7 Sept	Braithwaite and Estcourt establish Camp 3 and fix route to above Camp 4 on next days
11 Sept	Boardman, Boysen, Haston and MacInnes establish Camp 4 (7250 m)
16 Sept	Bonington and Richards establish Camp 5 (7825 m)
19 Sept	Ropes fixed to foot of Rock Band (8140 m) by Bonington, Richards and Scott
20 Sept	Braithwaite and Estcourt climb the Rock Band
22 Sept	Camp 6 (8320 m) established by Bonington, Haston, Scott, Thompson, Burke, Ang Phurba and Pertemba
23 Sept	Ropes fixed across 400 m of traverse
24 Sept	Haston and Scott reach summit 6pm and bivouac at 8750 m
26 Sept	Second summit bid by Boardman, Boysen, Burke and Pertemba. Boardman and Pertemba reach summit; Burke lost on the mountain
27 Sept	Bad weather; Camp 4 and Camp 1 evacuated. Camp 2 hit by avalanche blast
28 Sept	Those at Camp 5 and 6 descend to Camp 2
30 Sept	All survivors back at Base Camp

Mountain literature—then and now

Michael Ward

The purpose of mountaineering literature is threefold: first it is simply to report and record; secondly it seeks to describe the motives and emotions of the climber and lastly to distil that element of beauty which we find peculiar to mountain country and which may profoundly affect us.

While no one can argue that techniques have not changed in the last 100 years and radically in the last 20, men, I suspect, have not changed so very much. When it comes to the climber and so to his literature the maxim I would apply is: Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

In 1971 Gollancz published a posthumous collection of the essays and other writings of Tom Patey. Here is a passage from his description of an attempt on the Eigerwand with Don Whillans:

> 'Shortly after noon the next day we left Audrey behind at Alpiglen, and the two of us set off up the green meadows which girdle the foot of the Eiger-wand. Before leaving Don had disposed of his Last Will and Testament. "You've got the car key, lass, and you know where to find the house key. That's all you need to know. Ta, for now." Audrey smiled wanly. She had my profound sympathy . . . Don's preparations for the Eiger—meticulous in every other respect—had not included unnecessary physical exertion. While I dragged my weary muscles from Breuil to Zermatt via the Matterhorn, he wiled away the days at Chamonix sunbathing at the Plage until opening time. At the Bar Nationale he nightly sank five or six pints of 'heavy', smoked forty cigarettes, persuaded other layabouts to feed the juke box with their last francs and amassed a considerable reputation as an exponent of 'Baby Foot', the table football game which is the national sport of France. One day the heat had been sufficiently intense to cause a rush of blood to the head because he had walked four miles up to the Montenvers following the railway track, and had acquired such enormous blisters that

he had to make the return journey by train. He was nevertheless just as fit as he wanted to be or indeed needed to be.

First impressions of the Eigerwand belied its evil reputation. This was good climbing rock with excellent friction and lots of small incuts. We climbed unroped, making height rapidly. In fact I was just starting to enjoy myself, when I found the boot. . . . "Somebody's left a boot here", I shouted to Don. He pricked up his ears. "Look and see if there's a foot in it", he said.

I had picked it up: I put it down again hurriedly.

"Ha! Here's something else—a torn rucksack", he hissed.

"And here's his water-bottle—squashed flat".

I had lost my new found enthusiasm and decided to ignore future foreign bodies (I even ignored the pun).

"You might as well start getting used to them now," advised Whillans. "This is where they usually glance off, before they hit the bottom." He's a cheery character I thought to myself. To Don, a spade is just a spade—a simple trenching tool used by grave-diggers. At the top of the Pillar we donned our safety helmets. "One thing to remember on the Eiger", said Don, "never look up, or you may need a plastic surgeon." '

A century ago Leslie Stephen in 'The Playground of Europe' had this to say about mountaineering literature:

'There are two ways which have been appropriated to the descriptions of all sporting exploits. One is to indulge in fine writing about them, to burst out in sentences which swell to paragraphs, and in paragraphs which spread over the pages; to plunge into ecstasies about infinite abysses and overpowering splendours, to compare mountains to archangels lying down in eternal winding sheets of snow, and to convert them into allegories about man's highest destinies and aspirations. This is good when it is well done. Mr. Ruskin has covered the Matterhorn for example, with a whole web of poetical associations. . . . Yet most humble writers will feel that if they try to imitate Mr Ruskin's eloquence they will pay the penalty of becoming ridiculous. It is not everyone who can with impunity compare Alps to archangels.

Tall talk is luckily an object of suspicion to Englishmen, and consequently most writers, and especially those who frankly adopt the sporting view of the mountains, adopt the opposite scheme: they affect something like cynicism; they mix descriptions of scenery with allusions to fleas and bitter beer; they shrink with the prevailing dread of Englishmen from the danger of overstepping the limits of the sublime into its proverbial opposite; and they humbly try to amuse us because they cannot strike us with awe. This too, if I may say so, is good in its way and place . . . .A sense of humour is not incompatible with imaginative sensibility; and even Wordsworth might have been an equally powerful prophet of nature if he could sometimes have descended from his stilts. In short, a man may worship mountains, and yet have a quiet joke with them when he is wandering all day in their tremendous solitudes.'

Tom Patey was doing exactly what Leslie Stephen prescribed. He speaks of course with the voice of his time against the background of an almost over-

whelming commitment. Frivolity of speech may be a safe, moral antidote against mental and physical distress.

Leslie Stephen and Tom Patey had much in common—a love of mountains and a wry sense of humour plus a natural ability to communicate through the written word. However, Leslie Stephen wrote his book 'The Playground of Europe' against the background of intellectual enquiry that characterised the early Alpine writers. Many of these men were scholars and scientists and so disciplined by training and profession. They did not ascend north faces but they compiled guide-books, measured glacier movement and were forever boiling water to determine their altitude. Quite naturally, they felt it was important to impart their new found knowledge and enthusiasms to others.

Nowadays, the vast majority of mountaineers climb to enjoy themselves and not with a view to entertaining, let alone educating, others by their subsequent writings. It is standard practice to record new routes and first ascents but among the multitude of articles and books that have been written only a comparative few, wholly or in part, stand out as examples of both mountaineering and literary interest. Again it is not surprising that many of the earlier works stay in our memory for these have the freshness of discovery and the charm and fascination of things past.

As we all know, it is easier to record fact than to formulate a philosophy. Attempts on the latter are not always successful and, for example, Younghusband's spiritual forays have little appeal today. When it comes to analysing the analyst it may be a case of reductio ad absurdum.

Poets who are best qualified to deal with the emotions are few and variable in quality. The best mountain verse is not necessarily the best mountaineering verse. We cannot equate Geoffrey Winthrop Young with Shelley and Wordsworth but Geoffrey Winthrop Young had the advantage when it came to action. In his poem 'The Cragsman' he not only reveals the isolation of the rock climber dependent on his meagre holds and his own self-trust, but also the dilemma of the atheist who looks for nothing beyond this world and yet still needs to risk his life in order to fulfil himself.

Shelley's lines from 'Prometheus Unbound' are like some great orchestration, the avalanche builds up like a crescendo, but Noyce in his quiet verse about a snow-slide is more chilling when he surveys the silent, empty mountains around him and says 'I loathed them, trembling and sick, for you had gone.' This touches us all and we perfectly understand.

Another modern poet, Michael Roberts, found not only pleasure and relaxation in mountains but also a source of inspiration which he could carry over into his writing and his everyday life. In his long 'Elegy', the summit represents the limit of physical achievement and the liberation of intellectual force—it is implicit that the hard physical and mental effort must come first. Throughout mountain literature this theme recurs but in the end it remains a phenomenon that we can recognise but cannot precisely explain.

More than once the mountaineer and the explorer particularly have been likened to the philosopher and the research scientist. For explorer and scientist the gain is not so much material although this is very pleasant, but the primary satisfaction is intellectual and spiritual—the desire to know and understand, to make for the limit and beyond. Likewise in a purely physical sense this motive applies to the dedicated athlete.

It is, therefore, very relevant that Eric Shipton turned to Tennyson's 'Ulysses' to choose a title for his autobiography:

'Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravelled world, who's margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move'.

Claud Schuster in his autobiography discussed mountain mysticism and he too refers to the 'Odyssey' which he describes as a series of 'strange happenings beyond the penumbra of human intelligence' and he reminds us of the affinity between sea and mountain and their promise that 'anything may happen just around the corner'.

Literary surveys into the motives that compel people to leave routine existence to climb or sail, to explore or simply to survive in the most adverse circumstances have been written by Wilfrid Noyce. 'The Springs of Adventure' and 'They Survived' were both very interesting but neither went nearly far enough in analysis, mainly because Noyce was not equipped to do so. 'They Survived' was the more successful relying mainly on a straightforward story-telling technique. It would have needed a deep knowledge of the behavioural sciences and human physiology as well as a considerable literary skill to be able to do justice to those 2 themes in any full sense.

On balance it may be that many of the earlier works in mountain literature were better written than those of today. Inasmuch as it was from the ranks of the scholars that many mountaineers first came it is not surprising that they were better equipped than many of today's 'tigers' to write about their experiences. Had they been born later it is likely that these men would have had neither the time nor inclination to develop their techniques to meet the stringent demands of the hardest climbs. Instead of being at the forefront of the sport they might have found themselves on the sidelines but nonetheless able to apply their particular gifts, their learning and perception in the role of the informed observer. Inevitably, their essays would need to reflect the manners and mores of those they reported or they would have no integrity. Having made this acknowledgement to the past we may yet look around the bookshelves and find we are not without names to conjure with.

The plain and stilted prose of 'a Lad from Bruddersford' may not be a very easy or enlightening read but it has the great merit of authenticity. It can be a temptation for the professional writer to manipulate his material for effect and to strive unduly for answers. The light he throws becomes too brilliant, it dazzles but it fails to illuminate. We see the blurred rim of fancy rather than the hard, firm edge of fact.

In some measure it is like contrasting the accounts of space travel by Wells and Verne with the measured dialogue between Apollo crews and Space Control. The literature is more entertaining and often more exciting in its immediate impact, which was of course its intention. The drama that unfolds on our television screens should be stupefying to the imagination but is presented in so casual and commonplace a manner that we have to make an effort ourselves to appreciate properly the significance of what is being relayed into our drawing rooms.

So while it may be more aesthetically pleasing to wander through the mountains with Wordsworth or Belloc it is a great deal more awe-inspiring to

contemplate Bonington and his party edging their way up the S face of Annapurna.

In general, mountain literature is rich and varied within the bounds of a subject that tends to be esoteric. It is not easy to transpose great actions into good, let alone great literature—the repetitive nature of the Expedition Book demonstrates this very well and it may well be a declining genre for this reason. Looking to the future a more subtle and complex approach may be necessary to to give a fresh impetus to mountain literature which so far has not thrown up a Master of towering and universal appeal. Perhaps a future generation will provide us with a mountaineer who can combine the technical, literary and scientific skills to write as none before him. But that is something we must leave to time—'Time, which is the author of authors'.

Shining mountains, nameless valleys: Alaska and the Yukon

Terris Moore and Kenneth Andrasko

The world's first scientific expedition, sent out by Peter the Great—having already proved by coasting around the NE tip of Siberia that Asia must be separated from unseen America—is now, July, 1741, in the midst of its second sea voyage of exploration. In lower latitudes this time, the increasing log of sea miles from distant Petropavlovsk 6 weeks behind them, stirs Commander Vitus Bering and his 2 ship captains, Sven Waxell of the 'St. Peter' and Alexei Chirikov of the 'St Paul', to keen eagerness for a landfall of the completely unexplored N American coast, somewhere ahead.

Noon. 16 July. Cloudy and drizzling; but breaks permit a solar observation for latitude: 58° 14′ N, longitude uncertain. Then the clouds part, unrolling before Commander Bering and his ship's rapt company a magnificent panorama—tersely entered in the 'St Peter's' log: 'At 12:30 we sighted high snow-covered mountains and among them a high volcano N by W'. Mount St Elias and the discovery of Alaska! On board the 'St Paul' out of sight to the S at almost the same time: 'At two in the morning we distinguished some very high mountains ahead . . . This must be America'. Then turning N, when in latitude 58° 21′, '. . . high, snow covered mountains, bearing N 3/4 E': the spectacular Fairweather Range. And since the highest points of both these Ranges are all boundary peaks, this historic moment also represents the first view by literate men of the rim of W Canada—Yukon Territory and British Columbia.

International is indeed the word for these border ranges, especially their highest peak, Mount St Elias (5489 m). Discovered by a Dane in the employ of the Russian government, named for a Greek saint, first mapped by an Englishman who claimed possession of the region for his country, again claimed in turn as possessions by official expeditions from Spain, and then France, purchased from Russia by the United States, the first ascent of the