

as to the subject. Books were a frequent and cheerful conversational subject around the Rongbuk Base Camp which I shared in June 1982 with Bonington whose team had no less than four climber-writers. As on previous trips, Chris had his trusty home computer with him. A great deal of writing had been done on it. Rival author-climbers claimed the machine was programmed for every standard expedition subject. Hit the right keys and the sunset passage would zip forth; hit other keys and the incoming storm would print out.

There is a bit of truth in the jest. The book is a chronology, a reporting of a series of events. There is a lot of information on the life and scenes of Peking and Kashgar and on the Kirgiz—semi-nomads of the high Pamir. Although discerned with a keen eye, they are reported with a certain detachment, in long paragraphs that are little more than a sightseer's lists. I would have preferred that he be more personal and intimate, as in his previous books.

When Bonington does shine forth, it is fun. For instance, the passages relating the frustrations endured while trying to organize portage in remote areas through intermediaries, complicated by ignorance of the local language, were magnificent. So, too, his honesty about his own shortcomings. I liked the description of a high, miserable bivouac on Kongur.

Peter Boardman's diary selections are gently poignant. And the book teaches a lot about the world's best climbers in action: notably their midnight action (wrenched from warm sleeping bags) to evacuate tents that were situated on an avalanche slope, in favor of snow caves dug in the dark discomfort of frigid night.

The book is impressive in format. There are lots of lucid maps and sharp, four-color photographs, the most memorable being of Bonington himself, "a study in outrage," immediately after Boardman stepped through the roof of his snow coffin. The appendices are informative: team members, diary of events, medical science research, history of the Kongur area, fauna and flora, geology, equipment, food, photography, medical kit and a delightful description of that most anarchic of games, buzkashi. Best of all, the book is about a resourceful, stylish and quite happy expedition.

NED GILLETTE

When Men and Mountains Meet: The Explorers of the Western Himalayas 1820-75. John Keay. Archon Books, Hamden, Connecticut, 1982. 277 pages, black and white photographs, illustrations, maps, bibliography. \$17.50.

This is a book of the men who mapped, whored, botanized, ran guns, out-manuevered kings and plumbed the rivers of the Himalaya from 1820 to 1875. These are engrossing tales of adventure, easily more enthralling than modern, microcosmic accounts of Himalayan climbs. The mountains were unknown then, unmapped and unsafe. The attrition rate for the early explorers easily outweighs recent climbing fatalities in the Himalaya. Back then, in addition

to the frostbite, avalanches and river crossings, there were other hazards like the knives of suspicious Sikhs.

Perhaps one drawback of these excerpts from Victorian adventurers' journals is their style which tends to be personal with superficial observations. The reader can only imagine the voluminous research the author must have done to present us with introductory gems such as: "After the enthusiasms of Moorcroft, the affectations of Jacquemont and the ravings of Wolff, one shakes his (Vigne's) outstretched hand with a sigh of relief . . . his charm is neither florid nor demanding but a quiet and genial affability."

Despite Keay's polished presentation, the reader still must wade through empty, shallow travelogues of a time that demanded reticence of its heroes.

The photographs cleverly show the reader more of the itinerant Himalayan wanderers' personalities than their own journals. There is Gardiner bedecked in a tartan turban with a fierce mustache, clutching a weapon. Or Robert Shaw's assumed air of British regality, a sort of well-suited appearance of pomposity. Then there is the image of Hayward, "possessed with an insane desire to try the effects of cold steel across my throat." The intensity of Hayward's furrowed brow while holding a spear is unmistakably powerful.

The map illustrations are simply sketeches, covering vast topographical complexities with a quick sweep of the pen. It is possible that these modern map drawings are intentionally vague, so that the reader can identify with an adventurer's frustration at the rudimentary maps of the 1800's. Nonetheless, the maps' vagaries lost me.

When Men and Mountains Meet won't make any climber's best seller list. Yet it reveals a richness that has, perhaps, been lost nowadays. If you are willing to wade or skim through the digressions of olden-day pioneers, you'll find that these early Himalayan explorations have more excitement, scope and inspiration than most modern-day state-of-the-art accounts of a climber searching for a fingertip handhold.

JON WATERMAN

K2: Mountain of Mountains. Reinhold Messner and Alessandro Gogna. Kaye & Ward, London and Oxford University Press, New York, 1981. 177 pages, 31 black and white photographs, 109 color photographs, 6 sketches, 4 maps. \$35.00

This is principally a photographic essay for a small coffee table—ninety-six pages of color photographs and sixty-eight pages of text, of which one-third covers previous climbs and explorations of K2. The text presents personalized but limited views of the 1979 Italian-German ascent, with most of the writing by Gogna and the introduction and account of the summit ascent by Messner. Joachim Hoelsgen, a journalist-turned-climber contributes a worthwhile summary of the history of the peak.