

New books

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lation of some 6 million inhabitants. The trade press, with over 1,000 titles, and the company papers, including over 450 personnel news sheets, also form an important part of the Swiss press, whose structure is largely influenced by the very decentralised political organisation of the country. This helps to explain why Swiss newspaper circulations are so small compared with those of foreign papers; the dailies as a whole run to some 2.5 million copies, the trade press about 2 million copies a week, and staff news sheets roughly 5 million copies a year.

(OSEC)

NEW BOOKS

A NEW TOME FOR MOUNTAINEERS

George Allen & Unwin have published the 1968/69 volume of *"The Mountain World"* (190p. 60s.). This collection was started in 1953 and nine *"Mountain World"* volumes have appeared since then, the last two having been translated from German into English. They are published under the auspices of the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research and under the direction of Mr. Hans Richard Müller. The collection is unfortunately to come to an end with the present volume. In the preface, Mr. Müller explains that the exciting era of the first ascents of the world's giant peaks has now come to a close. In the place of a few but highly important expeditions, there are now a multiplicity of ventures every year. There are too many of them to be covered in the Alpine Annuary which the *"Mountain World"* series purports to be, and with the growing ordinariness of ambitious mountaineering expeditions, the interest of the general alpine public has waned. "The aim and object of this regular publication, to record the exploration of the world's mountains must be regarded as fulfilled", concludes Mr. Müller.

So this title is destined to be the last of a series, but comes nonetheless as a worthy addition to the vast body of alpine and mountaineering literature. The book presents 25 contributions by alpinists from Europe and Asia and, in particular, from India and Japan. Their accounts describe ascents in such varied and wild places as the Afghan Hindu Kush, the Simien in Ethiopia, the Damavand in Persia, the Karakorum in Pakistan, the Stauning Alps in Greenland, the Tukuhe Peak in Nepal and the mountains of East Anatolia. This Annuary ends with an

impressive list of climbs performed in the Himalayas and the Karakorum in 1967, as well as a list of the expeditions to date in the Alps of Greenland. There seems to be so many expeditions to regions which, not so long ago, were accessible to high-powered and officially sponsored expeditions only that they have become commonplace. An Austrian expedition planning to ascend the Pamir range in Russia had more problems in securing visas than in undertaking the actual climb.

The proliferation of private expeditions and the increasing familiarity of European mountaineers with the Himalayas seem to be the principal trend of present-day alpinism. All the peaks of the Alps have long been overcome, there now remains to do the hundreds of peaks above 7,000 metres still waiting to be conquered. But, at the present rate, there won't be many of such virgin peaks left for very long and Alpinists will have to start looking for an "Eiger North Face" in the Himalayas, and tackle it preferably during the most difficult conditions of the year. The British Anapurna expedition early this year was an indication of the kind of "madness" which we are still to expect from mountaineers.

(PMB)

"MURRAY'S HANDBOOK FOR TRAVELLERS IN SWITZERLAND"

There is a growing demand for the classics of Victorian literature in many fields—such as history, literature, sociology, economics and the natural sciences. Hitherto this demand has been met by the second-hand market. But the prices of second-hand books are rising sharply and their supply is very uncertain. It has therefore been the object of the *Victorian Library*, launched by the Leicester University Press, to make some of these classics available again at a reasonable cost. These publishers have in particular reproduced one of the most successful titles of the celebrated series of Murray handbooks intended for Victorian travellers, the *"Handbook for Travellers in Switzerland"* (£2 10s. — 370 p.). The original work has been reproduced photographically, so that the typography is identical, but has been enlarged with a very useful introduction by Professor Jack Simmons, of Leicester University.

The Handbook was first published in 1838 and was the equivalent of a Michelin Guide for the English travellers to Switzerland of the 19th century. The Murray dynasty of publishers thrived on the many re-editions of the various handbooks which it produced, such as the handbooks of Spain, France, Japan and India, the latter being still in press today. Those handbooks owed their success to the birth of modern tourism, and the handbook on Switzerland benefitted from the Victorian fashion for mountaineering and

the love of Alpine scenery which had been inspired by the Romantic movement.

Considering that the *Handbook for Travellers in Switzerland* was written by only one man, John Murray, assisted by mountain landscape painter William Brockedon, one is amazed by the wealth of details with which it abounds. The volume begins with an introduction on such useful touristic topics as Swiss currency, inter-city distances, the stage coach network, *lohnkutschers*, and Swiss inns. It also gives many pertinent tips on the most suitable equipment and luggage which the traveller should take with him and on the most favourable season in which he should set out on his Swiss journey. Many pages are devoted to the monuments, towns, valleys, passes and cascades which the traveller is recommended to see. A significant section describes the *moral condition of the Swiss*, their venality and churlishness, and the bad influence which tourism has had on originally simple and disinterested people. This section introduces the skeleton of the tours which are to be minutely described in the remainder of the book, the shortest suggested carriage tour lasting for two weeks, and the longest one taking the traveller for three months into every corner of Switzerland. The style is undeniably more literary and personal than the curt data offered by some modern holiday guides, as the following introductory passage shows:

"The most beautiful Swiss Valleys are those of Hasli, near Meyringen; the Simmenthal; the Vale of Sarnen; the Kanderthal and the Emmenthal—all distinguished for their quiet pastoral character, and the softness and luxuriance of their verdure. And here it may be remarked that the traveller in Switzerland must not suppose that beauty of scenery is confined to the High Alps: the Jura, and the intermediate undulating country, which, though still greatly elevated above the sea, may be called the Lowlands in reference to the Highlands of Switzerland, abound in peculiar and unobtrusive beauties—hills tufted with woods, among which picturesque masses of bare rock project at intervals, slopes bursting with rills, and meadows which, by the aid of copious irrigation, yield three crops of grass a year, presenting at all seasons a carpet of the liveliest verdure, and of a texture like velvet, equal to that of the best-kept English lawns;—such are the beauties of these lowland scenes."

Anyone who knows Switzerland moderately well should enjoy rediscovering it through the eyes of a 19th century traveller. He will also brush up its history in an entertaining way, as the account is not only geographical, but historical as well. This blending of history with geography lends an added interest to a recommended literary pilgrimage to Switzerland.

(PMB)