

Book reviews

The Great Days. WALTER BONATTI. Gollancz, 1974. £3.80.

This second autobiographical work by the legendary Italian covers his years as a mature climber from the tragedy on the Central Pillar of Fresnay in 1961 up to his pre-meditated retiral from extreme mountaineering after the solo winter ascent of the North Face Direct on the Matterhorn in 1965.

Between the epic tales, Bonatti expounds his classic mountaineering philosophy and reflects on the controversy which surrounded his much-publicised feats during this period of his career. He also gives interesting accounts of visits to other lands. But these are interludes, to let the reader unwind after the tension of the great ascents and retreats on the north walls. Indeed, this is an autobiography akin to Hermann Buhl's where the imaginative reader may judge it best to live through a single enthralling chapter only at a sitting.

Originally published abroad in 1971, the translation is by Geoffrey Sutton.

E.F.J.

The Eiger. DOUGAL HASTON. Cassell, 1974. £3.95.

The North Face of the Eiger has exerted a fascination on European climbers for more than forty years and much has been written about the history of the many attempts, successful and otherwise, which have taken place during that time. Dougal Haston's book centres around his own successful climb of the North Face Direct in 1966 under the leadership of the American, John Harlin and in company with another American, Layton Kor. John Harlin was killed in tragic circumstances during the course of the climb and the team joined forces with a German party in order to reach the summit. This ascent provides the main interest in the book, written as it is from personal experience; the greater proportion of the book is concerned with descriptions of other attempts, notably by the Japanese by the same Direct route and also by different routes. There are also chapters on the history of earlier attempts, on filming the North Face and on rescue methods. For the more general reader, the narrative may not continue to hold the interest after the initial excitement of the Haston climb, particularly as the later attempts are narrated at third hand and lack the personal involvement of the author. However, to devotees of Alpine climbing and of the Eiger in particular, the book has an essential place on the shelf.

A.D.C.

The Drove Roads of Scotland. A. R. B. HALDANE. Edinburgh University Press, 1971. £2.25.

This book gives us many interesting glimpses of life in the Highlands from the early days of cattle droving in the sixteenth century until the coming of the railway and the cattle float. The great part played in the economy of Scotland

by the breeding of cattle and later of sheep is indicated by the frequent references to markets, trysts and court-cases.

The fascinating search for old drove roads is encouraged by the information which Dr Haldane has gleaned for us, but the difficulty is that so many routes are now untraceable. Probably for this reason the author has not compiled a list of drove roads which can still be followed; however, the index gives valuable assistance.

R.K.J.

The Snows of Yesteryear: J. Norman Collie, Mountaineer. WILLIAM C. TAYLOR. Holt, Rinehard and Winston of Canada, 1973. \$7.50.

There is an abundance both of specific *Aberdeen* and of specific *Club* interest in this book. But there is much more – because it is a definitive account of Professor J. Norman Collie's climbing career and Norman Collie (1859–1942) has fairly been described as one of the leading British climbers of his generation.

The elements of his climbing career were recorded over the years, piecemeal, in books and in sundry journal articles both by himself and by others. But what has been lacking was a connected and coherent account of his climbing achievements. William C. Taylor has marshalled the facts about Collie well and, in eminently readable form, his book contains an orderly account of Collie's climbing, much of it pioneering, exploratory and science-oriented, in Great Britain and Ireland, in the Alps, in the Himalayas, in the Canadian Rockies and on the Lofoten Islands. Collie was perhaps in danger of going down to history as a legend. It has been useful to have the prospective legend fortified by the facts.

Although the author, wisely, does not attempt a full-scale biography – which would have had to cover Collie's eminence in other fields, for instance as the discoverer of neon and as the taker of the first X-ray photograph – he includes enough background information about Collie the man to ensure that posterity has less of an enigma to grapple with than might otherwise have been the case.

The apparatus of the book includes a list of Collie's 21 first ascents in the Canadian Rockies, a chronology of his life, a bibliography but no index. The format of the book, though the North-American idiom will be unfamiliar to most British readers, is attractive and successful. The number and range of intensely interesting photographs are astonishing and they have all been reproduced in a manner that does them justice. They are of people as well as of mountains, some are action photographs of people *on* mountains. Those that feature Collie himself at various stages in his life are a wonderful record of the craggy bachelor, every inch a climber, who looked for all the world like *both* Sherlock Holmes *and* Raymond Baxter!

The author has been well served by the preparer of the series of useful maps that is included for good measure – although some mistakes in the lettering of the maps will be as disappointing to the author as the fair crop of misprints in the text.

What about the local interest? The *author* of the book, now Professor of Paediatrics at the University of Alberta, is an Aberdonian who knows the Cairngorms, Skye *and* the Rockies. He acknowledges help with the book

afforded by Club office-holders Jean Callander and Eric Johnston. The *subject* of the book, though born in England, was a member of a well-known Aberdeenshire family and there is mention of Collie homes at Morkeu, Cults and at Glassel. Norman Collie freely admitted to having acquired his love of hills from his 'first ascent of a real mountain', the Hill of Fare at the age of eight. He was Honorary President of the Club from 1922 until his death in retirement at Sligachan twenty years later. No 80 of the *Journal* contains his article on 'Independence'. His famous 1925 Club Dinner account of his brush with the Grey Man of Ben Macdhui is recorded in No 64. No 83 includes not only a reprint of his earlier *Journal* article entitled 'Dreams' but also the appreciation written after his death by his friend Hugh D. Welsh, with whom he had very special *rappport*. All are, very appropriately, drawn upon by Professor Taylor.

H.M.R.W.

Mountains. JOHN CLEARE. Macmillan, 1975. £4.95.

John Cleare is well known both as mountaineer and as photographer. His latest book is full of wonderful pictures which are of uniformly high standard. The literary content ranges from historical surveys of climbing in various parts of the world to accounts of mountain adventures in which the author was personally involved. He has climbed with some of the best known of to-day's climbers, and the book reflects his own particular predilections for certain parts of the world. He spends a lot of time and space on the mountains of Africa, and on Sea Cliff and Stack climbing in Britain. He squeezes into his last chapter, which he entitles 'And the rest . . .', the Andes, the Caucasus, and the Antarctic. So as a complete survey of the mountains of the world, the book is a little unbalanced in the way it deals with different areas. However, much of the reading is compelling, and the whole publication can be strongly recommended, in spite of some slight inaccuracies and typographical errors, as a handsome and exciting addition to the ever-increasing library of books about mountaineering.

D.H.