

Other Books Reviewed

Edward Pyatt and Tom Connor

The Great Days Walter Bonatti (Gollancz, 1974, 189 pp, illustrations, £3.80)

The author, we are told, is giving up serious mountaineering for travel and photography in remote parts of the earth. He will be missed, though he will surely illumine his new field of endeavour. His outlook towards mountaineering reveals a curious mixture of the traditional and the modern, for he denies being competitive while in fact openly exhibiting all the classic symptoms. The book is the usual catalogue of N faces often climbed in atrocious conditions, stories of deeds outside the range of more than a handful of climbers, and there is little about mountains as the ordinary man finds them. The chapter dealing with a visit to central Siberia is as interesting as any in the book and this augurs well for the author's future in the wider field. For the rest, the main interest for the mountaineering reader is one of curiosity, to try to understand what makes the great man 'tick'. But is this enough? After one or two books does the mountaineer really care any more? The readership for these soul searchings and for tales of such desperate deeds must come in the end mainly from the non-mountaineering public and, as this betokens a successful publishing proposition, the flood of such works is unlikely to abate.

My Life as a Mountaineer A. Heckmair (Gollancz, 1975, 216 pp, illustrations, £4.40)

This is the third biography of an outstanding continental climber to appear within a year. Notices of the others, by Mazeaud and Bonatti, appear elsewhere in this journal. Again we have simple, straightforward and competently translated accounts of highly difficult Alpine climbs, which are far beyond the powers of most of us, among them the first ascent of the N face of the Eiger, Heckmair has also made several journeys and climbs in other continents, all of which are paraded for our entertainment.

A few general questions come to mind. For whom are these books written—for climbers, non-climbers, or both? Do they stimulate emulation on the part of young aspirants? Or do they serve mainly to entertain the world in general which views the mountains from a motor car? For the feeling grows on one that they are all rather similar—a near standard text with different names filled into the spaces. Feelings for mountains, inspirations for mountaineering are intensely personal so that, with the exception of a few outstanding writers like Young or Irving, the daring deeds and searchings for motivation of others have but little to offer to the committed mountaineer.

This book is no better, nor is it worse, than others of its kind. Certainly buy it if you feel that the author's experiences may contribute towards yours; but will they?

The Seventh Grade Reinhold Messner (OUP), New York, 1974, 160 pp, \$8.50)

This short, fascinating and unfortunately very expensive book outlines the approach of one of the most distinguished contemporary climbers to some very extreme routes, mostly climbed solo. Apart from a brief final section on the ill-fated Nanga Parbat expedition which resulted in the death of his brother, Günther and an expedition to the Andes, all the climbs mentioned are in the Alps, principally the Dolomites. The ascents are not treated from a technical viewpoint. Rather, Messner is concerned with his reactions to the particular extreme difficulties involved, and in the sections which precede each narrative, with outlining the intense mental and physical preparations involved. These reveal the tremendous dedication which has enabled him to surpass the absolute implied by the sixth grade and thereby to extend the limit of what was previously believed to be possible. They range from harsh regimes of running uphill on the toes, lengthy practice finger traverses, hundreds of metres of continuous free practice climbing, to the less serious activity (de-

pending on one's taste) of consuming large quantities of garlic prior to Nanga Parbat, this being reputed to improve the elasticity of one's vascular walls.

The book is a brief but revealing description of the philosophy behind some outstanding mountaineering achievements. Messner's dislike of artificial climbing is made plain, and he attempts to justify the risks of solo climbing in the extreme situations described. Allowing for translation it appears to be written in a pleasing style which avoids the irritating trendy mannerisms which mar so much contemporary writing about mountaineering.

In some cases, the picture captions and the tops of the pictures have been cut off in the printing process.

Climb to the Lost World Hamish MacInnes (Hodder & Stoughton, 1974, 224 pp, £3.40)
The 'Lost World' is Roraima, the plateau which lies in the S American rain forest at the junction of the boundaries of Guyana, Venezuela and Brazil, and was the inspiration for Conan Doyle's 'The Lost World'. The 1973 expedition to the 450 m Prow of Roraima, the N end of the plateau, has already been well publicised through the media of newspapers, television and public lectures. In addition to the 4 climbers—Anthoine, Brown, MacInnes and Whillans—the expedition's 15 members included a 3-man television crew. The book is a pungent and often coarse description of the progress of the expedition to the foot of the Prow, followed by the climb to the summit. A 'blood and guts' approach has been adopted, four-letter words and frequently revolting similes abounding, although one must add that under the conditions that prevailed their use would not have been entirely surprising. The terrain, vegetation, animal life and incessant rain posed special problems to the expedition, both in the approach and on the actual climb, which involved considerable technical difficulties. Whilst one could do without some of the more sordid details, the book is basically an interesting account of an unusual expedition.

Moments of Being—The Random Recollections of Raymond Greene (Heinemann, 1974, 180 pp, illustrations, £3.25)

This short autobiography of Raymond Greene—traveller, doctor and Himalayan mountaineer—is full of varied anecdote, yet it seems somewhat soulless and lacks any insight into motivation. At this late hour we have here yet another tale of some of the great expeditions of the 1930s. These were our boyhood heroes and these the tales we were brought up on, so that the book is powerfully nostalgic. Yet to anyone younger, and remote now from the deeds it describes, the treatment may well seem superficial when compared with the 'blood and thunder' and the soul searching of much of modern climbing literature. Nevertheless, read it for a glimpse, albeit brief, of the pre-War period; there will not be many more.

Chalkways of South and South-East England Edward C. Pyatt (David and Charles, 1974, 190 pp, illustrations, sketch plans, £3.95)

A general guide to walkers' routes on the chalk hill ridges of England, where the newly-created long-distance footpaths follow the lines of pre-historic trackways.

Vingt Ans de Cordeé R. Paragot and Lucien Berardini (Flammarion Paris, 1974, 226 pp, illustrations)

Two leading French climbers describe climbs together in all four corners of the world. An interesting feature is the use of marginal marks alongside each block of text indicating which of the authors is responsible.

Pérou 1973 (CAF Section Paris-Chamonix, 1974)

A short summary of a large scale expedition to the Andes. More than 200 members split into several groups to tackle various problems in mountaineering, high-level walking etc. Outstanding was a first ascent of the NE face of Huascaran Nord, but considerably more was done all over the place at every level of achievement and altitude.

A la découverte de la Sierra de Guara Pierre Minvielle (Pau, 1974, 136 pp, sketch maps, illustrations)

Describes numerous walkers' routes and the exploration of very striking river gorges in a little visited area of N Spain, 60 kms S of the Pyrenees. It sounds highly attractive to the seeker after wild and lonely country and would seem to be a worthwhile prospect for travellers and climbers who find more conventional districts too crowded for them.

Hommes et Montagnes du Kurdistan Turc—Sat Dag 1973

An interesting report (in French) by members of the Grenoble Université Montagne describing an expedition in 1973 to this fascinating part of Turkey. Several new routes are described; there are appendices on flora, fauna and geology and a bibliography.

Haute Randonnée Pyrénéenne G. Veron (CAF, 1974)

The CNSGR route GR10 which runs from end to end of the Pyrenees, already well established, is a walker's route requiring no mountaineering skills. The CAF has now produced an alternative 'High-Level Route' more appropriate for experienced mountaineers and this is the subject of this book. The way is broken into day expeditions and there is a full set of strip maps in black and white.

Kirinyaga—A Mount Kenya Anthology J. Temple and A. Walker, Eds (MCK, 1974, 61 pp, 5/-)

A duplicated work carrying accounts of many of the pioneer routes on the mountain. Costs obviously excluded photographs, but a map would have been very helpful. Let us hope that a more formal edition with all these amenities will appear in due course.

Guide du Randonneur Several authors (CNSGR Paris, 1974, 116 pp, illustrations)

The extensive range of guide-books to the long-distance footpath network in France is listed here. In addition the book contains a wealth of general information for the walker on technique equipment, food, first aid, camping and so on, all very helpful when planning a long-distance trip.

Hommes Cimes et Dieux Samivel (Arthaud, 1973, 466 pp, illustrations)

A wide-ranging disquisition on the legends and mythology of mountains by one of the world's leading authorities. Unfortunately something more than mountaineers' schoolboy French is required for really deep appreciation. The Grey Man of Ben Man-Dhuy (sic) is there representing the UK alongside counterparts from all over the world.

Munro's Tables (and other tables of lesser heights) Ed J. C. Donaldson (Scottish Mountaineering Trust, 1974, 125 pp, illustrations, sketch maps, £3.80)

This detailed work of reference has been revised and enlarged a number of times since it first appeared in the SMCJ in 1891. This latest is the first metric edition and is a result of the recent metrication of the OS maps. The magic height is now 914 metres, the peaks presumably become 914ers. It is a meticulous work of scholarship, though the price seems a high one to pay for mere statistics however accurate.

The Eiger Sanction Trevanian (Heinemann, 1973, 229 pp, £2.10)

Mountaineering fiction presents us with some fascinating problems—here to speculate whether the author is a mountaineer or just an imaginative writer who has done a lot of homework. There are substantial passages of mountaineering on which to attempt a judgment—a long rock climb on an American pinnacle and an unsuccessful attack on the Eiger Nordwand. However, as the whole work is a 'send up' of the James Bond genre of violence, sex, espionage and miscellaneous erudition, the writer may well be trying to 'send up' mountaineering also. It is hard to say. While the characters and the situations are a mix-

ture of the improbable and the impossible, with the possible only peeping in occasionally, the whole is not badly done within these admittedly serious limitations.

Alp William Hjortsberg (Barrie & Jenkins, 1970, 157 pp, £1.25)

This work of fiction, the blackest of black comedies, has an Alpine setting and involves some mountaineering. The characters include the fashionable number of perverts; none is the least sympathetic, so that their large-scale destruction leaves us unmoved. The details of climbing technique are sound, but the first ascent of the N face of Juggernaut is pure fantasy. The author is a complete cynic, sneering at everyone; unfortunately his readers only discover this after they have paid for the privilege.

Mountaineering Journals Part 2

Robert Lawford and Edward Pyatt

1 Introduction

This second summary of world mountaineering journals (and of the present stocks of the AC Library) covers those items which are continuing and will be retained indefinitely, but are not at present being bound. The layout is identical with Part 1 (see AJ 79 277). The codes giving the status and the subject matter of the journals are used here again with identical meaning. The subject matter category was intended to cover mountaineering works only; in the present list there are some journals on allied topics, such as alpine plants, skiing, general geography and so on, and in these cases no code has been allotted.

The following additional code has been added to the table:

Library stock

P complete
Q few missing
R many missing

The Library staff are concentrating on the need for 'gap filling' which this second list reveals.

2 Journals continuing, retained, but not being bound at present

United Kingdom

Alpine Garden Society Bulletin	4	—	X1, W	1930	P
Eagle Ski Club Year Book	1	—	X1 & 8	1925	R
Ski Survey (formerly British Ski Year Book)	3	—	X1	1920	P

Austria

Alpenvereins Jahrbuch (DOAV)	1	A	X1, W	1865	Q
Gebirgsfreund (OAV)	6	B	X1	1873	R
Osterreichischer alpenvereins (OAV)	6	B	X1	1863	Q
Osterreichische Bergsteiger-Zeitung	12	C	X1	1922	R