

Book Reviews

EDITED BY HARRIET T. PARSONS

The Mountain World 1956/57. Edited for the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research by Othmar Gurtner and Marcel Kurz; English version edited by Malcolm Barnes. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957. 200 pages; ill. Price \$6.00.

The current issue of *The Mountain World* records the world's most successful period of high mountain exploration and ascent so far. This single issue describes the first ascents of Kangchenjunga, Makalu, and Lhotse, and the second ascents of Everest and Kamet. The summit of Makalu, in fact, was reached on three successive days by a total of nine climbers. No wonder Jean Franco refers to Makalu as "The Happy Mountain." But he pays homage to the expeditions before him. "Their lessons were our opportunity, their sufferings were our debt." And as he says, "... oxygen was for us as much a part of our equipment as a good pair of mitts on Mont Blanc."

The Mountain World 1956/57 records not only ascents of the world's highest peaks, but mountain endeavors of other kinds in widely separated areas. For instance, Arnold Heim writes of the Virungas Volcanoes in tropical Africa, Wilhelm Kick in separate articles discusses glacial movements in the Karakoram and place names in Baltistan, and Bradford Washburn writes definitively of Mount McKinley. The latter article, magnificently illustrated, is certainly the outstanding work in this issue. Well written and compact, this concise account tells the history of past climbing on the mountain, analyzes the weather, air support and snow conditions, and pictures in detail great new routes that will some day be made on this vast 20,000-foot peak that lies 35 degrees of latitude north of Everest. Magnificent double-plate photographs and a section of Washburn's stunning relief map of Mount McKinley are included. This analysis of Mount McKinley sets a standard that promises to be unequalled for many years.

The Mountain World is written for a world-wide audience and American, German, and Swiss editions are published simultaneously. Despite cavalier tendencies with the proofreading, this publication annually provides readers throughout the world with a clear and beautiful record of research and high adventure.

ROBERT H. BATES

The First Ascent of Mont Blanc, by T. Graham Brown and Sir Gavin de Beer, with foreword by Sir John Hunt. London: Oxford University Press, 1957. 490 pages; ill. Price 70s.

Published on the occasion of the Centenary of the Alpine Club, this is an expensive book, but a necessary luxury for those interested in Alpine history, particularly in the events relating to the attempts on Mont Blanc and the successful effort of 1786. The collaboration of a great expert on the mountain (author of *Brenva* and former editor of *AJ*) with a noted historical authority bespeaks the integrity of its content.

The attainment of Mont Blanc on August 8, 1786 broke the magic barrier defending the hitherto almost ignored world of snow. Not only the highest summit of the Alps, this peak became symbolic as the portal to mountain adventure; but its clouded history, particularly in connection with the controversy developing around Paccard and Balmat, fills many printed pages. Only in recent years has the truth become known and Paccard placed in his rightful position of honor. Whymper was the first to see this: the village doctor almost forgotten as the result of several detractors. First there was Balmat himself, greedy for gold, then vainglorious Bourrit, jealous of any effort more fortunate than his own, and finally romancing Dumas, who swung public attention to Balmat. Others such as C. E. Mathews, Dr. Dübi, Freshfield, Montagnier, and E. H. Stevens have since striven to set the facts aright, and it has now fallen to Graham Brown and de Beer to throw further light on the problem.

But the new and sad revelation of the present volume is that de Saussure, the one man whom one thought of as putting truth before all, a neutralist if not openly pro-Paccard, now turns up in the camp of the derogators. De Saussure was well aware of Paccard's initiative; he must have known of the expedition to the Tacul basin, and certainly of the doctor's attempt on the Aiguille de Gouter. Instead of due acknowledgment in *Voyages* (vol. II), he repeated Bourrit's emphasis and omissions, knowing they were false. When Paccard included his barometric readings on the Aiguille du Gouter in his letter of September 25, 1785, to de Saussure, he came into scientific competition with the professor, and the reaction of the latter was one of resentment. De Saussure could, with a stroke of his pen, have killed the myth of Balmat's preeminence; but he did not, and thereby failed in his duty as an impartial scientist by supporting Bourrit's falsehoods.

The second part of the book presents in their original form numerous documents, some hitherto unpublished, others in which the text was incomplete or erroneous. The illustrations include many plates in color, reproduced from old prints, portraits of Paccard and Balmat, various photos of

Mont Blanc, and the original sketches made by von Gersdorf at Chamonix on the day of the first ascent.

J. MONROE THORINGTON

Premiers voyages au Mont-Blanc, par. H.-B. de Saussure, M.-T. Bourrit, et leurs contemporains, selected by Daniel May. Paris: Club des Libraires by André Wahl. Price 1950 fr.

In this, the 18th volume of a series *Découverte de la Terre*, an introduction of 39 pages precedes an anthology extracted from the works of de Saussure, Bourrit, and Deluc. The material is grouped under various headings: Chamonix, the Buet, The Tour of Mont Blanc (exploration and conquest of the mountain), and Col du Géant. While it brings under one cover portions of several narratives, all familiar to students of Alpine history, the book adds little to the knowledge of readers who have the original volumes available.

After the visit of Windham and Pococke to Chamonix in 1741, Mont Blanc came to be regarded much as Everest was a century and more afterward. The early confusion between the Buet and Mont Blanc has its parallel in mistaken identity of Himalayan peaks in modern days; while the caravans of guides and porters, impedimenta and provisions lists from the time of de Saussure to Albert Smith reflect in lesser scale the make-up of early expeditions to the Karakoram.

J. MONROE THORINGTON

Snowdon Biography, by Geoffrey Winthrop Young, Geoffrey Sutton, and Wilfrid Noyce. London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1957, 194 pages; 24 ills.; end-paper map. Price \$3.64.

To the American who has climbed in the Welsh mountains, or who has read extensively in the literature of that lovely region, these three essays will provide unusual enjoyment. But most of us who do not fit into either of these two classes will find this little book rather dull. The reader needs an intimate knowledge of the cliffs and crags or, in lieu of that, a deep interest in the men and women climbers whose names parade through the pages.

The first two essays are a chronicle of rock climbing in Wales. This gives little scope for the fine writing for which the authors are so well known. Place names unpronounceable to us abound and the famous climbing figures file past too speedily for the reader here to gain any interest in them. Prior familiarity with the area or the mountaineers is needed.

The third essay, *The Writer in Snowdonia*, traces the literature of the region from the Welsh poets to Wordsworth and on to the rock-climbing

guide books. A student of Carr and Lister's "The Mountains of Snowdonia," 1925, will find this a readable supplement, bringing up to date the second edition (1948) of that major work.

BRADLEY B. GILMAN

The Everest-Lhotse Adventure, by Albert Eggler. Translated by Hugh Merrick. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957. 222 pages; ill.; maps. Price \$4.50.

For the members of the American Alpine Club the Swiss expedition that in 1956 climbed to the highest yet unclimbed summit, Lhotse, the world's fourth peak, and twice reached the top of Mount Everest has a special interest. Many of us were fortunate enough to see the magnificent pictures and hear the thrilling story as told by our fellow member, Jürg Marmet. Even without this personal interest, Albert Eggler's fascinating and well written *The Everest-Lhotse Adventure* would be highly rewarding.

The account starts with a description of how the climbing team, and a real team it turned out to be, was picked and trained and of what they used in the way of food and equipment. It next carries us across India and Nepal to Namche Bazar and Base Camp. We feel the anguish the Swiss felt when first Luchsinger, then Pasang Dawa Lama, and finally Diehl fell seriously ill. We ascend the Khumbu icefall and the Western Cwm with the climbers, racing desperately to beat the oncoming monsoon. With them we live in the high camps and pack supplies, gasping for oxygen. We struggle up the Lhotse couloir and stand with Luchsinger and Reiss on its wind-swept summit. We ascend Mount Everest itself, first with Marmet and Schmied, then a second time with Reiss and von Gunten. We get to know intimately those marvelous, cheerful, child-like and hard-working Sherpas, whose qualities the Swiss have always been so quick to appreciate.

This is a thrilling book of a thrilling and well-run expedition. It has not suffered by its translation from German to English and reads easily and well. The photographs were excellent to begin with and have been well reproduced. This is an outstanding addition to the long list of titles that have recounted the history of the world's highest mountain.

H. ADAMS CARTER

Cho Oyu; by Favor of the Gods, by Herbert Tichy. Translated from the German by Basil Creighton. Foreword by Sir John Hunt. London: Methuen & Co., 1957. 196 pages; ill.; maps. Price 25s.

In the evergrowing shelves of mountaineering books there is a small select group of volumes that will never exceed fourteen in number. These are

books written about the first ascents of the 8000-meter peaks. Dr. Tichy has written a book with the same high standards that he used in conducting his expedition. The party was small; three Austrians and eleven Sherpas. At fourteen men this is by far the smallest party to be successful on an 8000-meter peak. Although the climb was short (four camps above base) and of mild technical difficulty, the story does not lack excitement. With Tichy's hands frozen and the wind blowing tents apart, along comes another expedition to compete for the summit, and a first-class melodrama results.

The first third of the book deals with preparations and a light account of the journey from Katmandu to Base Camp above Namche Bazar. Then they come to grips with Cho Oyu. There is little to come to grips with, however, for in a few days they are high up the mountain beyond the ice wall which stopped Eric Shipton's party in 1952. In an incredibly short time Tichy and three Sherpas establish Camp IV at 22,900 feet, within reach of the summit. Then a violent storm strikes, and if the reader overlooks that losing gloves is a rather elementary error, and that good tents don't come apart in 80-mph winds, it's pretty exciting. With the assault party in full retreat, along comes the Swiss expedition wanting the Austrians to get on with the climb or get off of the mountain. This tense moment is saved when Pasang Dawa Lama (who is the real hero of the story) gets the word in Namche Bazar and heads for the summit under forced draft. He joins the others at Camp III on the morning of the second day, and with Tichy and Jochler stands on the summit of Cho Oyu less than 36 hours after leaving Namche Bazar. After such a climb there is little left to do but go home, and Tichy fills out his book with the story of Pasang's wedding (his second), a drunken affair that leaves the reader wondering where all the chang came from. Certainly this is one of the better books on 8000-meter ascents to be published. Both the writing and photographs are excellent.

RICHARD K. IRVIN

Makalu, by Jean Franco. Translated from the French by Denise Morin.

London: Jonathan Cape, 1957. 256 pages; ill.; maps. Price 25s.

The ascent of Makalu in 1955, as with all the 8000-meter peaks, was a superb achievement accomplished by a group of highly competent mountaineers. Jean Franco tells their story in narrative form, with occasional use of dialogue, without overworking the popular theme of camp-to-camp routine spiced with dashes of sensation. He asks us at the start "... to sit down at our table, unshaven like the rest of us, to hear the songs of the Sherpas and the wind whistling over the moraine, and to climb up slowly

through a fascinating world of high mountains until he stands with us upon the summit, with three-quarters of the Asian continent at his feet."

His descriptions of the approach march through Nepal are interesting. We are introduced to various Nepalese, who happen upon the expedition on its way up along the Arun River. He shows great warmth of feeling for the Sherpas, who help bring the party toward the summit of Makalu. The ascent of the mountain went quite smoothly, which speaks well for their organization and planning. Rarely does more than one party reach the summit of such a mountain, yet, with the blessing of good weather, the entire climbing team, including a few Sherpas, reached the summit during a 72-hour period.

Makalu does not show the craftsmanship that is exhibited in *Annapurna*. In the latter book, Herzog created strong personalities through the continued use of dialogue and conveyed a vivid realism to the story that is not easy to attain. Franco uses this technique to a lesser degree, but it makes his story very readable.

ALLEN STECK

In Highest Nepal: Our Life Among the Sherpas, by Norman Hardie. London: Allen and Unwin, 1957. 191 pages; ill.; maps. Price 21s.

This book is the account of living with Sherpas in the high Nepalese valleys of Solo Khumbu, just south of Mount Everest. The author, a New Zealander, is one of the four members of the British Kangchenjunga Expedition who reached the summit in May 1955. Afterwards he left the climbing party at Base Camp and walked with three Sherpa companions to the village of Khumjung, near Namche Bazar. Joined later by his wife, Enid, and by A. J. Macdonald, he spent five months among these remarkable Mongoloid people who have provided the sinews of transport for most of the great Himalayan climbs. He and Macdonald also conducted a survey to untangle the maze of ridges and valleys south of Mount Chamlang.

The book is a straightforward, readable, day-by-day account of the author's experiences among the Sherpas, and he describes their customs, habits, beliefs, and economy. That he capitulated completely to his hosts and their way of life there isn't a doubt. To them he attributes the high qualities of good nature, gentleness, generosity, loyalty, and independence, with hardly a mention of any human failings whatever. In fact, of his departure he wrote: "I was not quite sure why I was leaving Khumjung, and wondered if anywhere else in the world could ever be to me so much a home."

However, such an admittedly simple, unadorned account tends to be two-dimensional. It seems to lack a depth and penetration that might have uncovered the inner spark which animates this interesting and unique segment of the human family. In other words, we hear the Sherpas tick, but the mechanism that makes them do so remains somewhat of a mystery. Still, Hardie's enthusiasm is catching and his story is very much worthwhile for those who are interested in the human aspect of the world's greatest mountain range.

The book is well illustrated by the author and his wife, and there are two diagrams, but the pair of outline maps are somewhat sketchy for those not generally familiar with the region.

WELDON F. HEALD

Far, Far the Mountain Peak, by John Masters. New York: The Viking Press, 1957. 471 pages. Price \$5.00.

A climber reading a novel about mountaineering finds himself considering it from two angles—as a story, and as a picture of the sport.

This book tells of a man driven by a craving for self-conquest and power over others, and by an insatiable ambition, who finds his special field of action in high mountaineering. As a story, it offers unusual and interesting personal relationships, and plenty of melodramatic action. Critics have been enthusiastic about its literary value—"A magnificent novel," "With warmth, color and authority," etc., etc. Readers have put it on the bestseller lists.

The author, who is not himself a climber, begins with a foreward thanking Hedley, Harrer, Ruttledge and Longstaff for their expert advice. With their help he has avoided any conspicuous technical mistakes. But there are points one cannot fail to notice.

Anyone who has seen how the mind typically works at high altitudes is rather surprised by those long, logical, penetrating discussions and meditations about personal philosophies and emotional problems, that take place at 23,000 feet, and up!

More important is the fundamental attitude toward mountains. The plot itself forces the author to emphasize climbing for personal aggrandizement. Although the chief character, who dominates the book, is represented as becoming one of the world's leading climbers, and although his European and Himalayan ascents manage to be wonderfully authentic and vivid, he has a strange lack. Nowhere do we see him showing any liking for mountains in themselves, or any enjoyment of their presence. Never does he even seem conscious of their existence, as actual physical

entities. Through most of the book they are to him just background-scenery—beautiful scenery, generally—for his climbing activities. And when finally he learns the meaning of compassion and humility and human warmth, he decides that "mountaineering consists of people, and only incidentally of mountains." Yet he calls himself "a mountaineer." Personally, I found this a readable and exciting novel, but very definitely *not* the story of a mountaineer.

ELIZABETH KNOWLTON

The Ascent of Manaslu in Photographs. The Japanese expeditions of 1952 to 1956, by Takayoshi Yoda. Tokio: The Mainichi Newspapers. 186 photographs, 9 in color. Price Yen 1,000. (Charles E. Tuttle, Rutland, Vt. \$5.00.)

Seldom has a mountaineering picture book contained so many excellent and delightful photographs as this volume which tells the story in pictures of the five Japanese expeditions to Manaslu in the Nepal Himalaya. The fifth expedition culminated in success on May 9, 1956, when the Sherpa Gyaltsen (who attained the summit of Makalu with the 1955 French expedition) and Toshio Imanishi planted the Rising Sun and the flag of Nepal on Manaslu's 26,657-foot summit. Two days later, on May 11, Kiichiro Kato and Minoru Higeta also struggled to the summit. Thus, after one reconnaissance and three failures, the Japanese added an eight-thousander to their climbing laurels.

Leaving Katmandu in Nepal early in March, it took 18 days for the expedition members to march to the foot of Manaslu. The photographs depict the route into the mountains as well as the ascent.

Although the text is in Japanese, a descriptive list of the photographs is given in English. Remember that in reading a Japanese book, you start at the right and work to the left.

FREDA B. WALBRECHT

Visit to the Sherpas, by Jennifer Bourdillon. London: Collins, 1956. 256 pages; ill. Price 16s.

The author is the wife of Tom Bourdillon, the Everest climber. While he was on one of the British reconnaissance expeditions, Mrs. Bourdillon spent the time visiting the Sherpas, that cheerful and energetic race who live in the foothills of the Himalayas and who have been so indispensable to the success of all climbing expeditions.

Her account of her life with them is a fascinating one. She was the first white woman ever to live entirely alone among them, and though

in many ways she found them to be a primitive people, they were so friendly and hospitable, so interested in her and in helping her, that it was a most rewarding experience. Their country, of course, is scenically one of the most spectacular in the world, and their villages are almost all at elevations over 10,000 feet. Their lives are full of hardships and are governed by the climate and the seasons, by the stony and barren hillsides from which it is so difficult to gain a living—in spite of which they are among the happiest people in the world. Mrs. Bourdillon writes of all this in the most interesting and refreshing way. She describes their daily lives, their religion and festivals, their curiosity about her, and their loyalty to whomever they are serving. She lived as one of them, sharing their meager food, sleeping on the floors of their huts with the entire family, and frequently the goats and pigs too! She traveled from village to village with the help of Sherpa porters and so came to have a very thorough knowledge and appreciation of Sola Khumbu and its remarkable people, so simple and hardworking, so cheerful and gay. A very worthwhile book.

HELEN LECONTE

I'll Climb Everest Alone, by Dennis Roberts. London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1957. 158 pages; ill.; maps. Price 15s.

This is the story of Captain Maurice Wilson, M.C., who undertook to climb Mount Everest alone on the basis of faith and fasting, and who ultimately perished at the foot of the North Col of the mountain at 21,500 feet, in May 1934. The point of view of the author is shown in the foreword, in which he says: "Call it madness, call it anything you like, but is there not an element of grandeur in the thought of this young man actuated perhaps by a flame of idealism, a desire to express something, to expand consciousness, to escape from fleshly shackles, to rise above all earthly considerations, setting out alone to scale the world's highest mountain, which four elaborate expeditions of experienced mountaineers had already failed to climb?" (p. 12)

Wilson's point of view is expressed in one of the last entries in his diary: "Weren't we told that faith would move mountains? If I have faith enough I *know* that I can climb Mount Everest." (p. 125)

In a sense, Wilson demonstrated the power of faith in that, without previous flying experience, he learned to fly, and flew a Moth Biplane solo from London to North Italy, no mean achievement in 1933. He then crossed Sikkim disguised as a Lama, went through Tibet, and ultimately attained a height of 21,500 feet on the East Rongbuk Glacier.

The author had access to Wilson's diaries and letters, and the book is very factual. Wilson was one of those who was so affected by the horrors of the First World War that he never got back into the ordinary stream of life. He finally reached the point where he believed that if a man fasts—and fasts properly—he at last reaches a stage when his physical body and his soul are one, and he lies close to death but completely drained of all bodily and spiritual ill. On this basis he believed that he could conquer Everest alone.

OSCAR R. HOUSTON

Un Uomo va Sui Monti, by Giorgio Brunner. Bologna: Edizione Alfa, 1957. 499 pages; ill.; drawings. Price 1500 lire.

This is a long and unusual book about mountains by a man who cares for them passionately. Giorgio Brunner is an engineer from Trieste; he is a husband and the father of two children, but after reading this book one is left with the impression that he is a lover of mountains first and foremost. He says himself that all his life has been lived actually and figuratively against a background of peaks.

If you want technical talk about climbing techniques, racy descriptions of expeditions, gossip about mountaineers, this book is not for you. If your approach to the high hills is a mystical one, if you have been guilty of solitary climbing, if you are a lover of mountain scenery in all its moods and aspects, you will feel sympathy for this lonely enthusiast. (However, this is rather a book to dip into, not to read straight through!)

Brunner started his climbing career as a small boy when he accomplished startling ascents and traverses on a large pile of old carpets in the attic. As he grew older, his passion found no encouragement from his family, and none of his friends cared for climbing, so he went off alone to his beloved Julian Alps, walking thirty and forty miles a day, taking incredible risks in his ignorance, learning everything the hard way—a great gangling boy who was set to be a mountaineer. He survived it all; he began to make mountain friends here and there: the guide Bernhard Biner in Zermatt, the celebrated rock climber Emilio Comici. He went off on organized expeditions, but still from time to time he would run away from the world up a solitary peak. Comici recognized his ability and shared his enthusiasm, and the two men became responsible for a splendid list of new winter and summer ascents in the Julian Alps and the Dolomites.

The first part of this book is the history of the making of a mountaineer, illustrated by Brunner's diaries, until the moment when he meets his

wife, a good climber in her own right. (His courtship of Massimina appears to be the only time in his life when he was content to amble up little hills!) The second part of the story tells of trips to the Andes, the Pyrenees, the Mont Blanc district, the Bernese Oberland, and Zermatt. Always Brunner returns happily to the Julian Alps, to Triglav and Montasch and Bela Pec, and he knows and loves every part of their wild and stern beauty.

In the mechanical and over-practical world of today, this book is refreshing. "My supreme happiness is on the solitary summit of a high mountain," says Giorgio Brunner at the end of his book. He takes us there with him, and we are the richer for it.

URSULA CORNING

Amadou Alpiniste, by Alexis Peiry. Paris: Désclée de Brouwer. 36 pages; 16 photographs by Suzi Pilet. Price \$1.72.

This charming book for children tells the story of little Amadou, whose greatest friend, a seasoned rock climber, is killed by lightning during an ascent of the Roche Percée in the little-known rocky range of the Castlosen in Switzerland. Amadou makes a vow to commemorate his friend by putting a cross with an inscription on the spot where his friend died. His climbing apprenticeship, his hair-raising adventures on the mountain, admirably illustrated by Suzi Pilet, the simplicity and the poetic atmosphere of this little idyll, should win many young friends for the mountains. There is much sound advice for incipient climbers, and the various routes on the mountain are excellently explained. This is a most refreshing little book.

URSULA CORNING

A Selection of some 900 British and Irish Mountain Tops. Compiled and arranged by William McKnight Docharty. Edinburgh: Darien Press Ltd., 1954. 124 pages: frontispiece, 9 panoramic photographs, mountain lists, explanatory texts. (Privately printed.)

William McKnight Docharty has achieved in his book something which many of us who know a little, and love what we know, of British hills, hoped that one day might be done. He has listed the hills of from 2500 to 3000 feet above sea level, in Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and England. (The countries are in order of their mountaineering importance, whether one measures by height or numbers.)

Sir Hugh Munro started, late last century, when he tabulated the 3000-foot-or-over peaks in Scotland, something that Docharty has now continued. It is still a feat, which few have achieved, to climb all the

276 "Munros" in Scotland. To climb all the British "Docharties," which Docharty's listed 2500-footers may well come to be termed, would be a far greater feat, though an attractive one to undertake.

Let no one despise the British mountains because they are "small" from a height above sea level point of view. It is unlikely that any mountaineer would, because every range has something special of its own, and mountain comparisons are generally inadequate. British mountaineering, however, derives much of its interest from the combination of a temperate climate with the northerly latitudes in which Britain lies.

The Gulf Stream may prevent Britain from being an icebound land like Greenland, but, when one climbs up 2000 feet or more in Britain, one moves right into a sub-arctic region. Take a look at the equivalent latitude in North America or Siberia, to see why this is true. In summer one can enjoy wonderful dry and warm rock-climbing, but in a flash the weather can change, and at 2000 feet snow can fall at any time of year. In winter and spring especially, real mountaineering alertness is essential on any British hill above that elevation. In these seasons a seemingly mild day can quickly change to the white hell of an arctic blizzard.

Docharty is a true mountaineer and mountain lover. If Fate has led him through a miraculous escape from being a complete cripple to accept limits to his mountaineering capacities, not only do his limitations exceed the physical aspirations of many men of his age, but they have led him to an appreciation, examination, and painstaking tabulation of interesting hills in the British Isles which might otherwise have missed the notice of many. He has thereby made a great contribution to mountaineering.

His book is not only a stimulus to further exploration of British mountains, it is a guide that any mountaineer from any country who finds himself in Britain, would highly value. Thousands of people may in consequence enjoy healthful pleasure they might otherwise have missed. It is to be hoped that many, Americans especially, may with the aid of Docharty's lists, find and learn to love the Britain that lies above 2000 feet.

MALCOLM DOUGLAS-HAMILTON

L'Homme et Le Mont Blanc, by Etienne Giudetti. Paris: Hachette, 1957.

197 pages; panorama. Price 750 fr.

In this account of Chamonix, its valley and Mont Blanc, the text is largely given over to the story of the mountain through the time of Saussure's ascent. Preliminary sections deal with visits to the valley as early as the

15th and 16th centuries, and it is pointed out that the supremacy of Mont Blanc was unrecognized because of the great heights attributed to peaks along such passes as the Mont Cenis and St. Gotthard, on which great rivers rose. One is struck by the amazingly accurate figure of 4808 m. which Saussure obtained by barometric measurement on the summit of Mont Blanc in 1787. It is also pointed out that, almost to the time of Whymper, the Mont Blanc massif had individual names for only a few peaks. Now there are more than 400 named points above 3000 m.

Subsequent climbing is compressed in a final 20-page chapter. There are three appended tables on climbing, in the first of which (to 1871) it is indicated that English climbers accounted for more than 50 percent of ascents, while our countrymen occupy third place, following France.

The errors and shortcomings of this book, which cannot compare in scope with Payot's *Au Royaume du Mont Blanc*, and is insecurely bound, are the subject of a critical review by L. Seylaz in *Die Alpen*, October 1957.

J. MONROE THORINGTON

Alpinisme Sovietique, by A. Tcherepov. Translated from the Russian into French by Paul Sulfourt. Paris: Amiot-Dumont, 1957.

This book's twofold uniqueness atones for its colorless style. Not only does it illustrate Soviet mountaineering philosophy, but the setting chosen for this portrayal is to western mountaineers one of the least known on earth. This is the Tian Shan, in the heart of Asia. The center of the range, the Khan Tengri massif, was in 1937 and 1938 the object of two strongly backed expeditions led by Professor A. A. Letavet, and the account of these makes up the core of the book.

The first, in 1937, made three major first ascents and at the same time discovered a very high and previously unknown peak which became the object of the 1938 expedition. The latter made what was thought to be an ascent of this new peak, until a wartime aerial survey proved that an adjacent and higher point on the ridge was not only the true summit (appropriately named Victory Peak in 1945), but also the second highest point (7439 meters) in the Soviet Union. Such was the unexplored nature of the Tian Shan until recent years.

The climbs appear to have been of a high order and well executed, under conditions made difficult by the combination of Himalayan altitudes and proximity to the cold of Siberia. Temperatures of -30° F., glaciers extending into the valleys far below the altitude of a Himalayan snow-line, and the necessity of attacking the highest peak from the north side, all add credit to the climbers' successes.

While the story of these successes reflects Russian qualities of courage and determination—and at times philosophical reflection—the Communist influence is always evident. Soviet mountaineering is no end in itself: throughout, the author justifies the climbing efforts as primarily for the sake of science. Mass calisthenics are portrayed against a backdrop of peaks, and Stalin's portrait is deposited in a summit cairn. A newly climbed mountain is named "Peak of the Twentieth Anniversary of Soviet Communist Youth." Little mention is made of human doubts or problems. In no case does the author admit a dilemma or indulge in that candid introspection necessary for its communication to the reader. There is self-criticisms of a sort—"Yes, we made a mistake. We'll have to correct it"—but in this case an apology for the ascent of a major peak in weather so bad that scientific findings were unobtainable, leading the author to complain, "Il n'en reste plus que l'aspect sportif"! Nevertheless, a few episodes are encouraging reminders that even in a Communist country mountaineering can retain some of the aspects which to westerners differentiate a sport from a campaign. A self-denying rescue of an injured companion, occasional references to non-material benefits of the climbs, camaraderie, and even humor, add spice to an otherwise unexciting fare.

ROBERT H. T. DODSON

Montagne Retrouvée, by Gilbert Toulouse. Paris: Arthaud, 1957. 212 pages.

"Alpinism had a double origin" this author points out. Most of the members of our club he would place in his first category: city folks bitten by the sporting bug, some with a goal little higher than that of escaping the boredom of their dull world. He obviously prefers his second breed (typified by Carrel, Croz, Maquignaz, and Rey): the lone native of the Alpine valley, carrying on a "dialogue with Nature" as he joins in that "divine game" of assaulting the high peaks. This book is devoted to describing the environment of such a mountain native, his villages and their legends and superstitions, his background of cow-herd or hardy smuggler. One fairly smells the stale cheese and manure.

While the reader will find no feats of mountaineering on these pages, he can gain an increased appreciation for the life to be observed outside of his Alpine resort hotel or on the walk to his climbing cabin.

ROGER S. WHITNEY

Vom Berge Verschlungen in Bücher bewahrt, by Helmut Presser. Bern: Schweizerischen Gutenberg Museums, 1957. 27 pages; ills. Price Sw. fr. 4.50.

On August 25 (old style), 1618, the village of Plurs, near Chiavenna in the Bregaglia valley, was destroyed by a landslide from Monte Conto, with loss of more than 2000 lives, only a few houses being left standing. The Thirty Years War had just begun, and obscured the lesser catastrophe. The present small volume gives the historical and pictorial facts, which the author likens to a 17th century Pompeii, an incorrect analogy, since no volcanic activity was involved. Other related incidents in Alpine areas are better known: the landslide of Mont Granier (1248) in Dauphiny, recorded in the *Nürnberg Chronicle*, and the fall of the Rossberg in 1806, which covered the Swiss village of Goldau. Plurs had become wealthy from the silk industry and from the sale of a soft stone, quarried for manufacture of pots, which alone brought the inhabitants an annual income of 60,000 ducats. Their mountain was so cut into during 1600 years that, in a sense, the villagers had dug their own graves. The gardens and palaces of rich Milanese now lie in forgotten ruins below ten meters of debris, surmounted by groves of chestnut trees.

The book contains facsimile documents and copies of old engravings, as well as a bibliography.

J. MONROE THORINGTON

Alpstein, by Walter Zuberbühler. Teufen (Appenzell): Arthur Nigli Ltd., 1956. 104 pages; 74 photographs by Herbert Maeder, end-paper map. Price Sw. fr. 18.80.

The canton of Appenzell, including the district around the Alpstein, forms the characteristic countryside of N. E. Switzerland. A study of its people forms the introduction to this attractive picture book, the text being in German, with English translation. The photography is exceptionally fine.

J. M. T.

Mit Glücklichen Augen, by Walter Pause. (Third edition) München: Bruckmann, 1957. 151 pages; ill. in color. Price 8.50 DM.

These "Notes of a romantic mountaineer" have made many friends since their first edition appeared in 1948. Pause takes us on easy hikes and difficult climbs, on foot and on skis, through the Bavarian and Austrian mountains near his home town of Munich. He has a delightful sense of humor; the chapters dealing with his early mountain experiences as a boy are most amusing. The color illustrations represent reproductions of paintings by famous painters of mountain scenery, each one supplied with a special comment by the author. For those who would like to follow

Pause's steps there is a brief description of his trips in guide form at the end of the book.

HORST VON HENNIG

To Kiss High Heaven: Nanda Devi, by J. J. Languepin. Translated from the French by Mervyn Savill. London: William Kimber, 1956. 199 pages; 9 ills.

This is an unusual mountaineering book for several reasons: it is emotional as only the French seem able to write; there is little description of actual technical climbing which dulls so many climbing books—only 76 of the 198 pages are devoted to the actual ascent. The people, the country and the mountains are sensitively, often poetically described, and the dialogue is well done, giving an air of vitality to the book.

Traverses of peaks and arêtes are often grander than summit climbs. The French determined in 1951 to climb 25,645-foot Nanda Devi (first climbed in 1936), cross the mile-long ridge, and descend over East Nanda Devi (24,390 feet). This is a heroic plan more because of altitude, uncertainty of Himalayan weather, and length of ridge than because of technical problems. Duplat, expedition leader, was so obsessed by the grandeur of the plan that some of his party believed he would rather die in the attempt than fail. The attempt took place in June 1951 and Duplat and Vignes were last seen close to the summit of Nanda Devi. No trace of them was found, the presumption being that they perished from exhaustion on the long climb or fell from the ridge. The expedition was well conceived, congenial, and well run. Far too little time, however, was spent acclimatizing (Duplat spent only *five* days from Base Camp to accident, and the others only ten). Too little attention was paid to the experiences of their predecessors, and the porter caravan was unnecessarily large and complex. Despite these minor shortcomings, it was a good expedition, unusual because it ended amicably.

The book has been translated clumsily, and the original French idiom is often obscure. There are many avoidable mis-spellings and a good many mis-statements of fact which could easily have been avoided by a little research. A good map and technical appendix would have added greatly to the book's value to climbers. It is, nevertheless, a very readable book, lively, sensitive, vivid, and refreshingly different from most mountaineering records.

CHARLES S. HOUSTON

The West Face, by Guido Magnone; with a preface by Maurice Herzog.

Translated by J. F. Burke. London: Museum Press, 1955. 166 pages; 15 photographs, 3 diagrams. Price 15s.

Guido Magnone and his companions have once again illustrated that man has still an unquenchable desire to explore and conquer the unknown. By using special techniques (whether one thinks they are ethical or not), the most difficult, and at times frightening, climbing was accomplished. I do not think the author has to go as far as he does in attempting to justify his motives for climbing. Men climb for different reasons and let's let it go at that. Needless to say, the organization and determination of the group that climbed the West Face of the Dru was of the highest order. A very readable book.

JULES M. EICHORN

Mischief In Patagonia, by H. W. Tilman. Cambridge University Press, 1957. 185 pages; 16 pages of photographs; 2 maps. Price \$3.75.

In *Mischief In Patagonia*, Mr. Tilman has sandwiched his account of crossing the Patagonian Ice Cap, in December 1955 and January 1956, from Peel Inlet to Lake Argentino and back between those of his voyages in the English pilot cutter, *Mischief*, from England through the Straits of Magellan to Peel Inlet and the return trip completing the circumnavigation of South America, thence back to England. The account of the Ice Cap crossing appears in brief but pertinent part in *AAJ* 1957.

Mr. Tilman, Major E. H. Marriott an experienced English climber, and Mr. Jorge Quinteros a Chilean climber, made up the ice cap party, leaving three others to act as ship keepers—no mean task as events proved—while the climbing party was on its trip. The climbers ascended the Calvo Glacier snout from a small beach on the northerly side of Calvo Fjord, thence up the glacier to Cervantes Ridge and down East Bismarck Glacier to the westerly side of Lake Argentino. Contrary to expectation, the party had a fair share of good weather, and despite Mr. Quinteros' frost-bitten feet, made the sixty-odd mile trip in the scheduled six weeks. While the ice cap crossing takes a mere thirty pages, it is clear that Mr. Tilman's new-found love of the sea has not dampened his ardor for first class mountaineering exploration.

The account of the voyages out from England and return suggest the author is a venturesome and resourceful, if not skillful, yachtman, whose spirit is much in the tradition of Lord Dufferin (*Letters From High Latitudes*), and perhaps more, of Harry Pidgeon (*Around the World Single Handed*), who also took to the sea in his middle years.

Mr. Tilman's lucid and amusing style of writing is refreshing in an age when the fashion in accounts tends to be purely factual. Frequent authoritative references to preceding voyages and to the historical backgrounds of many sailor's phrases which are commonly and indiscriminately used makes the book pleasant fare for the seagoing bibliophile. It would be rash to say that Mr. Tilman has produced his best book in *Mischief in Patagonia*, but it would seem reasonable to say that the adventure was worthy of the performer and that its chronicler has lost none of his cunning in its telling.

It is interesting that a climber in what now may seem to some to be the older tradition should add a new trick to his bag. Perhaps part of the answer is to be found in Mr. Tilman's statement that "the mountaineer usually accepts the challenge on his own terms, whereas once at sea the sailor has no say in the matter and in consequence may suffer more often the salutary and humbling emotion of fear."

It is exhilarating to read of an adventure such as this in which a relish for experiencing strong human emotion is more important than precisely measuring the degree of difference between a meticulously made plan and its consummation.

JOHN H. ROSS

A Dictionary of Mountaineering, by R. G. Collomb. Glasgow and London:

Blackie & Son Ltd., 1957. 175 pages; 52 sketches. Price 12s 6d.

This is an interesting attempt at a dictionary of mountaineering terms. It is, however, by no means complete or authoritative. French and German terms are given, but not exhaustively, yet Italian, Spanish, and other languages are largely ignored. It is written from the standpoint of the English reader of current English climbing literature, with considerable attention to foreign importations such as "abseil," which no American or English writer of the older school would be guilty of using, except perhaps *in extremis* as a synonym. There appears to be a marked partiality towards words of foreign origins, most of which would rarely, if ever, be found in English literature.

There is no attempt at giving pronunciation; a lack very apparent in words of Gaelic or Cymric origin. There are various errors, principally omissions of certain meanings of words or alternate usages, but the insertion of C.A.C. as the initials of the Alpine Club of Canada will immediately strike any American or Canadian reader. There is a tendency to define climbing terms by examples taken from British rock climbs of the places where such technique is customarily used. This practice appears to this reviewer as completely defeating the object of the book, for anyone

unfamiliar with the term would hardly be expected to be familiar with the climb used as an example. In fact it would seem that there is too much of an attempt to include a climbing manual in the definition of terms, although the author specifically disclaims such an objective.

The author is unfamiliar with American usage, but his definitions of British usage, particularly that of the younger rock climber, will be helpful to the American reader. The book cannot be compared to Underhill's or Schmidkunz' work, but is an interesting addition.

K. A. HENDERSON

A Century of Mountaineering, 1857-1957, by Arnold Lunn. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1957. 263 pages; 8 plates in color; 16 plates from photographs. Price 25 s.

This handsome volume, uniform in size and style with "The Mountain World" series, was sent to all members of the Alpine Club as a "Centenary Tribute" to the Alpine Club from the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research. In a preface, Othmar Gunther, of the Foundation, says: "In our attempt to achieve a real understanding of mountaineering epochs and trends we should be guided by two prominent beacons: mountain and man." In the search for a writer, he continues, the Foundation decided upon one "who could combine the factual approach of the historian and the personal interpretation of the essayist." The choice of Arnold Lunn was a happy one, for he is an accomplished writer and his experience with mountains and the men who seek them has been life-long. As a youth he rejoiced in mountains, from the precincts of Oxford he led his fellow-students to them, and in maturity he has kept abreast of all that goes on in Britain and the Alps. Moreover, it has been his privilege to know many of the pioneers about whom he writes. We should expect to find, therefore, a book full of life and ideas rather than a mere chronology; and such indeed is the case. Throughout the book he seems to say: "I am writing from my own point of view, and when I have finished someone else may go on and tell the story in another way." If this is not a history, it is full of the material out of which histories may be written. The book is built around people and the people come to life.

As soon as we get into the body of the book we begin to meet people. First come the British pioneers: Forbes, Albert Smith, Tyndall, Alfred Wills, Kennedy, the Mathews clan, and John Ball—men of the Golden Age; then, Whymper, Leslie Stephen, Mummery, and Coolidge, of the Silver Age; later, "Four Great Mountain Explorers"—Freshfield, the Duke of the Abruzzi, Vittorio Sella, and Martin Conway. There is a chapter on

"The Guides of the Golden Age." Geoffrey Winthrop Young, Schuster, Amery, and others come later. There are many anecdotes, including Lunn's own experiences with the Alpine Club. Foreign climbers are introduced, rather more than in most British books; even a few ladies are admitted to the book, if not to the A.C. There is a chapter on "Ski and Winter Mountaineering"—here the author speaks with more than ordinary authority, for he has been president of the Ski Club of Great Britain and editor of the *British Ski Year Book*. In "The Iron Age" there is a lively discussion of the ethics of artificial aid, in which Sir Arnold shows himself to be rather more tolerant of the "moderns" than are some of his contemporaries.

It is hardly to be expected of one man that he should be able to cover the whole world of mountaineering with equal authority. It would have been better perhaps if the author had frankly conceded this. It would have been better, for instance, to say nothing rather than treat the Canadian Rockies, the Andes, and New Zealand in a total of three pages. It would certainly have been better if he had left out the page and a half on "The North American Ranges" (meaning Alaska), for in them is found not only error of omission (How can one speak of Mount McKinley and not mention Herschel Parker and Belmore Browne?), but there is an unsightly blemish. The latter is not entirely the author's contribution, although he should have checked a little before placing sole reliance on Ullman's *The Age of Mountaineering*. The chapter that Lunn calls "excellent" is very unreliable, and in the account of the "Sourdough" climb of 1910 positively slanderous. A reading of reviews in the *Alpine Journal* (Vol. 53, May 1942, pp. 271-3; and Vol. 61, November 1956, pp. 426-8) would have given warning. However, let us not end on this note, for there is so much that is good in this unique "tribute" from one mountaineering organization to another that small defects should not distract attention from its merits.

FRANCIS P. FARQUHAR