REVIEWS.

POCKET GUIDE-BOOKS.*

It is interesting now and then to look up at the long array of old Alpine Guides, which fills a shelf of the book-case. There is the dapper Baedeker, not altogether comfortable at finding himself 'verengländert,' a practical adviser of prudent youth on its travels, careful alike of their pockets and their necks; a steady goer, allowing time for many a roadside halt, and one whom we could always give a start to, and catch up before the inn-door was reached. We speak of an old edition: now we hear a young and fast Baedeker reigns in its stead.

Deep in an obscure corner the 'Practical Guide' hides his shabby, brickdust coat; a cockney humourist, whose wit, unrepressed even among the noblest scenes of nature, fits exactly with that of the tourist abroad for the first time, and ignorant of any foreign tongue, whom we have all met at the *tables d'hôte* of the Bernese Oberland. But if we shudder at the jokes we must often smile at the presumably serious portion of the book, in which the tourist receives some very remarkable bits of practical advice and warning. If a pedestrian, he is told that amongst the objects which 'common comfort' compels him to carry are a pair of polished leather boots, and that in every case 'goloshes are indispensable.' For his benefit the stories told about Mont Blanc by Alpine climbers are authoritatively contradicted. 'New paths up are reported every season to English newspapers at a safe distance. They gratify the sensational and stimulate young ambition. *But the formation of the mountain renders any really new paths a physical impossibility,*' (sic). And to crown all, the anonymous writer furnishes an altogether original 'table of heights,' in which the careful and hitherto accepted conclusions of the engineers of the Swiss survey give way to the random shots of a guesser as reckless as any undergraduate in his Littlego. Mont Blanc for the first time in history scores his full 16,000 feet; but the Oberland peaks suffer, on the other hand, cruel injury. The Wetterhorn falls from 12,149 to 11,500 feet; the Schreckhorn from 13,394 to 12,500 feet; the Eiger from 13,045 to 12,300 feet; and, worst of all, the Æggischhorn from 9,649 to 7,700 feet. But enough of such facts and figures. One service rendered by our fellow-countryman to the Alpine Club we most willingly and gratefully acknowledge. For some reason—we do not care to inquire what—he has passed over in silence our most favourite haunts, the 'Adler,' at Grindelwald, the 'Monte Rosa,' at Zermatt, the 'Mont Blanc,' at Aosta. We part in peace, but on the condition that none of his followers' goloshes find their way across the forbidden thresholds where every mountaineer is at home.

Next stands 'Murray,' the romantic friend of our early days, apt in

* 1. Iwan Tschudi's *Schweizerführer*. St. Gallen: Scheitlin und Zollikofer. 2. *Wegweiser durch Südbaiern, Nord-und Mittel-Tirol und angrenzende Theile von Salzburg und Kärnten*. Von Th. Trautwein. Dritte Auflage. München: 1870, Verlag des Lindauer'schen Buchhandlung.

Digitized by Google

quotations, and well suited for the mule-path and the bag which dangles at the side-saddle. An intelligent, if somewhat unadventurous, gentleman, always anxious to move with the age, but somehow never quite able to keep up with it. Take down that faded copy, dated fifteen or twenty years ago, and we are at once carried back amongst a generation which knew very little of mountains, and still less of mountain-climbing. We find ourselves in the period when the snowy Alps were looked on with feelings of mingled terror and admiration—terror holding the first place—such as those inspired in children by a wild-beast show. The great peaks are all labelled 'dangerous' in the largest letters. Even on the Great Scheideck the shadow of the Wetterhorn seems to impend too closely, and the traveller feels happier with a good barrier, such as the Trümleten Thal, between his mule and the avalanches, which, as he firmly believes, an unwary shout or even gasp for breath may at any moment bring down on his head.

Only a few of the glacier passes frequented by natives of the country are inserted under a kind of protest. The use of the rope is still little understood, and consequently the smooth snow-field is with justice almost as much dreaded as the broken precipice. The St. Theodule is only fit for 'hardy and adventurous persons.' The Col d'Herens is scarcely known. The passage of the Col du Géant is an 'adventure requiring three or four guides;' while with regard to Mont Blanc we are seriously told that 'it is a somewhat remarkable fact that a large proportion of those who have made this ascent have been persons of unsound mind!' A guide-book put together on such principles naturally did not trouble itself about the eccentricities of the few who even then were beginning to find for themselves new paths above the snow level; while, with less reason, it declined even to mention the byeways of the lower region. At this time whole groups were left almost, if not entirely, unnoticed; Dauphiné, the Graians, the central Pennines, the whole of south-eastern Switzerland, and the adjacent Lombard Alps, were still virtually unknown lands. Englishmen who believed themselves tolerably well acquainted with Switzerland had never heard of the Aletsch Glacier; and their Guide had so little to say about it, that he did not think its name worth inserting in an index.

Thus, owing both to the comparatively small portion of the Swiss Alps described at all, and the very imperfect manner in which even that portion was dealt with, space was left for other matter than mere bare statistics of distances and inns. The editor endeavoured to offer himself not only as the guide in the simpler sense but as the moral leader or Mr. Barlow of his flock of grown-up Sandfords and Mertons. Where possible he slipped in a piece of historical information, or he suggested to the tourist the emotions appropriate to each spot of his sojourn, and in some cases even went so far as to furnish him with the fitting means of expressing them in a long quotation from 'Manfred' or 'Childe Harold.'

The completion of railroads to the very foot of the Alps gave an immense impulse to Alpine adventure. Englishmen realised for the first time that in central Europe, and within forty-eight hours of London, there was a region almost as unknown, and in parts quite as badly mapped, as the interior of Africa. The luxury of discovery, the excite-

Digitized by Google

ment of treading on virgin ground, and encountering and overcoming strange and at first sight insurmountable obstacles, was brought suddenly within the reach of men of moderate means and leisure.

The three volumes of 'Peaks, Passes, and Glaciers' were among the first literary results of this new-found pursuit. But the most complete record and summary of the labours of the Alpine Club is to be found in Mr. Ball's work. It is superfluous to dilate to the readers of this Journal on the merits of the 'Alpine Guide.' But it may perhaps be desirable to remind a younger generation of climbers of the enormous advance in Alpine exploration which was marked by its publication—an advance to which, looking either to the extent or character of their labours, English Alpine Clubmen have certainly made the most important contributions.

In another respect Mr. Ball's pages bear witness to the new spirit in which mountains have been of late years regarded by intelligent Englishmen. The place occupied in older volumes by disjointed scraps of history or poetry is filled with geological and botanical information. It is to the mountain itself, its rocky ribs or flowery garment, rather than to the human stories or emotions which may have gathered round its base, that our interest is directed.

The publication of a work of so complete and exhaustive a character might have naturally been expected to put a stop for some time at least to the production of any more Swiss Guides. That this has not proved the case is probably chiefly owing to a sudden growth of the tendency amongst travellers to look on condensation as the first merit in a hand-book, and to call for pocket companions of the most compact and portable form. In obedience to this demand, an enterprising American has succeeded in carrying compression to perhaps its utmost limit by forcing all Europe and the Levant into the compass of a single volume. No similar feat has, so far as we know, been performed on our side of the Atlantic. Yet the call for brevity has met with a response in quarters where it might have been least looked for. It has induced Joanne to issue a series of tiny 'livres de poche,' which contrast ludicrously with the swollen bulk of his ordinary volumes, and has persuaded even the conservative 'Murray' to reveal himself to the world under the new form of a 'Knapsack Guide.' We do not at present intend to speak of these, or of some other less worthy products of the same demand. The little volumes which have suggested the foregoing somewhat desultory remarks are both written in German, and are published respectively at St. Gall and Munich.

Herr von Tschudi's 'Schweizerführer' first appeared some years ago. Foreign publishers, however, seem to find it not only possible but profitable to bring out successive corrected editions of works of this class with a rapidity quite unknown in England. By this means Tschudi has been enabled steadily to advance with the times, and the last edition under our notice (1872) is in many respects a new book. The 'Schweizerführer' bears the same semi-official relation to the Swiss Alpine Club that Mr. Ball's book bears to the English. It also resembles the 'Alpine Guide' in being divided into three volumes, although it may also be had in one of very moderate dimensions. The Swiss work is distinguished

Digitized by Google

from the English by the comparative narrowness of its field—of which more hereafter—but above all by the determination of its author to subordinate every consideration but accuracy in order to secure the compactness of form preferred by the foot-traveller. Herr Tschudi's is in short the first carefully worked-out attempt by a competent hand to reduce into the smallest possible compass all the information absolutely necessary for a mountaineer in the Central Alps. In order to attain this end he has been content to give up any attempt at literary form, and to frame his work on the model of a dictionary, cataloguing every known Alpine expedition, and adding in as few words as possible a description of its nature and merits—the qualifying epithets being fastened on peaks and passes much as they are elsewhere on inns.

Formerly we were able to point to one inconsistency in Herr Tschudi's pursuit of brevity. Half the space devoted to the account of some peak or pass was sometimes occupied in chronicling the names of the first successful climbers. But in the last edition even this amiable concession to human weakness has been withdrawn, and mountaineers must for the future content themselves with the record of their exploits contained in Herr Studer's 'Höchste Gipfel der Schweiz.'

It will be seen, that where Mr. Ball proves himself an intelligent encyclopædic friend, Herr Tschudi is content to play the part of a plain guide. But the limited task which the Swiss writer has set himself has been most perfectly accomplished: he seems to possess a complete Alpine library, and to have formed a thorough digest of it. He has, besides, taken advantage of whatever information could be gleaned from the best guides and hotel-book entries. The 'Schweizerführer' is as thorough in the most remote and little-visited district as in the heart of the Bernese Oberland. No bye-path or once-traversed glacier col is left unnoticed. Take as an example the account of the mountains of Val Masino, where there is not only a sufficient notice of the numerous first-rate passes leading over into the Bregaglia and Val Malenco, but some interesting suggestions of routes from the Bagni di Masino to the head of Lago di Como, hitherto utterly unknown to travellers. In the important matter of inns, and with regard to the relative difficulty of excursions, we can, as far as our experience goes, bear witness to Herr Tschudi's trustworthiness. One statement, however—that there are many first-rate guides at Pontresina—he will hardly find English climbers willing to endorse. The men of that village have more than once during the last few years, when employed by Englishmen, shown a want of energy and a determination to halt at the first obstacle, attributed by themselves to a sudden sentiment for their wives or grandmothers, but by their employers to a dislike to do a fair day's work for less than two days' pay. At other times they have refused, except on the most exorbitant conditions, to go in company with an Oberland man, with whom it would have been an honour for them to be associated. It is some consolation to remember that such conduct resulted in their losing any share in the first ascent of the most formidable peak in their valley, the Piz Roseg.

Herr Trautwein, who is the editor of the publications of the youngest

Digitized by Google

Alpine Club, the 'Deutschen Alpen-Verein,' has evidently taken Tschudi as a model, and in many respects what has been said of the one book will apply to the other. His 'Wegweiser durch Südbaiern, Nord- und Mittel-Tyrol' is a useful little volume, and contains a great deal of information difficult to be found elsewhere. We have tested in particular the sections relating to the Zillerthaler Ferner and Orteler groups, and found them carefully compiled. In the latter, however, where immediate comparison is possible between the German and Swiss writers, the second has a decided advantage in the number of small topographical details, which make up the greater part of his description of each ascent, and to the intelligent climber take the place of finger-posts, often enabling him to dispense entirely with local assistance.

We have one criticism to make which applies, although unequally, to both volumes. Now that the barriers to free intercourse between nations are so universally removed, it is surely time for all writers of hand books to follow the example set by Mr. Ball, and to select natural rather than political boundaries for their works. Herr Tschudi labours under the disadvantage of having started with the territory of the Swiss Republic for his subject, and although his practical good sense has led him everywhere to cross the frontiers, we hardly think he has yet solved satisfactorily the problem of 'where to stop.' On the west, the country commonly visited during a Swiss tour is fairly bounded by the Val d'Aosta and the Little St. Bernard; but in the east the line of severance is less easy to select. Herr Tschudi seems still uncertain how to solve the difficulty; for while in his three-volume edition of 1871 he includes an imperfect notice of the Val Rendena and the Adamello group, and a very complete account of the Bergamasque valleys, in the condensed edition of 1872 the Orteler group is dealt with, but the country to the south is omitted. The traveller anxious to go southwards from Eastern Switzerland will find his journey more complete and easy of arrangement, if from the Engadine he makes a circuit including both these groups than if he visits one; and we think the omission of the Adamello while the Orteler is retained a decided mistake. It would be better either to stop short at the Buffalora Pass, or to boldly overstep the frontier and accept the Finstermunz road and the valley of the Adige as the proper limits of a tour in the Central Alps.

Herr Trautwein, however, offends much more seriously in this respect. Indeed we cannot help suspecting that he wishes to furnish us with a *reductio ad absurdum* of the political boundary system. Otherwise it would be as foolish as it is barbarous to entice a traveller into the Dolomites, and then—because the frontier of Venetia, and therefore of Italy and Austria, makes a *voyage en zigzag* over their confused mountain masses—to desert him in their midst, and refuse to utter a word about Pieve di Cadore or Agordo.

It may be looked on, perhaps, as an open question, whether in a guide-book intended for the use of mountaineers, who almost always carry with them the local sheet of an ordnance survey, detailed district maps are to be desired. An inaccurate map is often worse than none at all. Some of those in the 'Alpine Guide' are far from satisfactory, and will,

Digitized by Google

we hope, in future editions give place to more adequate and carefully constructed engravings. The maps of the Gross-Glockner and Œtzthal districts in Herr Trautwein's volume are models of their kind, and might well be imitated. Herr Tschudi has rightly, we are disposed to think, dispensed with district maps altogether, but his general map of Switzerland is quite unworthy of the excellent volume of which it is an accompaniment.

CAUCASIAN LITERATURE.

The word 'Caucasus,' prominently placed on the titles of two works* lately advertised, must have attracted the notice of mountaineers. We regret to say that any expectations they may have formed of gathering fresh information as to the mountains of the future will be disappointed. Mr. Mounsey merely traversed the often-described road which leads through Tiflis and past Ararat into Persia, and need not delay us except to correct the statement that Elbruz is seen from the high road near Gori, a parallel blunder to Addison's remark that the mountains of the Grisons form the background to the view from Bern. The Caucasus is in fact about as much known as the Alps were in the days of the 'Spectator.' The author of the second volume in two instances diverged from the tracks of the Russian post-telegas; but in his description of the most important of these diversions—that from Temir-khan-shura, through Daghestan to Grosnaya—he has been anticipated by Mr. Ussher, in his 'From London to Persepolis.' Despite his title, Sir A. Cunynghame is no more qualified to speak of the Eastern Caucasus as a whole than is one who has only visited the Salzkammergut of the Eastern Alps; of Schebulos and Basardjusi, the Orteler and Gross Glockner of the Caucasus, he appears not even to have heard the names; of the district of which a description is most required, the valley of the Alasan and the passes leading over the great mountain wall which overlooks it into Daghestan, he has not a word to tell us. Taken in hand by Russian officials biassed by pride in their own military achievements, and as a rule either devoid of taste for scenery or too little accustomed to it at home to be very discriminating judges, he was forwarded along the regular round of Schamyl's battle-fields prescribed to all tourists who abandon themselves to such guidance.

We cannot, as a rule, afford space to comment on either the matter or manner of works which make no addition to our knowledge; and we should have passed over in silence both the volumes, the titles of which are quoted below, did not certain statements made by Sir A. Cunynghame seem to us likely, if left unnoticed, to retard the exploration of the most interesting portions of the Caucasian chain.

Our chief ground of complaint against the author of the 'Eastern Caucasus' is, that being an Englishman who ought to know better, he repeats the stale programme that falls from the lips of every Russian

* 1. *Travels in the Eastern Caucasus.* By Lieut.-General Sir A. Cunynghame. London: John Murray, 1872.

2. *A Journey through the Caucasus and the interior of Persia.* By A. H. Mounsey. London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1872.

Digitized by Google

officer, and that by the route he recommends he is likely to divert his countrymen from the most beautiful portions of the country which he professes to describe. Pätigorsk, the ordinary track through Daghestan, and the Dariel, are very well in their way, and quite worth visiting; but those who have not seen the heads of the Mingrelian valleys, where the perfection of sylvan loveliness is united to the majesty of a great snow-crowned and glacier-draped range, can form little or no idea of the highest glory of Caucasian scenery. The view of Kazbek from the post-house is one of the landscapes the recollection of which Sir A. Cunynghame most cherishes. He might have brought home a whole gallery of mental pictures of more splendid and entrancing beauty. The glaciers of Koschtantau are as accessible as Gounib. The Mammison Pass is practicable for a grand duke. Oni offers fair head-quarters; and even Suanetia, for those who know how to profit by others' experience, is not difficult of access. There is no reason why future travellers, as capable of enduring hardships cheerfully as Sir A. Cunynghame evidently is, should not follow in the tracks of a Swiss geologist who has lately visited on horseback almost every valley of the central chain, penetrating to the foot of their glaciers. It is hardly needful to say that these remarks would not have been called for had the author purposely limited himself to descriptions of what he had himself seen. But it is fair to add that the chapter of general information which he has offered, though open, as we consider, to criticism in some most important respects, contains a great deal of advice, which, if not new, is at least sound and of some value.

In another serious matter Sir A. Cunynghame has been misinformed. The reader of his book is led to believe, on the authority of 'experienced persons at the Foreign Office,' that there is great danger in approaching the Caucasus during the summer months by way of the Black Sea and Poti. 'Many evils'—we should like to know more of them—'of which the least was fever or ague in the marshy lands of Imeritia, were held out to warn' the author against this route.

The English railway engineers were, unfortunately for themselves, compelled to work for months in the swamps of the Rion, and the report of their sufferings has, amongst partially-informed persons, given a bad name to the whole Caucasus. The mountain region is, like most highlands, healthy—at any rate sufficiently so to allow Europeans to camp out in the roughest manner, and even to get wet daily without suffering any serious consequences. The journey through the marshes along the Black Sea coast—the really fever-stricken district—has, ever since the establishment of steamers on the Rion, been easily accomplished in a day, and is now, by means of the railway, made the work of only a few hours. The climate of Poti matters, in fact, little more to the Caucasian traveller than that of Boulogne to the Swiss. When England keeps a consul at Tiflis—a seat of viceregal government and the centre of trade and industry for a large portion of western Asia – the Foreign Office will probably be better informed on this and kindred matters: until that time arrives, intending visitors to the Caucasus will perhaps do better to apply for information to the Alpine Club.

Digitized by Google

Again, 'enormous heat' is, when applied to Trans-Caucasia generally, a misleading phrase. Tiflis and the Georgian plains are undoubtedly, like Lombardy, warm in summer, although in some seasons at any rate by no means unbearably so; but the hills are always at hand, and there is never any need to go far for shade and mountain air.

We trust that English travellers will not be influenced, in planning Caucasian tours, by reports founded rather on hearsay than on the experiences recorded by former writers, with whose works—and they are tolerably numerous—Sir A. Cunynghame seems to be but slightly acquainted.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE ALPINE CLUB.

Monday, December 16.—Mr. W. Longman, *President, in the Chair.*

The following gentlemen were balloted for, and elected members of the Club, viz.: Messrs. S. F. Still, E. Hulton, C. Pilkington, H. Hoare, W. M. Pendlebury, Rev. J. F. Bramston, Rev. C. H. Hawkins, Messrs. W. White, and G. W. Stevens.

Mr. Adams-Reilly proposed, and Mr. C. G. Heathcote seconded, 'That Sir J. H. Ramsay, Bart., and the Rev. W. H. Hawker, be elected members of the Committee in place of Messrs. C. E. Mathews and D. W. Freshfield, who retire by rotation; and that the President, Vice-presidents, other members of Committee, and Secretary, be re-appointed for the ensuing year.' An alteration of Rule III. was agreed to, so as to allow of the Editor of the Alpine Journal being added to the Committee as an extra member, the possible number of such extra members being thus raised to four.

Mr. T. S. Kennedy read a paper on 'Excursions from Cormayeur, in the range of Mont Blanc,' giving an account of a new and more direct route up Mont Blanc from the Miage glacier, and of an ascent of the Aiguille de Léchaud.

Some discussion took place as to the expedience of, for the sake of country members, holding in future years the annual general meeting and the winter dinner on the same day. It appeared, however, to be the almost unanimous opinion of the country members present that the existing practice of holding the meeting and dinner on two successive days should be adhered to.

Tuesday, December 17.—The annual winter dinner took place at Willis's Rooms, when 110 members and their friends sat down; Mr. W. Longman, President, in the chair. Amongst the guests of the Club on the occasion were Sir F. Pollock, Bart., and Lt.-Col. the Hon. W. Sackville West. Mr. Arthur Croft lent for exhibition a large collection of his own water-colour drawings, and pictures were also lent by Mr. G. Barnard, Mr. Alfred Wills, and others. Plates of the Alpine Club map of Switzerland (now being executed under the supervision of Mr. Nichols), in various stages of completion, and a magnificent volume of photographs of the Icebergs in the Polar Seas and the Glaciers of Greenland, lately published by Messrs. Sampson, Low & Co., were laid on the table.

Digitized by Google