

## REVIEWS.

OUR perusal of Mr. Neil Munro's latest Highland romance, "The New Road," has been so long delayed that a notice of it at this time of day has, unfortunately, the appearance of being excessively belated.

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HIGHLAND      But it would be unpardonable not to say something of a  
NOVEL.        book that deals so extensively with the Central Highlands—  
                 "Corryarrick and the wilds of Badenoch, the Wicked  
                 Bounds, and dark Breadalbane's corried hills"—and that

breathes through every page of it the love of the hills and the moors, and the delights of open-air life. "Didst ever lie on heather, lad? and waken in the morning with the plover whistling?" asks one of the characters, who is also responsible for the protestation that there is "nothing better than the shanks," and that one can see a good deal more on them than when cocked up on a saddle. The "New Road" is the road through the Highlands from Perth to Inverness which was constructed by Marshal Wade after the '15 as part of the policy of bringing the clansmen under the subjection of law and order. Its construction marks the difference between the old, turbulent Gaeldom, and the new influences introduced by the dominant Sassenach; and the road, with the conflicting sentiments its making evokes, forms the underlying keynote of the book. There is a story of course—a story with a mystery involved in much duplicity and treachery, the unravelling of which affords great scope for the ingenuity of a Highland "beachdair" or scout. The personalities of Duncan Forbes of Culloden and Simon, Lord Lovat, figure throughout the story; and the hero and the scout have adventures in the hills which fairly rival those of David Balfour and Alan Breck. It is less in the story itself, however, than in these adventures, with their consequential descriptions of the country traversed, that mountain-lovers will be most interested; and they will be attracted as well by the constantly-recurring disquisitions on the new road and all that it means, all that it involves. The "beachdair" contemptuously disparages the road as "Bad for the feet! bad for the feet! Harder than ever to walk to kirk; it's neither good for men nor horses"; the hero espouses the utilitarian view that it will "likely be very good for business;" and the sensible but far from unsympathetic Culloden regards it thus—"Ye saw the Road? That Road's the end of us! The Romans didna manage it; Edward didna manage it; but there it is at last, through to our vitals, and it's up wi' the ell-wand, down the sword!" which reflection expresses the true philosophy of the whole matter. In many other passages does Mr. Munro finely convey to us the transition from wildness and strife to convenience and comfort, the change from the past to the present, and the disappearance of the old manners and modes of living. Delightful also are his sketches of the Highland character, with its curious amalgam of superstition, sentiment, and devotion, and its highly poetic turn of language. The chief representative of the antique Celt in the book, for instance, is made to remark—"There is a wise old word that will be saying, 'Men may meet, but never the mountains!'" and on being pressed for an explanation, he adds—"It

sounds a little flat in English, but in the Gaelic it will break men's hearts to hear. I canna put it plainer in the English, but it means that old friends meeting in a foreign land will vex themselves to think the mountains of their home so distant." There is an exquisite feeling in delicate touches such as this, which gives an added charm to a work that is otherwise captivating in a high degree. R. A.

By far the most interesting article in the February number of the *Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal* is one by Mr. James A. Parker on "The Green Ray." This is a somewhat rare atmospheric

phenomenon, seldom observable because occurring only under very exceptional conditions. "When the sun sets behind a clear and cloudless sea horizon," Mr. Parker explains, "its last ray of light, seen only for an instant as the upper edge of the sun disappears behind the horizon, is sometimes, not white as one might expect, but bright green. This beautiful phenomenon, which occurs also at sunrise, is known as the Green Ray, and it is one of the most rarely observed natural phenomena. It is also occasionally seen in a modified degree with low land or cloud horizons." Mr. Parker has witnessed it four times, and furnishes very precise details of his observations. He first saw it at sunrise (above the sea) from the Cruden Bay Hotel on a morning in November, 1907—"a most vivid point of brilliant emerald green light," which lasted for a second to a second and a half. He saw the green ray again on a morning in December, 1913, from a house in the western outskirts of Aberdeen, as the sun was rising from behind the Hill of Nigg; and a second time, from the same point of observation, in November, 1914. And, on an evening in June, 1914, while walking along the cliff path from the Bullers of Buchan to Cruden Bay, and on the top of the high ground near Dunbuy, he watched the sunset with an eight times prismatic binocular, and was once more successful in noticing the green ray. Besides recording his own observations, Mr. Parker furnishes particulars of observations by others which he has been able to collect; and, in conclusion, specifies the conditions which are favourable to the appearance of the green ray. The combination of these conditions, he says, can only occur very rarely, but the Green Ray, he adds, "would no doubt be seen more frequently if people knew to be on the outlook for it when the conditions were favourable for its appearance."

No fewer than thirty members of the Fell and Rock Climbing Club of the English Lake District were last year serving with the colours in different parts of the world, but half-a-dozen of them found time to "FELL AND ROCK forward articles and photographs to the issue of the Club's CLIMBING CLUB *Journal* for 1914. It is no wonder that the Editor, in JOURNAL." his Foreword, points to these contributions with "extra pride," and instances them as "tributes to the great love of the mountains which possesses the writers, and to their unselfishness in once again making a great effort to please and help their fellow-climbers and mountain lovers." The Club's specialty is that of rock-climbing, and the bulk of the articles are devoted to that particular feature of mountaineering. The President, Mr. W. P. Haskett-Smith, made the first ascent of Napes Needle in 1886, and vividly describes how he managed to accomplish what,

from the accompanying photographs, looks an almost impossible feat. Instructive accounts are given of other climbs in the Lake District; and in an interesting article it is contended—and with a good show of reason—that the poet Coleridge was the first man to ascend and so “discover” Scafell Pike. The Scottish climbs described are two in Skye. Some very striking verses, “The Cragman,” are reproduced from a volume of poems by Mr. Geoffrey Winthrop Young. They picture the delights of the rock-climber, but also the dangers:—

In this short span  
between my finger-tips on the smooth edge  
and these tense feet cramped to the crystal ledge  
I hold the life of man.

\* \* \* \* \*  
For what is there in all the world for me  
but what I know and see?  
And what remains of all I see and know  
if I let go?

FOUR of the fifteen articles in the *Rucksack Club Journal* for 1915 deal with climbs in the Alps—or, rather, with attempted climbs, for in several cases the projected programme was seriously interfered

“RUCKSACK CLUB JOURNAL.” with by too much snow and unfavourable weather conditions. One writer, indeed, makes this candid confession—“No, we did not see quite everything in our first Swiss holiday—no chamois, no golden eagles, no

wild, whirling blizzards and terrifying thunderstorms. We did not see a stream that took our fancy half so much as, say, the Garry in spate.” He and his companions had to be content with passes instead of peaks, yet they “enjoyed themselves abominably well.” The other articles are characterised by the same spirit of making the best of adverse circumstances—surely infectious in the Club, and highly to be commended. There are contributions on walks in and around Plynlimon and elsewhere in Wales, and on climbs of the Ilam rock in Dovedale and the Troutdale Pinnacle in Cumberland; while the longest and in many respects the most valuable article is devoted to a traverse of Jotunheim, the highest mountain region in Norway. Those who carry a camera in the hills will find many useful hints in the article on “Photography as a Sport.”

THE apparent disappearance from Scotland of what is ordinarily termed “real winter weather” is evidently interfering seriously with the pursuit of ski-ing. As much may be gathered from the suggestive

“SCOTTISH SKI CLUB MAGAZINE.” titles of two articles in the current number of the *Scottish Ski Club Magazine*—“Ski-Running (?) at Ballater” and “A Meet of One” (at Newtonmore); and the disappointments resulting from the unfavourable weather conditions

which are therein chronic'd lend emphasis to the title—and the matter—of still a third article in the same pessimistic vein—“The Winter of our Discontent.” Despite the drawbacks to the sport thus indicated, the contents of the *Magazine* are as interesting as ever, and there are excellent articles dealing with ski-ing at Davos and Zermatt, and in Bohemia, supplemented by admirable photographs. In the matter of photography, the opening article on “Snow and Its Photographic Expression,” by Dr. W. Inglis Clark, is well worth careful study by all devotees of the camera.

WE cordially welcome the *Annual* (for 1915) of the Mountain Club of South Africa, published by the Capetown section, which has just reached us. The Club is no new affair evidently, for this is the

S. AFRICA eighteenth issue of the *Annual*. It contains a really MOUNTAIN CLUB formidable list of peaks ascended by members during "ANNUAL" the past year. Naturally, the attempting of new routes up the rocky faces of Table Mountain is largely a pre-occupation of the Club, and many of the articles in the *Annual* are descriptive of the adventurous feats involved. The opening article is an interesting account of an ascent of Mount Kibo, Kilimanjaro, in what is (or was) German East Africa.

THE last entire month that R. L. Stevenson ever passed in Scotland was that of August 1882, and it was spent at Kingussie, on the advice of Sir

Andrew Clark, who was a great believer in the tonic influence of Speyside air. There is an incidental

IN allusion in "Memories and Portraits" to "the golden KINGUSSIE. burn that pours and sulks in the den behind King-

ussie"—the Gynack. An article in *Alma Mater*, the Aberdeen University Magazine, of 13 January, alludes to a little volume of poetry which was not only written by Stevenson while at Kingussie, but was "actually printed by Stevenson's own hand in the local printing office of a stationer." Stevenson, moreover, furnished the illustrations, and cut the blocks for their reproduction. The volume was entitled "The Graver and the Pen, or Scenes from Nature with Appropriate Verses," and though a copy of the volume is exceedingly rare, the illustration of one little poem at least, says the article, "may be seen in the original by all who will." It represents a clump of pines—"The Disputatious Pines"—the poem it illustrates being as follows—

The first pine to the second said :

"My leaves are black, my branches red ;

I stand upon this moor of mine

A hoar, unconquerable pine."

The second sniffed, and answered : "Pooh !

I am as good a pine as you."

"Discourteous tree," the first replied.

"The tempest in my boughs had cried

The hunter slumbered in my shade

A hundred years ere you were made,"

The second smiled as he returned

"I shall be here when you are burned."

So far discussion ruled the pair

Each turned on each a frowning air,

When flickering from the banks anigh

A flight of martens met their eye.

Some time their course they watched, and then

They nodded off to sleep again.

The writer of the article says the pines stand by the brink of the Spey, a little below the junction of the Gynack with the river, and adds—"A native of the place pointed out to me in all earnestness the very individual two trees of this great adventure—but on that point one may be allowed a few religious scruples."