

On page 107 the translator, in citing an "error" in the account of a rappel, is himself in error. Nevertheless, it's exciting and enjoyable reading.

DAVID HARRAH

*La Meije*, by Henri Isselin. *Collection Sempervivum*. Paris and Grenoble: Arthaud, 1956. 262 pages; ill.

Henri Isselin, whose "Barre des Ecrins" was reviewed in *AAJ*, 1955, has now turned his attention to the Meije. He has given us an equally complete and even more fascinating work on this great Dauphiné mountain, once known in the local dialect as "Oeille de la Meidjour"; in other words, the Meije is merely another of the many Aiguilles du Midi scattered throughout the Alps! Alone among the great Alpine peaks, the Meije remained unconquered till 1877, and was finally climbed by the young Frenchman, Boileau de Castelnau, with the Père Gaspard, pioneer guide of the valley of La Bérarde.

Books as well documented and precise as this one sometimes tend to be dry, but Isselin writes with humor and the vividness of a man who knows and loves his subject. We follow the early pioneers on the mountain, the establishment of the classic route, the many successful and unsuccessful attempts on the ridges and faces. We hear of the tragic death of the young Austrian, Emil Zsigmondy, on the south face in 1885, and of its conquest 27 years later by his compatriot, Guido Mayer, with the famous Cortina guide, Angelo Dibona. We visit the Dauphiné valleys of the Romanche and the Vén Eon, La Grave and La Bérarde, the local huts and camping sites. We meet a wonderful collection of Alpine characters, beginning with Whymper, Coolidge, and the latter's strong-minded aunt, Miss Brevoort, who arrived in La Grave in 1870 with nephew, dog, and three Swiss guides, to make the first attempt on the Meije. We see de Castelbau's return 36 years later, with his three children, to the scene of his early triumph, and his touching reunion with his old guide whom he found hale and hearty, tending sheep above his native village.

The sketches and illustrations are excellent, and should be helpful to climbers wishing to study the different routes. In short, anyone who knows French and plans to visit the Dauphiné should not miss this book.

URSULA CORNING

*Alps and Elephants*, by Gavin de Beers. London: Geoffrey Bles, 1955.

89 pages; appendices and references; map. Price 10 s 6 d.

Gavin de Beers' very readable re-examination of Hannibal's route across the Alps begins by testing the original narratives of Livy and Polybius. By a