

REVIEWS

Vocation Alpine. By Armand Charlet. Editions Victor Attinger, Neuchatel and Paris. Pp. 211. Illustrations. 1949.

It is barely thirty years since Christian Klucker wrote the first regular guide's memoirs at the suggestion of Dr. Janggen, president of the S.A.C. And not too willingly, for he wrote: 'These memoirs are the plague of my life; they give me no rest.' Nowadays it is quite in the fashion for guides to write memoirs or make their experiences the background of a novel. Most of these works are in the French language. It looks as if guiding might soon become a common prelude to authorship and that before long Chamonix may have an author-guides' club with the motto '*grimpons pour écrire.*' However that has not happened yet and it is quite clear that Armand Charlet had no ideas of authorship when he chose his profession. He is still climbing a good deal better than most; and that makes one wonder why the book ends with the traverse of the Aigs. du Diable in 1928. At that time only a very few of the series of sixty ascents of the Verte he has made up to date had taken place. The reason may be that a second volume is to come, and the history of the Grandes Jorasses and the Drus in the last twenty years assures us that there will be no lack of exciting material for it.

The early chapters contain some interesting local and family history. How remote we seem to be from the time when the King of Sardinia gave official recognition to the Compagnie des Guides in 1823 or from the prices when Armand's great-grandfather the Gros Louis, a noted smuggler of colossal build, paid 20 centimes for the portage of 50 kilos from Trient to Chamonix! His maternal grandfather, Ambrose Ravanel, combined the professions of guide and schoolmaster; otherwise we should have missed the comment to her husband of a titled lady he was escorting up to Montenvers: 'Fancy, my dear, we have a guide who uses the imperfect subjunctive!' Family history also reveals small incidents about former alpine celebrities omitted from the classics; uncle Gaspard's fury at having unwittingly carried a rucksack for Mummery, and the reason for it; Loppé's way of addressing Benoni Simond: 'Get out of my light, you worm: the older you get the worse idiot you become.'

At an early age Charlet took to skis, and he and his brother Georges soon became experts. Much of his time of military service seems to have been spent in mountaineering expeditions winked at, if not authorised, by authority; the headings of chapters on this period, *La Barre des Ecrins* and *La Meije* are significant. He took what chances he had as porter and as *aspirant guide* to practise his craft, mainly on the stereotyped expeditions and occasionally with incompetent and nervous clients, in particular one young man who aspired to be admitted to the G.H.M. These experiences must have helped to form the views expressed later in the book on the advantage the amateur has

over the guide in being able to choose his expedition and share its risks and labours with companions of comparable ability.

When a master of his craft commits his ideas to writing they are worth pondering over. I quote one or two: 'There is more merit in guiding a poorish climber over a well-known route than in the making of a more difficult route by an expert party who share the risks'; 'Guides (I am speaking of those worthy of the name who never fail to give of their best in the use of rope and axe) have to attain a sufficient mastery of the work in hand to preserve the indispensable margin of safety on which a guide who knows his job bases his line of action throughout his career.' But he recognizes the luck that enables incompetent parties so often to escape disaster: "Ces skieurs montagnards d'opérette de plus nombreux, parcourant les glaciers crevassés ou non en slip et sans corde."'

The Aiguilles du Diable provide the excitements and triumphs of the concluding chapters; from the conquest of L'Isolée, first without and then with E. R. Blanchet in 1923, to the complete traverse of the whole collection in 1928 with Myriam O'Brien and R. L. Underhill, each of them justifying the opinion Knubel had given of them: 'Tout à fait bon, moi qui pense.'

There is an introduction by Dr. Azéma and the dozen illustrations are from photos by Emile Gos (5), Fr. Marullaz (6) and J. Tairraz (1).

R. L. G. IRVING.

Challenge. Edited by W. R. Irwin. An Anthology of the Literature of Mountaineering. Pp. xx, 444. Columbia Univ. Press, New York. 1950. \$4.75.

THIS is a Reader's Digest of mountaineering rather than an anthology of its literature, for it contains no verse and nothing not originally written in English. The author, as we are told on the jacket of the book, considers himself an armchair mountaineer. His own contribution consists of an Introduction, short lives of the authors of the extracts, and lists of books on mountaineering, the product of hours, quite studious hours, in a library or several libraries. Our climbers disdainful of 'uplift' will be glad to hear that 'as athletic machines they were not harmed by their immunity' (from imagined influences), but will probably have no regrets that 'they missed the emotional value of temporary superstition.' That is the nearest label Mr. Irwin in his armchair can find for the enduring spiritual satisfactions with which mountains have been known to reward their votaries. The lives of writers and the Notes are reminiscent of Coolidge in their general accuracy and detail, though the appointment of Mallory to extra-mural work just before his last visit to Everest hardly justifies the description of 'university lecturer in history.'

The extracts are well chosen for a public that has little knowledge of Alpine literature: two of Leslie Stephen's best known chapters and two of Mummery's and long thrilling descriptions well known to most of us by Geoffrey Young, C. E. Montague, Gertrude Bell and others.

The ascents of Ararat (by Bryce), Kenya (by Mackinder), Minya Konka (by an American party) are less accessible to the general reader, as are the ascents in North and South America. Godley's admirable article on 'Mountains and the Public' and 'A Tricky Bit' from *When the Going was Good* by Evelyn Waugh supply additional variety and humour to the accounts of mountain adventure. For those who, like the Americans, want to 'get' things, whether it be peaks, places, authors, statistics or souvenirs rapidly and in quantity, this book has good value in the field of alpine literature.

R. L. G. IRVING.

Les Alpes Vaudoises. By Albert Chessex. *La Jungfrau*. By Hans Michel. *Les Glaciers*. By André Renand. Éditions du Griffon. (Agent, Felix Rose, 54, Blenheim Terrace, London, N.W.8). 7s. 6d. each.

THESE three booklets in French, published by Éditions du Griffon, Neuchatel, are a selection from a range of 39 similar brochures dealing with Switzerland, its physical treasures and notable personalities and the three mentioned above are those which may reasonably be supposed to be of interest to our members. Each consists of some 16/19 pages of descriptive letterpress and some 32 pages of photogravures and the Editor must be congratulated on his selection of authors whose style is matched to their subject matter.

Les Alpes Vaudoises deals in loving spirit with that charming district lying east of the Lake of Geneva, takes us from the gentler mountains in the Pays d'Enhaut (the 'Highlands') to the 10,000-footers of the Diablerets and Grand Muveran. The author is evidently a mountain lover of, perhaps, a by-gone age: the foothills, their flora and fauna, their views, their people and their legends, are as much to him as the slabs of the Argentine or Tête à Pierre Cabotz and the photographs tell us at a glance what pages of print would hardly convey.

La Jungfrau, by Hans Michel, translated from the German by André Jacquemand, is written in sterner vein. In no sense is it a climber's guide, but the mountain is dealt with historically, scientifically, and, chronologically, from a climbing point of view. It has certainly been one of the mountains that has attracted climbers from the earliest days. More than 90 lives have been lost on it and how many thousands have been thrilled by its mystery and beauty! The photographs are particularly beautiful. It is to be hoped that a copy of this Brochure is on sale at the Jungfrauoch station, for the selection covers all that a visitor can see, and a great deal that he never will. The six of the Rottal are of special interest for climbers.

Finally, we have:

Les Glaciers: Here we are in the icy realms of pure physical science but (fortunately ??) the reader is spared detailed statistical information about the growth and shrinkage of glaciers which is given in such detail in *Les Alpes*, while a condensation of this very interesting subject is written in simple but graceful French, as is the whole of this particular number (No. 38).

All three are so attractive a publication that it would seem worth while making an English translation, which should not be an expensive matter, and incorporating the beautiful illustrations, printed either here or in Switzerland.

C. T. LEHMANN.

Unclimbed New Zealand. By John Pascoe. Second Impression. Pp. 244. Illustrations and map. George Allen & Unwin, London. 1950. Price 21s.

THIS book, which is described on the dust cover as a second impression, and on p. 8 as a second edition, is a reprint (less a majority of the illustrations and two maps, but with the addition of an Index), of the book reviewed in *A.J.* 51. 155. No fresh expeditions are to be found, therefore, but the author, in a footnote on p. 230, says that he has a sequel to the volume in course of writing, so we may look forward to the story of his further expeditions since 1938.

There is no occasion, accordingly, to review the book for a second time, though in passing we may point out that the description on the dust cover of Mr. Pascoe as a 'Member of the Alpine Club, London,' is incorrect.

The Propagation of Alpines. By Lawrence D. Hills. Pp. 464. Plates and diagrams. Faber & Faber. 25s. 1950.

THIS is a unique book; nothing on the same lines has been written before and it should be of great interest and help to all those who propagate alpine plants, be they amateurs or professional growers, and be equally useful to the novice or the experienced cultivator. The various processes are described simply and in great detail and are illustrated by a number of excellent drawings and photographs, which may be considered redundant by the advanced worker, but even the old hand will find some very useful tips.

In the first chapter, 'Using this Book,' Mr. Hills tells us he is employing the latest nomenclature, as shown in the Kew Handbook of 1934; this is as it should be, for although it is upsetting and makes the old hands grouse to find one must call *Primula hirsuta* *P. rubra*, and *Primula Loczii* *P. sertula* and, what is worse, that *Erythrea diffusa* is now *Centaurium scilloides* and *Lychnis lagascae* is *Petrocoptis lagascae*; yet these changes have come to stay and the new names are as easy to memorise as the old and must be learnt. What is not so easy is to forget the old ones.

Now follow a series of chapters, the first on the method of simple division followed by a chapter 'the Dictionary of Propagation by Division,' giving a list of all the alpine plants that can be suitably increased by this method. Then a chapter on soils, such as seed compost and potting soils, the Author pointing out the great advantage of soil sterilisation, first advocated by the John Innes Horticultural Association, who have drawn up a formula for a universal seed and potting compost, which has made the work of propagation by seed,

both to the amateur and the professional a more simple and successful process than it was formerly. The average amateur enthusiast has to make his living and for most of us the time in the garden is limited to the evenings and week-ends and the last thing we want to be troubled with is the sterilising and mixing of our soils, and yet Mr. Hills says 'The Amateur is strongly advised against buying a ready made seed compost—this is unlikely to suit his alpine.' Here I must join issue with Mr. Hills, for my experience is that since adopting the John Innes seed compost, obtained from a reliable Horticultural firm, the germination of my seeds and the general well-being of the seedlings has improved immensely.

The next form of propagation is by cuttings and the methods of making these and the different forms of cuttings are described minutely and followed again by a 'Dictionary of Propagation by Cuttings,' then follow seed raising and the appropriate Dictionary after which we have a chapter on Root cuttings, Leaf cuttings and Layering and finally an interesting account of 'Alternative and Unorthodox methods of propagation.' These chapters occupy rather more than half the book, the rest is devoted to an 'Encyclopedia of Propagation' in which almost every alpine plant in cultivation is mentioned and against it the various forms of propagation suitable for employment in increasing it. It thus forms a most valuable book of reference, which every serious propagator is almost bound to have upon his shelves. Thus if you want to increase your stock of *Morisia hypogea*, you look it up and find it is propagated by root cuttings and if you are not familiar with this proceeding you are referred to the chapter on Root Cuttings, where the whole process is minutely described. There is finally an Appendix on Botanical Names and a glossary of the specific names of alpine plants with the appropriate stress indicated. A good many of our alpine enthusiasts would do well to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest this list and then we might have less false quantities flying about. The pronunciation of some botanic names by some amateurs, who ought to know better, must I am sure, make classical members simply squirm. The book ends in a marvellously complete index, every plant is to be found under its correct, up-to-date name and also under its various synonyms and even sometimes its English name, so there is no waste of time in looking up any plant, about which you want information, under whatever name you are accustomed to.

HUGH ROGER-SMITH.

Plant Hunting in Europe. By Dr. Hugh Roger-Smith. Pp. 80. Published by the Alpine Garden Society. 5s. 6d. post free. 1950.

THIS slim volume describes plant-hunting in selected valleys of the Swiss Alps, the Pyrenees, the Dolomites, the Carpathians, the Balkans, Greece and Cyprus, thus covering a wide field botanically. It will appeal strongly to those who cannot resist the urge to transplant their favourite alpines from a native habitat to the home rock-garden. The

author in a very interesting introduction imparts the secret of successful transplantation, and almost guarantees 90 per cent. survival, if his instructions are faithfully carried out. I fancy that the less enterprising of us, without doubting his word, will continue to buy or beg our rockplants from home sources, and doubtless miss many a thrill thereby. Dr. Roger-Smith has a wonderful eye for spotting rarities. I envy him his discovery of those two romantic gems, *Linnaea* and *Trientalis*, at Pontresina; his constant meetings with Ladies' Slipper, which has always eluded me; and the ease with which he identifies the members of that charming family, the Androsaces. The inevitable dryness of long lists of Latin names is relieved and diversified by tales of travel incidents and local lore. The illustrations vary in merit: those depicting flowers are all attractive and sometimes superb, e.g. *Gentiana pyrenaica* on p. 77: the somewhat colourless mountain views might with advantage have been replaced by more such treasures. The book is well printed and edited, except for a few mistakes in place-names: Hrebienok, the mountain resort in the Tatra, reads curiously as Hrebiehok (p. 52), and the ladders above Milchbach are on the way to the Gleckstein hut, not the Baregg (p. 16). But these are trifling errors in a book which will give as much pleasure to lovers of flowers and mountains as it must have given the author to compile.

H. E. L. PORTER.

The Mountaineering Handbook. A Complete and Practical Guide for Beginner or Expert. Published for A.B.M.S.A.C. by The Paternoster Press, London. 8s. 6d. 1950.

No book of instruction can take the place of lessons learned by climbing with experienced mountaineers, be they amateur or professional. Now that the regular use of guides as a means of learning the technique of mountaineering is beyond the permitted means of foreign visitors to the Alps, the practice of guideless climbing is the only means by which the novice may learn and practice his mountaineering technique. The practice of guideless climbing has come to be preferred because it allows, and indeed demands, the acceptance of a greater measure of responsibility by each member of the climbing party than when climbing with a professional guide. This book is a store-room of technique of great value to the novice both before and during his first season or two in the Alps. He should study it before his first visit to the Alps and keep it in his rucksack as a reference book while in the Alps.

In reading this book one is firstly struck by the fact that it is written by a Committee and translated and edited by a Committee, and secondly that it was written for the Swiss novice who, because he lives in a mountainous country, can be expected to be familiar with many of the terms which are introduced without explanation in the English text, e.g. Névé, Bergschrund. The book is liberally sprinkled with 'Translator's Notes' which give the British practice where these are at variance with the recommended Swiss practice. In some

cases the differences are so great that the novice must be left in grave doubt, *e.g.* on p. 27, 60 to 100 ft. of line is recommended while the translator insists that 150 to 200 ft. is *necessary*! On p. 28 the book recommends the folding type of glacier lantern using a candle; those who have tried to use this diabolical contrivance will know its frailties and how easily a gust of wind will blow it out and that it is impossible to relight it except in the still air inside a hut or at the bottom of a crevasse. In practice the electric battery hand torch seems to have completely superseded the candle lantern. In the section on clothes, insufficient stress is laid on the importance of a windproof outer integument with plenty of woollies underneath as the air-retaining heat-insulating material.

On p. 84 is the first mention of the use of ice pitons, but no description is given of the essential differences between rock and ice pitons and how to fix and use the latter.

In the chapter on glaciers mention should surely have been made of the use of the ice axe shaft as a probe for hidden crevasses. On p. 105 the grave dangers of succumbing to exposure from cold and lack of food is dismissed in one sentence 'Climbers may miss the hut and have to bivouac, fighting against a new enemy—the cold.'

The reviewer can offer no criticism on the chapter on 'Help in Case of Illness or Accident,' but as this section has clearly had the personal attention of a much respected doctor and Past President of the Association, we may be confident of the recommendations.

The Appendix describes the 'Tarbuck' system of rope management. Those of us who have seen Mr. Tarbuck demonstrate his system cannot fail to be impressed by its sound common sense; furthermore, it is also certain that the use of nylon rope with securing and belaying techniques, which are satisfactory for hemp rope, may easily lead to accidents unless the differing qualities of the two fibres are fully appreciated.

Taken as a whole there is much good advice and sound common sense in this little book, but much of it is so compressed to make it portable and so rounded and smoothed by the Committee of Authors and by the Committee of Translators and Editors of the English edition, that the result of this tortuous process must, in many cases, leave the novice guessing what is really the right equipment or the best method of tackling a problem.

BRYAN DONKIN.

Scholar Mountaineers. By Wilfrid Noyce. London: Dennis Dobson Ltd., 1950. 8vo. Pp. 164 + 12 plates. Price 12s. 6d. net.

It needs a skilful hand, discerning judgment, and good taste to make an attractive and readable book out of a well-worn subject, but that is what Mr. Wilfrid Noyce has done in his *Scholar Mountaineers*. There have been many learned disquisitions on the battle of the ideologies and the eventual victory of romanticism over classicism in the evolution of mountain feeling, but this book is constructed on very different lines.

It is a short sequence of pen-pictures of real live men whose song, like an orpheic chorus, gradually builds the edifice of mountain fascination. There is Dante with his very creditable vertical-distance performance; Petrarch on Mont Ventoux; Rousseau with his sentimental inconsistencies; de Saussure the scientist with the pen of a poet; Goethe the self-centred romantic; the Wordsworths, Keats, Ruskin and Leslie Stephen; Nietzsche the prophet of North faces, Pius XI, and Captain Scott.

I think that Mr. Noyce may find himself vulnerable when he says that the Greeks' 'instinct for the mountains came to them with the air they breathed,' or that 'in Greece there is from the first a typical western bustle upon the hilltops,' for although as Mr. Amery and, in a humbler way, I have tried to show that the literature of classical antiquity contains many gems of mountain appreciation, they were nevertheless somewhat exceptional, and Mr. Lunn might have something to say.

There are, however, some other points in Mr. Noyce's book where I differ from him on matters of opinion or of fact, and hope that if I refer to these I shall not be regarded as indulging in criticism other than constructive. So, in a book on scholar mountaineers, I should have liked to see a chapter devoted to one of the most important of them all: Albrecht von Haller, the 'Pliny of Switzerland,' veritable citadel of scholarship, administrator, statesman, educationalist, bibliographer, great anatomist, encyclopædic botanist, and founder of modern physiology. At the same time he was a poet and his long poem *Die Alpen*, published in 1732 and noteworthy as the first to be devoted to such a subject, was translated into most of the languages of Europe and went through twenty editions in his lifetime. In these verses Haller put forward the revolutionary view that the Alpine shepherd lived a life more blissful than the town-dweller—which view was subsequently adopted and distorted with political bias by Rousseau—and that the mountains are the abode of freedom—a theme later developed by Schiller and countless others. At the same time, Haller loved the mountains, and from 1728 until 1761 there were few years when he did not go to the Alps, the Jura, the Harz or the Black Forest, to collect their flowers or study their topography.

Mr. Noyce's only reference to Haller as 'a Genevese botanist' is therefore unfortunate, not only because he was so much more than a good botanist, but because he was a patrician of Berne, and it was largely his Bernese *gravitas*, worthy of ancient Rome, and his sturdy Teutonic humanism that made him a natural enemy of the men of Geneva, Rousseau and Voltaire, with their shallow if brilliant French genius.

Since we are speaking of Rousseau it may be worth mentioning that readers of Rousseau's published works are in danger of falling into the error of believing, as indeed he wished them to do, that he was a creature of infirmity. Certainly he had some, but it did not interfere with his remarkable capacity for walking very long distances and

scrambling about on mountains. The *Correspondance Générale* describing his botanical rambles on the Chasseron, and other mountains with Du Peyrou, D'Escherny and Gagnebin provides eloquent evidence of the good and sturdy companion that Rousseau could be on a walking tour, and lessens the antithesis between a puny man and rugged mountains.

And if Keats is included among scholar mountaineers, I should also have liked to see Sénancour. But these are, however, matters of opinion. As regards matters of fact, de Saussure's ascent of Mont Blanc was the third, his sojourn on the Col du Géant took place in 1788; the famous description of Leslie Stephen should run 'fleetest of foot of the whole Alpine brotherhood': trivia which detract little from the welcome due to this enjoyable book.

G. R. DE BEER.

Rock for Climbing. By C. Douglas Milner. Pp. 124 with 97 photographic illustrations. 10" × 7¼". London: Chapman & Hall. 1950. Price 25s.

MR. MILNER has set out bravely to give us a new kind of book, and on the whole has been successful. He uses photography to attract readers to the sport of rock climbing, and his writing helps them to understand it. The 20 pages of text with which he prefaces his pictures are an admirable essay on this sport, though he falls somewhat between two stools in trying both to arouse the interest of the new-comer and to satisfy the 'old hand.' Thus, the reader who may be attracted to rock climbing by Mr. Milner's photographs may have some difficulty in following the technical terms and the topographical details in the text.

The author opens by defining himself as an average mountaineer and a writer who cannot attempt to emulate the masters. The quality of the expeditions he illustrates and describes set him above this rating as a climber. And in his text, while taking himself rather seriously, despite a certain frivolity of style, he cannot resist following the masters in a brief excursion into mountaineering philosophy; in this his views are admirable and clear. He also makes some sound remarks on technique; we particularly commend his views on the ethics of piton climbing, in which he pleads for tolerance towards those who see fit to use modern aids in their own territories.

Nevertheless there are in the text some remarks which we cannot allow to pass without raising an eyebrow; that 'Skye gabbro is the finest climbing rock in the world' (p. 3); that in Switzerland, 'Here and there climbing on good sound rock can be found' (p. 77), and that 'all purely rock peaks are minor' (p. 81)—the latter a most misleading though no doubt technically correct statement. It is strange too that in his photographs he gives us none of the 'classical' rock routes up major Alpine peaks. Indeed the north-east ridge of the Jungfrau is the only big climb he illustrates. A book bearing this title would have been better for the Meije, the Innominata face, the Rothorn-Triftgrat or the Schreckhorn.

In mountain photography Mr. Milner is in this country the acknowledged master of his time, and in this book he includes some of his

finest work. He is at his best in his pictures of English and Welsh rock. He is particularly successful in conveying a sense of movement in climbing both up and down, a difficult achievement in a sport which, as practised on British rock, seems almost devoid of movement. He has the perseverance to visit the north-facing crags in the summer at sunrise and sunset to catch the only light that falls upon them, and he has the patience to wait for the sun to pick his chosen rocks while the rest remain in shadow ; but he does not always avoid making his rocks look like slag heaps, e.g. plates 13 and 43.

In the series of Skye his photographs are disappointing and give us nothing of the 'Coolin's bare ridges grape-blue in the morning sun,' nor the enchantment of the island setting. It is a pity also that British rock climbing is illustrated solely as a summer fine weather pastime. Every single peak is taken on a sunny day. We are never shown wet rock, nor are we admitted to the pleasures of climbing rock routes in the snow of early spring.

There is a fine series from Chamonix, of the Requin direct route and the Grépon traverse, full of action with outstanding pictures of abseils (plates 81 and 83a); (so much more convincing than the artificial abseils of the Chamonix postcards). Here we see the highest quality of photographic technique ; in detail his rock texture, especially on Lliwedd and of Chamonix granite is almost stereoscopic in its reality.

His high Alpine photographs elsewhere are disappointing ; they do not bear comparison with André Roch and the other Continentals who have had such vastly greater opportunities.

The book ends in the Dolomites. These photographs include a superb set of the Adang Kamin, the best of which was exhibited at the A.C.

Having seen this and other original examples of Mr. Milner's work, we cannot think that he has been well served by his publishers. Too many of the half-tone prints are too dark or too murky. They are fashionable by covering the full page ; as usual this has led to many of the mountains being decapitated. Moreover neighbouring pages sometimes make ill bedfellows, e.g. plates 48 and 49, which at first glance seem to be one picture. Mr. Milner spares us the technical details of his photography, which in other popular works only goes to show that the best way to success is to get to know your camera and your film and to use them always in exactly the same way. Instead he wisely refers us to the book which he has already written so ably on the subject. It is obvious nevertheless that many of the photographs are taken with miniature cameras with all their advantages of depth of focus and their drawbacks—such as grain and unsharpness. These are occasionally apparent even in Mr. Milner's hands (e.g. plates 67 and 92). He makes fine use of the quality of modern films to give luminosity in the shadows (see plate 38) which so distinguishes the contemporary from the older photography.

The book is refreshingly free from misprints. We have noted only 'Harford's' Slab on Scafell and the claim that the Dibona-Mayer

route on the Requin gives '4,000 ft. of rock'; in fact it is about 2000 ft.

Otherwise the book is accurate and wholly honest, and the photographs are free from seeking after false sensation, that weakness which was so popular 50 years ago. It should do much to interest hill lovers in rock climbing.

B. R. GOODFELLOW.

Mountains beneath the Horizon. By William Bell. Edited with an Introduction by John Heath-Stubbs. Faber and Faber. Price 8s. 6d.

IN his introduction John Heath-Stubbs gives an account of the career and poetry of William Bell. An Oxford graduate in Physics in 1944, he then served in the Fleet Air Arm and returned to Oxford after the War to read English. In 1946 he had a fall from a cliff in Wales, and in 1948 fell to his death with two companions on the Matterhorn, at the age of twenty-four.

'We are dealing with the fragmentary and unequal work of a very young man.' That is true, but it is also true that he was an extraordinary young man. It was well worth the trouble of making this small selection from a dead poet's writing. For these are the poems of a modern man's struggle: the struggle to find physical outlet for self in an increasingly mechanical age, as well as the struggle to find appropriate mental outlet in poetry.

The natures of men and natural objects like mountains are different, he seems to say, and in some ways opposed.

'Although you move among them as a friend
these mountains cannot take you for a brother.'

Hence the poems about mountains, which will especially interest readers of this journal, are perhaps the best as well as the most significant. For here is pointed most obviously the differentness as well as the necessary connexion between spiritual man and these natural playgrounds in which he exercises his highest endeavour. There is thus a subtle link joining the poet Petrarch with the peak he climbed, which will survive him and his work:

'Yet when your works are weathered past repair
wherever on the crags the mountaineers
have piled a cairn, your monument is there.'

He and the hill are two, but between these two there is a necessary and compelling bond.

The workmanship of the verse is uneven, as is natural. For in his metrical form too Bell was working out his own best path. In the *Elegies* he experiments, often very effectively, with metre. 'Echo to Narcissus' and 'the Siege of Warsaw' are interesting trials of the repeated Ballade ending. But perhaps the most fortunate poems are the *Sonnets*, which are simple experiences; indeed in which 'the personal experience, for him, forms the starting point of a metaphysical

exploration.' Sometimes certainly the rhymes are overbold and the rhythm broken: 'hid her' and 'consider' in the impressive sonnet on Homer and Milton; 'divine ardour and intellectual day,' where the stress appears wrong.

But the lines are never flat. Like his own 'cold seed' Bell seems to harbour 'a burning purpose in the kernel' which explains the vigour and also the incompleteness of his experience on mountains. It is almost pathetic that this mountaineer and poet of promise should write:

' I hope that this unsatisfactory letter
 may seem to you to fight
 the tempest and the eternal night
 and greet you with the faith of something better.'

WILFRID NOYCE.

Lakeland Scrapbook. By W. A. Poucher. Chapman & Hall. 1950. Pp. 136.
 11" × 8" with 141 photographs. Price 25s.

'POUCHER'S ANNUAL' is rather better than usual this year. There are signs of growing mellowness. We are shown more of the charming villages and valleys, and less of the bald-topped hills in eternal sunshine artificially brightened. There are some splendid pictures on cloudy days and in winter snow.

Nevertheless the photography is, as before, almost wholly impersonal. Mr. Poucher's innumerable visits do not seem to have bred any intimacy either with the Lakelanders or with other visitors. His villages are empty, and his churchyards peopled only by the dead. He does not take us into the world of climbers, skiers and skaters. Nor are we shown sailing, nor fishing, nor does he follow the hounds. All that goes to make Lakeland alive is passed by.

The book is happier for its scrapbook arrangement; the pictures are better for being smaller, and fewer sprawl over the double page. The quality of reproduction is noticeably better, though still inferior to any five-franc Swiss Calendar.

We still cannot understand why Mr. Poucher, who applies such infinite time and trouble to his photography, continues to use a 35 mm. camera. When he enlarges beyond 8-inch size his pictures, inevitably, are not good enough. But he is by now very sure of himself, and condescends to reveal his conjuring in more abundant detail than ever. Plenty of climbers whose photography is incidental believe they can do better, though it must be admitted that there are very few who succeed.

B. R. GOODFELLOW.

Mountains and Moorlands. By W. H. Pearsall. Pp. xv, 312. Illustrated.
 Collins, London. 1950. 21s.

UNFORTUNATELY it is rare for a scientist of the first rank to have both the inclination and the ability to explain his subject to a wide audience. The appearance of *Mountains and Moorlands* by Professor Pearsall is

therefore most welcome. Although many popular books on British Natural History have appeared in recent years it is unique in surveying the plants and animals of the British hills from a broad ecological viewpoint. Ecology is the study of plants and animals in relation to their environment and Professor Pearsall begins by discussing the structure, climate and soils of the British hills. These chapters are intended only as an introduction to the main theme, but a reader seeking a general understanding of the forces which have shaped our mountains may learn as much from the twenty-seven pages of Chapter II as from many full length books. The chapters on climate in its relation to vegetation and on soils contain much information of wide interest which is elsewhere inaccessible except in technical literature.

Against this background the general nature of the vegetation is then sketched. Clear line drawings, as in the early chapters, assist the reader to gain a preliminary picture of the distribution of the different types of vegetation. Thereafter, in more detail, the principle plant communities from the grassland and woodlands on the low slopes to the sparser vegetation of the hilltops are reviewed. The botanical section concludes with an essay on the ecological history of British vegetation.

There follow three chapters on animals treated from the same broad viewpoint. The altitudinal spread of butterflies and beetles is reviewed as well as the effect of game preservation on the Scottish hills. Finally, Professor Pearsall looks to the future and discusses the problems of conserving our mountain fauna and flora both from the viewpoint of the naturalist and the economist.

In his introduction he suggests that his book may be thought 'remarkable more for its omissions than its scope.' To many readers, however, its most remarkable feature will be the manner in which the material has been selected to give a clear and comprehensive answer to the question asked a dozen times a day by every open-eyed hill walker and seldom answered: 'What makes that plant or animal grow here and not there?'

The editors of the *New Naturalist* series in which the book is included have indulged again in many colour photographs. Some, especially close-ups of plants and insects, are above the average standard, but to the reviewer none invoke such an impression of genuine natural colour as Mr. Brinsden's black and white photograph of evening cloud in Langdale.

R. SCOTT RUSSELL.

Ande Patagoniche ; Viaggi di Esplorazione alla Cordigliera Patagonica Australe.
By Alberto M. de Agostini. Pp. 381. Soc. Cartografica G. de Agostini,
Milan. 1949.

SIGNOR AGOSTINI'S book, written in Italian and printed in Milan, is a beautifully produced description of explorations he has made in the Southern Andes between the Magellan Straits (Lat. 52° 30' S.), where the glaciers descend into the sea, and Lake Buenos Aires (Lat. 46° 30' S.).

It is a little known region, notable for its bad weather, its high winds and its almost continual mists. Its mountains are not high by Himalayan and, even, Andine standards, but they are in many cases of striking form and colour. Perhaps the most remarkable is Mt. Fitzroy (11,000 ft.) which, like 99 per cent. of the peaks in the range, is still unclimbed. It rises some 4000 ft. above the surrounding glacier, a gigantic pink limestone monolith of terrific aspect.

The author made his trip for geographic exploration rather than mountaineering, but his climbs on the San Lorenzo massif (12,000 ft.) were important and add much to existing knowledge of that mountain.

Fortunately, Agostini had plenty of time and so could, when necessary, wait for clear weather to get the photographs which are such an outstanding feature of the book. More than 300 are included, some of them in colours, and his ten panoramas (two of which are 3 ft. long when unfolded) add greatly to the effectiveness of the text.

The last chapter gives a summary of all the expeditions made in the Southern Andes to date and, as such, forms a much needed addition to the literature of the region.

As a work of reference the book suffers greatly from having no index covering either the text or the illustrations.

E. S. G. DE LA MOTTE.

Postscript to Adventure. By Lord Schuster. Eyre and Spottiswoode, London. 15s.

LORD SCHUSTER'S book divides itself roughly into three sections. We have a series of his delightful essays read before various assemblies of mountaineers; a masterly biography of Tyndall as a mountaineer, extracted from Eve and Creasey's 'Life', but slightly altered; and some personal discussions with Arnold Lunn who contributes a short Preface to the volume.

We are approaching the moment when we can appraise in retrospect a century of English mountaineering literature which has given us such a rich heritage of fine writing. But, while opinions must always differ in awarding the palm of excellence, there can be no doubt that as an essayist Lord Schuster will always rank among the very best. He is well equipped for the role as a classical scholar, with a perfect command of lucid and graceful style; he has a gift of narrative, tempered and enhanced by a dry sense of humour; and he is an enthusiastic student not only of the early history of mountaineering, but of all its modern developments, whether of climbing or ski-ing, being, incidentally, largely responsible for putting the final quietus to the somewhat sterile animosities which for some time inspired the protagonists of the two activities. His love of mountains and of mountaineering is many sided, and he is singularly successful in the difficult task of conveying to his readers the reasons for that love, and of encouraging them to seek for themselves the happiness which has enriched his own life.

Age places him in the position, fortunate for his readers, of being a living link between many of the great pioneers and the modern climber. When one adds that he is a first class mountaineer himself, with forty years of active experience to his credit, it is easy to understand why, amid the modern spate of mountaineering literature, *Postscript to Adventure* will be one of the outstanding books without which no Alpine Library will be complete.

The essay on Tyndall tells us all we want to know about him as a mountaineer, especially as regards his part in the great race to conquer the Matterhorn. It is a little masterpiece, factual in the minutest detail, but extremely readable. It throws much light on the characters of Bennen, J. A. Carrel, and other leading guides of the period, and gives a clear account of Tyndall's relations with Whymper, and of their mutual lack of understanding and readiness to take offence at the slightest provocation. In his open letter to Arnold Lunn, which forms the epilogue of the volume, Lord Schuster deals faithfully with another of Whymper's quarrels, namely his controversy with Coolidge about Almer's jump on the ridge of the Ecrins. This is examined and documented with all the skill of Lord Schuster's trained legal mind, but even so we are left in doubt as to the truth of the matter. One is inclined to wonder whether these quarrels, which were waged with bitterness and a prodigious lack of humour, are still of the absorbing interest which they were to their contemporaries and to the succeeding generation. To-day they seem to us to have been almost puerile, and could have been easily settled over a bottle of Bouvier. But, to these solemn, pugnacious Victorian giants, controversy was more stimulating than any Swiss champagne, and so we have the unedifying spectacle of these formidable men indulging not in Whistler's *Gentle Art of Making Enemies*, but in the almost savage pastime of taking umbrage, and one is inclined to differ from Lord Schuster's conclusion that Whymper was not himself an ardent controversialist.

It is curious how Whymper and the tragic conquest of the Matterhorn continue to dwarf other great personalities and other great adventures of the whole of the nineteenth century mountain epic. Actually, Whymper's climbing career was short compared to that of other pioneers of that period, and other mountains presented almost equally formidable problems to be overcome, and, in some cases, involved fatal accidents. Tyndall and other contemporaries were greater men, and quite as fine mountaineers, yet Whymper remains a household word while the rest are only dimly remembered by the reading public.

Lord Schuster's estimate of Whymper's character differs slightly from those of Lunn and Smythe, but his admiration for him is unstinted, though his remark that none of his Alpine companionships ripened into permanence is a tactful way of showing that he realises Whymper was not personally a very agreeable man at that period of his career. Tuckett, a cautious and kindly Quaker, once remarked 'No-one who has climbed with Whymper once seems inclined to repeat the experience.'

He has some astringent comments on Coolidge's strange inability to describe routes up mountains, and on Smythe's really silly suggestion that amateurs only employ and employed guides because they feel it ungentlemanly to carry loads or to cut steps.

A special word of praise is due to a short paper on the Meije, giving a vivid account of the conquest of this difficult mountain.

His correspondence with Arnold Lunn is an interesting example of how a mutual interest in mountaineering can create true friendship between men of very different temperaments. To Lord Schuster, Lunn is an iconoclast always reaching out for new and untried avenues towards a goal which he never quite finds. He watches these excursions with the sympathy of a friend, but, while Lunn continues to travel hopefully, Lord Schuster has already found rest for the sole of his foot, and is unable or unwilling to follow Lunn into his latest phase of metaphysical mysticism.

In a book dealing with so much past history, it is a relief to find so few numbered references to take one's eye off the narrative. It is illustrated with a few fine photographs, and a delightful reproduction of one of Wilink's paintings, and several of his line drawings.

There are some small mistakes, but nothing is so annoying as the habit of some reviewers, dealing with books by others superior to them in knowledge, of triumphantly pointing out minute slips and errors. The readers of this wholly delightful book can find their own amusement in detecting these in the manner of those who enjoy discovering the three verses in the 119th Psalm which contain no synonyms of the words 'statutes' or 'laws.'

G. E. HOWARD.

Au Royaume du Mont-Blanc. By Paul Payot. 8vo. 305 pages, with 97 illustrations. Bonneville (Haute Savoie): Imprimerie Plancher, 1950.

A YEAR ago, when the author's modest text accompanied G. Tairraz's splendid photos in *Chamonix et le Mont-Blanc*, anyone who knew Payot as a diligent historian would have predicted that he could do no less than follow it with a more comprehensive volume about his valley. But one had not expected anything so fine and thoroughly successful, for it offers in small space the modern authoritative summing up of all that one found in the earlier works of such men as Charles Durier, Stephen d'Arve and C. E. Mathews. There is much to learn from it and it should be on every climber's bookshelf, for there is a great deal in its pages that is new. For instance, the thirteenth-century designation for Chamonix was 'Campus Munitus,' which Payot believes should be translated as 'enclosed plain' rather than as 'fortified camp.' He rejects the opinion quaintly held by his uncle that the name derived from the two mills of the Priory (*Champ du meunier*). He tells us that in an unpublished letter of 1603 St. François de Sales was the first to mention Mont Blanc by name. In a brief paragraph we are told of the amazing expedition made in the last century by a guide of Bonneval (Blanc Greffier), who, when cattle plague precluded the traverse of

animals through Savoy, took a herd of 400 sheep across the Col du Géant from Aosta to the Montenvers.

The history and resources of the valley, the development of Chamonix itself, lead to the records of the first tourists, the conquest and subsequent ascents of Mont Blanc and its entourage. The illustrations, chiefly from the author's collection, are not to be found in anthologies; the old hotels, the tourists of another day, and the strange spectacle of a herd of cows on the Mer de Glace are most entertaining.

The growth of Chamonix as a tourist centre depended largely upon Mont Blanc and the excitement generated by its ascent. Let us hope that this excellent book will in some way lead to the restoration of the politically suppressed Chamonix Museum, which once so attractively exhibited the historic relics of bygone events, and whose absence is a present disgrace.

J. MONROE THORINGTON.

This My Voyage. By Tom Longstaff. Pp. 324. Illustrations. John Murray. 1950. 21s.

FOR very many years now Dr. Longstaff has been the Himalayan 'maestro,' *Guru* to many *Chelas*, worthy and unworthy. His advice has been sought continuously and given ungrudgingly. Many therefore will have looked forward to the appearance of *This My Voyage*, some perhaps with misgivings that when it came to writing, the *Guru* might have feet of literary clay. These need not have worried; for in this book Dr. Longstaff has given us the best of himself, while the sustained economy and terseness of his writing is a model.

The book starts on a minor note, travels in the Alps towards the end of last century. Here there could be little breaking of new ground, which is the author's 'forte'; but even here there is opportunity for vivid use of the simplest of words: 'The glorious week was over: yet I have it now.'

Though, as was to be expected, the greater part of the book is devoted to the Himalaya, the short chapter 'Caucasus' is no whit inferior. It may be that because the Caucasus are today more closed to the British climber than ever was Everest in the nineteenth century, the author's power of evoking an atmosphere can induce a nostalgia even among those who never set foot on the chain; this, and his Theocritean delight in proper names:—

'To the north loomed the vast dome of Elbruz, the highest peak of Caucasus. Great, massive, it seemed to support the heavens. . . . There to the east was Ushba, far more beautiful, with huge Shkara towering in the distance above the perfect cone of Tetnuld. . . .'

The central Himalaya, the mountains of Kumaon and Garhwal are perhaps the author's chief mountain love. His name will always be linked with Trisul, the ascent of which gave him the altitude record for the highest peak climbed for over 20 years. His account of the view from the top must be quoted:—

'I craned over on my belly to look down the astounding southern

precipice. Spread below were all the middle hills we had marched through : then the foothills : then the plains with rivers winding. To the west all was clear ; the whole scarp of the Western Himalaya so vast that I expected to see the earth rotating before my eyes.'

The epic of Gurla Mandhata with the 3000 ft. fall of the author and the Brocherels is another of the outstanding episodes of the book.

Few readers can fail to share the excitement of the first view of the great Dhaulagiri from the slopes of Gurla Mandhata.

The chapter on Everest, on the other hand, shows clearly that the writer's heart is not with the big formal type of mountain expedition.

Though he enjoyed the journey through Tibet, the unwieldiness and publicity of the large caravan do not inspire his pen. But when he goes on to the Karakorum, he is himself once again and can breathe his own excitement over the exploration of the great Siachen glacier into his reader.

The chapter on the Hindu Kush and Gilgit is not so convincing. Here he was never quite his own master ; and though his work as a political officer was in itself interesting, it does not inspire him to write as he does of the Himalaya and Karakorum.

Canada again is different. Though it has its own fascination for the author, and the Assiniboine adventure is great in the telling, the mere fact of the more pedestrian placenames and mountain names deprives the chapter of the poetic magic of Himalaya and Caucasus.

Spitsbergen and Greenland are of the sea rather than of the mountains ; and the author is here inclined to dwell longer on natural history and scientific aspects ; though in his mind exploration and natural science are always bound up together.

If there is a major criticism to be made, it is perhaps on the ground of too much compression. At times the general reader must find himself a little bewildered. As an instance, speaking of the Bhotias the author says, ' Inhabiting the British side of the border they have become Hindus, but are of Mongoloid blood : therefore they laugh ; the " Aryan " hillman does not.' It is of course a commonplace with those who know the East that the Mongolian is a cheerful individual who laughs easily, whereas the Aryan inhabitant of India, plainsman or hillman is rather unsmiling, and, to the Westerner, has little sense of humour. A little expansion might have made the point clearer to the armchair traveller.

Sometimes one feels defrauded by a sentence such as that at the end of the Canadian chapter :

' From there I was bound still farther north, to the Klondyke and a thousand miles down the Yukon through Alaska to the arctic circle and the ice-clad volcanoes beside Bering Sea.' How much must lie behind this sentence that one would like to hear.

The maps are excellent, and having only the minimum number of names, it is very easy to follow the journeys from the text. A minor criticism is that there are many slight differences in spelling between the maps and the text—*e.g.* Manasarowar and Mansarowar, Kinechish

and Kinnichish, Llanl and Lwanl, etc. It is unfortunate too that on the Gurla Mandhata map, of the three alternatives mentioned for the place, the text chooses Taklakot and the map Taklakhar.

Dr. Longstaff is a great hater of the modern craze for uniformity ; but surely Palwan and Pahlwan, Kiang and Kyang should not be spelt differently on different pages. Another slip, Mummery did not make the first ascent of the Aig. Verte by the Moine (not Moîne) ridge. But these are trifles compared with the vividness with which in a few short words he can bring an incident to life.

After Himalaya, Rockies and Arctic, the last chapter on British mountains is an anti-climax.

This perhaps was unavoidable, but it does lead up to the last sentences of the book which cry out for quotation : ' Beyond Edrachillis Bay rise the hills behind Scourie ; and beyond those we can see nearly to Cape Wrath. And then behold the sky, an hundred miles of it. So many things going on at once : clouds of every pattern with play of colour on sea and land ; here bright sunlight, there a black storm An enchanted land. So I have come back there to live.'

A book tantalisingly brief, but in the highest degree stimulating.

C. G. CRAWFORD.