

cohere, even though selected completely at random—just visualize 247 such pages:

"Nous deambulons dans les rues de Sestrogradcity [Cortina?]-ici, ça, sent l'escalade."

"Après consultation de la bouteille de Cognac, le baromètre bondit au 'Beaux Fixe.' Nous démarrons d'un pas énergique."

"Un tel horaire donne des droits; des droits à une halte, par exemple."

"Remontons; les occupations suivantes s'effectuent, alors—poser les sacs; s'asseoir; allumer une cigarette; et examiner la situation. Une seule chose compte—grimper. J'avance lentement—ce n'est pas beau, c'est le style 'rouleaux compresseur.' On avance le fil de l'arête, avec précautions; parfois à quatre pattes, à l'américain, vê. Je couvre d'injures les divinités locales."

"Finalement, tout bien pesé (et ma paresse a du poids), le bivouac est décidé. Le placement est bon, ce sera une des meilleurs de ma collection nocturne. La nuit passe lentement. Si ceux qui ont déterminé la vitesse de rotations des astres, à nous visibles, auraient eux mêmes fait des bivouacs, leurs calculs auraient pas fait les mêmes résultats."

"Enfin, le jour arrive, l'équipe descend, sans s'arrêter au refuge, étonnant le Gardien 'Ancora signora, si fre qualche giorni siamo di ritorno e questa, volta sua l'ultima' (parolles de MacArthur!)."

"Il n'est ainsi pas nécessaire, au sestograde, de faire beaucoup de courses, mais il est indisputable de parler beaucoup de celles que l'on a faits."

And interspersed through the text is authoritative historical matter which we here do not all know—in particular, the steady progress of Class VI, from the time when the editor of *A.J.* condemned piton work—including mention of (alphabetically, here) Andrich, Cassin, Dibona, Dimai, Dülfer, Fiechtel, Kugy, Lochmatter, Maquignaz, Preuss, Rath, Rossi, Steger, Wiessner and Zanutti—I count myself fortunate to have climbed with three of these, even if not on Class VI.

JOEL E. FISHER

The Puma's Claw, by Simon Clark. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1959.

223 pages; 22 photographs; 3 sketch maps; 1 diagram. Price \$4.95.

This is a light-hearted, well-written account of the first ascent of Pumasillo (20,490 feet) sixty airline miles west of Macchu Picchu, in the summer of 1957. The author, twenty-one, was the joint leader of the Cambridge Andean Expedition, of which all but two were Cambridge undergraduates; and the oldest, twenty-four, had worked in Peru and spoke Spanish. The irrepressible yet unobtrusive sense of humor and the easy attractive style make this book the kind that one is reluctant to put down until the end.

Americans will appreciate the party's problems of both working out the approach and then mostly back-packing aided by some mule transport around three sides of a rectangle from the north and west to reach the mountain. Travel up the Vilcabamba valley from Chaullay to Tincoq and thence by a corkscrew route to the base had its ups and downs in more ways than one. Fierce dogs, cordiality of the family of a hacienda owner, variable weather, several arduous approach reconnaissances within less than ten miles, finally brought the party, by July 18, in ones or twos, to 15,000 feet directly under the summit.

Here a calendar of procedure was worked out. The techniques of the Mustagh Tower climb in 1956 had been carefully studied, and they were prepared with rock- and ice-pitons, étriers, and 1500 feet of extra fixed-rope without which the climb would not have succeeded. An upper base was made and two camps on the west ridge, the highest at about 18,900 feet. The climbing for the next week, mostly on snow-covered or bare ice, is vividly described. Several vertical pitches from a few feet to a hundred or more were overcome. "South facing snow is the curse of Andean mountaineering." Layer upon layer of fine powder doesn't soften enough to consolidate. By contrast steps on northerly facing slopes melt out and must be recut at each passage. "Fearful cuts and overhangs—the ridge was little more than an exaggerated lace curtain of ice." "The 150 feet from its base—was the hardest climbing I had ever done anywhere." "Harry's and Ronnie's feat in surmounting it with fifty-pound packs . . . to establish Camp 2 on July 22."

The weather was now perfect. The first pair reached the sensational summit the next day. One only could climb to and stand on the highest point at a time, while the other remained anchored across a gap on top of the "Mushroom" to guard the climber on precariously perched snow. Two more made it on July 25, one of the last rope of three got up on the 27th, while the other two made fast in case the leader fell. The summit snowcap on rock appeared so perilously poised that the other two decided to forego the last twelve feet to the top as a measure of safety.

The whole expedition and the final climb were as good an example of cheerful, well executed teamwork, well described, as one could ask for. This is altogether a satisfactory story, told in a manner and style at which the British are pre-eminantly successful. The party is to be congratulated. The book should be added to everyone's list of the best of recent mountaineering literature.

HENRY S. HALL, JR.