

BOOK REVIEWS



Alps and Men, by G. R. de Beer, 8 vo., 256 pages including bibliography and index, illustrated by xvi plates, twenty drawings and three maps. London: Edward Arnold, 1932. Price 16s. New York: Longmans, Green and Co. Price \$5.00.

This volume forms the natural sequel to the author's "Early Travellers in the Alps," and covers the period 1750-1850. As is frankly admitted, it is a compiled book, a survey of alpine touring, dealing with the holiday-seekers who followed the growing fashion of visiting the Alps which became prevalent toward the close of the eighteenth century.

Mr. de Beer is, wisely, a disciple of Coolidge, best of modern historians. He does not hesitate to delve back into seventeenth century books, such as Merian's (1642) and Wagner's (1680, *not* 1684) in order to trace the sources of the tourist movement. The French Revolution played no small part in driving celebrities to Switzerland, and travellers followed in their path. De Saussure, Gibbon, Voltaire and Rousseau were personalities that attracted many to the Lake of Geneva. Mont Blanc in the distance did the rest. Gray, Owen, Coxe, the Beaufoys, Greville (driving across the St. Gotthard), and Miss Williams, were among the notable English wanderers before 1800.

The mountain campaigns of the Napoleonic Wars are a bit complicated for the average reader, but the author's chapters dealing with Lecourbe and Suvorof ably depict the surprisingly widespread character of these operations, extending as they did, across Switzerland into the heart of the Eastern Alps. It is interesting that, during unsettled times, there was yet a persistent developing Alpinism. This was not only apparent in the Mont Blanc area, but in the Oberland, where we follow the activities of the courageous Meyers, and note happily that the author leaves Coolidge for the moment in order to agree with Farrar's researches as to the first ascent of the Finsteraarhorn. We hear of Placidus à Spescha, pursuing his climbing in the groups near Disentis, although his ascent of Piz Aul, according to Coolidge, was in 1801

and not in 1792. De Beer is, apparently, less familiar with events transpiring in the Eastern Alps, and fails to mention the parallel movement which there led to such achievements as the ascents of the Glockner and Ortler.

Dolomieu (who went far from home to discover a type of rock that was almost at his doorstep), Shelley, and Byron were among the first tourists of the nineteenth century. Dumas further popularized travel with his *Impressions de Voyage*. The scientists came—Agassiz, Forbes and Tyndall—and Rodolphe Toepffer made the Alps safe for schoolboys.

The flowing tide continues; we follow Simond, Raoul-Rochette, Wordsworth, Bakewell, Brockedon and others, to mention but a few. Brockedon's fine self-portrait, in the Uffizi, is reproduced and it would be interesting to have for comparison the water-colour sketch by Clift now in the collection of the University of Geneva. In 1824 we find Brockedon accompanied by Clarkson Stanfield, just as, twenty-seven years later, another contemporary scenic artist, William Beverley, travelled with Albert Smith.

We cannot agree with the author as to the possible Arabic origin of certain place names (p. 123) in the Pennine Alps, as Coolidge clearly showed them to be due to Italian rather than Saracen influence.

The Englishman at Zermatt in 1851 mentioned (p. 182) by Englehard as Sir Robert Peel could only have been the third baronet (who caroused at Chamonix the same summer while Albert Smith's party was ascending Mont Blanc), his distinguished father having died in the preceding year.

Last of all we learn of the wanderings of composers, of Mendelssohn, writing waltzes for the peasant girls, of Liszt and George Sand; and of Wagner, who found in the alp-horn the signal note for Isolde's ship, and in the bird songs of the Sihl valley the inspiration of the forest scene of Siegfried.

An excellent biography and index completes the book, which remains a volume for reference rather than for continuous reading. The difference in price of the book in New York and in London, at present exchange rates, is surprising.

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