

H. W. Tilman: The Seven Mountain-Travel Books. Diadem Books, Ltd., London; The Mountaineers, Seattle, 1983. 896 pages, black and white photographs, maps. £14.95/\$30.00.

This book does not belong in a mountaineer's library, it belongs on the bedside table.

Tilman, together with his frequent partner, Eric Shipton, was a pioneer of the travel-light school of expeditionary mountaineering, which believed that the proper way to prepare for a trip was to drill holes in the handles of the tooth-brushes to save weight. Travelling light did not mean being ineffective, however. In 1936, Tilman himself reached the summit of Nanda Devi which remained the highest mountain in the world to be climbed until the French ascent of Annapurna in 1950.

Tilman was also a superb writer. His ironic understatement, wry humor and literate style made his books classics of mountaineering and travel literature. Unfortunately, these books have long been out of print and difficult to obtain.

This edition has combined Tilman's seven mountain-travel books into a single volume. Included are: *Snow on the Equator*, *The Ascent of Nanda Devi*, *When Men and Mountains Meet*, *Everest 1938*, *Two Mountains and a River*, *China to Chitral*, and *Nepal Himalaya*. All of them were favorably reviewed in this journal when they first appeared. Needless to say, as more and more expedition books are published, Tilman's reputation as a mountaineer and as a writer continues to soar.

The publishers of the current edition have managed to produce a book which is of reasonable size, with good print that any over-the-hill type can easily read, and without using tissue-paper-thin pages. The illustrations are an interesting combination of some pictures that appeared in the original editions plus new ones from various sources. Unfortunately, the quality of the reproductions is not up to the original standards; moreover, some of the photographs are badly cropped.

There is an excellent introduction by Jim Perrin, a friend of Tilman. In addition, there are three useful and interesting appendices: "A Note on Tilman as a Writer," "Selected Bibliography" and "Tilman's Mountaineering Record, 1929-1950." There is no question that Tilman was even more of a "character" than most mountaineers. However, he exemplified the best of the pioneer British Himalayan travellers who were literate, understood the local people even if they were not always totally sympathetic towards them, and were tough as a piece of dried yak meat.

The publication of this book means that there is no longer any excuse for mountaineers not to be familiar with Tilman's writings. Although the book is too heavy to haul up the mountain, it should be carried as far as Base Camp. It will introduce the new mountaineer to the heritage of the hills and will remind the veteran of the prior joy he had in reading Tilman. Perhaps, too, it can serve as a stylistic example to future expedition chroniclers.

NICHOLAS B. CLINCH