

REVIEWS.

The Cairngorm Hills of Scotland by Seton Gordon, F.Z.S. Mr. Seton Gordon is the best known writer of the present day about the Cairngorms, and in this volume of over 200 pages, illustrated with many fine photographs, he has given sketches of his many wanderings over the district, and gathered together a great mass of interesting matter relating to the legend and history of the region ; its physical configuration and its plant and animal life. The volume is not a guide book and it says nothing of climbing in the technical sense, for Mr. Gordon does not go in for rock work or snow work ; but to the ordinary hill-walker and hill-wanderer it will make a strong appeal and it is comprehensive in that the various chapters cover the whole of the Cairngorms, and a very complete index makes reference to any point easy. Mr. Gordon knows every corrie, burn and knoll, and in his walk down Glen A'an, for example, from the loch to Inchrory, he mentions a score of local Gaelic place names which do not appear on the one-inch map, but the names of which, like "The Otter's Knoll" and "The Little Knoll of the Robber," point to some long forgotten incident. Everywhere and always he is sensitive to the wind and the sky and he makes you feel the soft summer breeze wafting the scent of the hill plants or the fierce gale lashing your face with rain or sleet. It is superfluous to refer to his knowledge of the birds of the mountains : that appears on every page. One sometimes wonders, however, whether the present vogue for nature study is not actually endangering wild life, for the worst robbers of the Cairngorms to-day are the egg collectors of whose depredations Mr. Gordon writes with proper indignation. He mentions that in March (1925) a keeper told him that he had already received two letters from different collectors each offering him £5 for a clutch of golden eagle's eggs. Speaking of the mountain or blue hare, Mr. Gordon says that in June, 1924, he found a family of newly born leverets in a tuft of grass on the 4,000 ft. plateau of Braeriach—a great elevation, surely, for this creature to reach. Of that plague of the summer climber, the house fly, which accompanies one in swarms, Mr. Gordon remarks that it is not until you reach some 3,500 feet that it begins to drop behind. We are not so sure. And he forgets to remember that other

plague, the midges. The midges of a moist evening in Rothiemurchus are a thing not to be forgotten. But one might go on dipping into these pages indefinitely and one must close with a reference to the photographs, taken by the author and his wife, and a special tribute to the novel and admirable bird's eye map of the Cairngorms on the inside of the cover.

The Scottish Mountaineering Club Journal, Nos. 100 and 101, 2/6 each net. We congratulate the S.M.C. on the publication of the one hundredth number of its Journal. Appropriately it opens with a series of short articles by all

S.M.C. the former Editors. The most interesting article is a long one by Mr. G. Sang on the Achallader accident, in which he describes fully that unfortunate accident and the doings of the various search parties. It is significant that this rooth number of the S.M.C.J. should chronicle the formation of the Junior Mountaineering Club of Scotland with headquarters in Edinburgh and Glasgow. And in No. 101 we find that five pages have been placed at the disposal of the Junior Club, a facility of which they have taken full advantage, and a perusal of which shows that the "Juniors" are a pretty energetic lot. Both numbers are well illustrated, the frontispiece to No. 101 is Dr. J. R. Levack's "Storm Clouds over Coire an-t-Sneachda.

Tales of a Highland Parish (Glenshee), by Rev. T. D. Miller. In this unpretentious but very interesting little volume the former minister of Glenshee has gathered together the lore and legends of a district which is familiar to many members of the Cairngorm Club. Tír nam beann, nan gleann's nan gais-geach (the land of bens, glens and heroes) is the motto on the title page and it is very apt, for this region on the south side of the Grampians is rich in mountain and valley scenery and it is also rich in historical association. Glenshee is the scene of one of the legends of Fingal—the death of Diarmid. Grainne, the wife of Fingal, became enamoured of Diarmid, the nephew of Fingal, and he, when he discovered it, plotted this revenge, "He invited his nephew to play the part of Sir Lancelot in slaying a bear of great size and ferocity, whose lair was in a rocky ravine at the foot of Bengulbein. After slaying the monster he was commanded by King Fingal to measure, with bare foot, his quarry from snout to tail and then to take its measurement the reverse way. When doing so some of the sharp, foul bristles pierced and poisoned his foot, and, after a futile appeal for a draught of life-giving wine from the King's golden cup, he died in great agony." Bengulbein is the hill just above the Spittal of Glenshee and on its northern side is a gully called the Boar's Bed, while opposite the Spittal and across the stream is a tarn where the King

threw his cup and the mound where Queen Grainne, Diarmid and his white hounds lie buried. A later and historical and not mythical figure of the region was M'Comie Mor, of whose great physical strength and prowess tales still linger in the glen. He was a breeder of stock, his skill in which trade was inherited by his descendants. Glenshee suffered from the raids of the caterans from Lochaber and many and thrilling were the encounters with these marauders. In the early years of her stay at Balmoral, Queen Victoria travelled thither by Glenshee and the Cairnwell, and now, with motors, the old route has regained its importance. Glenshee is believed to be derived from the Gaelic word *shith* (fairies), and in olden days the glen folk were called "the fairies" by their neighbours.

The Rucksack Club Journal, No. 19 (1925) 4/- net.—The article in this issue which will interest our members most is probably that by Mr. W. E. Richards, describing the ascent of all the 4,000 feet tops in Scotland within twenty-four hours by Mr. Eustace Thomas and himself in 1924. Ben Lawers, with its 3,984 feet and 16 feet cairn, was conveniently regarded as not being a *bona fide* top! There is also an article by Mr. B. R. Goodfellow describing what was probably the third traverse of the Cuillin Main Ridge in one day. The members of the Rucksack Club seem to be going strong in the way of making "records" as there is a long article by the Editor, Mr. J. Wilding, suggesting a high level traverse of Great Britain from Lands End to John o' Groats along the watershed; but not necessarily in one day! He is apparently now engaged on this task and we wish him all success. The Journal is well illustrated by many photographs, Mr. Eustace Thomas' "Grandes Jorasses" and "Dent du Geant" being particularly fine.

The Alpine Journal, May 1925. The geographical distribution of the mountains dealt with in this number is world wide. Lt. Col. Norton deals with Everest. There are articles on the New Zealand Alps, on the side valleys and peaks of the Yellowhead Trail, while the Cariboo Mountains and the Ruwenjori are not left out of the immense survey and field of exploration contained within the covers of this number. In a short note it is difficult to pick out any article to which to refer to specially, but that on "Mountains and the Public," by the late D. D. Godley is by its humour and literary excellence most delightful fare and a good antidote to the views of the Dean of St. Paul's. The usual notes, reviews and illustrations complete an entrhralling number.

The November Number comprises its articles more to the European Alps than was the case with the previous number. The

Matterhorn and the Aiguilles of Chamonix form the subjects of the first three papers. An interesting note is given of the Meets arranged in the Alps of two British Mountaineering Clubs—The Scottish Mountaineering Club and the Climbers' Club. A copy of the memorial plaque to the late Edward Whymper which now adorns a doorway of the Monte Rosa Hotel at Zermatt, is given. This and the other illustrations are of the usual high standard which is associated with the premier mountaineering journal of the world. In memoriam notices include one of D. D. Godley whose delightful paper was referred to in the review of the previous number.

La Montagne. No. 190, March, 1926. The principal article in this number is a long obituary notice of the late Joseph Vallot, the builder of the Observatory on Mont Blanc, which is named after him and to which he ascended, for the last time, in 1920 in his 66th year. The remaining article is a description of the new Refuge de la Pilatte, in the Dauphine, built by the C.A.F. last year. A second refuge in the same district is to be built in 1926.

AMONG the publications of continental clubs which reach us is the journal of the Austrian section of the German and Austrian Alpine Club. This journal, which bears the title "Nachrichten der Sektion Austria," and which is published in Vienna, is a welcome indication of the summer and winter activities of Austrian alpinists. Another publication, also in German, of interest to travellers going further east is the year book of the Carpathian Club (Karpathenverein). That club has branches throughout the Carpathians, Beskids, etc., and brings out its annual under the title of "Turistik, Alpinismus und Wintersport." It is published in Kesmark, Czecho-Slovakia.

MUCH interesting matter relating to Braemar and the upper valley of the Dee appeared in the second issue of *The Deeside Field*, the publication of the Deeside Field Club, several members of the Cairngorm Club being among the contributors. Professor A. W. Gibb gives an account of cairngorms and other local gemstones. The cairngorm is a crystal of smoky quartz and one of the largest specimens known, 12 inches long and 3 inches in diameter, is the property of Mrs. A. Cook, Aberdeen, and was awarded a medal at the great Exhibition of 1851. Professor Gibb has seen another fine example, 6 to 8 inches long, which was found on Lochnagar, and he states that there is a strong vein of smoky quartz in the Black Spout on Lochnagar. Another gemstone found in granite in the Deeside Highlands, is the topaz, but, though it superficially resembles the cairngorm, it has no relation to the

quartz group and is totally different in composition. Dr. Alexander Bremner, whose researches into local geography are so well known, writes upon the Burn of the Vat. The Vat is a pot-hole cut out by water in glacial times and in size and character it is, Dr. Bremner says, unique in Europe. He makes an appeal, which everyone should support, for the better protection of this spot against the folk who disfigure it with their names, and hopes that the time will come when places like this will be taken under national keeping. In Mr. G. M. Fraser's article upon Glen Tanner and Mr. James Allan's recollections of timber cutting on Deeside are some interesting references to the floating days. The last occasion on which rafts of trees were seen on the Dee was in 1881, when cutting took place at Blackhall and the logs were floated down to the sawmill at Silverbank below Banchory.