, 14 plates. Price 750.00 f.

THIS work is a second edition. The first edition was published in 1940 and two years later the author died. The present edition has been amplified and revised by Monsieur Emile Gaillard from annotations and instructions left by Monsieur Godefroy.

The book represents the observations and studies of a mountaineer and mountain lover over a period of half a century. Its aim, to quote his words is that 'une initiation à l'intelligence des formes et des phénomènes de la montagne et des caractères originaux de la vie qui l'anime apporterait une véritable révélation à la plupart des personnes qui habitent dans les Alpes ou qui les visitent. Elle répondrait surtout aux désirs de cette élite pour laquelle l'alpinisme est autre chose et mieux qu'un vulgaire exercice du corps.'

Little appears to have escaped the author's notice. The different effects of the geological strata upon the scenery, and the erosive influences of water and ice receive detailed treatment. A chapter is devoted to snow and frost and another to glaciers and their glacio-geomorphological effects. Climate and the conditions of temperature, wind and precipitation are recorded and discussed. Finally plant, animal, and human life each receive a chapter.

To deal in detail with these many aspects of physical geography in the compass of one volume represents an immense task and an immense task, too, it is to absorb so many varied subjects. Such a work should be a book of reference, but what text book can be considered complete without a full index?

There are some inaccuracies, too; for instance the Swiss *Schneeschild* is not the same as the French *Corniche*.

The first edition was published during the war and this accounts, perhaps, for the fact that citations from works in countries other than France are not very plentiful. The immensely valuable work of the Swiss snow and avalanche investigators, for instance, receives no mention. On the other hand, the Swiss snow conditions and glaciers appear to have been examined, and are described, in some detail. The classification of avalanches is out of date by many years. No mention of wind slab avalanches is made.

As mentioned above, the work was intended for those who explore the Alps without concentrating the whole of their attention upon climbing and to them this book should prove of considerable interest, and of valuable instruction.

G. SELIGMAN.

Beitrag zu Den Theoretischen Grundlagen des Lawinenverbaus. Beiträge zur Geologie der Schweiz—Geotechnische Serie—Hydrologie Lieferung 6. By Edwin Bucher.

DR. BUCHER is director of the Swiss Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research, which has been built at the top of the Weissfluhjoch funicular at Davos. The reviewer remembers this as little more than a shed in

the early thirties when he used to visit the then director to exchange experiences on snow research. Now it is a beautifully appointed laboratory with cold chambers in which work may be carried on all the year round.

The work done there is of great importance in establishing the properties both of snow in the mass and also the structure of its individual crystals. Knowledge so obtained has thrown light on many practical problems. The study of avalanches, for example, has been considerably simplified by the elucidation of the mechanics of a mass of snow poised unstably on the hillside. There are still a few who gently smile at the scientific approach to these problems, but the number of those who gently smile at *them* increases.

The theme of the present work is the application of practical solutions in the building of avalanche defences based on theory accumulated for many years, and no one is better qualified than Dr. Bucher to describe these.

Chapters I and II deal with the mechanics and dynamics of snow considered as a mass, and with the development of unstable conditions in the snow cover on the mountain side. Chapter III gives data of the pressures of the snow upon built-up defences and outlines the arguments for and against various types of protective devices. Although the book is primarily written for the civil engineer, much in it, especially in the earlier chapters, should prove of instruction to the layman and the ski-mountaineer.

G. SELIGMAN.

Blue Guide to Switzerland. Edited by L. R. Muirhead. Ernest Benn. Pp. lxiv. + 473. Price 25s.

WHAT an immense amount of work must have gone into this! is one's first impression on taking up the book. The information of all kinds it contains is concise, clear and, as far as possible under such changing conditions, up to date.

Mr. William Martin, lecturer at Geneva University, does what can be done in fourteen to fifteen pages to diminish general ignorance of the history and political organisation of Switzerland. A similar task is performed for its art by M. Daniel Baud-Bovy. Then follow twenty-five pages of practical information, telling us how to get there, what sport we can enjoy there, what to wear and what to drink.

Some of the recommendations might provide matter for an Alpine Brains Trust: Are 'trousers better than knickerbockers' for climbing? Are 'two guides or a guide and a porter just as necessary on serious expeditions for a single climber as for two'?

The mass of detailed information that fills the rest of the book is arranged in nine main sections; one on the approaches from England, the rest on eight different regions into which the country is divided. Each region is covered by a series of journeys from a centre, or from one centre to another, exploring the side valleys and mountains on either side of the route.

Prices (generally minimum), are based on those supplied in 1947; they are almost certainly lower, but not much lower, than those of to-day. The cost of guides is about £2 per day (30-35 fr., with the franc at 17 to the £), and for particular peaks the rise on those which older climbers will remember is roughly proportional.

There some fifty maps; four on a scale of 1/50,000, showing the environs of Zermatt, Arosa, Klosters, Davos; sixteen on a scale of 1/75,000; almost all the rest 1/200,000. The choice of large scale maps indicates that the average tourist is the person whose needs are most considered; he will be able to find his way on his walks or expeditions made from popular centres, especially those open in winter and summer. All types of visitors will find the numerous plans of towns most useful, and the short historical etymological comments are interesting additions to the topographical and commercial details. Most of the ascents usually made are mentioned and guides' tariffs given; professional assistance is recommended with a due regard to the inability of the tourist to climb rocks.

In a book that deals with such an immense amount of detail and brought out under still difficult conditions, which tries to cater for the experienced alpinist as well as the entirely inexperienced visitor, there are naturally a few errors and a few statements with which the reader will disagree. Mr. Coolidge could have spent happy hours discovering obvious misprints such as Clusanfe for Susanfe, Elbrus for Elbruz, Orionde for Lo Rionde, Aul for Ault. The Mont Blanc district—perhaps because it is outside Switzerland—appears to have been rather less carefully covered than others. Up to the Col de Balme from Trient (3000 ft.) in 1½ hours and down to Tour in 2 hours (2400 ft.) sounds as if it needed reversing in direction. 'The Pierre Pointue route to the Grands Mulets is now little used' was true for a time before the téléférique that passes Pierre Pointue was available. It is, however, the only route described. The Dôme route up Mont Blanc does not join the Bionnassay route 'at the col' but above it. 'The routes up the Glacier de la Brenva and the Glacier du Mont Blanc de Courmayeur[?] are not recommended.' Even with the emendation to Routes up *from* the Brenva Glacier the remark may not meet with the approval of the present editor of the JOURNAL. Most of us would consider that 'the descent (from the Grandes Jorasses) may be made to the Refuge de Leschaux and the Montenvers in 6 hours' is unduly optimistic.

British rock climbers new to the Alps must not interpret 'difficult' in its present 'petrological' sense and put the Mont Collon and the Col du Lion in the same category, nor need they regard the Dent Perroc from Arolla as 'only for the most skilful.' The Passo Tremoggia and Fuorcla Fex-Scersen are described as 'really difficult' whereas Ball's Guide does not, the former being 'the most frequented by haymakers and smugglers.' A trustful party reading that the Lötschenlücke and the Ebnefluhjoch are 'among the passages accessible from Concordia' might find themselves in difficulties if they chose the latter as a

comparable alternative. Motorists approaching the Lötschental will not find that motors are forbidden on the road from Gampel to Kippel; they were not forbidden in 1947 on the new road up to Goppenstein.

These are minor criticisms in a guide which is not meant to take the place of Climbers' Guides; they do not invalidate the vast amount of useful and up to date information supplied. One more point, a very important one, the index seems to be all embracing and to have been most carefully compiled.

R. L. G. I.

S.M.C. Guide to the Island of Skye. Edited by E. W. Steeple, Guy Barlow, Harry MacRobert, and J. H. B. Bell. With an Appendix on new climbs revised by W. M. Mackenzie and J. K. W. Dunn. Second Edition, 1948. Pp. 155, with 34 illustrations, 21 diagrams, 1 map. Price 12s. 6d.

THE Foreword states that this Guide is a stop-gap reprint of the old one, pending the preparation of a new guide and of a pocket-size guide for rock-climbers.

The first edition of 1923 has been greatly improved, and the three principal changes are:—

(1) The red covers have been made waterproof—the old guide shed a bloody ooze over damp clothing.

(2) The rock-climbs have been re-classified—the White Slab of Coire a Ghrunnda, for example, has been written down from *severe* to *difficult* (although that is an extreme case).

(3) An Appendix gives forty new routes and variations made during the last twenty-six years—these are of all standards of difficulty up to *very severe*, and are mostly sited around Coire Lagan.

Outstanding among thirty-four photographs are several new and excellent winter scenes by Douglas Scott, and A'Cioch at Sunset by B. H. Humble. At the end is a remarkably clear map drawn by Robert Anderson, the artist. The guide is bulky and has been given a very high-quality production on first-class paper. It should be read in an arm-chair, not on the hills.

There is only one clause in the book to which the reviewer would take strong exception, and it is one for which the editors have not been responsible. Under the heading *Advice to Hill-walkers*, on the last page, the walker is counselled that, although it is best to avoid alcohol on the hills, yet 'a flask may be carried for emergencies.' Reason and experience show that alcohol should be avoided in emergency more than at any other time.

W. H. MURRAY.

Alpine Tragedy. By Charles Gos. Published November 29, 1948. George Allen & Unwin Ltd. Price 18s. net.

THIS book does not provide cheerful reading, nor is it intended to do so. It is not likely to make recruits for Alpine climbing, for it diffuses an atmosphere of death and destruction on every page, and must leave an impression on a novice that the dice are heavily loaded against

anyone who ventures on the forlorn hope of ascending a mountain in the Alps.

These results are achieved by an unbroken chain of narratives eloquently and gruesomely describing fatal accidents that have happened in various parts of the Alps during the history of mountaineering. Storms, avalanches, fatal slips on precipices or disappearances into crevasses are fated to occur in every chapter. The victims are doomed never to escape and the stories are completed, each to its tragic end at a grave in an Alpine village or an unknown tomb in the frozen depths of a glacier. We are spared nothing in the process, not even the full details of injuries received by the victims.

Yet in spite of the oppressive monotony of the death-motif that haunts these stories, they have a refreshing power of bringing vividly to the mind's eye the majestic beauty of form, the glory of sunlight and atmosphere and the alternating moods of sublime peace and relentless savagery that are characteristic of great snow-mountains.

Mr. Gos has a remarkable gift and knows what he is writing about. One reads in breathless anxiety and forgets, under the spell of his terrible eloquence, that the records of innumerable Alpine periodicals are proof that mountaineers quite frequently return from their expeditions in triumph and unscathed.

C. F. M.

Kingdom of Adventure: Everest. By James Ramsey Ullman. Collins, London.
Price 21s. net.

THE task was there to be done. Ten years after the last attempt on Everest, no successor to Younghusband had brought the story compactly up to date, and this no doubt made Mr. Ullman inevitable.

In *Kingdom of Adventure*, he has been fortunate in obtaining permission from the copyright-holders to tell the story from the original writings by 'participants.' The word is stretched to include at least five writers who never set foot near Everest; some of these are irreproachable as authorities, but hardly the truant war-time airman who seems to have discovered Kamet between Makalu and Everest. Nevertheless, the purely sub-editing task, which is what the book amounts to, has been done with some skill in choice and arrangement. Unfortunately, the merits of the original writings are throughout marred by the additions of James Ramsey Ullman, the 'interlocutor,' named in full every time he interlocutes (if that is the word), a thing he does far too frequently and with disastrous results in accuracy, taste and judgment.

'Two men crept slowly and painfully upward along a desolate skyline ridge. Below and on three sides of them were the blue depths of space.' Why three, why blue? Why the whole purple paragraph and many like it? Mallory's companions, 'watching him during those early June days of 1924, realised that he was preparing for his mightiest effort'—which, if it contributes anything, shows how easily the obvious can become melodramatic. Among the minor slips, there

is some bad news for eminent men. A 'Dr. T. E. Longstaffe' was one of the 'older generation' a quarter of a century ago; possibly it is his grandson who still persists in finding new routes up the face of Stac Polly? Norton and Somervell will be sorry to learn that their traverse at 28,000 ft. has been slashed to a mere 27,000. The N. Col is 'known to the Tibetans as Chang La.'

With Mr. Ullman's passion for dramatic superlatives and odious comparisons, a small and odd list of climbers (including a 'C. E. Greene') are described as 'among the finest mountaineers of their time.' 'Karl' (*sic*) Bauer's Kangchenjunga parties 'were composed of the finest German climbers of the day'—the greatness of those two expeditions lay precisely in the fact that Paul Bauer chose his men not as 'stars' but as a team. Again, Mr. Ullman can so misread the Everest lessons that he says that 'the sheerly mechanical climbing problems are so small as to be almost negligible.'

Throughout there is far more of struggle, mystery, tragedy, and drama than any 'Everester' (oh, that word!) will recall as being connected with the truth. Nor will his 'participants' derive much comfort from the fact that Mr. Ullman is 'proud to be in their company, even if only vicariously in the pages of a book.' That, they may well think for their part, depends on the book; one reader found this one hard to lay down until he had begun it.

T. A. BROCKLEBANK.

Jean Antoine Carrel. By Attilio Viriglio. Cappelli, Bologna. Pp. 332. Price 600 lire.

JEAN ANTOINE CARREL was the first great Italian guide and at any rate one of the greatest of the generation which first conquered the Alps. He was a passionate lover of the mountains, even more truly of one mountain, his own Cervino or Matterhorn, and an ardent Italian, or rather Valtournanche, patriot who wished to make sure of its conquest for his own people—naturally under his own leadership. It may well be that in his jealous eagerness not to let a foreigner even share in that conquest he really lost it to Whymper's British party, with its French and Swiss guides, and to the Zermatt valley, and had to be content with a second ascent. The story as told by Whymper in his *Scrambles* is transcribed and expanded with much imaginative dramatisation in his life of Carrel by Signor Viriglio. The author has borrowed equally freely from Whymper's book on the Andes for the Carrel brothers' part in that exhibition, and from Leone Sinigaglia's account of Carrel's heroic end.

An imaginative account of Carrel's boyhood and of his gallant part as a young *bersagliere* in the war of 1848 against Austria and a few pages on climbs between 1868 and 1880 complete the book. Without adding anything to serious Alpine literature or history, Signor Viriglio has brought his material together in a vivid and picturesque story which should appeal to Italian readers.

L. S. A.

Swiss Winter. By F. S. Smythe. Pp. 125, with photographs. A. & C. Black, London. Price 30s.

DURING the last forty years the technique of photography has progressed immensely. This advance lies almost entirely in the realm of processing and, of course, of better film material. The photographer has of himself made no progress. For instance, as far as mountains are concerned, no one has ever had a better eye for a photograph than, say, Sella and Donkin seventy years ago. Nowadays it is much easier for the moderate photographer to rival the results of the pioneers, but still there stand out some who have won pre-eminence in the eyes of the public. Again confining ourselves to mountains, one can admit that some modern photographers are in this class and if Mr. Smythe does not perhaps always maintain himself at their level it is certainly not for lack of the hard work, the wide experience of different conditions, and the long training of the eye without which no photographer has any hope of real success. Often, indeed, Mr. Smythe has shown us examples of his work which reach the highest class—there are some in this book. His fault, if fault it is, is that he produces so much to a receptive public that the general standard must almost inevitably be lower than if the output were smaller and more critically selected.

In another respect, too, Mr. Smythe's work suffers somewhat in comparison with that of others. If anyone produces a sixty-page book of photographs every year, in addition to many other activities, the publishers may not perhaps devote the acute attention to reproduction that is essential.

Let us frankly admit that reproduction is the very devil. Even greater strides have been made in the last half century in the technique of reproduction than in photography, but we are still a long, long way from the ideal, even with black-and-white. As for colour, it is often heart-breaking. In the case of the present book there is no doubt at all that every single photograph would look better if printed in the ordinary way on paper suited to it. The loss of quality is shocking in photographs reproduced on extremely smooth and shiny paper. It is difficult to understand why publishers of mountain books do not study the methods of their competitors who issue works on art or such admirable publications as *Vogue* and *Life*, where reproduction, particularly in colour, has attained a very high standard. They use paper with a slightly matt finish, which has texture to the touching finger and adds it to the picture. For colour work the paper is even more matt, which gives far truer tones without sensationalism. The price is no doubt higher, but it would surely be better to publish a book with thirty reproductions of the highest quality rather than sixty of less.

When all this is said, however, the fact remains that most of us would be extremely and justifiably proud to have produced photographs as fine as those that Mr. Smythe has selected. As already stated, the standard is a little uneven. In particular, some of the illustrations show too obvious use of the airbrush, while others are not entirely clear and give the impression of having been over-enlarged. One would imagine that

they were from 35 mm. film instead of $2\frac{1}{4}$ by $3\frac{1}{4}$. Here again, one suspects that this is rather poor reproduction than poor photography. It is only the sharpest and clearest photos that have stood the test of reproduction; hazy cloud effects tend to look fuzzy. Plate XIV, which is also on the wrapper, has the effect of a black-and-white reproduction of a water-colour sketch. Heaven knows how this was achieved.

In the present book Mr. Smythe has deliberately excluded the human form. This seems a pity. He has shown himself in the past a master of the art of adding balance and human interest to his photographs by the addition of a figure or two, often in the distance. Admittedly, the high Alps in winter are under-populated (apart, of course, from hotel bars and the immediate vicinity of funiculars), but it seems a pity that the impression should be given that Switzerland in winter is as desolate and bleak as the Karakorum. On the other hand, one can admit that the *Tatler* aspect of Switzerland ('Princess Glugglug having a beer at the Palace Bar') has been almost as overdone as the ski-ing ('Uncle Ambrose setting the Kabul slalom') and the Swiss *gemüthlich-theatrical* ('The virgin Jungfrau by moonlight from the Weinstube window').

As regards colour (of which there are eight examples), Mr. Smythe has the wisest things to say in the introduction. He emphasizes, what cannot be too sufficiently stressed, the difference of technique between colour and black-and-white. He rightly points out that snow scenes are not ideal for colour film in its present stage of development and he calls attention to the serious limitations of colour reproduction, which is certainly not outstanding in this book. It is worth suggesting that on the next occasion he should try the experiment of mounting his colour reproductions on a paper the tone of which is less bright than the chief highlights of the picture. This would support the brilliance of the snow without killing it and benefit the blue of the sky without electrifying it.

Of the monochromes, plates VII, X, XI, XVII and LI (bottom) perhaps stand out among many worthy rivals. In colour, Mr. Smythe has achieved a rare feat in the frontispiece, where the translucent colour of the snow in the shade is as true as that on the distant sunlit mountain. Plate XLVII, too, is discriminating, since it makes the best possible use of a limited medium.

D. BUSK.

A Climber in Wales. By Showell Styles, with a Foreword by the Rt. Hon. L. S. Amery. Pp. 85. Cornish Brothers, Ltd., Birmingham. Price 15s.

THIS is a collection of descriptions and impressions of climbing on the Welsh mountains reprinted from the *Birmingham Post*. The author discourses pleasantly of his experiences in a manner which will be enjoyed by many who are lovers of these hills. There are 25 illustrations of uneven merit. At its price the book might have had more meat in it, with better photographs deserving reproduction of a higher quality.

The Sierra Nevada : Range of Light. By Roderick Peattie. 8vo. Pp. 398 including index, 26 photographic illustrations and map. New York: The Vanguard Press, Inc., 1947. Price \$5.00.

THIS is the fifth volume of the American Mountain Series, the first, however, in which the contributors are all competent mountaineers. Among these, David R. Brower has prepared the chapter on winter sports, Weldon F. Heald the sections on trails and exploration, Oliver Kehrlein the story of Yosemite climbing, and François Matthes an outline of the geology. In addition, due consideration has been given to climate, birds, trees and forests. The extremely fine illustrations have been well chosen to attract climbers, who will encounter peaks of considerable variety and difficulty. Due to minimal glaciation an ice-axe is seldom required, but there are a number of ascents on which a knowledge of rock engineering is a requisite for success.

J. M. T.