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**SEAT OF THE GODS**

Almost two years to the day after the ascent of Everest—on May 25th of this year—another British expedition reached the summit of Kangchenjunga, then the highest unclimbed mountain in the world.

This was the mountain which Sir John Hunt has described as a tougher mountain than Everest, the mountain which had repelled the world's finest mountaineers and killed some of them, is constantly swept by terrible ice avalanches, and has been described as the most beautiful but the most dangerous mountain in the world.

We are still waiting to read the full story of the successful expedition—which stopped 10 of 15ft. below the actual summit to preserve "the seat of the gods" untouched—but in the meantime there has been published a lively account of last year's reconnaissance which explores the southwest face of the mountain, by which it was finally climbed, for the first time ("Kangchenjunga," by John W. Tucker. Elek Books, London, 21s.).

**Biggest ice fall**

Mr. Tucker, a well-known Lake District climber and former instructor at the Outward Bound Mountain School at Eskdale, who was a member of the reconnaissance expedition. He tells with refreshing modesty and humour how the party discovered a possible route to the summit by way of what must be one of the biggest ice falls in the world, and this was, in fact, the route used by Dr. Charles Evans and his companions in their successful bid this year.

The leader of the reconnaissance expedition was John Kempe, a young schoolmaster who, the previous year, had reconnoitered the possibilities of this formidable south-west face, the side of the mountain which the late F. S. Smythe once pronounced unclimbable.

Much of the credit for this year's successful ascent of Kangchenjunga should undoubtedly go to Kempe. Gilmour Lewis

(another climber with faith in his own convictions), Tucker and the other members of this small expedition with limited funds. The bulk of the expense was shouldered by the climbers themselves. They carried no oxygen and the absolute minimum of scientific equipment.

### **Racy account**

Besides his racy account of their own expedition, Tucker gives us a useful and exciting summary of all the earlier attempts on the mountain, and his book is thus the entire history of the third highest mountain in the world. It is a climbing history which has lasted exactly 50 years, the first attempt on the mountain in the modern sense being led by the notorious Aleister Crowley and ending in shameful disaster. In contrast, later attempts by the Bavarians and others were in the highest traditions of mountaineering.

Tucker's style is pleasing, his narrative clear and exciting and his sense of humour evident on nearly every page. Although he agrees that the more correct spelling of the mountain is "Kangchenjunga" he misses out the first "g" in his title and throughout because of the familiarity of this incorrect form "through use by the British Press."

I would have preferred him to have stuck to his guns.

There is a short foreword by Sir John Hunt.

A.H.G.