

REVIEWS AND NOTICES.

The Bernese Oberland. Vol. iv. (in 2 parts.) 'Climbers' Guides' Series. By H. Dübi. Pp. xx, 111 and xxiii, 131. London: T. Fisher Unwin. 1908. 10s. each.

THIS volume (which for practical reasons has been issued in two parts) completes the description in the 'Climbers' Guides' series of the Bernese Oberland, using this term in the widest sense as extending from the Dent de Moreles, on the S.W., to the Uri Rothstock, on the N.E. It takes in the region between the Grimsel and the Uri Rothstock, and thus the Rhône glacier, the Trift, Goeschenen Alp, Stein Alp, Meienthal, and Engelberg districts, practically the whole of which are most conveniently shown on a single 'Combined' sheet ('Susten Pass') of the splendid Siegfried map. The line of division between the two parts is placed at the Sustenlimmi, between Stein Alp and Goeschenen Alp. The scheme adopted is that which has become familiar in this series. As might be expected from the author's well-known leanings, special attention is paid to the history of the various peaks and passes. Thus the Titlis is first mentioned in 1661 (though not climbed till 1744), and was formerly called the Wendenstock, the peak of that name being called 'Mons Benderen' (from the rock ledges that extend along its N.W. base), and also Steinberg. The intricate Alpine history of the Dammastock and its immediate neighbours is unravelled by means of a close study of different editions of the Dufour map, as also is that of the various passes to which the name Damma Pass has been applied by different writers. One singular feature of the work is the comparatively large number of peaks of which the highest point has just *not* been attained; there is thus quite a wide field open to those who seek virgin tops, though the bit to be still conquered sometimes does not exceed 6 or 7 ft. We congratulate Herr Dübi on his excellent work, which must have cost him great pains, for, as in the case of vol. iii., accurate and full descriptions of what may be called minor peaks are far harder to write or to procure than those of the giants of the Alps.

To the Top of the Continent: Discovery, Exploration, and Adventure in Sub-Arctic Alaska; the First Ascent of Mount McKinley, 1906-6. By Frederick A. Cook, M.D. Illustrated. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

This is a highly coloured narrative of travel in a country where perils by water are as frequent and perhaps even more serious than perils by land. It is obviously written to suit the taste of an American public. The author alleges that his subject 'strains the "English Dictionary."' He has accordingly done his best to enlarge that volume. His style is exuberant, and words are put to what may seem, to European ears, strange uses. For instance, a niche cut out of a snow slope for a night shelter becomes a 'sidehill ditch,' the Alpine rope is a 'life-line,' an avalanche a

'reducing train.' Even 'foot hills' are 'sky piercing,' and loftier summits are alternately 'heaven-scraped' and 'sky-scraping,' phrases which unluckily have anything but sublime associations! To readers accustomed to an Alpine literature, written with more method and self-restraint, the details here given of the great feat which was the author's chief aim, the first ascent of Mount McKinley (20,390 ft.), the highest mountain in North America, are somewhat difficult to follow. Moreover, the difficulty is greatly increased by the absence of any map of the district beyond a 'miner's map,' on the small scale of 20 miles to the inch.

The following appear to be the main facts recorded by Dr. Cook as to an expedition remarkable in itself, and rendered still more remarkable by the late period of the year at which it was accomplished. The climbing party was composed of Dr. Cook and one companion, Mr. Bareille. They had no porters, but each carried a burden of over 40 lbs., comprising a silk tent, coats capable of being converted into sleeping-bags, provisions, cooking utensils, and certain instruments. They were absent from their base camp (1,000 ft.) 12 days. In the first three of the eight given to the ascent they marched 85 miles up a glacier; the remaining five were occupied in the actual climb, which began at about 8,000 ft. They slept two nights at 12,000 ft. and 16,800 ft. respectively in domed huts formed of snow-blocks (we are not told how the blocks were cut). The intervening night was spent in a hole cut on an ice-slope at an angle of 'nearly 60°,' and another night at 18,400 ft. in a silk tent (temperature 16° below zero). The chief difficulties of the climb were encountered in the middle portion (12,000 to 16,000 ft.), after the northern ridge of the mountain had been gained. Here ridges, cornices, séracs, and ice-slopes were piled up in a bewildering confusion that has communicated itself to the narrative. The final 4,000 ft. took two days to surmount, the rarity of the air proving the chief impediment. The temperature on the top at 10 A.M. was the same as during the previous night in the tent. To bring the detailed narrative and figures into correspondence, the date of the final ascent should be 'September 15,' *not* 16, and on page 224 we should read seventh for 'sixth' day.

The centre of interest in the volume is the climb of Mount McKinley, but its pages contain accounts of extensive wanderings and of many adventures in the region of which Mount McKinley is the culminating summit, as well as forcible descriptions of the colours of the Arctic atmosphere and scenery.

The Alaska Range, as Dr. Cook calls it, is, he tells us, some 500 miles long 'following its crescentic axis,' by 60 broad. It carries glaciers from 80 to 40 miles in length. There are evidences of a greater extension of the ice in past ages. Below the foot-hills lie considerable tracts of habitable and, apparently in part, cultivable country. Up to the present time its only inhabitants are gold miners, whose 'towns' are apt to move on as fresh fields are discovered. The timber-line is about 3,000 ft.; the summer snow-

line is not indicated, but the photographs show many bare slopes, and it is obvious that it is higher than in the wetter region round Mount St. Elias, which was admirably described and depicted by the Duke of the Abruzzi and Signor V. Sella. In the lowlands there are fields of flowers and ponds decked with waterlilies, 'evergreen forests' and 'underbrush as dense as tropical verdure.' According to Mr. Brooks, who adds a geological appendix, the highest peaks are granitic. It is remarkable that Mount McKinley exceeds any neighbouring summit by no less than 8,800 ft. Three more short appendices deal with 'Biological Data,' 'The Cook Inlet Aborigines,' and 'Railway Routes in Alaska.' There is no index, and, as has already been indicated, the maps are inadequate. There are, however, numerous and fairly effective illustrations, mostly photographic.