

Other Books Reviewed

Charles Kemp

Doctor on Everest. Of books on Everest there will be no end but Peter Steele's is certainly one worth adding to the list. The opening sentences are laconic enough—'Mount Everest Base Camp is a horrible place, utter desolation'. If this brevity is not maintained throughout the book clarity and interest are.

Each of the 16 chapters is headed by a charming little line drawing by Phoebe Bullock. The 32 photos, several of which are by John Cleare, are all interesting and pleasantly varied, depicting people, medical treatments, shrines, camps, climbing, and the mountain scene. The index is more than adequate.

As a layman it is not possible for me to do adequate justice to the medical aspects of Dr Steele's book. Of course a lot of it deals with this essential part of the Expeditions activities, and even in my layman's capacity it is possible to grasp the essentials and enjoy reading about them. In fact all the medical side is set out at appropriate places in the book in a most interesting way and never makes dry reading.

Dr Steele has very ably combined an account of his personal feelings and impressions during this unlucky 1971 International Expedition and the preparations for it, by himself and his colleagues, in the prevention and treatment of the various ailments which affected the members from time to time.

The human aspect as distinct from the medical is treated with much generosity. Almost without exception Peter Steele gives tribute to his partners and friends in this adventure. The responsibilities of the doctor on an adventure of this kind are quite dreadful. Not least is the total ability to live with others in hard conditions and to treat them accordingly. In Steele's book this comes through.

If the book opens laconically it closes equally so—in terms fully expressive of the final frustration of the leading climbers.

Three books by Mario Fantin, unfortunately all in Italian, have been received this year. *Sherpa Himalaya Nepal* is basically built around 118 colour photographs. Apart from the pictures, there is a very great deal of information about the territory, its people, their customs and their religion. There are 2 excellent maps and a profile which brilliantly describes the route from Kathmandu through Namche Bazar to the American Base Camp of 1963. There are glossaries of Sherpa/Italian, Nepalese/Italian and also English/Italian. However, the heart of the book lies in the superb photography and the lovingly drawn maps. The pictures begin around Kathmandu and move through the country, depicting the landscape, the buildings, the temples, the monasteries, the customs, the mountains and, perhaps above all, the people. The pictures

are fully and well captioned in English. All the plates are interesting, some are superb. Altogether a beautiful book.

The second book, *Tuareg Tassili Sahara*, is equally beautiful, and has French captions to the photographs, in addition to Italian. It must cover very nearly all the known ground; climbing histories of the Hoggar, Tassili, Akakus, Aïr, Tibesti and other ranges. Terrain, access, people and their customs, mountains and prehistoric art illustrated by very exciting photographs are enough to make this book an adventure in reading, whether or not Italian is within the reader's grasp.

The third book, *Uomini e Montagna del Sahara*, is of equal standard.

Another Italian book is *La Grande Civetta* by Alfonso Bernardi. This contains numerous individual contributions edited by Bernardi and is largely a history of recent climbing in the Civetta area of the Dolomites. It commences with a brief description of the geology of the region and continues with an account of climbing there from the first years of this century up until the Second World War. Most of the book is concerned with the development of the more extreme routes since the war, and contains several contributions from climbers who have been personally responsible for some of these ascents. The book is nicely produced, and contains many excellent photographs and line drawings of the region, which show the major peaks and important routes.

The Mount Cook Alpine region is described in another sumptuous book entitled *A Land Apart*, by George Harris and Graeme Hasler. It gives largely photographic coverage of all aspects of the region, from its early geological history to the characters who developed the sport of mountaineering in the New Zealand ranges. It goes right on to 1971 and beyond and in its epilogue acknowledges that there are still new routes being made, and to be made. The text is mercifully confined to, in general, a description of each photo. These captions are conveniently placed at the end of each section so the photos can be enjoyed in their own right. At the end of the book is an excellent route guide to Cook, Tasman, Dampier and other peaks, glaciers and passes and a mountain synopsis which could well serve as a model for others. However, the photos really make the book with the captions, and it would be a worthwhile addition to a mountain library.

A reprint of Whymper's *Travels amongst the Great Andes of the Equator* has appeared, with his original engravings. Eric Shipton's editorship and introduction add to the value and interest of this book. Whymper's style is still unique; for example: 'a muddy ditch is not the worst of beds—one soon becomes attached to it'.

Dee Molenaar and the Mountaineers of Seattle are to be congratulated on their excellently produced book, *The Challenge of Rainier*. It is difficult to imagine how anybody could produce a more complete and readable description of the ancient and modern history of a particular mountain. It is clear from the beginning that Dee Molenaar loves his National Park and its own mountain.

This shines through his writing and also in the very attractive drawings which enliven the pages. A noteworthy addition to any catalogue of mountain literature.

Nearer to home is Alan Hankinson's *The First Tigers*. This covers the early history of rock climbing in the Lake District. It begins with the 'Golden Age' and covers the span from 1882 to 1903, and ends with the exploits of some of the 'Tigers' of their day, and their subsequent achievements. It has obviously been carefully researched as to the people concerned, and is evocative both of them and of the countryside. It is eminently readable. Also dealing with this area is *The Climber and Fellwalker in Lakeland*, by Frank Monkhouse and Joe Williams. This book is the result of 4 years' planning and 40 years' experience. After brief notes on the geology and history of the area and another on the requirements for walking and climbing in Lakeland, it is largely devoted to descriptions of the good walks and climbs to be enjoyed. Lakeland is divided into seven natural areas, described in detail, 110 climbing crags are listed and the authors have selected 100 good climbs in ascending order of difficulty. For anybody going to Lakeland and not already familiar with it, this very readable book would be an excellent companion.

Kevin FitzGerald's *The Chilterns* is a book in the Batsford tradition, and if the area described is not mountain country it is interesting to note that there are nearly 3000 miles of footpaths in the Chilterns where you can keep yourself fit for the Alps. Mr FitzGerald's book contains a great deal of fascinating information about hill countryside so very close to London.

Two books which have the conservation of the countryside very much at heart are *Eryri—The Mountains of Longing* (by A. Lovins and P. Evans) and *Return to the Alps* (by M. Knight and G. Klammet). The former is another very beautiful book which describes an area of Snowdonia. The price is high but for those who appreciate the country described and lovingly depicted it may not be money ill-spent. Conservation has become an important social issue and books like this make their own contribution to the preservation of our heritage. The latter is also highly priced, but like its companion contains some remarkable examples of colour photography, very well reproduced. The text consists of an anthology of mountain literature.

An account of the recent activities of the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research appears in *Schweizerische Stiftung für Alpine Forschungen 1939 bis 1970*, by K. Weber and E. Feuz. It contains a brief outline of the aims and organisation of the Foundation, obituaries of prominent members who died during the above period, accounts of expeditions sponsored by the Foundation, notes on publications and descriptions of scientific studies undertaken. It concludes with a bibliography of scientific papers produced since 1939. The volume is perhaps of most interest to those directly concerned with the Foundation.

In conclusion, the Library Association County Libraries' Group, Newtown, Montgomeryshire, has produced its second edition of its *Reader's Guide to Books on Mountaineering* which, if not quite complete, lists enough good books to last most people quite a long time.