

## BOOK REVIEWS

cessful assault. The expedition was well planned and well executed, and the party worked harmoniously throughout, which is a tribute to the skill of the leader. They had some bad and some good luck, but were fortunate in having good luck in weather when they really needed it.

There is a thrilling description of the passage of the Ice Fall, which on close acquaintance proved fully as harrowing as it seemed to us from the bottom.

The expedition relied heavily on oxygen, using two types of apparatus, both open and closed circuits, beginning its use at comparatively low altitudes and using it both for sleeping and climbing on the higher slopes. The difficulties of leakage, breakage, and freezing are fully stated, and it is recognized that, if climbers so dependent on oxygen should be deprived of it at high altitudes through accident or storm, they would be in very great danger. Failure of oxygen equipment appears to have been partly or wholly responsible for the inability of the first assault party, Bourdillon and Evans, to reach the final summit. The book therefore still leaves open the question whether the advantages of oxygen outweigh its dangers and disadvantages.

The appendices contain much useful information about equipment, food, and supplies.

OSCAR R. HOUSTON

*The Story of Everest*, by W. H. Murray. 195 pages, 24 photographs, 14 maps and diagrams. English edition: London, J. M. Dent & Sons, 1953. Price, 15/—. American edition: New York, Dutton, 1954. Price, \$3.75.

Murray's book is opportune, not only because of Hunt's later record which concludes the Everest saga, but because a summary of the former expeditions has been needed now that the earlier volumes are difficult to obtain. Neither Younghusband's nor Ullman's summaries are satisfactory.

Murray is an experienced writer and has produced a clear, well-balanced book. Over half of it is occupied by the first three expeditions—1921, 1922, and 1924—which is just, for the expeditions of the 1930's added little that was fundamental to what had been learned on the earlier attempts. In 1936 and 1938 the weather precluded any hope of success.

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The author has not just compiled an anthology; he has re-interpreted the stories in the light of later evidence. He shows (p. 111) how the lessons from 1922 and 1924 were appreciated in 1933; and, equally (p. 181), how the Swiss failed to appreciate them fully in 1952. It may be hoped that the success of 1953 will rub home once more the need for acclimatization that the hazardous victory of the French on Annapurna has tended to obscure. Had the Swiss not underestimated this and other factors in 1952, Everest would very possibly have fallen to them.

Some of Murray's views are controversial; he seems to incline toward the post-monsoon period as being the best for climbing Everest; he is dubious about the need of oxygen. He is unlikely to have many supporters of the first opinion but, in view of the experiences of Houston's party on K2 in 1953, he may have powerful backing in his dislike of oxygen. Still, those last 800 to 1000 feet on Everest may make all the difference . . .

It may be noted that Murray (p. 104) holds that Odell saw Mallory and Irvine at the first and not the second step; and he agrees (p. 120) with the view put forward by Smythe that the ice-axe found by Wager and Wyn Harris marked the site of a slip. He suggests that this was probably on the ascent, not the descent. In this case they would (see the line drawing on p. 126) have fallen before they ever reached the first step and the question of whether Odell really saw them at all is in doubt.

S. B. T.

*The Mountain World*, edited by Marcel Kurz for the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research, Zurich. 220 pages, 64 illustrations, folding panorama, maps, and sketches. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953. Price, \$6.00.

This is an important book, attractively published. It is the eighth of a series prepared by the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research, but the first edition in English. This and the previous seven editions were published in either French or German, or both, under the titles: *Berge der Welt* or *Montagnes du Monde*.

For many years people wondered why so relatively little had been heard from the Swiss in the Himalayas or the other great mountain ranges of the world outside of their own Alps. Be that as it may, they have now appeared in many lands as contenders