

*East of Katmandu*, by Thomas Weir. 138 pages, 91 illustrations. Oliver and Boyd: Edinburgh and London, 1955. Price, 16 s.

Small Himalayan Expeditions are becoming more and more feasible. Thomas Weir and his Scottish companions have played a great part in advertising the pleasures of such an expedition.

In *East of Katmandu* Mr. Weir again puts his case. Despite the irritations that they encountered in Indian Customs and in quibbling porters, they experienced all the pleasures of exploring relatively unknown passes, climbing peaks that do not demand an organized siege, watching the beautiful country with its flowers and birds unfold before them, and sharing their experiences with the Sherpas in the latter's picturesque homeland.

The majority of the book is the description of the travel through the country and the incidental situations that occur. There are the sick men in the villages who come for medical aid, and the experience of being wined and dined in native houses. Watching the religious ceremonies of a strange people for their sick or for a sacrifice is part of the everyday life of this Scottish party, as are the visits to the monasteries en route. Mr. Weir lets us feel the excitement of each ridge crossed, each corner turned, and in the same paragraph shows us the fascination that the bird life of the area held for him, and which is one of the intriguing features of this countryside.

There is some good mountaineering also. Not spectacular, but the kind that draws most men to the mountains—a climb difficult enough to have some spice, with a rewarding view of the really great mountains of the world. For those who dream of exploring and climbing in distant places, this book should be a pleasant discovery and a worthwhile afternoon's reading. One might just go to Nepal after reading it.

HENRY S. FRANCIS, JR.

*Road to Rakaposhi*, by George Band; with Chapters Two and Five by Ted Wrangham and Chapter Seven by George Band and Roger Chorley. Also two appendices by David Fisher. 192 pages, 47 photographs, 4 maps. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1955. Price, 16 s.

This is an excellent book. In fact its excellencies are so many that I shall be able to mention only a few. In short, I recommend it as I would very few books on mountaineering, or any subject.

The title is an insight to the book. It is the story of the whole trip—the *Road*—to the mountain called Rakaposhi, in the state of Hunza, Pakistan. Significantly, only 55 pages are devoted to the actual climbing account. The author, George Band of Everest and Kangchenjunga, and his

associates, have realized that their preparation, their experiences in reaching Pakistan, their visits to Hunza, Baltit, and Nagir, and the people of these states are the necessary backdrop to their mountain, the atmosphere which gives their day *on* the mountain life and value.

As a result of this awareness, the excellent appendices, and generally an attitude of unselfish helpfulness—which Eric Shipton expresses in his foreword: “. . . content that others should use their discoveries to attain the success which, with a little more luck with the weather, might well have been theirs.”—this book could be used as a handbook for small expeditions to the Himalaya. The pleasure of this book is partly in that, and partly in the assurance—particularly comforting to this reviewer—that the small expedition is still possible and the finest way to climb and enjoy big mountains.

All in all, this is an engrossing and stimulating book. Its basic value is stated by Shipton in the completion of the above quotation: “At a time when competition and international rivalry seem to threaten the values and long established traditions of mountaineering, it is most encouraging to find this spirit still so very much alive.” In ending this review I might add two facts: one, Rakaposhi (25,550 feet), is still unclimbed and just three days march from an airport; two, I profoundly wish that I had been on this trip.

DAVID A. SOWLES

*A History of British Mountaineering*, by R. L. G. Irving. 240 pages, with 65 illustrations. London: B. T. Batsford, Ltd., 1955. Price, 25 s.

There are few places in the world where British have not climbed, and this is becoming true of other nationals as well. The evident difficulty in such a work, therefore, is to know what to leave out. Thomas Johnson, who botanized in Wales and ascended Snowdon in 1639, could not have imagined that he would be set down at the start of British achievement in this field, and a generation ago there was no certainty that Everest could be climbed.

In recent years the pioneer work of the Alpine Club founders has been overshadowed by expeditions beyond the Alps, so that the time is ripe for this book. The early chapters deal with Chamonix and Zermatt, and for the necessary background one finds brief mention of early climbers, such as Mlle. d'Angeville, who were not British at all, and this, except to the historian, is a bit confusing. In the Bernese Oberland we learn of the attempt to storm the Jungfrau from Rotthal which Slade and Yeats Brown made in 1828.