

## REVIEWS.

STUDENT AND SNIPER-SERGEANT: A Memoir of J. K. Forbes, M.A.  
By William Taylor, M.A., and Peter Diack, M.A. London: Hodder &  
Stoughton.—Of the many recently published memoirs

“STUDENT AND SNIPER-SERGEANT.” made many excursions in the Cairngorms. A son of Mr. Alexander Forbes, schoolmaster—also a former member of the Club—he acquired, early in life, the habit of taking long walks in the country, sometimes in company, but generally alone. When he was only nine years old, he disappeared from home one morning and did not return till dusk, having walked from Aberdeen to the Hill of Fare and back, a distance of thirty miles. A year later, he made his first acquaintance with “the real mountains,” during a holiday spent in the Cairngorms. At fourteen, he accompanied his father, a brother and a friend in a ten days’ tramping tour up Deeside to Ben Muich Dhui, then across to Blair Atholl and down the Tay to Dunkeld. On account of his youth, he was allowed to set the pace, but—as so frequently happens—his pace was too fast for the seniors and he had repeatedly to be called back. Later on, when a student at the University, and afterwards a teacher at Rathven public school, near Buckie, Forbes did a deal of walking and climbing by himself; and some striking experiences in these solitary rambles may be quoted:—

With bicycle and bag he vanished to the West after a strenuous military camp at Barry. He was heard of in the lighthouse at Lismore, and then among the wilds of Argyle and Inverness. Towards the end of the tour, he left a clachan near Stromeferry about five o’clock one morning, pushed and carried his bicycle some miles till riding became possible, rode straight ahead till dark, slept an hour or two on the hill-side, passed Tomintoul at dawn, and breakfasted at Kincardine o’Neil, on Deeside. He had done fully 140 miles—no small feat, considering the load he carried (tent, water-proof sheet, etc.), and the kind of road he had to cover.

Another time he made a tour alone to the Cairngorms; and, though the details of it are mostly unknown, one incident remains. To save a detour which would have required more time than he could spare, he crossed the Dee—at the time swollen with ice-water and lumps of melting snow—with his clothes bundled on his head!

Skye, once visited, remained his dearest hunting-ground. . . . He had gone up a gully once, and, many hundreds of feet above nothing, came exhausted to an overhanging cornice, where he had to remain for twenty minutes, half-sitting, half-hanging by his finger-tips, till he gathered strength and wind enough to twist himself over the last lift. He confessed that his thoughts during the interval were of the most serious kind, and, for the time, determined him to keep safer paths. But he had several narrow escapes of the same kind, though he said little about them.

The book, however, is more, very much more, than an account of mountaineering experiences. Forbes, who was of a deeply religious nature,

ultimately resolved to enter the ministry, and was studying at the Aberdeen U.F. Church College when the war broke out. He enlisted as a private in the 4th Gordons, and went over to France with his battalion in February 1915, and he speedily found himself in the trenches and the fighting line. He came to be recognised for his extraordinary reliability as a guide especially at night, and he organised and trained a section of "snipers" in order to "utterly confound the German crack shots," being appointed Sniper-Sergeant for the purpose. In this important work, we are told, he rendered service "acknowledged to be most valuable by the best authorities on the Staff." Unhappily, in an engagement on 25th September 1915, he was struck by a shell which exploded, killing him instantaneously.

This Memoir delineates a striking personality, endowed with great aptitude and a character of exceptional forcefulness; and it is abundantly evident that in Forbes's case a career of much promise and certain distinction was prematurely cut short. His reflections on the war and on the spiritual and other problems involved give the book a distinctive value.

R. A.

SELECTED LIST OF BOOKS ON MOUNTAINEERING. Compiled by LeRoy Jeffers, F.R.G.S., New York Public Library, 1916.—This is a catalogue

(46 pp.) of the books dealing with mountaineering which

MOUNTAINEERING are available for reference use in the Central Library

LITERATURE. Building, Fifth Avenue, New York, the Library having

become the custodian of the library of the American

Alpine Club and a depository of printed material of the organisations constituting the Bureau of Associated Mountaineering Clubs of North America. Such a Catalogue is mainly of service, of course, to members of these Clubs and to New York residents, but it has an interest to mountaineers elsewhere, if only as an index to the works relating to their pastime and to mountains generally, in all their aspects. The works specified in the catalogue are numerous, and they are fairly representative of mountaineering literature. There are books here dealing, not only with the American, Alaskan, and Canadian mountains, but with the Alps, the Dolomities, the Caucasus, the Himalayas, the Andes, the Cordilleras, etc.; books by writers of many nationalities—American, British, French, German and Italian. The dates of publication indicate the enormous impulse which has been given to mountaineering literature during the past sixty years—since 1856, when Will's "Wanderings Among the High Alps," was published. But there are not lacking many old books—the oldest, we think, being J. J. Helveticus Scheuchzer's "Sive itinera per Helvetiae alpinas regiones" (1723); among others we note Gruner's "Natural History of the Swiss Glaciers" (1770) and de Saussure's "Voyages in the Alps" (1786-7). English climbers and writers are well represented—from Whymper and Mummery down to the Workmans and the brothers Abraham; but Scotland's representation is almost confined to Burton's "Cairngorm Mountains," Sir Archibald Geikie's "Scenery of Scotland," not being included. We are glad to find the C. C. J., in the Catalogue, and also the names of several of our contributors.

R. A.

WHAT is known in the Highlands as the Loss of Gaick, or the Gaick Tragedy, has been alluded to once or twice in our pages (see *C. C. J.*,

THE LOSS OF GAICK. account of Gaick and of the incident that has made it famous was given by Mr. Henry Alexander in the February number of the *Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal*.

Mr. Alexander walked from Kingussie to Gaick Lodge one night in June last year, and incidentally discovered (as others of us have done before) that "sleeping out of doors is greatly over-rated"—he tried it, but the night was bitterly cold, and he was glad to get up and move on, a not uncommon experience. Gaick is a very wild place, surrounded by steep hills, and here in the first week of January 1800, (or the Christmas of 1799, old style—"the last Christmas of the century"), Captain John Macpherson of Ballochroan, "the Black Officer," along with four men who accompanied him to shoot deer, perished in an avalanche which descended on the bothy or hut they occupied. This is the only case recorded in the Scottish Highlands of a hut and its occupants being overwhelmed by an avalanche. Interest accordingly attaches to the incident for that reason, and it has been augmented by the legends that have sprung up, the avalanche, in the Celtic imagination, being a judgment on the Black Officer for his excess of zeal in recruiting, by which Speyside and Badenoch had been depleted of many young men. The story, besides, has its dramatic and poetical versions, Gaelic and English, so that, as Mr. Alexander says, "what with fact and myth, tale and verse, the Loss of Gaick became one of the great legends of the Highlands." Of both the historical and legendary parts of the tragedy Mr. Alexander has given us a capital account, drawing upon many sources for a narrative that is complete and satisfying.

As to the other contents of the number, Rev. A. Ronald G. Burn—under the title: "Out of the Golden Remote Wild West," a phrase borrowed from Swinburne's "Hesperia"—furnishes the first part of a discursive account of a survey of sundry hills in the neighbourhood of Loch Arkaig and Glen Dessary, West Inverness-shire, made apparently for the S. M. C. "Guide Book." The total number of tops climbed was 68 in twenty-five week-days (net), all the hills but two being over 3000 feet high; and "no off-days were taken, and none needed or desired." "Some" walking, to adopt the latest Americanism. Mr. J. H. Buchanan contributes pleasant and pleasantly-written "Memories of Skye." He is particularly enthusiastic in praise of Blaven. "Who will dispute," he asks, "that Blaven is one of the most splendid in the group of mountains where each one has an individuality of its own, and stands in its primitive strength like some Viking hero of old?"

PROBABLY to north-country readers the most interesting items in the June number of the *Journal* are two relating to the Shelter Stone at Loch Avon.

THE SHELTER STONE. One is a reprint of an article descriptive of a visit to the Cairngorms, contributed to the *Scotsman* by Mr. Walter A. Smith in 1875, the narrative including an account of a night spent under the Shelter Stone; and this article is followed by a reproduction of a stirring episode located at the Shelter Stone which occurs in Sir Thomas Dick Lauder's novel, "The Wolfe of

Badenoch," a work of still more ancient date. The hero of the romance was nearly killed by two or three mountaineers who, acting as his guides, led him astray into the Loch Avon wilds, and then attacked him at the Shelter Stone. Mr. Smith and the friends who accompanied him also had their adventure, for, when they occupied the "shelter," it was invaded by mountaineers—only they were bent on nothing more alarming than fishing in the loch. There is, of course, no comparison between the two incidents, but comparison otherwise is inevitable, for one can hardly fail to contrast Sir Thomas Dick Lauder's elaborate description of the Loch Avon scenery, particularly his accentuation of its awesome aspects, with the modern and more attractive presentation of the picturesqueness of the region, even with all its wild features, which Mr. Smith furnishes. The two papers are supplemented by an illustration of the Shelter Stone.

Rev. A. Ronald G. Burn continues the account of his energetic "bagging of Munros" in West Inverness-shire, and tells a number of delicious stories credited to a Celtic Munchausen of the name of "Kenneth of the Shieling." Dr. W. Inglis Clark contributes a spirited account of a winter walk from Killin Junction across the pass by the side of Craig M' Ranaich to Kingshouse, incidentally using a phrase that puzzles us. Mentioning the extraordinary way in which he was dressed, he says the words of an old Scots doggerel, heard by him in his youth, came to his mind. Referring to two women who, in face of a storm, had to reach Aberdeen, it ran thus—"They row'd their legs in straeen rapes, Magurkies on their heads for keps, And, buskit ower like twa bee-skeps, Set aff for Aberdeen."

What are "magurkies"?

As we go to press, a local philological expert informs us that the magurkie was a head-covering made of straw, identical (save as regards the material) with the close-fitting worsted mutch of bygone days. It was worn by persons engaged in peat-working in the moss. The term is still known on Deeside.

MR. E. ALEXANDER POWELL, the American journalist and author, has just written a book, "The End of the Trail," descriptive of a motor-car tour through the Pacific Coast States, from New Mexico to British Columbia. The Cascade Mountains are a noteworthy feature of the scenery in Oregon and Washington; and Mr. Powell declares them superior to the Alps.

He says:—

Nowhere in Switzerland do I recall a picture of such surpassing splendour as that which stood before us, as though on a titanic easel, as we looked up the vista formed by the fragrant, verdant Hood River valley toward the great white cone of Mount Hood. It is, indeed, so very beautiful that those Americans who know and love the world's white roof-trees can find scant justification for turning their faces toward the Alps when here, in the upper left-hand corner of their own country, are mountains which would make the ghost of the great Whymper moan for an alpenstock and hob-nailed boots. This startlingly sudden transition from orchards groaning with fruit to dense primeval forests, and from these forests to the stately, isolated snow peaks, is very different from Switzerland, of course. Indeed, to compare these mountains of the Pacific North-West with the Alps, as is so frequently done, seems to me to be a grave injustice to them both. The Alps form a wild and angry sea of icy mountains, and we have nothing in America to which they can be fittingly compared. The Cascades, on

the other hand, form a great system of lofty forest-wrapped ranges surmounted by the towering isolated peaks of snowy volcanoes, and Europe contains nothing to equal them. I am perfectly aware, of course, that the very large number of Americans who spend their summers in the ascent of the orthodox Swiss peaks—more often than not, if the truth were known, by means of funicular railways or through telescopes on hotel piazzas—look with scorn and contumely upon these mountains of the far Nor' west, which they regard as home-made and unfashionable and vulgar and not worth bothering about. Perhaps they are not aware, however, that no less an authority on mountaineering than James Bryce (I don't recall the title that he has taken now that he has been made a peer) said not long ago, in speaking of these sentinels that guard the Columbia—"We have nothing more beautiful in Switzerland or Tyrol, in Norway or the Pyrenees. The combination of ice scenery with woodland scenery of the grandest type is to be found nowhere in the Old World, unless it be in the Himalayas, and, so far as we know, nowhere else on the American continent." Which but serves to point the truth that foreigners are more appreciative of the beauties and grandeurs of our country than we are ourselves.