

## Some recent climbing books

*The Mountain World 1968/69.* English version ed. MALCOLM BARNES. George Allen and Unwin, 1970. £3.

This is the tenth volume (English series) of this well-known publication and, alas, the last. The publishers (Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research) think that their aim, to record the exploration of the world's mountains, has now been largely fulfilled and that their efforts must now take a new direction. Like its predecessors it is a sumptuous volume, beautifully illustrated, ranging widely over the globe; indeed, practically the only considerable area nowhere mentioned in the text is the North American scene.

The volume opens with an obituary of Marcel Kurz (1887-1967), in which Walter Amstutz outlines the achievements of this remarkable Alpine historian and topographer, whose interests ranged far beyond his native Alps.

The only Alpine climbing feature is the account of the first winter ascent of the N.E. face of the Piz Badile, an Italo-Swiss venture, undertaken between 21 December 1967 and 2 January 1968, using Himalayan tactics. One can only admire the skill and tenacity displayed, though the thought of spending even one winter night in wet clothes in an ice-cave is appalling! (There was an interruption of four days, due to bad weather, when the climbers descended to improved living conditions, presumably.)

There is an appreciative account of an ascent of Demavend, Persia's highest mountain, inspired by a glimpse of the peak from the windows of a plane, while that of the Franco-Swiss expedition to the mountains of Anatolia is especially interesting for its comments on the local Kurdish tribesmen.

Inevitably, expeditions to the Himalaya take up most space - Czech and Japanese expeditions to Hindu Kush; an Austrian party to N.E. Chitral; Dutch and Swiss parties in Nepal and an important investigation into the Glaciers of North Bhutan.

D. J. Bennet reviews climbing in the Staunings Alps, Greenland (72°N.), while that veteran of the New Zealand Alps, John Pascoe, presents an excellent summary of conditions in New Zealand, with comments on some recent expeditions there.

Two highly interesting nature articles more or less complete the tale: Simien - Ethiopia's Threatened Mountain area and the Alpine Salamander by Hans Peter Häfeli.

Quite comprehensive and good value at £3.

W.A.E.

*The Big Grey Man of Ben Macdhui.* AFFLECK GRAY. Impulse Books, Aberdeen, 1970. £2.

This is an enthralling book for lovers of the mountains who will appreciate the varying conditions in which it has been possible for uncanny experiences to occur. Mr Gray has gathered together a remarkable collection of evidence regarding Ben Macdhui's apparition and other weird phenomena seen, felt or

heard among the hills in Scotland and in other parts of the world, and many interesting theories are discussed.

The anecdotes have been linked together in a fascinating chronicle and include several reports by members of the Cairngorm Club. There are appropriate photographs of the Ben Macdhui region. The reader is left to form in general his own conclusions about the ghostly figures and strange foot-falls and the absorbing mystery of An Ferla Mhor. An index would have been helpful.

R.K.J.

*Mountain Midsummer.* MICHAEL GILL. Hodder & Stoughton, 1969. £2.50.

At the beginning of his book, Mr Gill talks of falling in love with mountains. His first loves, and it would seem his greatest ones, are the very wet and comparatively little known Darrans in his native New Zealand. The extremely tough conditions he found there and in other mountains in New Zealand gave an excellent training for higher and more exotic ranges. Perhaps the chapters on the Darrans are the most interesting as these hills are so little known.

An answer to an advertisement in the *Auckland Star* led to a meeting with Hillary, who was immediately taken by this resourceful doctor. Mr Gill went with him on two Himalayan and one Antarctic expeditions, and his very varied experiences on them make absorbing reading. He went to Nepal the first time via U.S.A., Great Britain, where he rock climbed in Wales, and fitted in a visit to Chamonix before flying to Katmandu. This is typical of him. He seems to have an enviable ability to surmount any kind of difficulty, and to make himself comfortable in, for example, a disintegrating snow-cave high in the New Zealand Alps, or in a small tent in the middle of an Antarctic blizzard. An *interesting* man who has written an unusual book.

J.C.A.

*Everest, the West Ridge.* THOMAS F. HORNBEIN. George Allen & Unwin, 1971. £3.50.

In 1963, a large American expedition put six men on the summit of Mt Everest, four by the South Col route, and two, the author and Willi Unsoeld by the unclimbed West Ridge. Hornbein was fanatically keen that an attempt should be made to traverse Everest by the Ridge and the South Col, but he and his fellow 'West Ridgers' had a long, and frustrating wait while most of the expedition's men and supplies were used to ensure the first ascent. But at last, he and Unsoeld were able to make their bid for the top from a comparatively low camp. Not quite sure of the route, but certain that they had passed the point of no return, they reached the summit late in the day. They descended in the tracks of Bishop and Jersted who had come up earlier that day on the South Col route, and eventually met up with their friends. Exhausted and almost oxygenless, the four men spent the night in the open at about 28,000 feet. They all got back safely, but Bishop and Unsoeld had to be flown by helicopter to Katmandu for urgent treatment for frost-bite – less than five days after they had stood on the summit.

By any standard, this was a tremendous achievement, the first major Himalayan traverse carried off in the face of many difficulties. Hornbein, however, remained curiously dissatisfied and doubtful. The final sentence in his book is typical of his attitude. 'It is strange how when a dream is fulfilled there is little left but doubt'. Much of his material was taken from diaries, on-the-spot tape recordings and questionnaires which expedition members filled out for their psychologist and sociologist, but it is very much his story. He has said he does not like to write, and one can believe this, but that he wanted to tell his own story. This must be one of the most intimate accounts of a major expedition ever written, and certainly is an unusual book.

J.C.A.

*That Untravelled World.* ERIC SHIPTON. Hodder & Stoughton, 1969. £2.25.

On his own admission, Eric Shipton prefers exploration to pure mountaineering, but has often managed to combine both. Of necessity his autobiography repeats much that has been written before, but there is also new material in this frank and vividly written book. Born in Ceylon, he travelled extensively with his family as a small child and has gone on travelling all his life. Although he did many climbs in the Alps prior to going to East Africa to work, there was a gap of thirty-seven years before he went back there. In that time he climbed the East African giants, went on several pre-war Everest and other Himalayan expeditions, explored in the Karakorum, acted as British Consul-General in Kashgar during the war, and then went on in a similar capacity to Kunming in South China at the time when the Communists were taking over. Having got his family and himself safely home, almost immediately he set off to look at Everest from the hitherto forbidden Nepalese side, Patagonia, Chile, Galapagos, Alaska – and back to the Alps at last for the Matterhorn centenary celebrations. He didn't want to go – he never liked crowds, but 'as President of the Alpine Club, I could hardly decline the invitation'. He was delighted when bad weather cancelled the planned mass ascent.

He is always interesting, very often funny, and shows once more that he is one of our most unusual and fascinating mountaineers.

J.C.A.

*The Kandahar Story.* SIR ARNOLD LUNN. George Allen & Unwin, 1969. 80p.

This little book (101 pages in paperback) is really a collection of reminiscences and anecdotes about the development of downhill ski-racing in Switzerland. The initiative for the departure, in 1924, from the cross-country race of Scandinavian origin came from a group of Englishmen who reckoned that the best way to test downhill skiing was to race downhill. The almost total triumph of downhill over cross-country can be seen any ski-able weekend in Scotland when thousands throng the lifts at Glenshee and Cairngorm but the ski-tourer meets none but a walker or two.

Sir Arnold Lunn invented the modern slalom race and he writes about its history and development with authority. Although the main appeal of this book will be to addicts, there are many points of general interest, thus 'I find in the

Swiss Press welcome evidence that our influence has not diminished, as for instance the competitor who had "die feste Nonstopzeit". Perhaps the Club could adopt the term for the speed merchants on the weekend excursions.

D.G.H.

*Climbing*. JAMES LOVELOCK. Batsford, 1971. £1.70.

As the author says 'This is basically a how-to-do-it book, not a why-you-do-it book'. He starts by giving a brief history of mountaineering then goes on to deal with equipment and kitting-out, rock climbing technique and snow and ice climbing. There is a complete chapter written by Trevor Jones on Artificial Climbing which deals clearly and concisely with the subject from such basic matters as belays and running belays to more complicated climbing with bongs and expansion bolts. Lovelock then details the main climbing areas of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, neatly done in just one chapter where unfortunately some inaccuracies in spelling and locations were noticed in the Scottish section.

The final chapter is on Safety, Survival and First Aid and goes into these serious matters very carefully and is particularly interesting when dealing with the quantity of food and water one should take on the hill. The photographs, forty in number, and the illustrations are generally excellent.

The book is completed by a bibliography, a glossary and lists of guide books, mountaineering clubs, First Aid posts and rescue teams.

G.J.S.

*The Book of Modern Mountaineering*. Edited by MALCOLM MILNE. Arthur Barker, 1968. £3.15.

This is an exciting anthology of recent developments, and fully justifies its title. There are ten sections, and the list of contributors reads like a compendium of the greatest names in the climbing world - W. H. Murray, Chris Bonington, Tom Patey, C. Douglas Milner, Tilman, Shipton, etc. The photographs are superb, although sometimes the reproduction has too much of a blue tinge. I have seen two copies of the book, and there was a marked difference in quality of colour rendering. However, the view from Everest, Dawn on the Eigerwand, splendid pictures of Alpamayo, incredible shots of Yosemite walls - these are a few of the illustrations which would alone make the book worth buying. The hazards as well as the exhilarations of modern mountaineering are covered, and there is an interesting chapter on 'The Woman Climber'. Altogether a first-class publication, strongly recommended.

D.H.

*Annapurna South Face*. CHRIS BONINGTON. Cassell, 1971. £3.25.

Annapurna has a special place in the history of Himalayan climbing as the first of the 8,000 metre peaks to be climbed; and now, twenty years later, in the

quest for more and more difficult climbs, its South Face becomes the first of the major faces to be climbed by modern Alpine siege tactics.

The outline of this successful expedition with its tragic ending is already well known, especially to viewers of 'News at Ten', and Bonington now tells the whole story very frankly and without hiding the clashes of personality which are not exclusive to international expeditions. He writes well and gradually builds a fascinating character study of his talented team.

Haston contributes a chapter on the experience of the summit pair which seems to get to the heart of this desperate standard of climbing where the will takes over. He writes of his 'total despair' as his rucksack with food and gear disappeared into space as they struggled to set up Camp VI at 24,000 feet and, after reaching the top with Whillans who 'picked a beautiful line through towards the summit ridge', of the 'supreme concentration' needed to get down.

The forty-eight pages of colour photographs are superb, but the cover higher up the mountain is scanty. The summit pair were not camera minded, and none of the climbers who reached Camp VI thought to photograph the site. The American, Frost, who made a lone unsuccessful summit bid, took a series of pictures at 25,000 feet, but these are not shown.

This is a handsome and comprehensive book, as befits a Mount Everest Foundation publication, and there are nine appendices written by expedition members, and a glossary of terms for the general reader.

E.F.J.

*Mountaineering in the Alps.* CLAIRE ELIANE ENGEL. George Allen & Unwin, 1971. £5.25.

The casual reader, without some previous knowledge of alpine history and geography, would find this historical survey somewhat difficult to digest. The discussion of the first ascent of Mont Blanc, for instance, presents the four chief protagonists, Paccard, Balmat, Bourrit and De Saussure, rather differently from older accounts of the struggle to reach the summit. The narrative is spun around this and other major developments—the Matterhorn, the Dru, the North Wall of the Eiger—together with consideration of changes in climbing techniques, of the development of winter mountaineering and of the influence of the alpine clubs. In consequence the presentation is occasionally haphazard and shows signs of incomplete revision, with similar comments on an incident or climber appearing in more than one section. Perhaps we can more readily excuse a foreign author writing in a strange tongue for the information that Haston was the one Englishman to complete the first direct winter ascent of the North Wall, than the occasional misspellings of proper names that caught the eye.

The whole approach, despite its shortcomings, has a freshness and character that encourages some consideration of the philosophy of the climber. The interested reader will find a most useful summary of the earliest approaches to the mountains and a good chronological bibliography, although it is difficult to accept that a factual chapter on mountains in war-time fits tidily within the general structure. The modern photographs 'in keeping with the changed aspect of alpine mountaineering' as the dust-cover has it, are unfortunately

not as informative as might have been hoped, or indeed as the earlier illustrations from other sources are. This book complements well the historical surveys written a few years ago to commemorate the centenaries of the Alpine Club and the Matterhorn ascent, and will be enjoyed particularly by those members who have an interest in the development of their recreation.

R.L.M.

### CLIMBING JOURNALS

We have received several Journals of Kindred Clubs, and we express our thanks for these interesting publications, which can be found in the Club Library.

