

## NEW CLIMBING BOOKS

- “ The Victorian Mountaineers,” by Ronald Clark. (Batsford, 1953, 18s.)  
 “ Mountains of the Midnight Sun,” by Showell Styles. (Hurst and Blackett, 1954, 18s.)  
 “ Tibetan Journey,” by George N. Patterson. (Faber, 1954, 15s.)  
 “ The Northern Highlands.” (S.M.C. Guide, 1953, 15s.)  
 “ Munro’s Tables.” (S.M.C. Guide, 1953, 7s. 6d.)  
 “ Rock Climbs at Arrochar.” (S.M.C. Guide, 1954, 3s. 6d.)  
 “ Climbers’ Guide to Ben Nevis.” (S.M.C. Guide, 1954, 7s. 6d.)  
 “ John Sikander,” by Donald C. Eyre. (Robert Hale, 1954, 10s. 6d.)

“ The Victorian Mountaineers ” were the men and women who, in Britain and the Alps, pointed the way to the pursuit of mountaineering as we know it to-day. Fortunately many of them were authors and we can go to original sources for much of the detail of the developments so well summarised by Ronald Clark in this book. The background to the climbers is well sketched in and the assessment of character clarifies many otherwise inexplicable incidents described elsewhere. The pictures throughout are good, but we may be biased, as the majority of those portrayed belonged to the Cairngorm Club—one of our early mass Meets being illustrated!

“ Mountains of the Midnight Sun ” is an account of a small expedition in 1952 to the unexplored and unclimbed mountains in the northern part of Lyngen peninsula in the extreme north of Norway. Despite the divided interests of geology and glaciology, and weather which makes the choice of title barely justifiable, a few 4,000 foot summits of considerable climbing interest were reached and a considerable amount of exploration and mapping carried out. The value of the book lies in its disclosure of the existence of still unclimbed mountains of moderate difficulty in a relatively easily accessible region, and of the measures required to get an expedition there. The author had a further party in the same area in 1953 and fewer of the tops around the Valley of Trolds are still virgin: it is to be hoped that an account of this will supplement the knowledge of Lyngen gained from this most readable book.

“ Tibetan Journey ” is an account of a trip across the south-eastern corner of Tibet, from China to Assam and India, or is it Pakistan? It is interesting to read this with the first part of Harrer’s “ Seven Years in Tibet ” in mind and to compare the attitude of climber and non-climber to the difficulties of travel in the Himalayan foothills. Harrer had no facilities; he had to live by his wits: George Patterson, son of a Scottish miner, had all the help official sponsorship could produce and an adequate native escort, yet his journey was by no means easy. One nevertheless gets an impression of over-statement on occasion, such as the assumed inevitability of death resulting from a bivouac on a snow pass. The book, however, gives an excellent description of life in this part of Tibet.

“ The Northern Highlands ” was published in good time for the 1954 Easter Meet at Ullapool. All who compared it in use with the earlier edition were in

no doubt as to the improvement in the current version. There has been in recent years a considerable increase in climbing activity in this area, and a search through a pile of journals is no longer required to find out what still has to be done. For the hill walker, mention of such names as Beinn Eighe, An Teallach, Suilven, and Ben Hope are sufficient to indicate the attractive nature of the country covered in an adequate fashion by this guide.

“Munro's Tables and Other Tables of Lesser Heights” reprints the 3,000 foot tables from the General guide and includes also lists of the 2,500 foot summits with a 500 foot drop, and all the 2,000 foot hills in the lowlands. The original Munro's Tables are too well known to need comment, other than an expression of gratification that the chance of “improving” them has not been taken. At first reading it seems strange that the 2,500 foot summits are not more numerous and that the majority of them are on the periphery of the main mountain masses rather than within them, but on consideration the explanation becomes apparent.

“Rock Climbs at Arrochar” is a pocket size sixty-four page volume in flexible covers, by B. H. Humble and J. B. Nimlin in collaboration with the Creagh Dhu Mountaineering Club. The occurrence of good climbing rock on the Cobbler and other Arrochar hills has led to these becoming the training ground for Glasgow climbers and it is to them that the appeal of this guide will be greatest. Some ninety routes of all grades of difficulty are classified and described concisely.

“Climbers' Guide to Ben Nevis” resembles in format and approach the earlier Glencoe rock-climbing guide. Dr G. G. Macphee acknowledges his debt to the late B. P. Kellet and J. H. B. Bell in the compilation of the descriptions of the climbs. The series of clear diagrammatic sketches and plans is a useful feature, particularly as, for ease of consultation, they are collected at the back of the volume.

R. L. M.

“John Sikander” is a very uneven novel, both in its subject matter and in its treatment. It oscillates uneasily between a psychological study of character and a pure adventure story. When the author forgets the troubles of his rather tiresome neurotic hero, he writes interestingly and absorbingly. Perhaps one should not cavil too much over inaccuracies about the frontiers of Pakistan and India, but it is irritating when the scene of a hazardous rock climb is always afterwards described as an ice cliff. The ending is disappointing and inconclusive—for not only has the reason for the adventure become too thin to be credible, but the author and his characters seem to have lost all faith in it too. The reader can hardly be expected to do what the author cannot, and the last emotion likely to be left by the book is a feeling of exasperation.

M. McA.