

## REVIEWS.

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**Postscript to Adventure.** Lord Schuster. Eyre and Spottiswoode. 15/-.

This collection of scholarly essays should be in the personal library of every mountaineer from the youngest to the oldest. Like a good companion on the hills, it falls in with the mood of the hour, be it light or serious.

For the younger generation of climbers Lord's Schuster's book confirms that the Golden Age of Mountaineering need be by no means past, while for the older mountaineer whose axe hangs on the wall as a happy reminder of more active days it awakens long-forgotten memories of hard days, expeditions well completed, or the vivid flash-back of "individual moment and instantaneous thrill"; perhaps this is why these essays possess such a personal flavour for the reader. The few carefully-chosen and widely representative photographs, beautifully reproduced, lend an added force to the underlying argument of the author. Of the essays, the two shortest—"A May Fox" and "The Rules of the Game"—offer most food for thought. Read before audiences of widely dissimilar age, they illustrate perfectly the firm foundations on which the spirit of modern mountaineering has been founded.

Whether or not we believe, with Lord Schuster, that our mountaineers of to-day are of lesser stuff than their forerunners of the "great years," we shall agree that "while those of us who are now old owe to them friendship, encouragement and inspiration, the youngest of those who now go to the hills owe to them, their precepts, and their example, attention, respect and gratitude."

For this book alone a younger generation will not be slow in adding its author's name to those whose precepts and example have been so great an inspiration.—J.S.B-G.

**One Green Bottle.** Elizabeth Coxhead. Faber and Faber. 10/6.

Most of us realise our own good fortune in having made our approach to mountaineering through the avenue of a friendly and prosperous Association. Some of us, forgetting that clubs and huts are not open to everyone, have perhaps been too apt to criticise the manner of approach of those less fortunate; while many who have watched the phenomenal growth of mountaineering as a popular sport may have wondered what kind of impact the cult of the rocks was having on the thousands who swarm from the city streets to—for example—a Youth Hostel like Idwal. The heroine of Miss Coxhead's latest book is a girl of the Birkenhead slums who discovers in the mountains round 'Cae Capel' Hostel—a thinly-disguised Idwal—the force which releases her latent strength of character and ultimately transmutes her innate "badness" into self-sacrifice.

The author is herself a rock-climber, and the climbing progress of Cath from the Slabs Ordinary to a lead on "Cloggy" is vividly described, and with an admirable economy and choice of words. The minor characters, mostly young climbers, are drawn with sympathy and clarity, but the development of Cathy's own character is the best thing Miss Coxhead has yet done. The two contrasted backgrounds, the mean streets and the clean hills, are painted with a sure touch.

"One Green Bottle" will be read for the poignant human story it tells so excellently. But it should be read by all who have at any time pondered the influence of the mountain sport on life and character.—S.S.

**The Sheffield Area.** Griststone Guide. Willmer Bros. Ltd. 9/-.

Nine shillings looks a high price for a climbing guide, but this remarkably comprehensive production is well worth it, for its 172 pages contain descriptions of nearly 800 climbs on the nine main "edges" and outlying crags in the Sheffield area. What is more, they are well described, and 20 clear line drawings, on which the routes are numbered in accordance with their numbers in the text, make identification a very simple matter. As for the 16 photo illustrations, each is a fine action-photo in its own right, comparing favourably with any pictures yet reproduced in guide-books. It is good to see the Mods. and Diff's. receiving their proper meed of description among the V.S.s; recent guide-book writers have tended to forget that their reproductions are likely to be used by many more beginners than tigers—climbers to whom "a right-foot-above-the-right-ear movement" (to quote a V.S. description) may remain unattainable. Modernity is noticeable in the naming of some of the recent climbs, among them "Confusion" and "Depression," and in at least two cases the search for originality has occasioned a relapse into foreign tongues, the results being "Himmelswillen" and "Teufelsweg." In size and appearance the volume resembles the Climbers' Club guides. It is in every way a credit to its editor, Mr. Eric Byne, and to those who assisted him in work well done.—S.S.

**The Mountaineer's Week-End Book.** Showell Styles. Seeley Service, 12/6.

A book of this sort has long been awaited by the mountaineering fraternity and eagerly desired by the acolyte of mountain ways. For the first time the essence of mountains and climbing tradition is distilled in one highly entertaining volume of 400 pages—"a Compendium," as the author says in his preface, "of Things about Mountains." Those "Things" include Weather, Songs, Equipment, Flowers, Food, Poems, Knots, Compass Work, Birds and Beasts, and a dozen others. For some the anthologies of prose and verse will be the most enthralling part of Mr. Styles' work; he has evidently dug deep in the rich mines of Club Journals to unearth mountain writings of climbers as diverse as Mallory and John Buchan, and to preserve for us the source of many a quotation that has passed into the vocabulary of the climber. The words and music of the mountain songs old and new are here, besides reference data about rope strains, photography, food values, medical supplies, glossaries, accident procedure, and packing lists. Climbing technique is, wisely, not dealt with; we have quite enough manuals on this subject already; but almost everything else a mountaineer ought to know is here, based on the dicta of the highest modern authorities. Mr. Styles is modest about his own climbing experience, but it enables him to comment usefully on vital matters of equipment and to write entertaining chapters on Mountain Travel and Mountain Camping. Rarely has an author been so fortunate in his illustrator and publisher. Mr. Thomas Beck's many charming mountain sketches, and his beautifully accurate drawings of flowers and knots, add distinction to an artistically produced and well-bound volume. This is a book whose packed wit and knowledge will make it a lifelong companion for every mountain-lover.—G.C.

**This is My Voyage.** Tom Longstaff. John Murray. 21/-.

This book is written by a mountaineer of no mean achievement with an obvious love and enjoyment of all that together goes to make up mountain exploration in the widest sense. It is remarkable that any one person should have been fortunate enough to have explored in so many different countries.

To one reader at least, the early adventures of youth have the greater appeal, for they capture the spirit of the pioneers. The earlier part of the book has a charm in being unsophisticated, but as one reads on one feels that much as the writer would like to lay down his pen there is still so much that must not be left out that he must stick to his task. There is really such a great deal of ground covered that one becomes satiated and feels a kind of mountain indigestion.

There is much useful and interesting data for reference, backed up by first-rate maps and a number of photographs perhaps more illustrative of the text than artistic. The bibliographical notes are well set out in a separate section, a method preferable to that of using footnotes on the actual page.

Should you read it? Yes, definitely! If you're interested in the hills at all you can't afford to miss it.—N.H.

**Subterranean Climbers.** Pierre Chevalier. Faber and Faber. 16/-.

This is an extraordinary book. In spite of this reviewer's aversion to potholing, the account of the exploration of the world's deepest pothole (the Trou de Glaz) held him enthralled. Mr. Hatt's sympathetic translation co-operates with the author's enthusiasm to achieve something approaching an epic.

The Trou de Glaz is 17 kilometres of passages, ledges, chasms and "cat-runs" in the heart of the Dent de Crolles (6777 feet) near Grenoble, with a total depth of 2157 feet. The finding of a way through this perilous labyrinth occupied Chevalier and his companions of the Lyons Speleological Club for 65 expeditions over 12 years. Twenty-three photographs and many maps and sketches illustrate the story. At times the non-caving reader must pause to marvel at the almost fanatical persistence and heroism which the leader devoted to his object of emerging at the far end of a wet and dirty hole in the ground—but mountaineers, perhaps, should be the last to look askance at such devotion. To the speleologist this is as great an achievement as the ascent of Anapurna is to the mountaineer. In both cases some part of our admiration is seated, as Chesterton says, "not in the fact that the thing was big or bold or successful, but in the fact that the thing was perfectly useless to everybody, including the person who did it."—S.S.

**The Pinnacle Club Journal, No. 6, 1950.**

The 1950 Journal is the first to be issued since 1938, but the long gap is amply bridged by the impressive record of some enterprising members. I first picked out Mabel Jeffrey's "Reminiscences of the Canadian Rockies" as being pleasant recollections of lectures and films of this extensive and delectable region. It sounds no less attractive from Mabel Jeffrey's recounting—except that frequent meetings with bears (including grizzlies) is a bit putting-off. Mrs. Punnett's "Eighteen Days in the Western Himalayas" is perhaps a small expedition as Himalayan projects go, but, ignoring some of the discomforts, it sounds a delightful trek in a region of great variety and beauty. A close-up of a visit to the Climbers' Club Hut at Bosigran by Nea Morin and visits to Arran by E. Wells conjure up visions of the gentler sort of climbing day. Gwen Moffatt's "Impressions of the French Alps," written in rather a halting style, tells of a bad season—plenty of plucky attempts with one successful ascent. Most mountaineers of maturer years are prone to do as Mrs. Worsley Leech—measure up present performances against those of more youthful days. The findings can be somewhat brutal, but readers will agree that Mrs. Leech

should be well content with the readings on her "Snowdonia Measuring-Stick." There are several other articles well worthy of comment, but space forbids it. Photographs serve to illustrate the textual matter, but one cannot say that they attain a very high standard. It is indeed fortunate that the ladies chronicle their doings as ably as they mountaineer. —A.E.W.

#### **The Journal of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club. Nos. 43 and 44, 1950.**

This Journal has a luxurious "creamy" quality about it, and the material within its pages is certainly equal to the general presentation. W. Peascod in "The Cinderella of Climbing Valleys" details and surveys climbs in the vicinity of Buttermere. It is in the nature of a review of the new Buttermere Guide Book. The old question of "classification" crops up—regrading of climbs in what he terms "the newer order of Desperation." The article is worth study as a descriptive supplement to the new guide. Bentley Beetham muses on the factors that make some climbs good and others bad. He analyses and lists in order of importance the desirable qualities of a climb. A report of the 1948 Zermatt Meet by Eric Furness; "Babanki D'aya"—a climb in the Bemenda Division of the Cameron" by M. N. H. Milne; "Sixty Four" by Anon.; "A First Ascent in Greenland" by W. R. B. Battle, are but a few of the Club's written-up activities, and others most decidedly merit comment. J. C. Lyth discusses some aspects of First Aid as applicable to climber casualties. The article is clear and informative and one mountaineers should read and absorb—it is no use being hopeless and helpless on the scene of an accident. "Climbs Old and New," though shorter than usual, as J. Carswell explains, lists some 29 new climbs—sufficient evidence of the Club's virile membership.

The tribute to Arthur Wakefield, who passed away in February, 1949, is made by Ashley Abraham, and is splendidly fitting to so distinguished a mountaineer. "His career was one of strenuous endeavour and entralling adventure, mainly spent in the benefit of his fellow-men." Wakefield was probably best known as a member of the 1922 Everest Expedition led by Bruce. He was President of the F. & R.C.C. in 1923-25, and spoke on the occasion of the dedication of the Club's War Memorial on Great Gable.

A wide circle of mountaineers will mourn the loss of George Basterfield. Those who have met the veteran Lakelander will remember this rugged genial character, so well known also for his songs and poems. George S. Bower writes of this eminent mountaineer—a past President of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club—and narrates incidents in the life of a great climbing personality.

An unusually long list of Book Reviews concludes yet another example of what a good Club Journal should be.—A.E.W.

#### **The Rucksack Club Journal, 1949.**

If the strength of a club be measured by the diversity of its activities, then the Rucksack Club should have few cares. Here we have members who climb, cave, fish and scramble in places as far apart as Switzerland and the Scottish Isles, the Chimanimanis and County Clare.

Among a batch of uniform merit, V. T. Dillon tells of adventures in "African Hills," while A. S. Piggott proves that a "Family Holiday" is no obstacle to the enjoyment of the greater pleasures of the Alps. R. A. Eastwood, in his amusing anecdote "The Compass" shows the terrible consequences of being too well prepared, and Ivan Waller breaks new ground in an account of the "Girdle Traverse of Iona."

Coming nearer home, John Lawton writes enthrallingly of the final conquest of "Suicide Groove," and then carries us pitch by pitch up some of the latest of Snowdonia's super Severes. Such reading is a never-failing source of pleasure to those like myself who never hope to lead such exacting climbs. The vitality of the club on British climbing grounds is further emphasised by an impressive list of new climbs both in Wales and the gritstone areas.

Coming to the end of the Journal it was a shock to me to read an obituary notice of a man whom I had met and climbed with but once, and of whose death I was not even aware. The name Toni Nicholson brings back misty memories of blue sky and Y Garn gully packed with snow, of wind-slab on Glyder Fawr and one of the finest days Snowdonia has ever given to me. Even such a short acquaintance convinced me that 'Toni' was the ideal mountain companion.—R.P.C.