

(Read ebook) Mind over Matter

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Ranulph Fiennes

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Ranulph Fiennes : Mind over Matter before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Mind over Matter:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. An appropriate titleBy Rick Di VitaAs I read this book I found it hard to believe that what I was reading was actually written by one of the adventurers. I was sure that I must be reading an account of their expedition based on one of their diaries that was recoverd next to their bodies. That Fiennes and Strand found it withing themselves to keep going is hard to believe, even now, and yet they achieved their goal. I would rank what they did one of the most "out there" of human achievements. And for that reason alone this book begs to be read.5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Driven and not by pleasureBy Lynn HarnettEnglishmen Ranulph Fiennes and Mike Stroud together made four failed attempts on the North Pole. Their major success was an expedition both inwardly expected to fail - the unsupported (carry everything) crossing of Antarctica. There had already been an unsupported trip to the South Pole. Indeed, as they were making their crossing, the Scandinavian explorer Erling Kagge - who claimed the first unsupported trip to the North Pole, disputed by his rivals Stroud and Fiennes - was making the first solo unsupported trip to the South Pole. The crossing of the Antarctic continent, however impractical, was the next logical goal. This account, and another by Stroud entitled "Shadows on the Wasteland," stress the grinding wear and tear on the human body, the bleak, black thoughts that accompany every labored step, and the life-threatening hazards of weather, crevassed terrain and starvation. The difference in their stories is entirely point-of-view and personality. Fiennes, the leader, sounds a practical, matter-of-fact note - his

appendices on leadership, equipment, history and topography are nearly as long as his personal account. Stroud, the younger and smaller man, is more volatile and impassioned, resentful of the very notion of leadership in a two-man expedition. They began the trip unsure that they would even be able to budge their sledges - loaded with 485 pounds of food, fuel and equipment. "It would be so embarrassing if, once in our harnesses, our efforts came to nought and the sledges refused to budge," says Stroud. After four hours they had moved only a couple of miles on their 1,700 hundred mile journey. And the next day they had their first equipment failure - a thermos that left one of the major respites of their day, hot soup, cold and full of gelatinous fat globs. On they went. Sails, parachutes inflated by the wind, had been an early bone of contention between them. Stroud was insistent, Fiennes, dubious about their usefulness and the added weight, agreed reluctantly. On their first try both found them terrifying and exhilarating. Says Stroud, "Compared with the toil of manhauling, to be pulled forward at high speed was a delight so intense that to ignore it, merely because it was difficult and dangerous, was near impossible." And Fiennes, "After a hectic ten minutes of being dragged over ice ridges, crossing ski tips and being struck in the back by the sledge.... I suddenly spotted a blueish shadow some forty feet ahead." Fiennes threw himself to one side. Stroud, used to seeing his companion fall, started to go around. Going too fast to stop, he plunged into the crevasse. Says Fiennes, "Appalling thoughts crowded my mind: chiefly how I would explain Mike's death to his wife and mother." But Stroud had landed on a precarious snow bridge. The description of extricating him and his sledge is harrowing. The sledge was permanently but not crucially damaged. On they went. Black thoughts, with no other outlet, turned on one another. Their chief friction was pacing. Stroud believed Fiennes was going slower than necessary because of brooding over his age (47); Fiennes believed Stroud was wasting energy by going too fast and later attributed hypothermic episodes to this depletion. Both experienced intense anger toward the other, most of which they avoided expressing except in their diaries. Consuming 5,200 calories a day, they were using 6,000 to 8,000, even 10,000. Slow starvation far outpaced the lessening of weight on the sledges. Because of Stroud's medical record keeping, (ironically described in greater daily detail by Fiennes) chemical changes and physical debilitation were documented with appalling exactitude. Both were subject to digestion problems, chronic frostbite infections, sores from chafing clothing and harnesses, skin damage from the depleted ozone layer, blindness from white-outs and from the absence of anything to focus on. But starvation was chief among their troubles, leading to muscle loss (even of the heart muscle) as well as every bit of insulating fat. When Fiennes finally called a halt after Stroud experienced several life-threatening bouts of hypothermia and hypoglycemia they had crossed the continent, although not the ice shelf which intervened between continent and ocean. They had succeeded, raising millions (at a penny per mile) for the Multiple Sclerosis Society, accomplishing major physiological research and being first to cross the continent unsupported. This, despite all the practical, idealistic reasons given, was their reason for going, a reason incomprehensible to most of us. Both books are well-written, expressive of separate personalities undergoing the same grueling physical and mental hardships. Both acknowledge they could not have made it without the other, for mental reasons as well as physical. Both are riveting accounts of exploration in a place few of us ever wish to go.

9 of 12 people found the following review helpful. will make you appreciate the dignity of earlier explorers
By A Customer
Amazing what they did, but told in a very undignified, uninspired manner. After finishing this I went immediately to Mawson's "Home of the Blizzard" and the contrast not only in writing style but personal qualities is startling. Fiennes complains endlessly, in a petty manner, about his companion-. He keeps telling the reader he is tougher, faster, better navigator, etc. yet he made some major screwups in planning (although he did a good job of avoiding the polar bears!). And the recollections are so self-centered, down to numerous photos of frostbitten toes, fingers etc, plus an hourly update of the status of every blister and hangnail. And he wrote the book after the fact! Scott, Mawson, Shackleton and many other earlier explorers didn't gripe one tenth as much even in their diaries, written in the midst of the pain and agony. And those earlier guys actually noticed their surroundings and wrote of them poetically. Since Fiennes took the trip mainly as fodder for a book (he says so in the book) you'd think he could have offered the reader much more. The earlier explorers accomplished things for the greater good - mapping, meteorological recordkeeping, collecting biological specimens, etc. They wrote their books, or published their journals, to finance exploration, not the other way around. And the MS cause seems dubious, considering it wasn't Fiennes' idea, but rather a condition placed on them to get funding. I found it depressing all in all. Much more inspiring to read about Scott freezing out there than this guy surviving.

In November 1992, Sir Ranulph Fiennes and Dr Michael Stroud set out to attempt the first unassisted crossing of the Antarctic continent. For ninety-seven days the two men fought pain, starvation and snowblindness, dragging 500-pound sledges across the frozen roof of the world. Equipment failure and injury dogged them, hypothermia very nearly claimed their lives, and the friendship between them turned to mutual hatred. Yet their will to succeed endured, and they completed by far the longest unsupported journey in Polar history.