

raderie as a primary motive among a new generation of climbers.

The Stanford Alpine Club deserves a place in the pantheon of elite university mountain clubs. Though it began much later than the better-known clubs in the east, the Stanford version spanned a critical period in the development of the sport. This book further illuminates that golden age of American climbing, and historians will want it for their collections. Other climbers and mountain photography buffs will also admire the book, although the hefty price tag may discourage some potential buyers.

DAVID REID

Mystery, Beauty, and Danger: The Literature of the Mountains and Mountain Climbing Published in English before 1946. Robert Hicks Bates, Ph.D. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Peter Randall, 2000. 228 pages, numerous historic photographs. \$40.

As an amateur (in the finest sense of the word) historian of the mountain scene, Dr. Bates learned his trade honestly, at the knee of Dr. James Monroe Thorington, another past president of The American Alpine Club, and the man who brought Dr. Bates into the Club.

In this well-produced volume, Dr. Bates has reproduced his doctoral thesis of 1946 in an updated and delightfully illustrated format. In bringing greater awareness to us of the classic literature of alpinism, our Honorary President brings us back to the earliest days of mountaineering—and does so in the words of the participants themselves, unabridged by subsequent editors. We read about Swiss (and Pyrenean) dragons from those who saw them (or imagined that they did). We can read the words—as they were long ago translated into English—of the earliest Swiss guides, and are offered intriguing glimpses of the mountain poetry of Thomas Moore, Matthew Arnold, William Morris, John Symonds, Percy Shelley, and a dozen others.

Dr. Bates takes us back in time to the original textbook of mountaineering, that written by Conrad Gesner in 1574, and brings new life to the more recent literary works of latter-day alpinists such as Clarence King, Jan Christiaan Smuts, and Leslie Stephens. It goes against the grain of human nature to endorse the work of a competitor in this sort of literary adventure, but Dr. Bates has given me no choice.

WILLIAM LOWELL PUTNAM

El Capitan: Historical Feats and Radical Routes. Daniel Duane. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2000. 35 black-and-white photos. 143 pages. \$24.95.

The endpapers of Dan Duane's book feature a double-page spread of the Grand Topo of El Capitan. Routes everywhere and behind each route a story. I find it striking that one can be considerably less than ancient and still remember gazing at all that rock when it had not a single route. Of course, the number of Americans serious about rock climbing in the early 1950s probably numbered less than the number of people to be found in the Berkeley climbing gym on a typical evening in 2001.

Duane is straightforward in indicating the limited aims of his book. It turns out to be a kind of history, but certainly not an inclusive one. After an initial chapter that chronicles his own initial experiences on El Cap—experiences I suspect that are closer to those of many, if not most, El Cap climbers than to those of the climbers he discusses—he moves on to Warren