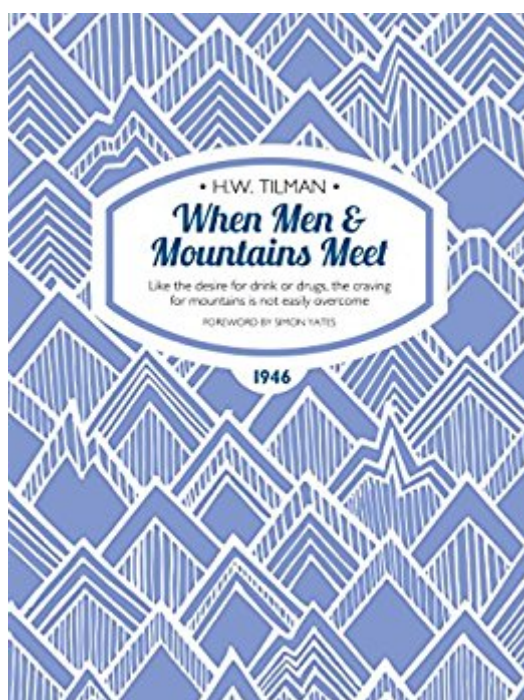


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When Men & Mountains Meet: Like The Desire For Drink Or Drugs, The Craving For Mountains Is Not Easily Overcome (Tilman: The Collected Edition)



Synopsis

“We had climbed a mountain and crossed a pass; been wet, cold, hungry, frightened, and withal happy. One more Himalayan season was over. It was time to begin thinking of the next.” “Strenuousness is the immortal path, sloth is the way of death.” First published in 1946, the scope of H.W. Bill Tilman’s *When Men & Mountains Meet* is broad, covering his disastrous expedition to the Assam Himalaya, a small exploratory trip into Sikkim, and then his wartime heroics. In the thirties, Assam was largely unknown and unexplored. It proved a challenging environment for Tilman’s party, the jungle leaving the men mosquito-bitten and suffering with tropical diseases, and thwarting their mountaineering success. Sikkim proved altogether more successful. Tilman, who is once again happy and healthy, enjoys some exploratory ice climbing and discovers Abominable Snowman tracks, particularly remarkable as the creature appeared to be wearing boots—there is no reason why he should not have picked up a discarded pair at the German Base Camp and put them to their obvious use. And then, in 1939, war breaks out. With good humour and characteristic understatement we hear about Tilman’s remarkable Second World War. After digging gun pits on the Belgian border and in Iraq, he was dropped by parachute behind enemy lines to fight alongside Albanian and Italian partisans. Tilman was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his efforts—and the keys to the city of Belluno, which he helped save from occupation and destruction. Tilman’s comments on the German approach to Himalayan climbing could equally be applied to his guerrilla warfare ethos. “They spent a lot of time and money and lost a lot of climbers and porters, through bad luck and more often through bad judgement.” While elsewhere the war machine rumbled on, Tilman’s war was fast, exciting, lightweight and foolhardy—and makes for gripping reading.

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