March 27. First ascent second peak N. from Copland Pass, 7373 ft., with the chambermaid and packer from the Hermitage.

March 28. Two peaks, Mt. Eric, over 8000 ft., with guide Tom Fish.

Konrad continues as follows :

'The mountains in New Zealand are fine. They have, like every mountain group, their own particular charm. But travelling in the mountains there means hard work in carrying. There are still hundreds of mountains to ascend. I may go out there again in October and shall be pleased to give any information to any member of the Alpine Club. The mountains are more or less dangerous from stones and avalanches, and the weather is very changeable. The best time for expeditions is February and March.'

REVIEWS AND NOTICES.

Pater Placidus a Spescha sein Leben und seine Schriften. Von Prof. Dr. F. Pretti und Prof. Dr. K. Hager. Benteli, Bern. 1913.

JUSTICE—tardy justice—has at last been done by his fellow-countrymen to one of the most remarkable of the precursors in the exploration and investigation of the High Alps. Pater Placidus a Spescha (A.D. 1752–1833) was a born climber—born, as the family story ran, under the sign of Capricornus ; but he was also an ardent student of Nature. Never did a student make a better use of his relatively few advantages, or struggle more courageously against disasters, arising out of the troublous times in which he lived.

The child of well-to-do peasants at Disentis in the Vorder Rhein Thal, Spescha sought a field for his intellectual activity in the Church, and gained some instruction at Chur and afterwards at Einsiedeln, before he returned to his native place to become a leading spirit among the brethren of the local monastery.

To do anything like justice to his career, to recount its picturesque incidents, the destruction by the French of his library and lithological collection, his banishment by the Austrians to Tyrol, the persecution he underwent in his convent on account of his liberal and tolerant attitude in matters of thought, or to give any account of his climbs, and of his many contributions to local history and natural science, would fill pages. Moreover, we are released from the task by the fact that it was partially carried out years ago in this JOURNAL (Vol. x. No. 74) in an article, partly founded on the late Prof. Theobald's volumes on Graubünden, that appears to have been overlooked by the editors of the book now under review in their list of tracts relating to Spescha. We shall limit ourselves,

therefore, to indicating very briefly the scope and method of the handsome volume which they put before the public.

It opens with a full biographical sketch of the Father, followed by appreciations of him as an historian and natural student and a list of the writings, mostly MSS., he left behind him. These, carefully edited, form the bulk of the work. First comes a history of the Convent at Disentis, then we have a monograph on the Tavetscher Thal followed by a description of the Passes of the Grauen Bund, numerous papers describing mountain ascents, hints for climbers' equipment, articles on avalanches and other calamities, and an account of Spescha's visit to Tyrol.

What most strikes the reader who looks over these papers is the many-sidedness of Spescha's interests and the extent to which he was before his time. It is curious, for instance, to find him planning a hut at the Puntaiglass Glacier, recommending warmly the top of the Lukmanier for the erection of an hotel and health-station, or suggesting to his convent that it should buy and develop the Tensniger Bad, a bathhouse which even forty years ago remained in a state of primitive simplicity worthy of Japan.

No pains have been spared by the publishers to make the book a worthy memorial of the old mountaineer. It is illustrated by two excellent portraits and a number of attractive facsimiles of coloured prints of the period and some very artistic photographs. We should have liked a view showing the south-western face of the Tödi, as an illustration of Spescha's repeated assaults on that noble mountain.

Guide de la Chaîne du Mont Blanc. Par Louis Kurz. Deuxième édition, revue et considérablement augmentée, avec 39 croquis dans le texte. Prix fr. 12. (To be procured direct from the author, 7 rue Saint-Honoré, Neuchâtel, Switzerland, or from Edward Stanford, Ltd., 12 to 14 Long Acre, London, W.C. Price 10*s.*)

Twenty-two years have elapsed since the first edition of this indispensable guide-book appeared, and while welcoming the new edition the mountaineer who is not quite certain whether he may still be counted in Sir Claud Schuster's 'middle age' puts aside almost with regret the rather dirty, much annotated and marked, somewhat greasy old volume that has been his companion on many a day of storm, of hardship, of unsullied triumph.

Of all the groups of mountains in the Alps there is none comparable to the great chain of Mont Blanc.

There you may learn all you need know of rock craft, of iceman-ship, of weather craft; there you may acquire all the almost imper-ceptible knowledge merging into intuition that on a great expedition arms your limbs, your eyes, your ears; all of which go to extend the never-ending education of the mountaineer. Of no other group known to me can this be said.

Although Mont Blanc, or any way Chamonix, is the goal of every

tourist, yet the mountains themselves, save perhaps the one route on Mont Blanc, are seldom overrun.

Very much attention has been paid to the group during the last twenty-two years, so that at the present time it is one of the best explored districts in the Alps. Of all these doings the new edition takes the most careful note, and it is pleasing to see that the author has obviously studied the ALPINE JOURNAL more closely than is the habit of many members of the Alpine Club.

I cannot find the omission of a single one of the many new routes that have been made during the last few years, while the references to the authorities are particularly complete. I would much have liked to see a star put against the references to other publications where a sketch or illustration is to be found.

The book is divided into seven sections, and it would have been more convenient if these sections could have been detached, as is the Baedeker practice. When on the Trélatête one is not so much interested in the Dolent as to want to carry a description of it. Authors so seldom consider our unhappy backs.

I notice very few misprints. On p. 174, at end of the first paragraph it should read 'A.J.' xxvii., not xxiv., and on p. xviii. of the abbreviations the famous A.A.-C.Z. finds no place.

The *format* is rather larger and more convenient than the old edition, and the book is generally well got up. The French is of the very simplest, and need not frighten any Englishman even whose linguistic abilities are moderate.

A new feature in the book is the thirty-nine route sketches. These are of very unequal value, and are generally not up to the standard of the sketches in other similar publications, *e.g.* 'Glarner Alpen' (1912). More use might have been made had permission been obtainable of the splendid series of marked routes published by M. Emile Fontaine in the 'Echo des Alpes.' Still we must not demand too much in the way of pictures from an entirely unsubsidised publication. The illustration of the most delightful and, under fair conditions, not very hard climb up the N. face of the Géant ought to show the line nearer the left-hand arête with a considerable horizontal traverse on a snow-covered ledge running across the face, from the end of which one strikes up the left hand of two gullies to gain the Col between the two summits. The traced route 3 on the E. face of the Aig. Blanche, p. 243, is very vague, and does not seem to be the line we followed.

M. Louis Kurz has published a most valuable book, and we are all indebted to him for the enormous trouble and care he has taken. It should be in the hands of every mountaineer, whether for use on the mountain or to study at one's leisure, for which purpose the references to authorities appear very comprehensive.

J. P. FARRAR.