

*Annapurna South Face*, by Chris Bonington. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971, 334 pages, 60 color plates, \$10.00

This climb represents the most difficult route yet accomplished on an 8000-meter peak. However, when we are told that it is a landmark in the history of mountaineering as important as that of the first ascent of Everest, we must realize that it will not be up to this generation to categorize their own ascents. It is much more likely that the landmarks will prove to be ascents such as that by Buhl and Diemberger on Broad Peak. In other words, a sport that insists its very existence depends on men adapting to the harsh mountain environment should aim in the direction of small, self-contained parties rather than the huge expedition sieges of the past.

Contrary to the style of most British expeditionary accounts, we are actually on the mountain by page 75. The writing is not brilliant—one British reviewer called it “service prose”—but it is lucid and uncluttered, easy to follow. The idea of including actual radio conversations and quotes from other climbers’ diaries adds another dimension. When we consider that Bonington wrote the book in just a couple of months after returning from the expedition, it appears quite remarkable. The sixty adequately reproduced color plates rate with the best photos from high Himalayan climbs. The ninety-page appendix is not something that every reader will wish to completely devour. But for those planning expeditions, for those with a special interest in equipment, oxygen, food, communications, photography, mountain medicine or the Nepalese, this section provides factual information that would not be assimilated into a normal expedition text.

In a book that was rushed it is perhaps inevitable that small errors will occur, but it is still disturbing to detect three misspelled proper names in a two-page spread. Regardless of the minor errors, this book is one of the most important, most readable and most lavishly reproduced expedition accounts of recent years.

GALEN A. ROWELL

*Summits and Secrets*, by Kurt Diemberger. Translated from the German by Hugh Merrick. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1971. 344 pages, 78 photographs, 8 maps and sketches. £5.50 (about \$15)

There cannot be many mountaineering autobiographies better than this one, combining vivid descriptions of great adventure with some tragedy and much gentle humor, spiced with thoughtful reflections on the meaning of one lifetime devoted to climbing. It is perhaps a premature autobiography, since by my reckoning Diemberger could have been only thirty-eight years of age by the time it was published. One may hope for a second volume twenty years hence.

Kurt Diemberger’s accomplishments include first ascents of two of