REVIEWS

Samson: the Life and Writings of Menlove Edwards. By Geoffrey Sutton and Wilfrid Noyce. 122 pp. Illus. The Cloister Press, Heaton Mersey, Stockport, 16*s*., post free.

MENLOVE Edwards was not a member of the Alpine Club, he did not like the Alps, yet the Club and the JOURNAL rightly recognised that his early death removed a very great climber and a great influence on his contemporaries and successors.

At the first meeting with Menlove it was impossible not to recognise the presence of great gifts of extraordinary power. He was almost worshipped by patients and by a whole generation of Welsh climbers. This book does not tell us a great deal about his climbing (that would require a history of climbing in Wales throughout the 'thirties); it is primarily concerned to rescue his writings from undeserved neglect. There is a hint that the authors will produce a further work on Menlove's Life and Writings if the reception of the present volume is sufficiently encouraging. There are all sorts of little obscurities that should be cleared up before the knowledge is lost. Central Gully on Lliwedd, for example; this is selected by Noyce[1] as perhaps the most typical, the most 'Edwards', the most striking of his climbs; nevertheless Edwards gives F. J. R. Dodd the credit for leading this, except the first overhang. The great feats of strength are recorded; the Minch, the Linn of Dee and the holding of Noyce after 200 ft. of clear fall on Mickledore Grooves.

Menlove's father and grandfather were, and his eldest brother is, a parson of the Church of England. His father met with an accident when Menlove was very young; he never recovered but was nineteen years dying. The boy spent much time in devoted help to his increasingly paralysed father; circumstances were hard, and his mother's task exceptionally so. Menlove got a scholarship to Fettes, but hated it, in spite of an apparently successful school career, not only academically but at cricket and hockey. He studied at Liverpool University to be a medical missionary, but the faith of his fathers deserted him and he went through characteristic distress about a contribution the S.P.C.K. had made to help his studies. He took to psychiatry, drawn perhaps to this form of service by his own homosexual inversion.[2] He was remarkably successful with his patients, but his own determination was

[1] *A.J.* 63. 258.

[2] This homosexuality always seems to have been taken as a fact by Edwards, but the analysis reported quoted on p. 53 seems to show that inhibited heterosexuality was also present.

towards research. In this he persisted in spite of almost total discouragement by his seniors. His intuitive methods, so successful clinically, were thought inappropriate for research. They wanted him to experiment with rats, but instead, in solitude, he explored deeper and deeper into his own mind. From this journey he never returned: 'He lost his life during a very daring solo voyage of discovery into the inner world.'

> 'O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
> Frightful, sheer, no-man fathomed. Hold them cheap
> May who ne'er hung there.'

The story is a tragedy in the high Shakespearean sense, not just a string of unbearable misfortunes. Sensitive to excess (if such a thing is possible); filled with an overflowing compassion to his fellows; condemned to loneliness by his inversion; his much loved elder brother, with whom he had started climbing, killed in a road accident; his conscientious objection rejected at the first go by a singularly obtuse tribunal which held that because he was not a Christian he could not have a conscience; the Child Guidance Clinic in which he gave devoted work closed down; a year in solitude at Hafod Owen working on his psychiatric *magnum opus*; Colin Kirkus lost over Hamburg; work and overwork at the Tavistock Clinic, but always hankering to get away from clinical work to his research which no one would recognise; the first breakdown, then others; suicide attempts; involved in the death of a child on the roads, but exonerated from blame; misery, and death.

He lost his way, but we have all lost our ways. We make terms with our failure, but Menlove would not. His total sincerity made any compromise impossible to him; we live from one compromise to another, he could not.

> 'The clouds still sail about above
> And they are gone too high.'

The 'flaw' in his nature that brought the tragedy upon him was this inflexible single-mindedness.

The second half of the book under review consists of a selection from Menlove's prose and poems. The prose is familiar to many of us; 'Scenery for a Murder', 'A Great Effort', and others, appeared in the *Climbers' Club Journal* between 1934 and 1941. They have imagination, humour, precision, insight, and all in a wholly individual style. (Not always wholly individual; the Helyg log entry of 21 Aug. /52 is, perhaps deliberately, entirely in one of James Joyce's styles.)

I know of no better writing on mountains. He did not write of his great climbs (or if he did, there is nothing to suggest more than an

amusing scramble), he preferred to analyse the off-day. He never sentimentalised mountains, he knew them for considerable protuberances, yet rock, grass and heather seen through the lens of Menlove's mind become charged with intense human experience.

The poems were new to the present reviewer. They are difficult, but not wantonly or carelessly so. I have little to add to, and nothing to take away from, Sutton and Noyce's comments, criticism and notes. The intensity of the poems makes an impact before the reader knows what has hit him, and he has to go back to find the source of the blow, not always with total success. They are personal with a fierce exclusiveness; the writer seldom addresses anyone but himself. They are the expression of his eternal self-wrestling, a battle that had few intermissions and was, literally, to the death.

I'm not sure that Sutton and Noyce have the whole answer to the question of Menlove's obscurity. Starting from the unbearable incident of his mother's dictionary, often recurring is the theme 'I must never let myself want affection; it is weak'. Now a poem is, as often as not, a cry for affection; such a cry is made, directly or indirectly, in many of Menlove's poems; at a more superficial level Menlove rejected any such cry, so it only emerged half hidden with a cloak of difficulty. The urge to express battled with the will to reticence. The resultant obscurity emerges, generally, as no more than severe economy, leaving the reader to struggle like a poor Latinist construing Tacitus unseen.

The authors have done their part admirably and it was well worth doing; my complaint amounts only to asking for more. More climbing, and at least part of the psychiatric work which was so important to Menlove, and more of the other writings. I should like to see some of the guide-book gems garnered, but perhaps they would give less delight anthologised than they have done on stances in the rain.

Two small quarrels: I resent 'the Rev. Edwards', and it is quite untrue to say of Meredith that his obscurity was 'the camouflage of emptiness'. There seems to have been some laxity either of proof-reading or by the printer. In every other respect, which is virtually all, the authors are to be congratulated and thanked.

Mount Everest: Structure, Exploration, and Population of the Everest Massif. By Toni Hagen, G. O. Dyhrenfurth, Ch. von Fürer, Erwin Schneider. Pp. 234, illustrations. Orell Füssli Verlag, Zürich. 1959.

FOLLOWING on the successful outcome of the Everest–Lhotse expedition in 1956, the late Othmar Gurtner summarised the preceding mountaineering exploration of the Himalayas as follows: '. . . the "big five" (Everest, K2, Kanchenjunga, Lhotse, Makalu) have been climbed in swift succession. These first ascents close a golden age just as another golden age ended in the Alps with the Matterhorn tragedy of 1865.'

We are in possession of an astounding variety of books and narratives dealing with the ascents carried out in this 'golden age', only a few of which now concern the authentic scientific exploration of the Himalayas. In the book under review however, we find the quintescence of the geological, ethnographical and cartographical exploration of the Everest massif combined with a survey of the principal mountaineering achievements undertaken in the Himalayas during its 'golden age'.

The pure scientist may be inclined to regard this book as 'neither flesh nor fowl', and the layman may have some difficulty in comprehending it. Let us, however, be honest: only the hectic rate of life today has prevented us from affording it more serious study, but the *interest* itself still remains. Must we fall victim to the principle of 'all or nothing'?

With a view to a deeper comprehension of the geological structure of the Everest massif, Toni Hagen, who has devoted nine years of his life to the geological exploration of Nepal, deals with the historical development of the Himalayan chain as a whole.

Starting with an account of mountain formation in general, he goes on to give a brief resumé of the convergence of the Asiatic continental and the Indian sub-continental shelves about seventy million years ago. which caused a rise of the bottom of the Himalayan sea lying between them. (The summit formation of the Everest massif is well known to consist of limestone.) Enormous forces pressed forth layers from the interior of the earth, overlaying, folding and raising them until they were finally weathered down to the form in which we know them today.

Although the lay mind may frequently be perplexed by the geological expressions and the subject matter itself is such as to demand great concentration on the part of the reader, nevertheless the book is written in an entertaining fashion and the brilliant descriptions are fascinating and provide light relief.

Günter Oskar Dyhrenfurth in his description of the exploration of the Everest massif (including Cho Oyu, Makalu and the Barun glacier) touches upon the principal features of the many expeditions in that area. Bearing in mind the extent to which a Himalayan historian is dependent upon reports from climbers differing in their personal outlook, it is easy to imagine the difficulty of presenting an objective conspectus. It is therefore very satisfactory, when, as is the case in this extremely wide-ranging survey, the chronicler refrains from making personal remarks and alterations in the text, which in any event could only do injustice to it.

The height of the Lambert–Tenzing camp (1952) in the small notch in the South ridge of Everest has been wrongly read off the Everest map and confused with the broad col at 8,230 m. The sketching in of the rocks on the map does not entirely correspond to the existing conditions

(e.g. on the whole of the South face) and simulates too great an accuracy. The site of the camp is actually about 100 m. above the broad col.

Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London) in his article entitled 'The Sherpas of the Khumbu Glacier', has produced an admirable ethnographical portrayal of these celebrated inhabitants of the Everest massif, unknown to many Himalayan explorers. 'The Village as a Community', 'Marriage and Family Life', 'The Structure of Society', and 'Priesthood and Monasteries' are only a few of the more illuminating subjects.

Finally we come to the new Everest map by Erwin Schneider, on the third page of the dust cover. This is a magnificent production involving months of very exacting surveying. The cartographical 'discovery' of the Everest massif and the origin of the map are dealt with in the accompanying text. It is a matter for regret that circumstances have not warranted production of this map in the same style and quality as that of the Mount McKinley map. (*The Mountain World*. 1956–7, p. 56)

No review of this book would be complete without praising the photographs, the most outstanding of which is a close-up of the summit formation of Ama Dablam.

Max Oechslin hits the nail on the head when he describes the book in in his preface in the following words: 'This book stands head and shoulders above all other books about the Himalayas. It could be called *the* book about the Himalayas, at all events it is certainly the pre-eminent book on the scientific exploration of the Everest massif.' It is a worthy forerunner of the mountaineering literature of the future, which will come to pass when Himalayan expeditions no longer operate in a blaze of press publicity.

JÜRG MARMET

(*Translated by E. N. Bowman*).

Great Days in New Zealand Exploration. By John Pascoe. Pp. 192. A. H. & A. W. Reed, Wellington, New Zealand. Bailey Bros. & Swifen, London. 1959. Price 21*s*.

THE early explorers of New Zealand left few records and although many of them are commemorated in the names of rivers and mountains, their exploits are little known. Mr. Pascoe, more than any other New Zealander, has attempted to preserve their history. In *Great Days in New Zealand Exploration*, he has selected journeys by seventeen explorers of the last century and one of the present generation. His *Mr. Explorer Douglas* (see *A.J.* 63. 153) revealed his capacity for assembling the records of an explorer with great patience and devotion. This book, written apparently for a more popular audience, is of lesser stature and sometimes discordant. None the less it records incidents in New Zealand exploration which are not readily accessible elsewhere.

R. SCOTT RUSSELL.

No Purdah in Padam. By Antonia Deacock. Pp. 207. Illus. Harrap, London. 1960. 16*s*.

THE world's view of the proper conduct of a wife whose husband is abroad on an expedition has undergone some evolution since, say, the days of the Crusades, and 1958 saw a further development in this direction when the wives of some of the members of the successful Rakaposhi party set out on their own expedition to the Himalayas. They drove by Land Rover to India, they stormed the innermost defences of New Delhi and emerged with a rare permit to cross the Inner Line, they trekked over old trade routes from Manali in Kulu to Padam in Zaskar on the far side of the Great Himalayan Range and back, picking up their virgin 18,000-ft. peak on the way, and they drove home in excellent order. Their leader reported The Women's Overland Himalayan Expedition, 1958, in *A.J.* 64, 83–90; Mrs. Deacock now gives a more extended and personal account of a notable enterprise.

Their choice of Padam as an objective was a good one—given more faith than most men could summon in the penetrability of the Inner Line—offering as it did the prospect of reasonably arduous travel through a fine variety of country, much of which is little known to Europeans and but sketchily mapped. That they attained their objective and obviously enjoyed themselves in the process reflects credit on their fortitude, good fortune and good sense. That their sociological studies of a woman's lot in Asia were less notable is scarcely surprising and detracts little from the merit of their enterprise.

The author had had little previous experience of mountaineering or mountain travel and this tends to be revealed in her narrative which is, in any event, addressed to a non-specialised public, so that its standing as mountain literature is modest. It will, however, have a wide appeal as a tale of happily encountered adventure and much interest for those who would follow their footsteps. The photographs fail to do justice to the occasion, but the choice was probably restricted as most of the expedition's cameras were put out of action by being dunked with their wearers in various streams along the way. There are two good maps, though that of the march rather gives the impression that this trans-Himalayan country is more thickly settled than is the case and perpetuates the fiction of the Muni La. There is a difference of opinion between the book and its jacket as to how Zaskar should be spelt, the latter being in unison with the Survey of India. F. SOLARI.

Die Alpen vom Mont Ventoux bis zum Kahlenberg. 230 Kunstdruckbilder nach Photos bekannter Bergotografen ausgewählt und mit Texten begleitet von Karl Lukan. Verlag Anton Schroll: Wien-München pp. 48, 230 pls.

THE number of picture-books of the Alps is large enough for standards to be raised very high if a new one is to find a place in the libraries of

alp-lovers, and the present work certainly qualifies. The beauty of the photographs and their selection are remarkable, and their accompanying text which introduces a background of alpine history without acrimony is most welcome. The 230 views reproduced here were selected from 50,000. The book is composed of the following sections: From the Mediterranean to the Mer de Glace, The Swiss Alps, Between the Grand St. Bernard and the Ortler, Mountains between the Lake of Garda and Triglav, From the Lake of Constance to the Wienerwald. The only comment that I might make is that the name of Paccard appears after that of Balmat instead of before as it deserves, but at least it does appear, which is more than can be said of many books in which Mont Blanc is mentioned.

GAVIN DE BEER.