

# Book Reviews

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## BOOK REVIEWS. "THE STORY OF SKI-ING".

by ARNOLD LUNN.

(Publishers Eyre and Spottiswoods Ltd., Price 21/-)

The first Honours List of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, issued in June this year, included the name of Arnold Lunn on whom the honour of knighthood was conferred in recognition of his services to British skiing and Anglo-Swiss relations.

Of Sir Arnold's services to Anglo-Swiss relations we are well aware. The Swiss Colony in Great Britain realize how fortunate they are to possess so staunch a friend and so devoted a supporter as he has proved to be. They rejoice with him in the well-deserved honour by which he has been rewarded.

As for his services to skiing, the award is equally well-deserved. Sir Arnold's position in the world of this fascinating sport is unique, his reputation world-wide. It is a sport which owes him much. He has practiced it, promoted and organised it, revolutionised it and written about it. He, with his father has been largely responsible for its introduction and development in the Swiss Alps. No-one, therefore, is better qualified than he to write this work the publication of which marks the golden jubilee of the Ski Club of Great Britain.

The "Story of Ski-ing", a well-written and well-planned book of some 200 pages, records all the known facts and every important event of skiing from the stone age to the present day. Ski-ing is probably the oldest of all sports; it is also the one to have more active participants than any other. Sir Arnold makes the point that if more people watch football than skiing, more people ski than play football.

Scandinavia is the cradle and the nursery of skiing. It was only towards the end of the last century that the sport came to be introduced into Switzerland. In 1888 Colonel Napier brought skis to Davos and the following year we find Sir Arthur Conan Doyle beginning to ski, also at Davos. From then rapid progress was made. Clubs were founded, races and competitions were organised, text-books on ski-technique appeared and the sport became popular, not only in European countries, but also on the American Continent and in the British dominions. It attracted the academic youth; Oxford and Cambridge were particularly well represented in the Swiss Events, and many prominent people, among them Lord Roberts of

Kandahar and Field-Marshal Montgomery, gave their patronage. And skiing became one of the items included in the Olympic Games.

Sir Arnold tells the story with his usual skill and charm. Much of it is personal and biographical: he writes affectionately of his father, a lovable Utopian imbued with lofty ideals, the ski pioneer who never skied, the business man who never amassed a fortune. He relates his own experiences, tells of his friendships and human contacts, of the part he took in competitive racing, of his triumphs and his disappointments, and refers to the brushes he had with Nazi officials and, later, with the Russians. His association with the Swiss (whose dialect he seems to have mastered) were always cordial and happy. Swiss readers will enjoy his accurate rendering of a conversation in sturdy Schwyzerdütsch on page 113.

Highly specialized as a book of this kind is bound to be, it is not over-burdened with technicalities. The personal and human touch makes it very readable and of general interest.

An admirable feature is the appendix in which, apart from the alphabetical index, is found a "digest" of skiing history in much detail and in chronological order, an excellent method whereby the main narrative is allowed to flow unencumbered.

As Schiller has his Mythenstein, so Sir Arnold ought to have his statue on the slopes of Adelboden.

J.J.F.S.



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