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Review: The Himalayas

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## ASIA.

## THE HIMALAYAS.

(a) 'Twenty Years in the Himalaya.' By Major the Hon. C. G. Bruce. London : Arnold. 1910. 16s. *net*.

It is no new experience that when a man of action takes a pen in his hand he beats the professional writer at his own game. Certain it is that few practised authors could have written such a book as this. It is so alive, so cheery, and gives the impression of so much knowledge and experience in reserve. In fact, however good a book this may be, regarded as an account of a region of the earth, it is still better as giving an unintended but most attractive picture of the singular and rich personality of the author. The man behind the book is the thing, rather than the mountains behind it. A robust human being hurries through the pages laughing, boistering, observing, and obviously always leading others.

If it be true, as it is, that no man knows the mountain region of the Himalaya over so large an area as Major Bruce, it is likewise true that no one begins to know the various mountain peoples of many races, languages, and kinds as he does. They open themselves to him as a nut to a nut-cracker. From a Gurkha to a Balti he finds them no impossible riddle, obviously because he begins by liking them in a plain human rather than in a scientific fashion. It almost follows that such of them as find place, live on his pages. Without effort on his part he makes them credible and vital, seeing them no otherwise himself.

Major Bruce writes apologetically, or rather deprecatingly, of his own powers as a climber. He had no chance to learn in the Alps under established experts, and the gigantic Himalayas are a poor training ground. However this may be from the modern highly trained expert rock-climbing point-of-view, the fact is that he climbs as well as a man need for the purpose of getting anywhere in ordinary reason, and that, after all, is the sole purpose of climbing. The best men, such as Mummery, Collie, and Longstaff, were glad enough to have him on their rope when they could get the chance.

The volume opens with a charming sketch of Nepal as seen by one who knew what to look for. No account of that district possesses anything like the quality of these thirty pages. Any one who knows mountain country can at least understand this description, far *vider* than photographs; but a man must have lived twenty years with Gurkhas to be able to see so much that is fresh on a highway so frequently trodden.

Sikkim comes in for less lively treatment, but that was the weather's fault; besides, has not the story been told by Freshfield? We are next whisked off to Kumaon and Garhwal, this time with Longstaff and Mumm. In Kumaon, we are told, "everything runs to waste, especially grass. . . . There is no industry and no forethought. This seems to be the character of the Garhwali peasant. But . . . a pleasure to meet. . . . Simple, pleasant mountain folk, strong and enduring," and so forth, followed by a page or two of excellent characterization and incident.

Dharmasala and Chamba, Suru, and then Kaghan, are the headings of chapters, each of which might have been a book. Kaghan is Major Bruce's particular scrambling ground. It is near his Indian home, as nearness goes in those parts. The mountains are of reasonable size. The whole country was practically unknown when he first took it up. It proved to be an excellent training ground for his Gurkha companions. A delightful country to have near at hand, but not big enough in scale to become famous.

Then we pass on to Gilgit and Baltistan and the great Karakorams, and to

Nanga Parbat and Chilas, where war and mere sport find place, and brave deeds done as lightly in the one as in the other. And so away westward still, to Chitral and the great Tirich Mir in the Hindu Kush, beyond which no one yet has had aught to say about mountains.

The volume concludes with an admirable description of camp life in the hills from a lady's point of view, by Mrs. Bruce, with much that is delightful about the flowers, of camping in "a sea of blue forget-me-not and giant larkspurs," and other such lovely sights as may well arouse the envy of an untravelled reader.

In brief, the book is one to be read, and that will outlast many an explorer's carefully compiled tale. It will live because its pages are full of life.

M. C.

- (b) 'The Call of the Snowy Hispar: A Narrative of Exploration and Mountaineering on the Northern Frontier of India.' By William Hunter Workman and Fanny Bullock Workman. London: Constable & Co. 1910. 21s. *net*.

Few persons, if any, have made more adventurous expeditions into the north-western part of the Himalaya than Dr. and Mrs. Workman; the results obtained, specially in the detail of main glaciers and their feeders, have been of much use in filling in blanks or correcting somewhat imaginative sketches, made in 1855-64, when Kashmir was surveyed by a party under Captain T. G. Montgomerie, R.E., of the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India. His work, so far as it went, being chiefly triangulation and investigation of routes, was admirable; but the supply of fuller particulars was beyond his scope. Consequently geographers and travellers are deeply indebted to those who fill in blank spaces on the map, and add to its topographical detail.

The immediately previous exploration by the authors of the book under consideration was around the peaks and glaciers of Nunkun, two great mountains (Ser and Mer), almost due east from Srinagar, which tower a clear 3000 feet above their neighbours; this time they went a long way further north, passing beyond the old boundary of the Kashmir State. The route lay from Srinagar to Gilgit, and thence up the Kanjut valley to Hunza and Nagar, where the Mir was called upon and asked for assistance in coolies and supplies. The party was a considerable one consisting of two Italian scientific surveyors, the guide Cyprien Savoye, three European porters, and coolies as required, Mr. Hogg being in charge of the camp. They arrived at Hispar, a village near the foot of the glacier, early in July, 1908, and thence dividing into parties traversed the length of the main glacier, and investigated some of the side ones. The map from the original drawing of Dr. M. Koncza is beautifully clear, and is a useful contribution to our imperfect knowledge of those regions. Return was made by the Hispar pass, and the Biafo glaciers to Askole and the Braldu river, across which on a ropebridge one of the party had to be carried blindfolded, as he could not endure the sight of the raging stream beneath. The Shigar river was followed to Skardo where it joins the Indus, and thence the party crossed the Deosai plains to Gurais and Srinagar.

The book is pleasantly written and full of interest to mountaineers; the illustrations are excellent and well selected, some, such as that at p. 224, of Lakelets at upper Hispar, are singularly instructive, and of a quality to match those in Dr. Sven Hedin's "Scientific Results," of his journeys in and about the Takla Makan, than which no higher praise can be given.

W. BROADFOOT.