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REVIEWS.

THE ASCENT OF MOUNT ST. ELIAS (ALASKA). Narrated
by FILIPPO DE FILIPPI. (A. & C. Black.)

EXPLORATION of the world's greater mountain ranges is proceeding apace. The last three years have seen the ascents of some of the highest peaks of the Andes, of Kenia in Africa, and of St. Elias in Alaska; and to these we must now add the recent exploration of fresh fields in the Eastern Himalayas.

We can well understand the charm of these expeditions. With the sense of freedom which is given by a few weeks' walk forward, with all our worldly goods, for the time being at least, upon our backs, most of us are familiar; and we can imagine the fascination of a longer journey, through a region far from the nearest human habitation, amid such scenery as all great mountain chains afford, with the stimulus of the need of absolute self-reliance, and the knowledge that no man has ever passed that way before; that we are the first to break in upon the solitude of Nature. What a change from the trammels of ordinary civilised life!

But in these days, when a trip round the world forms part of the education of the ordinary youth, the man who would explore new country must be prepared for difficulties; and few undertakings of the kind, we should think, can have been more arduous than the ascent of Mount St. Elias by the Duke of the Abruzzi. Eighteen thousand feet above the sea is of course not much of an altitude nowadays; but fifteen thousand feet above the snow-line is surely a creditable elevation to attain. The party had to traverse more than 100 miles of ice and snow; they camped out for weeks on glaciers, they carried with them, for the greater part of the journey, over 1000 lbs. of luggage; and this in a country where bad weather, even in the most favourable season of the year, is the rule and not the exception. The mosquitoes, too, are so numerous and so aggressive that, after camping out for one night on the

Malaspina moraine, the Prince and his party were unrecognisable. We do not think Alaska will ever become the playground of America. No Zermatt will ever come into existence there: there will be no Riffelalp, no Gornergrat Railway, no rope-festooned Matterhorn.

But let us turn from these melancholy reflections to the bright pages of Dr. Filippi's volume. The majority of readers will, we think, find Signor Sella's illustrations the most attractive feature of the book. The full-page photographs are very good, and admirably reproduced; and many of the smaller views, such, for example, as "In the channels of the Archipelago," show that capacity for choosing a subject with a view to composition and pleasing effect which seems to be confined to amateur photographers. Much of the text is worth reading, though it occasionally seems to be illustrating the photographs, as if the writer were giving a lecture with the aid of dissolving views. Special attention must be drawn to a foot-note on page 35, in which Dr. Filippi shows conclusively that a glacier may recede without flowing backwards.

Our only regret is that the party did not make a better map of the district. The "Sketch map of the Mount St. Elias region" appended to the volume shows nothing north of the St. Elias ridge; and is admittedly based on the work of Mr. Russell, who explored the district ten years ago. This defect is, however, to some extent repaired by Signor Sella's panoramic views, which are placed together at the end of the book. They give an excellent idea of the general character of the region, with its peculiarity of vast and almost level plains covered with glacier. The view of the country to the north is especially interesting. It shows a region into which no one has yet penetrated. Members of the Climbers' Club who are not already aware of the fact will be glad to hear that there is a higher mountain than St. Elias in this quarter, and that it would probably not be necessary to cross more than 300 miles of glacier in order to ascend it. Those who do not propose to visit the district are recommended, at least, to peruse Dr. Filippi's book.

L. C.