Book Reviews

Venomous and Poisonous Animals: A Handbook for Biologists, Toxicologists and Toxinologists, Physicians and Pharmacists

Dietrich Mebs

Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2002

US \$129.95, 339 pages, hardcover

Professor Dietrich Mebs of Frankfurt, Germany, has written *Venomous and Poisonous Animals: A Handbook for Biologists, Toxicologists and Toxinologists, Physicians and Pharmacists*. The book contains 261 color photographs and 71 black-and-white figures. The content includes information on the life history of poisonous and venomous animals and their toxins, clinical envenomations and poisonings, and clinical management. There is an introduction to toxinology, a very nice section on venomous marine animals, a section on poisonous marine animals, and then a discussion of terrestrial animals, including invertebrates (scorpions, spiders, ticks, centipedes, bees, wasps, hornets, beetles, caterpillars), amphibians, lizards, snakes, birds, and mammals.

The figures are plentiful and of very high quality, with superb color reproduction. I found most of the clinical recommendations to be up-to-date but not very comprehensive or extensive. Furthermore, there is a bit of therapeutic nihilism, such as the advice that no specific therapy is recommended for a fire coral sting. Anyone who has suffered a fire coral envenomation will attest that it hurts and that there are effective therapies. Additionally, much of this book has been translated into English with the assistance of an Australian author, so oftentimes drugs that are mentioned are not in US formularies.

The strengths of this book are in the descriptions of the creatures, discussions of methods of envenomation, and wonderful photographs. It belongs in the library of anyone within its intended audience who wishes to have a complete reference set related to toxinology. It provides more than a sophisticated overview—it is well written and quite fascinating.

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The Mountaineers Anthology Series, Volume I: Glorious Failures

The Mountaineers Anthology Series, Volume II: Courage & Misfortune

Seattle, WA: Mountaineers Books, 2001

US \$16.95 each, 236 pages (Vol 1) and 253 pages (Vol 2), softcover

Many a glorious tale has been written of climbers' exploits in the lofty places of the world. Many a heroic story has been told of the struggle to reach the summit, the fulfillment (temporary at least) found there, and the trip back down. The triumphant return to base camp, the joy of accomplishment, and the afterglow of satisfaction all are widely chronicled. The mountaineering literature is replete with such tales, and they are truly inspirational to those of us who bag a peak or two once in a while.

Not so common are the tales of failures, of climbs that started and never finished, of summits almost reached but climbers turned around, of companions fallen and left where they lay as the mountain claimed their lives, and of mountaineers who did not return to their families. It is true that these tales are out there, but they certainly are not celebrated or embraced with the enthusiasm reserved for the tales of triumph.

The *Mountaineers Anthology Series* is a new effort by the prolific outdoor publishing house to collect and abstract some of the best mountaineering literature written. Herein lie tales by some of the world's most prominent climbers and chroniclers; some tales are from works long out of print. Each vignette is resurrected, thematically grouped with similar stories, and provided with a commentary.

Volume I: Glorious Failures is about climbs that got away and summits never attained. We read of Belmore Browne and Professor Herschel Parker being turned back by storms merely 150 feet from the summit of Mt. McKinley on their third trip to the mountain. We learn of the effects of isolation, fear, and privation on the close friendship of David Roberts and Don Jensen as they attempt Alaska's Mt. Deborah. Joe Simpson's story of being plucked from the face of the Petit Dru by helicopter after his bivvy ledge collapsed makes me wonder if I really have the mettle to play this game. Stories of the 1939 American Expedition to K2 and what went wrong from different perspectives of the players are fascinating and offer a window into the human complexities encountered during such an undertaking, and they show the challenge of the mountain. Sixteen riveting tales in