

'Alpine Journal' will be very glad to receive and forward to the proper quarter any contributions which may be sent to him by English friends of the Tyrol.

WINTER MEETING AND DINNER.—The Annual General Meeting of the Club will be held on Monday evening, December 18, and the Picture Exhibition and Winter Dinner at Willis's Rooms the following afternoon and evening. Further particulars will be announced by circular.

REVIEWS.

Il Club Alpino in Torino dal 1863 al 1881. Notizie storiche raccolte da Cesare Isaia. (Turin: Casanova. 60 cent.)

In this pamphlet Signor Isaia, a well-known explorer of his native Alps, and the President of the Turin section of the Italian Alpine Club, gives us a genuine contribution to Alpine Club history. We have set out before us the beginnings of the Italian Club, founded in the autumn of 1863 as a local society in Turin, its gradual growth, and the final sinking of Turin, its 'metropolis,' into merely one of its thirty-seven actually existing sections. On March 31, 1882, the Club numbered no less than 3,234 members, the chief section in point of numbers being that of Turin, with 425 members. The book is the record of modest but genuine work, and is far more than the bulletin of a purely local society. It is followed by a most interesting catalogue of the objects exhibited by the Turin section at the Milanese Congress in 1881, including not merely maps and printed papers, but articles of Alpine equipment, panoramas, photographs, scientific collections (including a small number of specimens of rocks gathered on various peaks), and numerous plans and sketches of the huts, &c., built by the section since 1876, the date of the definite separation of the central and sectional organisations. Both matter and arrangement reflect the highest credit on Signor Isaia.

Les Vallées Vaudoises. Etude de topographie et d'histoire militaire. Par A. de Rochas d'Aiglun, chef de bataillon du génie. (Paris, 1881. 10 francs.)

Monsieur de Rochas d'Aiglun has devoted much time and labour to the publication of documents throwing light on the topography and military history of the alpine portion of the old province of Dauphiné. In 1874 he published all the original documents, including letters of Catinat and Vauban, relating to the alpine campaign of 1692 against the Duke of Savoy, which included the sieges of Embrun and Guillestre. Again, in 1875, he carefully edited Montannel's Memoirs on the Military Topography of the Alpine Frontier of France (cf. A. J. x. 276), a perfect storehouse of information on the subject. In 1877 we have him, in conjunction with Dr. J. A. Chabrand, publishing a valuable treatise on the dialect of the inhabitants of the Cottian Alps, particularly of the

district called the Queyras. In 1879 he contributed to the 'Revue de Géographie' his 'Premiers Essais d'un Glossaire Topographique des Alpes.' And now we have from his fertile pen an elaborate monograph on the Waldensian valleys of Piedmont.

This district has generally been described by religious writers of a rather gushing type, and the traveller who visits it expecting to see nothing but 'Alpine mountains cold' and bleak and barren valleys is amazed to find the reality very different from his anticipation. The scenery, instead of recalling the desolation of the Oisans and the Dévoluy, is thoroughly Italian—magnificent forests, romantic dells, crystal rivulets, and picturesquely-placed hamlets combining to produce an effect familiar to all who have once gazed on the beauties of the Val d'Aosta. In the natural reaction which follows this unlooked for discovery (we confess this was our own experience on our first visit), he is apt to jump to the conclusion that the dangers and perils of the persecuted Vaudois were not so great as they have been painted, and to read with some distrust the narrative of the 'Glorieuse Rentrée' of the Vaudois under Henri Arnaud in 1689, and of their valiant resistance in the eighteenth century. But we have only to turn to M. de Rochas d'Aiglun's last book in order to convince ourselves that this judgment is as one-sided as the former. After a topographical introduction, in which many errors of his predecessors are rectified, and which is accompanied by a capital map on a scale of 100,000 apparently constructed by the author himself, we have what is entitled a Military History of the Vaudois. This turns out to be a topographical study of all the skirmishes and assaults on the Vaudois in their valleys, which enables us to realise vividly the physical obstacles against which the hardy inhabitants had to struggle, and thus to appreciate better the possibility, apart from all questions of religious fervour, of their long continued resistance. And the author helps us much to gain this clear idea by reprinting the contemporary narratives and letters of men on both sides, and thus enabling us to grasp clearly the importance attached to the suppression of these pestilent heretics, as they were in the eyes of the Dukes of Savoy and their advisers. Such an arrangement speaks highly for the modesty of M. de Rochas, and cannot be too much commended, while the connecting narrative which he supplies throws a welcome light on obscure passages. A large amount of space is naturally devoted to the events of 1686-1690. A remarkable episode is the establishment of a Republic in the valley of San Martino under the protectorate of Louis XIV., the object being to secure liberty of conscience. This state, a curious anticipation of the Napoleonic republics a hundred years later, lasted from 1704 to 1708. This work will be specially interesting to historical students. But all who care for the Alpine ranges below as above the snow-line will find it of great use and importance, since it includes the minute study of a mountain district, and that a district teeming with historical associations of a kind which should be very attractive to all lovers of the Alps. We trust that M. de Rochas d'Aiglun will continue his researches into the history of the Cottian Alps, and thus show the world that Alpine societies can do something besides climbing, for the author is not only

a distinguished engineer and writer, but occupies a high post in the Société des Touristes du Dauphiné, and is the editor of its *Annuaire* lately reviewed in these pages.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE 'J. E. M.' GUIDE TO SWITZERLAND.

We have received the following letter:—

The Rev. W. A. B. Coolidge.

'SIR,—As the Editor of the above, and as "a person of large assurance, and still larger ignorance," I take the liberty to enclose a few "Opinions of the Press," so that you may observe that I have not done you the honour to quote the fearful and wonderful review (sic) which appears in the August issue of the Mutual Admiration Society's Publication—"The Alpine Journal." I would further take the liberty to inform you, that while I do not lay claim to the transcendent genius which distinguishes yourself, I nevertheless appeal to a public as far-seeing and quite as intelligent as that for which you condescend to scribble; and I will venture on the prophecy that long after the Rev. W. A. B. Coolidge and his works, and the "Alpine Journal," are dead and forgotten, the "J. E. M." will be looked upon as a standard guide-book.

'It may surprise you to learn that the work is written entirely from personal experience and knowledge of Switzerland, and in the whole 480 odd pages of text there are not six pages of reprint. The editing was done abroad, and often during the most acute physical and mental suffering due to infirm health. Its faults—which, after all, are venial ones—might well have been touched lightly when dealing with a first edition of a comprehensive work of this nature; for an editor who would fail to correct them in a subsequent issue would be an ass, or something worse. Not only has the getting up of the book involved the expenditure of many hundreds of pounds, but two years of hard work, anxiety, and worry. An honest man, therefore, who was something more than an amateur scribbler, would have taken these things into consideration, even while burning to display his wonderful knowledge. That all the faults you pointed out exist I readily admit; but at the same time I must believe that the "J. E. M." guide is not without merits, seeing that I have received 175 letters from the general public, and, included amongst my correspondents are clergymen, doctors, artists, a minor canon or two, and no doubt *you* will be shocked to hear that even some Oxford and Cambridge men are amongst these non-discriminating people. Without exception every one of these 175 writers has something favourable to say; though no doubt they and the editors of the various journals in which reviews have appeared are simply persons of "great assurance or greater ignorance" when compared with your own august self.