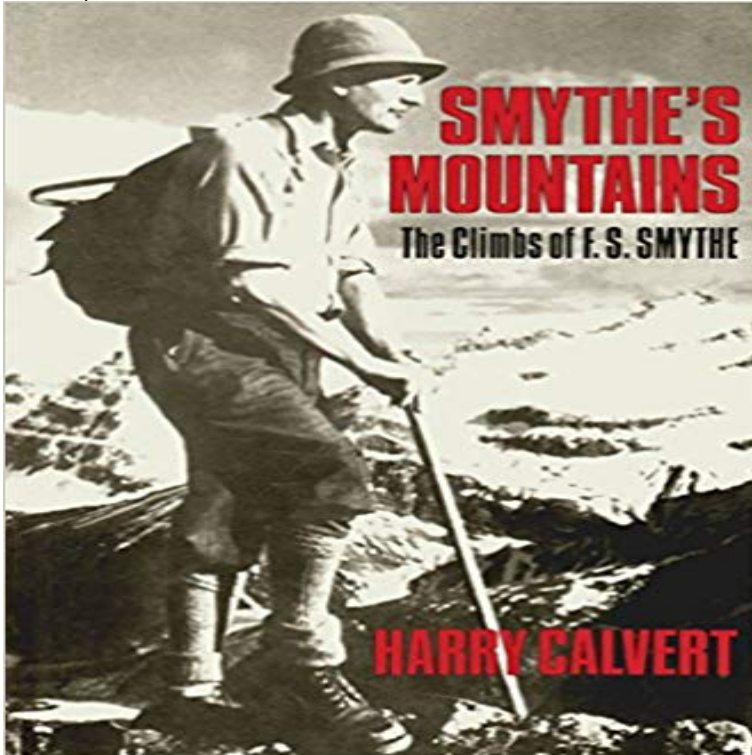


Smythes Mountains: The Climbs of F.S. Smythe



Among mountaineers, Frank Smythe ranks as one of the greats. His achievements are legendary: the conquest of Kamet; the solo climb to within a thousand feet of Everest's summit; his triumphs in the Alps and the Rockies. He was born to be a mountaineer. He climbed his first peak at the age of seven, his only companion a sixteen-year-old guide. He served his climbing apprenticeship in the hills of North Wales, but soon moved on to the Alps. The Alpine chapters are, one might say, this book's flanks: the central position is held by the Himalayas. Even so, the most satisfying of his mountain experiences were not those on the mightiest ranges but adventures of lesser drama: not the Brenva Face climbs on Mont Blanc, the classic round at Zermatt or the innovations in the Bernese Oberland; his first love remained the Tyrol and the Alps of central Switzerland. And in the Himalayas it was the same: the indispensable dimensions he found in the Bhyundar Valley (a mountain valley, true), which he described uniquely in *The Valley of Flowers*. However, for many readers it's the high drama of the major peaks that will have the greatest appeal. That means Kangchenjunga, Kamet, Everest. Harry Calvert does not mince words about the leader of the Kangchenjunga expedition: a leader who believed that the will was everything, who demanded the impossible while neglecting the necessary. The result was failure, but for Smythe there were the consolations of Ramthang and Jonsong Peaks. And invaluable experience which, as leader of a privately organised expedition, took him to the top of Kamet. Then came Everest. Smythe was the obvious leader, but not to the climbing Establishment: he came from the wrong background, the wrong school... This is a grand book that will appeal strongly to mountaineers, and to armchair climbers too.

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