Frank Aston-Binns has gone to his rest; he has the beloved mountains for his monument; and of this I am well assured—that there will always live in the hearts of those left behind the memory of his friendship.

GEORGE WHERRY.

REVIEW.

In the Forbidden Land. By A. Henry Savage Landor. (London: Heinemann. 1898.)

IN the 22nd, 23rd, and 24th chapters of 'The Forbidden Land,' a work by Mr. A. Henry Savage Landor, the author of two previous books of travel in the Far East, which has been presented by its publisher, Mr. Heinemann to the Alpine Club, the author describes his ascent to the crest of a Himalayan Pass, the altitude of which he gives, from his own observations made with scientific instruments which, he tells us, he 'was carrying for the Royal Geographical Society,' as exactly 22,000 ft.

The details of the expedition furnished are of a very unique and surprising character, as will be gathered from the following summary, which necessarily does but scanty justice to the picturesqueness of Mr. Landor's narrative. It is, in fact, only a humble endeavour to extract from it certain definite statements as to facts and figures. No dates are given in this part of Mr. Landor's book, but it would appear from the appendix that it was in June or July 1897 that the following adventure took place:—

The author and his party spent, at an altitude of 15,400 ft., a night of storm, during which snow fell in their camp to a depth of 2 ft. About 6 A.M. they started. They marched for mile after mile over sharp stones, with 'their feet in a dreadful condition, cut and bleeding, because it was constantly necessary to walk barefooted.' By 4.30 P.M. they had covered 8 miles, and reached a spot (16,150 ft.) near the sources of the Mangshan river, which is shown on the Indian Government maps of Kumaon. The snow line is stated to be here at 16,000 ft.

Almost immediately, without eating or taking any provisions, although they had already been some ten hours without food, the author, with Dr. Harkua Wilson, 'in charge of Bhot dispensaries, American Episcopal Mission,' and two native companions, started again, and after walking about 3 miles, reached the glacier at the head of the valley (17,800 ft.). Mr. Landor was carrying on his person 'silver rupees, two aneroids, cartridges, a revolver,' &c., the weight of which is elsewhere precisely stated as sixty pounds. It may be noted in passing that one of the aneroids was only graduated to 20,000 ft. (vol. i. p. 6). Mr. Landor was wearing thin clothes (p. 155), a small cap, 'medium thick shoes without nails,' and never carried a stick (p. 7). He adds, 'I think it was due

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largely to the simplicity of my personal equipment that I was able to climb to one of the greatest altitudes ever reached by a human being.'

The following sentences are given verbatim from vol. i. p. 164 :— 'Turning sharply northwards we began an ascent towards the pass. To gaze upon the incline before us was alone sufficient to deter one from attempting to climb it, had one a choice; in addition to this the snow we struggled over was so soft and deep that we sank into it up to our waists. Occasionally, the snow alternated with patches of loose *débris* and rotten rock, in which we were no better off; in fact, the fatigue of progressing over them was simply overpowering. Having climbed up half a dozen steps among the loose cutting stones, we felt ourselves sliding back to almost our original point of departure, followed by a small avalanche of shifting material that only stopped when it got to the foot of the mountain. At 19,000 ft. we were for a considerable distance on soft snow covering an icefield with deep crevasses and cracks in it. We had to feel our way with great caution, particularly as there was only the light of the moon to depend upon.'

At sunset the thermometer fell suddenly 40°, to what point we are not told. When 20,500 ft. had been reached Dr. Harkua Wilson collapsed and was left behind. Two hundred feet higher one of the natives gave in, and was also left behind, wrapped in a blanket, with the thermometer in his pocket. At this time a thick mist prevailed. At 11 P.M., Mr. Landor and the remaining native reached the crest of the pass. The mist having apparently dispersed, they enjoyed an extensive view, and 'registered observations' giving a height of 22,000 ft.

The distance traversed from the spot which they left soon after 4.30 P.M. they reckon as 5 miles, the difference in vertical height as 5,850 ft., of which 1,650 ft. were in the first three miles. The time they occupied is stated as about 6 hrs. Both the climbers suffered severely from cold and rarefied air. How long they remained on the crest is left a mystery. When they first arrived they were in fog; it was succeeded by 'bright moonlight' and 'extraordinarily brilliant stars,' under which they could see the intricate hill ranges of the immense Tibetan plateau, with snow-peaks beyond it. The fog then again rose, and enabled Mr. Landor to witness the 'Spectre of the Brocken' in the centre of a lunar rainbow. He next fell into a state of semi-consciousness, and, when he recovered, it was snowing hard. Mr. Landor roused, however, his comrade, who was further gone than himself, and the couple, picking up their half-frozen companions on the way, descended from the pass to the foot of the glacier (4,200 ft.) in 30 min.! The distance is almost exactly the same as that from the Cabane Vallot to the Grands Mulets. They, however, did not apparently reach their followers at the 16,150 ft. camp and get their first meal till about 5 A.M., having then been 23 hrs. without food of any sort.

The author has thought it expedient to support this tale by printing in an appendix a formal certificate from Dr. Harkua

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Wilson that he reached 22,000 ft. while carrying 60 lbs. on his back. Since, according to the narrative, Dr. Wilson did not himself come within 1,500 ft. of the point in question, his evidence is obviously inconclusive. It may be noted that on the one inch to the mile survey of Kumaon of the Indian Government the highest measured peak on the frontier ridge within 20 miles of this pass is 21,130 ft. Mr. Landor tells us he saw many elevations higher than that on which he stood both to the N.W. and S.E.

Mr. Landor had every assistance from the Royal Geographical Society. He must have had, or he ought to have had, a copy of their 'Hints to Travellers,' which contains concise instructions for mountain explorers. Why did he disregard all common rules and precautions? Why did he walk in nailless shoes, or with bare, bleeding feet? Why did he undertake, and force his companions to undertake, great exertion without food? Why, being a man of light physique, did he encumber himself with a burden no Alpine guide would willingly carry under like conditions? Why did he attack an unknown glacier pass of extraordinary height by night, and without a rope or even a staff? How came he to abandon for a time two of his comrades under circumstances which made such an abandonment very likely to prove fatal? And finally, how did he manage to descend by night with his load and his half-frozen comrades 4,200 ft. in 30 min., and that over a crevassed névé, through soft snow and down loose rocks?

Mr. Landor's story is not put forward as a romance, founded on fact, and coloured so as to satisfy the supposed taste of the unscientific public. Mr. Landor presents himself and has been received by the critics of our daily press as a traveller thought worthy of the loan of instruments by the Council of the Royal Geographical Society (p. 6), who has by their means produced a trustworthy original map 'made entirely from his own surveys of an area of 12,500 square miles in Tibet proper.' This being so, he invites expert criticism and is bound to justify his claim to have reached 22,000 ft. by full details of the nature of the observations on which it is founded; and, having done this, he would consult his credit by furnishing some reasonable explanation of how he came to perform what is, according to his statements, one of the most extraordinary feats of endurance and speed ever reported in the annals of mountain exploration under conditions, and with 'a simplicity of personal equipment,' which involved needless suffering and danger, and which, had any of the party perished, would have led every competent mountaineer to ascribe their deaths to inexperience or rashness on the part of their leader.

We have here dealt only with a single incident in Mr. Landor's narrative. But there are other and more far-reaching questions that might easily be asked as to the geographical and cartographical results of his journey. The public will await with unusual interest the detailed notice of his work which has been promised in the 'Journal' of the Royal Geographical Society.

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