

*Windslab*, by Cochrane Stewart. 253 pages, with 3 sketch maps.  
London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1952. Price, 12/6.

Scene: an Austrian hut in the Grossglockner region.

Time: November 1945.

Weather: a raging snow blizzard.

Characters: an Austrian Huettenwart; an Austrian guide of great personal charm and professional skill, but doubtful political loyalty; a German cavalry Colonel; two British Army officers; two girls (naturally both with great beauty and sex appeal), one the widow of an old Cossack general and a maneater of the first order, the other a Yugoslavian, working for the British.

Immediately above the hut hangs a cornice 20 feet high. Between the cornice and the hut is a steep slope of windslab snow. When the wind drops, the cornice will inevitably come down, bringing the hut with it. Escape appears impossible: the two girls are incapacitated, and the valley is utterly cut off. What does A do next?

This exciting tale, told against a complicated and kaleidoscopic background of the last months of the war, would provide excellent reading, were one marooned in a hut under similar circumstances. Cochrane Stewart lived through the time he writes of. He was one of the first British soldiers to enter Austria in 1945 and was at the historic meeting when the Western and Russian armies linked up. His knowledge of the district is convincing; his British Generals, Russian Cossacks and Bolshies, German agents and local villagers are quite credible. Above all, his windslab is menacing and real from the first page of the book till the moment when it breaks over the hut with "a hissing which had grown to the strength of red-hot iron being dipped in water."

URSULA CORNING

*La Neige en Deuil*, by Henri Troyat. 195 pages. Paris: Flammarion, 1952. Price, 390 Fr. frs.

This is primarily a psychological novel, not a tale of mountain adventure, but it is unthinkable without its background of the French peasant's home, the little village and its inhabitants, and the savage mountains that condition all their lives. The very moving story

centers round a simple aging mountain guide and his devotion to his sheep, his home, and his good-for-nothing younger brother. We follow them on their last tragic climb and live through the hair-raising ascent of a rock face in November. The mountaineering part of the book is done with a masterly touch; the whole is a real work of art.

U. C.