

are not merely abbreviations of the original narratives, but woven in are critical analyses and expressions of opinion. As an example, in writing of the 1934 Nanga Parbat expedition, Professor Mason says: "So ended this attempt—in the greatest mountain disaster of our time. It is easy to look back and criticize. But it must be realized how little was known about the rapid deterioration of strength above 23,000 feet, especially under storm conditions . . . But there was also great heroism. Climbers and porters alike freely gave of their lives for one another." Of the 1938 K2 expedition he remarks: "Gambling on fine weather they could have gone higher and might just possibly have reached the summit, but they would never have returned and they wisely withdrew . . . Houston's decision . . . was wise. A great mountaineer, he knew when to turn back." But there is not always praise. By way of contrast we quote from the account of the K2 expedition of the following year: "(The leader) now made the fatal and almost inconceivable decision to go on, regardless of the consequences. . . . It is difficult to record in temperate language the folly of this enterprise. . . . Each day added to the errors of judgment. The weather was never to blame. The one redeeming feature was the heroism of (the Sherpas)." Almost every episode is summed up with similar discerning and often pungent remarks.

Among the many features of the book that make it indispensable to anyone, whether climber or reader, interested in the Himalaya are the appendices in which are to be found a table of the great peaks, showing their position, altitude, and the system, section, and group to which they belong; comments on the determination of Himalayan heights; a chronological summary, with references to pages in the text of the book; and a short bibliography.

In London last December I asked Professor Mason about the pronunciation of the name *Himalaya*. "Don't try to conform to someone's theory of its derivation," he said, "just use *Him-a-lay-a*."

FRANCIS P. FARQUHAR

*Ascent of K2*. By Prof. Ardito Desio. Translated by David Moore. 239 pages, 57 illustrations, 3 maps in text. London: Elek Books. Printed in Holland, 1955. Price 21 s.

The most massive assault on any major peak in the history of mountaineering, hindered by worse than average weather, barely succeeded in putting two men on the summit of K2 late in the afternoon of July 31, 1954.

The English translation of this readable book is adequately illustrated. There are brief appendices at the end, a diary covering the period of organ-

ization as well as the expedition itself, but no index. Considerable scientific work was accomplished in addition to the actual mountaineering.

The climbing party, mostly professional guides, was chosen only after the most searching physical examinations and rigorous field tests in the high Alps. No Himalayan expedition before has had practically unlimited financial resources and such elaborate equipment, 16 tons of which was shipped from Genoa, all assembled in four months.

The most extraordinary phenomenon seen was a huge new glacier, formed when a great ice mass slid off Haramosh into the Kutiah valley, causing death and destruction, and threatening the entire Stak valley 40 miles northwest of Skardu. In 1953 this glacier is said to have increased its length eight miles in three months.

The leader, Ardito Desio, professor of geology at the University of Milan, was 57. Compagnoni, who reached the top, was 40, and his companion Lacedelli, 29. The other climbers ranged in age from 24 to 47, to average 33.

The actual story of the approach and attack on the mountain followed much the familiar pattern and is well recounted. Most of the 500 porters deserted when the Baltoro Glacier was reached. Smaller groups of porters were recruited, and with the help of a few Boltis and Hunzas and the climbers themselves Base Camp was established at the end of May. Placing camps up the Abruzzi ridge took all of June and most of July. Bad weather, and the death of Puchoz, one of the strongest climbers, at Camp 2 from pneumonia, and various minor accidents, delayed progress. Parties and individual climbers moved up and down the mountain, using the fixed rope almost as a trolley.

Luck was with Compagnoni and Lacedelli the last two days. July 30 at Camp 8 (25,400) the weather was perfect. In powder snow up to their waists and after climbing formidable rock pitches, they made Camp 9 at 26,500 feet. Two others, Bonatti and Mahdi, trying to bring up more oxygen and food, were benighted without shelter at 26,200 feet. On July 31, Compagnoni and Lacedelli had first to go down 300 feet to recover the extra oxygen, then, carrying 42 pounds each they started up. The rock had much more snow and ice than when Wiessner had been on it 15 years before. The climbing on rock, ice, and snow was difficult at times. The oxygen gave out, but acclimatized as the two men were this did not stop them, nor did they even throw off the heavy equipment. The cold became intense late in the afternoon—they estimated it at perhaps 40° below zero, but fortunately the air was almost still. At 6 P.M. they reached the summit in clear weather. On the descent both men had falls, but were only

badly shaken. At Camp 8 three other climbers and two Hunzas were there to meet them, and next day all started down together.

Desio comments at the end that the margin between success and failure may have been supplied by the party's mental attitude. They had set out with the object of *conquering* K2 and not merely *making an attempt*. That and perhaps their great reserves of manpower and equipment, plus luck with the weather at the climax (after much earlier buffeting) resulted in well deserved success.

HENRY S. HALL, JR.

*Kangchenjunga Challenge*, by Paul Bauer. 202 pages and 12 illustrations.

Foreword by Sir John Hunt. London: Kimber, 1955. Price, 18 s.

Paul Bauer, one of the famous climbers of this century, here recounts the story of the Bavarian attempts to climb Kangchenjunga from the northeast in 1929 and 1931. The story is factual and undramatic, but it describes probably the finest craftsmanship in ice climbing displayed by any expedition to the world's highest mountains. The obstacles that the Bauer parties overcame on the northeast spur are still amazing, and it must be remembered that the climbers used no oxygen. An interesting feature, of course, was that at several of their 11 camps, the Germans saved the weight of tents by using snow caves. Bauer also describes early climbs in the Caucasus and the ascent of Siniolchu, as well as retelling the classic stories of man against snow and ice on Kangchenjunga.

ROBERT H. BATES

*Kangchenjunga*, by John Tucker. 217 pages and 34 illustrations. Foreword by Sir John Hunt. London: Elek, 1955. Price, 21 s.

John Tucker's pleasant story of the reconnaissance of the southwest side of Kangchenjunga in 1954 will not become a classic, but it is remarkably light hearted and uninhibited. It summarizes earlier attempts on the mountain before describing the experiences of the group led by John Kempe in 1954. These men showed no thoroughness in planning or preparation; nothing about the group smacked of big business or of a military campaign. Instead, its informality is delightfully shocking and refreshing.

This small party to the southwest face of Kangchenjunga tested an idea formed by Gilmour Lewis in 1951, and developed by him and Kempe in 1953 when they examined Kangchenjunga from the summit of Kabru (24,006 feet). They thought that a route might be forced up the great icefall of the southwest face to the huge, prominent snow shelf that projects from the mountain at about 24,000 feet, and that from there a route might continue up over steep snow and rock to the summit. Although the