

THE CUD COUNTRY.—The following letter has been received from a correspondent at Rumbelbellipore, C.P. :

‘The ALPINE JOURNAL speaks with the authority of age and experience, and its word on anything connected with mountaineering is usually accepted as Holy Writ, even in Scottish mountaineering circles. This hard won reputation for infallibility prompts me to draw the attention of the Editor to a curious lapse in the May number. How far the Editor is responsible for the blunders of his contributors is not for me to say ; no doubt, in questions of grammar or taste he has the last word, but in questions of fact his critical faculties are liable to be lulled to sleep by the repute of the contributor.

In *A. J.* 55. 236 Mr. Smythe writes : “A new word was coined for the Bens and Braes ; they became the ‘Cuds,’ a good Lancashire word, I understand.” May I say that the word in question is neither Lancashire nor good, and although ignorance of Lancashire dialect, while it may be deplored, is not to be censured, it is another matter to give such random unchecked statements the stamp of truth by printing them in the JOURNAL. There was no need for Mr. Smythe to consult his Lancashire friends, of whom the writer is one, or any of the books on Lancashire dialect, of which there are many. The word so dear to his suffering pupils was really “Khud,” a word current in the hills of India meaning a hillside or steep slope, imported into the Army’s vocabulary and widely used there. One has to be no great conjurer to discover this, no great student of Himalayan literature, no philologist, crossword expert or Oriental savant.

No, there is no excuse for this oversight. When this paragraph was penned and subsequently printed, the King of the Cuds was careless and you, Sir, were asleep.’

Guilty, m’lud !
I chewed the cud.
On ben and brae and bonny hill
The Editor must frank the bill.

GIFT.—Dr. J. Monroe Thorington of Philadelphia (Hon. Member of the A.C.) has presented to the A.C. Library the MS. of Mrs. Mark Beaufoy’s diary of her journey in the Oberland in 1787, the text of which appeared in *A. J.* 40. 261 *sqq.* For this most interesting and generous gift, we desire to express to the donor our most cordial thanks.

REVIEWS

The Delectable Mountains: By Douglas Busk. Pp. 288, with 36 pp. of illustrations and 4 maps. Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd., London, 1946. Price 21s.

EVERY mountaineering book is in some measure an autobiography, showing the writer mirrored in the manner of his climbing, his choice of companion and his written or unwritten comments, and those books

in which the autobiographical thread has been strongest have often been the most satisfying. Douglas Busk's book follows in this tradition, telling without affectation and equally without that stilted impersonality which has sometimes been affected the story of his own development as a mountaineer. The background is clearly drawn: early days at Eton, visits to the Continent to learn languages, the Oxford University Mountaineering Club in the twenties, and the sequence of appointments in the Diplomatic Service. And the secondary figures of the story too, guides, climbing friends and chance travelling companions, are real people seen with a sympathetic eye, men who can talk as well as belay the rope.

The book is well called *The Delectable Mountains*, for it is indeed a story, smoothly told, of the pleasures of the hills sampled with a connoisseur's choice: first ventures in Engadine and Pyrenees, the finding of a companion in Armand Charlet and many happy expeditions with him in the Mont Blanc group, visits to the American and Canadian Rockies, climbs in Persia and South Africa, and, not least, winter and summer skiing in many places.

At a time when guided climbing is becoming the exception, the author's account of his climbing and skiing companionship with Armand Charlet is of special value, a reminder that the professional can still have much to offer to the serious climber. An outstanding episode in the book is the lyrical account of a lazy day revisiting with Charlet the Grands Charmoz, scene of their first climb together. To those pent up in England for six years of war the greatest interest is, however, in the description of travel and climbing in Persia, including an ascent of the 18,000 ft. Demavend and two attempts on Takht-i-Suleiman in the Elburz chain.

The reviewer's copy was without the forty odd photographs and the maps with which the book is illustrated. There is a chapter of technical notes on mountain photography.

PETER LLOYD.

When Men and Mountains meet. By H. W. Tilman. Pp. 232, with 54 photographs, and 6 sketch maps. Cambridge University Press, 1946. Price 15s.

THIS book is not always about mountains, but you feel the mountains in the background all the time, even when they are far out of sight and the eye can see nothing but the flat sands of the Libyan desert.

After a few expeditions in the Himalaya, Tilman takes us with him to his risky and romantic life among the guerrillas of Albania and North Italy, and we end up with victory in the streets of Belluno. Yet the book is not a mere scrapbook of reminiscences, as some writers would have made it, but is a consistent whole, bound together by the personality of the author. If ever there was anybody whose life among the mountains qualified him for the rough, anxious, nerve-racking work of 'special service' among guerrilla patriots, that man is Tilman. Some of his friends may have laughed at him for his tendency to carry

underequipment to extremes ; but few of them would have stood, as he was able to stand, this sort of life. Many more of his friends admired and envied his ability to live on the country and to make himself completely at home in the most outlandish places. And when he is dropped by parachute in some wild spot in the Dolomites and has to wait several months before the next visit of a plane with a pair of socks or a tin of biscuits, one cannot help feeling that there is nobody in the world who was better fitted for that sort of situation than our friend Tilman.

He writes, as usual, with a degree of understatement which is very welcome in these days of writing up. And if only the journalists would realise it, it is far more effective. The most tense and dramatic situations—adventures in which the risks are not the calculable ones of mountains, rocks and glaciers, or even of ordinary warfare, but the entirely unpredictable dangers of enemy patrols, fifth columnists, traitors and darkness—these are here described as if they were of little more moment than crossing Piccadilly in the black-out. But the reader with a little imagination will fill in the blanks between the lines, and realise that in this book we have an account of some of the most risky jobs that anyone could be called upon to tackle, some of the most patient heroism that even this war has produced.

The first adventure in the book is an exploration, in 1939, of some of the country east of Bhutan, during which the author was laid low by malaria most of the time. And it takes no ordinary malaria to lay Tilman low. The one thing they forgot, while lightening their loads at a certain stage, was the quinine. The country into which they went was an almost unknown part of the world, and would have provided them with some fine exploration, and perhaps good climbing on Gori Chen and the adjacent peaks. But they were a lot of invalids, and one of them, Nukku, actually died. In fact, as one reads the account, one wonders why any of them got home alive. Their exemplary care of Thundu, who was gravely ill, was rewarded by his recovery (from *kala-azar and malaria*).

Next we have two expeditions to the Zemu Gap. It seems quite certain that the 'crossing' of this pass, so well known as a landmark to those of us who frequent the Sikkim Himalaya, had never been done. Thither Tilman went in 1936, with some porters whom he was training for Nanda Devi. He gives us a racy and graphic account of his trip, and of the unavailing efforts to get up the ice walls of the Zemu Gap from the south. Like others, he had a hard time in the forests of the Talung Chu, deceptively marked on the official map with a large red path. In 1938, on the way back from Everest, Tilman renewed his attempts on the Gap, this time from the Zemu Glacier side. He successfully crossed it in horrible weather.

There follows a short account of three climbs done in wartime. One was a mountain in Parthia 'of almost Alpine standard' though only 6500 ft. high. Another was the rocky peak of Bisitun in Persia, on which he slept a night 'to remind himself'—if indeed friend Tilman

needs reminding of such things—that 'abstinence from low pleasures is the only means of meriting or obtaining the higher.'

Next we plunge into the western Desert, described grimly—as it deserves—'There are no mountains . . . there is scarcely a hill.' But Tilman found one, called Zaghouan, and climbed it. A man after the reviewer's own heart.

Then we leave the climbing grounds, and in the second half of the book we renew our acquaintance with the mountains as the background for sterner scenes, and the habitat of the hardy and loyal partisans, whom the mountains have moulded into their own rugged and indomitable shape. Tilman volunteered for the job of 'special service' for the sake, he writes, 'of complete independence.' Independent in a way he may have been, but terribly dependent all the time on things going right—on the enemy not happening to see him at a time when seeing him might have meant torture and death; on his partisans not having a traitor amongst them; on being able to get enough to eat where no rations are supplied; on keeping the dish upright whether one is with one's own side, with people of doubtful loyalty, or with a party who are frankly in sympathy with the enemy.

The author is dropped by parachute among people of whose language he knows not a word, and within a few weeks he seems to converse freely with them in any of three different dialects. Lucky man. Whether he does it by extreme rapidity in learning languages, or by a masterly use of signs and gestures, I do not know. But he does it, and his well known predilection for 'living on the country,' perfected by much practice in the Himalaya and other more outlandish places, must have stood him in good stead, and made him about the best possible person for special service with partisans or guerrillas. We follow him through hairbreadth escapes, pitched battles on mountain ridges, hide and seek with death as the stakes, and we get an insight into a side of warfare about which no information could ever be given to us during the war. The book ends appropriately enough with victory, and with a fine appraisal of the good qualities of the motley crew of truly loyal souls with whom his lot was cast.

There is not so much about climbing mountains in this book as in *Nanda Devi*, but more real adventure, more varied scenes and companions, and all described in just the same easy style of writing.

The illustrations are from photographs taken under the greatest possible difficulties—in bad weather in Assam, in strictest secrecy with the partisans. But they are very adequate as helping one to picture the scenes and people of the book. My only complaint is about the maps, which might have been much better. Why not have maps to scale, at any rate in those parts of the world where scale maps are available? This is, as I say, the only blemish, and a small one, in a thoroughly readable book which should have a far wider appeal than among those only who love the mountains. For we all love to hear of the great things that are done when men and mountains meet.

T. H. SOMERVELL.

Climbing in Britain. By J. E. Q. Barford. Pp. 160, 16 photographs, 47 sketches. Penguin Books, 1946. Price 1s.

WHEN the British Mountaineering Council was formed, one of its primary aims was to coordinate and make available to all who required it up to date knowledge of mountaineering technique, and to make sure that the great increase in mountaineering and climbing in this country did not lead to a deterioration of standards of behaviour or of safety on the mountains. It was therefore resolved amongst other things to publish this book. The choice of medium could not have been better, for the wide circulation, excellent production and cheap price of Penguin books will ensure that it reaches the widest possible public, while the convenient size makes it possible for the book to be taken out on expeditions. The choice of editor in J. E. Q. Barford (Honorary Secretary of the British Mountaineering Council) is equally fortunate, for few climbers are better qualified to coordinate the views of British mountaineers on climbing in Britain, and a large section of the book is his own work.

In addition to chapters on rock climbing technique up to a high standard, the book contains sections on snow and ice, hill walking, camping, equipment, mountain rescue, climbing districts, and etymology. The book is liberally provided with useful sketches and diagrams. Though it is intended largely for would-be mountaineers and novices, it will be found to contain useful information for more experienced climbers as well.

In a book of this size covering such a wide field, the editor has had to be brief and to the point and it has not been possible to digress into the field of mountaineering philosophy. It assumes that the reader already possesses the enthusiasm and initiative to carry him into the mountains, and is largely concerned with technique and safety when he gets there. Except for a few brief passages such as that in the hill walking chapter there is little hint that he is going to enjoy himself when he gets there; it is all rather a grim business, this climbing. It is very understandable and is in many respects the *raison d'être* of this book that great stress should be laid on the dangers of mountaineering and on mountain rescue; yet it tends to give too strong an impression that death lurks at every corner waiting to claim the inexperienced or inefficient. Once this possible deterrent has been overcome, however, the book will be of the greatest service in improving technique and encouraging safety, and with the knowledge thus gained the climber's own imagination and experiences should encourage a healthier attitude of mind.

In the chapter on hostels and climbing huts it seems illogical to give full details of the huts owned by the various mountaineering clubs which can be used by relatively few, whilst no such details are given of the Youth Hostels which can be used by so many, particularly in places outside North Wales and the Lakes.

F. A. PULLINGER.

Guide du Massif des Ecrins. By Lucien Devies and Maurice Laloue. In two volumes. Volume I: Meije, Ecrins. Volume II: Ailefroide, Pelvoux, Bans, Olan, Muzelle. Pp. 786, with 103 diagrams by Germaine Moselly. Map. Editions B. Arthaud, Grenoble and Paris, 1946. 900 francs. Sponsored by the Groupe de Haute Montagne.

Les Aiguilles Rouges. By Jacques de Lépiney. New edition prepared by Armand Charlet, Lucien Devies, F. Germain, and R. Perret. Pp. 101, with 26 diagrams and several sketch maps. Guide Vallot. Librairie Fischbacher, Paris, 1946.

CLIMBERS who claim to disapprove of guide books are, I think, dishonest, especially if they are guideless climbers, or perhaps merely stupid in not recognising the great utility that a guide book may have in opening the way to the good climbs in a district on one's first visit and so to great pleasure, a greater pleasure than is open to those who choose to ignore the recorded experience of others. For all my climbing life, I have lived with and loved guide books to read in the valleys and use in the hills, from my first introduction to Steeple, Barlow and MacRobert, through the Welsh and Lakes rock climbing guides, to Gaillard, Kurz, Rütter, de Lépiney, Lagarde, Migot, Bonacossa and now MM. Devies and Laloue and their colleagues. Climbers may be unable to write good books, but they can certainly write good guide books, enough for their fellow climbers in their armchairs in winter to sweat in anticipation of hard climbs to come and to lead them along the right routes on the cliffs of our hills and the mountain sides of the Alps. The 'centrist' may scoff and say that the true mountaineer has no need of such things; as a substitute he has his human guide and the remembered conversations of the bars of his chosen district. For the 'excentrist,' the guide book opens new ways every holiday and week end. He can avoid the popular route and, if the author has done his job well, find the neglected ways which offer greater satisfaction and peace. The moderate climber can no more expect to find the satisfactions of the pioneer in the Alps; the guide books at any rate enable him to find the good routes in a wide variety of districts, and to do the most interesting climbs which are within his powers.

These G.H.M. authors (both books being primarily G.H.M. productions) truly make the would-be climber on the Aiguilles Rouges or in the Dauphiné sweat in anticipation. A typical passage of the Ecrins guide reads: '... une dalle verticale sans prise, ayant à sa partie supérieure un toit surplombant incliné à 45°, d'environ 2 m. . . . S'élever sur 4 m.' This is on the W. face of the Aiguille Dibona and is Grade VI, but the big mountains have routes of parallel difficulty. One is impatient to go and look for oneself to see whether the writers' enthusiasms have surpassed the phlegmatic objectivity common to most authors of guide books, an objectivity which, as in some British cases, often leads to understatement. It is interesting to notice that the G.H.M. have decided to adopt a method of classification which can be used precisely where the climb lends itself to precise classification, and that they use adjectives in their proper sense. When they say that a climb is difficult, they imply that it is difficult for climbers,

not easy for climbers and difficult for walkers. This seems an admirable innovation and one which we might well adopt, together with numbers to class rock climbing difficulty and adjectives for the overall difficulty of a route.

In detail, the Aiguilles Rouges guide follows the general style of the Vallot series, but with many new routes included. The Dauphiné guide is, of course, completely new and fills a gap which has long needed filling. The last guide book to this area was by Gaillard, published in 1929, and this covered only part of it. The thirties and early forties have seen many new routes done, most of them suitable for tigers only, but others worthy of the attention of any moderately strong party, such as the Lloyd-Longland route on the N. face of Le Sirac, 'peut-être la plus belle voie du Sirac.' It is for the description of such routes made easily accessible for the first time that the ordinary climber is most grateful to the men who undertake the laborious job of evaluating climbs and writing guide books.

In all the harder routes, reference to the use of pegs both as safeguards and as positive aids is made. On hard routes the latter practice is perhaps the more permissible, if it is only by such methods that the routes can be done. The use of pegs as safeguards is more pernicious, since no strict line of justification can be drawn and later and less competent parties tend to multiply them without end. This is probably the major menace to the greater Alpine rock routes. The reviewer would suggest that the effort which was devoted to condemning wholly the use of pegs should be applied now to condemning their insertion as safeguards where the pioneers of the routes needed none, and that a little quiet boasting should be encouraged among those who, finding them unnecessary, remove them. Also, if a party finds it necessary to use a peg because of a rapid and unexpected deterioration of the weather, it should make it a point of honour to remove it. If such a code could be agreed, it is to the writers of guide books such as this that we must look to make the code fashionable. Certainly experience in another rock district of the Alps this summer, where detailed guide books in Italian and German to the hard routes have now been available for over ten years, has convinced me that the indiscriminate use of pegs as safeguards will rapidly spoil these magnificent routes to which the *Guide du Massif des Ecrins* has opened the doors.

Information about ski routes and possibilities is included together with a 1 : 50,000 map of the whole area with the main ski routes marked.

J. E. Q. BARFORD.

Peak Panorama. Kinder Scout to Dovedale. By W. A. Poucher. With 85 photographs by the author. Chapman and Hall Ltd., London, 1946. Price 21s. net.

THIS book will enhance Mr. Poucher's reputation as a photographer. In the course of his first visit to Derbyshire he has taken a good series of photographs illustrating the hills, the beauty spots and the curiosities

of the district. The Pennine landscape gives little help to the photographer, but Mr. Poucher has chosen his viewpoints with skill and has made the most of his subjects. I thought those of Kinder Scout were particularly fine. The picture of the Downfall will specially interest past Presidents of the Club who have visited it on or about the second Sunday in November, attended by a praetorian guard of the Rucksack Club and the head gamekeeper.

Mr. Poucher's prose proclaims him an enthusiastic pedestrian. He builds a detailed account of his travels on a solid foundation of guide book material, and what he has to say will be of interest to those who have yet to discover Derbyshire. The native born also will find much to entertain him in this volume.

Of more recondite subjects such as the niceties of trespass, gritstone climbing and caving, Mr. Poucher has apparently no first hand knowledge and it would have been helpful to his less experienced readers if he had included a list of a few authoritative handbooks, *On Foot in the Peak*, for example. Potential trespassers might also consult the sections of the *Infantry Training Manual* which deal with the use of cover, and bear in mind that April to June include the nesting season, when all right minded men keep off the preserved moors. They are fortified in their rectitude by the increased numbers, vigilance, and ferocity of the keepers at these times.

C. DOUGLAS MILNER.

THE ALPINE CLUB LIBRARY

By F. OUGHTON, Assistant Librarian

The following have been added to the Library :—

Publications of Clubs and Societies

- Alpine Club of Canada, Banff.** Constitution and List of Members. $6\frac{7}{8} \times 4\frac{3}{4}$. Pp. 28. 1946
- Appalachian Mountain Club, Boston, Mass., U.S.A.** Register for 1946. $7\frac{3}{8} \times 5$. Pp. 153. 1946
- . Appalachia. No. 101. $9\frac{1}{4} \times 5\frac{5}{8}$. Pp. 144. Illustrations, drawings, sketch maps, portraits. 1946
- Club Andino, Bariloche.** Memoria 1945. Decimocuarta Ejercicio. $8\frac{5}{8} \times 5\frac{3}{4}$. Pp. 116. Illustrations, portraits, groups and sketch maps. 1946
- Geological Institution, University of Upsala, Sweden.** Bulletin. Vol. xxxi. $10 \times 6\frac{1}{2}$. Pp. 404. Illustrations, diagrams, charts. 1946
- Himalayan Club, New Delhi, India.** The Himalayan Journal. Vol. xiii. Edited by C. W. F. Noyce. $8\frac{5}{8} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$. Pp. 150. Illustrations, sketch maps. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1946
- Mountain Club of South Africa, Cape Town.** Journal. No. 48 for 1945. $8\frac{3}{4} \times 6$. Pp. 71. Illustrations, sketch maps. 1946
- New Zealand Alpine Club.** Journal. Vol. xi, No. 33. $8\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$. Pp. 286. Illustrations, panoramas, maps. June 1946