

Standard Encyclopedia of the World's Mountains. Edited by Julian Huxley; G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1962. 383 pages, 16 color plates, 12 maps, glossary, gazetteer. Price \$10.95.

Omne ens mensuram sumit a fine I believe the scholastic axiom goes: "Every being takes its measure from its purpose."

The purpose of this book is clearly stated in the introduction (no page number):

"It aims at being a standard reference book with a *high degree of accuracy* in its factual information, which includes the geographical status of each peak, glacier or pass mentioned, its geology, special fauna and flora, its historical importance, and of course who first discovered, explored or climbed it—anything, in fact, of interest about the mountain in question. To balance these *hard facts* use has been made in many articles of quotations . . ."

"This book . . . will serve as an introduction to those who are not familiar with the mountains, and as a *valuable reference* to those who are . . ." (Italics supplied)

This purpose is not achieved. To dignify the volume with the title of *Standard Encyclopedia* is stretching things a bit, unless one takes a good hard look at the deep Greek roots of encyclopedia ($\Sigma\nu$ in $+\kappa\upsilon\kappa\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ circle $+\pi\alpha\iota\delta\epsilon\iota\alpha$ instruction). Because of the claim made, a few examples of discrepancies should be given:

Oscar Houston, and not Eric Shipton, led the 1950 group which first confirmed that Everest could be *approached* from the south. (p. 31)

Dr. Walter A. Wood, Jr., President of the American Geographical Society of New York, New York Director of the Arctic Institute of North America and former president of the American Alpine Club gets rather brief treatment. (p. 31) Many outstanding American mountaineers are not even mentioned.

The person giving the shoulder belay is, as sketched with the rope wrapped around his right arm, in a rather dangerous position. So, *a fortiori*, is his unseen companion. (p. 36, Glossary illus.)

Crampons are now made of lighter material than steel. (p. 37)

A rope sling should have been placed around the short nub used to anchor the rope for the rappel sketched in the glossary. (p. 40)

The maps are hardly adequate for a *Standard Encyclopedia*. (pp. 41-53)

"The Aleutian Range has been explored largely by American scientists and mountaineers, among whom H. Bradford Washburn, Walter A. Wood, Robert Bates and Dr. Terris Moore have been the most prominent." (pp. 65-66.) Though they have explored other northern ranges, these men have spent little or no time in the Aleutians.

"In the sanctuary are stored the holy relics, including *fragments of the Holy Church*, of which every monastery possesses some, and many remains

of saints and apostles, *all set in precious reliquaries studded with jewels. To them the monks pray, and their healing powers are never doubted.*" (pp. 83-85: Athos, Mount) Italics added. If the monks are praying *to* the relics and remains they are living in idolatry and the abbot should be so informed. Fragments of the Holy Church would make most interesting relics. The last words italicized make up an inaccurate and misleading statement, as well as a dangerous universal one.

"Bhutan, a protectorate under Indian authority . . ." (p. 93)

The work of the Arctic Institute in the Brooks Range is completely omitted. (p. 98)

The account of the first ascents in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta is rather thoroughly confused, as a cursory glance at the available first-hand accounts will easily show. (pp. 123-124: Cristóbal Colón, Pico)

"Height 29,002 feet (also estimated at 29,145 feet)" (p. 147: Everest, Mount). The difference of figures is, of course, due to the use of a different value for the coefficient of refraction in the adjustment of calculations. Ordinary reference to the original Survey of India work shows this. Dr. Gulatee's revised figure of 29,028 feet, discussed at length in the *Geographical Journal* about 1955, was used as long ago as 1957 on the fine map of Everest edited by the *Deutscher Alpenverein, Oesterreicher Alpenverein und Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*.

"First climbed, Dartmouth College Expedition, 1934. (p. 123: Crillon, Mount.) Harvard has lost two fine sons in Bradford Washburn and H. Adams Carter, who made the ascent.

Adams Carter and Bradford Washburn proved conclusively that Cook's claim regarding Mount McKinley was false. This was done in a masterful article appearing in the *American Alpine Journal* 1958. (p. 206: McKinley, Mount.)

"The vast 25,000-foot ridge that joints it (Lhotse) to Everest was explored by H. W. Tilman's party, who considered climbing Everest by the south wall of the Lhotse-Nuptse (second satellite-peak) ridge . . ." Hardly. (pp. 200-201: Lhotse)

There is no mention of the work of Dr. Walter Wood, Bradford Washburn or Robert Bates in the St. Elias Range. (pp. 270-271)

"Today a scenic highway connects the highest point of California with the lowest in America—Death Valley . . ." (p. 314: Whitney, Mount) There is, of course, no such highway.

"Sentinel Mountains Group in Ellsworth Highland, Antarctica; highest peak is Mount Ulmer (12,500 ft.)" (p. 350, Glossary) The height for Mount Vinson, in this range, is actually nearly one mile higher than the figure given: 5,140 meters or 16,864 feet. This measurement has been

available for at least two years. Mount Ulmer is now given at 9100 feet.

Mount Ayantepui, in Venezuela, over whose escarpment drops the highest waterfall on earth, is not even mentioned.

These few examples may serve to give a general idea of the accuracy rating of the book. As a standard encyclopedia it is much like the furnace and chimney built by Samdadchiemba, the companion of Abbé Huc and Père Gabet in Tibet. "The structure was extremely picturesque" wrote the Abbé, "but it labored under the enormous disadvantage of being wholly useless."

Competent advice was available, the data is available; neither seems to have been used with much care. One wonders if the contributors listed did have a chance to go through the proofs personally. The *Lonsdale Library, Volume XVIII: Mountaineering* was a much better job a quarter of a century ago.

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