

## BOOK REVIEWS

CLIMBING WITH JOSEPH GEORGES. *Dorothy E. Thompson.*  
(Titus Wilson & Son, Kendal, 25/-)

This book is an account of the climbs that Miss Thompson made during the twenties and thirties with the guide Joseph Georges, and is written with the clear intention that the latter should be seen to be the hero of the story. Certainly Joseph Georges is an alpine guide well worth writing about; he emerges from these pages as the very best of his kind, possessed of great experience and mountain sense combined with an adventurous spirit, and with considerable strength without being an indiscriminate user of the "sack of coals" technique. Add to this a sense of humour, a short way with bergschrunds, and consideration for his clients, and we have a pretty good picture of the man.

In this case, consideration for this particular client grew quite quickly into appreciation of her abilities. The main interest centres on Mt. Blanc, where Miss Thompson was the first woman to climb the Brouillard Arête as well as making excursions on the Brenva face and over the Bionnassay. She also *descended* the Peuteret. Her own part in these adventures is most modestly told, but despite this the author stands revealed as no ordinary woman climber. Miss Thompson died in 1961, and her many friends in the Ladies' Alpine Club and the Pinnacle Club have since rallied round so that this very fitting monument to her distinguished climbing career should not go unpublished, and this, with the co-operation of the Publishers and the diligence of Mrs. Nea Morin and others, has been the result.

This book makes no pretension to style, and some of the literary allusions will be lost on the present-day reader; nevertheless it makes very pleasant reading and I have no hesitation in commending it as entertainment fit for a mountaineers' library. It also throws an interesting light on Alpine climbing habits and practice between the wars; a world of porters and candle-lanterns, nailed boots and odd clothing, new routes and old leisurely ways, which already seems to be fading into history.

M.H.

ROCK CLIMBING. *Peter Nock.* (W. & G. Foyle Ltd., 4/-)  
INSTRUCTIONS IN ROCK CLIMBING. *Anthony Greenbank.*

(Museum Press, Ltd., 15/-)

*Foyles Handbooks for Sportsmen* already cover several dozen different activities, and it is not surprising that rock climbing has found a place amongst them. Climbers generally will welcome this book; M.A.M. members particularly, for the author, an expert on rock, is a member of the Association. The book is written for

aspirant rock climbers only; snow and ice work have no place in it, and hill walking and general mountain craft have little.

After a short historical introduction, the book gets under way with a chapter on equipment which has the merit of seeking to provide for essentials without cluttering the climber up in the process. The following chapter, on the use of the rope, contains plenty of carefully thought out advice and is to be recommended both for the beginner and for revision.

The chapter on elementary techniques is very sound, and that on advanced techniques is remarkable for the lucid exposition of a mass of detail in so short a compass. The book concludes with the usual glossary and appendices listing clubs, guide books and guides.

One or two errors occur with proper nouns; *Cynn Las* for Cynn Las, *Triglau* for Triglav, and it is the Black Cuillin, not the Red, that provides the thousand feet of Gabbro, but taking into account the cost, and the admirable conciseness with which the author has marshalled his facts, this is one of the best little books on rock climbing yet to have been written.

The above was written before Mr. Greenbank's book was received for review, so comparisons, though invidious, are inevitable. Mr. Greenbank writes for a different type of Second from that envisaged by Mr. Nock, and sets out to meet him more than halfway in an extraordinarily conscientious fashion. Mr. Greenbank's Second is given a route card to help him find the crag; Mr. Nock's Second would disdain this (and might in the event keep Mr. Nock waiting at the foot of the climb). Mr. Greenbank's second is possibly less likely to end up in Bangor Infirmary than Mr. Nock's, and this is certainly a point in Mr. Greenbank's favour in these overpopulated days; but he pays a high price for his comparative immunity. Every possible circumstance that he might meet is clearly set out for him, and every type of rock obstruction, crack, chimney, wall or slab is treated separately with detailed hints on the manner of its conquest, and if all these hints serve to reduce the appalling number of stupid accidents that occur each summer, then Mr. Greenbank has, in writing his book, clearly done mountaineering a most meritorious service.

It is, however, at the expense of the element of surprise (which ought to be allowed to turn into delight), and it does make the book rather long. Even given the need to forewarn the aspirant climber and to send him out properly equipped with knowledge as well as tackle, there are *some* things that the climber ought to be able to discover for himself, and there is *something* to be said for a progressive revelation of climbing surprises, a continuous development of *nous*. A little more reserve in the communication of climbing knowledge

could justifiably improve this book, and it could be further shortened by the excision of the account, not really germane, of the Skye expedition described in Chapter One.

Having made this criticism though, it must be said that it would be hard to fault any of the copious advice given. Mr. Greenbank knows his stuff, and the book will serve as a better compendium for the mountain school instructor than Mr. Nock's; the latter's book, however, will have more appeal to postulants to the M.A.M. Mr. Greenbank's glossary is the biggest yet, and is not entirely successful in its search for clarity.

To sum up: if I were Mr. Greenbank's Second, I should get to the top with unwrung withers; if Mr. Nock's, I should have a struggle but would probably enjoy it more. I do not, however, recommend to either of these gentlemen that they offer to lead me up anything without first making discreet enquiries of the Honorary Secretary.

M.H.