

REVIEWS

The Ascent of Everest. By John Hunt. Pp. xx, 300. Illustrations. Hodder & Stoughton, London. 25s.

THE author himself tells us that *The Ascent of Everest* had to be written quickly—we can guess why—and was, in fact, written within a month. That makes it all the more astonishing that the story has been so well and fully told. No other book of mountaineering adventure has approached it in popularity, and the Treasurer of the Everest Committee must be gloating over the figures of sales. Certainly Sir John Hunt had an ideal subject, and Fortune wore her most indulgent smile when she let the great news of the ascent coincide with the coronation of Queen Elizabeth.

Some thirty years ago, Mallory wrote after the 1922 expedition: 'It sounds more like war than sport and perhaps it is'; and it is not surprising that Hunt's book reads like the story by a soldier of a military campaign. His task was to tell us just how the great enterprise was prepared for and carried to a triumphant conclusion; it is a tale of careful planning and resolute action. There are brief references to the previous history of the mountain, which has been fully told in several volumes, and generous acknowledgements of all that his party owed to the experience gained in many gallant attempts to reach the summit, and he seems to be satisfied with Mallory's reason for them, 'because it is there.'

The emphasis in recent years on ascents by new and very difficult routes, often requiring special technique, has tended to obscure the fact that the height of a mountain and the finding of some way to its top constitute the *fons et origo* of mountaineering; the Himalaya, and Everest more than all, have taken us back to first principles. In preparing the campaign three problems were presented by the great altitude, the climate, and the technical difficulties. The two chapters on planning read, as they should be, in conjunction with Appendices III–VIII, may tax the patience of those who want to get on to the actual assault, but they are of great value, the results of the labours of many helpers, members of the party, reserves who sublimated their disappointment in not being chosen to join it in unstinted efforts to promote the success of the 'elect,' and others not mountaineers, who were interested in giving the expedition the benefit of their knowledge and the best possible equipment.

Oxygen takes first place in the items of special equipment that helped to make success possible. One cannot help wondering if, when the ascent by the north face is achieved, it will justify what Mallory wrote after the last attempt in 1922 had been interrupted tragically by an avalanche below the North Col: 'I have little doubt, besides, that using oxygen and given the opportunity, Somervell and I would have reached the top—for whatever that performance might be worth.' The benefit of using oxygen and its effect on rates of climbing at a great

height are well brought out in the book, particularly by the figures in Appendix V. While recognising the great benefit from its use in procuring several hours of sleep before going above 26,000 ft., we must remember that men have climbed for hours at over 27,000 ft. and that Smythe says he slept for 13 hours at Camp VI without it. Of the actual oxygen sets Hunt says: 'the improvement in performance for a given weight of our apparatus over any previous equipment used on Everest was considerable.' 'Disappointingly small' seems a better description than 'considerable,' if we compare the figures in Appendix V with those given by Professor Finch in *A.J.* 51. In the former the open-circuit set with two cylinders holding 800 l. apiece is given as 29½ lb. Finch says, writing in 1939: 'a complete apparatus holding 1500 l. (2 cylinders) need only weigh 16-17 lb.'

The fact that not a single serious case of frostbite occurred is a fine testimony to the excellence of the ungainly boots and garments worn on the upper part of the mountain. The appetites of the party and their comparative freedom from illness show that the rations were sufficiently well chosen to suit the tastes of its many members in circumstances where it is only too easy to become fastidious.

Few will find fault with the decision to restrict the party to members of the Commonwealth and not to make it 'an experiment in international goodwill'; nor, fortunately, is there any reason to regret the refusal to confer British nationality on Zatopek and thereby make certain of success. How well the difficult task of selecting the team from the numerous applicants was done can be appreciated in almost every chapter of the story. Bitter cold, pitiless wind, and extreme fatigue, are severe tests of willingness to help and unselfish unity of purpose, and it is good to read Hunt's sincere, unstinted praise of his party and easy to infer how admirably he managed and led it. The two New Zealanders, Hillary and Lowe, had both had recent experience of Himalayan climbing and showed us too, what a grand training ground for work in snow and ice, and also in weight-carrying, their own Alps had been. It is interesting to note that the only two of the climbing party without Himalayan experience found acclimatisation to great height more difficult than the rest. Tenzing made a notable contribution to success as a climber and in getting the best out of his fellow Sherpas, besides taking the numbers of the climbing party over the sinister thirteen. The reader will do well to master the Christian names of the latter given on pp. 27-29; otherwise he may often have to refer back to them to see which Tom, which George, which Charles, and which Mike, is doing his good deed for the moment. The use of Christian names may be unusual, but so is a campaign where the only discipline ever needed was self-discipline. After reading 'Preparations: One and Two,' some of us will feel more grateful than ever to the Alps for having given such rich and lasting rewards without having had to undergo what Tilman has called 'the ordeal by planning.'

Enough is told us of the approach through Nepal to suggest that the fortnight spent upon it was the most recreative period of the whole long,

exacting ascent, an up-and-down march among all kinds of botanical, entomological, and ornithological attractions, 'with views downwards and skywards that were breath-taking.' For the two short periods devoted to acclimatisation exercises, the party split into three groups. These exercises seem to have been of just the right length and character to be a valuable part of the build-up, contributing a good deal besides the increase of red corpuscles; some half dozen ascents of peaks of about 20,000 ft. were taken as a sort of sweet ration. The general fitness and 'the gargantuan appetites' testify to the value of this preliminary three weeks' training before tackling the three main defences of Everest, the icefall, the Lhotse Face, and the final pyramid.

All the parties that have made their way up this Khumbu Icefall, Shipton's in 1951, the Swiss in 1952, and the British in 1953, have found it a difficult and hazardous undertaking. Passages in it are evidently T.D. or E.D. (*très*, or *extrêmement* difficile, and 'dangereux' as well as 'difficile') and one crevasse obviously A₃, seeing that three sections of portable ladder were required to bridge it. Unremitting care in escorting laden porters through its maze of séracs has done much to avoid serious accidents, but the debt to Fortune is implicit in such phrases as 'the ever-present possibility of another slice peeling off the cliff and crushing a party in the act of passing,' 'we must count ourselves extremely fortunate that no accident occurred' and 'we were now on the crest of the débris from the collapse of the cliffs above us.' Nor, in most cases, does a successful passage by one party make a subsequent passage safer; indeed, it may well have become less so. According to Hillary, the condition of the icefall was incomparably worse in 1953 than in 1951; any ascent of it not made immediately after a previous one is really a first ascent.

Base Camp under the Lho La was fully occupied and provisioned by April 22 and a way found through such unpleasant places as 'Hillary's Horror,' 'Hell-Fire Alley,' the 'Nutcracker,' etc., to Camp III at 20,000 ft. 'on a shallow scoop in an area not overlooked by other cliffs.' For nine days 'the scheduled services ran to an almost clockwork time.' We can hardly exaggerate the demands made on the porters and their escorts during this building up of the lower layers of the great pyramid whose apex was to be the hopeful dispatch of two men towards the last ridge of the mountain.

A reconnaissance of the Lhotse Face in unkind weather confirmed expectations of its formidable character, and it was appreciated from the start that at least one camp would be necessary between Camp V at its foot, at 22,000 ft., and the South Col nearly 4,000 ft. above. On May 7, Hunt outlined his plan to the party and each man learned the part he was to play in the assault. The arguments for its adoption are well set out and full of interest. Judging after the event, we may feel a momentary regret that a camp above the South Col was not made available for Evans and Bourdillon, the first assault party; it might have enabled them to reach the summit on May 27 or 28. But we must bear in mind that 'the efficiency of the closed-circuit apparatus

had not been fully established,' that the possibility of providing oxygen and equipment for the night on the south-east ridge was doubtful, and that, in the event, the wind on May 28 was almost certainly too strong to justify an all-out attempt to reach the top. The wisdom of Hunt's decisions, both as to the tactics for the assault and the choice of individuals to carry it out, are strikingly borne out by the results.

The forcing of the route up the Lhotse Face is a thrilling story of early frustration of gallant efforts by constant falls of snow and icy gales, and at last the joyful sight on May 21 of Noyce and Annullu moving across the traverse to the Geneva Spur, to be followed next day by the long file of laden and now confident Sherpas going up with many hundredweights of oxygen and equipment for the South Col. If any proof were needed that Hillary and Tenzing were fitted for the supreme effort it was given that day, when, having climbed direct the day before from Camp IV to Camp VII, they led the Sherpas over wind-crusted snow to the South Col and descended in the afternoon to Advanced Base.

Hunt himself was undergoing the full stress of the physical battle from May 23-28. His account of his gruelling experiences tells us what a terribly tough struggle it was ; probably the grimmest time of all was the battle for a whole hour to put up the pyramid tent in the gale on the South Col. Small wonder the first assault party with the bearers of equipment for a camp on the ridge above had to put off the start for 24 hours. On May 27 a defect in Evans' oxygen set all but prevented any attempt, but when he and Bourdillon got going, they climbed at the astonishing rate of nearly 1,000 ft. an hour to the crest of the south-east ridge, rapidly overtaking and distancing the heavily-laden pair, Hunt and Da Namgyal, the other Sherpa, 'Balu,' having been left unfit for work at the South Col. The extreme exhaustion of all four on getting down again to the South Col is sufficient evidence that both pairs turned back just in time. Had Evans and Bourdillon waited to change their cylinders till they had reached a higher point, they might well have tried for the summit and not returned. As a booster permitting greater achievement, oxygen clearly proved its value, yet it leaves me slightly in doubt as to where doping begins—the end is hardly in doubt—and how far such unnatural chemical stimulus of flagging energy is to be encouraged in mountaineering or in any sport. Shall we presently have Olympic athletes given an injection just before the event, or see horses having some whiffs from an oxygen nose-bag as they move to the starting point? Whatever view we may hold about the matter, Hunt's job was to make the best possible use of the equipment at his disposal, and considering the limited amount of gas and the weight of the containers, he could not have done it better. The slow, grievous struggle to descend the 2,000 ft. from the South Col on May 28 to Camp VII where Noyce 'looked after us like a nurse,' is further proof of how great had been the effort of Hunt, Evans and Bourdillon the day before.

Again only one Sherpa was fit to help Gregory and Lowe to carry loads up to a sloping ledge at nearly 28,000 ft., where they left Hillary

and Tenzing to pass the night. These words of Hillary's show what acclimatisation can do for exceptional men: 'though not breathing oxygen, we could still work quite hard making two levels of the sloping ledge, but rested every ten minutes or so to regain our breath and energy.' How different is Hillary's description of 'the satisfying meal they ate' and of the ensuing night from the account of the last bivouac of Herzog and Lachenal 3,000 ft. lower on Annapurna. Fine weather, absence of strong wind, and wonderfully good snow in places where it was badly needed, were almost necessary aids to success and all were granted; Hillary and Tenzing did the rest. Could Everest have done more for them than enable Hillary to write: 'To my surprise I was enjoying the climb as much as I ever enjoyed a fine ridge in my own New Zealand Alps'? The back and foot tactics used to overcome the most formidable pitch near the summit where, mercifully, adherent snow clung firmly to the rock, with Tenzing landed at the top 'like a giant fish,' is more typical of a day in the Alps, or even Wales in winter, than of men bent over an ice-axe struggling for breath on Everest. The comments on the view from the summit and speculations as to a possible route up the neighbouring Makalu do not suggest exhaustion or great dulling of perception. Several passages in Hillary's description of the descent give the impression of a thoroughly competent party on an Alpine ridge. 'We were tired, but not too tired to be careful. We scrambled cautiously over the rock traverse, moved one at a time over shaky snow sections and finally cramponed up our steps and back on to the South Peak. Only one hour from the top!' Even these two were near the limit of their strength before they got down to the South Col. 'We were too tired to make any response to Lowe's enthusiastic reception of our news. . . . Just short of the tent my oxygen ran out. We had had enough to do the job, but by no means too much.'

The anxious wait for news down below in the Cwm next day and the return of all from the highest parts of the mountain without a single serious casualty make good reading; it is a story simply told that needs no embellishments. The return from any successful high ascent is a joyous thing for a party, and when the return is made with Everest *dans la poche* there is a sense of triumph about it which can be shared by many who usually prefer to keep mountains at a distance. Hunt's comments on the attitude of the Nepalese are restrained: 'It was regrettable that the commotion excited was mingled with some political opportunism, mainly over the achievement of Tenzing.' His narrative does full justice everywhere to the part Tenzing had played and he is moved to add: 'I could not help feeling sorry that the nature of our enterprise was so misinterpreted by these good people. In their rightful pride and joy over Tenzing they quite neglected the other Sherpas and most members of the expedition, his comrades in the great achievement.'

In a last chapter of 'Reflections,' the main factors in success are considered, and tribute is paid to the men and to fortune to whom tribute is due; the future will show how far what is called the 'aftermath of

Everest' will affect mountaineering. With the ascent of Everest, a limit of achievement in mountaineering has been reached. Happily, the sense of achievement is not all, not even the best, it gives us.

The forty-eight photographs are well chosen and very good, not least the portraits of the party and some of the Sherpas; the view from the site of the Swiss camp on the south-east ridge is most impressive. Of the six coloured plates, my favourite is that taken from the Base Camp looking towards Taweche; it gives a feeling of icy desolation and is yet bracing and full of beauty. The route up the Lhotse Face and the sites and heights of the various camps can be easily grasped in a sketch map. The picture of the final pyramid from above the South Col makes any further delineation of the route up unnecessary. Special thanks are due to Hillary for his views of the final ridge from the South summit, that of Tenzing on the summit, and the view down the North face. Evans' pen-sketches introduce a lighter human element. The nine Appendices are of varying interest, but they show what an immense field has been covered in the endeavour to put the ascent of Everest among the great events of history. Misprints are so few they hardly deserve mention and they are too obvious to mislead. e.g., p. 5, 18 years for 28 years; p. 137, South Col at 26,580 ft. for 25,850 ft.; p. 161, Camp VII at 27,000 ft. for 24,000 ft.; p. 259, 200 litres/minute should surely be 200 litres/hour. Our thanks to Sir John Hunt for such a good record of a splendid achievement.

R. L. G. IRVING.

Avant-Premières à L'Everest. By Gabriel Chevalley, René Dittert, Raymond Lambert. Pp. 310. Illustrations. B. Arthaud, Paris. 1953.

M. ANDRÉ GUÉX has compiled this story of the two Swiss attempts on Everest in the spring and autumn of 1952 from the notes and diaries of the three climbers named as above on the cover of the book. We are left in no doubt about the ordeals suffered by the two parties and the narrators, being free from some of the inhibitions that affect the British, have given us some vivid pictures of individual impressions and reactions.

The book was not finished till after the success of the British expedition on May 29, 1953, and there are a few passages that make me wonder whether we ought not to apologise for that success, or at least renounce a good deal of the credit for it! Let me quote examples: 'Il n'y a pas de victoires pour les pionniers' (Alpine literature is full of records of first ascents which disprove this); 'Nous avons ouvert la porte.' We know the nature of the icefall is such that Nature effectively closes the door a few months, if not weeks, after the passage of a party and that a subsequent ascent may be even more difficult. And Shipton's party in 1951 ascended it to the last crevasse below the cwm, a crevasse which was more simply if less dramatically crossed in 1953 than in 1952. 'La route du Sud est ouverte maintenant' is a little surprising; rather as if a party which had had to turn back some hundreds of feet below the Central Peak of the Meije had claimed to have opened the northern

route to the West Peak. And there is something near tragi-comedy in the passage in Appendix III where the ascent of Everest by Hunt's party is compared to the conquest of Constantinople by the Turks just 500 years ago, being an event about which '*bien des hommes ne peuvent s'empêcher d'en éprouver, avec un douloureux pincement au plus profond d'eux-mêmes, une poignante mélancolie.*'

These occasional expressions of natural disappointment in no way detract from the great interest of the book or diminish our sympathy for the battle-weary men returning from the terrible South Col; '*les visages sont creusés, hâves, mangés par la fatigue, amaigris à en être méconnaissables.*' Neither of the two assaults reached the South Col with sufficient reserves of strength to make success possible. Only men of quite amazing powers of endurance could have spent the night as Lambert and Tenzing did on the south-east ridge; ('*pas de sacs de couchage, pas de matériel, pas de réchaud, une tente qui claque dans le vent*'), then climbed several hundred feet up the ridge and come back to the South Col. The ordeal can be imagined reading Lambert's comment on their condition on nearing the tents there: '*il y avait dix mètres à remonter, on ne pouvait pas. Faites attention.*'

It was most unfortunate for the Swiss that the necessity of an intermediate camp on the Lhotse Face was not realised before the spring assault; this and the failure of the oxygen apparatus were impossibly big handicaps for any party. Their experiences in the autumn show that it would be folly to make a further attempt to climb Everest after the monsoon. The Khumbu Icefall was naturally easier after the continued snowfalls, but the Lhotse Face was terrible; after the disappearance of the sun very early in the afternoon, the cold was unendurable and the wind relentless as ever. After the accident to four Sherpas, the direct route by the Geneva Spur was abandoned for the route by the Lhotse glacier, but conditions were too bad. To have fought their way to the South Col and survived was a very great performance.

We owe to René Dittert most of the account of the spring attempt. The appreciations by the party of Indian life and the approaches to Everest have the freshness of first impressions, and there are plenty of amusing incidents and pleasing pictures, such as that of the party '*occupée à se laver les dents avec du thé, car il est prudent de n'utiliser que l'eau bouillie.*' Lambert contributes largely to the humorous acceptance of difficult times. Breathing was made almost impossible by driving snowdust in the Lhotse Face and evoked: '*Ici on aimerait avoir la bouche deux fois plus grande. C'est pour ça qu'on a choisi des Genevois. Tous des grandes gueules!*' Lambert himself contributes a chapter on the attempt by him and Tenzing from the South Col when they reached 8,600 m.

Dittert was unable to join the autumn party, which brought half as much material again and over a hundred more coolies and Sherpas than in the spring. Chevalley's diary and some extracts from Lambert's provide the story; much shorter than that of the earlier attempt.

The illustrations are many and varied; particularly impressive is a

double-page picture of the camp in the upper cwm showing the shadow even at one o'clock beginning to spread the awful cold over the Lhotse Face. The sketch plans show the way up that face well ; the maps are not so good. Surely the name Lho La given by the discoverers has been accepted for the col at the foot of the north-west ridge of Everest and it is quite certain that the west and east Rongbuk Glaciers are not both west of Changtse, the North Peak. There is a good deal to be said for transferring Lho La to the South Col as that is what the words mean, but the text talks of the South Col all through.

R. L. G. IRVING.

New Zealanders and Everest. By L. V. Bryant. A. H. & A. W. Reed. Wellington, N.Z. 1953.

THIS is a most attractive booklet of 26 pages of text and 16 of photographs by the present headmaster of Pukehohe High School. It begins with a tribute to the happy connection between the New Zealand Alpine Club and our own, and to the influence of British climbers on the attitude of New Zealanders to mountaineering. Plenty of training in dealing with snow and ice, often in doubtful or bad weather, heavy swagging, and the need to reduce to the minimum the food and impedimenta taken on an expedition, made of Bryant just the man to join the Tilman-Shipton Reconnaissance of 1935 ; his portrait in the booklet is final confirmation of it. He tells the story of that expedition briefly and modestly. A New Zealand-trained man, Scott Russell, carried on the connection with the British in Shipton's 1939 journey of exploration and a New Zealand Rhodes scholar, Packard, enabled Tilman's party to enter Nepal in 1950 wearing the mantle of science.

The first wholly New Zealand party, Hillary, Lowe, Cotter, and Riddiford, to visit the Himalaya (in 1951), did some fine work and learned quickly to adapt themselves to conditions there. Later in that year, Hillary and Riddiford (not Lowe, as is stated on page 36) joined Shipton's party in time for the reconnaissance of the Khumbu Icefall. Evidently New Zealand can produce others well qualified to deal with the biggest Himalayan ascents, besides Hillary and Lowe, whose doings are now one of the great events of recent history.

The photographs deserve special mention. The New Zealand airman Andrews has taken pictures of the final ridge of Everest seen in profile against the sky that are of exceptional interest, and there are two fine pictures of Makalu, which doubtless looms large in the less publicised ambitions of the next New Zealand expedition. Another photograph picks out in a remarkable way the east wall of the great couloir on which the highest ascents of the north face have been stopped. It is conventional to show us Everest climbers as nearly resembling Abominable Snowmen as the disuse of the razor can make them, and rather refreshing to see two groups of four fine young men discussing their climbing plans as they might in the garden at home.

I noticed one or two trifling mistakes (or variations) in the spelling of native names ; the reference to the *late* R. L. G. Irving (p. 43) is a mere temporary error.

R. L. G. IRVING.

La Conquête de L'Everest par Le Sherpa Tensing. Récit d' Yves Malartic. Pp. 300. Illustrations. Éditions du Scorpion, Paris. 1953.

THERE is one thing to approve in this book, the name of the publishers, for it is a poisonous book, meant to sting. What corresponds with events that happened is filched from other sources ; what is contributed by the author, a French journalist, is mainly ignorant or malevolent misrepresentation. There is plenty of evidence that the writer knows little of his subject, and that his object is to belittle the achievements of the other members of Hunt's party and give a grossly distorted impression of their relations with the Sherpas. When we see the comment of *La Montagne*, 'on ne peut trop flétrir ce livre scandaleux,' we can say 'Thank you' and forget the book. Removal of one or two of the most objectionable features and a repudiation of Tenzing's authorship have been ordered in France. There are numerous errors of fact ; the statement that Gregory had had no previous experience anywhere but in the Alps and the Lake District, and the description of the photo opposite p. 176 are examples. Perhaps the best effort is to say that the Sherpas, 'pour relever leur prestige . . . décidèrent que les sahibs porteraient des charges de 30 kilos jusqu'au-dessus du Col Sud !'

R. L. G. IRVING.

Seven Years in Tibet. By Heinrich Harrer. Pp. xiii, 288. Illustrations. Rupert Hart-Davis, London. 1953. 16s.

HERR HARRER escaped from internment at Dehra Dun in April 1944, reached Lhasa in January 1946, was in Lhasa until November 1950, and after spending a winter in the Chumbi valley crossed the border into India in March 1951. Already known as a member of the 1936 Austrian Olympic Ski team and as the winner of the Downhill Race in the World Students' Championships in the following year and on account of his ascent of the Eiger by the north wall in 1938, he had, on the invitation of Peter Aufschnaiter, been a member of the German Nanga Parbat expedition of 1939 and was waiting with Aufschnaiter in Karachi for an overdue boat when war was declared.

The earlier part of the book describes how, by a combination of resolution, ingenuity, tact and great physical endurance, Harrer and Aufschnaiter made their way to Lhasa, across Himalayan passes, up the head waters of the Indus, down the upper reaches of the Tsangpo, and finally, in mid-winter, across the high, bleak, and bandit-infested Chang Thang. Having very little money they lived life at the level of the ordinary villagers. With the exception of Madame David Neel, no educated Europeans have had a similar experience of getting to

know Tibetan villagers in their homes and it is to be hoped that Herr Harrer will expand the account of the journey into a full book.

The nearly five years spent in Lhasa are dealt with in some 165 pages, at the end of which one is hungry for more. Seldom can such opportunity have been combined with such talent for observation and charm of description. Arriving in Lhasa destitute and in rags, the travellers found the Tibetans ready to open to them their homes and their hearts. They saw everything there was to be seen. With the young Dalai Lama, Harrer was in close touch, both as tutor and when, on the invasion of Tibet by the Chinese Communists in 1950, the Dalai Lama withdrew temporarily to the Chumbi valley.

Here again it is to be hoped that the author will not rest content with the deserved success of a book which is said to be established as a best-seller in many countries, but will, out of his great stores of knowledge, do still more in the direction of his 'heartfelt wish' to 'create some understanding for a people whose will to live in peace and freedom has won so little sympathy from an indifferent world.' Nor is it to the present author only that such an appeal may be addressed. Whatever may happen in Tibet, it can hardly be doubted that the land of a generation hence will be very different from that of yesterday. The frontiers of a country which during the first half of the present century had become gradually more and more open to Europeans—and notably to Everest Expeditions—are now again closed. What we want now are accounts of the particular experiences of individuals who have had contact with a people whose one wish, as the author says, is to find God and to serve Him.

The translation by Mr. Richard Graves is very good.

B. J. GOULD.

Camps and Climbs in Arctic Norway. By Thomas Weir. Pp. vii, 85. Illustrations. Cassell & Co. Ltd., London. 1953. 15s.

THIS is a wholly delightful book. The author is one of those happy mountaineers who finds beauties and interests outside the actual work of climbing, one can easily imagine him clinging desperately, spread-eagled on some impossible granite slab yet keenly enjoying the colours of a clump of saxifrage in which his nose is temporarily buried. The book is full of interesting information on this Arctic land, of the fishing industry, its most important means of livelihood, and of the people, friendly and very hospitable, 'the solid foundation of their lives is the large family unit.' He enlarges on their ingenuity in meeting the difficulties of life in these high latitudes, and outstanding here is Clara, the expert carpet spinner, who weaves most serviceable carpets out of worn-out clothing. Here indeed is a new use for old clothes, woven into carpets through the long Arctic nights; Persia and Kidderminster will have to look to their laurels. She even wheedled the author out of a pair of cherished but sadly torn climbing breeches and a few days

later displayed them converted into a warm brown carpet. And so now

There is some corner of a foreign floor
That is forever England.

The climbing throughout was of the highest order, from the Dyrhaugstind, the only peak which I share with the author, to the magnificent 23-hours day on the Jaeggevarre, the sort of day which one does get when working without maps and a false peak is first climbed (how one knows those false peaks !). And all through the book the really splendid photographs are a delight. I enjoyed, too, the account of the sensational leap on the ' Goat ' (there is one rather like it on the Bianco ridge of the Piz Bernina); as it has been climbed without artificial aids I hope the folk of Svolvær will, in memory of Slingsby, forbid any ironmongery on the peak. The author pays graceful tribute to Slingsby, who seems to live in Norway still; it is extraordinary how often one is asked with smiling interest and in the present tense if one knows Slingsby. For all those who are tired of Swiss chair-lifts and innumerable and crowded huts the author has shown the way, Northwards ! But oh ! grant us a little less rain.

K. C. P. STRUVE.

La Conquête du Salcantay. By Bernard Pierre. Pp. 191. Illustrations. Bibliothèque de l'Alpinisme. Amiot Dumont, Paris. 1953.

Nelle Ande del Sud-Peru. By Piero Ghiglione. Pp. 159. Illustrations. Garzanti, Milan. 1953.

THE last three years have indeed been notable as regards exploration and climbing in the Peruvian Andes; a series of expeditions, some of an encouragingly cosmopolitan nature, have visited all the main divisions of the range, and there have been many important first ascents. In the north (Cordillera Blanca), the outstanding achievements have been the conquest of Nevado Alpamayo by the Franco-Belgian expedition of 1951, and of Huantsan by a Franco-Dutch expedition in 1952; in the Cordillera de Huayhuash, Yerupaja was climbed by an American party in 1950.

The two books under review, deal with exploration and ascents during the same period in the more southerly groups of the Andes of Peru, i.e. the Cordilleras of Vilcabamba and Vilcanota near Cuzco, and the volcanic region north-west of Arequipa. The dominant peak of the Vilcabamba, and one of the finest in Peru, is 20,600 ft. Salcantay, and its first ascent on August 5, 1952, by a Franco-American expedition, forms the theme of M. Pierre's book. The party consisted of six Americans (Messrs. Bell, Ayres, Matthews, Michael, Riggs, and Oberlin) and three French, Dr. Guillemin, M. Pierre himself, and last, but certainly not least, Mme. Claude Kogan, whose late husband led the Alpamayo expedition and whose climbing record in Peru is a remarkable one. After three abortive attempts in bad weather, four of the Americans, with Mme. Kogan and M. Pierre, succeeded in forcing

a way up the north-east face from a Camp II at 5,400 metres. Much step-cutting was necessary on the very steep ice spine between this camp and the summit ridge, on which the entire party bivouacked in a crevasse, after reaching the final pyramid late in the afternoon. Thus the strategy employed on Alpamayo was substantially repeated, but the climbers endured a long and bitterly cold night, and one is again justified in asking how they would have fared if the weather had broken completely.

Shortly before M. Pierre's party arrived on the mountain, a Swiss climber, Félix Marx, had claimed to have reached the summit of Salcantay accompanied by Markus Broenimann, a fellow-Swiss resident in Lima. Broenimann, who suffered from frost-bite, had a bad fall on the descent, and Marx's conduct in leaving him at a high camp, as well as his somewhat aggressive manner in claiming the summit as a personal triumph, made a poor impression on the French and Americans when they met him returning down the valley. It subsequently transpired—and Broenimann himself was the first to publish the true facts—that they had followed a route on and near the east ridge, had gained the summit dome at 6,100 metres (in itself a fine achievement for a party of only two) but had failed to traverse it to the top. Their flag was found at the highest point reached by them, and Marx subsequently retracted the claim he had originally made to the actual summit.

M. Pierre's account of his own ascent is a vivacious and well-balanced one, with good photographs, some of them taken on a preliminary aerial reconnaissance, of the Salcantay massif and the impressive virgin peaks Humantay (Pico Soray) and Pumasillo, which surround it. The second half of his book is an interesting and useful geographical, historical, and bibliographical summary of mountain exploration in Peru, with notes on organisation and equipment which bear out his statement that 'l'andinisme, dans l'échelle de valeurs, se situe entre l'alpinisme et l'himalayisme.' The weather on Salcantay is much less stable than in the Cordillera Blanca, and though, as an ice and snow climb, it may not quite rival Alpamayo or Yerupaja, the conquest of the peak by this exceptionally well knit and harmonious international expedition is a magnificent achievement which well merits the excellent record of it written by M. Pierre.

That veteran of Andean exploration, Signor Piero Ghiglione, also describes an attempt on Salcantay which he made from the south-east in 1950, but the main topics of his book are his climbs on Ausangate and other peaks in the Vilcanota region, and various ascents, some of them new, on the volcanoes of the far south-west of Peru. In 1952, accompanied by an Austrian, Herr Rebitsch, and a Swede, Hr. Bolinder, he succeeded in climbing three of the six summits of Ausangate (21,650 ft.), the giant peak which rises to the south-east of Cuzco (they were prevented by lack of time from continuing the traverse of the ridge to the highest point). The attack on Ausangate was made from the south-east, through really formidable crevassed glacier and enormous séracs, and from a high camp pitched at nearly 20,000 ft. There are

many other high peaks in this massif, notably Cayangate and Colquecruz, which are clearly of the highest alpine interest and which, apart from Signor Ghiglione's reconnaissance, are still largely unexplored. The same can be said of the region to the east of the Urubamba valley, on the border of the Amazonian basin, which Ghiglione also visited. This district is notable, owing to a freak of local climatic and soil conditions, for a Ruwenzori-like tropical rain forest, which must be an extraordinary contrast to the bleak altiplano from which so many of the other peaks rise.

The vast isolated volcanoes rising from the deserts nearer the Pacific in the south-west of Peru, are described in a second section of the book. Most of these, being technically easier than the jagged peaks of the eastern range, have already been climbed, but they are still formidable undertakings by reason of their altitude, their intense cold, and their isolation in the midst of hundreds of miles of arid desert. Signor Ghiglione's description of the first ascent of Solimana (20,588 ft.) confirms this to the full; it also confirms the extraordinary qualities of Andean horses and mules, which he took to well over 17,000 ft. on both Solimana and Coropuna (on Aconcagua mules have, of course, been considerably higher). Signor Ghiglione also climbed Ampato and Chachani, the sister peak to Misti, the famous volcano above Arequipa.

Nelle Ande del Sud-Peru, by reason of its geographical scope, and its sections on the flora, fauna, geology, and ethnology of the regions visited, is a really valuable contribution to Andean literature, and is an important, if less detailed, complement to the monographs of Borchers, Kinzl, and Schneider, on the Cordillera Blanca of the north. It is illustrated by 78 fine photographs, both of the mountains and their inhabitants.

TH. CROMBIE.

[Since this review was written, a German expedition has visited the Cordillera Vilcanota and ascended Ausangate, Surimani and several other peaks.—Editor.]

The Victorian Mountaineers. By Ronald Clark. Pp. 242, with 45 illustrations. B. T. Batsford. 1953. 18s. net.

IN this book the author discusses the character of the Victorian mountaineers and the motives which led them to climb mountains. Before they could go to the Alps in any numbers, three essentials had to be met; 'There had first to be a spiritual preparation, the making of an *apologia* which would enable men to regard mountains neither as areas of danger and terror nor as roseate, pink-and-white paradises where Rousseau-like peasants danced in perpetual good weather.' The technique of mountain travel had to be built up, and the existence of the world above the snowline had to be made known to more than a handful of specialist adventurers. The credit for carrying out these tasks is given to Ruskin, Forbes, and Albert Smith. Their work is summarised in a chapter headed 'The Prophets.'

Chapter Two deals briefly with the mystery—‘the lustre of the unknown’—that hung about the Alps at the time of Queen Victoria’s accession, and with the careers of some of the Pioneers. Not all will agree with the remarks on guideless climbing; after mentioning the first guideless ascents of the Matterhorn and of the Meije, the author states that the ‘apogee of the guideless climbing movement came early for the Victorians, in this period of the young Hudson,’ and ‘it was only the experience of the Second World War, combined with the financial stringency imposed by post-war restrictions, that was to begin the formation’ of a great school of guideless English climbing. Has Mr. Clark forgotten the guideless ropes of the ‘nineties? The expeditions of parties led by Wilson, or Mummery, are sufficient evidence that there existed before the end of the century a school of guideless English climbing of the highest class. Mummery, however, is evidently considered of so little import in the Victorian mountaineering world that the only mention of his name in the book is in connection with the possibility of his joining Conway’s expedition to the Karakorums in 1892.

After an account of the formation of the Alpine Club, the parts played by the scientists and the clergy in the ‘Golden Age’ are reviewed. The Church provided some of the most successful of the early Victorian mountaineers, who ‘chose mountaineering for the simple reason that it could, and did, provide something that no other pastime did offer. What that almost indefinable quality really was, can best be inferred from the fact that the serious thinkers appreciated it most. For it was a moral quality. It was a satisfaction of the mind rather than of the body. It was a window through which man saw his own justification.’

Perhaps there has been a tendency to emphasize unduly the part played by the clergy, and it is worthy of comment that, according to the statistics of membership in *A.J.* 58. 127–8, of the first 281 members to join the Alpine Club only 27 are listed under the profession of ‘Church,’ whereas 76 are under that of ‘Law.’

Whymper, Coolidge, and Conway are each allotted a chapter, and the author deals also with lady climbers and the development of mountaineering in Britain. He is not the first to examine the motives that sent the Victorians to the Alps, but when all is said, may it not be that they climbed for pleasure, pure and simple, urged on by what Frank Smythe called the ‘Spirit of Adventure’?

Errors are almost bound to occur in a book of this sort, but Mr. Clark should know better than to write that Whymper and Macdonald made the first ascent of Mont Pelvoux, and thus assist in perpetuating a legend that is taking a very long time to die. The second edition of *Scrambles* was published in the same year as the first (1871), and not two years later. It is now generally accepted that the first ascent of the Finsteraarhorn was made in 1829, and not in 1811.

On p. 175 a letter from Miss Ellen Pigeon to Coolidge is quoted. ‘In days gone by [she wrote in 1892] many A.C.’s would not speak to us, though no one was so impertinent as “the king of the Riffel.”’

This impertinent monarch is said to have been Sir Edward Davidson. In the early days of the Misses Pigeon, Davidson had not appeared upon the Alpine scene and even those who did not know him may find it difficult to picture him being impertinent to lady climbers, though he might prove 'superior' and irritating. If Mr. Clark will refer to the Badminton *Mountaineering* he will find that the Rev. J. F. Hardy 'in later years . . . took the rôle of a confirmed "Centrist," and was known for many years as "the king of the Riffel."'

A word of praise for the illustrations. Many of these have not previously been published, and most are of considerable historical interest, which would have been even greater had it been found possible to give the names of all those appearing in them.

D. F. O. DANGAR.

The Call of the Mountains. By Colin Wyatt. Pp. 96, with 75 illustrations. Thames & Hudson, London. 1952.

To this reviewer, the popular volume of mountain photographs with expanded commentary has always seemed a rather less than satisfactory format, and, if not to fail, then to fall between two standards and two schools; the schools, those of the climber and the non-climber, scarcely to be reconciled in a single work that is neither book nor loose-leaf folio. These well-liked and well-subscribed productions that have appeared in a regular stream between the wars and since seem to lack this in common: a text that has the nourishment of an essay, and a folio of prints that can be conveniently detached for hanging; and one wonders how often, after first rapture, they are taken down, or rather up, from the single, large bottom shelf which must be specially designed to hold them.

Mr. Wyatt's is, at the least, a rival in charm and merit to those of the two leading practitioners of this form of photographic journalism, his text lacking neither the reticence and good sense of the late Frank Smythe, nor his photographs the competence of W. A. Poucher. He has, indeed, gone further than these, not confining himself to a district, or even a country; like Mark Antony, he has bestrid the ocean, and scenes from the realms and islands of four continents are among the 'plates dropt from his pocket.'

The professional amateurs among us may note how much at ease is the author both with the panchromatic valley and the orthochromatic peak, and will see in Plate 13, 'Ptarmigan Tracks,' and Plates 64 and 68 of Snow-gums, fine examples of the way in which a local feature can be used to give a picture special significance and beauty.

G. N. CARRELL.

Alpiniste, Est-Ce Toi? By Alain de Chatellus. Pp. 174. Illustrations. B. Arthaud, Paris. 1953.

THIS is a psychological study of mountaineering; la Vocation (why we climb), l'Enchantement (why we enjoy it), la Rançon (the price demanded), les Stigmates (the marks it leaves on us). *Tot homines, tot*

sententiae can be said of mountaineering more than of most of men's activities. We all climb because we like to, and each of us has his particular reason for liking it. Most of M. de Chatellus' 170 pages would discover differences of opinion in his readers, and for that alone the book is interesting and at times provocative. It is concerned primarily with 'ceux qui sont voués aux grandes courses,' men who spend the hours of day and often of night on such places as the sterner faces of the Dru and the Grandes Jorasses, regular members of the cinquième and sixième classes. There is a kindly but distant condescension in the treatment of less ambitious mountaineers. A few quotations will give some ideas of his diagnosis of *dementia scandendi*.

'Le but des grimpeurs modernes est de gravir des sommets ou de franchir des cols par des voies d'une difficulté suffisante pour mettre complètement à l'épreuve les forces physiques et morales et révéler le véritable visage de la haute montagne.' That invites the question, do we get the best out of the human or any other machine by perpetually testing it to the limit of its powers, and is the real mountain any more than the real person or animal revealed only when we are fighting to dominate it?

'Trouver dans les Alpes en échange du risque une fondation solide de sa personnalité'; 'la joie du risque pour un but qui ne vaut pas la peine'; 'apaiser sa soif de domination'; 'la satisfaction du vainqueur est sans égale, dit Jacques de Lépiney, l'homme a dominé la montagne'; 'sans compétition, pas de sport'; 'Ce ne sera jamais par ses courses collectives qu'une nation pourra revendiquer la première place en alpinisme, mais par les exploits des meilleurs de ses fils.' The general impression one gets is that these *grandes courses* are undertaken to gain or regain self-assurance. We British, living in our island away from immediate contact with other nations and other ways of life, may have had too much of it in the past; we have, at least, tried to bring up the young generation not to show it or cultivate it. Does the increasing emphasis on material achievement that can be measured in numerical units and publicized, mean that it has been a mistake to try and keep self-assertion and pride in performance out of our ideals? The future will tell us. A year or two before the war, probably 1936, I read with interest and satisfaction the comment of a Frenchman on the Olympic Games: 'The British hardly won any of the first three places in the events, but they were the only competitors that seemed to understand the meaning of the word sport.' Shooting, sailing, climbing; all can be enjoyed alone, without a suggestion of competition, even many of the greatest thrills we get from games. The pleasure of making a century at cricket does not, in my experience, depend to any extent on the *soif de domination* or even *la joie de la victoire*, but on the sensuous pleasure of timing and hitting the ball as well as we can, off slow as much as off fast bowling; it is the same pleasure that we get from finding and rightly using finger and toe holds on steep rock, and in efficient wielding of the axe on ice and snow. Of course there is an element of risk; no one who has done high mountaineering for long and suffered

the tempers of weather high up can fail to have been unpleasantly aware of it ; to accept reasonable risks is a very different thing from regarding them as an attraction, and the battle with fear as a necessary ingredient of a climb. That is akin to what de Chatellus calls ' le paroxysme des sentiments qui est l'élément essentiel de la passion des alpinistes allemands.' ' La crainte des veilles de courses,' the apprehension felt, especially by a leader, about the morrow's climb is to me a very doubtful contribution to the pleasures of an expedition.

' Curiosité et l'attrait de la difficulté et du risque ' are given as the motives of the earlier climbers. I find another written in 1906 by F. W. Bourdillon : ' the ideal joy that only mountains give—the unreasoned, uncovetous, unworldly love of them we know not why, we care not why, only because they are what they are.' This last is a feeling about them not quite extinct in the rising generation. Quite recently, a novice reaching the summit after a scramble along a ridge that made little demands on his considerable powers was moved to say : ' It makes me feel I never need to open a book again.' The day, quite without serious risk, had evidently been a valuable contribution to his education. It may suggest the attitude of a child to an elder who has lifted him on his shoulder to give him a glimpse of the very source of light and life ; a childish view perhaps, but one which, if retained throughout an Alpine career, ensures one completely against the fate of those unhappy men of whom de Chatellus says ' il leur est pénible de voir leurs meilleures réalisations reléguées au quatrième degré.'

But let me be just and grateful to him for this : ' Admirons les sages qui ont parcouru toutes les Alpes en se contentant de courses classiques. Sachant connaître leur limite sans jamais la dépasser, ils auront cependant trouvé en montagne une lumière qui éclairera toute une existence.' And I like this : ' la joie du skieur est dans la descente, celle de l'alpiniste dans l'ascension, rien n'établit mieux la différence.' If Arnold Lunn does not, let him turn to this comment on page 113 on the rich and rancorous climber suggested by the attitude of Coolidge in his later years : ' Dans l'enfer des alpinistes qu'une place de choix lui soit réservée.'

The views expressed on women climbers will certainly not find wholehearted acceptance with many of that sisterhood and might, I feel, have been different had the author had the privilege of taking Mallory's daughters to the Alps. What he says about the extent to which religion may affect a man's view of mountains and mountaineering gives the impression of detachment from any wish to experience it. His remark that ' Chez tous les écrivains anglais antérieurs à 1914, il y a une tendance à considérer la montagne comme une chère vieille chose . . . sans vénération ni crainte ' is too sweeping and uncomprehending. In writing of the effect of the Himalaya on various climbers, Mallory's dramatic end on Everest makes it difficult for him, as for many others who never knew him well, to realise he could write of the Himalaya : ' on the whole they are disappointing and infinitely less beautiful than the Alps.' There are numerous quotations from

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry and extracts from G. W. Young, Mummery, Finch, Tézenas du Montcel, Dalloz, Devies, Bauer, and others.

Some fine illustrations contribute in various ways pictorial comments on the text and also provide us with a test of our knowledge of the Alps in trying to identify them all. In his last pages M. de Chatellus makes the confession 'd'avoir parlé de sentiments que je n'ai fait que pressentir sans les éprouver directement.' Well! That must often happen to psychologists.

R. L. G. IRVING.

Alpinismo Italiano nel Mondo. Published by the Italian Alpine Club and Italian Touring Club. Milan. 1953.

THIS 363-page book, prepared by the Scientific Committee of the Italian Alpine Club, contains thirty-four brief accounts, with relevant bibliography, of Italian expeditions to mountain regions outside Europe. The period covered is from Roberto Lerco's expedition to the Caucasus in 1887 to Piero Ghiglione's Andine achievements in 1950.

Most of the narratives, especially those by the original authors, have appeared unabridged elsewhere (e.g. 'Bollettino' or 'Rivista Mensile del C.A.I.' etc.), but new and interesting are the extracts from Roberto Lerco's unpublished work 'Un viaggio nel Caucaso.' It was in September, 1887, that Lerco, with the guide Jakob Müller of Gsteigwiler, made the third ascent of Elbruz and second ascent of Kasbek (first ascent from the south-east). Lerco, who seems to have been a singularly enterprising person, also travelled extensively in Kashmir and the Western Himalayas during the last century. One is astonished to learn that he even toyed with the idea of attempting an 'Achttausender' (probably Nanga Parbat!). Roberto Lerco, although the first Italian climber to answer the call of the more lofty mountains of the world, seems to-day to be remembered by only a small number of 'studiosi.' According to the introductory note, it was his own excessive modesty which consigned him to unmerited oblivion. One ventures to suggest that the unfortunate effects of Lerco's reserved disposition could speedily be remedied by the early publication of his shelved manuscripts.

The information given in the chapter on the mountains of Ethiopia has not appeared in any British mountaineering book or periodical and will probably be new to many readers. According to the official report of the Italian military expedition to the Ras Dashan massif in November, 1936, the highest point (Ancua) was found to be 5,050 m. instead of 4,620 m. The 'operation' seems to have been carried out with such élan and enthusiasm that not a major peak or col remained inviolate after November 11, 1936.

The text is illustrated with twenty-nine maps, but particularly pleasing are the well-chosen and admirably reproduced photographs. The latter occupy full pages and include several 'classics' by Vittorio Sella.

J. SANSEVERINO.

Mountaineering. By T. A. H. Peacocke. 3rd Edition, 1953. viii + 216 pp. Illustrated. A. & C. Black Ltd., London. 8s. 6d.

ORIGINALLY published in 1941, Mr. Peacocke's book is already familiar. It is an elementary textbook, mainly on Alpine climbing. Many of the present generation of British guideless climbers, who started climbing in the Alps after the war, must have read it with profit. It has been, and remains, a useful book, worthy of a new edition.

But certain comments may, with respect, be made. In this new edition, says the preface, 'the opportunity has been taken to revise the book throughout and to bring it into line with the aspirations of modern youth.' The latter aim has, perhaps inevitably, been unsuccessful. Standards of performance have risen, not only among the expert but generally, and mountaineering knowledge is more widely disseminated. But Mr. Peacocke's aspirations remain of the nineteen thirties. Certainly some Alpine beginners go for too ambitious routes too quickly; but nowadays average parties can, and do, advance safely to harder climbs, especially on rock, after a shorter apprenticeship than was customary twenty years ago. It is interesting, and not insignificant, how dated Mr. Peacocke's approach now seems.

More surprising, and more regrettable, for it should be one of the most useful parts of a book of this kind, the equipment chapter is not fully up to date. Duvet clothing is not mentioned. Mr. Peacocke's view that nails are preferable to vibrams for 'serious high Alpine climbs' (p. 4) is entitled to respect, but it should be made clear that it is a personal view only and that vibrams are now the standard footwear for all normal Alpine expeditions. Again, though nylon rope is discussed, it is not made clear that it has entirely superseded natural fibre ropes, except possibly for artificial climbing. The Siegfried map of Switzerland has now been replaced by the Carte Nationale. And it is surprising to find no advice about guidebooks. Information about these, and about the grading system of the French Vallot series, would be valuable to the Alpine novices for whom this book is intended.

The precepts on technique follow tradition. The reviewer must record dissent from the advice to hold the axe horizontally behind when descending snow (p. 68), and not to begin learning to use crampons till the second or third season (p. 84). And while no one would grudge Mr. Peacocke his personal distaste for pitons, the remarks about Munich and engineering (p. 43) are out of place in a modern textbook. But for the most part the advice is sound. The mountains have not changed, nor have the basic techniques for climbing them. We must be grateful to Mr. Peacocke for sharing with us the lessons of his wide experience.

The first ascent of the old Brenva route was in 1865, not 1872 (p. 81).

A. K. RAWLINSON.