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REVIEWS.

Several reviews are held over for the next number.

SCOTTISH MOUNTAINEERING CLUB JOURNAL, No. 57.
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THIS number is hardly up to the usual high standard. Mr. Parker records how his party "bagged" the Cuillins in a week, and Dr. Wilson contributes a very pleasing article on Morven, a hill in Aberdeenshire, we may mention, to save non-Scotsmen trouble. A cyclopædic compilation records how many climbers went to the King's country at Braemar, and what they did at Easter, 1908.

The final section of the *Scottish Mountaineering Club Guide Book* is inserted, and one wonders what the excellent Editor will do to fill up his pages now that his *magnum opus* and great stand-by is completed. We take this opportunity, however, to congratulate the Editor on the completion of a splendid work, and one that will be of the greatest interest and use to members and non-members of the Scottish Mountaineering Club alike. We hope the Club will see its way to issue the *Guide Book* in separate book form, together with the very numerous and fine illustrations that now accompany it.

Last, but not least, we notice that the Scottish ladies have at length asserted themselves, and, following the lead of the Ladies' Alpine Club, have started "The Ladies' Scottish Climbing Club." We wish the new Club every success.

THE ALPS IN NATURE AND HISTORY. W. A. B. COOLIDGE,
Methuen & Co.

WE are glad to welcome this long expected book which should be read by all interested in the Alps. Some chapters, such as

those on the flowers and animals of the Alps, might have received fuller treatment, but no one could quarrel with the author's admirably clear account of the Alps in History, and the story of the Alpine Passes.

In the chapter devoted to modern mountaineering there are a number of points on which modern climbers who climb without guides will not agree with Mr. Coolidge.

Appalled at the large number of accidents that have of late years happened to guideless climbers, he rightly condemns the incompetent amateur for attempting performances for which he has neither the skill nor the physical powers. But he goes further than that ; though admitting that a few amateurs have proved themselves as capable as the 'professional glacier guide,' by which we must suppose that he means the best professional guides, he maintains that 'really capable amateurs' are not to be compared to 'good glacier guides.'

The points he deals with are :—

1. 'An amateur cannot decide in the twinkling of an eye as to the state of the snow.' Most people who have had any experience at all can tell at once if snow is well within the limit of safety or outside it, but few can give an absolutely reliable opinion as to the security of snow when it is near the limit of danger. The leader of a party, amateur or professional, who is competent to give an opinion under such circumstances, must have had considerable experience of bad weather conditions, and must, in addition, be gifted with exceptional powers of observation and deduction. Probably only a few climbers, amateur or professional, possess this knowledge. As a rule, when a guide tells the condition of a snow bridge by the amount of resistance it offers to his axe, he is doing nothing which is not well within the powers of any capable amateur who has been accustomed to lead on snow-covered glaciers.

Even the determination of the stability of snow on an ice-slope requires, as a rule, no exceptional skill.

2. 'An amateur cannot possess the inherited and accumulated weather wisdom of a guide.' Here again it must be said

that a few people possess an uncanny and almost miraculous knowledge of the weather, and can be trusted when they say that it is safe to undertake a difficult climb in doubtful weather. But how few they are! Expeditions of a high order should obviously not be undertaken under such conditions either by guided or guideless parties.

3. 'An amateur cannot hope to vie with a professional in such tiring work as step-cutting, carrying weights, and so on.' 'Certainly he cannot as a rule, but why should he? If he is skilled in the use of properly made crampons he can almost entirely dispense with steps as he will be free at any rate from the toil of long step-cutting; as regards weights, all members of a guideless party must be prepared to carry their share, and the omission of some entirely unnecessary luxuries such as liquids, cameras, etc., will enable a guideless party to carry even more necessaries, such as warm clothes and extra food, than a normally guided party. Besides, porters can be taken on most expeditions if the amateur members have a difficulty in carrying the necessary weights.

4. 'A guide is used to such surprises as sudden mist, bad weather, loss of way on trackless snowfields or in the mazes of a crevassed glacier, and is, in consequence, less demoralised than an amateur.' We presume that what is meant is the occurrence of one of the first two circumstances when the party are on or in the two last regions.

The deduction is obviously incorrect. Moral courage and determination are not the failings of most guideless climbers.

Any leader, amateur or professional, may temporarily miss his way, but he should soon find his bearings again if he has a compass and a reliable map, and has used them before he got lost. It has been admitted that the amateur will almost always be able to read a map and use a compass better than the professional guide. Consequently, on those points, the professional can claim no superiority.

Of course, it is presumed that both professional and amateur have taken the trouble to practice finding their way with compass and map over unknown snowfields or glaciers.

When no map exists of a region, or, at any rate, the party have none, the compass is of comparatively small use for finding the way off, though it is absolutely essential as a guide to the course taken. In that case the party have to follow the line of least resistance, and try experiments in different directions. For this work the competent amateur is as good, if not better, than the guide, for he has probably spent more time on crevassed glaciers. This is owing to the fact that the guide's business is to ascend mountains, not to spend several seasons in the study of crevassed glaciers, which the competent amateur has certainly done as part of his mountaineering education. As a matter of fact, the modern tendency is much more to get to the top of a mountain than to study mountaineering, consequently the modern guide has very little experience of icefalls as he avoids them on every possible occasion.

5. 'An amateur tends to relax attention when the chief difficulties are over and the excitement is past.' Obviously only the incompetent amateur.

6. 'Bad weather makes a heavy demand on bodily strength.' Most amateurs will be at a disadvantage as regards their power of endurance to cold. It is also true that insufficient food or of unsuitable character will knock up an amateur more quickly than a guide. But proper precautions should, at any rate, lessen this last danger.

7. 'Guideless climbers are under no legal responsibility towards one another.' Surely the bond that should unite a party is not a legal one?

We have dealt with these points somewhat at length as we feel that the author's arguments might tend to discourage guideless climbers with whom the future of mountaineering lies.

We thoroughly agree with the appeal to beginners to practice before they run unknown risks and to exercise caution, but, unless they make experiments, how are they to learn mountaineering?

The relative superiority of amateur and professional is an old question and of no importance whatever, for, if A is good

enough to lead on a certain expedition, what does it matter if B and C are rather more gifted?

The comparison of the merits of the amateur and professional is really only intended to warn climbers that they must not lead on expeditions unless they are competent, but the implication is that it is unsafe to attempt almost any expedition without professional help, a conclusion with which we entirely disagree.

If this were so, the sport of mountaineering would soon become extinct.

THE NETHERWORLD OF MENDIP. E. A. BAKER and H. E. BALCH. Clifton: J. Baker & Son. London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1907.

THE fascination of exploring underground passages is undoubted. We know that Kublai Khan erected his pleasure dome in a locality which possessed unrivalled opportunities for speleologists.

Probably ordinary climbers of the Middle World have no idea of the excitement of cave work. Even an expert would lose his way unless he employed the expedient used by Theseus in exploring the Cretan cave. Narrow tunnels have to be crept through of the size of an average drain-pipe; waterfalls descended; airy traverses negotiated on infinitesimal ledges. The rope is by no means always a safeguard, as the leader has to descend places where the rope is only a partial help. Even to those who are not likely to explore caves, the book should prove of great interest as it gives a well written description of some of the most interesting underground channels in this country.

ROCK-CLIMBING IN SKYE. By A. P. ABRAHAM. London: Longmans, Green & Co. 21/- net.

THIS is certainly the best book on British Rock-climbing that has yet been produced. Well written and admirably illustrated,

it will prove of interest to many climbers who have never been fortunate enough to visit Skye. The descriptions are much clearer and more easily followed than in either of the climbing books on The Lake District and North Wales.

WALKS AND CLIMBS AROUND AROLLA. (London : S. Chick and Co., 48 Wells Street, Oxford Street, W. 2/9, Post free.)

THE valuable notes made by visitors to Arolla on the climbs of the district have been collected and edited by Mr. Larden. The result is a Climber's Guide, which should prove of great use to mountaineers at Arolla. We consider that the historical method, though of interest, is apt to be somewhat confusing. It has, however, good authority, for we believe it is still employed to teach logic at a famous University. This book, we think, would have been still more valuable if it had been more carefully edited, and the accounts of climbs given on some uniform principle.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS WINTER SPORTS CLUB YEAR BOOK, 1909, contains an interesting account of the different winter resorts, and a "Who's Who" of the members.