

Lord of Alaska, by Hector Chevigny. 8vo., 320 pages, including bibliography, index and end-paper map. New York: Viking Press, 1942. Price \$3.00.

This is the story of Aleksandr Baranov and the Russian adventure in Alaska, and should be read by those who have visited parts of that country's coast between Kodiak Island and Sitka. It is the amazing history of a man of humble origin, with the petty faults of his class and withal an amazing tenacity, who governed the first Russian colony in North America, at a time when the search for the Northwest Passage and traffic in sea otter fur were enterprises of free companies during the reign of Catherine the Great. With her death Petersburg took control, and much of Baranov's life was a struggle with caste prejudice, petty intrigue and insufficient backing. For more than a quarter of a century (1791-1819), in the face of almost insuperable hardship and difficulty, Baranov held the little colony together, built ships, of which the *Phoenix* was the first, reconquered and rebuilt Sitka after the massacre, and in the end, with greater initiative, Russia could have had California by the mere acknowledgment of Mexican independence from Spain. But, as Peter the Great complained, Russians were not intended to become a nation of sailors, nor did they penetrate far into the Alaskan interior, lest gold divert the quest from fur. In the last years of Baranov's administration the annual fur take brought a profit of more than one and a half million dollars; yet in 1867 the American flag was raised for a price of only seven million.

British Hills and Mountains, by J. H. Bell, E. F. Bozman and J. Fairfax-Blakeborough. 8 vo. ; pp vii + 115, with 99 plates, three in color, index and maps. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons (London: B. T. Batsford, Ltd.), 1940. Price \$3.00.

This is a most useful picture-book of the mountains of the British Isles, a well-written and informative guide by mountaineers for the climber and walker. It is divided into two main sections: the mountains and hills of Scotland, by Doctor Bell; and those of England and Wales by E. F. Bozman, in which latter section J. Fairfax-Blakeborough describes the Pennines.

Ben Nevis (4406 ft.), the highest British mountain, possesses on its N.E. side the grandest cirque of precipices in Britain, and the

winter view is deceptively Alpine. The Grampians, Cairngorms and the peaks of Skye afford evident fascination to pedestrians as well as climbers. "The finest rock-climbing expedition in Britain is the traverse of all these peaks [the 33 summits of the main Cuillin ridge of Skye] in one way, an undertaking which involves more than 10,000 ft. of ascent." The range is 7.5 miles long and exceedingly narrow and difficult in parts.

Scafell Pike (3210 ft.) is the loftiest point of the Lake District and the principal English mountain, in a region which arouses one to excitement comparable to the thrill of the great Swiss centers, and one has but to look at the illustration of climbing on the Innominate Crack of Great Gable to be certain of its outstanding quality. "The climbs on Scafell compare favorably on a smaller scale with the Chamonix aiguilles."

Snowdon (3560 ft.) overtops Scafell, and the mountains of Wales give a feeling of grandeur and desolation. The loftiest peaks of the British Isles are near the west coast, backed by lesser ranges. Adverse weather can make them as dangerous as the Alps, and their mystery in varying atmospheric conditions will continually attract.

Britain's Mountain Heritage, by Arthur Gardner. 8 vo.; xii + 51 pages, with 128 illustrations from the author's photographs and a map. London: B. T. Batsford, Ltd., 1942. Price 12/6.

Like the foregoing volume, this is a picture book, but designed to emphasize the disastrous results of urbanisation and to recommend the conversion of certain areas to National Parks.

The English Lake District, Snowdonia and the Scottish Highlands are given particular treatment, and a concluding chapter deals with large scale plans and adequate methods of conservation. The problem will be urgent in the post-war years, and the reader is placed in touch with the work through an appendix containing notes on preservation societies and their work.

The map shows the areas of special beauty which might be scheduled for reservation, and the photos demonstrate the claims of various districts.