

the expense spent by previous expeditions. He makes the further point that the more efficient and modestly organised small expedition does not disturb the economy of the country through which the mountaineers must pass on their approach to the mountain, or inflate the market for goods and services, food and porters. He establishes his case.

THE 1938 story is told with a simplicity worthy of the expedition itself. It is typical that Mr. Tilman not only writes, "I have no hardships to bemoan, no disasters to recount, and no tragedies to regret" but also that "unlike the desert and the sea, mountains have not yet found a writer worthy of them." Yet his is as great in his own field as Gertrude Bell and Herman Melville were in theirs. His narrative is so shorn of the superfluous that his account emerges with all the clarity and grace of the essential.

He begins logically with the preparations faced by his party of seven, including such experienced men as Shipton, Smythe, and Odell. His estimate of a sufficient weight of food averaging two pounds a man a day is one which some self-indulgent New Zealand mountaineers could well remember. With the cost of the expedition under £2,500 it was possible to do without newspaper support. The assembly of Sherpa porters, the trek through Sikkim to Thibet, incidents of hospitality en route, and obstacles of snow on the high passes make an under-current that is familiar and welcome to all readers of Himalayan literature. Then follows the work of swagging loads, the irritations of sore throats and influenza, and the decision to recuperate in the Kharta valley where camp was made in "a broad meadow sheltered on two sides by forests of birch, juniper, and rhododendron."

The pattern of retreat and advance, advance and retreat is of absorbing interest. On the way up to the North Col the porters were involved in an avalanche, but good technique saved them from injury. The western approach to the North Col proved a safer route under bad snow conditions. Shipton and Smythe helped by porters made Camp VI at 27,000 feet. Their attempt was made in powder snow, hip-deep. Shipton wrote: "An hour's exhausting work yielded little more than a rope's length of progress, even on easy beginning on the slabs. We went on until, on the steeper ground, we were in obvious danger of being swept off the rocks by a snow avalanche. Then we returned, completely convinced of the hopelessness of the task. It was bitterly disappointing, as we were both far fitter at these altitudes than we had been in 1933, and the glittering summit looked tauntingly near." Tilman and Lloyd made an attempt to reach the summit ridge, but "smooth out-ward-sloping rocks, covered in part by snow" turned them back.

TILMAN'S final chapter pleads not only for the minimum of organisation for future expeditions, but for these to be made without elaborate aerial droppings. "Mountains," he writes, "can claim the rights of 'open towns,' and our self-respect should restrain us from dropping on them tents, tins, or possibly men." He thinks that with favourable weather and conditions near the summit, the mountain can be climbed by good men without auxiliary aids. The appendices include an interesting discussion reprinted from the *Geographical Journal*, some judicious levity about the "Abominable Snowman," a dissertation about

the use of oxygen, on which opinion is divided, and scientific notes by Odell.

There is no false note in this book. Its interest will hold for the layman as well as for the mountaineer. It has brought the attempts on Mount Everest into true perspective. The maps and index are good, and generally the illustrations are impressive, though the publishers have not used photographs to the best advantage either for size or position. Tilman notes that his forerunners to the Himalaya did not look upon themselves as "so many bearded and be-whiskered embodiments of man's unconquerable spirit striving to attain the highest." His case is that of a normal man who enjoys mountaineering, whether in his own country or among the highest peaks of the world. We should be grateful to him for his valid reasoning and lively narrative.

## OF SCHOOLS

ALMAE MATRES. By F. B. Malim. Cambridge University Press.

HERE is a collection of facts, not about education, but about noted schools — Marlborough, Sedgbergh, Haileybury and Wellington (of England) and several of the foremost schools in South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Mr. Malim (formerly of Wellington College, England), says that in 1938 it was his singular good fortune to be invited by the Head Masters' Conference to visit those schools in the four Dominions whose headmasters are members of the Conference. His title is not original, but neither has he anything new to say about the institutions which are his subjects. In each case he gives a full account of the ideals of the founders, with comments on the glories of tradition, age, architecture, and surroundings, and the reverence for Alma Mater as a person, "moulding the character and enjoying the loyalty and affection of her children." Were he a skilled journalist (he would probably say "God Forbid"), he might have made a thoroughly interesting volume from the ample information at his disposal, for the majority of men enjoy a flash-back to their old schooldays. But *Almae Matres* has the touch of the guide-book, complete with nine Latin quotations and an occasional excursion into Greek. However, it served to remind me that my subscription to the Old Boys' Association was long overdue.

—E.R.B.

## RED-BRICK PRIESTLEY

THE LINDEN TREE: A Play in Two Acts and Four Scenes. By J. B. Priestley, William Heinemann Ltd.

THIS play of Priestley's, staged in London last year, was enthusiastically received by the critics, and proved so popular that, apparently, it is still running. Ivor Brown, one of the ablest of them, says many people have voted it Priestley's best, and considers the "beautifully veracious acting" to be "as true to life as the text of the play itself." Yet in New York *The Linden Tree* ran for less than a week. We may perhaps find in certain original and vital elements in the play, part of the explanation of this American failure. It is not only that English domestic and University life are different from American. The background of this story of a history professor in one of England's "red-brick universities" — those provincial institutions that do such good work but in the popular view are overshadowed by Oxford and Cambridge — is drab. It would be

(continued on next page)

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