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NEW PUBLICATIONS.

THE ANNALS OF MONT BLANC.—*A Monograph*, by CHARLES EDWARD MATHEWS, *sometime President of the Alpine Club*. (Fisher Unwin.)

THIS long-expected volume fills a gap in mountaineering literature that has been steadily widening for years. Lovers of the great Alps and of their history have sought out the records, for the most part privately printed in pamphlet form, of the early climbers of Mont Blanc, and have found it an expensive search. In this single volume those brief pieces of ancient history are collated in proper sequence, and though there is to some extent a sameness in the recorded experiences, any reader who has a general interest in early mountaineering and more especially a personal acquaintance with this mountain in particular, will be only too glad to have such a complete and inexpensive summary to his hand.

Those who have read the story of the first ascent of Mont Blanc by Jacques Balmat and Dr. Paccard as usually told, will confess to a prejudice against the Doctor. This is by reason of the publicity given to Balmat's account, supplied to Alexandre Dumas 46 years after the event by the garrulous old man, vain of his former triumph and bent on self-aggrandisement. Dumas was no mountaineer, and probably translated the already exaggerated description into journalese for the benefit, and indeed the better appreciation, of a non-climbing *clientèle* of French readers. We smile at Albert Smith's version of his own ascent, and all but the most equable and good-humoured readers, such as Mr. Mathews himself, feel disgusted at the man and his bare-faced means of making money out of his mountaineering by grotesque misrepresentation and belated discovery of the "humour of it." Yet the "Impressions de Voyage Suisse" have taken us all in, and Mr. Mathews comes forward, more than a century after that historic climb, whose details should be accurately known we think to all genuine mountaineers, and supplies us with the missing chapter—the other man's story. "Men now gaze with delight on the two beautiful statues of Jacques Balmat and Horace Bénédict de Saussure with which Chamonix is adorned. They peruse with interest the lineaments of the great guide on the medallion which faces the main street of the village. Is it too much to hope that tardy justice may yet be done to the Doctor, and that some similar memorial may keep green the memory of Michel Gabriel

Paccard?" For we feel convinced on reading this book, that a good case has been made out for the Doctor, and although there are still pieces of evidence wanting, small discrepancies to be explained rather than glossed over, the author is to be congratulated on having done an act of justice to the memory of a man of strength, courage and brains. The case must be studied by reference to the volume itself, but we may remark that in an account written and published by Beattie in 1836, based on information gathered at Chamonix, Balmat is said to have been seriously indisposed after his four nights' exposure on the mountain, and to have offered to take Paccard to the summit in return for medical service rendered. This ingenious explanation of one disputed point seems to have been overlooked by Mr. Mathews, who also passes without criticism Carrier's (and Dumas') statement that in climbing the last 350 feet of moderately easy snowslope, they were *opposed* by a north-east wind which forcibly retarded their progress. Yet the direction of the summit was south-west, and with a strong wind thus *helping* them they should have walked up comfortably in half an hour.

The subsequent ascents are described up to the time of Albert Smith, who, caricature of a climber though he was, did more than any other to bring people to the Alps. Then we have a brief account of the formation of the Alpine Club, and the discovery of other routes to the summit. Touching this, historically we can have nothing but praise for the book, but geographically it is occasionally incomplete. No doubt most of the illustrations are beautiful that show us the various chief aspects of the mountain, but as climbers we should prefer to see a monograph with more precise information concerning the different routes up, and even if they had to be contented with process plates, it would surely please many unimaginative readers to find pictorial presentation of the chief views obtained during the ascent by the ordinary way. Mr. Mathews rightly praises Imfeld's map of the Mont Blanc chain, but we cannot refrain from pointing out how far his own map is behind the times in its delineation of the outlying peaks of the *massif*, peaks of such interest as the Charmoz, Grépon or the Dent du Réquin. It may be urged that these are not directly connected with the subject of the monograph, but neither then are such matters as fatalities on the Col du Géant which are here described in detail. We must be thankful for the splendid reprint of Martel's rare tract on the Glaciers of Savoy, the chapter on the geology of the region, for which the author has enlisted the services of the distinguished Professor Bonney, the excellent bibliography, and above all for the simple but graphic way in which Mr.

Mathews has told his story. The climbing world expected a good deal from him, and it is not disappointed. His information is reliable, his criticism is sound, as indeed a mountaineering experience of over forty years may be expected to have matured it; his discrimination of the essential truth in various partially conflicting records is as acute as his tolerance for the personal equation of the narrators is large. He scarcely ever introduces his own share in the making of Alpine history, and yet he has managed unconsciously to impress his own personality unmistakably on his work. "He knows what a great mountain has to teach him, and he prepares himself to receive the lesson with a sympathetic and reverent heart. He trains his body and keeps open his mind. Undue bodily fatigue is unknown to him, and therefore he always possesses the maximum capacity of appreciation. To him every tree, or fern, or flower has its tale to tell; to him the jagged rocks reveal their own history; to him the glory of the sunlight on the eternal snows, and the silence that is in the starry sky, alike bring happiness and peace." O. G. J.

WELSH MOUNTAINEERING.—*A Practical Guide to the Ascent of all the Principal Mountains in Wales*, by ALEX. W. PERRY (L. Upcott Gill), 2s. 6d.

A COPY of this work, published in 1896, has just been sent us anonymously, we presume for the purpose of review. It is of a handy size, printed on good paper in clear type, with unusually wide margins, and in spite of an external illustration of an impossible sunset and some still more impossible mountains, the first impression it conveyed was a very favourable one. We must confess, however, that as a practical guide to the Welsh Mountains we are not able to recommend it, although it can scarcely fail to prove a source of interest and amusement to all who are acquainted with the district described. Some of the information one gleans from its pages is startling in its novelty. We should think very few of our members have ever tried the following method of reaching Crib Goch (which by the way is spoken of as a spur overlooking the Llanberis Pass).

Route 2.—From Pen-y-Gwryd. By the usual tracks to the spring near Ddysgyl and then by the Aber route.

It is interesting to learn that Moel Siabod "needs very careful climbing," and that the "narrow, nasty ridge that leads from Pen Helig to Carnedd has precipices on each side, and *must* be avoided in bad weather or by persons subject to giddy fits.

“It is very firm but *very dangerous.*” (The Italics are not ours.) This is more especially charming as the work purports to be written, not for the ordinary path-frequenting tourists, but to assist those who wish to ascend the mountains by “scrambling up the sides.”

Of Lliwedd the author says :—

Be sure, however, you keep to the solid of the mountain, and are not persuaded to go gully-climbing. There have been fatal accidents on its sides. If you only take the path found to the left of Llydaw it will lead you by an easy and beautiful route to the summit. A gentleman named Mr. Mitchell killed himself in trying to scale an impossible gully on Lliwedd. By going up the shoulder of the mountain he could have reached the same spot on the ridge in far less time than he would have done by scaling the gully. No one is more fond than I of a risky and dangerous bit, but I am old enough to know the difference between the possible and the impossible.

In the introduction the formation of a Welsh Mountain Club is advocated to undertake various functions, such as the collection of literature appertaining to climbing in Wales, the organization of a proper guide service, and scale of fees, etc., etc. The author proposes that the membership of such a club should be confined to *bonâ fide* climbers, no one to be eligible unless he has accomplished the following “climb” in ten hours: From Penmaenmawr to Moelfre, thence across the valley to Cefn Maen-amor. Ascent of Tal-y-fan, then by way of Foel Lwyd to Drosogl and along the ridge to Drum. Over the summits of Foel Fras, Arryg, Carnedd Llewelyn and Carnedd Dafydd, and down by Braich Ddu to Pen Benylog. Thence over Tryfan and Glyder Fach to Pen-y-Gwryd.

Should a club, with such a qualification, ever be formed, we anticipate the membership would not be very considerable.

We cannot conclude without quoting the following route descriptions :—

Glyder Fawr from Llyn-y-Cwm (Devil’s Kitchen). The route from Lyn-y-Cwm starts from a little hollow near the carn at Lyn-y-Cwm. After a climb up a grassy track for two and a half hours the summit of Glyder Fawr is easily reached.

Carnedd-y-Filiast from Bethesda. Take a brake from the station to Llyn Ogwen (5 miles), pass Ogwen bank, and then the broad and bare part of the valley comes into view. After a short walk Carnedd-y-Filiast is seen rising to the extreme right.

AMONG THE HIMALAYAS.—By Major L. A. WADDELL, LL.D., F.L.S. (Westminster, Archibald Constable & Co.), 18s.

NEW CLIMBS IN NORWAY.—By E. C. OPPENHEIM (London, T. Fisher Unwin), 7s. 6d.