

SOME NEW CLIMBING BOOKS

- "Mountain Climbing," by Godfrey Francis. A Teach Yourself Book (English Universities Press, 1958, 7s. 6d.).
- "Rock Climbing," by C. M. Dixon. Know the Game Series (Educational Productions Ltd., 1958, 2s. 6d.).
- "A Dictionary of Mountaineering," by R. G. Collons (Blackie, 1957, 12s. 6d.).
- "Rock Climbing in Britain," by J. E. B Wright (Nicholas Kaye, 1958, 15s.).
- "Where to Climb in the British Isles," by Edward C. Pyatt (Faber, 1960, 20s.).
- "Mid Moor and Mountain," by Melville Balsillie and Jim Westwood (Hertfordshire Scout Council, 1955, 7s. 6d.).
- "The Outdoor Guide," by Roy McCarthy (Crosby Lockwood, 1960, 10s. 6d.).
- "Coronation Everest," by James Morris (Faber, 1958, 16s.).
- "Great Days in New Zealand Mountaineering," by John Pascoe (Bailey Bros. & Swinfen, 1958, 21s.).
- "Shadow Buttress," by Showell Styles (Faber, 1959, 15s.).
- "Selected Poems on West Penwith and Reflections," by A. W. Andrews, Vol. 1 (J. W. Saundry, Penzance, 1957, 5s.).

As Barford's Pelican "Climbing in Britain" is out-of-print and apparently unlikely to be reprinted, "Mountain Climbing" has been sponsored by the B.M.C. and the A.S.C.C. as "an up-to-date book on Mountain Craft, to introduce beginners and lead the more experienced into bigger mountains and advanced methods." The results of accepting an already prepared manuscript include a marked change of emphasis, for while Barford's book dealt with British conditions, here the bias is towards alpine climbing. This is unfortunate in the circumstances, as the book can scarcely be recommended to the *ab initio* beginner, although it is an excellent textbook on alpine climbing. Several examples may serve to illustrate this point. First of all, in our opinion, the danger of wearing rubber soles in Scottish conditions in winter is not adequately presented. Secondly a description of an expedition along a snow-covered cliff edge in mist in winter does not even mention the possibility of roping, in view of the danger from cornices or, perhaps more important, inability to see the edge in such conditions. Nor will those in full knowledge of the circumstances agree that winter incidents on Nevis in recent years have been almost equally divided between very experienced climbers and misguided beginners—unless a climber can be considered to be very experienced although lacking any winter experience in Scotland, an assumption with which we disagree. In a recent *Alpine Journal*, Dr T. W. Patey cannot recall a single serious incident in the last ten years befalling an experienced Scottish party on a Scottish winter climb. We hope that this book does not encourage still more beginners from the south to tackle Nevis under the wrong conditions, ill-equipped and ill-provided. Generally the descriptions of rock and ice technique are clearly and concisely stated, although many of the illustrations are badly located, a page or so too late. The book concludes with a chapter on mountain rescue, and lists of rescue posts and British Climbing Clubs. It is sad to have to report that

the author was killed by a rock fall on Pillar Rock during a thunderstorm in June 1960.

The less ambitious "Rock Climbing" is an excellent introductory textbook. It includes clearly-drawn sketches covering all aspects of rock work, which present the principles much more explicitly than pages of text. This is a pamphlet which is likely to be taken to the cliffs; its paper binding is therefore unlikely to survive. But it can be recommended to the beginner for close study.

It is difficult to decide what purpose "A Dictionary of Mountaineering" is intended to serve. It is a collection of short (up to three-page) articles on miscellaneous subjects of mountaineering interest, with English translations of the commoner continental terms, and a few diagrams and photographs illustrating some of the items. The choice of items is puzzling. Thus, the French but not the German abbreviation for the Swiss Alpine Club is included, while the British Mountaineering Council appears, but not the Association of Scottish Climbing Clubs. Is the bed of a gully really the level portion between pitches? Is cwm now in wider general use than coire or cirque? These examples are chosen to show how difficult it is for an author of a compilation of this nature to be comprehensive, while at the same time avoiding the temptation to say too much rather than too little. This is in fact our chief criticism of this book—its tendency of writing round a topic rather than defining it concisely. It will, on occasion, serve as a useful reference book but its limitations must be appreciated, as must also the fact that in reviewing a book of this type it is easy to detail a few shortcomings and to ignore its many qualities.

"Rock Climbing in Britain" and "Where to Climb in the British Isles" are both directed towards the climber who is turning to a new area and who requires information on the mountains with good rock and on the standard routes. The latter book attempts a more systematic treatment but is less well-balanced, devoting, for instance, twelve pages to the West Riding of Yorkshire and five to Skye. A useful feature of E. C. Pyatt's rather encyclopædic book is the inclusion of lists of references for each area, while J. E. B. Wright has produced a more readable overall account.

"Mid Moor and Mountain" is a handbook for senior scouts dealing with excursions of all grades from local hikes to alpine camps. Melville Balsillie has long experience of the organisation and supervision of such expeditions, and the book is dedicated to Ben Macdhui "in recognition of his outstanding services to Senior Scouting." It is good to know that proper guidance in mountain craft is available to the Scouts of Hertfordshire.

"The Outdoor Guide," a spiral bound booklet of 250 pages, attempts to advise on all outdoor activities on air, land and water. The section on mountaineering lists qualified guides and B.M.C. but not A.S.C.C. clubs, and suggests climbing areas, with the good advice to novices to avoid Scottish ice. Other relevant sections deal briefly with camping, rambling and hill walking; skiing and pot-holing.

"Coronation Everest" is yet another account of the ascent of Everest, but a refreshing one, written this time by a layman who was on the spot. It is interesting

to cover the ground from Katmandu to Base Camp and beyond with a guide whose personal ambition is not focused on the summit, who is planning rather how to get his despatches back to *The Times* without interception by the lurking newshounds. It is somewhat amusing to detect rather divided loyalties! But even the most hardened peak-bagger may feel a little sentimental over the account of the well-timed transmission to London of the news of final success and of the confirmation of the success by the little receiver at Base Camp.

“Great Days in New Zealand Mountaineering” presents stories of the exploration of the climbing areas of New Zealand, from the snow and ice peaks of South Island to crater mountains in the North. The local topography of each area is illustrated by clear sketch maps, but the reader ignorant of the wider geography would have welcomed a map locating the various mountain groups more precisely. A well-chosen collection of photographs gives a good impression of the rock and snow which challenged the climbers whose exploits are recounted by John Pascoe, himself a notable pioneer with numerous first ascents to his credit.

“Shadow Buttress” is a novel by an author whose mountaineering fiction has previously been of the detective story type, written under the pseudonym Glyn Carr. This, however, is the story, set in the north-west, of a professional guide whose sight fails, of misadventure on the rocks of Shadow Buttress, and of the relationships of climber and guide, man and girl. The writing is crisp and the atmosphere reasonably well-established, but the reader is left with a feeling that the dramatic situations are somewhat overdrawn.

The author of “Selected Poems on West Penwith and Reflections” was a notable figure in British mountaineering and the father of Cornish cliff climbing, persuading the Climbers’ Club to establish the Bosigran Hut. As we regret to record his death in 1959 at the age of 90, it seems appropriate to quote one of his verses:—

VALHALLA

To each his own Valhalla and release
From perpetuity of petty things,
But we who are the freemen of the hills
Need no such sanctuary. We may not rest
Until we have climbed high enough to see
Beyond the false horizon’s beckoning line
Which flatters us in vain for still we climb.

All the above books, and many more, are available in the Club Library.

R. L. M.

NEW ROCK-CLIMBING GUIDES

It will be noticed that this number of the *Journal* does not include a section dealing with new climbs in the Cairngorms. This is because the two-volume S.M.C.