

told him to stop his sniveling or I'd leave him there." Barber's great resourcefulness during the difficult descent is manifest, but not all readers will be persuaded by his ascription of his "seeming lack of compassion" to a "defense mechanism to deal with what was happening."

The narrative has an obstructed energy. Block quotations, mostly from Barber, appear frequently, not always well integrated with Lee's text. More editing would have eliminated irritating repetitions. The volume provides a publisher's preface and a glossary for the lay reader, a nonpublisher's preface describing how the account came to be written and a prologue that seems designed to humanize the book's subject. Many photographs are interspersed; they range from the murky to the striking.

Although afflicted with many shortcomings, *On Edge* recounts some stunning achievements from Yosemite to England, Dresden, Australia and Turkestan. I failed David Roberts' sweaty-palms test ("I doubt that there is a climber in the world who can read some of the episodes in Chip's book . . . without having to pause to wipe his sweating palms on his trousers."), but other hands may respond more readily. The book is of importance for those who follow the frontiers of hard climbing. It establishes or confirms Barber's significance in several areas: his insistence on good style, ability to lead on sight climbs that had stymied locals, and his extraordinary solo ascents.

STEVEN JERVIS

*50 Years of Alpinism*. Riccardo Cassin. Diadem Books Ltd., London and The Mountaineers, Seattle, 1982. 207 pages, black and white photographs, diagrams, maps. \$17.50.

Riccardo Cassin has written a masterpiece of an autobiography—possibly the most important mountaineering book to be published in the last twenty-five years! It's all here—a scintillating record of a half century of high-standard Alpine endeavor: his first climbs in the Grigna, the Dolomites, the north face of the Cima Ovest, the north face of the Piz Badile, the Walker Spur of the Grandes Jorasses, the Cassin Ridge of McKinley, Jirishanca, Gasherbrum IV and Lhotse. Perhaps the world's best climbs done by one its best climbers. What more could one ask for?

But Cassin does deliver more. Recorded in these pages are tales usually ignored by his predecessors—tales of the roles of patriotism and nationalism within the framework of mountaineering. The joy expressed at making the first "Italian" ascent of a Dolomite north wall was clearly a source of great satisfaction to the young Cassin. It was also a significant step in overcoming the territorial constraints of a twentieth century Europe about to go to war. Neglected by most authors as taboo subjects, nationalistic feelings are discussed quite openly by Cassin—to his great credit. It may prove very surprising to the modern climbing generation to discover how profound these feelings actually

were during the prewar period and how much psychological pressure each leading superstar of his day felt due to outside political forces beyond his control. Not free to luxuriate in the endless expanses of the North American landscape of space and liberty, the leading European climbers were thrust into the midst of political currents which were as difficult to navigate as were the outstanding routes they pioneered.

Cassin's views on the continuing search for and overcoming of difficulties in the mountains are presented in one very interesting chapter. Cassin was one of the first to adopt artificial means to overcome impossible routes where his predecessors had decided to retreat rather than use aid. He notes that progress has and always will occur in mountaineering. The search for greater difficulty gives its just rewards and satisfaction. But he ends this section with an appeal to all to seek also the aesthetic and ethical sensations which the mountains offer. Here, finally, is a glimpse of Cassin's personality and he is not shy about telling it as he believes it is.

The translation from Italian to English is excellent and faithfully records Cassin's style. The only obvious defect is the lack of color photographs which were present in the original Italian edition. Nonetheless, ninety photographs—some of them never before published—record the climb, the climbers and the action.

It is rare when one man has such an outstanding record and career. Even rarer is the ability to write about climbing in a logical and flowing fashion. This book is surely destined to become one of the great classics of modern mountaineering literature.

ROY KLIGFIELD

*Great Expedition Hoaxes.* David Roberts. Sierra Club Books, San Francisco, 1982. 182 pages, 14 black and white photographs, 8 maps, bibliographies. \$12.95.

Dave Roberts has here produced another one of his very readable books. He has chosen what he regards as ten great historic exploration deceptions and psychoanalyzed the leading actors in each. The book begins with Sebastian Cabot who, in 1508-9, reported he had discovered a Northwest Passage to Cathay and that he had also explored the North American coast down to the tip of Florida; Roberts thinks that this Cabot never left England and may simply have been seeking to appropriate and expand the actual explorations of his father, John Cabot.

Undoubtedly, the most curious story in this collection is the case of James "Abyssinian" Bruce, 1769-73, who was regarded as a complete fake almost immediately upon his return to England and was mocked and scorned through the remainder of his life. Not until years after his death, in 1796, was it discovered by subsequent travelers to Abyssinia that Bruce had indeed done essentially what he claimed—thus providing us with a sort of mirror image of