

REVIEWS

Days of Fresh Air. By the Rt. Hon. L. S. Amery. Pp. 320; illustrated.
London: Jarrold, Ltd. 1939. Price 16s.

THIS is a book appealing as much to the general public as to members of the Alpine Club. It covers much ground and describes the gifted author's adventures from his Harrow days down to 1914. We give a list of chapters:

- I. Juvenilia.
- II. The Alps.
- III. Balkan Tangle.
- IV. A Joyous Wandering.
- V. Dolomites, Montenegro, Crete.
- VI. The South African War.
- VII. South Africa Revisited.
- VIII. Canada.
- IX. The Alps Again.
- X. More Africa.
- XI. The Attempt on Mt. Robson.
- XII. Hudson's Bay.
- XIII. Dolomites and Antipodes.

Chapter I relates a fact not generally known: Mr. Amery was born in India, a country with which, curiously enough, the author has less acquaintance than with any other part of the British Empire. At Harrow Mr. Amery was one of the gymnastic pair. Going up to Balliol in 1892 he made the acquaintance of Scafell Pikes and the first ascent of the Oblique Gully of Great Gable, with the late Owen Glynn Jones. The author takes his first (and last) mountain toss! Chapter II witnesses a first visit to the Pennines and Zermatt (1894) and describes how two rather inexperienced boys make the ascents of Rothorn, Weisshorn and Dent Blanche—the lower Gabelhorn thrown in for practice—all in the space of five days. Mr. Winston Churchill during the same period makes his only mountain climb¹—Monte Rosa—and gets an attack of mountain sickness and a 'badly flayed' face. While staying the night previous to the ascent of the Matterhorn at the Hörnli, the author makes the acquaintance of a girl, 'one of the few outstanding women climbers of the day,' Miss Lily Bristow, Mummery's sister-in-law, destined to accomplish the first descent of the mountain by the Zmutt on the following day. Also he meets for the first time, the acquaintance ripening later into a great companionship, 'a boy with wonderfully bright blue eyes, Josef Pollinger . . .

¹ Mr. G. A. Hasler, however, quotes an entry from the late Christen Kaufmann's *Führerbuch*, from which it appears that Mr. Churchill accomplished the ascent of the Wetterhorn, also in 1894. *A.J.* 51. 130.

destined to become perhaps the best all-round guide of his generation.' Altogether a wonderful first season.

Chapters III, IV and V to the non-mountaineering reader are perhaps the most interesting in the book. The state of politics in that 'Tangle' existing prior to the Greek-Turkish war of 1897 and afterwards is described in masterly fashion. There are long-continued wanderings—one with F. E. Smith, the late Lord Birkenhead—in that extremely uncivilised zone. Several rough ascents in the Dinaric Alps are described in most attractive fashion. With characteristic self-effacement our author tells us nothing of the results of his labours from a British point of view. No wonder that he became one of the greatest Balkan authorities. And thereby hangs a tale, perhaps the best of many concerning the British Salonika Force of after years. Perhaps Mr. Amery in a later volume may be persuaded to relate it himself. A reviewer dare not anticipate.

The 'South African War' and following chapter are of quite remarkable interest with their shrewd comments on events and men. The author was well acquainted with Cecil Rhodes and President Kruger, while he was on terms of friendship with Louis Botha, and, of course, Lord Milner, being indeed one of the latter's 'young men.' Among other such is also mentioned John Buchan, later Lord Tweedsmuir. The author of *The Times History of the South African War* is indeed well qualified to comment on men and tactics. Of one very distinguished General, Mr. Amery remarks (p. 151): 'a great hustler and improviser, he, neither then nor later, ever understood the meaning of the word organisation.' Few will quarrel with the indictment, any more than with the remarks on cavalry tactics as practised and propounded subsequently by two great leaders, despite Lord Roberts' experiences and teachings '... when the Great War came the one idea dominating our two successive Commanders-in-Chief in France was the creation of a gap through which the great cavalry charge was to take place.' And all this in direct contradiction with 'the tactics developed by the said officers with such success at Colesberg and in the relief of Kimberley' (pp. 158-9). The Drakensberg peaks described include the ascent of Mt. aux Sources with an amusing seated glissade in company of a Basuto clad in a billycock hat and ostrich feather, a discarded British scarlet tunic and a couple of jackal tails fore and aft. 'Mt. Amery' in the immediate vicinity commemorates our author's visit and exploits. There are excellent illustrations of both these fine peaks. The reviewer's own company during the South African War was once on picket on the summit of Mt. aux Sources. The men's descent of—fortunately—the Free State slope was strongly anticipatory of the Basuto's, no fewer than six rifles and numerous trousers becoming unserviceable.

Chapter VIII describes a visit to Canada under Lord Grey's ægis. Ascents include Wapta, Eagle, Stephen, Pope and Abbott. Several were accomplished alone. Whymper was at Field. Mr. Amery saw him for the last time in 1909, probably 'at the Canadian A.C. camp,

and he held an auction of all his old climbing kit to celebrate his final retirement from mountaineering.'

Chapter IX finds our author back in the Alps again. Many adventures are lightly skimmed over, including a terrifying mishap on the Arolla Aiguilles Rouges already described in the JOURNAL (23. 393-7).

The following chapter describes an interesting journey to Kenya and Uganda, followed by Egypt. The famous lion episode so well related in Patterson's *Man-eaters of Tsavo* figures in the text, together with the incident of Fashoda and Colonel Stanton's tact. A charming little vignette is devoted to Harold Amery who fell in the European war.

Chapter XI relates Mr. Amery's well-known first assault on Mt. Robson, together with Arnold Mumm, Hastings and Moritz Inderbinnen. The attempt is described at greater length in *A.J.* 25. 293 *sqq.* The subsequent descent of the Upper Fraser by canoe was a great adventure. In Chapter XII is found a wonderfully interesting visit to Hudson's Bay made in company with the Governor-General, Lord Grey.

The last chapter, 'Dolomites and Antipodes,' finds the author back again in Tyrol, in the Zillertal, Tauern and Dolomites. It describes the decadence in quality of the guests at Cortina and the despair of Alma Menardi—it was deeper still in 1933. Mr. Amery also visits the famous Carrara Marbles—his is perhaps the only British party to climb on these extremely treacherous rocks. With a view to the next edition we venture to point out that 'Winklerturm' is the spelling of that well-known pinnacle, of which the reviewer made the first 'British' ascent in 1893; 'Violet Towers' in the title of the illustration facing p. 303 is an amusing printer's error.

The last episodes are concerned with a visit to Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand.

Simply and charmingly written, Mr. Amery's book flits lightly over mountains, rivers, lakes, countries and individuals. There is material enough in these pages to have furnished a dozen volumes. Yet we would not have it otherwise in a work described under such a title. What we do trust is that the success of these reminiscences will induce the versatile and gifted author to give us some more 'Days of Fresh Air.' He can find ample material in the twenty-five years elapsing between the two Great Wars.

Approach to the Hills. By C. F. Meade. Pp. 266, illustrations. London: John Murray, 1940. Price 10s. 6d. net.

MR. MEADE has for many years written articles upon mountaineering, and has become known to us as an authority upon the Himalaya and in technical fields. Some of these papers he has now collected, and added to them a number more. A happy title gives them unity; and it is also illustrative of the author's own attitude to hills, of his single-minded pursuit of their adventure in all seasons and many lands, and

of the very high standard of mountaineering tradition which he has always upheld. The book is well produced, light in hand and economical, and although the illustrations, many of them from his own fine photographs, may have lost something in reproduction, they are unusually well chosen to help the text.

Everything that has its place in the mountain world has also its valued place in Mr. Meade's own 'approach' to hills. The history, the peoples, the guides, the craft, the daily incidents, absurdities, squabbles and charms of camp and travel, he has lived through them all with observant sympathy, and can reproduce them for us with a humorous detachment which accentuates the sensitive and sincere feeling behind. The changes also in what we may call the mental approach to climbing, apparent of recent years, interest him no less, and many of his chapters are devoted to an expert retelling and elucidating of the modern fantastic self-immolations upon the Eiger, Grandes Jorasses and so on, as samples of the new approach.

Inevitably such a collection written at different dates must be of uneven merit. But certain of the studies are of such fine craftsmanship that we are perhaps too ready to criticise the remainder for not being equally good. We start our approach historically with the ascent of Mont Aiguille, picturesquely recounted and with delightful touches of characteristic humour, such as the significance of 'the two royal chaplains' who were taken on the ascent as a precautionary measure. When Mr. Meade later is mentioning the climb upon the Grandes Jorasses by the two Italian mechanics, we could have wished for his caustic comment upon the 'changed approach' indicated in their substituting for the chaplains two hypodermic syringes, with the same purpose of 'easing the passage.' There follow two admirable studies of guides: that of Blanc Greffier is lightly but perfectly sketched, so as to reveal him as a part of the life of his own mountains, and of the age of classic mountaineering to which he belonged, to which he introduced Mr. Meade, and which his brilliant sons continued for yet another generation. As a bridge-over to modern climbing comes a thrilling story of a Dolomite rock climb, a 'shilling shocker' performed by the author before its time; and then, as a contrast but in the same key, the chronicle of a recent epic rescue upon the Dru, wherein some fifty climbers were implicated. This gives occasion for another of Mr. Meade's lightning portraits, this time a rushing sight of Armand Charlet, whose cyclonic appearances in the book form a theme almost as attractive as Pierre Blanc's dashing feats and comments. We should have welcomed at this point, probably, one or two of Mr. Meade's own great Alpine ascents, made during what he calls the Indian summer of Alpine exploration, in which he himself took a notable part. But he has preferred to follow a different line of development, that suggested by the sensational climbs just described, and passes on at once to a number of examples of the modern 'changed approach.' He clarifies expertly and vividly the confused travailings upon a northern facet of the Eiger and the international metal-workings up one of the Grandes

Jorasses buttresses, and includes the savage farce of the semi-military imbroglio upon the winter Watzmann. He does his best for these as human exhibitions. He is characteristically generous to the type of nerve and endurance they demanded, while he puts the nature of the ambition or glory-seeking which inspired them in a right light by ironic comment or its eloquent absence. In discussing the causes which have contributed to this change of approach, he seems to hesitate between several explanations. It would take too long to discuss them here ; but the book would have gained by some tidying up of this part of its argument. Bringing together the Himalayan tragedies into one section and under a single moral would be a like improvement, as also the completing of the sequels of the Alpine tragedies in other than footnotes. There is in fact an over-weighting of these modernist examples, and, well as they are told, we would gladly exchange one or two for more of Mr. Meade's own adventures. The more so because of the exceptionally high quality, both as stories and as literature, of a number of the studies.

Two indeed deserve especial notice, 'A Neglected Pastime' and 'A Christmas Enterprise.' The first of these describes a casual balloon-drift across France, the sounds and silences of night and dawn, and a revelation of Mont Blanc through snow clouds at morning. The second tells of the bringing of a Christmas tree to the children of Bonneval, Pierre Blanc's village, in mid-winter. It would be difficult to overpraise the restraint and charm of these beautifully written studies. They are short masterpieces of the open air, of movement, of economic description. In the second, a few words suffice to suggest in a succession of pictures the people, the costumes, the way of living, the winter perils and hardship, the vigil of the children in the dark, and the sudden flaring up of the magical tree. With real art we are not left at that usual point of high colour in a Christmas story. The dispersal follows as swiftly, and we are returned to the reality of black, wintry, Alpine night.

Anyone who could write these stories or many of the witty pages of the Himalayan travels, with their shrewd understanding of the ways of men and mountains and touches of inner romance, would appear to owe an explanation to the mountaineering world for making it wait so long for this book. Certainly Mr. Meade will hardly be excused if he does not again, and soon, use his obvious gift upon his many untold Alpine adventures.

Edward Whymper. By Frank S. Smythe. Pp. x, 330, with illustrations and map. Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd., London, 1940. Price 21s. net.

By common consent Edward Whymper is the outstanding figure of the heroic age of Alpine exploration and conquest. But we may well ask, on what is this acknowledged claim to preeminence founded, on mere total of achievement, on method or on personality? As a youth Whymper climbed for five successive seasons in the Alps. In the course of these he reached a dozen summits and crossed half a dozen

passes, the great majority of these first ascents, and, more particularly, made six attempts to get up the Matterhorn by the Italian ridge before discovering the easier route from Zermatt. On these climbs he wrote a book which will always live as a classic of mountaineering adventure. But to all intents and purposes he gave up Alpine climbing at the age of twenty-five. Fifteen years later he spent six months in the Andes and made a number of laborious but not otherwise difficult ascents, only the highest, Chimborazo, exceeding 20,000 ft. The results of this expedition were embodied in a *magnum opus* of less general interest but of greater scientific importance than his *Scrambles*. For the rest of his days he attended to his business, lectured and wrote guide books on Zermatt and Chamonix, visiting the Alps regularly to collect fresh details for new editions or moneys due on their sale. The older generation of members of the Club will recall him as a rather unapproachable, often morose and increasingly crotchety *habitué* of Alpine resorts—‘one-third hero, one-third old bachelor, one-third mysterious man of business,’ to quote one of the kindlier descriptions of the Whymper of those later years.

How do these three Whympers belong together and which of them constitutes his claim to greatness? These are the questions to which Mr. Smythe's *Life* affords as near an answer as is ever likely to be given. With the help of much material carefully collected and, above all, of Whymper's own diaries, beginning before he was fifteen, he gives us a Whymper, more or less continuous, more or less ‘in the round,’ yet even so still very much of an enigma. The key to that enigma, in Mr. Smythe's view, is to be found in the repression and inhibition of his boyhood days. He finds in the diary the cry of an imprisoned soul, the early atrophy of a spirit tied down to dull and monotonous work, of a keen intelligence denied greatness by stifling of the intuitive, sensitive, human element. Mr. Smythe may be right. But diaries are by no means sure guides to character. For some they are opportunities for self-expression, for others just a jotted chronicle of the day's events, with or without casual comment, and affording little clue to the diarist's character or emotions. The present reviewer discovered only the other day a forgotten diary of his first two years at Oxford, almost the happiest and spiritually most exciting of his life; laziness or the absence of striking events made it as bald as young Whymper's, and he can only hope that no future biographer will read into it the early atrophy of a stifled soul.

It is equally possible to read into the young Whymper's diary nothing more than the ordinary daily jottings of an intelligent boy who found routine work a little boring, who followed public affairs with shrewd insight, who enjoyed both playing and watching cricket, and could even deign to note his passing interest in an attractive girl. Two things, however, do stand out from the diary and from the life behind it. One is that Whymper's youth was spent in and moulded by the continuous exercise of an artistic craft demanding incessant concentration on detail. The other is an ill-defined ambition to be something great,

'the person of my day, perhaps Prime Minister, at least a millionaire,' and to be recognised. Ardent ambition thwarted by circumstances and then cramped and eventually submerged by the instinct for meticulous detail—that is, perhaps, the nearest to any general summary of Whymper's life that one can arrive at.

At the age of twenty Whymper was sent out to the Alps by Longman's to provide illustrations for a book, and in pursuit of his task visited Saas Fee, Zermatt, Chamonix and the Dauphiné. He saw more than enough to inspire him with a love for the glories of Alpine scenery. What is more, he came in contact with a new world, the world of the men who were exploring and conquering the Alps with a zest and a passion which it is difficult to recall. No new ranges today, whatever their height or difficulty, can give the thrill that the Alps gave when mountaineering, as such, was new. What a field for boyish ambition! Whymper threw himself into it heart and soul, helped by unequalled bodily strength and, what is more, by a systematic, methodical mind which soon realised that the essence of mountaineering success is proper planning and prevision, and by a practical, mechanical turn that made him naturally devise implements and devices helpful to his task. From the first he planned, reconnoitred and worked out all his ascents himself. Guides were there to carry out their execution in detail, but they were always his ascents. And for him they were only worth while if they were first ascents.

Two first ascents, above all, appealed to him from the first, the Weisshorn and the Matterhorn, and it was truly characteristic of his outlook that as soon as he heard that Tyndall had conquered it, 'my interest in the Weisshorn abated,' and his whole heart and mind concentrated on the Matterhorn. This at first sight he had compared to a sugar loaf with its head knocked on one side and as grand but not beautiful. But for five years it became the supreme interest in his life, the goal of his ambition. Other lesser climbs were mere interludes, training exercises taken with the great end in view. But even these were hardly worth while if they had been ascended before. He never troubled to try the Weisshorn, though ranking it first for beauty in all the Alps, and even his ascent of the Dent Blanche was only undertaken because it was uncertain whether Kennedy had actually reached the summit.

The story of those five seasons is well summarised by Mr. Smythe, in so far as Whymper's *Scrambles* can bear summarising. To the account of the accident on the Matterhorn which closed Whymper's Alpine career he adds little, for the simple reason that there is little to be added. The reasons are, after all, fairly simple. The technique of roped climbing was still in its infancy. What are today elementary rules, namely, not to climb more than three or four on a rope and to let the weakest climber go first on the descent, were not yet fully realised. If Hadow had gone down first his slip would have been instantaneously checked by Croz, and the rest of the party might never even have noticed or heard of it. As for the use of the weak rope by old Peter

Taugwalder laziness is surely sufficient explanation. The front four were already roped on one of the two good ropes; Whymper and young Taugwalder were a little way behind with the other. Sooner than bother the front four to undo themselves and rearrange the rope to include him, or wait for Whymper to rejoin the party, he tied himself on to those in front with the extra rope he was carrying, and then let Whymper tie on to him when he caught up.

One part of Whymper's story of the disaster the present reviewer can corroborate from his own experience. The same halo circle with crosses inside (only if my memory serves me right arranged more like a Maltese cross) was seen from the Italian shoulder in the same quarter at the same late hour of the afternoon in 1927. Mr. Smythe has unearthed contemporary comments to illustrate not only the thrill of horror which the disaster evoked, but the general attitude of reprobation towards so reprehensibly rash a pursuit as mountaineering. What has, perhaps, even more direct bearing on Whymper's life is the fact that he was not only terribly shaken at the time—his whole account of the 'Taugwalders' attitude betrays this—but that all the criticism and innuendo that followed permanently embittered him.

So ended Whymper, the boy hero of Alpine adventure. To him, and, before he had lost him out of mind for good, the largely sated and partly disillusioned Whymper of the next few years erected the finest memorial ever dedicated to a mountaineer and to his adventuring in *Scrambles amongst the Alps*. Mr. Smythe has done well to reprint Mr. Geoffrey Winthrop Young's admirable review of *Scrambles* in the *Cornhill* of 1923. The work is, no doubt, that of an egoist, but not of a self-conscious one. It is, to quote Mr. Young, 'the lifelike presentation of a flinty mountain and a steely Whymper in continuous concussion, the whole illuminated by the firework of sparks which they strike out of one another. . . . All the time he is shouting at us: "These are the mountains and this is me, and thus went the truth that passed between us." ' All that is true, but what is also true is that *Scrambles* is full of exuberant life, of avid intellectual interest, of a passionate feeling for natural beauty, of human likes and dislikes, of generous appreciation.

It is difficult to read the book and agree with Mr. Smythe that this Whymper was already warped and stifled in soul. It is still more difficult to draw that conclusion from the wonderful portrait of Whymper at twenty-five. That face, so utterly unlike all later ones, is the face of a young Achilles or Alexander, sensitive, spiritual, shining with the fire of conquest.² If there were cramping influences in youth they were, at any rate for that brief flowering of high adventure, latent, and only began to reassert themselves in the disappointments and the routine of subsequent years. And if he loved climbing less for itself than for the victories to be won, he was in this, after all, the natural embodiment of that age. That is why he, the boy *conquistador*, has rightly maintained and will always maintain his preeminence.

² See portrait *A. J.* 26. facing p. 55.

The rest is aftermath. For a while he toyed with a new ambition and went off twice to Greenland. From a single-handed venture, and that by one unversed in ski-ing or Arctic sledging, conspicuous triumphs could hardly be expected, and in that sense at least the expeditions were disappointing. On the other hand, they afforded abundant scope for the scientific side of Whymper's mind and for his rapidly growing passion for accumulating and recording detail. The Andes offered a more congenial field, and one might speculate what Whymper might have achieved there, or in the Himalaya, if he had turned to high altitude climbing in his younger years. By 1880 the stubborn will was still there. But it was already accompanied by much of the less amiable traits of later years, and interest in climbing had become a secondary thing to the methodical recording of physiological and geological facts.

The really significant thing is that while Whymper took five years to bring out his *Scrambles*, he took ten to bring out his *Great Andes of the Equator*. Making all allowances for the preoccupations of his business as a wood engraver, even the first of these was far too long a period for a normal person to convert his mountain diaries into a book. The fire of ambition, once dimmed, was never again to blaze out through the heaped up ashes of detail. From the *Scrambles* via the Andean *magnum opus* to the local guide books and the making of footpaths round tourist resorts in the Rockies was a natural, perhaps inherently inevitable decline. The writer only knew him in that last phase, a taciturn, grumpy, but not altogether unkindly Nestor in whom it was difficult to divine anything of the young Achilles who fell at the fall of Troy, whose spirit never recovered from that day of victory and disaster on the Matterhorn. For linking so skilfully and understandingly the one to the other the whole mountaineering world owes Mr. Smythe a debt of gratitude.

The Adventures of a Mountaineer. By Frank Smythe. 8½ × 5½, pp. vii, 228, illustrations. J. M. Dent & Sons, London, 1940. Price 7s. 6d. net.

HERE we have at a popular price and adapted for reading by the uninitiated the stories of Mr. Smythe's most famous climbs. Previous works of his have already enabled us to be present in spirit and comfortably absent in body in a great storm on the Schreckhorn, on the first climb up Mont Blanc by the Red Sentinel route, under the threatening ice cliffs of Kangchenjunga and on the breathlessly high slopes of Kamet and Everest. These are adventures that may be read not once nor twice only.

Mr. Smythe is writing for those who have to be told what a gendarme is, so his experiences provide plenty of opportunity for instruction on mountain craft, for short purple patches of description and for occasional glimpses of mysticism in the mountain creed. We are left in no doubt at all that mountaineering as Frank Smythe has pursued it is a very exciting sport and that luck intervenes to save its votaries with encouraging frequency, and he is ungrudging in his praise of the

rewards it brings. Among the minor rewards he seems to be exceptional in associating perfect appreciation of a plateful of soup and mutton with the higher reaches of Everest.

There are indications of rather hurried writing which may pass unnoticed by the readers for whom the book is primarily produced. For instance, on pp. 86-88 there is a very detailed description of an exciting incident on 'my hardest rock climb'; was it necessary to insert the footnote on p. 86 which ends: 'my memory of the subsequent incident is strangely hazy'? And on the same climb there is a passage describing the bivouac and the spiritual exaltation induced by it: 'we forgot for a while our bodies, so small and frail, so susceptible to cold and fatigue, and trod for a while the boundary of things knowable and things unknowable.' And in the very next paragraph we are told that 'bodily frailty so often blunts spiritual enjoyment . . . And so it was with us.' And what is 'a mere wrinkle'? On p. 89 it is 'little over a yard wide'; on p. 95 it is a 'tiny finger scrape.' Is it quite wise that novices should be told on such high authority that it is the stretch in the rope 'more than anything else that contributes to safety in mountaineering'? Is it quite in accord with the accounts of the Everest expeditions of 1922 and 1924 to say that they 'experienced no great difficulty in climbing' the North Col?

As usual, we get admirable pictures from the author's camera. The photo of the Schreckhorn has been converted into a stark black and white picture, in keeping with the terrors of the text. No figure on steep rocks has ever been more perfectly in focus than that of J. H. B. Bell on Ben Nevis; and the text lets us believe that his almost seraphic expression would still be there after he climbed the next few feet. The picture of the party going up the North Col under Everest, with the leader right on his toes, shows how blithely men can go without oxygen. And it was right to end with a near view of the top of Everest and the grim rocks of the couloir where Smythe and three others have had to turn back, a thousand feet below their goal. When we read that last chapter and see this picture we shall come as near as most of us will ever get to saying with the author: 'I trod the very boundaries of life and death on the topmost pinnacle of the earth's surface.'

A Camera in the Hills. By F. S. Smythe. 75 illustrations; pp. 147. London: A. and C. Black, 1939. Price 12s. 6d.

THIS is a companion volume to *The Mountain Scene* and *Peaks and Valleys*, reviewed in *A.J.* 49. 296 and 50. 344. The praise previously awarded can be given in fullest measure to the present work, while the reproduction of the really beautiful views is once more magnificent. The author has saved us any possible criticism of the illustrations by a full review of any failings in the letterpress facing the picture. We have heard that he is not quite satisfied with the tone of all the photographs; he considers that the shadowed portions are reproduced too darkly. Whatever be the author's opinion, we can assure the purchaser of this work that he will be satisfied—entirely.

It is quite superfluous for a reviewer to express his personal preferences on this superb collection, but from a strictly mountaineering standpoint we should like to draw especial attention to the views of the Aiguille de Bionnassay and Dôme de Miage (Plates xlvii–liii). Plate xlix is perhaps as fine a view of a narrow snow arête as ever taken. Plate li has also the appeal of an unstudied example of every possible fault committed by an unfortunate ladies' party in the descent. No wonder Mr. Smythe himself awaited an accident, and yet the illustration represents but the easiest part of the descent to the Col de Bionnassay! In Plate I it is not quite clear whether a figure is intended to be seen mounting on the N.W. slope of the peak. The Innominata views are unique as well as beautiful, while the plates of Scottish scenery are full of atmospheric—and natural—effect.

The letterpress is adequate and the price reasonable. Fortunate is the possessor of the three volumes.

Peaks and Lamas. By Marco Pallis. Colour plate, illustrations, maps. London: Cassell & Co. 1939. 18s.

THE author went to the Himalaya first in 1933 in order to climb at the source of the Ganges and later in the Sutlej basin; during that visit a spark was kindled that illumined his journey in 1936 with a brighter flame, when both in Sikkim and Ladakh peaks gave way to Lamas.

The chief merits of the book, therefore, are the author's earnestness and his capacity to interpret the difficulties of Buddhist Tradition to the Western mind. Pallis is far from the first to attempt such a task, but by explaining the 'Round' step by step, as it was revealed by master to pupil, he has produced an extremely clear exposition of Buddhist thought, especially when one remembers that at no time did he benefit from residence at a truly Tibetan monastery. Occasionally, but not often, the author allows his enthusiasm to lead him astray, and one cannot help thinking that he would have been better advised to keep strictly to the Tradition and its teaching, and not to attempt comparisons with Western religion. It is hardly fair to compare the doctrine expounded in a monastery garden with that practised in crowded cities of the West, such as Liverpool. The contrast in environment is too great. More than once he permits his exuberance in his new discovery to be definitely unfair, as for instance in his remarks about Christian missions. It is manifestly unsafe for one who has spent less than two years in the East to generalise and condemn (p. 196), and it is certain that here the author has lapsed from his general rule to abide by his own self-imposed standard of first-hand observation. I have a feeling that the Hermit Abbot of Lachhen would have prescribed the first antidote to the first poison of the 'Round.' The author also has some harsh things to say about the decadence of Tibetan art in these antechambers of Tibet, ascribing it altogether to the influence of Western contact, which appears to him to be almost unrelievedly bad; one is almost led to believe that the lice in the

Mulbekh rest-house were left there by Britons. If comparisons are made, it would have been fairer to set forth the good and the evil on both sides. One may, if one accepts the Buddhist Tradition, agree with the Lama who explained that Pallis shows unmistakable signs of having been a Tibetan in a previous existence.

In the reviewer's opinion, it is this onesidedness that mars an otherwise remarkable book. Would this Tradition, protected by almost inaccessible mountains and deserts, with a lenient and sympathetic, though much maligned, Indian Government on one side of it, survive for long in parts of Europe to-day? Is the practice of the Tradition followed so strictly outside the monastic country of Tibet? Cannot similar peace and seclusion be found within the walls of many a Christian monastery, for those who wish to escape the pleasures—and the trials—of twentieth-century England? These are random thoughts.

I have said that peaks gave precedence to Lamas in the course of the author's journeys. So it is in the recording. There is a certain lack of exactness of detail, an unawareness of Himalayan history, a certain egotism in the mountaineering story. Himalayan climbing is older than 1933; and, if in that year the topography of the Gangotri glaciers was not fully known, the Pallis expedition³ did little to elucidate it. How often must one impress upon the Himalayan novice that he cannot have it both ways; he cannot claim to be an explorer and yet expect to find an accurate map. The Survey of India has indeed now completed a detailed map of all this region, and it is a pity that no account has been taken of it. The same errors of identification that were made in 1933 are repeated here. Satopanth is more than four miles distant from the peak climbed by Kirkus and Warren, which was presumably the one shown on the new map in the Bhagirathi group with a height of 21,176 feet. The heights given in Chapter IV must be several hundred feet too high.

Peaks and Lamas is not an easy book to review. The author has taken an infinity of trouble and has been well supported by his publishers. If the reviewer differs from the treatment of some of the questions raised it is because a much longer sojourn in the East may have taught him to see something of both sides of a problem.

KENNETH MASON.

The Everlasting Hills. By J. Waller ('J. W.'). 8 $\frac{3}{8}$ " by 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ ". Pp. xii, 190. Illustrations, sketch-maps. William Blackwood & Sons, Ltd., Edinburgh, 1939. Price 15s. net.

THIS is a book about the climbing of mountains, but it will appeal to others besides the mountaineer. It tells of the successive expeditions, mostly Himalayan, which have been at once the cause and the outcome of Captain Waller's development from a complete climbing tyro to a mountaineer who, having tackled two 25,000-ft. peaks, now

³ *A.J.* 46. 306 sqq.

considers himself to have 'gained enough experience to be able to attempt something more ambitious.'

The book is free from dull detail of routes, stores and equipment, and its straightforward style, its flashes of humour—frequently at the expense of the author himself—and its many and excellent photographs, make it a worthy addition to the literature of mountains and adventure.

Apart from a week or two of guided climbing from Arolla when he was seventeen years of age, Waller really began climbing five years later in 1933, when he spent two months in the Kashmir 'Alps' with an inexperienced Kashmiri youth as his only companion. The high spot of these climbs was the ascent of the 16,400-ft. Buttress Peak.⁴ This season confirmed his love of mountains and inspired him with sufficient confidence to attempt, the following year, to climb Nun, a 23,400-ft. peak in Ladakh, with another equally inexperienced Army subaltern. They made mistakes and were badly equipped, but wisely took few risks, and although they failed to climb Nun they reached the summit of a subsidiary peak of 22,000 ft. From this climb Waller learned much and first became convinced of the importance of diet on Himalayan expeditions.

In 1935 he organised a much more ambitious attempt, with a party of four and two Sherpa porters, on Peak 36 (Saltoro Kangri), 25,400 ft., in the Karakoram.⁵ The help of a medical man was called in and for this climb a more scientific diet was evolved. The party reached a height of 23,500 ft. but were driven back by bad weather. The following year Waller decided to go to Switzerland and 'learn to climb.' The reader is left to draw his own conclusions regarding the lessons learnt. Owing to unrest on the N.W. Frontier, Waller's 1937 climbing was restricted to the Kashmir mountains, but in 1938 he organized his biggest project to date, an expedition to Masherbrum,⁶ 25,660 ft., also in the Karakoram range. The author's gift for organisation was exercised to the full on this expedition; every detail was considered and modified in the light of past experience; equipment was of the best; the climbing party stronger; more high altitude porters were engaged, and the rations were again modified and at last met with approval. Dr. G. A. J. Teasdale, who was responsible for the diet, believes that wrong feeding is largely to blame for mountain sickness and high altitude deterioration,⁷ and this claim and the virtues of his diet—which seem to lie in the balance of various foods rather than in special ingredients—seem to have been substantiated on Masherbrum, for the party, who varied greatly in age, physical characteristics and previous high altitude experience, all kept remarkably fit and did not even suffer from headaches.

One feels that on Masherbrum Waller considers that his previous experiences had been brought to maturity, and it is ironical that the expedition on which disaster was most narrowly escaped should have

⁴ *H. J.* vi. 132.

⁶ *A. J.* 50. 199 *sqq.*

⁵ *H. J.* viii. 14 *sqq.*; *A. J.* 50. 3.

⁷ *H. J.* xi. 57 *sqq.*

been this—the one on which the human element was the strongest—for a serious accident to two climbers forced a retreat when a height of 25,000 ft. had been reached and chances of success seemed bright.

A word must be said about the excellent photographs in this book. There are sixty-four beautiful, full-page plates which add greatly to the interest of the book, the subjects of which range from domestic scenes in Balti villages to panoramas of magnificent mountains. Incidentally, the title of Plate 56 should refer to Plate 57, and *vice versa*.⁸

Finally, this book should be an inspiration to young men with a hankering for adventure, for it shows what can be achieved in a very short time by one with no initial qualifications except enthusiasm and no exceptional advantages of wealth or opportunity.

Mountains in Flower. By Volkmar Vareschi and Ernst Krause. With 72 illustrations. Lindsay Drummond, London, 1939. Price 10s. 6d. net.

IN *Mountains in Flower* Mr. Vareschi has approached his subject from an angle different from that of any Alpine book with which I am acquainted. He has set out to catch the spirit of the mountains, and his tales of the hills are made the pegs on which he hangs an amazing amount of erudite botanical observations; this information is given in simple language that can be perfectly understood by non-botanical readers. Some of these observations have a definite bearing on mountaineering, as for instance, the fact that the Moonwort that dislikes the full noontide sun on its leaves arranges them to lie parallel with the plane of the sun at noon; so if you are befogged without a compass all you have to do is to find a Moonwort when you can at once determine your compass bearings. Another useful bit of information is, that the juice of a divided Houseleek is a handy and quick remedy for a wasp-sting; but there is a wealth of botanical observation on almost every page, the knowledge of which adds greatly to the interest of the plants and flowers that one meets with on one's climbs. There is no attempt in the text to describe the plants illustrated, but in an appendix each plant mentioned in the text is briefly described: its family, distribution, and mode of growth, and the place where the photograph was taken are mentioned. The recognition of the plants is left to the photographs, and here Mr. Vareschi is finely backed up by Mr. Krause, whose photographs are wonderful. I doubt if such a collection of studies of alpine plants *in situ* has ever been brought together before. These pictures are most artistic and at the same time absolutely accurate, and they have frequently as a background the mountains near which they were growing. Those who are familiar with the Dolomites will readily recognise old friends. In many of the pictures the plants are considerably enlarged, which I think is a pity, for to the uninitiated they will, I feel sure, prove confusing; for instance, *Eritrichium nanum* is

⁸ Owing to the author's departure on active service, certain misprints were not corrected in the final revision. It should be noted that the titles and pictures of Plates 27 and 28 should be interchanged, and that the titles of Plates 57 and 60 should be as for Plates 60 and 56.

enlarged two and a half times, and the result is out of character. The same applies to *Potentilla nitida* and *Soldanella pusilla* and many others ; and the good photograph of *Gentiana acaulis* seems to me to be quite spoilt by being twice the natural size and makes the flowers seem coarse, while the colour photograph of the same plant on the frontispiece, which is natural size, is altogether satisfying and is surely the most perfect colour representation of this plant that has ever been made. I strongly recommend all mountaineers to read this book ; those who know their plants and have some botanical knowledge will find a great many new observations to interest them, and those who have no special botanical experiences will, I believe, be stimulated to observe the plants they meet on their scrambles, and to take a greater interest in their ways of life.

H. R. ROGER-SMITH.

Tragédies Alpestres. By Charles Gos. Pp. v, 402, with 30 illustrations. Les Editions de France, Paris, 1940. Price, frs. 50.

MOUNTAINEERING accidents are unfortunate not merely for their sadness but because they give rise to the worst form of sensationalism in literature. Paul Hervieu coined a hideous catchword, 'l'Alpe Homicide,' which is a regular summer migrant to newspaper headlines. Journalists have little knowledge of mountains and mountain accidents, and their accounts of fatal falls in Alpine districts are often fit only for Hollywood film plots akin to the egregious *Piz Palü* and *Storm on Mont Blanc*.⁹

Charles Gos' book conveys a totally different impression. His knowledge of mountains is wide and exhaustive. He has climbed most, if not all of the peaks he describes. His tales throw a new light on stories dulled by heavy or numerous repetitions. They are no longer newspaper cuttings : they recover their true meaning, the end of a human destiny. And not a sudden end : an Alpine accident is often the result of a slow process. The paths to salvation close one after another with a queer, deliberate perversity. The victims, it seems, have ample time to choose between life and death, and they choose death at leisure, not knowing what their choice means until it is too late. Charles Gos shows the working of a slow, resistless Alpine predestination, dreadful indeed, but as presented here neither gruesome nor repulsive. He points out in his preface that, 'on the heights, the most appalling form of death always borrows some majesty and poetry from the surrounding landscape.' He even discovers a sort of silver lining to that darkest aspect of mountaineering in 'the fine quality of the friendship which unites the climber with his guide. For months each year, often during a whole lifetime, a man from the city will entrust his life to a man from the mountains. Together, they face unchained forces, endure the worst hardships and time and again look death in the face. . . Through the whole history of mountaineering, British climbers have given

⁹ Cf. *A.J.* 43. 390, with further references.

magnificent and touching instances of this friendship. More than others, they have understood the worth of those simple men and have appreciated their charm and their inward refinement. . . In almost every Alpine cemetery you will find some simple memorial dedicated by climbers to their dead guide.'

The author has painted several pictures which cannot be easily forgotten. The most impressive pages are 'Des morts à la Dent Blanche' and 'Un bas-relief s'écroule,' two accidents which took place on the Dent Blanche: the fall of W. E. Gabbett and the two Lochmatters on the Ferpècle face, with an impressive closing scene—the guides of the search party, kneeling in the snow round the three corpses and singing a prayer in the midst of a raging blizzard—and the fall of Owen Glynne Jones and his three guides from the Ferpècle arête, with the awful description of the short desperate struggle of the leading guide attempting to climb a rock step, his failure and the ensuing tragedy.

Alpine historians will find sheer delight in reading the notes at the end of each chapter. Charles Gos has gone to every known source and a few hitherto unknown, unpublished documents which he has discovered. The result is that almost every single detail is founded on documentary evidence and is thoroughly reliable. The book is history all over, without lapse into fiction.

The photographs are magnificent. Most of them come from Emile Gos or Vittorio Sella. Yet the most interesting is one by Ugo de Amicis, which shows Guido Rey standing in front of Carrel's memorial cross in Riondé.