

REVIEWS

Mountaineering Holiday. By Frank S. Smythe. Pp. xi, 229. Illustrations, sketch-map. Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1940. Price 12s. 6d.

MR. SMYTHE'S new work is one of the best books he has written so far and will be immensely appreciated by most of his readers as a record of what may be considered, according to contemporary standards, climbs which may well come within the scope of the more enterprising climbers of the present day. The various expeditions are described in a delightfully simple and straightforward manner without being overloaded with too much detail of the actual climbing, and the sometimes tedious philosophising in which Mr. Smythe often indulges is kept within reasonable bounds. Mr. Smythe was fortunate in his choice of a companion and he and Capt. Gavin may be congratulated on a remarkably interesting sequence of varied climbs in a single season.

Mr. Smythe shows clearly that he is a true lover of the mountains in the best sense of the words. He does not ascend them for the mere sake of climbing them and, although we know that he has a splendid record of mountaineering achievement, he is able to extract the utmost enjoyment from easy climbs and from the incidental features of the scenery of the higher regions which are a closed book to those who do not penetrate to them.

We are glad to note that Mr. Smythe draws special attention to the dangers incurred by the misuse of crampons; also that he appreciates the value of the really first-class guide at his true worth.

Just by way of slight criticism, we venture the opinion that Chapter I does not make a very good beginning. Mr. Smythe indulges in generalisations which are not always fair or accurate and certainly without much interest. The first part of this chapter might with advantage have been considerably cut down. Incidentally we must confess complete ignorance of what the word 'Paridownercarplee' (quoted on p. 9) may mean.

In Chapter II Mr. Smythe quotes from Whymper's *Scrambles amongst the Alps* a so-called dramatic episode during the first passage of the Col de la Pilatte when one of the party, Jean Reynaud, was said to have made a somewhat ignominious jump over the bergschrund. We would like to refer Mr. Smythe to A. W. Moore's account of the same incident in *The Alps in 1864*, which definitely differs from Whymper's version. Furthermore, we believe that there is somewhere a record of an indignant denial by Reynaud himself.

As might be expected, the book is illustrated by a number of magnificent photographs all taken during this holiday by Mr. Smythe himself.

The map facing p. 136 shows evidence of careless treatment with regard to the spelling of the names, many of which on the Italian side are given partly in French and partly in Italian. It would have been

simpler to have given them all their French names, by no means out of place in the case of a French-speaking district. In any case, if Italian nomenclature were adopted, 'M^t Bianco' should be 'M^{te} Bianco.'

British Hills and Mountains. By J. H. B. Bell, E. F. Bozman and J. Fairfax Blakeborough. Pp. 115, with 99 illustrations. B. T. Batsford, London, 1940. Price 8s. 6d. net.

FOR such a broth three cooks are none too many. So far from spoiling it, they have helped to preserve its many distinctive flavours. Scotland is rightly given priority of position and space; her 'munros' outnumber many times the few rivals south of the Tweed which push their heads above 3000 ft.

Dr. Bell has packed an immense amount of information into the Scottish section, which occupies a little more than half the book. He starts us in the Southern Uplands and does not finish with Suilven and the Northern Highlands till he has taken us an almost bewildering series of attractive excursions in the hills that lie between. He writes for walkers whose suitable equipment proclaims them mountaineers according to the definition given by Mr. Bozman: 'a person who, when he or she sees a mountain or a hill, tends to want to get to the top of it.' The places delectable to rock climbers are clearly indicated, and the invitation to find what Dr. Bell himself has found in them is cordial, but it is not his job to show how it is done. He gives wise warnings about the effects of mist and frost on ridges like that running from Beinn Nuis to Suidhe Fhearghas in Arran, which a party with a few days' scrambling experience might traverse on a fine warm day without finding any difficulty. These Scottish pages are so full of practical advice based on personal knowledge that there is little room for more. Moreover, Dr. Bell knows that the only way to find out whether a prospect or an excursion really pleases is to go and see. One reference to the main ridge of the Coolins is enough to show that he is a sure guide and no vain talker: 'The finest rock-climbing expedition in Britain is to traverse all these peaks in one day . . . I have been over it twice, at an interval of eleven years, and trust I may be fortunate enough to repeat the expedition. . . . We returned to Glen Brittle late in the evening and were rather stumped for a reply when Mr. Macrae of the Lodge asked us, "What ever did you do it for?"'

Mr. Bozman has fewer imperious mountain beauties demanding his attention. He can devote more space to the individual character of the only two important groups in his section, the Lake Mountains and the Snowdon group. The former has bestowed favours in full measure on him. Reading his pages we are sure without the convincing proof of illustration 56 that the rock is made for climbing, and without illustration 61 that the prospect may be serene and friendly, and that the weather may be hot and thirst-giving as well as wet. Variety of scenery is here concentrated as nowhere else: 'It is possible by ascending 100 ft., by turning a hairpin bend in a zigzag path, or by crossing

one of a thousand torrents, to change the panorama so radically that one seems to have walked into a new country.'

Snowdon and the mountains near it seem to have looked more sternly at him. He suggests that this may be due to their slightly greater height and to the human history associated with them. 'Wildness, and grandeur and desolation' is the impression they give. And the weather has been exceptionally unkind to him. 'My own impressions after a number of years begin and end with rain and wet winds, winter and summer.' He, like Dr. Bell, indicates the special attractions for climbers.

South and Central Wales are full of hills that often come near to being mountains, and Mr. Bozman does something to re-establish Plynlimmon in the position accorded to it by Victorian governesses; he considers it the finest viewpoint in Wales. With the co-operation of the photographers he brings out the manifold attraction of the hills that make no claim to be mountains, the Border hills of Wales, the Malvern hills, the high moors of the south-west and the Downs. He walks these hills because he loves them and he is not too stern a guide. 'I see no objection in principle even to the licensed houses on the top of Snowdon and Monte Rosa; nor would the Matterhorn or Mount Everest be so defiled in my opinion. But lake and valley scenery is another matter—it is sensitive and can easily be killed.' Rather shocking this, if it means that he has not visited Snowdon since the Summit hotel was removed!

Inserted between the excellent chapters on the Lake District and Snowdon is one by Mr. Fairfax Blakeborough on the Pennines and hills of the north-east. Nothing much for the rock-climber here. A party with ropes looking for new routes to fame in the Cleveland and Hambleton Hills was told, 'There's nowt na branter i' Bilsdale or Farndale than Whitemare cliff.' Pot-holing and egg-collecting on the coast cliffs of the East Riding are the only things that need a long rope. Makers of new routes in the Alps might note an item of equipment for the egg-collector: 'an old billycock hat padded with cotton wool protects his head from falling stones.' The real adventure of these hills is rambling, 'to make new discoveries in areas we thought we already thoroughly knew.'

The illustrations need more than a mere mention. In a remarkable degree they suggest the atmosphere of British hills of every kind, their serenity in sunshine, their quickly changing moods as the clouds pass over them, the mystery that gathers round the lochs that lie in their recesses. Mr. Robert M. Adam has been exceptionally fortunate in his portrayal of the Scottish mountains and knows how well the mantle of winter suits them.

One or two of the humbler hills (and the author who describes them) have been somewhat let down: the Wrekin by a thousand feet to 335 ft. and Pilsdon Pen in Dorset to 90 ft. There is an index which tells you the place of any hill or mountain in the text and, if it is so honoured, in the series of illustrations.

Bergkameraden. By members of the West Alpen Club. Pp. 271, illustrated. Zürich, Orell Füssli, 1940. Price 7 fcs. 50 c.

THE various members of the W.A.C. dedicate this entertaining work to their parent and well-beloved S.A.C. Dr. Oskar Hug in an excellent preface explains the origin of this Club within a Club and describes its numerous and worthy objectives. Briefly, we may state that the W.A.C. is 'a kind of counterblast to the German invasion' of the Western Alps. It is perhaps representative 'of a rather extreme school' of Swiss mountaineering, but a perusal of the numerous narratives of extremely difficult climbing reveals no trace of the spirit of national self-glorification.

The general get-up of the book is good, the print is European, while the 24 illustrations are nearly all quite admirable. Those of the Sciora di Fuori, *Schleierkante*, N.W. Gemelli buttress, Badile N. buttress (a magnificent air photo), another on the said buttress, Ushba, Aiguille Noire de Péteret, together with the well-known 'Sella' Caucasian photographs are of super-excellence, especially when the low cost of the book is considered.

Of the twenty narratives it is sufficient to state that all are very readable, especially those written by MM. E. R. Blanchet, Oskar Hug (note especially his Caucasus, 1910, story, pp. 154 *sqq.*), W. Weckert—*both* tales, H. Bernhard and Marcel Kurz, the last-named contributing a concise but striking picture of the Himalaya. H. Bernhard's contribution is among the most entertaining in the book, entitled 'A honeymoon trip on the N. buttress of Badile.' The story is extremely exciting: the writer, his wife and a friend, view from the crest of the said buttress an Italian party of five scaling the smooth and precipitous face in the angle between the N. buttress and E. arête. Away to the E. they see a German party nearly overwhelmed by stonefall on a N.W. buttress of the adjacent Cengalo. Our party, obviously a very competent one, duly attains the summit where a storm is raging. As so often has occurred, they also miss the easy but complicated descent of the S. face, are compelled to bivouac and, on day breaking, find themselves halfway down the difficult W. arête! Attaining the Badile hut, drenched and half-frozen, they are forced by the continuous storm to remain two nights. Finally, three mornings after their departure from Switzerland, they hear voices outside the hut. These belong to the survivors of the Italian face-climbing party, two of whose members are lying dead on the mountain.¹ Truly a 'case of the breaking of every æthic of mountaineering, save that of comradeship.'

'No possible return' is another great tale (pp. 99 *sqq.*) of adventure on the S. face of the Grosse Windgälle, as terrible a climb as any yet accomplished. Such also is the storming of Ushba, under its then conditions, by the same admirable mountaineer and writer, Herr Weckert (pp. 206 *sqq.*). Yet another exciting story is the conquest in one day of the S. arête of the Aiguille Noire de Péteret (pp. 180 *sqq.*), among the most difficult of climbs, yet elsewhere described,² from a different attitude of mind, as easy compared to the W. face!

¹ *A. J.* 49. 286,

² *A. J.* 48. 167, *R.M.* 1936, pp. 8-14.

Save for the absence of any form of index, and the persistent use of the objectionable form 'Kangchenzönga'—to say nothing of the vulgarised 'Kantsch'—we can both recommend the book warmly and congratulate our Swiss friends on their achievements.

Two Men in the Antarctic. An Expedition to Graham Land, 1920-1922. By T. W. Bagshawe. $8\frac{5}{8} \times 5\frac{1}{8}$. Pp. xxi, 292. Illustrations, panoramas, sketch maps. Cambridge University Press, London, 1939. Price 15s. net.

CLIMBERS have not as a rule been closely interested in Antarctic expeditions, though in recent years the advantage of knowing about polar equipment has certainly been of benefit on Mount Everest. Interest has probably increased, and the present book recounts an expedition in 1921, when the author, aged 19, and his companion, aged 20, chose to winter in the Antarctic rather than return with their leader when the original expedition plans proved impracticable. The two older men had made the mistake of trusting to a Norwegian whaler to land the party of four at a suitable base in the Weddell Sea, but the whalers naturally shunned any risk of pack-ice or of going to a quarter where they could not pursue their calling. The result was a choice of a hut site limited to a small area on the west side of Graham Land. Some attempts were made to find a practicable route across the Graham Land mountains to the original goal of the Weddell Sea, and when these failed the two leaders returned home. Their failure to find a crossing will no doubt be the subject of some comment from those accustomed to mountain travel, for it does not appear as if any determined attempt was made to pierce a way through a 100-mile length of coast, as only about 5 miles was examined on short motor boat reconnaissances. The two younger men resented the decision to abandon the expedition and preferred to take the risk of a winter in an improvised hut rather than return ingloriously. It was a bold decision, for neither had had previous experience either of warding off cold or of general outdoor self-sufficiency. They deserve all credit, and moreover, though the original expedition was stated to be a wintering one, it is evident that it lacked many winter necessities, such as variety of food, hut materials, proper tools, and so on. The two men made the most of what gear they had, and showed no little ingenuity in devising comforts, and Bagshawe has much to say in praise of Lester, his companion from the mercantile marine, whose habits were invariably ship-shape. Log books were kept of the weather and tides, and also of bird behaviour—the penguins providing the main source of study. This meant long spells of duty for a party of only two men, and makes a remarkable record. The travel area, however, was confined almost to hundreds of yards. With a companion trained in ice work, something more would no doubt have been possible, but the lack of a man with mountain experience was the retreating leader's mistake and no blame attaches to the two who remained at their post and in spite of forebodings successfully weathered a Robinson Crusoe winter.

J. M. WORDIE.

Schweizer im Himalaja. By André Roch, David Zogg, Fritz Steuri and Ernst Huber. Amstutz & Herdig. Zürich, 1939.

IN this book³ the four members of the 1939 Swiss expedition to Garhwal recount their achievements. They have much to tell, for their successes included the ascent of Dunagiri, one of the finest of natural ridge climbs, of Rataban and of Gauri Parbat. The expedition was sponsored by the *Schweizer Stiftung für ausseralpine Forschungen* which exists to facilitate the exploration by Swiss parties of distant mountain ranges; it is an organisation which British climbers may well envy.

The account is given by the four members of the expedition in turn, André Roch the leader, David Zogg and Fritz Steuri the two guides, and Ernst Huber the surveyor; and though the tale told in this form lacks something of the directness and cohesion of a personal account by one hand, it gives a simple and unaffected record of the journeys through the lovely Garhwal valleys, the first failure on Dunagiri, the party's quick adaptation to Himalayan conditions, and the successful ascent some days later, the climbs on Rataban and Gauri Parbat and finally the disastrous failure on Chaukhamba (Badrinath Peak). Handsome acknowledgment is made of the essential part played in the climbing by the native porters, and it is noteworthy that apart from the Sherpas, Dotial coolies were also used with great success. These, apparently without any special equipment, carried up to the camps on the Rhamani Glacier at 5000 m. and on the upper Kosa Glacier. A Lata man took part with Huber and a Sherpa in the ascent of Rataban.

The story ends with the account of the attempt on the N. face of Chaukhamba and of the avalanche which overwhelmed the camp and which all the Europeans and all but one of the Sherpas were lucky enough to survive. A Dotial porter who had joined the Sherpas in carrying to the high camp was also killed. A sad ending to an otherwise brilliantly successful undertaking.

The book is illustrated with many magnificent photographs.

Ramond. Carnets Pyrénéens. Tome iii (1793-1795). Tome iv (1795). Deuxième Carnet. $8\frac{3}{4} \times 5\frac{1}{4}$. Pp. 123 and 97. Éditions de l'Échauguette, Château-Fort de Lourdes. 1939.

VOLUMES III and IV containing the *Deuxième Carnet Pyrénéen*, printed on the finest Japanese paper, have been presented to the Club. Vol. III consists of the diaries from May 1793 to August 1795. In such a time of political disturbance there must necessarily be a great deal in the diaries that has nothing to do with mountain exploration; indeed, Ramond spent several months of the period in prison. The entry for Sunday, January 21, 1794, reads: 'Arrested with my sister at Gavarnie at 2 A.M.' A visit to the Chapelle de Héas above Gèdre occasions reflections on the superstitions of hill-folk, the avarice of priests and the need for tolerance. The Pic de Néouvielle is attempted, but faulty guiding leads the party to a minor summit, where they are cut off

³ See *A.J.* 52. 34 *sqq.*

from the base of the actual peak by a hopelessly steep scree slope covered with hard snow. There is a delightful glissade into the unknown in the track of avalanches, Ramond and his guide leaning on their sticks, the rest sitting. The volume ends with a pleasant comment on the existing map of the chain : ' May Heaven preserve the Pyrenees from an earthquake big enough to make the map correct ! '

Vol. IV deals with excursions in the valley of the Adour. Scotsmen will like his reference to their country in a description of the Campan valley, where the flocks are ' herded together in shapeless stone pens that might have been made by the savages of Caledonia.' Several pages are devoted to proving that the famous medicinal waters of Bagnères de Bigorre are a fraud, the warm ones *eau crue*, the cold ones *eau pure*. Ramond here writes rather as a householder of Barèges, the keen rival of Bagnères de Bigorre, than as a scientist in search of truth. The ascent of the Pêne du Liéris is the most interesting mountaineering item in the volume. Incidentally it would tell us that Ramond was a scientist and not a climber, as all right-minded men who climbed had then to be, even if we had not the lists of plants and rocks on his expeditions at such frequent intervals in the diaries. He seems to have been up the rocky, isolated Pic du Midi at least eight times, but he clearly prefers the Pêne du Liéris. This last was gained by a couloir where ' a thick layer of earth and vegetation provided soft treading for the feet. There were handholds everywhere. One ascends slowly, looking about and botanising and one arrives at the top laden with rare and magnificent plants.' And at the top : ' Instead of the hideous precipice which cuts off the Pic du Midi on all sides, a long succession of foothills connected the heights of the Liéris with the plain. On the former the traveller stops horror-stricken on the edge of the abyss which separates him from the world of men ; on the latter the eye rests confidently on the easy steps which lead down to the level of the pleasant country spread out below.' The references to Mont Perdu in the diaries do not suggest the burning desire to make the first ascent with which Ramond has been often credited.