# REVIEWS AND NOTICES.

*Pioneer Work in the Alps of New Zealand.* A record of the first exploration of the chief glaciers and ranges of the Southern Alps. By Arthur P. Harper, with Maps and Illustrations. (London: Fisher Unwin. 1896.)

In our opinion it is something of a misfortune that mountaineering works should have become so largely the subjects of commercial speculation, that Alpine authors should look for their profits in hundreds or possibly thousands, in place of in the modest tens which contented —and even surprised and pleased—their predecessors. The traveller who employs a 'literary agent' to hawk his wares—the output of his past or of his projected summer journey—round the Publishers' Row until he has obtained the uttermost farthing is in no position to complain if his book, when it appears, is pretentious in bulk without being beautiful in detail; if he finds himself the subject of paragraphs of a character to raise a blush even on a bronzed cheek; if he is liable to the persecution of the interviewer and the portrayer of 'celebrities at home;' if, in short, the wares he has parted with are puffed and 'boomed' in every way known to the book market. *Chacun a son goût.* Commercial success unfortunately too often spells literary and artistic failure. We do not propose to cite examples, and we should not make these general remarks on this occasion could they be suspected of having any particular reference to Mr. Harper's volume which, in form, in general get-up (illustrations excepted), and in the character of its letterpress is all that it should be.

It is too often not the man who has done most hard work or added most to knowledge in his chosen field who secures the largest share of popular attention. To gain a place in the mind of the public it is essential to make it a partner in our pains and pleasures, our failures and successes. The surveyor or pioneer who is mute must expect to remain inglorious. He surely has his reward; he follows a fine profession, and often satisfies an individual passion. He ought not to begrudge the peak-hunter the glory, such as it is, to be gained by a well-advertised and powerfully illustrated volume. But surveyors are human, and even in their lodges in the wilderness they sometimes crave for the sympathy of their fellows. In such a case the best thing they can do is to set themselves down to tell their own story: and this is what Mr. Harper has done. He is careful to point out, however, that his book was written before Mr. FitzGerald's was published, so that *post* does not in this instance imply *propter*. In the main the two volumes are the natural complement of one another, and the only possible matter for regret is that Mr. Harper's did not come out first. For his work and that of his comrades was most of it done before Mr. FitzGerald's visit to the colony, and to a certain extent led up to the latter's successes; even if in one particular case luck combined with insight to enable the visitor to make a discovery which the surveyors would rather he had not snatched from them. But our purpose here is to avoid

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controversial matters—which are dealt with elsewhere—and to devote our available space to doing justice to a very straightforward, manly, and meritorious record of persistent explorations, carried on for the most part under very trying conditions.

Mr. Harper's sub-title, 'A Record of the First Exploration of the Chief Glaciers and Ranges of the Southern Alps,' is hardly as precise and accurate as we should expect from so severe a critic. It is fair to point out that on the author's own showing the chief glaciers lie on the eastern slope, while his record is, but for some brief references in one chapter, confined to a detailed account of the recent investigation and survey, undertaken by the Colonial Government, of the valleys on the western slope of the Central Group of the Alps of New Zealand. The hero of Mr. Harper's book—strange to say—is not himself, but rather Mr. Douglas, a veteran explorer to whose labours, extending over many seasons, his younger comrade does full and generous justice. The best evidence of the extent of these labours is to be found in a contrast between the map published by the Royal Geographical Society with Mr. Harper's paper in 1893 and that in his present book. The work has been done, and well done; and it is, no doubt, the duty of governments to be mean! Still it is difficult to read the details of the delays and hardships to which the surveyors were subjected from their inadequate staff and equipment without some impatience. They do things better in India, or even Asiatic Russia. And now that Mr. Harper has officially reported to his employers ('Reports,' 1895–6) that it is expedient that a track should be taken over FitzGerald's Pass, and further that it will bring the West Coast within a day of The Hermitage, we may at any rate express a hope that the few hundred pounds required for the undertaking will not deter the Government from at once setting about a public work which must do much not only to attract visitors to the colony, but also to render its most beautiful region accessible to its own people. Mountaineers will add a petition that the heart of the local financiers may be so far softened as to allow of their accepting Mr. Harper's suggestion and erecting a few huts, with provision cupboards, like those in the Alps, in the vicinity of the West Coast glaciers. This is all that is wanted to assure the thorough scientific investigation of the upper snows.

Mr. Harper's observations not only show us the present aspect, but help to carry us back to past ages in the history of this remarkable region. We are led to imagine (and with the help of Von Haast's map, 'Discovery of Canterbury,' p. 370, it is not difficult to do so) a coast, closely resembling that of Alaska in our own day, on which great glaciers issuing from narrow gorges spread themselves out fanwise in face of the ocean waves. Then the ice retreated, not without considerable oscillations, streams cut through its deposits, forests and ferns crept up the glens. The ranges were still devoid of inhabitants, for the Maoris are no mountaineers. Other two-legged inhabitants they had, however, in abundance; for up to the time when Mr. Harper wrote the

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recesses of the western slope were the paradise of wingless birds. The *first* explorers found *weekas* in full possession. The *weeka* is a friendly and confiding bird, whose only vices seem to be an imperfect sense of property and a taste for Thyestean banquets. Wherever the surveyor went he had a poultry yard at hand, and consequently had the less need to burden himself with a portable larder. Many and amusing are the stories Mr. Harper tells us of the odd tricks and habits of his camp companions. But, alas ! on his last visit to the Copland Valley he had no companions—and no food. The birds with which the valley once swarmed had fallen victims to the cats and weasels which are introduced into the colony and take to the woods. A new difficulty was added to exploration. We must not be led beyond our scope, or we might quote some of the excellent natural history stories with which Mr. Harper diversifies his pages, and more than make up for the relative scarcity of—in the strict sense of the words—mountaineering adventure.

With trackless forests and boulder-strewn river beds, impassable gorges and abrupt bluffs below, rocks that are not only of the steepest but of the rottenest, and ice-slopes of the most treacherous quality above, the New Zealand Alps have furnished no easy field for their first explorers. They will doubtless become easier. Everything is easier to the explorer who has not to be his own beast of burden. The valleys will be opened by tracks; the peaks will become better known. Already we see in Mr. Harper's account of the Copland Valley that the process is beginning. Not only Mr. FitzGerald, but also Mr. Douglas (see 'Report,' 1894–5) found its scrub and torrent-beds almost intolerable. Mr. Harper makes comparatively light of them ; and no doubt, if the tracks he blazed (p. 284) are not overgrown, the difficulties are already further diminished, and will disappear with the construction of his projected road.

Whatever future travellers may find, Mr. Harper's book completes a picture which without it would have been imperfect—that of the central group of the New Zealand Alps in its natural state. We shall not attempt here to forestall his very clear and vivacious descriptions of scenery and adventure among the glaciers and forests of the western slope. His book deserves, and will repay, careful perusal. Readers who have also studied Mr. FitzGerald's work are in a position to appreciate fully the labours and perils undergone by those who have done most to open up for Englishmen this noble region. Mountaineers who wish to take their share in future exploration should look beyond and behind these volumes to Von Haast's map and the Survey Reports. They will learn that south and north of the great central range, the limits of which are defined by nature in Haast's and Whitcombe's Passes, there are many comparatively isolated glacier groups, geologically part of the same chain, which will meet their requirements for years to come.

Of the illustrations the only good we can say is that the views chosen, had they been properly reproduced, would have served well to illustrate the text. But the process employed, both in this and Signor Sinigaglia's 'Dolomite' book, which comes from the same

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publisher, has completely broken down. The fault is in the reproduction, for some better plates from the same negatives have appeared in the Reports of the New Zealand Survey and in the Italian Alpine Club 'Bollettino.' There is great difficulty still in obtaining satisfactory plates printed in and with the text, but in the case of full-page illustrations there can be no excuse for such faint and flat smears. The Collotype process can and has produced better results than these, and at Munich in particular has been carried to great perfection.

The map is excellent, but it is a pity that in this case (as with Mr. FitzGerald's map) there is no imprint to show that it is in fact based not on the work of any one or two men, but on that of a staff of Government surveyors, many of whom have contributed to its general excellence. There is no Government department that in proportion to the means at its disposal has done so much for glacier mapping and even illustration as the New Zealand Survey Department, and its successive chiefs and their subordinates have well earned the gratitude of all who are interested in mountain exploration.

*Chamonix and the Range of Mont Blanc: a Guide.* By Edward Whymper. With Illustrations and Maps. (London: John Murray. 1896.) Pp. 192.

We anticipated from the pen of Mr. Whymper a guide-book of more than usual interest and value, and we are not disappointed. Those who know the Valley of Chamonix will enjoy a perusal of this pleasant little volume, while the tourist who has not yet approached the 'Great White Mountain' will also find in it much interest and information on matters both great and small. The title of Mr. Whymper's new volume is certainly unassuming, comprising, as it does, a great deal more than might in the usual way be expected from its name. But Mr. Whymper, to his reputation as a climber, an author, and an artist, adds here by his attention to detail the character of a good man of business; and though little is said by the author to remind us directly of his long and intimate acquaintance with Chamonix, or of his mountaineering triumphs in that region, the work bears the impress of a considerable experience of the district and its literature.

After a short but practical Introduction the work commences with a concise and graphic sketch of the early history of Chamonix, so far as that is known, and then we come to the ever-attractive 'Story of Mont Blanc.' The historical miscellany, which occupies fully half the book, is interesting and clearly arranged. In presenting the history of the ascent of Mont Blanc Mr. Whymper is well advised in giving a translation in full of the account of De Saussure; and he has made judicious extracts also from some of the numerous accounts of ascents printed by enthusiastic climbers.

A 'Chapter of Accidents' is the relation of a number of accidents which have happened on or in the chain of Mont Blanc, and of their causes; and the lessons thereby conveyed to climbers, old and young, are not the less impressive because unaccompanied by

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special admonitions. The Observatories of Vallot and Janssen receive due notice, and whether or not the latter is found to gradually sink with the summit snows the story of its construction will continue to be of interest.

The remaining portion of the book consists of practical information as to the various routes and excursions—great and small—from Chamonix; and although the author does not aim at providing for mountaineers the detailed information of a 'Climbers' Guide,' that supplied will satisfy many enquirers. We have alphabetical tables of peaks and passes, with their heights; lists of guides and their tariffs; and tables showing the relation between English feet and metres. The accompanying maps, plans, and illustrations (some of the last already familiar) are clear and useful. The absence of one or two recognised glacier routes in the map, which is one of those issued with Mr. Whymper's 'Scrambles,' and a few slips in the text, hardly detract from the general value of this interesting little work, which is published in paper cover at the modest price of three shillings, and which its possessors will deem worthy of a more enduring binding.

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## THE WINTER EXHIBITION OF PHOTOGRAPHS AND OLD PRINTS.

In following up the successful experiment of last summer and holding an exhibition in the Club Gallery, from which paintings were rigidly excluded, the Committee have continued in a very excellent course; but whereas in 1895–6 the short winter days of early darkness were allotted to the artists, while the photographs exhibited later in the year were illumined by the summer sun, this year, acting on the advice given by the late President in his valedictory address, the order of the exhibitions was reversed, 'the photographs being shown in winter, and the pictures in the brighter and longer days of the London season.'

In addition to photographs the exhibition included numerous prints of Alpine and sub-Alpine subjects, together with a collection of 25 pencil portraits by Mr. Charles Flack, amongst which we recognised such old friends as Peter Baumann, Ulrich Kaufmann, Christian Almer, and the brothers Boss.

As regards number, the photographs showed a falling off from some previous exhibitions. There appears to be a growing tendency to exhibit enlargements rather than direct prints, and undoubtedly the former are more effective on the walls of a gallery, and as a rule more artistic in tone than half-plate or even whole-plate direct prints.

In the notice of a former exhibition printed in this Journal regret was expressed that enlargements were admitted, as so many negatives are improved by enlargement, and that therefore the direct prints shown were at a disadvantage; this is undoubtedly true, but for exhibition purposes surely the best results obtainable should be encouraged; the exhibition is in no sense a photographic

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