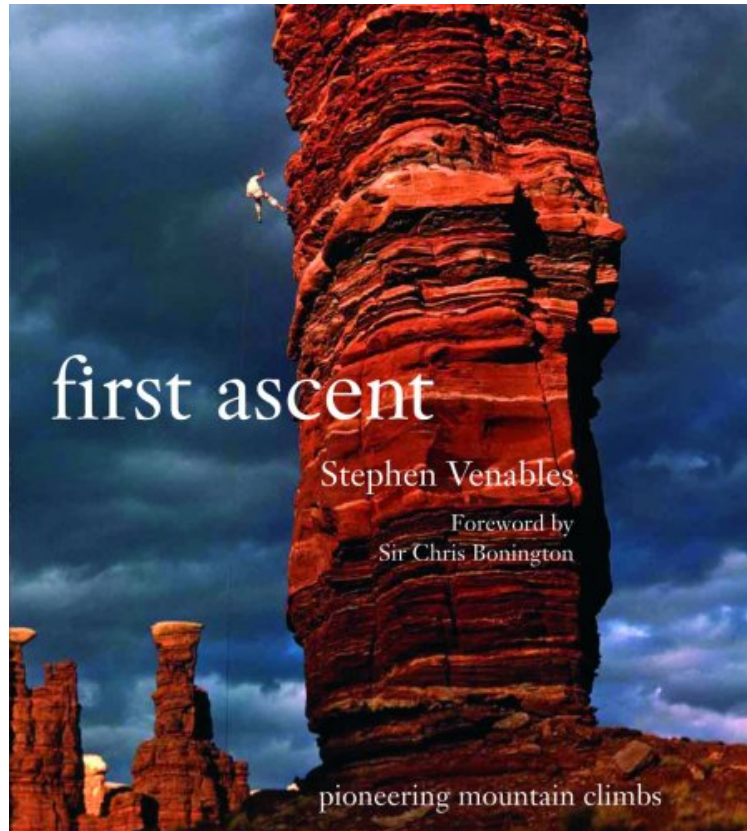


First Ascent: Pioneering Mountain Climbs

Stephen Venables

*ePub | *DOC | audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF*



 Download

 Read Online

#2644445 in Books Firefly Books 2008-09-26Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 11.00 x .88 x 9.50l, 3.22
#File Name: 1554074037192 pages | File size: 25.Mb

Stephen Venables : First Ascent: Pioneering Mountain Climbs before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised First Ascent: Pioneering Mountain Climbs:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. More Than A Coffee Table Book But Lacks FocusBy Chan Joon YeeFor a coffeetable book, there is a lot to read in this book. In fact, the book describes itself as "accounts of the first to conquer the world's greatest mountains".Holding books like this one in hand, the tendency is naturally just to look at the pictures. And the pictures are stunning. Nevertheless, a lot of writing goes into this book, starting off with the earliest history of pilgrims climbing for religious merit or high altitude sacrifice. The explorers came later and it would seem that with nothing more to explore, people are climbing to make "sacrifices" as well.The book proper starts off with the race for Denali, blowing Cook's hoax, Kilimanjaro, Kenya, Mt Cook, smaller peaks in Scotland etc. It's not until page 57 that the author touches on the Himalayas. But after providing some information on early attempts on Nanda Devi and Everest, the author digresses to talk about alpine walls in Europe!Thankfully, he talks about 8000m peaks in the next chanpter, but a few pages later, he's talking about rock walls and towers in Yosemite. The author then goes back to "Himalayan Renaissance", covering Annapurna, Makalu, Karakoram peaks and Everest - briefly. Then, it's back to rock walls and towers again.I can't deny that the book is well-done, but being a fan of the Himalayas, I find the author's coverage on the rooftop of the world a little disappointing. What about peaks in China, Bhutan, Myanmar,

South America and Indonesia? Maybe it's my personal preference, but somehow, I find that the author's focus a little off. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Johanne Gregory Excellent book. Was a hit with my mountain climbing 25 year old son. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A good overview of the development of climbing shown through various ... By Kim ke Sviland A good overview of the development of climbing shown through various first ascent the last couple of hundred years. Some of the sections are a bit fractioned and there is a lot of name-dropping making the read less easy.

Thrilling first-hand accounts by those who conquered the world's great mountain peaks. First Ascent takes readers back to a time when there were many mountains yet to be climbed. Using first-hand accounts and archival photographs, it tells the exciting history of world mountaineering by describing in vivid detail the first ascents of the most daunting peaks. At the same time, it reveals the development of climbing styles and climbing technology. Covering every main mountain range in the world, these pioneering ascents include classic mountaineering, rock climbing, unassisted climbing, big-wall climbing, ice climbing and clean climbing. Tragedy and victory are equal partners in these gripping real-life adventures. First Ascent includes the 24 most challenging ascents dating from 1865 to 2005. Among them are: The first ascent of Everest, in 1865, which claimed three lives Beatrice Tomasson's 1902 climb of the Marmolada south face American climber Layton Kor's ascent of the spectacular Utah Towers The first ascent of the north face of North Twin in the Canadian Rockies, one of history's greatest climbs The first free climb of Yosemite's El Capitan, as recently as the 1990s. Climbers, outdoor enthusiasts and would-be adventurers will enjoy these exhilarating true stories told by the climbers and accompanied by thrilling photos taken along the way.

Trying to decipher between the thousands of first ascents is like pinning a bull's-eye on your head at a mountain guides' ice-axe throwing contest. Your choices are bound to elicit controversy. And yet Venables has likely done the trick with his latest book. Climbs he features in a book full of stunning full-page colour photos were all ground-breaking in some way. You'll come away inspired to notch your own first ascents. (Trent Edwards The Calgary Herald 2008-12-18) There's no one better to dissect the peculiar psychology of those driven to physical and mental extreme than [Stephen] Venables, an intellectual who describes the motivations and emotions of a mountaineer in a series of gripping and remarkably honest books, most recently First Ascent. (Simon Crompton TimesOnline UK 2008-10-27) It's a rare pleasure when stunning pictures of heavenly perches are complemented by truly readable text that puts mountain climbing into both a historical and spiritual context. For all its detail on climbers and peaks, this coffee table gift book may be best suited to the select few, just this side of terminally odd, who prefer the straitened life of a peak-freak. (Catherine Mitchell Winnipeg Free Press 2008-12-07) Many books have chronicled mountaineering adventures throughout the world but this book is unique in telling the often-harrowing stories of those who made the initial ascent of peaks both large and small. The individual stories of those who had the courage to go where no one had gone before can be viewed as inspiring or insane, selfishly egocentric or generous. However, it makes for exciting reading. The daring feats of the men and women who were lured to the unknown to make it to the top the first time is covered with flair and amazing photography on every page, including archival footage. Historians and mountaineers, both armchair and actual, will find the book hard to put down.... This book is a joy to read, cover to cover, is a fine reference book, and it would make a great coffee-table book to peruse anywhere throughout. (Georgia Briscoe American Reference Book Annual) Rock climber, writer, and lecturer Venables, the first Briton to climb Mount Everest without oxygen, profiles a sizable list of climbers who are credited with first ascents of summits and other challenging heights in mountain ranges across the globe. (Book News Inc.) About the Author Stephen Venables is a world-renowned mountaineer who climbed Everest without oxygen, pioneering a new route at the same time. He is the author of eight books, including the award-winning Painted Mountains. His most recent project was retracing Ernest Shackleton's steps for the IMAX movie, Shackleton's Antarctic Adventure. Sir Chris Bonington is one of the world's most successful expedition leaders, having led the team that made the first ascents of the south face of Annapurna and the southwest face of Everest. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Introduction We spent the night sitting upright, with our feet hanging over the edge and our backs pressed against a wall of smooth granite. Foam pads insulated us from the snow window ledge on which we sat. From the necks of our down sleeping bags, nylon slings protruded, clipped to a steel peg we had hammered into a crack above us, to make quite sure neither of us rolled over and fell a thousand meters back down the mountain face we had been climbing for the last three days. Above us, the wall curved out of sight, black against the starry sky, unknown, unexplored. I won't say that it was the most comfortable night of my life, but I slept intermittently and, apart from a slight apprehension about the next day's climbing, I was reasonably content. The hard part was getting going in the morning, forcing stiff limbs and numb fingers to function efficiently in the biting cold of dawn. Packing away sleeping bags, lacing boots, lashing crampons to your boots and sorting out the ropes is a fiddly business, particularly when you are operating from a ledge no bigger than a narrow bench. But once we got going and the blood flowed I warmed to the task, thrilled to discover that the crack I had eyed up the previous afternoon was climbable, then overjoyed to discover huge handholds right on the lip of an overhang I had been worrying about all night. Then my companion Dick took over, leading up an almost vertical

square-cut corner filled with ice just solid enough to support the spiked tips of his crampons. Everything was working out nicely, I thought, as I paid out the ropes with one hand and took pictures with the other, then put down the camera to gaze out at all the other peaks crowding the horizon. Above the corner I took over again, tiptoeing right, puzzling out the moves, linking tiny ice smears on the smooth rock to work sideways to another crack, where I could slot in a solid wedge for security. As I looked back a shaft of sunlight finally shone across our north face to illuminate Dick's red helmet and soon I was able to remove gloves and feel the rough crystalline granite warm under my fingers. This tactile movement over the vertical face of the mountain was intoxicating -- pure physical pleasure, somewhere halfway between gymnastics and ballet. Intoxicating also was the linking of hidden clues, the revelation of secrets, the realization of the imaginary line we had sketched up this blank canvas. It was hard work, of course, defying gravity, moving our bodies and our sacks full of gear through the thin Himalayan air, nearly 6,000 meters above sea level; but, late that evening, when we finally settled into our sleeping bags, thrilled tonight to be lying full stretch on bed-sized ledge, we enjoyed all the deep satisfaction of a hard day's task completed. That day's climbing in Kashmir was one of the best of my life. What transformed pure physical delight into something deeper was the fact that no one had been here before. Every twist and turn and surprise of this route was our own discovery; finding a way through this hardest section on the fourth day of the climb, we could dare to hope, for the first time, that we might actually reach the summit. The top wasn't everything: what counted more was the quality of the journey. Nevertheless the summit -- that obscure object of our irrational desires -- gave shape and focus to the journey: it was an endpoint, a goal, a reward which would afterwards add a retrospective glow to the whole experience. And this particular summit was doubly special, because no-one had ever reached it before. The following day, after ten hours hard, hard work on frighteningly steep ice, we made it and two days after that we were safely down at our base camp, relaxing beside a stream in a glade of birch trees, enjoying the delicious sensation of completing the journey and returning to earth, hardly believing that just two days earlier we had been standing on that remote white point in the sky that I had been dreaming about for four years. According to the local people the mountain was called Shivling -- a common Hindu name which means lingam, or phallus, of Shiva. We distinguished this mountain by calling it Kishtwar Shivling, after the nearest market town. It is one of several peaks, mainly Himalayan, where I and my companions have been lucky enough to be first to the summit. None of those summits has been particularly high or outrageously difficult, but it was till immensely satisfying to be there first. That sounds terribly egocentric and smacks a bit of neo-colonial aggrandizement. No-one could deny that mountaineering is quite an egocentric pursuit, or at least quite a selfish one. However, the being first has nothing to do with some kind of "conquest." No mountaineer ever uses the word "conquest," unless, as Edmund Hillary famously did, he is talking about conquering his or her own inner weaknesses. Mountains are never conquered. But occasionally we are lucky enough to find an interesting way up them -- and, we hope, back down them -- and if we happen to be first, the pleasure lies in the exploration, in the lure of the unknown. For most people "first ascent" probably conjures up images of a high, pointed, inaccessible snowy peak -- of a summit. That is a wonderfully graphic symbol of aspiration and of course it is hugely satisfying to be first to the top of an actual peak. But what really counts is how you reach that peak. So, although I was only the 204th person to reach the summit of Everest, I felt very happy to have got there by a new route, with a small four-man team stretched to its absolute limit. Many of the first ascents in this book are in that vein -- first ascents of new routes up a mountain, or first ascents in a new, more sporting style. Not all climbs even lead to a summit at all. For instance, the British mountaineer Joe Brown is not known best for making the first ascent of the world's third highest mountain, Kangchenjunga: most climbers know him as the legendary rock climber who was first to climb Cenotaph Corner -- a 35-meter-high lump of rhyolite stuck half way up a heather hillside in North Wales. Most Himalayan climbers derive as much satisfaction (or probably more satisfaction if they are honest) from a sunny rock climb near sea level, as they do from reaching a remote high altitude summit. So, I have chosen in this book to try and cover the whole game of mountaineering, from the smallest boulders to the summit of Everest and I have attempted to make the coverage both global and historical, starting with the earliest ascents recorded by Man. That means that the scope is almost limitless. Within that boundless field, I have tried to concentrate on ascents that have in some way been groundbreaking. I have included quite large number of mountains or mountain faces, such as the Matterhorn and the North Face of the Eiger, which have the kind of mythic status it is hard to ignore; but I have also tried to include a few esoteric oddities to tempt the reader down less well-trodden paths. There is probably an unrealistically high proportion of first ascents by British climbers. I fear there is an element of personal bias here. However, part of the reason is that British climbers offer a particularly rich wealth of written records to dip into. It also happens that many of the mountaineers who started on the small but geologically varied mountains and cliffs of these little islands have, over the years, gone on to make their mark amongst the biggest and most remote vertical landscapes in the world. They have also played quite a big role in exploring new ground and experimenting with new notions of what is possible. And that is what this book is really all about. Stephen Venables