

REVIEWS

Mountains of Tartary. By Eric Shipton. Pp. 224. Hodder & Stoughton, London. 1951. 20s.

China to Chitral. By H. W. Tilman. Pp. xii, 124. Cambridge University Press. 1951. 25s.

How true it is that to travel hopefully is better than to arrive ! With one exception—the finding by Shipton of the ‘Elusive Arch’—neither he nor Tilman arrived at any of their goals, Muztagh Ata, Chakragil, the Uchart-Ulughart Passage or Bogdo Ola. But how satisfying for them was the search, and how exciting it is for their readers to travel and climb hopefully with them among some of the world’s loveliest and most fantastic, yet least-known mountains ! Those fortunate few who know Kashgar will envy Shipton’s luck in having been posted there late enough in history for the range of his travels to be extended by the motor transport which was denied to previous author-Consuls General, yet not too late to see that ‘strange and lovely land’ before it disappeared behind the Iron Curtain. His book and Tilman’s, together with the latter’s *Two Mountains and a River* and Mrs. Shipton’s *The Antique Land* are the first popular travel books dealing with Kashgaria to appear since 1937, and if present indications are to be trusted they will be the last for a long time to come. But the two books under review are notable for other reasons also. Their authors are the only British mountaineers of the first rank, or for that matter of any rank at all, who have pitted their skill and experience against the tremendous ranges that wall off the Tarim Basin from the rest of Central Asia. Moreover, both authors are keen and skilful photographers and their books, especially Tilman’s, contain some of the loveliest mountain-pictures that have come out of Sinkiang.

Mountains of Tartary suffers somewhat from the fact that only the first four chapters and Chapter VIII cover ground which is not dealt with in its three companion volumes mentioned above. The Karakoram journey, the quest for the Arch, and the Muztagh Ata expedition (except for the three days of high climbing) are well described in *The Antique Land* ; the story of the Muztagh Ata climb is given in *Two Mountains and a River*, and the Bogdo Ola and Chakragil climbs which are the high lights of *Mountains of Tartary* are described even more fully in *China to Chitral*. The amount of enjoyment that the average reader, to whom the whole country is new, will get from either of these latter books will depend to some extent on whether he has read the other first or not. But to the Central Asian enthusiast and the connoisseur of Himalayan climbing this overlapping will be no drawback. The two books are written in entirely different styles and from different points of view. Shipton is restrained, introspective, artistically sensitive to the beauty of the mountains, interested on the whole in places rather than in people. Tilman, on the other hand, is a ‘people-person’

rather than a 'place-person'; he writes with humour and gusto (and many an allusion to the more full-blooded English classics) of meals and mah-jong with lorry-drivers and generals, of being chased by an armed Kazak in Dzungaria, of rowing a primitive and extremely leaky boat across the 'Heavenly Pool' on Bogdo Ola, while Shipton analyses the urge which keeps him moving upwards at 25,000 ft., or the emotions attending success or near-success on a high climb. But the two writers are alike in their delight, which each communicates in his own way to his reader, in such things as

'... climbing easily along the bright crests of [Bogdo Ola's] high untrodden ridges' (Tilman).

Or gazing from the top of a 9,000 ft. precipice to where

'... suspended above this great abyss, close at hand and dazzling in the early morning sun, were the hanging glacier terraces, tier upon tier of them, supported by slender buttresses of fluted ice, which formed the North Face of Chakragil' (Shipton).

Another feature of both books, but notably of Shipton's, is the refreshing candour, rare among travel-writers, with which the authors admit and discuss the mistakes which cost them success on their high climbs. Only by such unsparing self-criticism does a great climber pass down the fruits of his experience to mountaineering posterity.

Both books would have been the better for larger-scaled maps showing the relief of the country, the routes taken by the authors and more place-names. The two-page indexes, too, are scarcely worthy of books which, whether the authors like it or not, cannot help becoming standard works in the scanty literature of Central Asian travel. By the same token, the authors might well have referred more freely, and with proper documentation, to the publications of their few predecessors in the field. Even reviewers are human, and this one confesses to disappointment at finding no reference in either book to his own reconnaissance of the Oitagh Jilgha and Chakragil¹ and of the Shiwakte Mountains to the east of Kungur² which the authors contemplated exploring as a possible alternative to climbing Muztagh Ata. But these shortcomings, if such they are, will not spoil the book for the devotee of 'arm-chair' mountain exploration for whom, evidently, they were written and to whom they can confidently be recommended.

C. P. SKRINE.

Mountains with a Difference. By Geoffrey Winthrop Young. Pp. ix, 282. (The New Alpine Library.) Eyre & Spottiswoode, London. 18s. 1951.

THIS book has a good title, for mountains can mean so much or so little to so many different people or even to the same people on different

¹ *Chinese Central Asia*, pp. 281-5.

² *Ibid.* Chaps. VII, X, XI, XVI, and *Geographical Journal*, November, 1925, Vol. LXVI, pp. 385-411.

occasions. The significance of mountain scenery is hard to estimate, because its values are by no means exclusively materialistic and cannot therefore be measured. To people with divers temperaments, mountains may mean almost anything between two extremes ; to some they may represent a fine well-aired gymnasium ; to others an excursion outside time into Paradise. Perhaps among mountaineers the ideally comprehensive experience can only be achieved by an athlete who is a poet with a logical mind, a climber who has been able to assure himself of his devotion when in that fine and terrible phrase, best understood perhaps by the French, he has become 'un grand mutilé de la guerre.'

Mr. Young's book will certainly make many of us conscious of our limitations, perhaps, for instance, of our unnecessary dissatisfaction with mountains of the smaller sort merely on account of their limited dimensions or their lack of perpetual snow. One cannot imagine the author speaking contemptuously of any mountain, even the easiest. Probably, like Mummery, he would have climbed if there had been no view, or would have walked to the top if there had been no difficulty. Above all he is interested in the psychology of mountaineers as it is affected by mountain scenery and climbing. He is an explorer at heart and he used to rejoice in discovering virgin rock-faces and ridges among British hills. He appreciates, too, the charm of an old rock-climb because it is old, no less than a new climb because it is new. The man who 'may climb and climb and prove a villain' he accounts for by the adequate explanation that he will have climbed from vanity.

Young's love of nature is catholic and includes in it that great alternative or accompaniment to mountains—the sea, and he refers with sympathy to Andrews, the climber who spent a lifetime exploring the cliffs on the Cornish coast. Nor does his love of British hills yield to his love of the Alps. Ingleborough, Snowdon, Ben Nevis, Matterhorn, the south side of Mont Blanc have all seemed equally sublime to him at different times, and he devotes a chapter to the west coast of Ireland with the tremendous cliffs of Mount Brandon falling sheer to the Atlantic.

The splendid praise that the book accords to British climbers is sure evidence that the 'death or glory' type of stunt climbing played no part in the development of mountaineering in this country, and, says Young, 'it has remained true of our best climbers that they are fonder of the mountains than of their own skill.'

It is interesting to read of the impressions made on a great mountaineer by the fierce fighting on the Isonzo in which he took part. The resemblances between modern warfare and the seamier side of mountaineering are obvious, but the contrasts are more real than the resemblances, for the good mountaineer is expected to mitigate risks constantly, whereas the good soldier has to grasp 'this nettle, danger' more often than he plucks the flower, safety.

Young's loss of his leg in the fighting on the Isonzo is vividly described, but what is probably most interesting both to him and his

mountaineering readers is the enthralling story of the indomitable attempts to overcome the handicap of his disablement by climbing in the British hills and the Alps. Even more interesting is his own analysis of the psychological results. To judge by his unique experiments and experience, the practical lesson seems to be that the conventional mobility and activity of a man as disabled as Young was can be vastly extended. On the other hand, Young's greatest feats of one-legged climbing can only be within the capacity of an exceptional being, and it is doubtful whether it can be profitable to emulate them. As he himself says in an early stage of his Alpine campaign, 'I climbed only on the undying hope that things would not be so bad with me, and with the leg, as I knew them to be.'

A disheartening moment accepted by him with remarkable composure was the last decision that Young made on the summit of the Rothorn not to recommence his formidable experiments on the great peaks. It was a sudden moment of deeply pondered disillusion: 'The mountains as I looked at them looked to me—just, mountains,' and he asks, had the climbing done since the disastrous wound never really served to re-create more than a simulacrum of himself as he once was? As he says, something surely had gone wrong; the mountain did not feel the same, he was no longer part of it. This may be the same tragedy that is to be feared in old age, even if its onset is less acute and at a cost of less suffering. It is evident that the mountain is always the same, but that man never is.

Young's conclusion was that neither in the mountains nor in himself had the virtue of mountaineering lain, but only in the relationship which could be created and constantly renewed between the two; and that this on his side depended on the technique of climbing. Does not this imply that a mountaineer may perhaps come to depend on technique too much as an end in itself and too much for peace of mind?

Later there is an account of a fearful fall that Young had during the descent of the Rothorn on the same day. It was caused by a lack of balance due to his disablement and could hardly have been predictable. The incident is brilliantly described and I think that all climbers who have had serious falls agree that a state of semi-anaesthesia—or, as Young calls it, dream consciousness—supersedes ordinary consciousness in such emergencies. The result is that an unexpected fall from a great height is not always such an appalling experience as might be supposed.

The book is delightful to read. We have heard very often of how the sun rises in the Alps, many of us have seen it do so and many writers have attempted descriptions, seldom successfully. In the chapter dealing with the author's return to the great peaks after his disablement the real thing is produced; perhaps it has never been done better, but the paragraph deserves to be left in its setting and shall not be quoted here.

C. F. MEADE.

Monts Pacifique. By Saint-Loup. Pp. 277. Arthaud, Grenoble. 1951.

THIS is not an easy book to review. It is not a book on mountaineering; it is not a travel book; and it is not mainly descriptive or historical. It combines many of these, into what is essentially a writer's dramatisation of one of the world's greatest mountain chains, the Andes. It may be described as drama in five acts. The first act, given the title *The Playground and its Problem*, defines the area, namely that from the latitude of Valparaiso south to the Straits of Magellan, and within these 2,500 odd kilometres five outstanding mountaineering problems are selected for discussion. Act Two is a discussion of *Andean Aids and Defences*, mountain sickness, mules and guides. Act Three takes the reader on a *Voyage Amongst the Isles of Rain*, made to trace the Indians who had taken refuge in the south of the Continent and who had taken the soul of the Cordillera with them. Finding these men vanished, the writer, in Act Four, *The Lost Soul*, describes the legends which they left behind them. Act Five is perhaps the most dramatic. The last hours are described of those of the present age who gave their lives for the love of Andean exploration. The author sees this as a sacrifice made by the white man as a redemption for the ancient civilisation he had destroyed.

If dramatisation is accepted as a means of stimulating public interest in mountaineering, it may be said that the book offers entertaining reading, and it moves swiftly along. The style is not one, however, which all authors, who are themselves mountaineers, would choose. Much of it is impressionist in technique: much of it forced: 'Glace et neige, blanc sur blanc,' washed, perhaps, with the new detergents, whiter than snow. There are some fine phrases too: 'Les nuages de tragédie Shakesparienne élevent leur maléfice.' Or effects: 'Mont Sacramento, Solitude, Unité, Réalité.' There is occasional humour: 'Ces pionniers ne connaissent, en fait de médicaments, que l'Embrocation Ellimans pour animaux, a usage externe: Eno's Fruit Salt a usage interne.' Or, 'Les tarifs du Sacramento ont augmenté. Quarante cinq pous de pluie cette fois.' The book is also punctuated with conversations, real and imaginary, which strive to heighten the atmosphere of these fantastic mountains. But in spite of these effects it is difficult for the English reader to feel that the author has quite the gift of achieving the results he desires.

Having said this, let it be admitted that this is an interesting book, and unlike others on the southern Andes. If the author, who is technical adviser to mountain troops of the Argentine Republic, does not describe major ascents at first hand, he is deeply interested in all that concerns the Andean Cordillera. What he sets out to give is the story of their exploration from the latitude of Mendoza to the islands of the Magellanes. The difficulties in the ascent of the greater peaks are analysed. The author is intrigued by the problem presented, for instance, by the South face of Aconcagua. He gives his conclusions based on a personal reconnaissance, and illustrates his findings by means of a sketch. The problem of the Fitz Roy is analysed too, and the conclusion reached that its ascent, free from technical difficulty, depends on the adequate

organisation of base and higher camps. The ascent of its neighbour, Torre, is a more severe problem, a solution to which is not yet in sight. The clue to the ascent of the Sarmiento lies in ice work. Technically the Saint-Valentin is less a problem than that which the weather presents. Exploration, let alone climbing, is not made easier when there is no visibility for more than 300 days a year, and when the summits are seen only occasionally between one storm and the next. The reader is assisted by several sketch maps, and a number of attractive, even fantastic photographs, which illustrate the text.

Though this is not a book that will satisfy the climber or mountaineer, it will bring the Andes to a wider public than know much of them to-day. It may well serve to stimulate a younger generation to fill what are still blanks of continental dimensions on the map. It is because this is essentially an interpretative work, one that attempts to convey a writer's impression of a great range of mountains rather than one which covers only the technical problems they present, that the reviewer has enjoyed it.

A. E. GUNTHER.

The Magic of the Dolomites. By W. A. Poucher. Pp. 144. Country Life Ltd., London. 1951. 35s.

FEW holiday makers could bring back a set of photographs of the consistently high quality displayed in this volume. Yet this essay on the Dolomites is, with equal consistency, something of a disappointment. It is the essence of our own creed that photography must rank not higher than second in the priorities; we pass each alpine way but seldom and so have often had occasion to envy the author his licence to dwell, revisit and select: something very much better than we ourselves can do is, then, expected as a matter of course.

The true lover casts many a sidelong glance at his mistress; yet expressive glances are not Mr. Poucher's lances in his approach to the latest candidate for his affections, and his rather bold frontal stare does less than justice to these strange and lovely mountain forms, or to the author's mastery of the photographic art and almost unrivalled experience in handling the mountain scene from the valleys and foothills. The work is at its best in the monochrome rendering of colour—compare Cevetto from Nago d'Alleghe, and from above Caprile—and in cloud-catching and cloud-rendering it is masterly throughout. But we miss the imaginative approach, the unusual angle, the sudden revelation of rock-splay and sun-slant; the fine handling of cloud-decoration perhaps alone proclaims authorship, and points the patience and leisure required to serve it.

'Bolzano windows,' an oblique shot, is a striking and attractive exception, and the two 'Civettos,' though formal, are delightful. A few pictures are frankly documentary. As usual, the author is at his best in the depopulated landscape: the one action picture shows two climbers proceeding strangely and bear-like on all fours, clearly embarrassed by a bight of double cord hanging loosely between them.

In one or two pictures gaucherie seems to have been accepted for the sake of topical interest ; and the optic-nerve-shattering reflections of the Latemar Towers should have been omitted. The book is beautifully produced.

It is just possible that writers of commentaries to books of photographs attach more importance to them than do their readers. The prose backing to this book takes the form of a holiday diary. Technical advice is compressed into a single paragraph, a model of brevity and good sense. More than a thousand frames were exposed on this holiday—if that is the right word. Mr. Poucher tells us that he ‘used Leica cameras throughout the trip,’ with three kinds of special lenses. Our only complaint, theoretical perhaps in 1952, is that we are not told how many Leicas, Summitars, Elmars and Summarons we ought to take with us on our own trips to the mountains.

G. N. CARRELL.

Leslie Stephen, His Thought and Character in Relation to his Time. By Noel Annan. Pp. viii, 342. MacGibbon and Kee. 1951. 25s.

THE name of Leslie Stephen ranks so high on the roll of English mountaineers and writers on mountaineering that any book about him can hardly fail to interest readers of this Journal, of which he was for four years the Editor. Such is the quality, however, of Mr. Annan's study that it will appeal to a far wider circle than this. The space devoted to Stephen's mountaineering is indeed small ; only nine pages in the text and two in the notes at the end of the volume, and readers of the *Alpine Journal* will not find much that is new to them about this aspect of his career. They will enjoy, however, a photograph of Stephen with Melchior Anderegg, and they will be interested in Mr. Annan's account of how the delicate boy who was removed from the rigours of Eton life at the age of 14 developed into the Cambridge rowing man and long-distance runner, and later into the ‘fleetest of foot of the whole Alpine brotherhood,’ as Whymper called him, possessed of fabulous powers of endurance. In Mr. Annan's judgment Stephen, better than Kingsley, deserved the title of the founder of muscular Christianity (though he shed his Christianity in 1864), and his cult of athletics was in the first place a response to the challenge of his early feebleness. ‘Stephen's youthful determination to be an athlete was a rationalisation of a . . . deep-seated fear : a doubt whether he was capable of achieving anything. Mountaineering gave Stephen the chance to announce to the world that, like Carlyle, he had proclaimed the everlasting Yea and that he gloried in the struggle for existence’ (p. 83). But though, as Mr. Annan says (p. 81), ‘Stephen went to the Alps to climb and for no other reason,’ the happiness he found there was not merely the satisfaction of physical achievement : he was ‘a Wordsworthian,’ and, as F. W. Maitland put it in the biography published in 1906, ‘The Alps, it may be, became Stephen's “cathedral”.’

Mr. Annan's book does not pretend to be a biography. The two first chapters, biographical but by no means purely narrative, were added

to earlier chapters written as a critical study which should, in Maitland's words, 'illustrate [Stephen's] life by his books, his books by his life and both by their environment.' Accordingly we find Stephen set here against the background of the Victorian age 'as a member of the new intellectual aristocracy of the great Stephen connection which links the Clapham Sect with the original Bloomsbury circle, and of that ethical and intellectual tradition which was expressed most finely in the writings of Mill and George Eliot.' Mr. Annan's wide range of reading and interest, his penetration and his fairness of mind, have produced a clear, balanced and deeply interesting exposition of Stephen's attitude to the theological and philosophical issues of his day and of his position as a literary critic; wit and felicity of style make the book eminently readable.

There are more misprints than one would expect in a volume so admirably turned out, and there are a few slips. On p. 298 the work of Arnold Lunn referred to should be *Switzerland and the English*, while on the opposite page it is odd to find de Saussure described as 'the German scientist.'

J. R. M. BUTLER.

Annapurna premier 8,000 m. By Maurice Herzog, Arthaud, Paris, 1951.

AFTER the great climb to nearly 27,000 ft., on Everest in 1922, by far the greatest height yet reached by mountaineers, Mallory wrote: 'Our climb was a pretty killing affair. Norton as well as Morshead is clean out of it now; Morshead will lose a toe besides six finger tips; . . . It sounds more like war than sport, and perhaps it is.' Those last words, with the word 'perhaps' omitted, would be a fair comment on Annapurna.

Here is a vivid record of a great adventure made by a temperamental enthusiast free from the inhibitions that restrain the pen of our British Himalayan explorers and climbers. The emotions of this French party on first confronting the mighty Dhaulagiri must have been ample compensation for the trials of the long approach through a strange land, with its vexatious problems of language and transportation. They reached Tukucha on April 21, near the northern frontier of Nepal with Tibet. Only Dhaulagiri, not Annapurna, had been visible and naturally the first reconnaissances were directed to the former, though its vast precipices and immensely long, steep ridges held out little prospect of successful attack. They discovered that the conclusions of the map makers of the north side of the peak were wrong, but beyond that nothing but danger and discouragement. Reconnaissance also disposed of an alleged Col de Tilicho at 6,000 m. just north of Annapurna. Actually two Cols de Tilicho were discovered at 5,000 m. with a lake between. From the east col, Herzog and Rébuffat descended to Manangbhot, where they suspected the redoubtable Tilman might be planning attacks on Annapurna or Manaslu. They saw neither Tilman nor Annapurna and Herzog only just managed to crawl back to the camp on the east

Col de Tilicho. Meanwhile Ichac had climbed a 6,200 m. peak of the Muktinath Himal and spotted the correct position of Annapurna.

A council of war on May 14 decided to attack the mountain either by the north-west spur or by some route from the west glacier descending from the north face. The attempt on the spur was led by the Chamonix experts Lachenal and Terray who surmounted '*des passages du bon 5*' and then, regardless of the vast scale of Himalayan ridges returned quite sure the spur route would 'go,' and were both in favour of moving up the whole base camp and equipment to where the difficulties began. Fortunately Herzog insisted on a further reconnaissance in force. A pitch of exceptional difficulty which extended Lachenal to the limit shook his confidence in the route as feasible for the whole party; Herzog and Terray went on up to about 6,000 m. to assure themselves the spur was no use. The '*arête aux Choux-Fleurs*' connecting it with Annapurna was still a long way off and, as they saw later, is separated from the spur by an impossibly deep gap.

The glacier face, if any, could offer a route to the summit. Once it came into view from the west glacier all doubts vanished. Camp I at 5,400 m., Camp II at 5,900 m., Camp III at 6,400 m. and Camp IV at 6,900 m. were quickly and successfully established. The steep slopes generally covered by several inches of new snow fallen the previous afternoon and the occasional difficult ice-walls to be climbed and roped suggest the approach to the North Col on Everest multiplied some three times. The strain of carrying in soft snow, the effect of the height on imperfectly acclimatized men, the alternation of hope and depression, are well described. On June 2 Herzog and Lachenal with two Sherpas went up to establish Camp V beside iced rocks at the edge of the Faucille Glacier, which opens up a simple route to the summit. The Sherpas declined the offer to share in the final ascent and descended to Camp IV. After a bad stormy night Herzog and Lachenal started at 6.0. An uneventful, but breathless, exhausting ascent, much of it over hard snow—this at 26,000 ft.—and a short final couloir brought them to the top at 2.0. After photographing Herzog waving a flag in justifiable pride, Lachenal, fearful of frostbite, hurried down, but was nowhere to be seen when Herzog reached Terray and Rébuffat at Camp V. His cries for help were heard and Terray found him '*affalé, le regard vide, sans piolet, sans passe-montagne, sans gants, un seul crampon*' and helped him into camp. Herzog had dropped his gloves near the summit and his hands were frozen stiff.

The descent was tragic, but Terray and Rébuffat saved the party; their courage and the care they took of their two helpless comrades is beyond praise. The night in the crevasse was terrible. The journey back over steep rough paths and streams is a long tale of suffering. The descriptions of painful injections, amputations of finger joints and toes continue till we come at last to a picture of the patient in clean clothes, shaved by a competent barber, receiving from the Maharajah of Nepal the Gurkha medal of the Order of the Valiant Right Hand. The honour, we may be sure, he shared with the other gallant survivors of June 4.

What can we learn from Annapurna about acclimatisation and tactics? Not very much. A Balaclava wins our unstinted admiration but teaches little about winning battles. An advocate of rush tactics might find support for his view, and particularly for a French expedition sustained by wonderful *élan* but liable to quick reaction and depression. Moreover a diet of nougat, drops of condensed milk and cachets to stimulate effort, induce sleep and diminish pain precludes any prolonged attack. What would Odell and Smythe have said to this regime! The pitiful condition of Herzog and Lachenal may well have been aggravated by the exhaustion of reserves of strength and inadequate replacement.

It is easy to be wise after the event, but one or two obvious points must strike the reader. First, the failure to find Camp IV. On a ridge route, as followed on much of Everest, on Kangchenjunga and Nanda Devi it is comparatively easy to find the way even in thick mist, but on a broad glacier face where seracs and crevasses are apt to look much alike, surely some device for marking the way, as was done with willow wands in Alaskan ascents, is a necessary precaution. Secondly, how was it that Schatz and Couzy did nothing to indicate the position of Camp IV to the four who they must have known were on their way down in the mist and almost certainly in difficulty by the afternoon of June 4.

The selection of Annapurna for the first 'huit mille' to be conquered was a wise one. Dhaulagiri is clearly an exceedingly tough and hazardous proposition, Manaslu, judging by the picture in the *Alpine Journal* of May 1951 is equally hostile; so are the others whose names or histories are well known; Gosainthan may be friendly, for all I know, but it is too close to the 8,000 m. line to be quite safe from subsidence or the mischievous vagaries of surveyors.

Herzog says there have been 22 attempts to climb a 'huit mille.' This is surely an exaggeration unless British expeditions are included. None of these, owing to our antiquated system of measuring heights has been directed to a 'huit mille,' but to Everest, or K2, Nanga Parbat or Nanda Devi. In consequence this great victory over Annapurna has not given us quite the thrill it would have if we had been used to a more modern yardstick. But it is a fine tale of fearless, skilled mountaineering and we thank that faithful, gallant pair, Terray and Rébuffat that the price paid included no loss of life. The oath of obedience sworn by the members of the expedition seems on the whole to have been faithfully observed.

Annapurna will probably strengthen the position of what one may call the Centre Group in the High Court of Parliament of Himalayan climbers. Parties not too small yet not so big that individual adventure is lost in mass organisation; a diet something between 'cachets' and 'quails'; no prolonged stays at heights much above 20,000 ft., but some acclimatisation suited to individual requirements at about that height. It is interesting to read Herzog's observation that the Sherpas at Camp V could work hard at the ice platform for 4 or

5 minutes whereas he and Lachenal had to pause after 40 seconds, though the Sherpas seemed to have suffered almost as much from headache.

Our congratulations and our sympathy to the leader and writer. He throws in all he has. Such phrases as 'l'ami avec qui j'avais si souvent frôlé la mort' show what climbing means to him. And how many of us would burst into tears at the thought that we could never now climb the north face of the Eiger!

Illustrations, maps and diagrams are good and clear.

R. L. G. IRVING.

The Great Beast ; the life of Aleister Crowley. By John Symonds. Pp. 316. Rider and Co., London. 1951. 21s.

SEVERAL books, written recently, have referred to Aleister Crowley, but Mr. Symonds, his literary executor, gives us the fullest picture of the man. Of his capacities as a mountaineer we hear little; yet since this, and chess-playing, were among the few passable features of Crowley's life, more might perhaps have been said.

He claimed to have learned to climb rocks in the British Isles in 1890 and 1893¹, and he was elected to the S.M.C. on December 7, 1894², his proposer and seconder being A. E. Maylard and J. Norman Collie. Between 1894 and 1898 he went yearly to the Alps, and in 1894 he made the climbs on Beachy Head about which he corresponded with Mummery³ and on which he contributed an illustrated article to the *S.M.C. Journal* (vol. iii, 288 sqq.). His best year in the Alps would seem to have been 1895, when he claimed the Eiger (alone)⁴, Eigerjoch, Jungfrauoch, Mönch (traversed from Wengen), Jungfrau from the Rottalsattel and an attempt from the Guggi Glacier, Wetterlücke, Mönchjoch, Beichgrat, Petersgrat and Tschingelhorn.⁵

Up to 1898 his climbing career appeared to be, if not outstanding, at least promising, though somewhat erratic, and there was abundant testimony, by men as competent to judge as Norman Collie, Maylard, Solly, H. V. Reade, Eckenstein and Larden (and others still living) that he was a very capable climber, particularly on rocks (though Maylard also thought him the best amateur step-cutter he had seen); and only Larden was disposed to regard him as reckless. But after this date, beyond boulder clambering and work with crampons in the Geant

¹ *The Pioneer* (Allahabad), Oct. 15, 1905.

² *S.M.C.J.*, iii, 228.

³ *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley*, vol i, pp. 108-9.

⁴ *The Confessions*, vol. i, p. 119.

⁵ The list is a little deceptive; it is not clear that either the [South] Eigerjoch or the Jungfrauoch were crossed, and the inference is that both were simply visited from the eastern flank. Similarly, the Wetterlücke if, as seems likely, it was merely reached from the Petersgrat, amounts to nothing, for it is only on the northern side that it presents any problems. For details of Crowley's climbs, see *S.M.C.J.* iii, 238; iv, 61, 242; v, 40, 195; and W. Larden, *Walks and Climbs around Arolla*, pp. 38, 49/50, 69/70, 84, 118.

ice-fall⁶ and elsewhere, and some mountain treks in Mexico, he seems to have done little climbing except for his two well-known Himalayan expeditions, to K2 (1902) and to Kangchenjunga (1905). Mr. Symonds does not whitewash Crowley during these trips, but we learn nothing really new. He appears as a consistently unpleasant man, falling out with his companions ; and he ' wrote himself off ' in the estimation of all mountaineers when he refused to go out to help in an accident on Kangchenjunga by which four men were killed and three others endangered. He justified himself later in the Press by saying he was not over-anxious to render help, as a mountain accident ' is one of the things for which I have no sympathy whatever ' ; and, though he claimed to be the only competent climber on the mountain, ' the doctor is old enough to rescue himself, and nobody would want to rescue Righi ' ⁷. His climbing career, which had started well, thus petered out in discredit, as the sadism, the chronic disarticulation of the moral sense, and all those attributes that made him a shoddy mountebank in everything else he did, corrupted the saving grace that the mountains might have brought him.

The bulk of the volume is concerned with Crowley's main life-work, those weird and disreputable incursions into occultism that formed a façade for unbridled indulgence in every revolting form of sensual vice. The book, indeed, makes rather tedious reading, being largely a succession of druggings, suicides, debauchery, starvation, misery of all sorts, without any relieving features. Crowley was an absurd as well as a degenerate individual ; whatever good traits he had, Mr. Symonds fails to bring them out. Yet some superficially attractive qualities he must have had, if only to explain how not a few well-known men made friends with him, though almost all seem to have been disillusioned in time. For the most part, his associates were neurotics and the riff-raff of various efforts to construct systems of esoteric mysticism. Crowley himself appears to have produced no new ideas ; he borrowed them, as he borrowed money, without making any return. His wretched Abbey at Cefalù in Sicily does not compare with eighteenth-century Medmenham ; Wilkes, Dashwood and the others of the Hell-Fire Club were a virile, almost respectable set of men compared with the insipid decadents of Crowley's group.

A certain consistency ran through his life ; the boy whose hero was Nana Sahib and who wished he had been at Cawnpore to help in the slaughtering ; the husband who, at the birth of his first child, was said to have conducted a magical ceremony, whilst his wife was in labour, intended to make her produce a monster ; the pinchbeck Messiah who showed his divinity by defecating on his friends' carpets, or by eating excrement and human flesh ; the artist who advertised for models who should be dwarfs, hunchbacks, freaks of all sorts, but only if

⁶ Longstaff, *This My Voyage*, p. 23.

⁷ See criticisms in *A.J.* xxiii, 51-4. Alcesti de Righi was a young Italian member of the expedition, who had been knocked senseless and half buried during the accident. ' The doctor ' referred to was J. Jacot-Guillarmod.

exceptionally ugly or deformed; the poet whose verse was described by a *Westminster Gazette* reviewer as making one constantly think of the young men who stood outside Delmonicos, picking their teeth in order to suggest to the casual passer-by that they had been dining inside⁸; 'slice him where you will,' as Bertie Wooster would say, he seems rotten all through, and his Trinity contemporaries who threw him, one term, into the fountain, for being dirty—all round—knew their business.⁹ Indeed, as one puts down the book one is tempted to think, like a writer to *The Pioneer* on August 24, 1905, that not merely the sport of mountaineering, but the world at large, would have suffered no loss if Kangchenjunga had permanently effaced Crowley.

T. S. BLAKENEY.

Hill Walking in Snowdonia. By E. G. Rowland. Pp. 83. Camping and Open Air Press, Ltd. 3s. 6d.

THIS is a useful guide book for walkers at a modest price. The author, a retired civil servant resident in Criccieth, knows the district intimately and describes the excursions with careful accuracy: his main purpose is to encourage beginners, and this the book is well designed to do. It should soon be popular. There is plenty of 'supporting' information, a sketch map and a selection of Mr. W. A. Poucher's familiar photographs.

H. R. C. CARR.

Arran with Camera and Sketchbook. By V. A. Firsoff. Pp. 230 with 49 photos, 21 pen and ink drawings in the text and 2 sketch maps. Robert Hale Ltd. 18s. 6d.

THIS is not a guide to the mountains of Arran although written by a mountaineer. There are several references to the S.M.C.'s Guide to *The Islands of Scotland (excluding Skye)* and about one third is devoted to the granite peaks of the northern part of the Island. The most interesting parts are geological, and folk-lore. The photographs are rather commonplace, the more outstanding ones being Cir Mhor (p. 33), Cioch na h'Oigh (p. 48), Gorse and Gean (p. 88) and the frontispiece showing Ceum na Caillich and North Sannox Burn. The line drawings however, are excellent and most descriptive. The Maps are very clear but neither of them shows the numerous corries which are referred to frequently in the text.

I personally have never seen a Golden Eagle in Arran but the author has seen them quite often, and refers to eyries in Glens Catacol and Chalmadale. He also reports having seen a Sea-Eagle or white-tailed eagle near the Fallen Rocks although this species, according to Dr. Fraser Darling, now appears to be extinct in Scotland.

⁸ I am indebted to Mr. Winthrop Young for this reference.

⁹ Not that they were alone in expressing their views forcefully; one of the most justly revered members of the Alpine Club today looks back complacently to the year 1895, when he gave Crowley a severe thrashing and a black eye!

The book is pleasantly written and should appeal to all lovers of the Island as well as to the summer visitor to the famous holiday resorts Lamlash and Brodick, particularly to the latter. The geological descriptions are not too technical and should be easily understood by the general public.

H. MACROBERT.

Speaking of Switzerland. By G. R. De Beer. Pp. 216. Eyre & Spottiswoode, London. 21s.

DR. DE BEER'S knowledge of what has been written about Switzerland and its mountains must be as extensive as that of Coolidge; his way of sharing portions of that knowledge with us is far more entertaining. In his opening chapter he writes: 'We are attracted to Switzerland not only by its direct effects on ourselves but also by the affection in which it has been held by others. Chief among these topographical links with the past are the literary, artistic and musical associations.' That shows the nature of the book and why it is full of quotations from writers of all kinds in all the centuries.

When Dr. De Beer gives us a list it is sure to be accurate and exhaustive. His list, compiled to prove that 'the sons of Switzerland have not been without their effect on English history,' is so long as to be as pardonably skippable as the generations of the sons of Noah, at least on a first reading. He uses the word *oromancy* to describe the beneficial effects experienced through mountains, and it may soften our present feelings towards the Chinese to know that they were *oromantics* long before Ruskin, Leslie Stephen or Arnold Lunn. Numerous quotations tell us how *oromantics* have expressed their feelings by the use of analogies, of the pathetic fallacy and of musical compositions. Musicians must feel a new interest in the Oberland peaks when they see their skylines compared with the melodies in Brahms' Double Concerto in A minor. It makes one speculate as to whether some modern composer will be brought in to suggest a skyline for an artificial mountain suitable for an Olympic piton-climbing contest.

Alpine sunrises and sunsets stimulate the search for analogies; more than one writer associates sunset with death, as T. E. Brown (1874): 'One evening our sunset was the real rose pink you have heard of so much. It fades, you know, into a death-like chalk white. That is the most *awful* thing.' One misses any mention of what is to some the most beautiful phase in this transformation scene at the close of day, when moonless night has shrouded in obscurity all the lower world, but the highest snows seem to glow by contrast as if they had woken to life again in a new ethereal existence. Most writers quoted agree about the unsuitability of high mountains for purposes of art. Theophile Gautier thinks 'art goes no higher than vegetation,' and William Hunt says: 'You can't represent the height of the Alps or the Sierras.' It is certainly rather like trying to make Goliath impressive on a postage stamp. And it may be a good thing

that mountains must be looked at as they were made and not in any likeness ; after all, it was on a mountain the second commandment had its origin !

The puzzles of Alpine history the author selects from his store have not the familiarity of Hannibal's Pass or the Paccard-Balmat controversy. Which pass did Stiliche cross in 401, or Petrarch in 1356 or Milton in 1639 ; what English lord perished on the Murette Glacier and was on view for years in the ice in his scarlet coat ; who were the Englishmen to attempt and fail to climb Mont Blanc in 1792 and 1814 ; why did a member of Catherine of Brunswick's suite lie so badly about her journey ? If De Beer has not given us the right answers, we are not likely ever to know them. A touching inscription to a certain Julia Alpinula inspired tributes from Byron and many others. But when De Beer and Coolidge agree it was a sixteenth-century forgery, there is no more to be said. In the chapter on Early Englishmen's Journeys through Switzerland is a long extract from the Sloane MSS. in the British Museum which contains a reference to 'cammels.' *Chamois* misheard as *chameaux* has been so translated.

The subjects of other chapters are David Hume's apocryphal visit to Switzerland, The First Englishman on the Scheidegg (Rev. Norton Nicholls), Charles Blair's Hut on the Montenvers, Lord Camelford's Will, Byron's Boat and Boatman, Shelley's Professions of Atheism in Visitors' Books at or near Chamonix, A Chapter of Accidents (not the usual kind), and finally the Royal Family in Switzerland, where, at Yverden, are now resting in the museum Queen Victoria's slippers, spectacles and pen.

Dr. De Beer generally shows us both sides of the pictures of the Alps in men's minds. Between beautiful passages describing the Alps in winter from J. A. Symonds and R. L. Stevenson are quotations from Katharine Mansfield who finds the snow hateful, and from D. H. Lawrence who also hates its 'stark and shroudy whiteness.' But when he gives us the verdict of an Oxford Professor of English Literature : 'It [Switzerland] was very ugly and very healthy,' he might have given us the last words of an Oxford Professor of Poetry at the foot of the East face of Monte Rosa : 'I thought this was the most beautiful spot in the world, now I know it.'

Four small very pleasing illustrations from coloured aquatints by Franz Hegi show us two of Switzerland's lake towns, Lausanne and Neuchâtel, the Devil's Bridge on the St. Gotthard and the glaciers of Grindelwald at a time when an exorcist was needed to restrain their exuberance. The index, in which, as in the text, it would need a far more discerning eye than mine to find a mistake, shows what an immense field Dr. De Beer's researches have covered. Of the total of about 500 names little more than a score are those of twentieth-century people ; for it is not the familiar present but the thoughts and feelings of the past that he is mainly concerned with bringing before us.

R. L. G. IRVING.

Rambles in the Alps. By Hugh Merrick. Pp. 128. Country Life. London, 1951. 30s.

THE reader whom Mr. Merrick has in mind is the person who likes walking among mountains, but who prefers to do so on a path, and not to use his hands for anything more strenuous than sardine-tin-opening and camera-holding. Mr. Merrick aims at persuading this reader that the high Alps have a great deal to offer him, and that he can even, without surrendering his status as a walker, extend his sallies to the tops of real mountains—the Breithorn, say, or the Aiguille de Polset—provided always that the venture is ‘undertaken with sufficient forethought, under proper expert leadership.’ And he encourages his walkers to make bold use of mountain huts, while warning them that they run the risk of black looks from the pure ‘climbers.’ (One might put in the mild defence that it is not so much the presence of walkers that we resent, as the chat and racket that they, with no horrible early start in prospect, are apt to make in dormitories.)

The object of these extended walks is to increase the number of good viewpoints, hence of good photographs: and Mr. Merrick’s most telling argument lies in his own fine pictures taken in four districts—Valais, Chamonix, Tarentaise, Oberland—and in various places, from the Jura to Lugano, lumped together as ‘The Approaches.’ He mostly favours the high-level walk above the valley, from which the high peaks are best seen, with ample foreground. This level is favoured by the climber also, from practical as well as æsthetic reasons: usually it is not till he is off the rope that he has time or liberty to select view-points, compose a scene, and in general fiddle about with his camera in a time-wasting way. Mr. Merrick scores, I think, by still being impressed by things that the climber too often takes for granted, such as the séracs of an icefall (p. 31), and his general views are best when least obviously ‘composed,’ when the scene before him is recorded directly, almost baldly, as in ‘Mont Blanc from the Brévent’ (p. 94).

A good many of Mr. Merrick’s pictures set me thinking hard about the role of the human figure in a mountain landscape. For scale it has its obvious purpose, though there are other ways of supplying that (on p. 120 the Bétemps hut gives scale to Castor and Pollux less ostentatiously than the self-conscious person beside it). More important is its role in creating the mood of the mountain experience. For most of us, and for most of Mr. Merrick’s readers, mountains are not objects that exist in isolation: they imply ourselves, or other people, climbing them, walking about them, enjoying them, living among them. And, after much thought and a rigorous scrutiny of my own as well as Mr. Merrick’s photographs, I have come to the conclusion that the pictures in which the humans look all right are those where they are in just such purposeful relation to the scene: as on p. 48 of this book, where a girl is simply walking up a path, head bent. The people who look dreadful are those who seem to exist for the camera alone—staring out at us with photographic grins, distracting attention from

mountains and glaciers behind them, or planted with heavenward gaze in an attitude that strongly suggests an answer to such words as 'Now just fifteen steps away, a bit to the right, look up at the peak, and for heaven's sake hold it till I give the word !'

JANET ADAM SMITH.

Nanda Devi : 3^e Expédition Française à L'Himalaya. By J-J. Languepin and L. Payan. Pp. xvi. 72 Illustrations. B. Arthaud, Grenoble, 1952.

THIS is a splendidly illustrated volume, on the lines of *Regards Vers L'Annapurna*. M. Payan contributes an introduction and M. Languepin supplies a nine-page commentary on the illustrations. Inevitably, in such a well-trodden district as Garhwal, a large number of the pictures cover familiar views on the approaches to the mountain, but the standard of photography is what we have learned to expect from the Continent.

The book is dedicated to the memory of Roger Duplat and Gilbert Vignes, who disappeared on Nanda Devi on June 29, 1951.

T. S. BLAKENEY.

Alpine Glaciers. By A. E. Lockington Vial. The Batchworth Press. 10" × 7½". 122 pp., including 86 half-tone plates. 30s.

It is claimed by the publishers that this book is the first of its kind. Clearly the author has an enthusiasm for and indeed almost an obsession with glaciers, their broad design and grotesque details. He has spent many years taking photographs of them, as visitors to the Exhibitions know well.

The book disappoints the climber as, except for an ascent of the Jungfrau, the author does not take us above the level of the huts. Moreover the illustrations do no justice to the author's ability as a photographer. It would be better with half the number of pictures and a higher quality of reproduction.

B. R. GOODFELLOW.

Berge der Welt 1951. Published for the "Stiftung" by Büchergilde Gutenberg. 9½" × 7". 288 pp., including 64 plates and 3 maps. Edited by Marcel Kurz.

WITH Volume VI this splendid annual maintains its style and tradition of reporting expeditions sponsored by the Stiftung, and recording the important mountaineering and mountain exploration of the previous year.

There is a full account of the Ibi Gamin Expedition in which K. Berrill participated. The conquest of this peak, 24,124 ft., was a model of efficient planning and management, and is we believe the highest summit yet attained by the Stiftung parties. There are valuable notes on equipment, stores and expenses.

Louis Lachenal contributes an article on the now well known epic of Annapurna, and Per Kvernberg similarly tells the Tirich Mir story.

There is a long account of the International Expedition to Eastern Baffin Island, in which Swiss, British and four other nationalities took part.

André Roch writes briefly of his ascent of Mount Logan (19,844 ft.), the second peak of North America, and contributes an interesting article on scientific observations of glacial movement and temperatures in the Himalayas and elsewhere. Piero Ghiglione of Courmayeur contributes a useful catalogue of the Peruvian Andes with a general map. There is a historical article on climbing in Greece.

As before 'Alpine Rundschau' gives valuable notes from the last season's Alpine routes, and similar mountaineering and topographical information from all over the world, particularly the Himalayas, Andes and U.S.S.R.

The photographs are carefully selected to illustrate the subject matter and maintain throughout the highest quality.

This journal has now become truly indispensable to any mountaineer whose plans embrace the lesser known ranges of the world. And no journal groups together so conveniently the news of what is going on in the Alps. Marcel Kurz is indeed to be congratulated in his achievement. It is splendid news that it is henceforth to be published also in English.

B. R. GOODFELLOW.

No Picnic on Mount Kenya. By Felice Benuzzi. Pp. 231. William Kimber, London. 1952. 15s.

THIS is a combination of themes—an escape from a prisoner-of-war's camp, a mountaineering adventure, and a touch of jungle travel thrown in. It would be easy to choose books that excelled it on any one theme, but it makes an unusual appeal by its blend of all three.

The English rather enjoy eccentrics ; people who do not fall into the standard pattern of humanity with which we are progressively threatened ; people who do odd things because it is their whim. As a nation, we have ourselves been noted for this characteristic ; 'the mad Englishman' is something not normally understandable by the foreigner. We may to-day be less tolerant of such idiosyncracies than we used to be ; but the most stay-at-home generally have a sneaking admiration for people who prefer to do the unaccountable thing ; for men like Alain Gerbault, who seems only happy when alone on a small yacht in mid-ocean ; or for a Tilman who, wishing to cross Africa to pick up a boat, makes his journey on a push-bike.

In Signor Benuzzi and his companions we have men after our own hearts ; our national prejudice against foreigners will not stand up against them. They broke out of their P.O.W. camp, not to try and regain their freedom, but simply to climb a mountain—and then to return to camp. They even left a polite note behind them, apologizing for any inconvenience caused by their escapade and expressing their intention to return in about fourteen days ! Which they did (a few days late), after a grim struggle home against the threat of starvation.

In his earlier pages the writer gives us the reason for it all—the tedium of camp life, the absence of privacy, the claustrophobia. Then he tells how they prepared for the trip ; crampons had to be manufactured out of scrap-iron, ice-axes from hammers ; stores of food laid in on the quiet ; and much else. They travelled hard and adventurously and if they failed on Batian it was a fine failure, and they had success on the lower point of Lenana. In the face of their achievements, it strikes one as banal to speculate on whether they had reached 5,000 metres or not ; to the British, the Continental concern for 4,000 metres in the Alps, now (apparently) 5,000 in Africa, or for 8,000 in the Himalayas, seems a trifle puerile. (Mont Blanc, incidentally, is wrongly stated to be 4,883 m.)

This is an excellently written book that anyone can enjoy.

T. S. BLAKENEY.