More than MOUNTAINS

John A. Jackson
Purple Primula at 16,500 feet on Kolahoi, Kashmir Himalaya
More than Mountains

BY

John A. Jackson

With frontispiece in colour forty-eight illustrations in half-tone and six line drawings and maps

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J. A. J.
I

Visit to Kashmir

I was looking at Nanga Parbat, a tall white peak due north of me that seemed very close. This was different from operational flying—the smell of oil and petrol was gone. No longer did the sticky sweat gel the jute-dust from supply sacks. Eyes could see clearly; the body felt clean. Life was good. Earlier in the day a glorious sunrise had lit the snows of the Pir Punjals to a rich golden colour as I cycled past the Maharajah’s Palace by Dal Lake. Now I was on Chergand, a ‘hill’ of 9000 ft. overlooking the Vale of Kashmir. My walk had taken me through fields of wild mustard, along paths lined with star tulips, and over stream-beds filled with “Crown Imperial” lilies. I had enjoyed an icy bath in a rock pool at the foot of a waterfall—newly melted snow, and the coldest water I’d ever touched. It had been a good finish to the walk scrambling over rocks, and floundering in a 500-foot snow-gully. Now I could sit and watch the clouds sinking below ridge after ridge of the snow-covered Himalaya. North and north-east were high, bare peaks and snow-filled valleys; regions, perhaps, where man had never trod. At night the snow would be growing pink, then suffusing into purple shadows—a cold land, maybe, but with a strong pull at the heart. I longed to trek into it, to know the mountains, to find out something about the people who lived among them. This was what it was like seeing the Himalaya for the first time.

For many months I had been flying with 31 Squadron over the Burma and Assam hills on the other side of India, helping to supply Wingate’s Chindits or Army outposts with food and ammunition. Daily supply drops to hill stations such as Tiddim,
Falam, and Haka became routine and easy, but when, after the Japanese advance, the destinations were altered to very exact and difficult dropping-zones, the comfortable feeling quickly changed. Most flights entailed covering very mountainous country, and when the great thunder-headed nimbo-cumulus clouds swept in from the Bay of Bengal, skimming the ridges at a hundred feet up or less, they were not always pleasant. Despite this, throughout the whole of my operational flying I always looked forward to escaping from the steamy heat of the air-strip in north-east Bengal and seeing the hills once again. The Dakota III became my magic carpet, my escape from the heat, dirt, flies, and monotony. A dawn take-off and a course of 110° meant not only a cool trip at nine or ten thousand feet but also a possible glimpse of the cloud-layers once again flowing over the Chin hills and into the deep-cut valleys, like the white, foaming waves over a monster Niagara. Jungle trails seen dimly, or scattered hill villages perched on precipitous ridges, never failed to fascinate, and the distant horizon as seen from above the Brahmaputra valley in Assam stimulated my desire to climb in the Himalaya as soon as possible. At the completion of an operational tour I had persuaded Len Eyres and Bobby Finberg to visit Kashmir with me. Chergand was my first hill.

On arrival at Srinagar, “City of the Sun” and capital of Kashmir, we were fortunate in meeting Mrs F. Castle, and being allowed to stay at her home, Prasada Villa. From the first moment when we saw the green paddy-fields, blue lakes, and distant snow-covered hill-tops we were impressed by the beauty of the Kashmir Vale, and our eyes feasted themselves on the fresh colouring of spring blossoms—cherry, almond, and orange.

During our few days’ stay we wandered among the narrow streets of Srinagar Old Town, watching the men at work on intricate wood carvings; we mingled with the shouting Kashmiri traders, and avoided permanent injury beneath the wheels of tongas (ponies and traps). We glided across the Dal Lake in shikaras to visit famous Moghul Gardens, such as Shalimar, which was built by Shah Jahan for his wife Nur Jahan, “Light of the World,” and visited house-boats lying idle beneath a canopy of leaves along
the Jhelum river. Always there was something new to see. Kashmiri *dungas* (shallow boats), paddled along by men wearing ragged clothes and skullcaps, moved about their business all day long, and in the evenings we enjoyed hearing the music of light voices as wooden boats were poled across the water by women wearing long, flowing shawls.

After Chergand, I enjoyed a day in the snow at Killenmarg, from whence I saw Nanga Parbat again, and this was followed by a day of trout-fishing in the clear, rushing stream that flows from Haramoukh and down a steep *nullah*, or ravine, to the Sind river. We had been invited to join Mrs Castle on the fishing venture and as she lifted a trout cleanly from the water below the bridge at Kangan she laughingly told us a story of Gangerbal Lake. This lake nestles in an area of grassy upland at about 11,000 ft., near to the 5000-foot precipice of Haramoukh—'the face that dispels afflictions.' Hindu pilgrims visit the lake each year and cast upon its sacred waters the ashes of their cremated dead. Many years ago a relative of Mrs Castle's, a keen fisherman, stocked the lake with trout, an act which was considered irreverent by the Hindus, who protested that the fish were in fact eating their own people. Eager to put matters right the fisherman spent a prolonged camping and fishing holiday by the shores of the lake, in an effort to remove the offending fish. This may have pacified the pilgrims, but when I saw the lake late in 1945 there were still plenty of four- and five-pound trout enjoying life in the cool glacial water. I've chuckled at this fishing tale many times, and I'm quite sure there would be a twinkle in the fisherman's eye too, as he did his best to pacify the Hindus.

On the last day of the holiday I again set out at dawn and cycled along the shores of the Bod Dal to Harwan, where I hid the bicycle in some bushes. I wished to climb Mahadeo, a peak 13,300 ft. high, which, whether snow-covered or otherwise, helps to make the background to the famous Shalimar one of the prettiest gardens in the world. As it was early in the year the snow still lay deep in the gullies, and I was many hours—almost ten—before I reached the top, feeling very exhausted, but jubilant at the completion of eight thousand feet of ascent from Harwan.
Chergand and Mahadeo were the beginning, I thought, as I cycled back to Srinagar in the evening, and I resolved to return again to the everlasting snows.

My chance came in the July of the same year after completing several more months of operational flying. I was reduced from 12st. 4lb. to 9st. 8lb. after serious food-poisoning, and obtained a month’s furlough. After a few days of rest and good food at Prasada Villa I felt fit enough to trek, and, meeting Dr Ernest Neve, I decided to make the journey from Pahalgam across the hills to Sonamarg. En route I crossed my first glacier to reach a height of 15,000 ft. on Kolahoi, using a tent-pole in lieu of ice-axe. Now I realize it was the worst form of folly, but at the time each step over the dry, open ice put fresh life into a sick plain-dweller escaping to the hills. It could have ended otherwise, but as it was the fresh air, cool days, and vigorous exercise effected their own cure, so that I arrived in Sonamarg tired but happy. At Sonamarg I met Harry Tilly, Gordon Whittle, and Wilfred Noyce, who were preparing a Base Camp for the newly formed Aircrew Mountain Centre. Back in Srinagar I sought out Wing-Commander ‘Tony’ Smythe and asked him if I might be taken on to the strength of the unit. Fortunately, he was requiring rock-climbing instructors; my experience in climbing in the British Isles was considered sufficient, the trek of the previous weeks was looked upon with favour, and I returned to Aircrew Mountain Centre within three weeks.
Aircrew Mountain Centre was primarily intended for aircrews who were just about to go on operational duty, or who had just finished a tour of operational flying, but later we also accommodated groups of glider troops and paratroops. The four to five weeks' course aimed at getting the crews physically and mentally fit by taking them into the mountain country north of the Vale of Kashmir, where they trekked along the high valleys or climbed on snow-ice and rock in the mountains. At first the headquarters were at Ganderbal on a group of house-boats, but later moved to an hotel at Nagin Bagh, on the shores of Dal Lake. As parties arrived from various squadrons or training units they were kitted out with rucksacks, clothing, ice-axes, and boots, put through various tests of fitness, then allowed at least one evening to enjoy the fleshpots of Srinagar.

The following morning a leader was assigned to a group of ten or twelve, and they were transported by truck to Woyl Bridge, in the Sind Valley. After a walk of six or seven miles they then camped beneath the walnut-trees beside the rushing Sind river. From here the itinerary varied, and often a course would rush through the valley in two days to the trekking camp at Sonamarg.

Usually I liked to stay a second night and take my companions up the Kangan Nullah to the ancient Buddhist ruins at Nara Nag. From here we would continue the ascent through forests of blue pine and deodar, the air impregnated with the odour of resin and the track strewn with hundreds of bronze pine-cones—a track which led to slopes covered with short grass and tiny blue tarns.
below Haramoukh. Generally on this day we would obtain good, clear views of the glaciated Pir Punjal Mountains; it was a quick way of escaping from the well-trodden road, and prepared the muscles for the dusty journey to Gund the next day.

This was a fourteen-mile walk, and whenever it was hot we stopped to bathe as often as possible in the cold, milky-coloured river which drains the melting snows of the high peaks on the border of Ladakh and Kashmir. Sometimes we halted at small groups of houses built on the Swiss chalet pattern and purchased sweet, milkless tea flavoured with the juice of fresh lemons, or bought pocketfuls of walnuts from small boys dressed in ragged clothing made from coarsely woven wool. Along this route were many terraced fields, which being irrigated, grow crops of rice, as well as barley and thick plantations of maize. Often these fields are raided by black bear, which are numerous in the hills above, and sometimes as we sat round the camp-fires at Gund we could hear the farmers placed on platforms built in the trees shouting and beating drums to scare away the marauders.

Above Gund, at 10,000 ft. on the southern slopes of the Sind Valley, there was a favourite hut of mine—Zaiwan. Dense coniferous forests surrounded it, and the route there was thickly covered with a soft cushion of pine-needles. Many glaciers, ridges, and high peaks lay within range of a day or two on either side of the Yem Har—the pass where the Kashmir pony-men would brew tea in thanksgiving for a safe crossing. Down at the forest hut they would light fires and sing most of the night to keep black bear away from the ponies. Above the hut the country was exceedingly beautiful. Sparkling streams cut their beds through shale; there were smooth grass slopes, and crossed pathways partly covered with yellow-flowered dwarf rhododendron, buckwheat, and sky-blue gentian. As you wandered freely through the rich-scented alpine meadows you could see the falcon swoop on a low-flying bunting, or hear the cry of alpine swifts as they skimmed the tarn of the Goddess Yem. The eye would sweep along the ridges leading to the peaks of Sekiwas and the Sentinel. Ever since a lone trek through the area in 1944 I had longed to climb the dominating peak of this fine country—a most striking peak, with
well-defined ridges sweeping down majestically from a final cone 15,118 ft. in height. I had named it Sentinel.

June 23, 1945, was a cold day, as a pupil and I left the Zaiwan forest hut for the pass and the peak. Quite early my pupil was mountain-sick and had to return to the hut and the warmth of a pine-log fire. A cool, refreshing wind fanned my cheeks as I plodded through the snow past the Yem Sar—now a bright blue tear-drop against a whitened back-cloth. Two hours more and I stood at the foot of the Pass.

At this time of year the Yem Har was a smooth, steep slope of hardened snow. Was it possible that in August and September here would be a trade route between the Sind and Liddar Valleys? Now in June it was presenting barely justifiable risks for a solitary climber. Cutting furiously with the ice-axe, or kicking and stamping steps with my feet, I gradually made a staircase to the top of the pass. My toes froze, but I remembered Smythe’s advice, so curled and bunched them till circulation returned. A final cornice of quite large dimensions curled a white snarling lip towards me—but its bite was mild, its snow trickling down my neck giving but a suggestion of discomfort. A long ridge of sedimentary rock then led me eastward to a col and the final sweep of rock to the summit. Pinnacles not of very great difficulty had to be climbed with exceeding care due to the slippery nature of the rock. It was my first climb of the year at this height, and progress became shockingly slow. I would sit down to rest, decide to turn back, and within a minute of resting decide again and again—each time it happened—that I would go on to the next broad ledge. This day taught me much of climbing at altitudes over 12,000 ft. I realized that it was not just technique and physical fitness that were required, but also a large proportion of mental push and drive.

Large masses of cumulus were already drifting towards the peak as I sat on the summit looking down at the ribbon of the Sind Valley eight thousand feet below. Kolahoi—the Matterhorn of Kashmir—was already partly hidden, and Sekiwas Peak stood out boldly against the grey, billowing cloud. As my climb was probably a first ascent, I had a feeling of great satisfaction with the
unique view, but really I was too tired to feel any great elation—it was enough to be there.

Sekiwas Peak (15,404 ft.) was the sister peak to Sentinel. In May Johnny Hansbury, Bill Starr, and Stanley Brooks had tried the mountain. For a few hours—all too short—I was able to pay them a visit at the hut and with Johnny went up on the Zaiwan ridge to view the problem. Masses of wet snow gave little promise. We were chased off the ridge by a violent storm, lightning flashing all around us. It was an amusing glissade down to the hut as at one moment I attempted to go round both sides of a tree at the same time. (It didn’t work.) Later, at midnight, the three left the hut and for many hours forced their way through deep snow and along corniced ridges. Finally they turned back several hours from the top, and at great peril from avalanche. This I learned later, as I had gone on to Sonamarg with a party of glider troops.

Later in the year I was again at Zaiwan, with Bill Starr and three others, to attempt the peak. It was a memorable ascent for various reasons. The pass was clear, but it was a dirty day, and clouds played hide-and-seek with our mountain. One of the party was an elderly Squadron-Leader and Meteorology Officer who enjoyed himself, and though he didn’t climb to the summit he came most of the way to the exposed pinnacle ridge, the four of us being left traversing the steep but broken north face, which was partly plastered with new snow. At the summit there was no view, as the clouds thickened and grew black with menace. We found a cairn—some one had been there before. On the descent I had my first experience in mountains of an electrical storm. Our ice-axes sizzled and sang with the static charge, hair tingled, and as we dropped the axes on the ridge to scramble down to safer shelter the storm broke upon us. Electricity discharged among the rocks of the shattered ridge, and great hailstones pelted down around us. Under the overhang of a great boulder we crouched for half an hour while the first fierceness of the storm spent itself. Our ‘Met. Office’ whiled away the time by giving a scientific explanation for the formation of hailstones, splitting them with his thumb-nail to show the layers of ice surrounding a nucleus around which they appeared to have frozen in succession.
Ancient and Modern: A Street Scene in 'Old Town,' Srinagar
House-boats beneath a Canopy of Leaves along the Jhelum River, Kashmir
The crossing of the pass and the journey back to Zaiwan was a cold and wetting experience. Once again the forest hut became a welcome home. A pine-log fire flaming brightly, with the resin oozing and bubbling from the cells, quickly dried our clothes. Hot tea, an ample meal, and good talk rounded off the day. That day was my last among the high hills above Zaiwan, but later, in 1952, I saw them again from the West Liddar Valley. They hadn’t changed, of course, and seeing Sekiwas and Sentinel was to feel again the thrill of ascent, to recall the grandeur of panorama, and remember the little hut built snugly among the pines.

Having stayed a night at Gund, we used to walk through the Gagangir Gorge, where rock walls rise steeply on either side for over a mile, and once through it across the beautiful Alpine meadow of Sonamarg to the trekking-camp.

In late spring the ground is covered with Himalayan peony, white and blue anemones, Primula rosea, and broad spreads of yellow-flowered saffron from which the area derives its name of Sonamarg—the Meadow of Gold. The trekking-camp was situated at the top of a grassy hill at a height of 9000 ft. From it we had clear, uninterrupted views of the Serebal Peaks to the north-east, lofty buttresses of grey limestone to the north, the spires of “Cathedral Peak” to the west, and, dominating the camp to the south-west, the three prongs of Great Thajiwas (15,928 ft.), with a glacier pushing down from its rock base.

We had our climbing-camp at a height of 11,000 ft. in Thajiwas—“Valley of Glaciers.” There was an almost unlimited amount of rock on which to climb, glaciers were numerous, and the volcanic peaks rising as high as 16,400 ft. often provided climbing routes of high order. During the late months of 1944 in this valley I had begun my apprenticeship on snow-ice and glaciers, being fortunate to follow the good example set me by Wilfred Noyce, who was then the chief instructor. Together we climbed Mosquito Peak—not a difficult mountain by its normal route, but for me a memorable day.

In the valley too I encountered my first snow pigeons, Tibetan fox, and a snow leopard—a fleeting glimpse this, as the swiftly moving animal sped across the névé of one of the glaciers.
Lammergeiers and griffon vultures often lurked about the camp in search of offal, and soon I could distinguish the whistle of a marmot from the call of a white-capped redstart or the Himalayan dipper. Bears were numerous too, and though we rarely saw the animals we found their tracks criss-crossing the snow areas throughout the year; so much so that one small offshoot nullah was named Bear Valley. Just once in the late October of 1945 I saw a mother bear and two cubs, and chased after them to obtain a photograph, but on the glacier at 14,000 ft. I was soon outpaced.

Early in 1945 Wing-Commander Smythe had left Aircrew Mountain Centre, as did most of the very best instructors, such as Wilfred Noyce, Harry Tilly, Gordon Whittle, Ralph Stokoe, and John Hansbury. The climbing-camp was abolished, and mountaineering frowned upon. Secretly, with the aid of an eager group of glider pilots, I built a crude hut, with rough stone walls roofed with silver birch, which was covered with squares of turf. We placed fibre mats on top of the earth floor, made pegs from which to hang our clothes, and succeeded in making it fairly comfortable. The roof leaked at times and we got wet, but we were content, for from the hut we could walk and climb on most of the glaciers and peaks in the valley. Happily, once our plot was revealed to the new C.O. some five weeks later, the results justified it, and extra tents and mountain rations were supplied.

Outside the hut we could look straight across to slopes of silver birch, and, swinging clockwise, see up the boulder-strewn valley to a snow col at 14,200 ft. Next came Mosquito Peak, which joined Valehead Peak by a jagged, toothy ridge. Valehead Peak threw off a north-west ridge that formed the flanking wall of two tiny glaciers, and finally terminated at a great block we named Sunday Buttress. Following round, the eye was caught up by towering seracs on a large, steep glacier that we named Glacier III. A long ridge-peak bristling with 'gendarmes,' and named Kazim Pahalin Bal, formed the western boundary of the glacier, much of which was hidden by a huge crag, Glacier Crag—almost a peak in itself, soaring nearly perpendicularly above the hut for two thousand five hundred feet. Glacier Crag was separated from Swallow Crag, of an equal size, by a deep rift named Amphi-
theatre Gully, which terminated at its head in a 1000-foot wall of rock. Next to Swallow Crag came Glacier II, another steep and broken glacier which abutted against a massive rock curtain. The névé of the glacier ran smoothly upward towards the final rock pyramid of Great Thajiwas. Glacier I was cut off from our view by rock buttresses; nor could we see the bottom part of the valley where the glacier stream joined the Sind river below Sonamarg, then sped on its way through the Gagangir Gorge. The summit of Cathedral Peak used to pierce through the screen of evening mist that swept up the valley from the Sind, and in the morning caught the first rays of the rising sun which seemed to change its serrated summit of leaden-grey rock into battlements of burnished gold. Finally the views to the north-east and east were cut off by the lower pine-clad slopes of Zabnar, but it was still possible to see the level top of Luderwas, a grassy alp on which the nomadic Gujar people grazed cattle, sheep, and goats, and which at night was sprinkled with the many winking fires of each separate Gujar camp.

Of the large number of people that stayed at the hut and made climbs from it in 1945 almost all enjoyed living in their mountain home. Many were city-dwellers in civilian life who had never been into the country, and who at first could see little return for the large output of energy required to reach the climbing-hut. Most went away a little puzzled, perhaps, but nevertheless admitting to a new-found enjoyment in rough and ready living in a leaky hut; in strenuous walks and climbs; in sitting round a blazing birch-log fire at night, drinking the odd mugful of coffee and rum, and talking of the day in the hills with friends.

After preliminary days of being taken up to the col across uncomplicated glaciers, or on some rock climb on Swallow or Yellow Crag, the pupils were taken in groups of four or five on the ascent of a peak in the area. Some of the mountains were ascended many times during the year, and by many varied ways, so that now my memories of some of them are intertwined, and it is difficult to unravel the threads. There was the ascent of Valehead Peak (15,528 ft.) by the Pinnacle Buttress route, which was of good average Alpine standard, and which we did perhaps eight or ten times; and there was the ascent of the same peak by Glacier
II, which entailed a complicated glacier crossing and a final rock climb on the precipitous north-west ridge of the mountain. Lesser Thajiwas was too far away for one day's climb, and we usually bivouacked near the snout of Glacier I. Fine bivouacs these, for as we lay on top of thick layers of bracken fronds we could watch the shadows lengthen across the ridge and curtain of the Serabal Mountains; and I remember one outstanding evening when the snow and the rocks above us were tinted pink, the bracken took on a strange ruddy glow as salmon-coloured stratus clouds spread across a sky which changed to purple in the east, and Serabal seemed ablaze with fire as it caught the last rays of the setting sun. The snout of Glacier I above was steep, and could always, in the hot months, be relied upon to give us a strenuous hour or two of step-cutting in hard, bare ice.

Arrow Peak (15,800 ft.) was another fine-looking mountain which I first climbed with John Buzzard and Les Levy. It was an interesting day, which entailed an ascent of steep slabs and short vertical chimneys to reach the top of Amphitheatre Wall, from whence we walked over snow to the col between the 15,700-foot Umbrella Peak (first climbed by Wilfred Noyce and a pupil in 1944) and Cefn Carnedd—High Cairn (climbed by John Buzzard in 1945). From the col we could see the Arrow Peak, which was a prominent rocky spire half-way along the rock rim above Glacier III, and to reach it we had an easy but sensational traverse along the narrow ridge from Cefn Carnedd.

Beyond the col between Valehead Peak and Kazim Pahalim Bal a ridge swung round to the east, and terminated in a pyramid-shaped rock peak of 15,500 ft. Les Levy and I, with a pupil named Topp, first reached the summit of the peak by traversing this ridge, climbing en route a peculiarly shaped gendarme some two hundred feet in height which we named the Crumpled Horn. We found a cave beneath the overhang on the east side of the gendarme, and its walls were studded with thousands of perfectly shaped hexagonal quartz crystals. Near the summit we found a crystal weighing over a pound, and fittingly we named the mountain Crystal Peak. However, the most pleasing memory of that day came early in the climb. We topped a mound of snowy
boulders and looked down upon a clear pool of pure water which reflected the brilliant hyacinth blue of the sky, contrasting with its own deep white surrounding snow. The setting among the mountains was startlingly pretty, perhaps the more so because of the surprise at finding an unfrozen pool at that height so late in the year. Ever afterwards we called it the Baraf Sar—the Snow Tarn.

Climb after climb, mountain after mountain, return to mind whenever I think of Thajiwas, and some of the happiest hill days I have yet had. Two peaks in particular bring back golden memories. One of these, Great Thajiwas (15,928 ft.), was first climbed in 1937 by James Waller. His route was by the Great Couloir from Glacier I—a steep couloir over a thousand feet in height. In 1944 A. J. M. Smythe and Dr Graham almost made the second ascent by traversing back along the north-east ridge from the rock wall at the head of the glacier. Another feasible route was by Glacier II—Waller's descent route in 1937. This glacier extends from the mountain in a broad, level névé below the watershed wall, then steepens at the lower icefall, being much crevassed with seracs threatening anyone ascending the snout. Several parties looked at the glacier, usually finding a broad chasm preventing access to the névé and route to the final pyramid. In 1945 six of us did make the second ascent via this route—a first string of three led by myself, and the second string, led by John Buzzard. The day was not of the best, and wetting sleet chilled us to the bone. Mist obscured our views, but the route-finding, the twisting and turning in and out of crevasse systems, seracs, and snow gullies, was pleasure enough. The great chasm was eventually crossed by a rickety snow bridge, the névé and final pyramid gained.

The other peak, Kazim Pahalim Bal, is a fine ridge about 16,400 ft. in height overlooking the largest of the Thajiwas glaciers, and one evening in August 1945 with Rajbah, a Shitkari ponyman, I carried gear to the small Gujar (or perhaps Neanderthal?) type shelter we had built earlier in the year. Rajbah returned to Sonamarg, and I spent a memorable evening alone among the beautiful moonlit snows of the valley. Suspecting a visit from a prowling black bear, I slept very little, and stayed awake reading F. S. Smythe's The Kangchenjunga Adventure.
Shortly before dawn I ascended to the col at 14,000 ft., and then traversed the Pinnacle Buttress route of Valehead Peak in the warm, rosy glow of early morning. Gwashi Brör, or Kolahoi, and the peaks of Ladakh were magnificently clear, yet I couldn’t recall seeing a more breath-taking view than that of Nanga Parbat during the first crystal-clearness of dawn. It seemed but a stone’s throw away, and all its detail of ice-snow and rock was distinct to the very summit. It was splendid to be among such scenery, so enhanced by the beautiful sweeping ridge I was to ascend.

I climbed the ridge to the East Pinnacle slowly and steadily without any real difficulty, but with a care for loose rock. I remember a short, sensational hand traverse; and later a pretty rock window provided a superb frame for the Liddar Valley and the peaks rimming either side. From the East Pinnacle I traversed many gendarmes—mostly on the right-hand side, where steep rib buttresses and narrow couloirs swept down for thousands of feet to Glacier III. Surprisingly, after the first promise of morning, snow-flakes began to fall and the sky to cloud over before I reached the Central Pinnacle (probably the highest) where I built a cairn. The traverse to the West Pinnacle proved rather more difficult, and progress was slower owing to the cooler weather. On reaching it I decided reluctantly—because I was alone, and the weather worsening—to escape down the crumbled south face to Basmai Nar. A loose but very easy descent over a series of ledges and short rock walls was followed by a rather hurried ascent over two small ice-fields in quite a snow-flurry to the col between Umbrella Peak and the Arrow. I was very fit, and felt quite safe in mountains. This was living life to the full. With no one else to trouble me, I felt a wonderful freedom and a remoteness from the troubles of the world that was balm to the soul. It proved to be an exhilarating run and glissade from Umbrella Peak to Glacier III, and from there down Amphitheatre Gully to camp. Complete happiness after such a rare mountain day compelled me to stay yet another night among those fine volcanic peaks, sleep or not, bears or no bears—but sleep I did, and no bears came.

With ponies one could within a day or so bivouac in the range of the Zogpu Da to the north-west. This was rare trekking
Sonamarg and the 'Valley of Glaciers,' Kashmir
country of high valleys and soaring rock peaks—rather Dolomitic. Below the peaks the hill-slopes and valley floors were covered with the short green grass so loved by sheep. In spring and summer the same ground was carpeted with flowers of a rare beauty—blue poppy, saxifrage, gentian, yellow colchicum, the velvet-petalled edelweiss and starry immortelle. I loved this country. Tracks were rare, and many valleys seemed little if ever frequented by man. Bright blue tarns, or sars, nestled in grassy hollows left by a glaciation long since gone—the tarns fed by the icy melt-water of tiny remnant glaciers that still perch precariously on the steep sides of the Zogpu Peaks.

Occasionally we would find a Gujar encampment—the Gujars being a likeable gipsy race from Jammu. Each year for about three months these Gujars trek from Jammu along the valleys bringing cattle, sheep, and goats to feed on the high Alpine meadows, or margs. Most are dark-skinned and brown-eyed, but, as with Ladakhis and other peoples of Central Asia, I’ve seen them blue-eyed, with rosy cheeks and fair complexions.

Their temporary homes are roughly built, often just a few branches complete with leaves crudely placed together in the shape of a bell-tent. The more permanent shelters used year by year have dry-stone walls some three feet high for a base. Poles and turf are used to make the roof, or in some cases a semi-waterproof canvas is slung over a ridge pole—tent fashion. Sheep and goats are milked, much of the cream being used for making cheese and butter. These Gujars are a people of pride and dignity. The older menfolk still grow long, flowing beards which are often tinted red. The women wear much silver jewellery and trinkets made of quartz and jade and other semi-precious stones. Like many other people of the Himalaya, they are prone to goitre.

Wanderers, they know the Kashmir mountains extremely well, crossing high passes and glaciers with their large flocks of sheep and goats much as the Swiss peasants did not so long ago. I’ve often stopped to talk, on occasion camping with them, and enjoyed cups of hot milk mixed with eggs—the eggs obtained from the few poultry they carry around with them. These Gujars, the Kashmir hillmen, the Baltis and Ladakhis were the people of the
mountains, and much of my interest and enjoyment of the hills came from my meetings with them.

Nichinai (16,141 ft.) is one of the highest of the Zogpu peaks. Its rock is safe to climb, being of the Dras Volcanic series, as is the Thajiwas Valley. John Buzzard and I had a crack at it in early November, 1945, taking with us two of the better pupils of the Mountain Centre. A suitable bivouac was used at the Nichinai Bar, a pass of 13,386 ft. beneath the north face of the mountain, and the day before our attempt I had a bonny walk and climb along a corniced ridge to a shaly peak affording a good view of the north face up which we were to climb. At this late season the temperature was low, and much powder-snow overlaid the rocks. The four of us left the 'bivvy' before daylight. Rough, boulder-strewn ground was a nuisance in the dark, and we stumbled along to the small glacier at the foot of the rock wall. Gradually the distant snow-covered hills became a lighter blue, the rocky buttresses and ribs visible for the first time. Nanga Parbat looked huge and very magnificent as slowly the blue changed to rosy pink, then gradually to a pure gold. The frosted ice glistened and sparkled with sequin-like fairy-lights. A memorable dawn.

We split into two ropes. John took a pupil named Taylor, while I had one whose first name was Brian. Leading off, I crossed the bergschrund and ascended several steep walls of rock that gave John the greatest satisfaction. The sound rock reminded him of the Welsh crags. A long, snow-covered shelf crossed the north face approximately one-third of the way up. This was our immediate destination. I can remember thinking we were a cheerful party. Should we reach the top? We were confident of success.

The steepness eased off a little, but the rocks, now deeply snow-covered, hid the holds for feet and hands. A number of short grooves and gullies led us to the shelf. Here the party suffered a grievous blow, for Taylor was violently sick, and John most generously took on the task of returning with him to the 'bivvy.' For a long time we could see them resting as we climbed, our movements becoming slower as difficulties increased. Scraping away the snow became cold and monotonous work; unthinking I removed my mitten to free my fingers for an awkward traverse,
and at amazing speed they numbed, sticking to the rock—pulling them away there was a sensation of stickiness, as if the skin was peeling from the flesh. The skin remained grey, and later peeled away. Frequently we halted to stamp our feet and beat our hands, but slowly we gained the narrow north-east ridge and traversed the first gendarme. We had been slow—and now our progress was extremely so. Brian was a good pupil and keen. In the short stay at the Mountain Centre he had learned much and climbed several peaks in Thajiwas—he liked mountains, but this was a new experience. The shattered ridge and awkward cornices required great care. Short run-outs of the rope and sound belays when possible became essential. At the second gendarme we halted and carefully weighed up the problem of difficulty and time—and ate. Miles away to the south-east we could see the village of Gund, some nine thousand feet lower down, and beyond the Sind could see the Sentinel, Sekiwas, and Kolahoi. In the north Nanga Parbat still dominated the mountain scene, but beyond and to the north-east high snow peaks suggested the Karakorums.

Our height—15,600 ft.—was not high enough for the time of day and the difficulties that remained. To attempt to reach the summit would mean taking unjustifiable risks with a pupil, because of the speed required. This was the decision I made, and we began to return along the route even more slowly than when we had come. As we were on a north face, the sun no longer shone upon the snow and rock, and all was gripped with a fierce cold. Two red-billed choughs were our only companions. By dusk we reached the glacier, and hurried quickly to the rock-strewn slopes leading to the pass and the ‘bivvy.’ In his usual kindly way John was waiting for us with the ever-welcome pot of tea. This day had its disappointments, but the dawn, the climbing, with its great need for care, and the view from the ridge had more than compensated, and I always remember it as one of my richest mountain experiences.

The climb on Nichinai was also the last of the mountaineering for Aircrew Mountain Centre. Soon the last of the pupils left Sonamarg, and the great igneous peaks of Thajiwas and the Zogpu Da were once again in splendid isolation.
Ladakh—sometimes referred to as Western Tibet—is reached from the Sind valley by the pass called the Zoji La. This pass, which up to 1947 was part of the Ladakh treaty road, is the chief trade route between Kashmir and countries of Central Asia, a route many thousands of years old traversed at all times by a great variety of peoples—the hill Kashmiris, strong, cheerful, but dirty Ladakhis, ragged coolies from Baltistan, brightly clothed horsemen from Hunza, nomadic Tibetans, and wandering lamas. Men from Yarkand come over the pass, driving yaks that carry wool and cloth for trade—carpets too, made from goat-wool that has been sprinkled with water, then trampled to a thick felt with the feet. These carpets are called *numbdahs*. Droves of sheep and goats, each carrying a pack of salt or grain, are brought across the pass by tall, good-looking nomads from Chang Tang. These men will have travelled over a thousand miles from a cold and barren North Tibet to reach the land of milk and honey—Kashmir. The pass is low by Himalayan standards, only 11,500 ft. in height, yet it is notoriously dangerous, for on either side of it rise steep mountains of from 17,000 to 18,000 ft. From November until May the snow lies deep, but once it starts to melt away the griffon vulture and the lammergeier—the lamb eagle of Biblical fame—appear, to dispose of the bodies of ponies and yaks that have been caught in drifts or buried by avalanche.

Once we counted the number of carcasses and piles of bones, finding twenty-three within the space of three miles; at the same time discovering the bodies of two Ladakhis—a man and a boy. Blizzards blow up quickly here at the beginning of winter, and the narrow track that winds its way across the almost vertical
rock-face becomes very treacherous. John Hansbury knew this when once crossing with a number of Australian aircrew. Most of a day, and all of a night, they struggled along in a blizzard, eventually reaching Baltal, in the Sind Valley. Three horses and their loads were lost, but all the men were safe. For a really fine effort, John received the B.E.M.

A similar spell of bad weather must have caught the refugees from the Altai Mountains—Golden Mountains—in 1942. These people left their mountain homes rather than become subjects of a foreign Power, and eventually arrived in Ladakh. They were not allowed to stay, and several thousand pitiful human beings began the journey from the Paskyam Valley over the Zoji La to Kashmir. Babies were thrown into the river or left behind to die, and over a hundred adults are said to have died of exhaustion and cold on the pass.

The highest point of the La is the birthplace of two rivers, the Sind and the Gamru Nah, and there you can watch the streams flow in opposite directions, one to Ladakh and the other to Kashmir. When I crossed the Zoji La in October 1945 I thought it was for the last time, and sat down to memorize my last view through a flurry of snow. Above I could see dimly a large crag—the Zoji Crag, and I remembered the story told me by Daniel Berger, Swiss missionary at Kargil. A legend of Western Tibet tells of a remote mountain valley where lived the Goddess Zoji, who had fallen in love with another local god. The feeling was reciprocated. Unfortunately, several jealous demons, or djinns (with which Ladakh abounds, apparently) took a very poor view of the courtship, and the pair of lovers were turned into beautiful white snow pigeons. Still undaunted, the two planned to escape by flying into Kashmir—the young god to go round by Gilgit and Nanga Parbat, and Zoji to cross by the unnamed pass into the Sind Valley. All was going well, but at the last moment the djinns realized the situation, and as Zoji, flying swiftly to freedom, reached the highest point of the pass, she was changed into a large black rock, which is supposed to have the shape of a woman. From the rock the pass got its name Zoji La—"The Pass of the Goddess Zoji."
The country east of the pass is fine trekking country, and was much enjoyed by members of Aircrew Mountain Centre. I think that to many of us, much of the charm of the country lay in the startling transformation in the people, their customs, clothing, and religion. In strong contrast, too, was the change in mountain scenery, so treeless, rocky, and barren, in Ladakh, as compared with the tree-clad and grassy slopes of the Kashmir valleys. In the beginning I was content to trek in Kashmir, and climb in the valley of Thajiwas, but the change came in November—the once-clear skies filling with the leaden clouds of winter. I had a small party staying at Matayan for two days. A line of porters leaning against the wind appeared from the east followed by Harry Tilly and Gordon Whittle. They had been beyond Kargil to Mulbek and into the Buddhist country. Their descriptions made me wish to see the barren mountains, high-level valleys, and the people.

Parties of varying sizes used to leave Sonamarg with laden ponies and ponymen, these hired at the gorah (pony) village of Shitkari, some two miles from the Golden Meadow. With them they would take the local wheat flour (atta), eggs, and poultry to augment the good food present in boxes of American mountain rations. American bivouac tents, rubberized ground-sheets, blankets, and crude kapok-filled sleeping-bags made up the tentage. All these things the ponies carried, packed in sacks or in yak dahns—strong, leather-covered panniers usually slung on either side of a yak.

Machoi is the first building on the east side of the pass—a small dak hut and caravanserai. Beyond it, a few miles away, lies the squalid village of Matayan. It was near Matayan we used to practise river crossings, and I can remember the first involuntary one in the spring of 1945. Many hundreds of people, Yarkandis, Ladakhis, and Kashmiris, were camped on either side of the Muski river. They had been there for days. The river itself was greatly swollen with glacial melt-water and the run-off from the snows above. Avalanche blocks floated on the turbulent surface. It was very cold. I informed Illia, my head ‘Gorah Wallah,’¹ that

¹ The local term for 'pony-man'.
we must reach Pindras that day. His reply was short and to the point—"Thik Kai Sahib"—and he handed me the reins of the leading pony. We plunged into the icy water together, the sturdy pony being fortunately a good swimmer. Slowly we forced our way across to shingle flats and emerged on the opposite bank. The rest was an amazing spectacle, as the hundreds of traders packed up goods and chattels, dashed with their animals down to the river, and proceeded to cross. The resulting chaos was terrific and many a pony or yak was swept away in the flood, but as far as I can remember none was drowned.

Bill Starr and I were at the dak hut in Matayan on the first day of peace, and that morning we left to try to locate a route on Beraz (17,800 ft.) used by Charles Bagot and his party a few days earlier. They had ascended by one of the steep canyons, or nullahs, offshooting from the Matayan Nullah, and attained a height of 17,000 ft., where they had to halt and return owing to the sickness of one of the pupils. We ourselves were puzzled by the numerous turnings, but decided to explore the main nullah, and soon we beheld a beautiful white pyramidal peak several miles ahead—so beautiful that to approach the mountain seemed a natural procedure.

Perhaps two hours later we ascended a steep glacier snout, followed by an almost vertical thirty-foot snow wall up which we kicked huge steps, using the axes for carving out hand-holds. A mile away the same peak was tempting us from the other side of a flat stretch of glacier. We didn’t have a rope, but Bill agreed to follow exactly in my footsteps, and so we crossed the glacier, then ascended the peak by a northerly ridge to its summit. It was our first time over 17,000 ft., but I can remember that we felt supremely fit, and that cutting steps in steep ice near the top was very easy. Not knowing the mountain, or possessing a map, it was pleasing to find a small cairn and the scratched names of Ralph Stokoe and Gordon Whittle—this, then, could only be Cumberland Peak (17,300 ft.), which they had climbed from Machoi the year before. Without doubt it was the high Karakorum we could see to the north, for some of the highest points disappeared into the great level stretch of cloud-base estimated at
22,000 ft. to 24,000 ft. To the south and east rose a host of peaks between 17,000 ft. and 20,000 ft. in height, set splendidly in a frozen base of untrodden glacier systems.

Descent was made quickly by traversing along the westerly ridge for a short distance, and then striking down obliquely to reach the glacier by jumping the bergschrund. It was late, so we ran down into the Lower Suweke Nar and sped quickly along the valley bottom. Darkness descended while we were still some distance from Matayan, and it was some time after 10 P.M. when we reached it. We had been almost fifteen hours. Our ponymen Rajbah and Illia seemed relieved to see us, while we in our turn were pleased to receive the pot of strong tea they had thoughtfully made and kept hot for us.

Beyond Matayan the snowy peaks are less numerous, the landscape more truly Tibetan. Beyond Dras there are small fields of ripening barley surrounded by dry-stone walls, and making a patchwork splash of colour against the drab hillside. Between Shamsa Karbu and Kargil the fields and river-banks are dotted with trees—a great surprise, for Ladakh is almost a treeless country. The surprise is even greater when it is realized the trees are apricots—Kargil apricots—small, juicy, world-famous as one of the most delicious varieties grown. In autumn these trees are at their best, for then the early frost changes the colouring of the leaves to gold and brown, yellow, black, blue, and red—quite easily the most colourful leaf-display I have ever seen.

During hot summer days the intoxicating air is saturated with the perfume of wild roses—pink and yellow, single and double. The hot sun beats back at you from hard volcanic rock—harsh, bare rock, ochreous, plum-coloured, vermilion—fire-tinted. Choking dust, ground fine over countless ages, cakes the ears and nostrils, covers one’s hair and clothes, sticking to the body sweat. These are the days one looks longingly at the deep, slow-moving river—muddy and milky, washing and rewashing the smoothly curving flats of green glacial silt—an exciting river that could tell of birth at great heights, as the fierce Central Asian sun slowly melts the grains of snow-ice, with each drop coalescing and intermingling, forming sparkling runnels, merging into streams,
picking up rock flour and gravel, then leaving a glacier snout as a rushing, turbid torrent. This must often happen in a world of snow, ice, and rock untrod by man—an almost ageless world that only time can slowly change. These are the places that pull at the heart, or at something not quite fathomable—but the attraction of the unknown is there, and I have found that on the few occasions when the desire to see and know has been fulfilled, in that rare moment one’s whole body, physical and mental, has been filled with a great content.

I remember what the Sadhu said in the Alaknanda Valley when we returned from a successful journey up the Bangneu, in North Garhwal. “You desire, and you fulfil desire, but you only desire again. It is best put away, suppressed, forgotten.” I felt he was wrong, but then perhaps each man’s reason for return to the hills is uniquely his own. In much all must agree, but to each man his own subtle difference of appreciation, his own spirit of adventure, his own secret urge. Leave these for base glory and you lose the real hills and your first paradoxical, unfathomable knowing.

At the border of Ladakh and Baltistan two rivers meet—the Suru and the Shingo. Kargil, second largest town in Ladakh, is situated near the confluence of these two rivers, which cut a deep cleft through gabbro\(^1\) peaks and within a few miles join the Indus to help form the famous Indus Gorge beyond Skardu. A stony pathway by the river-side leads you past a small mosque used by the Shah Mahommedans of Kargil, and a narrow street, partly cobbled, provides the main thoroughfare of the town. Along its length shopkeepers of different nationalities sell a great variety of goods—cheap and gaudy trinkets from India; carefully carved copper-work from Tibet; felt carpets from Yarkand, and the neatly sewn boots of Ladakh, soled with yak leather. The passers-by are very cosmopolitan too, for wandering ascetics and lamas rub shoulders with natives of Turkistan, India, Kashmir, Tibet, and Hunza. Groups of traders haggle over prices, yak-drovers squat in circles playing a game of chance; a Chang Tang Tibetan perhaps thinking of the high, wind-swept plateau, plays a plaintive tune on his double flute, while his friend smokes an iron pipe,

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\(^1\) These are peaks of crystalline, igneous rock.
A Kashmiri Boatman on Dal Lake
‘Ridging Days’ on Thajiwas Peaks

Days upon the ridges of mountains are well remembered, especially when the fluffy clouds contrast with a sky of royal blue, and a brilliant sun warms hard volcanic rock.
or hookah, that probably came from Baltistan. Occasionally a ragged coolie will build a mound of clay on the ground, hollow it out, insert a hollow stem, press in a wad of tobacco, and by this ingenious method obtain a wayside smoke. Though the street seems dirty and squalid, there is much of interest to see.

Butter is made from the milk of the yak or the *dzö*—the *dzö* being a cross between a yak and a Kashmir cow. In Central Asia this butter has many uses; it greases the hair, supplies fuel for butter-lamps, is carved into statues of Buddha for religious processions, floats on the surface of butter-tea, and often for the poorer people is the only storable form of wealth. In the Kargil and Paskyam area the peasants take the butter above the snow-line and bury it beneath the ice. Before he dies a father gives instructions that his store of butter shall be passed on to his eldest son. Thus it accumulates. With Daniel Berger, the Swiss missionary, I once bought some of this butter of great age—over sixty years old, we were told, and it was still edible, though a little rancid and discoloured.

Daniel had been in Kargil with his wife and children for almost eleven years, during which time he had built a small school-house for the two dozen children at the mission. Their home was built in the traditional Ladakhi style, with two stories, mud walls, heavy cross-beams, and a spacious veranda. That the missionaries had little contact with the outside world was brought home to me when in 1945 I arrived at Kargil with a party of fighter-pilots. Daniel was delighted to see the twelve of us, and told me we were the largest party he had ever had, the previous party attaining double figures, being the French Karakorum Expedition in 1936. After this first visit I was always made welcome at their home among the Kargil apricots and poplars, and it was with Daniel Berger and his wife that I had my first taste of Tibetan butter-tea. I had watched it being made. First a handful of shredded Chinese brick tea was placed in a shallow pan and covered with water. While the water boiled a sprinkling of crude bicarbonate of soda was added, and the whole mass frothed and bubbled vigorously like a miniature Vesuvius. Three times this was done; then the remains were stirred into a metal pot of boiling water.
process was going on, a shy Tibetan maiden was pounding butter in a long brass-bound tub and its contents were now mixed thoroughly with the tea. Salt was added to taste.

Along with the older mission children, we sat cross-legged around the huge pot, and when our cups were filled with the brew a plate of tsampa (roasted ground barley) was passed round for each to take a handful. The tea was then drunk, leaving a quantity in the bottom of the cup into which the tsampa was poured. A liberal stirring with the finger mixed the two substances into a homogeneous whole, which was then scraped out and rolled into sausages. Though wholesome and nourishing, it does become a little monotonous, and soon I was embarrassed by the large quantity I was expected to consume. Much to my relief, Daniel informed me that Tibetan etiquette allows you to put the spare ‘sausages’ in the ambag (folds) of your chuba (gown)—in my case my pocket. He then told me of the rather amusing but enchanting belief of the local people. Often the Ladakhis visit friends, and on returning home at night are chased by demons. However, if they are well loaded with the tsampa sausages they run quickly and throw them as far as possible over their shoulders—not as ammunition, but as bait. The hungry demons stop to devour the ‘sausages’ at the expense of losing a tasty human morsel.

Mulbek village is twenty-four miles beyond Kargil. Long before you reach it you pass through a winding gorge beyond Paskyam which eventually opens out into a wide river-flat. Soon you see chortens surrounded by high mani walls, so you take care to pass them on the left, as is the custom. A chorten is a religious symbol—a receptacle for offerings, which sometimes contains the ashes of saints or sacred writings; a mani wall is built of flat stone slabs on which Buddhist prayers are inscribed; prayers such as “Om Mani Padme Hum”—“O hail the jewel in the Lotus!” To pass them on the left is important, because demons may pounce upon you if your right flank is turned away from the symbol. The instant you enter this wider valley you sense the complete change over to Lamaism.

In the fields along the route, Ladakhi men and women are
usually hoeing or dragging the hand-plough through the soil. The women are not shy, but look at you keenly, perhaps laughing at the unusual sight. Probably this is because the Ladakhis are polyandrists, and the women-folk have much more freedom than in many Eastern countries. By custom, when a girl marries an eldest son she automatically becomes the wife of all his brothers. This same rule applies in Tibet, and rather more loosely in the Sherpa country of Sola Khumbu.

Yaks and ponies are a common sight, as also are the double-humped Bactrian camels, which are used to carry trade loads between Leh and Kargil. Along a side-valley there is an imposing whitewashed gompa (Buddhist monastery) that has been built into a huge wall of rock, and at first sight there appears to be no possible route along the steep face to its entrance. Watch a little while, and soon you see small figures climbing steeply up a rake, or ledge. It is the one and only way. Another mile along the narrow path takes you round the corner of a river bluff, and before you is the Gompa of Mulbek perched upon the top of a steep rock aiguille. Two- and three-storied houses cluster around the base of the rock, and huge flapping torcho (prayer flags) welcome you to the village. At the front of the building there are spacious stables and yards, and within them a few yaks may be resting languidly in the sun while their owners play with stone dice on the dusty, hard-baked soil.

When I first arrived at Mulbek I was greeted by a villainous-looking Ladakhi who led me to a spacious tin-roofed rest-house. Despite his appearance, he turned out to be a friendly fellow who produced, without being asked, a warming pot of butter-tea, and on the following day went out of his way to put me on the right path to the Gompa. The path, which is steep and lined with prayer-flags, winds behind the back of the aiguille, and before I arrived at the door of the monastery two of the monks, or lamas, came out to greet me. They were Red Hat lamas, members of the sect which practise a lamaism less strict than those who wear the yellow hat, for they still retain some of the customs of the earlier Bon religion of Tibet. Their long robes were the colour of old red wine, and on their feet they wore a special type of cratpa
(felt boot) with turned-up toes and calf-length uppers of brilliant crimson colour. Neither spoke Hindustani, and no method of communication was possible, but their gestures were friendly, their faces all smiles, and I followed them into the flat-roofed building.

Light filtered into passages through narrow wood-framed slits and lit up rows of wooden prayer-wheels, wooden drums with a central spindle round which the drum can revolve. The hollow drum is filled with carefully folded papers on which have been printed many Buddhist prayers. A light touch of the finger causes these to revolve, and each turn of the wheel is the equivalent of saying many thousands of prayers. Wheels vary greatly in size, type, and colour, and some which are little larger than a bobbin are held in the hand. This type have drums made of copper embossed with lively lotus patterns, figures of Buddha, and the prayer 'Om Mani Padme Hum.' As the hand rotates clockwise the drum turns, and a chain with a piece of lead attached swings outward, helping the rotation by centrifugal force. Larger wheels, some of them twenty feet high, are turned by water-power. Gay colours are popular, though sometimes in the monasteries age and neglect have turned them to a dull brown. From Ladakh to Sola Khumbu and beyond they are the same in construction and meaning, and like the torcho or the chorten symbolize to the traveller the high mountain and plateau country of Central Asia.

The passageway led off into a room smelling strongly of rancid butter which was burning in small brass goblets—a tiny wick giving forth a small amount of light. Clothed Buddhas and idols were placed side by side in rows, one above the other—the clothes there to keep them warm. Cymbals, drums, flutes and huge ten-foot trumpets (tung-chens) littered the floor. Thankas (pictures woven in cloth) and ceremonial masks covered the walls. It was a dusty room conveying an atmosphere of great age.

The drone of a voice attracted me to another small ill-lit alcove. Again butter-lamps were burning, this time by a small table on which was propped a gompa book. A sharp-eyed, bald-headed monk sat cross-legged by the book, reading aloud at tremendous speed. His was a chanting voice that maintained one
note, dropping only slightly at the end of a sentence or a page. Occasionally there was a bubbly, sucking noise; the monk swallowed, paused for a moment, and then the rustle of paper indicated the turning of a page. Here time was of no importance.

Feeling a tug at my elbow, I turned and followed a monk through a tiny doorway which led out on to the gompa roof. The sudden change from comparative darkness to brilliant sunshine was blinding, but once my eyes had accustomed themselves to the change I could admire the splendid view. Below me in plain view were the houses of Mulbek surrounded by terraced fields which spread out towards the river. Jagged cliffs composed of rich, ruddy-brown rock reared up one behind the other on the opposite side of the valley, and away to the east I could see the snowy peaks of the Zaskar range—a mountain country which has been little explored. The air was clear and fresh. White prayer-flags, attached to slender poles, fluttered beside me on the roof. Sunlight flashed from the polished brass of a tung-chen that one of the monks had brought along to show me. No clouds appeared in the great dome of blue sky above, and it was hard to realize that these people endure a much harsher climate at different seasons. This was my last view from a Buddhist gompa for many years. The next day I returned to Kargil and stayed with Daniel Berger for my last time.

The Dras river at 10,000 ft. has cut through the sedimentary and volcanic rock, leaving steeply towering walls on either side. Great grey masses of snow-bearing clouds build up and precipitate their load with ominous persistence. The grey river, perhaps sloppy with snow-mush, flows sluggishly along the flat valley bottom, and soon all is a grey and white world. Only here and there does a dark crag project its overhang beyond the touch of the snow. A lone figure—a Ladakhi with his yak—can be seen moving slowly through the swirl of flakes towards his flat-roofed home. It is a stark, unfriendly landscape—rugged, forbidding. It is Ladakh in winter.

But when the clouds disperse and the sun shines upon a new world the snow sparkles and each bulge of ice, each ridge and rib, shows highlights and shadows of startling beauty. Little life stirs
at all in the village as the inhabitants crouch over carefully nurtured fires of yak-dung, cooking their meals from stored grain and root crop. Perhaps the occasional howl of a wolf, the sweet whistle of a marmot, or the harsh cry of a snow leopard are the only sounds that disturb the silence.

My last memory of Ladakh is of a superb sunrise experienced while moving from Matayan to Machoi. At first all was quiet, dismal, and gloomy. Trekking onward, our last glimpse of Matayan was of a dark, narrow valley with the flat-roofed Central Asian village straggling along the ice-edged Gamru river. Ahead lay the snow-covered Alpine meadow of Nimarg, in shadow but surrounded by the splendid peaks of the Lower Suweke Nar and Machoi, seemingly aloof and remote within regions of intense cold. Suddenly the bold Machoi Peak was illuminated by flaming rays of light, as though the sun had burst the bonds of cold and frost and was now pouring forth in jubilation. The pale white face of the mountain was transformed into a wall of rosy ice flutes, the snow and ice crests of the steep ridges being lit with brilliant coruscations.

By 8.30 A.M. we were resting our ponies at Machoi village, and supplying a couple of cheery and voluble dak runners with cigarettes. The Machoi Peak and pinnacles were by now fully flooded by the sun’s rays, and the glacier curling down to the dak hut was a superb glistening white pathway in the new dress of powder snow. We crossed the Zoji La, and towards the end of the day were back at Sonamarg preparing for our last evening in the Golden Meadow, surrounded by the host of peaks, which throughout a year had shown to us their many moods, allowed us a glimpse of their innermost secrets, given us unforgettable mountain days, and enriched our lives.
An Expedition to Garhwal

Return to the Himalaya

It was during the October of 1951 when Harry Tilly invited me to join him on an expedition to the Garhwal, or Nepal Himalaya. He and Wilfred Noyce had intended returning to the Himalaya ever since their mountaineering days in Kashmir and Sikkim, and, fortunately for me, it had always been their intention to ask me to join them. I was delighted, so said yes and hoped all would be well. Before our final plans were hatched it was disappointing to learn that Wilfred would be unable to take part because of other commitments, and just the two of us began the organization of the intended venture.

Private expeditions such as this one tend to develop slowly at first, and so with us, but gradually, like a snowball trundling down a hill, it began to assume size and shape. David Bryson, a Talks producer with the B.B.C., brought our number up to three, and shortly afterwards John Kempe, master at a public school in India, joined our company. Finally, R. K. Misra, an Indian who held an executive position with Burma Shell, and who was a friend of John Kempe’s, became our fifth member. Letters written in frantic haste passed to and fro among us all in ever-increasing numbers. We had to purchase most of the equipment ourselves, and whenever possible bought ex-Army stores. A few firms such as Peak Frean’s and Simpkin’s, who were kindly disposed to the expedition, supplied us with food and refreshment, and Burroughs Wellcome put at our disposal a comprehensive medicine chest, complete with enormous lock. We hadn’t a doctor, and ‘medics’ was left in my charge.
Harry worked tremendously hard co-ordinating the work and supplying lists in sextuplicate for the Indian Customs. A lot of time and ink was used up obtaining permits from the Ministry of Food for export of rations, but at last, on April 2, 1952, Harry, David, and I boarded the s.s. Carthage, bound for Bombay. There were no difficulties; and even the very precious food permit, for possession of which we had sweated blood, was merely marked ‘Exasperated’ instead of ‘Examined’ by a weary Customs official.

During the journey out we again ran over our plans for a two and a half months’ stay in Garhwal. We were fortunate in having Harry lead us and to advise, in the light of his previous Himalayan experience. In his wisdom he put forward a three-point plan, with an avoidance of extreme monsoon conditions as its main point. This was as follows:

(1) Trek from Ranikhet to Josimath to avoid the Pilgrim route from Chamoli, then ascend the Alaknanda Valley to Badrinath, and place our Base Camp the following day in the Satopanth Valley. From there we could then make a reconnaissance of Nilkanta (21,640 ft.) and attempt to reach its summit.

(2) At the end of May we would leave the Satopanth area, and cross over to the Banke Plateau, in the Kamet region, and attempt Peak (22,896 ft.), perhaps also trying a second ascent of Mana Peak. Once the monsoon began we could then move on to Plan 3.

(3) In order to avoid much of the monsoon and still climb in good weather we would move over to Gamsoli, in the Dhauliganga, and obtain porters to carry our loads north to the Raikhana Glacier, from which we could attempt various peaks of the Ganesh Parbat group.

We were happy with the plan, and realized that it would enable us to cover a lot of country. We had great hopes.

In Algiers we visited the Kasbah—the native market-place—and at Port Said had an amusing time avoiding the Galli Galli men (conjuring tricksters). A great weight was taken off my mind in the Suez Canal on April 13. I received news that Eileen, my wife, had given birth to a baby son, and both were well. The first telegram was a little misleading, and read “All well. Four”.
recheck soothed my shattered nerves, and the resulting telegram read “Both well. Son.” Leaving England had not been easy for me, but no one encouraged me more, or pressed me harder to go on the expedition, than my wife, and that evening my two companions insisted on a toast with champagne to “Eileen and John Gregory Jackson.”

In Bombay we were met by Mr and Mrs Leyden, of the Himalayan Club, and with their help we passed safely and quickly through the Indian Customs, then entrained for Delhi. After a dreary, dusty journey, we arrived there almost twenty-four hours later, and met Kempe and Misra for the first time. Four small, stocky men with hopeful, smiling faces appeared outside the Hotel Cecil the next morning. These men were our Sherpas—Lhakpa Tsering, sirdar and cook, Nima Sitor, Ang Tsering, and Nimo Tenzing. They had been waiting in Delhi on the hot plains for two days, and it was obviously a relief to them to be told that we should leave for the railhead at Kathgodom that same night. Chaos is a mild term for the mad scramble at Delhi station and on to the train, but we managed, and nothing was left behind: not even Nima Sitor, who got himself lost, but turned up miraculously as the train pulled out of the platform.

The first great surge of joy and tingle of adventure came to me the following morning as we neared the railhead and saw dimly through a distant haze a long blue line of hills. Memories of the Kashmir Himalaya flooded back to mind and washed away the dreariness of a dusty journey. Expectantly we scrambled on to the platform at Kathgodom and mixed excitedly with a milling crowd of half-naked coolies, bearded Sikhs, weary Hindu pilgrims, whining beggars, and wandering holy men. The shouting, the hustle and bustle, and the pungent smells of garlic and sweating bodies were nostalgic with the memories they stimulated. Our 1500 lb. of baggage was loaded on to a rickety bus and with all nine of us aboard it then wound its way along the road to Rani-khet. Hill people were busy tilling the fields, and occasionally the smell of burning pine-wood was a tang in the nostrils. It was a happy journey for all of us, and for two in particular, for this was our return to the Himalaya.
The Diary of a Trek  
(Ranikhet to Base Camp in the Satopanth Valley)  

In a thousand ages of the Gods, I could not tell thee of the glories of Himachal, where Shiva lived, and where the Ganges falls from the throne of Vishnu like the slender thread of a Lotus flower.

April 23, 1952. Evening

To-day we entered the foothills of the Himalaya by the road from Kathgodom. We revelled in the rich green colouring of the hill slopes, and sang out with delight at each glimpse of a hoopoe, or a Paradise flycatcher. Now in the evening we are resting at the Forest Bungalow in Ranikhet, surrounded by tall, long-leaved pine-trees—the chir-tree (Pinus longifolia).

The bungalow is on a ridge, and we can look out across the deep-cut valleys of Garhwal. In the distance, many of them clouded over, are the hills we shall journey into during the next few weeks. For a few hours the feverish rushing and organizing of the past months is over. A mild wind feels cool and clean on our faces, and bears a promise of rich experiences to come. The quiet and peace of the night bring great content.

April 24. Afternoon

After lunch to-day we chose our porters from some fifty or sixty Dhotials who came in from the village. They are to carry loads for us through to Base Camp in the Satopanth Valley. Like the Sherpas, they come from Nepal, but from the village of Dhoti, in the south-west. However, in features, dress, and religion they differ from the Sherpas, for they are Hindus, and have features similar to the Garhwalis. We have had to make a bando-bast with them—that is, an agreement as to how much they will
carry, and for how much money. Nineteen have been chosen, and it has been decided we pay them three rupees (4s. 6d.) per day. Their carrying capacity must be phenomenal for, with extra food and clothing for themselves, I estimate they will carry an average of 90 to 95 lb. Zungia is with us, and proudly proclaims his past experience with expeditions. "Zungia Berthotholi Himal"; "Zungia with Murray Sahib's Expedition"; "Zungia Panche Chuli"; "Zungia Rishi Gorge"—his smile is huge whilst he says it. As is the case with all of them, he seems to be constantly spinning wool on to a long wooden spindle, or else knitting wool into garments, and appears almost to have finished making a pullover.

**April 26. Evening**

Yesterday we began the long journey in the traditional way. The buses that took us and our gear to Ghurur were the usual ancient ones with the inner tubes protruding from the tyres. As we expected, a tube burst, but fortunately the betel-chewing driver was able to pull up quickly. Many of the Dhotials were sick. As we walked to Baijnath, by the side of the Gomati river, we noticed many willow-trees, and several white rambler roses. Hill terracing is done on a grand scale, and very few bare slopes were seen. Native women were busy threshing wheat in the farmyards, and drying out the grain on matting carpets. Silver bangles and jewelled necklaces glittered in the sunlight. It is the one way of storing wealth, and I have no doubt these people are more wealthy than the Indian of the plains, for their houses are strongly built, washed white and chocolate, and have a very good, clean appearance.

Last night we camped by a Hindu temple, and this morning were awakened by the ringing of bells and the repetition of many prayers. Wild roses and pomegranate-trees are plentiful, and I notice that broad beans, peas, barley, and maize are cropped as well as wheat. The natives gash the chir-trees with long knives and tie little pots beneath each cut. It is similar to the method of collecting rubber, but here it is resin that fills the pot. All the resin is dried and taken to the Government collecting stations.
Our Dhotials are a very cheerful bunch of fellows, and this evening I watched them at play with a toy telephone made from two match-boxes and a length of string. For hours now they have been prancing about and laughing freely at the astonishment of companions trying it out for the first time. Apparently they like taking medicine too, and Kuar Singh is making heavy inroads on my stock of aspirins. Some are busy on the de-lousing process and carefully pick out the pests from their woolly clothing, while at the same time I can see Lhakpa Tsering teaching Nima Sitor the English alphabet. Kuar Sing’s son fell out of a fir-tree shortly after we arrived at Gwaldam, and David helped me bathe him down with warm antiseptic water. Though badly bruised and cut, he insists he will be able to carry a full load to-morrow, and is embarrassingly grateful for our attentions. Probably it was his first bath.

Despite the interest of the surrounding country and the people we met, I found the day’s journey very hot and very tiring. However, an afternoon convection shower which was preceded by a grand show of lightning and followed by rolls of thunder that echoed among the hills, has helped to relieve the oppressive heat.

April 27. Afternoon

It was clear and fresh this morning, and from the lawn in front of the Forest Hut we could see the sun glistening on the ridges of Trisul, the trident, the three-peaked one, and lighting up the snow of Nanda Ghunti. The valleys were still partly hidden, and disappeared into dark blue depths, yet somewhere we must cross them and eventually pass by the snowy south-west flank of Trisul. Each day we shall descend to a new valley, and each day cross a pass a little higher than the previous one.

April 28. Morning

Yesterday after leaving Gwaldam we descended many thousands of feet through pine forests, then bathed in the Pindari river, grey with suspended mica. Later we watched a number of natives putting the finishing touches to a stage which will be used for a
Ramlila Festival. The brilliantly coloured backcloth was painted with red, blue, green, and yellow figures depicting some story of the Hindu religion. The sunlight shone through the coloured canvas, and the result was beautiful, reminding me of a stained-glass window in Notre-Dame. There was a crescent moon in the evening, and while I lay in the open, sleepless in my bag, I was able to watch the circling of Ursa Major round the North Star.

The heat during these early days is intense. South-facing slopes are steep, dry, and almost barren of trees. Always it is a pleasure to reach the top of a ridge, see the new view, and know we are going to descend the cooler, well-wooded northern slopes. These slopes are covered mostly with Himalayan oak, chir-tree, deodar, red-blossomed rhododendron, and quite dense clumps of bamboo. Occasionally we are delighted to see sycamore-trees and a few hazels, covered with dancing yellow catkins. Whenever possible we stop beneath a shady chir or deodar, blow up the Lilos, and rest for a while until the coolies catch up with us. Woodpeckers, wagtails, and redstarts add flashes of colour to the green of the trees, and rich red brown of the earth. It is incongruous to hear cuckoos and at the same time see parrots darting from one tree to another.

Evening

Arriving at the dak hut above Wan this afternoon, we were impressed by the appearance of Jatropani, a peak 13,356 ft. high whose shape reminded us of the Scottish hills. No wonder it delighted the Scottish expedition in 1950. The local school interested them too, and as we passed by the children were singing a couplet composed by Gandhi during the partition riots.

"The mightiest and greatest of all Gods is Rama; Ishva and Allah are his names, and we must ask him to give wise counsel to all."

April 29. Morning

Last night we slept out on the tiny alp outside the Forest Hut, surrounded by wooded hills and tall pines. Our Dhotials, led by Zungia, who is a merry old fellow, built a huge fire and danced
for us until the late hours. It was utterly carefree, and at one time they sang old songs, telling us legends of famous mortals, and of Gods of the Himalaya. Finally they made chapatties, and boiled fern-fronds, which were eaten with great relish. I wonder what they think about the expedition and our desire to reach the snows. Certainly they enjoy being with us, and I’m sure they like the adventure of the journey.

Evening

By good fortune, and not good management, we took the wrong path this morning, and ascended to a pass at 11,500 ft. We were rewarded with near views of Nanda Ghunti and Trisul, and the Alpine flowers were so abundant—we walked through thick clusters of mauve primula, yellow saxifrage, and beautiful blue forget-me-nots—that I was reminded of the valleys and the hills of the Zogpu Da, where the short green grass is often speckled with such bright flower colourings; and, as always was the case, my booted feet felt lighter, and the desire to reach the distant hills was intensified. Still we kept to the wrong path, and toured the slopes of a green hill towards Sutal, where quite suddenly we found ourselves within a deserted village. A little Hindu prayer-shrine similar to a Tibetan chorten was surrounded by hundreds of purple Primula denticulata, and occasionally our eyes were focused upon mutated primulas, as pure white as the snows above.

April 30. Evening

After leaving the deserted village we descended steeply by a dusty mountain path to the Nanda Kini river, where we camped. This morning the scene was delightful. A few yards from our camp two rushing rivers met with a great roar and swirl of spray; blue smoke curled slowly above the cooking-fires, and the sun filtered through the leaves of pine-trees. We might have been in Kashmir, Switzerland, the Rockies—anywhere.

We passed on to Rhamni, which is a fairly compact village, built below a forested ridge, and on arrival here we met a column of stick-carriers in a hurry—men, women, and children dashing down a stony gully to escape a wetting from the after-
noon thunderstorm. Possibly there is Bhotia ("man of Tibet") influence at Rhamni, as many of the inhabitants recalled the features and dress of the Tibetans. However, their houses are very different, and can’t compete with the spacious Tibetan double-storied house. Bamboo is the main building material, and thick thatches are commonplace.

Our way is the classic pilgrim route of old, and as such befits our return to the Himalaya, but I wonder how many pilgrims use it now. We seldom see any, and now the buses run to Chamoli; this harder path must be shunned, for no doubt food and shelter are easier to obtain along the other route.

Cuckoos called all day long, a lammergeier cut swiftly through the clear air above us just before we arrived, and scores of blue swallow-tailed butterflies tumbled among the wild strawberries and violets by the path-side. Such movement and colour, along with the distant views, are very restful to eyes long trained to focus on the print of many books, and content themselves with the drab monochromes of city streets. How many people realize the wonderful colouring of the Himalaya?

For twenty-three rupees we have bought a sheep, a thin, shaggy black one with sorrowful eyes. We have named it Cuthbert I, and presumably we shall buy more from time to time.

From our camp we can see Pallballa, Jatropani, and the pass we crossed yesterday, with Trisul and the Maktoli soaring up behind much higher than all the rest.

May 1. Morning

Before dusk last evening the softly falling rain wet many of our equipment boxes, and great long streamers that swept towards us soon hid the hills.

Evening

To-day’s journey has been very varied in its interest, and for the first few hours we descended through forest for four thousand feet to the Bireh Ganga. Our path was covered by a thick carpet of decaying leaves which gave off an odour of an English woodland.
The Mulbek Monastery, Ladakh
The Way to Nirvana: the Buddhist Gompa at Mulbek, in Ladakh
This view is taken looking towards the Namika La, with the peaks of the Zaskar range in the background.

Ladakhis on the Zoji La in Summer
Each man is wearing the chuba, or long woollen smock, and the natpa, or boots soled with yak-hide. The man on the left is wearing a nathing, the national headdress of Baltistan, or 'Little Tibet.'
Strange it was, and stranger still to see the chestnut, sycamore, stitchwort, and wild garlic so near to bamboo and chir.

Prior to a cool bathe in the glacial river, we were startled by a number of large langur monkeys bounding about vigorously in the bamboo. The specimens seen must have weighed somewhere near 120 lb., and were covered with grey hair. Are these the yeti or Abominable Snowman? This idea seems to be gaining favour, though they appear to be forest-loving animals. Can these creatures leave this level and ascend to altitudes of 18,000 or 19,000 feet to an environment without trees and shrubs, where all is cold and frost; or is the yeti another type of anthropoid highly specialized for living at altitudes? I think we would all like to believe this mysterious creature exists in the mountains, just as Smythe liked to do.

All the water-mills we passed resembled small Scottish shielings, and the revolving stone wheels seemed to be constantly grinding corn or wheat for atta (wheat flour) and tsampa (roasted barley flour), but few people were seen, and they are either shy or blasé about the presence of an expedition.

It has been our longest day so far, and we enjoy the relaxation of this open camp near Kaliaghat. Here and there a patch of snow is showing, and billowy white cumulus clouds emphasize the blueness of the sky above the towering craggy peaks that surround the camp.

May 2. Afternoon

We are at Dakwani, below the Kuari Pass. The day's walk has brought us higher than we were before, and the deep blood-red colour of the rhododendron blossoms has changed to delicate pastel shades of pink and lilac. Himalayan dippers and white-capped redstarts have been plentiful, and with David I spent an hour trying to get near enough for a colour photograph of one of them. They were too quick for us, but it was interesting to watch them busily hunting food among the rounded boulders in mid-stream. The Cuthbert steaks last night were far too tough, but this morning we used the pressure cooker with partial success, much to Harry's relief, for he has false teeth. They certainly are
scrawny creatures, these sheep, and appear to be mostly bone with a meagre covering of wool, but then they live high, and we often see them grazing upon a hill slope of short brown grass, and cared for by small, ragged boys. Some of the sheep we have met being driven along the pilgrim path in large flocks have appeared to be in better condition, and the white goats have been magnificent animals. Their wool seems to have a peculiar silky sheen that I've never seen elsewhere, and most of them carry a pack of grain or salt weighing some 20 lb. Because each animal carries a bell beneath its throat, the noise of their passing is very musical, and the merry tinkle fits in well with the mood of this environment.

May 3. Afternoon; Tea-time.

Harry was energetic yesterday, exceptionally so, and ascended to the top of the Kuari Pass. His descriptions on return whetted our appetites for the morning. No tents were erected, and we slept out beneath the star-studded sky, so that this morning we could roll up the sleeping-bags quickly and set out to reach the Kuari rim at dawn. It was good to slip into a smooth rhythm and to know that soon we would see the mountain region to which we are going. The view was not disappointing, and I shall never forget the splendour or the immensity of what we saw. To the northwest a low belt of cloud encircled Kamet and Mana Peak. Directly in front of us 16,000 ft. of snow-ice and rock swept down from the flat summits of Gauri and Hathi Parbat to the Dhauli river at 6000 ft. in the great Dhauli Gorge. White pyramid peaks lined the Tibetan border, but the centre-piece, the dominating peak, which was seemingly higher than all the rest because of its comparative nearness, was the ice-sheeted Dunagiri—a beautiful white spire of glistening snow and ice. On the east side we could look up the great rift of the Rishi Gorge and at its head see Nanda Devi (25,660 ft.), but perhaps I was most impressed as we glissaded down from a snowy promontory at 13,650 ft. and, on nearing the tree-line, saw an old, gnarled pine—a lonely sentinel in a wasteland of snow. It was Smythe's lone pine, the very one he used as a frontispiece for his book The Spirit of the Hills. The
surprise and pleasure of seeing in reality an old friend of boyhood days will remain an exquisite memory.

Our Dhotials trek in bare feet, and they were glad to reach the flower-carpeted alps above Tapoban after crossing the several miles of snow, and we too enjoyed seeing the tiny rock roses clustered around small boulders of mica-schist. These made a pretty picture among the many small flakes of mica that sparkled there.

Now we are camped near Tapoban, and I have made every one take another dose of Atebrin, because it is an area where malarial mosquitoes are said to be numerous. We shall soon leave them behind, for we are into the mountains, but then I must remember we shall shortly join the busy pilgrim route to Badrinath, where other equally dread diseases are common.

May 4. Late afternoon

Hazel-nuts and sycamore keys! Honeysuckle, white roses, and thistle! We have seen all of these on our journey to Josimath along the Dhauliganga. We had clear views up the Rishi Ganga to Nanda Devi and the Inner Sanctuary, through hanging branches of fir and silver birch. It is fascinating to find such variety of flora among these mountains. Though it is a hot day, and a dusty walk, the experiences all along the route have made the hours slip by. A village schoolmaster taking a dozen ragged schoolchildren on a picnic astonished me, as did also the Garhwali girl who was washing wool by a stream, and beating a rapid tattoo upon the wool with sticks to remove the fat and dirt. Her movements were graceful, and each accompanied by a merry jingle of the many bracelets she wore. Heavy silver earrings and a solid silver neckband shone brightly, and in many ways I was reminded of the Gujar people in Kashmir. Probably the most memorable stop was at a Pundit’s house near Josimath, where we gulped down many pints of hot, refreshing tea. The Pundit’s children, who wore pale-coloured garments of Indian style, peered at us from ill-lit doorways, then overcame their shyness as their proud father told us stories uppermost in the minds of all Hindu pilgrims —stories of Vishnu, who created the Ganges, and of Ganesh, first
son of Vishnu, who had his head severed from his body by mistake. The head was eventually replaced by the head of an elephant. Soon all the children disappeared, then reappeared at the last moment for a photograph, proudly dressed in a hotch-potch of ragged European clothes.

**Evening**

Josimath is a large village situated a thousand feet above the confluence of two great rivers—the Alaknanda and the Dhauli-ganga. Shops are plentiful, and display large amounts of roughly woven cloth, rubber plimsolls for the pilgrims, lamps, matches, candles, and dry-looking packets of cigarettes. Food shops display huge mounds of dried millet seeds, atta, ghur (a brown sugar made from palms), and sickly-looking spices covered by heaving black masses of flies. The pilgrimage brings with it temporary prosperity for the shopkeeper. At the small post-office I found several letters on arrival, and it has been cheering to read news from my wife, who is well, and to learn that our little boy is in good health.

**May 6. Morning**

At last we are ready to complete the journey to Badrinath. For the past two days we have shared the dak bungalow with a betel-chewing tehsildar (magistrate) and his wife. They were cheerful and accommodating, but the sight of crimson teeth and bloody-looking lips never fails to revolt me. We have checked and re-packed our loads, and been able to pay off four of our coolies. Zungia is now head man, replacing Kuar Singh, who has not carried a single load throughout the previous ten days. I’m afraid Kuar Singh was rather a helpless type who would cheerfully have swallowed all the aspirin from the medicine chest, but whom we had to depose because he was giving us all the headaches.

**Evening**

We were a happy expedition that left Josimath and descended to Vishnuprayag. Pilgrims and fakirs were numerous and many of them stripped off all their clothes and bathed in the Sacred Ganges. Possibly those that bathe in the icy water will have a better chance
of avoiding disease, for which the route is notorious. The Indian Government is making an effort to improve conditions, and gaily painted latrines have been placed at frequent halts along the way. Unfortunately, they are not always used, as is regularly and embarrassingly clear to see. Cholera is the dreaded scourge, and once it takes a grip spreads quickly, for the pilgrims sleep side by side at night in wooden buildings where ventilation is almost nonexistent. Often we see old men and old women, some bent almost double with age and weariness, carrying long staffs much bigger than themselves. Families with young children trek side by side with fakirs and Sadhus—the wandering holy men who seek enlightenment. All of them will have journeyed on foot from Chamoli, and many will have travelled for many months from South India, covering thousands of miles.

The easy path from Vishnuprayag enabled us to enjoy the steep gorge scenery of the Alaknanda and to admire the many Hindu shrines beneath overhanging rock bluffs. Perhaps now I know how the pilgrims feel when they see Badrinath for the first time, for this afternoon I experienced a rare feeling of joy as I crossed the low, swinging bridge to the entrance of the Byhundar Ganga, and gazed up the deep green rift of Smythe’s “Valley of Flowers.”

May 8. Morning

Nilkanta, the Queen of Garhwal, the blue throne of Shiva—call it what you will, it is a mountain indescribably beautiful when seen by moonlight. The dak hut was closed when we arrived, and we have had to stay the night in the gaol. At three in the morning I slipped out of my sleeping-bag and walked out on to the wall of the compound. The valley was black, and the sacred river not many yards away almost invisible, but high in the sky, in a frozen world, I could see the hanging glaciers and the snowy pyramid of Nilkanta lit up by the silver rays of the full moon. Like the great Sphinx that guards the timeless desert, so did the “Queen of Garhwal” seem to be guarding the secrets of the white wastelands, impassively watching the struggles and aspirations of us ephemeral mortals. I went back to my sleeping-bag, not to sleep, but to remember.
Evening

Badrinath is 10,242 ft. above sea-level. In winter the snowfalls are heavy, and the whole valley of the Alaknanda is evacuated until the early spring. Ten days before our arrival much of Badrinath was destroyed by avalanche, and this morning when we visited the bazaar we walked over houses still buried beneath the snow. Carpenters and masons were working at frantic speed to repair many damaged buildings, in anticipation of a large influx of pilgrims during the month of May. Once the pilgrims arrive here they will visit the Brahma Kapal, a large rock that juts out into the river. They will say their prayers or bathe in the Mother Ganges. There is a legend that a long time ago great flood-waters poured out of the Himalaya and down to the plains of India, where they destroyed the crops, washed away hundreds of villages, and drowned thousands of people. The plainsmen prayed not to Brahma the Creator, or Shiva the Destroyer, but to Vishnu the Protector, and he is said to have laid himself down and allowed the flood-waters to flow out of his mouth, down his body, and between his toes. This controlled the flood, and formed the river now known as the Mother Ganges, the life-giving river which takes essential water and alluvial soil down to the parched plains of India.

At the north end of the bazaar there is a steep alleyway of steps which leads to a hot sulphur spring, but none of us has been allowed to descend to the sacred well where the pilgrims bathe, nor have we been able to enter the 1200-year-old Temple of Vishnu, which dominates the township. Its walls are covered with carving, and the weathered greens, reds, browns, and yellows contrast with the brightly gilded dome of the Main Temple. Fakirs smeared with ashes and natural-coloured earth sit upon temple steps worn smooth over the ages by the passage of many devotees. Sadhus wearing the long orange smocks provide a refreshing gaiety of colour among the drab narrow streets away from the temple.

Our friend the Sadhu, whom we met early in the afternoon, is a fine character, and, with his long, flowing white beard beneath
a weather-beaten face topped by a shock of white hair, looks a Santa Claus of the Himalaya. He says he was once a solicitor in Southern India, but now he has renounced the world and all desires to spend his days in search of God. The search certainly takes him upon the narrow, rugged path (though in the Himalaya it is far from straight). His pilgrimage over the Niti La to Mt. Kailas in Tibet must have been a great journey, for he had no money, and had to beg for his food. On arrival at Mt. Kailas he performed the circumambulation of the sacred mountain, taking several days, but sensibly he did it on his two feet and not by the method of prostration. Though he says he has renounced all desire, I notice he is prepared to consume large quantities of our chocolate, and can discuss at length the relative merits of various brands of cigarettes. He does it with a twinkle in his eye.

May 9. Morning

Yesterday we arrived at our Base Camp in the Satopanth Valley, and to-day, sad to say, we shall have to watch our Dhotials depart. They have been good companions, and each day did something to endear themselves to us in memory—perhaps bringing us a bowl of boiled fern-fronds, or a bunch of flowers, or making a welcome log fire on a cold, rainy day, and always there was a song to make the dark evening ring with the sound of happy voices.

After leaving Badrinath yesterday, we walked up the valley to Mana, having to cross the Alaknanda by a large snow bridge because the wooden suspension bridge had been destroyed by spring floods. Much snow covered the ground, but occasionally we crossed soggy areas of brown, grass-covered peat brightened by the lovely blue of mountain iris. There was a rustle and whistle of hundreds of snow pigeons, as they flew low over the village, and changed course quickly, turning together, flashing black or white in the watery sunlight. Mana was deserted. Each house door was padlocked and safely barred, but we understand the Bhotias (men of Tibet) should have been here weeks ago. It is the late winter that is delaying these semi-nomadic people, and possibly it will not be good for us.
At the point where the Saraswati river joins the Alaknanda we crossed by a natural rock bridge from which we looked down into a deep cleft, and masses of white, foaming water made a thunderous din as it roared beneath our feet. Fine spray made the atmosphere shimmer, causing it to burst into dancing rainbow lights every few seconds, and this same spray supplied moisture to the many emerald and apple-green mosses and lichen on the brown rock walls. It is here along the Saraswati that Gautama Buddha is said to have spent many years of his life in contemplation.

There was a feeling of excitement throughout the expedition as we walked a little breathlessly over boulder-strewn slopes, and saw a peak of majestic proportions rise high before us—it was Balakun, and we knew that soon we should be placing our Base Camp in as beautiful a spot as we could find. We did find the right place, and here we are in a little sun-trap hollow, gazing up at the perpendicular rock walls that rise above the camp. Not far away the wall is breached, and we can hear the clanging and the clatter of the many stones that shoot down the 400-ft. fall of the Vasudhara—“Where the Ganges falls from the throne of Vishnu like the slender thread of a Lotus flower.”

Red-billed choughs are chattering overhead, while dun-coloured fieldfare and bunting circle our hollow in search of crumbs. Two miles farther up the valley two glaciers meet—the Satopanth and the Bhagirath Karak—and at the snout of them there pours forth a dirty, turbulent stream which is the source of the Ganges. It is the place of greatest veneration, but only the hardiest of Hindu pilgrims ever reach it.

The camp looks bright and cheerful, with its one orange “Meade” tent, two laurel-green “Meades,” a tiny sky-blue “Tinker,” one primrose-coloured “Yak,” and the large apple-green Sherpa tent, on this brown alp which is surrounded by great grey crags and lofty white snow peaks. This should satisfy our longing for colour after weeks in a land of snow and ice, and now that we have arrived here fit and in good heart I bring this diary of the trek to a close.
‘Char Time': John Kempe and David Bryson drinking Tea at a Pundit’s House in the Dhauliganga

A Welcome Cup of Butter-tea

Dr Biswas and Akhia Bhutta are shown, with their hosts, lamas at Thyangboche. Note the shaven heads of the lamas.
Avalanche Debris at Badrinath, in the Alaknanda
A few houses can still be seen partly buried beneath the snow.
The ‘Seeker after Enlightenment’: our Sadhu at Badrinath

The Sadhu is carrying his tea-pot, made from the husk of a coconut.

Karen Singh, a Dhotial
[p. 158]
Mount Kwangde, seen through a Frieze of Russet Leaves

The Pilgrim Route up the Alaknanda Valley, in the Garhwal Himalaya
Postscript

So ended my diary of the trek from Ranikhet to Base Camp in the Satopanth Valley, but the evening that followed brought the journey to a more fitting conclusion. It was softly beautiful that evening at the Base Camp in the Alaknanda below the Satopanth Glacier; so beautiful that one felt compelled to sit, look, and listen. Shortly after supper I left our four Sherpas, having spent a pleasant ten minutes chatting with them, and reminiscing a little to myself over similar nights at high camps in the Kashmir hills years ago. I could still see the Sherpas by the camp-fire and smell the burning juniper as a little of the blue smoke drifted by the tent. I could see the blueness, because the full moon was flooding our valley with its light and casting strange shadows through the filmy cloud on to the steep rock buttresses on the north side. There was a faint rushing sound from the glacial stream, and a splashing from the liquid silver waterfall half a mile away. A gossamer veil of low cloud looked almost phosphorescent at the bottom of the valley, and the silvered snow on the high, 20,000-ft. peaks seemed very far away, but it was an important part of our mountain home. Finally I slipped into my sleeping-bag, content with the memory of our first days together, and looking forward to the future days we should spend mountaineering in the Satopanth and along the Bhagirath Karak.
The Bhagirath Karak

On our first morning at Base Camp in the Satopanth we had looked out of the tents to see the cold white faces of Chaukhamba and Balakun turn a delicate blush pink, then a radiant gold that slowly crept down the steep snow walls. Our valley home had remained in the grip of cold for another hour. That dawn bore a false promise, and on the second morning low mist filled the valley and wreathed about our tents.

Fine, drenching rain pitter-pattered on the tent fabric, and the rumble of many an unseen avalanche was borne to us on the chill wind throughout the day. Broad patches of snow still covered most of the area as low as 10,000 ft., and it was obvious that late winter conditions still obtained in the mountains. There seemed little point in rushing at a formidable adversary such as Nilkanta, for its steep, rocky west ridge, sheeted in icy armour, would blunt any rash attack. Instead we planned to take our five small tents along the Bhagirath Karak glacier to explore the possibilities of climbing upon the mountain range to the north-west. The map marked several 20,000-ft. peaks that held promise of early success if the weather was kind.

We gathered food and equipment together and stored it in the large Sherpa tent. Despite the mist and the rain, our Sherpas wandered far and wide in search of juniper and horse-dung with which to stock up our Base Camp fuel-supplies. David and Misra departed for Badrinath with mail, and with the intention of recording an interview with the Rawal, the head priest of the temple. We hoped they might also bring back a supply of kerosene.

David and Misra had not returned by morning. There was little
promise about the new day, but Harry, John, and I, with Ang Tsering and Nima Sitor, left camp with very full loads. The ablation valley along the Bhagirath Karak was filled with snow, but we found the narrow top of the moraine to be a feasible route. Shortly after midday the weather worsened, and at a height of 13,000 ft. we decided to camp. Stones were cleared away to level out two rough platforms, and we pitched our camp hurriedly as the snow fell thickly. The two Sherpas returned to Base with a note informing David of our plan to push on farther up the stony glacier the next day to establish Camp I. We all felt a little miserable, and grumbled at the unkind turn in the weather; but Harry's Optimus stove soon warmed the tent and boiled our water, and we were cheered by drinking a hot pannikin of tea.

Snow continued to fall through the night, but the sun shone for us in the morning and we packed our loads early. A quantity of equipment was left behind, and we continued our journey along the lateral moraine, eager to see the next view round the corner of each rock bluff. Already the air felt thin and lacking in oxygen, so that a steady plod was all we could manage, though we wished to hurry. After two hours I dumped my load behind a boulder and returned to our previous camp-site to meet the rear party. Harry and John pressed on to prepare a camping-ground for the night. I returned in time to meet the rear party within yards of our equipment. A few birds resembling ptarmigan had accompanied me along the moraine, but were scared off as our cheerful shouts of greeting echoed and re-echoed among the grim, towering mountain walls. To my surprise three of the Dhotials were with the party, Zungia, Gheetia, and Atbia. They had helped our four Sherpas to carry loads this far, but were eager to return, and no one could blame them for doing so. Their efforts had been a great help, and their journey through the snow in bare feet a noble gesture.

Camp I was established at a height of approximately 14,000 ft. The French expedition to Chaukhamba subsequently placed their Base Camp near to this place, because water was available at a clear stream that rippled through the grassy ablation valley. Now, in early May, there was no water and no grass. It was an area
covered with deep, cold snow that had to be beaten down to form suitable foundations for our tents. Balakun towered behind us now, and presented a face of ice and jagged rock, split by a formidable couloir—an obvious avalanche shoot. Great rock bastions—excellent flying buttresses for a castle of ice—sprang from the base of the 23,468-ft. Chaukhamba, which was a giant of bulging snow and hanging glaciers opposite our camp. My Yak tent was used for a cookhouse, and every one piled into Misra’s tent for warmth. David handed out the latest mail, which he had collected at the small post-office in Badrinath, and we read and then reread it as we consumed platefuls of delicious pemmican soup. New snow fell during the night.

Five of us left the camp in the morning to reach a ridge from which we might be able to see the peaks to the north. Snow lay deep, and the steep preliminary slopes proved too much for Misra, who had limited experience of such things; so, finding a sheltered knoll beneath a steep rib of rock, he waited there for our return.

We enjoyed the jolly scramble up the rib, which eventually petered out where the rock merged into a rising shoulder of snow, and we rested at a height of 17,000 ft., eating snow mixed with lemon crystals. Balakun and Chaukhamba were attractive, but our eyes repeatedly turned to the head of the Bhagirath Karak, and a sharply defined curve of snow at 18,000 ft. This was the col first reached by Mr C. F. Meade in 1912, and it was still uncrossed. On first climbing to the possible pass he and his two Swiss guides had been able to look down on the unexplored head of the Gangotri Glacier. The slope leading to the pass looked incredibly steep.

A low snow peak of 18,000 ft. inspired us to move. The strong sun reflected from the new white snow made it hot work as we trudged steadily onward, and trickles of sweat ran down my forehead, misting the goggles, and making my eyeballs smart with the salty liquid.

David and John progressed several hundred feet ahead while I stopped to wipe the goggles clear. Try as I might, it seemed impossible to regain the lost distance, and childishly I felt angry that they should be so far ahead. The ascent to the summit in deep
snow was useful for acclimatizing and we had interesting views of several mountains over twenty thousand feet that might be reached during our few remaining days of reconnaissance. We named a fine-looking pyramid of 19,800 ft. the Weisshorn Peak. This was climbed by members of the French expedition six weeks later, and named Deo Dhakni after the name of grassy slopes lower down. Chaukhamba presented its north-east face to us, and a stream of cloud blew from its summit. Masses of new snow appeared unstable, and hung precariously over magnificent vertical drops.

Running and glissading, we descended to the rib within the hour, scrambled happily down the rock, and were back at the camp in time to escape the worst of a snow-flurry. It snowed all through the night.

The following day we again ascended the rib and placed a camp on a snowy plateau at about 17,300 ft., although it was snowing hard and blowing very cold.

The sun shone in the early morning, but the sky was threatening a further deterioration in the weather. The three of us staying at this camp, John Kempe, David Bryson, and myself, decided to attempt an unnamed peak 20,260 ft. in height. We moved quickly at first in the circumstances, for the sun had softened the deep-lying snow, and we still lacked acclimatization. We crossed a smooth glacier and reached a col at 18,500 ft. where we rested a little while, refreshing ourselves with tablets of glucose.

By 11 A.M. the sky conditions had worsened still further, snow began to fall, and we were soon enveloped in cold grey clouds. Snow-covered slopes leading to the summit ridge of our mountain were fairly steep and often rocky, though snow had to be scraped away to find holds for hands and toes. Frequently we had to pause to beat our mitten-covered hands and stamp our numbing feet whenever there was a jut of rock. At no time was it clear enough to enable smooth, uninterrupted progress, and finally, after a breath-taking struggle over a snow-draped wall, we arrived at a small ledge from which there appeared to be no possible way of progression. Immediately to the left there was an almost perpendicular face of snow, but ahead and to the right was an unin-
viting void, because of the grey-white cloud that merged with the solid ground, forming an opaque screen. We could see each other, and a ruffling of the snow-surface a couple of feet away, but beyond this latter there was nothingness; we were isolated on the mountain, not knowing which way to move safely, except in the direction from which we had come. Snowballs were made, and we threw them gently in front of us, where they disappeared from sight too quickly to enable us to make an accurate estimation of the angle of the slope. Grimly determined, we launched out on the steep face, but as the surface layers of snow slid down and around us ominously, and as the flakes fell more thickly, reducing visibility to zero, we decided unanimously to retreat, having attained a height of 19,800 ft. on the mountain.

On the return the tracks made on the outward journey were obliterated; we could see nothing, and at times as we walked on into the blank grey wall ahead we stumbled into snowy hollows, or realized we were on an ascending slope only when our faces buried themselves in the fluffy snow. Our tents were covered, only the black tips of the tent-poles showing through the white, blanketing snow, and we were lucky to find them. It was a fortunate time to return, for within ten minutes we heard shouts, and I noticed Nima Sitor and Lhakpa Tsering floundering in the snow. They had been unable to see the tents, and as I dashed out to bring them in I heard my ice-axe sizzling and whining with the static electricity. These Sherpas had brought food, but we knew there would be little chance of using it on further climbs, as by now the powder-snow would be lying deep on all the high mountains. Perhaps if we had extra good weather for our two remaining days we would be able to push ourselves to the top of some peak and look down into the Arwa Glen to the north. We told the Sherpas to return to Camp I, and they seemed relieved. Once they had gone we hurriedly prepared a meal of pemmican and beef soup, reinforced with potatoes for bulk. Again we were warmed by the food, and by the extra heat from the Optimus, which we left burning for a few extra minutes while we donned extra pull-over and socks ready for the night’s sleep. David and I played chess for an hour, then lay smoking a last cigarette and talking of
days in the hills back home in Britain. There was a final "Good night, David," "Good night, Jack," and I rolled over on the hip-length Lilo, burying my head in the down-filled hood of my sleeping bag.

It was still early, and sleep did not come easily. David made the noises peculiar to "Cheyne-Stokes breathing," gulping down the thin air in desperation, then subsiding into strange silence. At this point I would realize that I too had not been breathing for some time, that my body was needing air, and I in my turn would begin to fill the lungs with life-giving oxygen. I lifted my head, and through a tiny gap in the zip at the door could see a small amount of light. I seemed to have been lying down for hours, yet the long night was still to come. Occasionally small white flakes of extremely cold powder-snow blew through the hole, making me shiver as they settled on my bare neck. A violent gust buffeted the sturdy fabric which was our only protection from the full violence of the storm, and, as a further swirl of flakes fell lightly on my beard, the last thing I remember hearing was the wild music of the wind from the east, the screaming banshee howl and a sad-sounding, plaintive moan as it rushed by the taut, frozen guy-ropes.

In the morning our movements were slow, and no one was eager to leave the snug warmth of the sleeping-bags. David zipped open the door, and a pile of drifted snow toppled into the tent. John's blue tent was half-buried, and our food and cooking utensils were completely hidden. Scraping and probing to find the Optimus and the mëta fuel was extremely cold work, so each of us retired every few moments to beat back warmth and life to deadened hands. The stove spluttered, then broke into a steady roar, the snow began to melt in the small pan, and John joined us in our tent. As we drank our first pot of tea we frequently heard the roar of ice avalanches and the sibilant hiss of the masses of new snow which slithered down the south-west face of the Weisshorn Peak, now the scene of furious activity.

Camp II was evacuated, and we climbed carefully down the now snowy rib to rejoin Harry and the Sherpas on the glacier. The late falls of snow temporarily precluded further attempts at
climbing a peak, and the next morning we packed our gear to descend to Base Camp. During our last moments at the camp-site a huge avalanche swept the face of Chaukhamba. There was a tremendous roar of falling, grinding ice-blocks, and a wind swept along the valley carrying icy particles that melted on the skin.

Surprisingly there was less snow at Base Camp than when we had left seven days earlier, and a few sturdy Alpines were starting to bloom. The green of new grass and the yellow and orange of *Potentilla argyrophylla* were colours that refreshed our eyes, now used to white snow, black rock, and grey cloud. Round a cheerful fire of dwarf juniper we planned to have a rest day, and then to make a reconnaissance of the Bangneu area to the north. High, unnamed peaks were shown on the map, which was in many places devoid of detail, and there was a promise of some entertaining mountaineering and travel. In the evening we sang a few songs—Harry and I attempting “Over the Sea to Skye,” John the “Banks and Braes of Bonny Doon,” and David rounded off our efforts with an excellent rendering of the *Irish Spinning-wheel Song*. Finally Nima Sitor and Nimo Tenzing sang us a pretty Sherpa tune, the words of which were noteworthy, but at the end of seven days of snow not quite apt—“Because the sun shines brightly over the Himalaya, so should our lives be bright.”
The Amazing Man-made Terraces of Garhwal
This method of cultivation ensures that the maximum amount of land is used.
Rhododendrons; in the background, the Kuari Pass
My First Twenty-thousander

The morning of May 19 was fine, and we were out of our tents very early. Food and medical and mountaineering equipment were packed ready for Harry and John, who were to form an advance reconnaissance party up the Bangneu Nullah. Shortly after breakfast they left Base Camp along with three Sherpas. They hoped to place a Camp I as high as possible up the Nullah, and to make their reconnaissance the following day, while we—David, Misra, and I—went up to join them.

This weather was more promising after the previous snowy days. In the hot sun the snow melted from the rocks low down. There was a strong smell of wild thyme underfoot, and the aromatic odour of dwarf juniper burning on the fire seemed to drift heavily through the small Meade tents. During the afternoon there were many white, billowy clouds in the blue sky, and the sun shone through them, speckling the peaks. The shadows showed up the huge cornices on the snow ridges, and on the beautifully curved snow cols. Snow pigeons and choughs circled the camp at intervals, and pretty tortoiseshell butterflies moved from Alpine to Alpine.

A few hours at the Vasudara Falls were well spent. Bright rainbows were to be seen in the spray, and richly coloured lichens—orange and green—grew profusely on the rocks.

Two young Hindus from Calcutta came up the valley to the falls and to the source of the Ganges—pilgrims from Badrinath—they had paid homage at the Temple of Vishnu, and bathed in the hot sulphur spring.

Our Sherpas returned late in the evening, and the next day we got away by mid-morning—the three of us and four Sherpas.
The bottom of the steep-walled nullah was covered in old glacial debris, and a high moraine led us through dwarf rhododendron to steep little snow gullies. By noon the day was worsening. Our surroundings were quite dramatic—a level glacier stretch, surrounded by high peaks, fantastic rock pinnacles, and in all seven steep glacier snouts reaching down to the basin. Several were just steep ice-falls, others hanging glaciers. A wild, rather desolate scene—avalanche debris everywhere; and frequently masses of blue-green ice poured down the funnel of the Bangneu Glacier snout.

Up a side nullah we found Harry's Meade tent pitched at 15,000 ft. There was a note saying they had ascended the ice-fall for another thousand feet with the Tinker tent, and would we follow on. It was snowing quite hard, and as David felt none too well (for the only time on the whole expedition) we decided to remain where we were. Snow continued to fall the following morning, but as it was clearing shortly after midday we packed the gear and in sunshine set out for the true Camp I at 16,000 ft. On arrival we were dismayed to find John Kempe suffering from dysentery. I dosed him with sulphaguanadine, one milligram every four hours. On reconnaissance the two had noted that a direct ascent up the Bangneu Glacier snout was impossible. However, their ascent through the ice-falls of the side canyon had showed them a possible route over a high rock barrier leading to the glacier plateau. This was exciting news, and promised some interesting mountaineering for the following day. Lhakpa made a hot brew, and we all went to bed early.

The morning of Thursday, May 22, was cloudless and sunny. Quickly we packed and prepared for a crossing of the barrier. Unfortunately, John Kempe was much worse, and had to be left behind. The steep ascent above Camp I took us across masses of avalanche debris and above the second ice-fall. Roped together, we stamped out a way through a deep, snow-covered level section to the third ice-fall. Scenery was magnificent, surrounded as we were by steep glaciers and high, unnamed 20,000-ft. peaks. At the ice-fall we threaded our way through huge crevasses, blue-green and agape—no slips permissible here. Careful belays had to be
made over a steep snow bulge to the right of a 60-ft. vertical wall, draped with huge, glittering icicles. Yes, slowly but surely we were working out the way on to the Bangneu. I can remember thinking how hot the sun was—wondering what a cold can of water would taste like—even wishing at times I could lie down and have a good nap—yet pulsing through all these flittering thoughts was a dominating desire to push on and see a new world. Suddenly came the thrill of it—one moment pushing through level snow, and the next moment the entire party gazing in wonder down a steep 800-ft. snow-face to the Bangneu, and out to (and along and around) a cold new world of high, unclimbed, unnamed peaks, jagged ridges, ice-walls, leering bergschrunds, and, below us all, the crevassed glacier névé to which we must descend. The Sherpas wanted to throw down their loads and try sliding after them—bad judgment, this, and taken probably in desperation—for at first it did look incredibly steep. However, David’s cautious steps soon became bold, plunging strides, and the entire party assembled on the glacier to place Camp II at 17,300 ft. It was much colder late in the afternoon, and there was slight snow. We were overlooked by three 20,000-ft. giants, and we decided to attempt the second highest peak (20,330 ft.) by a steep snow shoulder on the south-west face. Ang Tsering and Nima Sitor were to return to Camp I in the morning to help John Kempe. Lhakpa and Nimo Tenzing were to remain in support at Camp II, but as it turned out they also descended to obtain solid meths. and food. This alteration in plan could have been most unfortunate, for the following eventful day found us entirely on our own when we needed the Sherpas most.

On May 23 we were awake before dawn and ate breakfast quickly, and within an hour Harry, David, Misra, and I began crossing the Bangneu. The sky was cloudless. The snow, crisp and firm, glittered sequin-like in the early-morning sun. After three-quarters of an hour we looked back, and could see the Sherpas, two black dots ascending the steep snow-face on the way to Camp I. Higher the snow began to soften, and David and I took turns at making steps. At about 19,000 ft. we attained a shallow slope immediately below the bergschrund, and sat down to eat
glucose. By now the peaks of Garhwal were becoming familiar, yet it was always a thrill to see the gorge of the Alaknanda, and, towering above it, the peaks of Dunagiri, Nilkanta, and Narayan Parbat.

Misra found that the altitude affected his breathing, so he decided to wait at this good viewpoint while the three of us climbed the last 1200 ft. The 500-ft. steep bulge below the west ridge was exhausting work, and frequently we changed leadership to save our strength.

Soft sections found us floundering thigh-deep in cold, powdery snow, but a firmness higher up falsely led us on. A few feet from the west ridge, at a height of 20,000 ft., we heard a sharp crack; there was a violent wobble of the mountain-side, and, before being flung into the air, I had time to see the whole steep bulge cracking up into huge blocks and slabs of snow.

The descent of the next five to six hundred feet was made very rapidly, mostly upside down, or curling through the air, yet there was time to sense relief at going away from tremendous cliffs on the right of the bulge; time to realize that I must try to 'swim' on the surface to prevent suffocating burial under the snow—and time to feel dismay that this should happen so early in the expedition.

On my first bounce my ice-axe plunged in to the hilt, but I was torn from it as if by a giant hand. The second bounce ripped off a mitten and dislodged my goggles. There was a blinding flash of light and a confused whirling of snow. Arms threshed vigorously on the third contact, there was a rapid slowing down of the surface, and before it had stopped I jumped with all my strength to avoid being crushed by the following blocks. At first relief was short-lived, for I could see nothing of my companions, but soon I heard a shout, and saw Misra helping Harry move from deep snow, and above could see David waving. Although also flung upside down, he was left behind by the avalanche, and stopped after twenty to thirty feet, being unscathed after it all. Harry had been swept down some three hundred and fifty feet and halted in a most fortunate way near the edge of the steep cliff. His was the greatest damage, for his left knee had been hit or twisted, and
he found it impossible to move without the greatest pain. My back and groin felt weak, but not seriously damaged, and the snow had scraped some eight or nine inches of skin from my right arm. We gathered together below the bergschrund, David descending the avalanche slope quickly and picking up my axe on the way. How we could get Harry down was the question. That he was in pain there was little doubt, yet he struggled along bravely in the deep snow. Sometimes we would drag him along laid on a rucksack frame, or each attempt to carry him in a fireman’s lift. Though this was very tiring, David managed such a lift on three occasions—at 19,000 ft.! Six hours after leaving the schrund we were back at Camp II, wearied but not defeated, determined that some day we would try again.

On June 10, almost three weeks later, a camp was established for the second time on the Bangneu at 17,500 ft. Harry, with a painful knee, had ascended to Camp II with us, but the pain and stiffness made it clear that he should return to England for treatment. Sadly we parted company the following day, Harry descending to Base Camp, and David and I to make a second attempt at Avalanche Mountain, as we had named the 20,330-ft. peak. (During these three weeks David and I climbed on Nilkanta, as described in Chapter 8.) We decided to avoid the avalanche bulge and attempt the west ridge. The snow softened in the hot sun as we went higher, and though we made good speed we found that the snow and cornices on the steep rock towers were unsafe.

Shortly before midday, having reached an altitude of 19,800 ft., we realized that another three hours along the corniced ridge would be needed to reach the summit. The hot sun in the mid-afternoon would have made the return dangerous and unjustifiable. We had had, however, a fine mountaineering day, with splendid views across the rugged Arwa Glen to the peaks on the Tibetan border, Dunagiri and Nanda Devi once again soaring loftily into the clear blue sky over in the south-east corner of Garhwal. Before retracing our steps to Camp II we decided upon a new method of attack. If we placed a Camp III at 19,000 ft. below the snow bulge perhaps we could ascend the dangerous
avalanche slopes while they were still in the freezing grip of early-morning cold. On June 13 Lhakpa and Ang Tsering helped us to place a light tent at 19,000 ft. below the bergschrund on the avalanche bulge, and then they returned to Camp II. This high camp is now a rich memory. The world of valleys, both high and low, was beneath our airy perch, life was down to its elementals, and on the morrow we would know if our peak was possible or not. Mists occasionally shut out the world, and the chill wind made us seek the warmth of sleeping-bags. David and I slept little, and each hour glanced at the watch to see the time. At half-past three in the morning we prepared for our attempt. To save weight no Primus stove had been taken, and a small meal of biscuits and cheese was all we had. After an hour our preparations were complete, so we left the small Meade tent, and at first a patch of deep powder-snow caused us to fear the cold had been too intense. The old avalanche route was tried, but as the slope steepened doubts and fears increased. Again we retraced our steps, and tested an even steeper snow slope over to the left.

We had noticed that the sun only reached this slope late in the morning, and at once we found the going easier. David was in ice-claws, and he kicked excellent steps all the way to where the rock gendarmes joined the corniced snow ridge. Here we roped together and began to traverse the steep and corniced ridge above the avalanche bulge. Always we had doubts. Would the snow stay firm? Or would we once again hear that sickening crack and feel the mountain stir itself? A snow hollow on the steep face gave some relief, for we knew that if the surface slid we would be precipitated speedily but safely into its soft centre. Soon we arrived at the west rock tower. Should we ascend the rock or traverse its base to reach the summit? David was still in ice-claws, so we decided to traverse. All feeling had gone from my feet, but it did not seem to matter, for soon we would reach the summit and in the early morning sun perhaps beat back some feeling into them. Three hours after leaving camp we were sitting upon the summit rock enjoying a superb mountain panorama. Mists filled the Arwa Glen and the valley of the Alaknanda, but across the rolling sea of cloud we could see the great peaks of the Central
Himalaya towering above in magnificent splendour. Northward ran a long line of high, unnamed peaks on the Tibetan border. The knife-edged east ridge of Avalanche Mountain drew one’s eyes along and out over silvered clouds to Kamet and Mana peaks, and farther round to the south-east, where soared into a clear blue sky the peaks of Rataban, Hathi Parbat, Nanda Devi, and Trisul. Snow-flecks glittered on the summit cornice. Swift-growing cumulus clouds threatened close by, as Nilkanta—the Queen—pushed herself majestically through the misty layer, and westward the sickle ridge of Peak (20,860 ft.), sister to Avalanche Mountain, caused us to ponder on its none too obvious possibilities.

For ten minutes we stayed on the summit of the mountain, then started to descend. The snow was still good and, as we had calculated, the sun had only begun to touch the snow of the traverse along the ridge. The return journey to Camp III took us barely an hour and a half, and the sun had been on the possible avalanche slopes for only twenty to thirty minutes. Our idea had worked.

This ascent took place from June 11 to 13.
AVID and I sat outside the tent at Camp III eating snow with apricot jam, and rubbed back a little warmth into our feet. Both of us had toes that had lost all feeling, and it was several weeks before the sense of touch returned to them. After these preliminaries we packed the tent and returned to Camp II late in the morning. News was not very good. Nimo Tenzing had brought a letter from Harry, who was on his way out of Garhwal, and also a lengthy telegram from the Indian Government, refusing a further request to cross the Bhyundar Khanta to Gamsali, in the Dhauliganga. Dark clouds became menacing, and as the snow-flakes began to fall we made a snap decision to return to Base Camp and prepare for an attempt at Nilkanta. We descended during quite a vicious snow-storm. Once again we enjoyed the contrasting richness of colour in the Satopanth. John Kempe, who had left us a fortnight before, had sent a newspaper clipping which informed us that the Cho Oyu expedition was returning to England, and that the Swiss expedition to Everest had given up their attempt, eight hundred feet from the summit, because of bad weather. Already the monsoon had reached the Eastern Himalaya, but we felt that its advent in the Satopanth area would make little change to the weather we had experienced during the previous six weeks.

At breakfast-time the following morning Lhakpa, our cook and sirdar, regaled us with tsampa porridge and paratties—unleavened bread made with atta mixed with water, rolled into flat pancakes, and fried in ghee (clarified butter). He made them excellently, and they tasted delicious with Marmite or honey. Throughout the day thirty or forty pilgrims visited the falls of Vasudhara, and at
times we feared for their safety as masses of dwarf juniper were flung down from the crags above to the snow beds below by men from Mana. It was a splendid sight to see these men, natural rock climbers, traversing airily the steep rock walls thousands of feet above us in search of the juniper—their main source of fuel. Lhakpa and Nimo Tenzing descended to Mana to buy a sheep, and order fresh supplies of tsampa, while David and I wrote letters and washed some of our clothing in the Alaknanda.

The next day we decided we should all descend to Mana to obtain the tsampa, and then continue to Badrinath to search for mail and seek out a washer for the Primus stove, which leaked badly and refused to function at higher altitudes. As we came to the path that led to the natural rock bridge we skirted a perpendicular wall of reddish-brown volcanic rock with a number of Hindu shrines around its base. White rambler roses were in bloom and a purple heath gave off a rich perfume. Children were hoeing the fields that surrounded the village. A line of ten or twelve Bhotia women singing a jolly rhythmical song and carrying bamboo baskets filled with wood stopped as though paralysed on seeing us, then scurried along giggling and hiding their faces when the camera—the evil eye—was pointed at them.

Though intermingling and intermarrying with the natives of Garhwal, the Bhotias still retain many Tibetan characteristics. The women wear clothing that is brightly coloured and of Tibetan style; long cross-over blouses, necklaces and amber bangles, and multi-coloured jackets. Houses are not large, but are often two-storied, and the flat roof of Tibet is replaced by a sloping roof covered with stone slabs—a very necessary modification, this, because of the far greater snowfall on the south side of the Himalaya. The same modification has been made by the Sherpas of Nepal.

Mana at 10,500 ft. is the last village before the Mana Pass at 18,402 ft., which crosses the Indo-Tibetan border nineteen miles farther north. Much trade is carried on between the Tibetan people and those of Garhwal over this pass, which is sometimes called the Dungri La. The people of the village were already busily trading Indian grain, cloth, and other essential commodities
for sheep, goats, rock salt, borax, wool, and woollen goods. The largest yak I have ever seen was loaded high with goods, and grazed quietly by the wayside as its owner, a Tibetan, smoked a hookah with his Bhotia friends. A little old lady made a picturesque sight as she wove a rough woollen blanket on a primitive hand-loom, and a few yards away a young girl with a large wooden pole was pounding wheat-grain in a hollowed stone. The women and children seemed very busy, but the men lounged idly in the sun, smoking, talking, or just sleeping. Along the path between Mana and Badrinath people were busy in the fields, tending crops of barley, buckwheat, and potatoes. These potatoes are excellent to eat, and the soil and climate of the Alaknanda—indeed, of most of Garhwal—seems to provide an ideal environment for their growth.

Badrinath was crowded with pilgrims, and the shops were filled to overflowing with every type of commodity one would find in a modern European store. At one of them we were accosted for news about our expedition by a soft-voiced Indian, Govind Nautiyal, who soon delighted us with his profound knowledge of the area. He told us that Hindu mythology is filled with stories of battles between gods and demons in these mountains; that every cave, stream, pool, waterfall, or rock had its own particular name and religious significance. Badrinath was famous long before Benares, and indeed, this sacred spot was known and revered as early as the sixth century B.C., for detailed accounts of it are given in various Puranas. We had noticed scores of people at the Brahma Kapal as we entered the village, and he informed us it is the rock where Brahma dwells, and that the people we saw were performing ceremonies in memory of departed ancestors. The ashes of Mahatma Gandhi were cast upon the holy water between the Brahma Kapal and Taptakund—the hot sulphur spring—in 1948. The shrine of Badrinath is one of the religious corners of India—one of the four most holy places, the other three being Pameshwar, Dwarka, and Jagannath. It was fascinating listening to his stories, and between times he would ask us a shrewd question, which we answered, so that no doubt he felt the giving of information reciprocated. Apparently he was an agent
Satopanth, Bhagirath Karak, and the Bangneu, Garhwal

On this map the scale is approximately one inch to one mile. "B.C." denotes Base Camp.
for Reuter in his spare time. We left him after a while and wandered down the narrow street to find our Sherpas, who were searching for washers and supplies of sugar.

People of all ages and castes, from north, south, east, and west, a living stream, swept along the streets, waving sticks or umbrellas and exchanging salutations—"Jai Ind!" "Jai Badrinnath!"

At the post-office we hurriedly sorted through the pigeonholes, finding David Bryson's mail under D, and one for me in its right place from Major-General Williams, who was leading a party of the Indian Army to Kamet (25,447 ft.), in North Garhwal. We had known that John might meet the expedition on his way back to India, and he had promised to inquire of the possibilities of our joining them. Kamet sounded very attractive, and it would be one way of seeing the area we had planned to climb in. It was a kind letter, but, as we had suspected, the expedition was already large enough. Time was short, and we must hurry back, but 'our Sadhu,' as we now affectionately called him, appeared from behind the post-office carrying a large brown teapot made from the husk of a coconut.

Washers? Yes, he would get us a washer. "I'll loan you a Primus stove if you wish, but first come with me and drink a cup of tea while we talk." He was insistent, persuasive, likeable, and we followed him over the bridge to his little house, which commanded a view of Nilkanta, the natural shrine of Shiva. A number of carefully tended flower-beds surrounded by small, neat paths extended to his door, and inside the house the rooms were low and snug, but almost devoid of light. There was a hurricane lamp for use in the evenings, a small table, a hard bed, and a bookshelf filled with books—a dictionary, "Sanskrit—English; English—Sanskrit"; the "Teach yourself" series, on Spanish, French, Gardening, and other subjects; and a copy of Smythe's Kamet Conquered. There really was a Primus too, and with it he boiled water for our tea.

It was late when we left the Sadhu, and we walked quickly back to the Base Camp. A Bhotia coolie came to the tents as we ate our evening meal, and told us the French expedition had been
successful in climbing Chaukhamba. We were pleased at their success, and decided to ascend the Bhagirath Karak the next morning in order to congratulate them. Nilkanta was now the most interesting of the unclimbed peaks in the area, and, as we were the only members of our expedition left, we decided to invite the French to join us in our attempt.

In the morning we made good speed, as there was little snow, and we could walk easily along tiny paths through the now grassy ablation valley. The Bhotias graze their sheep along these valleys during the monsoon.

At the French camp we were made very welcome and given a lunch of rice and dal (lentil flour), and they broached a delicious cognac to toast the expeditions.

They had had a disappointing time at first because of the poor weather conditions, but, making full use of the fine spell, ascended Chaukhamba at the same time as we made the ascent of Avalanche Peak.

We put forward our suggestion, and gave our invitation. Victor Russenberger and Lucien George, the two who had made the ascent of Chaukhamba, decided they would join forces with us. First they would have to arrange for coolies from Mana, and we were to meet at the junction of the Satopanth and Bagirath Karak in two days’ time.

On the one day remaining we sorted out ten days’ food for Nilkanta, bathed in the stream from the Vasudhara, and consumed large quantities of the late departed Cuthbert III.

F. S. Smythe once described Nilkanta as the Siniolchu of the Central Himalaya,¹ and gave it the name “Queen of Garhwal.” He and the late Lieutenant-Colonel Oliver attempted to climb the mountain in 1937, by the long and steep south-east ridge. Ten years later Major C. G. Wylie and P. Murden tried the same route, finding it extremely difficult, and decided that siege tactics would be required if the mountain were to be climbed by that ridge. Undeterred by the setback, they then trekked round to the Satopanth Glacier and reached a col at about 18,500 ft. at the foot of the west ridge. The ridge was rocky, and bristled with pinnacles.

¹ Siniolchu is the most beautiful peak of Sikkim.
to which they gave the amusing names of Tweedledum and Tweedledee, the Three Ugly Sisters, and the Red Tower. They returned from a height of approximately 19,000 ft. in bad weather, but confident that the west ridge route to the summit was possible. This was the total of our information at the time, but later, on meeting Edmund Hillary and George Lowe in Bombay, we learned that in 1951 they had also been to the West Col, and had ascended to a similar height in poor conditions before returning to their camp.

On May 28, several days after the avalanche in the Bangneu, and during the three-week interval before we climbed Avalanche Mountain (as described in Chapter 7) John and David had left with three Sherpas to place a camp on the Satopanth Glacier, from which to reconnoitre the mountain. Harry and I stayed at Base Camp to recover from the avalanche accident, and on the second day met the members of the French Chaukhamba Expedition, who were just arriving in the valley. It was interesting for two expeditions to be meeting in the Himalaya, and we had a merry communal meal in the evening. After the third day my arm, which had been stripped of skin in places, and tended to suppurate, felt much better, and I set out to join David and John on Nilkanta. I camped at a little grazing alp named Majna, and the next day met them at the foot of the West Col. Snow conditions were extremely poor, and even shallow slopes of twenty to twenty-five degrees were seen to be avalanching. Two days prior to my joining the party they had been swept down by an avalanche while trying to reach the Col, and there seemed little hope of immediate improvement in the conditions.

On June 2 (I remembered it was Whit-Monday, and that on the previous year my wife and I had climbed Gillercombe Buttress, in the Lake District) we were awake by 2.30 A.M., but owing to a faulty washer on the Primus stove we were delayed until after five o'clock. As we set out to ascend to the Col the weather looked very poor, but we climbed in the steps previously made to a height of 17,000 ft. Beyond this point the snow became very soft, and we wallowed above our thighs in it. The sky looked as grim as any I can remember in the Himalaya; soon we became en-
developed in cloud, and it had begun to snow. Disconsolately, we decided to return. It was a difficult decision to make, especially as John had to leave us in a few days' time, but it was the correct decision, and the only sound one that could be made. The leaden sky presaged a spell of bad weather that made climbing an impossibility. For seven days, floods of rain and heavy falls of snow fell day and night at Base Camp, and as low as Mana village, at 10,000 ft. On June 5, the worst of the days, there was a great storm through the night; tent-poles cracked, and guy-ropes were broken. This was our first experience with Nilkanta, and now that David and I were going again we hoped for much better snow conditions, and some fine weather.

We met Victor and Lucien at the appointed spot, and were pleased to see they had brought three Sherpas with them, which increased our total number of Sherpas to seven. One of them, Gyaldzen (nicknamed "Big Eyes" by H. W. Tilman), had been on Nilkanta with Major Wylie in 1947. The other two Sherpas were Lhakpa Temba and Ang Temba, who did well on Everest in 1953. The Bhotia coolies who were carrying the French equipment did not impress me, and compared with Sherpas or Dhotials seemed very slow and expensive. Even a moderately slow progress was maintained only by resorting to the expedient of hiding their hookah and tobacco in our rucksacks. Late in the day we established Base Camp near the grazing alp of Majna, on the Satopanth Glacier. There had been a great change at Majna since our attempt on Nilkanta, five weeks before, and the lower slopes leading up to the basin at the foot of the slopes below the Col were partly covered with grass, and a lovely show of purple primula, potentilla, and an aromatic dwarf rhododendron. Even so, Gyaldzen was surprised, and declared that there was still much more snow than there had been in 1947. Ang Temba's hand was septic; there was a great lump under his armpit, and I dosed him with penicillin. Two days later he carried a heavy load up to the Col. One of the many pleasures of our expedition with Lucien and Victor was the exchanging of food-supplies—they relished our Vita-Weat and tinned jams, while we unashamedly guzzled their corn-flakes and Camembert cheese. Perhaps Victor was too
enthusiastic, for his tummy was none too good, and I dosed him with sulphathiazole. In actual fact it was the aftermath of the extremely hard work he had done on Chaukhamba.

The sun shone brilliantly the following morning, and, with four Sherpas, Lucien, David, and I placed a Camp I at 16,000 ft. at the foot of the slopes beneath the Col. In the afternoon layers of ominous-looking clouds moved relentlessly up the Satopanth from the Alaknanda, but above them we still had views of Avalanche Peak and the mountains of the Kamet area.

Though we were awake by 3.30 A.M. the following day, an early start was again delayed by work on our stove. We were away by 5.30 A.M.; snow conditions on the route up to the ridge were infinitely better, and we placed Camp II on the Col by midday. Monsoon clouds were massing. Snow fell throughout the night.

We breakfasted early, trying to feel optimistic, though already grey, cigar-shaped clouds were moving towards us, and behind them high cumulus showed lowering leaden tops. We traversed around Tweedledum, and ascended a couloir to the base of Tweedledee. Hail and snow reduced visibility to little more than a dozen yards. Lucien’s head was cut by a fall of ice and stones, and I was hit in the throat by a falling chunk of ice. We had knocked in one piton to prepare a hand-rail for the Sherpas, but continuing under these conditions was not practicable. On return we were gladdened by the sight of platefuls of scrambled egg that Gyaldzen had prepared for us, and soon three Sherpas arrived with food and fuel. They had had a trying time on the steep slopes below the Col, with small stones and snow avalanches passing them on either side. We were also informed that snow and a large block of ice had swept by Camp I earlier in the day. It began to snow heavily again towards evening and through the night. Clearly this was the monsoon. It seemed doubtful whether Sherpas could carry beyond the Col because of the difficulty of the rocks, and we had planned to bivouac at about 20,000 ft. The snows now made this hopeless. Rocks plastered with snow also increased the dangers of the supply route between Camps I and II. We decided to descend. Through a break in the clouds we could see the peaks about Kamet, and Ganesh Parbat, on the Tibetan
Example of Nevar Art

A Carved Stone Figure in the Valley of Khammadi—A Fine
Camp II, Bangneu Glacier (17,500 ft.)
David Bryson is sheltering from the hot afternoon sun. The high-altitude Meade tent was shared by two climbers. Boots, rope, and clothes are seen out to dry.

Harry Tilly, Leader of the 1952 Expedition to the Garhwal Himalaya
border, cloudless, and clearly outlined against a blue sky. These should have been our main objectives in June, but withdrawal of the permit prevented the carrying out of the plans devised by Harry to avoid the rigours of the monsoon.

It was gallimg to see these mountains as we finally left the Col and descended. We stayed at Majna for four days, but there was no sign of improvement in the weather, and we decided to descend to the Vasudhara camp on June 26. The day before we left I walked alone along the left lateral moraine and looked up to the head of the Satopanth Glacier, which leads over to the Gangotri area. The stony glacier seemed a desolate place; the only sounds were the occasional cry of a chough overhead and the clatter and clonk of falling stones. For once I was glad to be alone. Nothing persists save change, and here the change was very slow; there was something eternal about it that made the things in life that worry us seem small. Perhaps this is just one more reason why we escape to the hills. I knew that we hadn’t achieved as much as we had hoped, but I had learned much, the days had been full of interest, I had had the joy of having the best of all companions, and I could return to my wife and son with a story worth the telling.

On the return to Vasudhara we had some tricky and amusing moments crossing the streams, swollen to raging torrents by monsoon rains, and at the Bangneu Nullah we lost a load of mutton, which swept out of sight before anyone could give a word of warning.

We hired ponies to carry our loads down the ancient pilgrim route to Chamoli, and within two days our caravan passed through Badrinath.

Three days of rapid descent along the pilgrim path seemed a hot and sticky anticlimax to the expedition—yet it was realized that this was the way of all pilgrims, whether they had been to the source of the Ganges, or to seek out romance and adventure among the eternal snows.
DAVID BRYSON and I found Delhi expensive on return from Garhwal, and money was short. Fortunately, we were invited to broadcast on the All-India Radio, and the fee provided us with sufficient rupees to book a flight to Kashmir. During many of the stormy periods that we experienced in the Satopanth valley I had talked at length about the sunshine, the beautiful colouring, and the fine mountain country of the Western Himalaya. David Bryson was keen to see it for himself, and put my descriptions to the test.

A long way below us a twisting and turning brown road wound its way through the green-forested hills. Along it we could see a line of tiny moving dots moving slowly like a steadily marching column of soldier ants across a sandy desert. But the dots were not ants, they were human beings—pilgrims making their way towards the Cave of Amarnath, in Kashmir. The Indian Airways Dakota in which we were flying moved steadily forward, soon leaving the roadway behind, and before long we could see the broad Vale of Kashmir below. The pilgrims would be many days reaching the valley, but for us the path was made easy, and within half an hour the metal bird was setting us down on the airstrip outside Srinagar. Even so, I missed the slow run in by truck along the dusty road from Rawalpindi with the ever-changing view of high hills and the avenues of stately poplars that run by fields richly green with the thickly growing rice and maize. Perhaps the slower progress of the pilgrims is even more satisfying. I should like to try it some day.

In Srinagar we made arrangements to live on the house-boat
Gwenette, and as we drove through the streets aboard a tonga a swarthy Kashmiri tradesman chased us on a bicycle, shouting, "Jackson, Sahib, I remember you. R.A.F. Pleased to buy my clothing." It was pleasing to be recognized so easily after seven years, especially as I wasn’t this man’s debtor, but a greater surprise was still to come. In a shikara we glided slowly across the lake to the boat, and were salaamed by a tall bearded cook whom I immediately recognized as our cook at the climbing camp of Thajiwas days. The years between slipped away, and it seemed as if the break had never been.

The Gwenette was a solidly built boat made mostly of pine-wood. Its rooms, which were large and thickly carpeted, were furnished with fine examples of Kashmiri carved chairs and tables, all tastefully arranged. We had chosen well. A large paraffin lamp cast its soft yellow light into every corner, and soon we were eating the hot meal carefully prepared and served. Later, as we drank our coffee by the window, we could hear the soft dip of the paddles and saw the rippling of the water as shikaras glided across the lake. Eventually one of them appeared at the open window. We heard an inquiring voice speaking the Kashmiri tongue, and a smiling figure wearing a Persian cap and clean white clothes salaamed. "My name is Subhana the Worst," the man said. "I am the biggest rogue in Kashmir. I came to speak with the boatman, and had no idea you were here. I will leave you in peace." His manner and quiet, cultured voice inspired confidence, so we asked him to join us at our coffee. It was a fortunate meeting, for Subhana—whose real name was Ghulam Rasool—was a wealthy Kashmiri who owned many workshops for the weaving of Kashmiri carpets, and the making of delicately chased silver-ware. For an hour we listened, fascinated, to his story of the Persian and Kashmiri carpets, the method of their weaving and the history of their design. To him they were much more than a covering for the floor; they were among the finest examples of craftsmanship in the world. He told us how many of them were copies of the Moghul gardens, such as Nagin Bagh and Shalimar; carpets on which the Moghul Emperors used to lie in winter pretending that once again they were sitting beneath
the shady chenar-trees in summer watching the kingfishers and the dragon-flies darting over pools thickly covered with lotus blossoms. Before he left us we were invited to visit the workshops the following day; and that we did. There in small rooms men were weaving carpets of delicate patterns, using threads brightly coloured with natural dyes from plants grown in the valley. Boys of various ages from seven to sixteen were serving an apprenticeship; some of the older ones beginning to weave on their own. The room was dark and the work intricate; small wonder that blindness is a common affliction among the middle-aged Kashmiris. Later we were privileged to see several sixteenth-century Persian carpets that Subhana was sending to the World Exhibition of crafts in Zürich the following year.

We had eight days in which to see as much of Kashmir as possible, so we soon investigated the possibilities of trekking into the mountains. Gulmarg was too near, and to my dismay I discovered that Europeans were allowed to stay at Sonamarg for only one day. Apparently there was a military post at Sonamarg and no one was allowed across the Zoji La except with a very special permit from the Indian Government.

On the evening of the second day, as I lay on my bed, wakened by the annoying buzz of voracious mosquitoes, I thought of my one trek up the Liddar Valley to Kolahoi. I had been very young and inexperienced then, in 1944, so perhaps my memories of the journey were exaggerated by a youthful exuberance. If we went there this time would Kashmir live up to all I had promised David? My mind went back to the morning in August 1944 when I had left Prasada Villa very early, pedalling a bicycle with rucksack and tent lashed to the sides. The equipment weighed some 80 lb., making it difficult to balance as I travelled through the inky darkness. It had been the first night of Ramadhan, and within half an hour of starting my journey the priests began to wail morning prayers from the mosques, wakening the people to eat and pray before sunrise. No faithful Mahommedan eats between sunrise and sunset during Ramadhan. After twenty miles I was saturated by a surprise rainstorm, and while I was sheltering, the sunlight bathed the Pir Punjal Peaks with a rosy
glow, birds sang a lovely dawn chorus, and pied kingsfishers fished for young trout over the surface of the tranquil river Jhelum. Later in the afternoon I arrived at Pahalgam, where I pitched my small canvas tent on a grassy *maidan*, and in the evening lay contented on the soft turf, watching the sparks shoot high from the log fire and listening to the gentle murmur of the Liddar river hidden behind the pines.

During the next evening, while I was camped at Aru, I had met Dr Ernest Neve. He encouraged me in my solitary journey, but advised me not to carry the bicycle and equipment any farther, but to hire a pony. I was delighted to have met in the mountains this fine old pioneer of Himalayan exploration; the first man to make the ascent of Kolahoi along with Colonel Kenneth Mason in 1912.

An over-bold mosquito settled on my nose, bringing me back to the house-boat and reality. Perhaps my tapestry of youthful memories was too richly embroidered, I thought, and turned uneasily in the blankets.

Still my mind wouldn’t rest, and I remembered that the next day I bought six maize cobs and a *seer* (two pints) of milk from one of the villagers, then dismantled the bicycle ready to put on the broad back of a hill pony. I had revelled in the walk to Lidderwatt through forests of spruce and deodar, then across grassy uplands covered with Alpines—sage, stonecrops, vetches, teasel, fumitory, and starry gentian. Once again I made a fire with resin-scented logs, and watched a fiery sunset setting the lower pine-covered shoulders of the Kolahoi massif ablaze with flaming light. I stirred the fire into a fierce blaze too, because of reports that three Gujars had recently been mauled by bears. Daringly I walked through the dark, quiet forest, hours before the dawn the following day, and at 5 A.M. set my feet on the northern glacier of Kolahoi—the glacier from which the mountain derives its name—“Wreath Stream.”

That day on my first glacier was yet another golden thread among my mountain memories. Would the thread have tarnished or was it really true gold? David and I would go to Kolahoi and put it to the acid test. My mind settled at last, I turned over,
covered my ears to escape the attentions of further mosquitoes, and went to sleep.

During the flight from Delhi we had made the acquaintance of an American ciné photographer named Al Paul, whom we often met in Srinagar. He wished to join us on our trek to Kolahoi, and on the morning of the third day the three of us boarded the bus for Pahalgam. This bus runs daily to Pahalgam through the months of pilgrimage to the Amarnath Caves in the Liddar Valley. From the smooth roadway of the Bund (the main shopping centre in Srinagar) we turned eastward, heading towards Islamabad, and for a few fleeting moments I caught a glimpse of Prasada Villa on top of the hill. It was a quick journey to Pahalgam by bus, with but one halt at the ancient temple of Martand. The temple is said to be very old, and a relic of the days when Buddhism was the religion throughout Kashmir. Two of the buildings possess gilded roofs, and the whole establishment is now kept in repair by Hindu priests. The large pool in front of the building has been a trout hatchery for many years, and as we cast a handful of crumbs upon the water large trout curved upward powerfully and rippled the surface in their eagerness. A white-robed figure asked us to sign the visitors' book, and I turned back the pages for signs of my visit in 1944. A name caught my eye, and we were pleased to notice that only a few weeks previously the book had been signed by Dr T. H. Somervell, the mountaineer and medical missionary. Only the year before I had been delighted to see him at the Fell and Rock Climbing Club dinner in Keswick, when to me his face was quite easily remembered, though the only other time I had met him was in my home town when I was a child of eight and he gave a memorable lecture on Mt. Everest and his missionary work. Mountaineers and travellers were my heroes from that night onward.

At Pahalgam we hired a pony to take our baggage, then walked by the banks of the West Liddar river to Arau. On the arrival of Ahdoo, the ponyman, and our baggage we busily set about the preparation of a meal. One of the villagers, a typical hillman named Mirra, helped us willingly, bringing wood and
water and scouring dirty *dekchis* (pans); and we cast all thoughts of empty pockets to the wind and engaged him as our cook.

At Lidderwatt the next day we stopped to bathe in the cold river, then walked through the forest of deodar, spruce, blue pine, and larch until at over 9000 ft. the silver birch began to predominate. A mile and a half from the snout of the Kolahoi glacier we walked into a large Gujar encampment, and as it began to rain we haggled for the hire of one of their shelters. Eventually we persuaded them to let us have a small construction of stone over which they had spread a white canvas—the price being two rupees each for two nights. Though flea-ridden, it was dry, and the only inconvenience was that numerous hens paraded in and out at all times.

Next door the building was of a more permanent kind, having a roof of brushwood, birch, and turf. It was apparently the favourite meeting-place of the menfolk, who used to sit and talk, all the while passing round an evil-smelling hookah. Among them was the patriarch of the Gujas, a grand-looking old man with a long, flowing beard tinted red, and piercing eyes that had developed crows' feet at the sides through many years of scrutinizing hill slopes in the fierce glare of the Himalayan sun. In the evening the Gujar girls shepherded several hundred sheep into the square outside the dwellings and busily proceeded to milk the ewes. This sheep-milk is delicious, and we drank large quantities during our short stay in the Liddar valley. Our American friend Al was delighted at finding these fascinating people in the valley, and spent much time with his ciné-camera taking hundreds of feet of film. He had just been on a filming tour of Indonesia and was in Kashmir for a very short time, but now expressed a desire to return as soon as possible to make a film study of the hill people. Al decided to stay with the Gujars the next day while David and I went out for a climb.

The two of us wakened at 1.30 A.M., consumed a plateful of corn-flakes and sheep-milk, then left the Gujar tent at 2 A.M. The still night air felt warm, and as we trudged along to the valley in the moonlight we managed to keep to the suggestion of a path until reaching the snout of the glacier. On the way we had seen
men sleeping out on the roof-tops, and the only sound that disturbed the peace of the moonlit valley was the bark of a solitary sheep-dog by the last Gujar dwelling. Glacier seracs glistened weirdly as we ascended steep, hard slopes of snow that became a strain as we crabbled up sideways in our rubber-soled boots. Whenever possible we escaped on to rock and shale for relief; then quite suddenly we were crossing a level stretch of névé to the Neve-Mason Couloir at the foot of the east ridge of Kolahoi. There we nibbled at our second breakfast and watched the dawn light suffuse the stratified rocks of Kolahoi’s northern precipice with gold. Gwashi Bror—“Goddess of Light”—the native name was the most fitting at that moment. Soon we could see Nanga Parbat in the north, and to the right of Kazim Pahalin Bal ridge, which looked far more impressive than from down below. Each and every gendarme I had traversed alone on that superb day in 1945 was clear to see. Scores of pointed peaks, their snowy summits sparkling in the sun, soared high above a vast glaciated area to the east. Nun Kun, Zí—and yes, there quite clearly, Cumbeland Peak, looking a good deal more ferocious than it really was.

The first few hundred feet up the couloir were awkward, and necessitated much use of the ice-axe once again, because of our boots; so as early as possible we escaped to the left on to a shattered rib of rock that swept up towards a great sentinel gendarme called the Castle.

The rock was sound, rich red, volcanic; and at the turning of an awkward block our eyes drank in the rich deep purple of the petals and the emerald green of the blades of Primula Stuartii, then fastened upon lush pink cushions of yet another high-growing Alpine. Here we stopped a while to put on the rope, and then beyond the Castle we climbed steadily along the ridge and over pinnacles, moved quickly across neat ledges, scrambled down into and out of clear-cut gaps, over gangways wet with melting ice, and on towards the white corniced summit of our peak. At midday ten hours after leaving the Liddar Valley we drove our ice-axes into the final cornice that drapes over towards the steep, toothy north ridge. We had had a magnificent climb of some 7500 ft., and now we could sit back to revel in the terrific pano-
rama. Nanga Parbat was still there, an aloof white giant; and beyond it, looking like a layer of fair-weather cumulus, was the Karakorum range. Excitedly I pointed out the nearer peaks I knew, Haramoukh, the Zogpu Da, and Nichinai; Kazim, Great Thajiwas, and Crystal Peak. A deep blue cleft split the mountains, and we could see over the Zoji La to Matayan, in Ladakh.

Beyond Nun Kun mountain after mountain stretched away into the distance, reaching to Kulu, and, dare we say it, perhaps there dimly we could see the snowy ranges of Garhwal. Probably we sought to see more than was possible on this exceedingly clear day, but there are times when the heart sees more than the eye. The thread of gold in the fabric was not tarnished after all, I thought; it shone out with even greater brilliance, and my heart sang with gladness. David is a generous man, but there on the summit he saw it wasn’t necessary to be kind to one who perhaps looked upon these mountains with faintly rose-tinted spectacles—he had looked for and found in the Kashmir hills all that he might desire.

On a few scattered rocks above the south ridge—the ridge first climbed by Sir (then Lieutenant) John Hunt in 1937—we sat down beside a small cairn and ate a hatful of lemon-snow, a delicious concoction made by layering snow, lemon crystals, and sugar in the proportions $3 : 2 : 1$ and stirring them together.

Within two and a half hours of leaving the summit we were back at the foot of the couloir enjoying a glissade down to the névé. A layer of clouds had begun to creep up from the valley shortly after we started to descend, and within minutes we were enveloped in clammy, clinging mists. Partly because of this, and partly because of our stream of conversation, we missed the correct turning and got on the wrong side of an unnamed peak. Clearly we were descending rapidly down to Baltal, below the Zoji La, and at first we were greatly tempted to continue. It would have meant staying the night and crossing the Thajiwas Col the next morning—a wonderful thought—but wisdom prevailed over wish, and we twisted through a heavily crevassed area towards an unknown col. Visibility was extremely bad at this time, and at the narrow col there was little to indicate the angle
of the slope or its destination. We plunged forward and down in deep snow, down and down for perhaps two thousand feet—then suddenly we were in the clear, and could see the Gujar encampment several miles away. The glissade to the glacier snout took us but a few minutes, and we then walked beside a rushing stream, through bright pink beds of *Primula rosea*.

Within two days we were back on the house-boat in Srinagar, awaiting a Dakota to carry us over the hills again and to Delhi.
Prelude to the "Snowman" Expedition

While I was at Sonamarg in 1945 I often engaged a certain coolie to carry loads for me up to the climbing hut in the Valley of Glaciers. We named him "Buda"—"Old Man"—for he was the patriarch of the village. During his long life he had had many interesting experiences, and once, so he said, he had carried as porter to the Base Camp on Nanga Parbat with the German expedition in 1934. At other times, either as a ponyman or coolie, he had travelled extensively throughout Kashmir and Ladakh. Once I can remember his telling me of having seen in his youth a hairy creature wandering across a boulder-strewn nullah in the country north of the Zoji La. He became quite excited as he told me the story, said it was a Mi-Go—a snowman—that it was walking on two legs, and gave most lurid descriptions of its fierce appearance and of its great size. Though he seemed quite genuinely to have seen some hairy animal his efforts to impress me with his descriptions made me feel that his imagination had run away with him. "Bears are here in plenty, and you probably saw one of those," I said, but despite this he stuck to his story, and was quite sure the animal he saw was not a bear.

This particular tale was the first I ever had at first hand from a native of the Himalaya, though I had, of course, read other people's accounts of native stories and of finding large footprints in the snow. There was the well-known account of Mallory, Bullock, and others finding tracks of various animals on the Lhakpa La during the 1921 Everest reconnaissance led by Colonel Howard-Bury. They had found along with tracks of hares and
foxes strange large prints that resembled a human foot. The porters had told the mountaineers that they were the tracks of the Metoh-Kangmi—literally, a disgusting or dirty snow animal. I had also read Smythe's account of his finding and following tracks in Garhwal. On that occasion the tracks were followed for a long distance over difficult ground, and photographs were taken. An examination of the photographs had caused some argument among zoologists as to whether they had been made by a bear or a langur monkey, but eventually a majority had decided they were the tracks of a migrating bear. In later years certain authorities, probably in view of fresh evidence, swung round to the view that the Metoh-Kangmi was really a langur monkey. Because of this opinion it was interesting to see the langur monkeys among the bamboo clumps in Garhwal during our 1952 expedition, an incident described earlier in this book. When the Daily Mail decided to send out an expedition in 1954 to try to solve the riddle of the 'snowman' those two experiences were my only direct contact with the mystery. The newspaper had compiled a huge dossier of information on the Metoh-Kangmi that was most impressive. Many of the stories were imaginative, and some fantastic, obviously sent in by people who had never been in the Himalaya, and who had not talked with Himalayan people. On the other hand, most of the information seemed to be genuine records of native stories, or actual descriptions of footprints seen by members of mountaineering expeditions in the past.

It was over a hundred years ago that the first European, a botanist, came back out of Sikkim and retold stories that he had heard from the natives of some strange hairy animal living in the mountains. Several other Europeans in the nineteenth century also made reference to the animal in various articles, and Colonel L. A. Waddell, in his book Among the Himalayas, told of seeing large tracks on a snowfield in north-east Sikkim in 1889. The name "Abominable Snowman" did not enter into common parlance until 1921 (the year of the Everest reconnaissance), when a Mr Henry Newman gave it as a translation of the Tibetan name 'Metoh-Kangmi.' Unfortunately, this rather theatrical translation conjures up a picture of a huge and hairy barefooted human,
possibly club in hand, wandering about in the snows of high, cold regions: versatile as human beings are, the idea is simply incredible to us.

In fact, Kangmi does mean "Man of the snow," but Metoh would have been better translated as 'dirty,' filthy,' or 'disgusting'; to the Tibetan mind it is simply a name that helps to describe the animal, a name such as Orang-Outang, which apparently means "Wild man of the forest." As the natives do not possess a degree in Zoology, or a knowledge of Latin and Greek, it is possible to assume they considered their name as the quickest rough description.

In the 1930's tracks were found several times, and Smythe's account of finding prints has already been mentioned. In 1937 Sir John Hunt and C. R. Cooke found a set of strange footprints while climbing on the Zemu Gap, near Kangchenjunga, and Mr C. R. Cooke actually found good prints in mud as well as on snow. Also during these years Eric Shipton came across tracks in various parts of the Himalaya at various times, but when in 1951 he and Michael Ward photographed a long line of footprints on the Menlung La in Nepal there was renewed interest in the mystery of the Metoh-Kangmi.

The photographs show the prints as having been made on crystallized snow or hard ice, and as well as the imprint of a broad foot it is clear to see a large toe and the outline of other toes. At one place the animal making the footprints had jumped across a crevasse, and there was a clear impression of its having dug in its toes to prevent a slip. One of the Sherpas—Sen Tensing—was quite sure the prints had been made by a yeti—the name commonly used by the Sherpas for the 'snow animal.' Other peculiar tracks were found by the Japanese expedition on Mansalu in 1952, and the same year Dr Wyss-Dunant, leader of the Swiss Everest expedition, reported the finding of tracks in the Khumbu valley. In 1953 the second senior lama of Thyangboche Gompa told the members of the British Everest expedition of a visit by a yeti to the Gompa grounds. This particular animal was described as over five feet in height, capable of walking upright, and covered with greyish-brown hair. It was also seen to scratch itself monkey-
fashion, and it moved away from the monastery when the monks blew their conch-shell and horns.

Though native stories had been heard, and tracks seen, in various places throughout the Himalaya, clearly the greatest proportion were located in the areas of the Nepal-Tibet and the Nepal-Sikkim border. Sola Khumbu, or 'Sherpaland,' in the region of Everest, was the most obvious choice of locality to make a search, for it was the Sherpas themselves who were able to furnish the most information. Besides the name Metoh-Kangmi, other native names have been used, such as Mi-Go (pronounced Mey-Goo), Mirka, Kang Admi, Yeti, and eventually Meh-Teh, the true name given to the Snowman by the Sherpas, but that is part of the story that follows. Perhaps the brief summary given here will serve to clarify some of the references which will be made and also show there was some foundation on which to build up the Daily Mail expedition, which among other things set out to try and solve the mystery of the Snowman.
I was at Pen-Y-Gwyrd hotel, in Wales. The occasion was a dinner given by the Climbers Club to members and reserves of the successful Mt. Everest expedition. Very appropriately the tables were decorated with pretty clusters of blue gentian, and the dinner rounded off with a glass of vintage Bouvier. Mr and Mrs Chris Briggs had also painted on the floor a set of large white footprints which led to the bar. These too were appropriate, because for me they led to the Himalaya and the foot of Everest. While in the bar I was invited to join the Daily Mail expedition in search of the yeti. For a number of weeks I heard nothing more, though in actual fact preparations were already well advanced. Late in November a five-minute talk on the phone with Tom Stobart clinched the matter, and I found myself hurriedly preparing to leave the country in December.

Several week-ends were spent in London helping to organize the mountaineering equipment, though in this case the valuable assistance of Percy Rowden and of Mr and Mrs Rob Lawrie already ensured that all was well. A room on the top floor of the Associated Newspapers building began to look like the storehouse for an expeditionary force, as food, photographic materials, and mountaineering and hunting equipment piled up in large quantities. Stobart was advertising for two camera assistants, and it so happened that Stan Jeeves, a friend of mine from Nelson, was in London on business. He is a keen photographer, and particularly

1 The great A. F. Mummery always used to break a flask of this on the top of any newly conquered peak.
skilled in the photography of natural history subjects. The results of mentioning this were quite astonishing to me, and I think to Stan, for he was whisked away from a station platform for an interview with Stobart in a near-by café. Thus I found myself on the expedition with a fellow-townsman and a friend.

Other members were spread far and wide; most of them I knew only by name until meeting them in Katmandu. Charles Stoner flew from London early in December to form a one-man advance party in Sola Khumbu—a task which he fulfilled most nobly. Gerald Russell had been in search of rare animals before, and he too soon left for India. Dr Biswas, Curator at the Calcutta Museum, was, of course, already out there. Within a fortnight of our meeting Ralph Izzard, he also was on the way to Bombay, and by Christmas we in England were reduced to five in number. Tom Stobart, Charles Lagus, Stanley Jeeves, Dr Bill Edgar, and myself. Stan and I were to sail from Tilbury on December 30, in charge of the two hundred and fifty packages of equipment. The other three members would fly later.

The two of us arrived at Bombay aboard the Strathaird, and after a smooth passage through the Indian Customs saw to the packing of gear on the rail trucks. Stobart and Edgar were delayed, which enabled us to have an evening with Vince Wigglin, a friend with whom I’d often climbed in Britain and the Alps. Such meetings far away from home stand out as extremely pleasant memories. A telegram informed us that Lagus was flying to Calcutta with radio equipment, and we were joined by Stobart and Edgar on the morning of January 16. We entrained the same evening. A cold and dusty train journey to Roxaul became tedious and exasperating, particularly at the change-over to the narrow gauge of the Oudh and Tyrut Railway. Most of us developed colds, and I a nasty chest cough that persisted for several weeks. The only light relief came at Garrackpore, owing to a mistake of the Indian Telegraph Service. We had wired ahead, inquiring for telegrams in the name of Stobart. On arrival we were amused to find everything ready, for in a near-by waiting-room were a couple of hot stovebaths. One could only commend the station staff for rising to the occasion and making
Gateway to the Himalaya

This view, from the West Liddar Valley, is taken looking past Silver Birch to the Kazim ridge.

A Gujar Encampment beside the West Liddar River, in Kashmir
Camp-site at Thosi

"Daily Mail" Yeti Party and a Section of Sherpas
such splendid efforts to ensure our cleanliness. Akhia Bhutia, who was to be the animal-skinner for Dr Biswas, met us at Roxaul, and after making arrangements for transference of the gear on the overhead rail, we too were conveyed to Simra in a couple of Indian Army jeeps.

Simra proved to be a small grass airstrip just over the Nepalese border, and from it a twenty-minute Dakota flight found us making the run-in to land at Katmandu. While airborne I was quite impressed by the topography, and the similarity of the flight with that to the Vale of Kashmir, or to Imphal in North Assam. Once on the ground the old bullock carts made a striking contrast with the modern aircraft. The flat irrigated fields were a patchwork of brown and green; there was a crispness about the wind, as if it was blowing from the snow on the distant white peaks, and we were refreshed by the coolness and the colour.

For four days we were extremely busy sorting and repacking the equipment into 60-lb. loads, a task all too often delayed by a rather full social round. There was little time to view the famous capital of Nepal, but I was greatly impressed by what I saw, and it quite easily came up to my expectations. The large statues of Buddha, and the chortens, the huge drums and curious carvings, gave to it a charming atmosphere typical of the East. Nepalese coolies jostled in the streets with ragged Tibetan traders; impatient drivers hooted horns on the few vehicles in the town, scattering the large numbers of dogs, chickens, and human beings unused to traffic. Everywhere there was an impression of the bustle of the West encroaching upon the easier, slower rhythm of Eastern life. Shops displayed native herbs from up-country villages or the latest in antibiotics from European laboratories. Cameras and films were offered along with Buddhist thankas, or exquisite examples of local carved statues, yet all these things seemed but to accentuate the timelessness, the indifference to surface change, of this old city saturated with examples of ancient Newar culture.

Our Sherpas, carefully chosen for us by Tenzing, were sorted out into personal servants. Ang Dawa became my friend and companion to the very end of the expedition. He was, and is, a
very good Sherpa. I would like to be in the Himalaya with him again. After a hurried kitting out they helped us to load the trucks and with these dilapidated vehicles filled to overflowing we trundled out of Katmandu, bound for Banepa, on January 25.

We arrived late at our destination, and pitched camp in the dark. A bhudmash (thief) caused momentary excitement by running off with a bag of tent-pegs; Sherpas gave chase, and the rest of the sympathetic township followed in full cry. The ‘fox’ got away. A runner arrived with news from Stoner. He had interrogated many Sherpas, and discovered there were three names for our quarry in common use among the people of Sola Khumbu. Chu-Teh was a Tibetan name for an animal which possessed a tail, and from descriptions it would seem to be a monkey. Dzu-Teh was the name used for the large Himalayan red bear, and Meh-Teh was the true name for the creature which made the unusual footprints in the mountains. The Meh-Teh, then, was the animal we were after.

All the coolies turned up for a load in the morning—270 of them. A bevy of Sherpanis was also produced as if out of the sky by our grinning Sherpas, and to these we gave the important task of carrying the expedition money. “Stan’s Sherpanis,” we called them, for he was our expedition paymaster. They formed a happy and colourful group, and were certainly a useful addition to the bandobast. The first day’s trek ended at a wretched and filthy camp-site near Hoksi; but, nevertheless, the views en route had already excited the imagination. Deep-cut river valleys flanked by terraced hill-slopes were reminiscent of Garhwal. The clarity of the atmosphere was exceptional, and the distant peaks appeared sharp and near. It was thrilling to see the Langtang peaks, and a far-off massif that might be the Annapurna Himal. People were busy in the fields, tilling the land with short, chopping hand-hoes, as in Garhwal and Ladakh, and I noticed they grew crops of sugar-cane, barley, maize, and wheat. Already we had seen many varieties of wagtails, a plumbeous redstart, shrikes, and some of the many ‘lesser’ eagles.

We made a short march to Daulaghat the next day and camped at the confluence of two rivers. The evening is particularly
memorable because of the peculiar disposal of a body. Our tents were crowded together on the shingle flats, where we were able to jump in the river to wash away the dirt and grime of a dusty journey. Cleansed, we squatted down for a brew of tea. A drum-beat disturbed the quiet. Soon we heard a chanting as a group of Nepalis stepped carefully along the shingle carrying a pole from which was slung a heavy bundle, which proved to be the body of a recent victim of small-pox. A few prayers were intoned over the corpse, which, complete with water-gourd, food, and eating-sticks, was then launched into the river to be carried away by the swiftly flowing water. We were shocked. Dr Edgar looked worried. His worried look increased considerably when the ‘pole-bearers’ then stripped and bathed in the pool from which we had been obtaining our drinking-water. Supplies of water-sterilizing tablets were checked forthwith.

Shortly after this comforting incident several of us, using binoculars, watched a pair of ibis-bills flying swiftly down stream. “These birds,” Biswas said, “are of great interest to Indian ornithologists. Their nesting habits and courtship have never been watched. Perhaps we shall find their marshy breeding-grounds in the Sola Khumbu.” All of us asked questions.

“Who was your companion in Sikkim?”

“Salim Ali, the ornithologist,” Bis replied, and then he became interested when Stan described how he used a camera with a special Luks shutter for photographing birds. Ralph said he was going to collect lichens for an expert in England. Dr Edgar evidently had been a keen bird-watcher in Britain. We were getting to know each other.

For the first time we broke camp without breakfast, having it later, at 9 A.M. This is a good idea if the time taken is of reasonable length—but it is so easy for it to get out of hand. It didn’t matter on this first real pull of the trek, from the river at 2400 ft.—lowest point on the march—to the ridge at Chyabas of 7000 ft. There was time enough to saunter and take in the interest of the local people, whose houses here were well thatched and white-washed. The ridge was a tonic, for it was covered with short cropped grass. It was pleasant to lie back and in the north see Gosainthan—
the sacred mountain in Tibet. Westward there was line after line of deep blue hills stretching back to Katmandu and beyond—the valleys between them were haze-filled. Twice we saw a jackal lurking near the camp. A few nomadic Tibetans, very picturesque in these surroundings, stopped to have words with our Sherpas and to see the Doc—whether they were ill or not. Looking through H. E. Tilman’s *Nepal Himalaya*, I was delighted to find a photograph of two of our Sherpas, ‘Prometheus’ Danu and Nima Tenzing. The Tenzing of the picture looked very different from the now Westernized version, minus the long flowing hair and the rough Khumbu robes. Stan’s Sherpanis pulled poor Nima’s leg unmercifully when they saw the picture, and the camp was noisy with their laughter.

This day we penetrated into Buddhist country, and all day long passed old chortens, mani walls, and bunches of prayer-flags. We camped in the grounds of the Buddhist gompa at Risingo. The *torcho* were the largest I’d seen—long, narrow strips of cloth covered with faded prayers were attached to the fifty-foot poles that surrounded the gompa yard. Prayer-wheels marked the entrance to the monastery, and gave to me the pleasure I had waited for—the satisfaction of reaching a land of Tibetan peoples once again.

At dusk we could still see fine peaks of over 20,000 ft. in the distance. It was agreed that this must be the best time of the year for seeing the far Himalaya. All day long we had magnificent views of Gosainthan, Gauri Sankar, Menlungtse, and other high peaks in the Sola Khumbu. We had seen a great white cloud-plume blowing from some peak hidden behind Menlungtse—we thought it was Everest, and the Sherpas agreed. Rich red rhododendrons had made a fine setting for those snow-decked mountains, and the quiet was often disturbed by the noisy escape from near-by bush of pairs of monal pheasants, coloured a metallic green and blue, with a splash of red. We found the black aquatic larvae of may-fly and stone-fly swimming freely in the streams or hiding behind stones like those back home, and we chased brown, shiny water-beetles with our hands along the orange sand at the bottom of shallow pools. Later in the village we admired the
primitive but effective water-mills, and it was remarkable to me that they were so similar to the ones in the far-away Faroe Islands. A busy Nepali peasant worked dexterously with grey clay, shaping out *dekchis*—earthenware pots—and here again water was used to turn the potter’s wheel. Once there was a young girl, wearing monstrous copper earrings, weaving the yellow bamboo fibre mats on a primitive loom, and, some way along the day’s journey, I remember a primitive sugar-cane mill of one-woman power. The crusher was simply a long pole with handle attached, inserted within a hollowed-out log. Cane was placed between pole and log, so that as the girl trudged round and round, pushing on the handle, the cane was crushed and the juice collected from a narrow hole bored into the bottom of the log. Rich red marl contrasted with the thirsty-looking bleached grass and the rich green of irrigated crops—a day of vivid colour.

Late in the evening the Chief Lama at Risingo opened the doors of the Gompa and the still night air was permeated with the odour of rancid butter, mingling with the strong aromatic smell of incense. There was the muffled banging of a drum being beaten, while the monk intoned the Mani Mantra—Tibetan prayers. Around him were many statues sitting in various postures and one tiny butter-lamp shed a soft light upon the gilded Buddhas. There is a strange mysterious atmosphere about lamaism that makes the hair tingle. To Western eyes there is ugliness in the ceremonial masks and the peculiar Buddhas, and ignorance and superstition among the simple monks, but there is a thrilling beauty too.

Since leaving Katmandu, I had been on the look-out for a favourite hill bird—the white-capped redstart. We saw one on the way from Risingo to our next camp-site at a pass of 8000 ft. The white-capped redstarts, and also the plumbeous redstarts, are common water-birds of the Himalaya, and while we were taking a much-needed bathe in the Charnawati river two of these dainty birds flew across our pool. Besides these and the ibis-bills, we had already seen the little eagles, the fishing eagles, kingfishers, tits, swifts, and the black-crested sibia. Brightly coloured scarlet and golden minivets were adding further richness to the local colour,
and the merry notes of the Himalayan laughing thrush, clear, full-throated, sped us on our way.

During the two days after leaving the pass we crossed two fascinating bridges. The first of these was a fantastic chain bridge which came at the end of a charming walk through a forest of chir-trees—*Pinus longifolia*—with soft beds of pine needles underfoot. Two slack chains were provided for a hand-hold, and you walked across seven or eight planks laid end to end. The construction swayed alarmingly. A foot placed carelessly might mean a swift drop to the river some fifty feet below. While we breakfasted the Sherpanis hastened to wash each other's hair—a noble effort that seemed to me somewhat nullified as they then greased the jet-black locks with liquid butter, and then plaited them into pigtails. We camped at Karentachap.

The second bridge came once again at the end of a cool walk through long-leaved pine. But this was a strong and well-built metal bridge—it was a great surprise to see one so far from Katmandu. A legend on a metal plate informed us that it had been built by Scottish engineers in the nineteenth century. This was an even greater surprise, for we all knew that until 1949 no white man was supposed to have travelled beyond the valley of Katmandu. Here was evidence of Europeans having penetrated well beyond the valley some sixty or seventy years before. Four wretched-looking nuns, carrying great quantities of pans and blankets, passed us at the bridge. They smelled strongly of the acrid rancid butter, and pushed out filthy hands for alms. These the Sherpas gave freely, saying it was a good omen for the expedition, because the nuns were from the Rongbuk Monastery at the foot of Everest, or Chomolungma—Mother Goddess of the Snows.

Too much *chang* (local beer) was available on the march, as a consequence of which many coolies arrived in late. Nevertheless, many noble acts were performed for fellow-drunkards, and I remember a scrawny, elderly Nepali who carried double loads (120 lb.) for his drunken scoundrel of a son. Our camp was pitched at a small hill-village named Yarsa, remembered for its strong stench of ordure.
From Yarsa we had a leg-stretching climb for 2000 ft. to a pass, and again revelled in the views of far-away mountains. One setting in particular, of snow-flecked rock peaks in the Langtang Himal framed by foreground pine-trees, was as beautiful as anything I'd ever seen in Kashmir. Once over the pass we walked through a country of pine woods and smooth, grassy slopes. We had a bathe in a deep pool—quite cold—and then crossed over an intervening ridge to the valley of the Kimti Khola. Houses were no longer thatched, but stone-slated, two-storied, white-washed, and possessing spacious verandas—more like the houses of Ladakh than those we saw later in the Sola Khumbu. Half a mile from the village of Thosi we pitched our camp by the banks of the river. Narayan, our cook, purchased mahseer from the local fishermen—a tasty fish somewhat similar to small trout. As we had promised earlier, we paid our coolies a further advance of cash—a sorry promise that lost us a day, put good money in the pockets of the local inhabitants, and caused many a sore head among our Nepalis. I was not sorry to stop, for I had been having stomach trouble and the shivers ever since the train journey from Bombay. It was also good to stop and saturate oneself in the atmosphere of these southern valleys, rather than rush through at mad speed, savouring little. Stobart and I baked bread with some success, or so it would seem, for all we baked was wolfed down at astonishing speed by our ‘friends.’ It was also a useful performance, because Narayan watched jealously and with great care. We two never needed to bake bread again.

Thosi is a unique village in these hills because of its iron mines, and the ‘smelting’ carried out in the blacksmiths’ shops. The crude iron ore is mined several miles away and thousands of feet up from the village. A native crawls into a very narrow shaft for some eighty to a hundred feet. In almost total darkness he chips out the ore and fills a small bag, which is then drawn out by his mate on a continuous length of rope. At the same time an empty bag is conveyed along the rope towards the miner. Locks, kukris, and links for the chain bridges are made from the smelted ore, and the workmanship is of a surprisingly high standard considering the crude implements and simple furnaces used by the craftsmen.
For several miles along the Kimti Khola we were accompanied by wandering musicians—a gay group of fellows with clothes tattered and torn, feet bare, and hair a-tangle. They banged drums robustly, and blew peculiar reed horns that from the distance reminded us of the bagpipes. They passed round the hat. Later, during the ascent to a high ridge, we passed by several high cliffs, and under one could see large nests of bees—tens of thousands of the insects making an ominous hum and forming a heaving ball around the huge combs. At first some of the bare combs looked like strange curtains of giant fungi, and we were amazed to realize, after looking through binoculars, that these too were honeycombs some ten square feet in area. I believe that on the return journey a misguided member of the party shot at the combs and nests, bringing down upon himself and others the justifiable wrath of the little creatures. Most of the party were stung, some of them many times.

A Himalayan golden eagle nested on the adjacent cliff—a dark-coloured bird with rich golden plumage on its head and neck. She was sitting on the nest—a small cave in the face of the cliff, roughly strewn with twigs, the entrance white with the birds’ droppings. Some one suggested that this interesting example of the eagle and its nest should be investigated, and two of us ascended wooded slopes to the top of the cliff. I traversed across on to the face over steep grass, on to ledges and by little rock walls. Eight feet from the nest the ledge leading to it was crumbly, and several feet peeled away. I wasn’t roped, so I turned back. I made a second journey roped, Stobart filming the whole process. I hoped there wouldn’t be any dramatic attacks by an angry bird, and felt relief when it flew away, leaving behind one large golden egg some four inches long. I felt a cad as I pocketed the thing. It was my first and, I hope, my last nest robbery, but in the interests of science I had been asked to take the egg away. Biswas, our zoologist, was sure the bird would lay again. I hope it did.

We crossed the ridge by a pass named the Chyangma La at a height of 9500 ft. Seven long mani walls inscribed with the Tibetan prayers marked the highest point and comforted the
traveller. Beyond the seven manis we descended fifteen hundred feet, passing a series of large white chortens. Here again the houses were often white-washed, two-storied, and roofed with stone. Cows and sheep were grazing in good big fields, and occasionally a little white building could be seen perched high upon a lovely green alp. It was a change from the endless terracing of the previous nine days, and we felt we were moving well into the mountain country. On the other side of a deep valley, we could see the Lamjura—a pass we should soon be crossing. A fine dusting of snow covered the hills and silvered the curve of the Lamjura cross, which from our camp strongly resembled the Kuari in Garhwal. A tiny brook rippled by the tents, and bunches of pink primula brightened the cracks and crannies of a nearby wall. Local people, wearing woollen smocks and felt boots, came to see the strangers. As with our Sherpas, their features were Mongoloid. We were in Sola country.

It wasn't until the second day of reaching Sola country that we crossed the Lamjura, for on the first we descended to the Likhi Khola, and after a splendid two-mile walk up-river enjoying good views of Numbur (22,800 ft.) we made a two thousand-foot ascent to an almost waterless camp-site. Here the country was heavily forested. Doc and I covered the four thousand feet to the Lamjura fairly quickly the next day, and wandered slowly down through superb country to the village of Junbesi. The valley landscape was somewhat reminiscent of Switzerland and the valley of Saas. We met a local man who had been savagely gashed down the side of his face, the cut almost slicing his eye. We gathered it had been done by a brigand wielding a kukri, and we decided to beware of the people. Later our companions assured us everything was quite all right; it was only a dog-bite. We decided to beware of the dogs.

Junbesi is a large village, possessing two-storied houses and many of three—all built closely together, and threaded by narrow streets. There is a large gompa, and several extra large chortens, somewhat different from the normal, for each has eyes and a nose painted on them. Huge, silent sentinels they seem to be, and wherever I went I had the curious feeling of being watched.
The bridge, too, was unusual, for it possessed a roof similar to the avalanche covers you see in the Alps. It seemed that not only did the entire populace of Junbesi visit us that night, but that they drove all their yaks, cows, donkeys, and goats through the camp. Never before was there such a chaos, and a tangle of legs and ropes.

The next part of our journey began with an easy ascending traverse from which we had a bird’s-eye view of the lovely valleys, part covered with pine. Mostly they were smooth green slopes, with here and there a small group of houses surrounded by well-tilled fields. Rounding the shoulder of a hill, we had a tremendous view of mountains; and then suddenly there was Everest—a huge cloud banner streaming from it for miles. The south summit, the top, and much of the route along the south ridge could be seen clearly. It made a great impression on me, for in this setting it seemed all the more immense and dominant. A giant, indeed, of great character, and, as could be seen, the only mountain capable of flirting with the high winds at almost 30,000 ft. Once again I felt like the young airman seeing Nanga Parbat from the Chergand ridge many years before. It was a very fine and humble moment.

Along the route through the next river valley a number of trapas (apprentice monks) had erected a crude scaffolding by the side of a boulder, and were busy chiselling out the Mani Mantra—Buddhist prayers—in huge letters. An opportunity for doing this is rarely passed by, and the whole of Sola Khumbu is covered with such boulders as if with a rash. If the usual encircling movements are made then one’s daily walk is prolonged, but this is a penance that no one can avoid, and it ensures a hundred per cent. observance.

A grey mist settled down along the hill-tops, and we arrived at Taksindu barely able to catch a glimpse of the shrouded gompa on the slope above our camp-site. Out came the many lamas, trapas, and later the ‘Abbot,’ or Head Lama, who kept up an incessant muttering of “Om Mani,” even managing a strangled example in the midst of a prodigious yawn.

Even before the dawn a booming of the tung-chens—long trumpets—and the shrill falsetto of the gya-lings—silver trumpets
emanated from the monastery. Lamas and trapas, young men and old, joined in the chanting of early prayers. We were ready to move early. Several monks joined us as load-carriers, the more weary coolies having sub-contracted out. It was a satisfactory arrangement, as, despite their apparently sedentary life, the monks proved to be much tougher and quicker.

Now the country was truly Himalayan in proportion as we descended to and entered the valley of the Dudh Kosi. This river which drains the snow areas of Cho Oyu, Gyanchung Kang, Everest, and Lhotse, has cut a tremendous gorge which is magnificently wild. Steep rock cliffs and almost vertical slopes of green hem in the turbulent glacier water, across which there are occasional natural rock bridges impossible of access. A detour had to be made because of a landslide, and we crossed the river by a crude log bridge from which we ascended to the village of Kharia Khola. Yellow and scarlet minivets flashed over fields of wild mustard and blue pea flower. They were tilled by a peculiarly backward Sherpa people, of cretinous appearance, with large goitres hanging down to their shoulders, and pitiful moronic eyes. Sturdy Sherpas from Thame and Namche Bazaar were already descending the valley to greet us. Three more days and we would be among their homes. Slim Pasang Phutar II and the burly, jocular Phu Dorjé, both of whom had been twice to the South Col the year before, were waiting at the village.

My own Sherpa, Ang Dawa was proving to be a first-class lad, good in camp, and, as proved later, a fine companion in the hills. His wife Ang Dami appeared to keep him very much under her thumb, though as I came to know the two better I realized there was a real and very genuine affection between them—an affection sometimes hard to detect in Sherpas, though I have no doubt it is there. Our Sherpanis remained a tidy, cheerful section of the large bandobast, and their clothing as clean and colourful as that of a Swiss peasant of the Valais. This clothing consists of a cross-over blouse, a long black skirt, part covered back and front by a thick woollen multi-coloured apron and a coloured sash at the waist. On their feet they wear the calf-length boots soled with yak leather, and with felt uppers richly coloured. These boots are
almost identical with the *cratpa* of Ladakh. Amber bangles from Kalimpong are worn on the wrist. There are necklaces of jade and *zi* stones, and ears adorned by the *along*—large earrings made of thick brass, with grape-sized turquoises attached. The long jet-black hair, greased with butter, is plaited into hip-length pigtails, brightly decorated at the ends with vari-coloured tassels. In this costume some of the women look most handsome, with their high cheek-bones, delicately modelled features, glistening white teeth, and a smile that radiates happiness. The whole Sherpa contingent were a merry bunch. There seemed to be a rough division into those who were married and those Sherpas and Sherpanis who were ‘sort of’ married—but none seemed to care very much. As they neared their homes they naturally met old friends, drank much *chang*, and introduced us to the pleasures of eating ‘Sherpa aloe.’ These are steam-cooked potatoes, which are of delicious flavour, and when kept intact in the skin prove a useful emergency mountain food.

To reach Panyan requires an ascent of some 4000 ft. from Kharia Khola through the belt of rhododendrons and pine forest, terminating in a region of stark, burned-out conifers, set against barren, boulder-strewn slopes, which merge into great walls and towers of grey rock. We saw many snow pigeons, and the plain-backed mountain thrush, and even in early February at 13,000 ft. our eyes were gladdened by mauve cushions of primula growing in each shady corner. Numbers of Tibetan and Sherpa families camped in the forest, and as the dank mist swirled around us at Panyan these nomadic groups with their wooden carrying-frames and fur-lined hats looked startlingly like Eskimos.

We were all pleased to reach Namche Bazaar within the next two days, and to meet Charles Stoner of the advance section. For me they were dismal days, as I was feeling ill. I took *aureomycin* capsules every four hours; these were certainly my worst days ever in the Himalaya. The final 2000-ft. rise to the village was purgatory, and though I was the first to arrive, it was merely because I knew that if I stopped I might take hours to finish the simple journey. Fortunately, I soon recovered, and had no further trouble during the expedition.
Kwangde, the mountain wall east of Namche, carried surprisingly little snow. Everest, Lhotse, and Nuptse showed as great masses of black rock with here and there the odd dusting of snow. There had been less snow through the early winter months than at any other time within human memory. What effect this would have on the mountaineering higher up would be interesting to see. Passes would probably be easier, though maybe some too icy for pleasure. Peaks, if ever we had the chance of climbing them, would perhaps in some cases be made more possible; others, of course, would be increased in difficulty. Would it also mean that the yeti was already living quite high so early in the year? Stoner had recently returned from a reconnaissance in the Imja Khola, and was enthusiastic about a group of footprints he photographed, and a number of large pieces of animal faces he had picked up near the prints. In size and shape the faces led us to suppose they were from a large mammal. They contained seeds of berries and the hair of a vole.

Jeeves, the paymaster, with the help of Biswas and Akhia Bhutia, paid off the 270 coolies, carefully taking the thumb-print of each, in lieu of a signature, as proof of payment. Sherpas and Sherpanis from Kumjung and the surrounding villages descended upon us in force, led by the formidable but kindly ‘Mrs’ Da Tenzing, who insisted on our downing muddy-looking chang in large quantities. Possibly my palate is not sturdy enough, for I was never able to do more than sip this alcoholic porridge. Made from fermented tsampa, rice, or millet, the true chang is practically a solid which can be eaten in the lump. More usually it is mixed and stirred with water, then heated slowly over a fire. Some acceleration of fermentation takes place, for cups of the resulting lumpy mess are not only revolting to drink, but also have a quick inebriating effect on the consumer. Strained and filtered, this semi-solid exudes a practically clear, watery liquid which Ang Dawa named ‘chang juice.’ This I could drink and enjoy. The people were proving hospitable—perhaps too hospitable—but then I wrong them, for theirs is the impulsive honest generosity of simple peoples.

I know now the mountains and the valleys of Khumbu are
very beautiful, often serene and colourful—sometimes savage and cruel—always satisfying. Nevertheless, without the Sherpas the country would lose much of its charm. They and the hills are in perfect harmony. Their houses are strongly built of water-washed stones. Roofs are made of stone slabs or wooden slats, and the wooden windows are often cheerfully carved, with occasionally a glass window inset. Mostly they are two-storied houses, with the ground floor used as a yak byre and the owners living above in a large wood-panelled room. Usually the wooden cross-beams are cobwebbed and dusty. Thankas or blackened chunks of yak meat hang down into the room. The fireplace is a hollowed stone flag, above which there is an iron trestle for the *dekchis*. There is no chimney so the smoke escapes wherever it can, or not at all, and most of the time you are seeing things through a thin blue haze of smoke. Almost always there is a prayer shrine with a brightly patterned mat, and a long, hard bench on which the occupants sleep. Chang jars and butter tubs of all shapes and sizes will fill one corner, while on the shelves there glisten large copper bowls for storing water, and beside them an array of brass or copper ladles. There are bags filled with *tsampa*, rice, onions, chillies, and perhaps in another corner there will be a Sherpani ‘mashing’ potatoes with a wooden roller on a grooved stone slab. Women do most of the cooking of the meals, which once prepared are eaten as the inhabitants sit cross-legged around the fire. Fingers are used instead of knives and forks or spoons. Chang or *rakshi*—distilled rice spirit—are often drunk during or after a meal.

On February 14 we ended our journey from Katmandu. This day we moved from Namche Bazaar to make our permanent Base Camp near the confluence of the Dudh Khosi and the Imja Khola. Two hundred and fifty Sherpas, Sherpanis, and children, extremes of great age and youth, helped us to make the move. They were a splendid sight as they swept down the grassy hill slopes to the river junction, resembling a scene from a gaily coloured Western film. Stan and I paid them off in pairs, while the milling throng was kept within reasonable order by Gyaldzen and Phu Dorjé. Gyaldzen would drag and hustle two in front of
us for pay, and Phu Dorjé literally threw them out at the other side, to the accompaniment of much cheering and laughter. Sometimes a Sherpa would be teamed up with a Sherpani, an occasion for much leg-pulling and cross-banter. Altogether a merry jostling crowd, a fine, tough people, with a lively sense of humour and a good community spirit.
To the Foot of Everest—and the First Footprints

*A huge peak, black and huge
As if with voluntary power instinct.*
—WORDSWORTH, *The Prelude, Book I*

The brilliance of the scene, the scene itself, had a sense of unreality about it. I had looked at these same mountains, *chortens, gompas*, and the rock ramparts at the head of the Imja Khola so many times on photographs. Strange now to be looking in reality at the Lhotse-Nuptse wall, with Everest just peeping over the top, and its usual cloud banner streaming off it to the east. As expected, Ama Dablam was a fantastic peak, a huge throne of rock and ice, difficult—impossible even in a majestic way. We took many pictures of it, and some of the lovely *chorten*, with Kantega and Thamserku in the background—fiercely beautiful. The golden spire on the Thyangboche Gompa roof glistened and flashed in the sun, and the terra-cotta wash of the Gompa walls added a splash of rich colouring to the landscape. Small patches of snow covered the surrounding fields, and a number of yaks rooted about among the few bare patches of grass.

Pasang Phutar II came over to us as we sat by the *chorten* and invited us to a small house for a drink of butter-tea. It was much the same as it had been before—perhaps too little salt—probably in deference to our unaccustomed palate. I’m not sure Stan enjoyed the drink, though I know he enjoyed the experience. Our host was an elderly man, who despite an enormous goitre that rested on his right shoulder was an imposing figure, wearing a skull-cap and long smock the colour of old red wine, and continually swinging a small prayer-wheel. A devout Buddhist, with
A Quiet Corner

This corner of a Sherpa home shows the ornate type of windows, and the large amount of wood used in the construction of a house.
A Typical Sherpa House at Pangboche

The house is two-storeyed, and has wooden slats for a roof. The yaks grazing in the field sleep in the ground-floor section, which is a stable.
TO THE FOOT OF EVEREST

an extensive knowledge of the religious books, he was looked upon with special favour by the monks at Thyangboche, and allowed a house in the Gompa grounds. One could see the resemblance between him and Gyaldzen of Namche, Stoner's personal Sherpa, and a high-altitude carrier on Everest; for they were uncle and nephew, and both outstanding men. The house was clean; it had the usual large room and central fire. There was a prayer-wheel in the corner which the old man's wife was turning, at the same time stirring the pot of tsampa with the other hand. At each complete turn of the wheel there was the tinkle of a tiny bell. What a simple and enchanting treatment of a religious belief!

From Thyangboche we walked through the last of the treeline, the snow underfoot well marked by tracks of fox and bird. Game trails led everywhere, and the winter silence of the forest of silver birch and pine was disturbed only by the occasional hiss and plop of soft snow sliding from a hanging branch. Below the woods the Imja Khola has cut out a narrow rock gorge which is spanned by a wooden bridge. Here the walls were festooned with giant icicles and smooth bulges of ice. The river looked very cold as it rushed beneath our feet.

Mani walls and prayer flags told us that we were near Pangboche—a village not unlike Mana, in the Alaknanda, with its dry-stone walls and similar small fields in which the yaks were feeding. There was plenty of evidence that previous expeditions had stayed here, for three ply-wood boxes from Andrew Lusks had been broken up to cover gaps in the windows. Some showed the words "Mount Everest Expedition 1953"; other windows had cardboard sheets fixed to them displaying the Swiss cross. We camped in one of the fields. Ang Dawa made a huge fire and produced a hot soup mixed with tsampa, potatoes, and a tin of steak—very good. The temperature was soon well below freezing, the night clear and starry. A full moon shone upon the snow round about and on the peaks above, giving them that silvery, crystalline, Christmas card effect. This was a cold, silent mountain night. My mind flicked back several years to a night spent on the summit of the Dent Blanche after climbing the Ferpecle. That was a cold
and silent mountain world too, shared with John, Harry, and Ken.

We visited Pangboche Gompa the following morning. It was a smaller replica of Thyangboche. Somewhere here we should see the now famous Pangboche yeti scalp. News of this first came to light early in 1953, and later in the year it was examined by Charles Evans, and also by two Indians who attempted Pumori during the post-monsoon period. When I had talked with one of the Indians in Bombay I had been impressed by his air of conviction about the authenticity of the scalp. Getting to see the scalp was not such a simple matter, because the Gompa officials had it carefully wrapped and sealed. "We have decided," they said—I think at the instigation of the wily Sonam Tenzing—"to keep the scalp covered and locked away." At this time, and all other times, it took a five-rupee note to make them break the seal, which we had been informed could not be broken at any price. Once it was produced we examined it and photographed it from all angles. The thick skin was covered by reddish-brown hair, and a prominent bristly crest ran from back to front. There was no indication on the inside of the skin of an occipital crest. Small hair-pits were visible. Signs of stitching or connexions could not be found—the scalp was entire, and would fit snugly upon one's head. It is supposed to have been in the possession of the Gompa for about two hundred and fifty to three hundred years.

This scalp, and others seen later at Kumjung and Nanche have no religious significance, but are used at certain ceremonial dances throughout the year. Later we had reason to believe that there existed an 'original' of the Khumbu Scalp at Rongbuk or Dza Rongpo—the monastery at the foot of Everest on the Tibet side. I couldn't say what animal the scalp was from, though I was very surprised at the extreme thickness of the skin, and the toughness of the bristly hair. Examining it again later, I felt I must agree with Stobart that it could be an artifact, shaped from the skin of a wild boar—the crest and the bristles could then be accounted for. If it really is an artifact it would be interesting to see if the 'original' is so too, or whether it is from another animal. The shape and colouring of these scalps fits with the description of the Meh-
TO THE FOOT OF EVEREST

Teh given to Stoner by the local people of Sola Khumbu. Whatever we may think or eventually decide, we can be sure they were not made to fool or to misguide Europeans, for until 1950 no European had been to Sola Khumbu. Nor do I think these people would concoct or build up a hoax of such dimensions—to them, at least, the Meh-Teh is very much a reality. Possibly we should remember they may be copies of a true original, copies used in ceremonial dances, much as we of the West have used copies of the head of an ass for Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The age of the 'exhibit' faces us with the possibility of the animal's having once existed, and become extinct within living memory. When one is on the spot and faced with a scalp, a set of most peculiar footprints, and numerous Sherpa stories, I feel that anyone would be loath to give a definite opinion about the Meh-Teh either way.

From the Gompa we had a pleasant walk up the Imja Khola to the villages of Pheriche and Phalong Karpo, where we camped at the junction of the Khumbu and Chola Khola valleys. On the way we saw many snow pigeons and the ram chikor, or snow cock, a large pheasant-like bird, several large flocks of sparrows—*Paserina himalayanensis*—and some rare Himalayan bullfinch. The marshy nature of the valley at Pheriche caused Biswas to consider it a possible breeding-ground for the ibis-bill, though Stan and I doubted this. Pheriche was certainly a quiet village without its population, but it was felt that in May—the breeding-time of the bird—the whole valley would be a hustle and bustle of people, and that it would be covered by grazing yak. That is what happened.

Akhia Bhutia, the skinner, was not well. Altitude did not agree with him, and so he remained at Pheriche the following morning. Three Sherpas remained with him, while ourselves with four Sherpas ascended to Lobuje yak-hut—the 1953 Everest Rest Camp—in the Khumbu valley. Views up the Chola Khola roused our interest. From below it looked a promising valley for a Meh-Teh search, with a col at the top fitting in with the idea of a drive. It was the opinion of several members of the expedition that, if we found a narrow enough valley in which animals were proved
to be living, we could force them in front of us to a narrow col at its head, if such a col existed. All that was required was that some one reach the col first and intercept the creatures. All soon realized that the vast valleys of the Everest region would require an army of people to cover even a small area thoroughly. Escape routes were all too many, and incapable of being blocked by our small forces, even had the animal been an inexpert climber—and this was unlikely, in view of its natural environment. Two of us went ahead of Biswas and the Sherpas, reaching Lobuje early in the afternoon. Wilfred Noyce and Alfred Gregory had written to me from this hut the previous year, so we looked around for food or valuables, but we found only one unused packet of orange crystals. Snow surrounded the stone building, and everywhere there was evidence of animal life—prints of mouse hare, fox, snow-cock, and snow leopard. Eventually, beyond Lobuje, we two found fæces and an old set of prints, quite large, that I think could have been made only by bear or some such animal. The upper valley was quiet, and our wanderings, interspersed with ten-minute periods of lying down to watch, felt most eerie. We returned when near to the Swiss Lake Camp of 1952. That evening in our little stone dwelling I wrote the following notes, to be dispatched to Ralph Izzard.

NOTES ON THE DAY—FEBRUARY 19

(1) Hind-quarters of a mouse hare found at approximately 16,000 ft., obviously used as food.
(2) Footprints of an animal, probably of the cat family, found at 16,000 ft. and photographed. Quite fresh. Probably snow leopard.
(3) At Lobuje found footprints of the following: cat family, fox, mouse hare, snow-cock. All clear, and fairly fresh.
(4) Lobuje. 2.15 P.M. Live mouse hare seen by Stan Jeeves and me.
(5) During a walk up the valley above Lobuje we found footprints up to and possibly above 17,500 ft. as follows:
   (a) Deer family.
   (b) Cat family. Probably snow leopard.
   (c) Canine family. Large, and possibly wolf.
(d) Large prints—several days old.

(e) Close to the above prints, and also those of the wolf, we found faeces containing hair of small creatures and also berry-seeds.

(f) I think certain prints are not of cat, canine, or deer family, but from knowledge gained of animal life in Kashmir and Ladakh, would say prints are of a bear or some similar large animal.

Prints at the time. 10 inches long and 5 to 5 inches wide.

Snow throughout the night. Minimum temperature. 8 degrees F. Maximum Day Temperature 24 degrees F.

It continued to snow for two days. The temperature dropped to thirty degrees of frost, but it was not as cold as I had expected it to be in the middle of February. On the first of these days visibility was down to forty or fifty yards most of the time. We went out for only three hours across the stony glacier, and saw but one small carnivore—its tracks being quickly covered by the falling snow. It was decided we leave the Upper Khumbu alone for a day or two, so on the second day Stan and I, with Mingma Gyalzen, had a little jaunt up a jolly rock gendarme above Lobuje to about 18,000 ft. As the clouds lifted momentarily glimpses of Pokalde and Ama Dablam were most fearsome. Though late, the snows of winter were now upon them. Ang Nyima and Pasang Phutar II brought back food from our lower camp, now moved to the Tola yak hut above Phalong Karpo, and Ang Temba returned to Base Camp with a note requesting more food and giving our reasons for staying on at Lobuje.

On the third day we again ascended the upper part of the Khumbu Valley. Biswas came with us, but, feeling the altitude, turned back at the chaos of moraine near the Swiss Lake Camp. Snow lay deep, muffling the sound of our voices, and hiding the gaps between boulders. Ang Dawa’s speed was too quick for our unacclimatized bodies, but we stumbled on in deep snow,

1 These prints were followed for about eighty yards to the lateral moraine of the Khumbu Glacier, where they disappeared. Two prints were clearer than the rest and toe marks were visible. There was a deeper depression at the heel. Photographed at a height of about 17,000 ft.
hopping frenziedly on top of the moraine, and sliding in ungainly fashion down icy slopes. This was a different world from that of the past six weeks. Here Pumori and Nuptse stood as two fine sentinels to the tremendous Upper Khumbu basin, with its wall of rock and ice and the soaring heights of Lingtren and Khumbutse. Now we were in a strange world of frozen tarns and blue-green ice pinnacles. The sighing of the wind and the whip of tensioned ice was strange music fitting the mood of this cold land in the winter of the Himalaya.

Here we came upon the rusting top of a Vita-Weat tin, a button, a torn piece of cloth, or a frozen length of string. These were the clues leading us to the Everest Base Camp of 1953, and, like the pack in a paper-chase, we followed them.

A great tumble of ice blocks below the Lho La indicated the entrance to the Western Cwm, and at last I was satisfied of its existence. Silly, I know, but then even though you know it is there, you come upon it with such suddenness, at the last moment of believing in its existence. It must be seen to be realized, this remote part of the earth; a strange place for a man to seek. It seems almost timeless, for the never-ceasing erosive forces of the elements have changed the rocks but slowly. Yet how many minds turn upon it—this lonely spot visited by no more than a score of white men; how often must vivid mind-pictures conjure up the rough and tumble of ice at the foot of Everest. I was glad I was there. I knew that, as long as I remained a sentient being, here was a memory I would treasure.

We soon lost the little warmth of the winter sun. A rapid drop of the air temperature chilled the bone as we returned. Snow temperature was very low, and my boot-ends froze hard in a ridiculous turned-up position. Yet at the Swiss Camp site, by the frozen lake, we caught a tiakpa, a Himalayan mouse-hare—a bonny furry creature the size of a guinea-pig, but quicker and more dainty in its movements. Here then, in the winter, at 17,500

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1 The mouse-hare (*Ochotona angdawai*) is a ‘new species’: this was the first ever caught. The *Daily Mail* expedition caught four new mammals in Sola Khumbu. My Sherpa Ang Dawa caught the mouse-hare, and from him it derives its specific name *angdawai*.
ft., was proof of mammalian life at high altitudes—if proof was needed after seeing all the tracks. We were pleased, for often people exclaim that surely no animals live above 16,000 ft. Many times we saw these mouse-hares as high as 18,000 ft. or higher, and found tracks of snow leopard, leopard-cat, and fox—the carnivore that hunt them.

The temperature fell to zero Fahrenheit as we ate our supper at Lobuje, and by morning the thickly falling snow put an extra blanket over all the landscape. Two of us went down to Tola, and were delighted to find that, not only had food been sent, but also another commodity for which we hungered—mail! The weather was worsening. I sent a note to Lobuje asking the remainder to come down too. Snow lay very deep, and the Khumbu was of no use for a little while. Even the animals would hole up in this.

Snow was quickly obliterating the tracks. Three of us, Mingma Gyaldzen, Stan Jeeves, and I, were trailing a snow-leopard. In the early morning we had found the tracks as we ascended the Chola Khola. We must hurry. After two miles they disappeared into a rocky lair, and at no place did they emerge. It was a massive jumble of rock—a maze—the animal was perfectly safe, and we could do nothing. We looked across the valley towards the Taweche peaks, and for a few tantalizing moments, the mist obscured them, then revealed to us the opposite of Dante’s Inferno—the Tibetan Hell, a frozen world of massive walls and soaring spires, ice curtains, and rocks draped carelessly with snow or rimed with frost. Cold, damp clouds half filled the icy gullies. The scale of these impossible, fantastic mountains dwarfed one’s thoughts, almost drowned one’s aspirations.

At about 16,500 ft. we found what we had gone for—a couple of yak dwellings and a few fields—Chola. The snow almost covered the roofs of the stone houses, but we found a door and forced our way in. It was a simple home, but strongly built, and its owner obviously a tidy man. Stone shelves jutted from the walls, and slabs of rock provided ample seating. A central upright beam was covered with Buddhist inscriptions, and a few beards of dried barley were pinned to it to form a spray. We sat down to share chocolate and Kendal mint cake, at the same time breathing
in the sweet odour of good green hay. Much of it was piled to the ceiling in one corner. Fine hay—rich green grass was its basis, and it was in such good condition we could have thought it had been machine-dried. Obviously Chola is a fine little alp in the summer, much better than the fields of the larger villages lower down, where the slightest breeze blows away the top soil.

On our way back to Tola we realized we must return to this interesting valley and visit the glacier col at the top, which on the map is marked incorrectly as the Tibetan border.

The next day we returned to Base Camp, told our story to Ralph Izzard, and discussed the possibilities of an early return. Base had changed since we went away. Charles Lagus and Bill Edgar with the help of Sherpas had fixed up a permanent mess tent, using packing-cases to form a wall with cupboards, and covered it with our largest piece of canvas. The floor was strewn with fresh fronds of dwarf juniper, which gave off a clean, resinous smell. A fifty-foot wireless mast reached as high as the trees around the clearing, and occasionally the peace of camp was shattered by the rude explosion of a small petrol generator, which Charles Lagus used when calling Mukerjee at Namche Bazaar. I’m sure Mukerjee heard the engine long before he heard Charles.

Ralph Izzard, Charles Stoner, and Gerald Russell had arrived two days before us, having had a trying time in the deep snow of the Dudh Kosi valley. There had been no sign of the Meh-Teh, but an interesting reconnaissance of the valley inspired them to prepare for a return. Tom Stobart had made a quick sortie up the Imja Khola to Mingbo and back, taking some four days. It had been a useful week for us individually, and for the expedition as a whole. The fact emerged that a week or eight days was not long enough time for each search, as many days were taken up travelling to and from the area we wished to cover. Finally we decided upon three-week periods.

Despite the hustle of preparation, and prolonged discussion of our next ventures, we were able to enjoy the other activities of camp, both day and night. Most of our Sherpas had their wives or sisters with them, and a continuous stream of people went in and out of camp. This friendly way of life enabled us to get to know
Khumbu: Ice Pinnacles

This photograph was taken by Stan Jeeves, using my camera.
The View from Col III, Chola Khola
Ice-draped Walls and Jagged Crag

This scene is in the Upper Bhote Khosi. The stony Bhote Glacier is in the foreground.

Thamserku, from the Upper Dudh Kosi
"A Country much more Serene and Peaceful than that from which we had come"

Tibetans at the top of the Nangpu La—the highest trade route in the world. The plateau of Tibet lies beyond.

Wandering Minstrels in the Valley of the Kimti Khola
quite a lot of Sherpa gossip, and therefore of Sherpa life. One morning I jotted down a few of their stories and various happenings. Mingma—Da Tenzing's younger son—was going to marry a Namche girl at the end of the year. 'Mrs' Gyaldzen of Namche, our second sirdar's wife, had just had a baby. Mingma Gyaldzen's mother was very ill, and not expected to live. 'Mrs' Tsuong of Pangboche had just been to the Doc with tummy-ache, but the Doc says it's going to mean an increase in the family. Pretty Ang Phutar—daughter of Pasang Phutar II—was obviously making eyes at Da Temba—a good lad, half-brother to my Ang Dawa. Same mother, but a different father. Da Tenzing's eldest son, who had run away the year before, had been brought back, and was once again living in Kumjung. Gyaldzen II (Big Eyes) was going as sirdar to the Japanese on Mansalu. Nima Tenzing (with me in Garhwal) was a Sherpa with the Californian expedition on Makalu. There would be a big dance at Thami Gompa in May. Jackson Sahib was no longer called the "Morti Sahib"; he had lost a lot of weight. I could have told them I should—I had it to lose. The hermit Lama above Dingboche says you will find the Meh-Teh over the Tesi Lapcha—a nice rumour of Ang Dawa's, because he knew I wanted to go there. A faithful lad. So it went on, and in the evenings these happy people made the camp ring with song and dance.

A huge log-fire saturated the clearing with golden dancing light, and around the fire sat the elders of the people of Phorche and Kumjung. Gyaldzen's wife, her greasy skin and buttered hair shining, rocked the baby, which was swathed in clothes. A brass-bound chang jar was passed around freely, and the smiles and the bursts of laughter indicated a happy group of Sherpas. Six Sherpas, hands linked behind their backs, began a slow, rhythmic movement of the feet, and started to sing—not the light notes that come from the head, but a harder, unnatural alto that comes from the throat. They smiled as they sang. Suddenly the singing stopped and the feet began to shuffle and to pound the dusty earth—this soft-shoe shuffle kept to time by a rhythmical hiss from all present. A turn around and a move to the fire, forward, backward, turn around again—jade and amber beads glistened in
the light, and the brass *kaus* flashed lambent fire. Sherpas joined the dancing women, and a jolly rollicking song began—an exciting dance, with vigorous turns and much pounding of the feet.

Phonetic:  

O chong chey, chey do mo la,  
Dong mu alley charley. (*Repeat.*)  
Papoo mapey teh,  
Sey la papoo mapey teh,  
O chong chey, chey do mo la,  
Dong mu alley charley.

*Moderato*  
*Free rhythm*

![Musical notation]

*A Tibetan tune*

This tune became familiar to us, as they were always whistling it; it was as popular as the one used as part of the background music to the Everest film.

Old Gyaldzen from Phorche and Phu Dorjé, who appeared to be the local virtuosos of song and dance, directed events. I’m sure Ang Dawa was well on the way to being drunk, but his condition didn’t worsen. Some of us joined in the movements, and I linked arms with Dorjé and Gyaldzen. Such was a Sherpa dance: a very carefree and prolonged affair, sometimes a little monotonous, as the repetition of a song seemed endless. I enjoyed every one I attended. I felt very proud that before I left with my
Sherpas for Kangchenjunga the locals gave our small group a special dance, with an extra large number of people attending.

For three days we enjoyed the luxuries of Base Camp. We were then ready to leave once more in our various groups. Ralph Izzard and Gerald Russell arranged to stay three weeks in the Upper Dudh Kosi, searching the areas around the Dudh Pokari—a lake marked on the map, its name meaning the Milk Pool. Stoner intended to search parts of the Bhote Kosi, then endeavour to find a pass by which means he could link up with the Izzard party in the Dudh Kosi. With a similar plan in mind, I decided to revisit the Khumbu and Chola valleys with Tom Stobart's party, which consisted of Bill Edgar, Stan Jeeves, Charles Lagus, and himself. After staying with them for a week, I should try to make the crossing from the Chola Khola, to Chugima and the Dudh Kosi, where I could join the Izzard party in order to increase the number of persons engaged in searching that very large valley. Biswas intended to remain in camp for several days arranging specimens, then to proceed to the Bhote Kosi, where he would join Stoner. All the parties set out on March 5.
We made the yak-hut at Tola our sub-base. Nemi and his men had brought with them from Katmandu a large variety of equipment, and I now possessed a soil-testing outfit, a net, collecting bottles, and a vasculum. I made myself a box for mounting the insects I caught and brought back in bottles, then helped Jeeves to make a clover-leaf trap with wire and sticks, in the hope of catching birds for purposes of photography and observation. Sherpas at Dingboche complained of two wolves that had killed a yak calf near Pheriche, so Stobart was soon busy making a trap of Dexian angle-iron with which he hoped to catch one or both. The days, never very long at this early time of the year, were sunny and bright. Mountains stood out sharp and bold against the blue sky—the royal blue sky, that seems so unbelievable to people who live at lower altitudes. Long trailers of powder-snow streamed off the ridges of Kantega and Taweche, warning us of the strong winds from the north-west, probably cold and bitter winds straight from the plateau of Central Asia. Warm and comfortable down below, we knew that life up there would be intolerable. On the third day the wind swung round, blowing directly from the north, and over the Lho La, down the valley, whipping the tent flaps and blowing dust up the nostrils and in the eyes.

A careless Sherpa threw away a lighted cigarette down by the stream. I was setting and mounting a wasp outside the Meade tent

1 A vasculum is a botanist’s collecting case.
2 A Dexian angle-iron is a piece of iron bent at a right-angle.
and keeping half an eye on Ang Phutar, now named “Cherry Crush” as she plagued Da Temba by flirting coquettishly with the other boys. The acrid smell of smouldering wood irritated my nostrils. Soon I could taste the smoke, as suddenly we were enveloped in a thick blue haze which covered our hands, faces, and clothing with black specks of soot. We rushed to the top of the little hill by Tola, and were shocked to see the dwarf juniper and azalea scrub ablaze a few miles above Phalong Karpo. The conflagration seemed small, and the three Sherpas down there well able to handle the situation, but nevertheless we rushed down to help. Great gusts of wind whistled down upon the blaze, and long before we got there it had spread beyond control. For hours we tried to keep it within bounds, using the stream to make a break by saturating the bushes on either side with water.

The heat was oppressive, breathing difficult and unpleasant. Devouring red flames twenty to thirty feet high leapt the stream, and there was nothing further we could do. Twenty-four hours later it burnt itself out.

Not one or two or a score but hundreds of yellow-billed choughs appeared as from nowhere during the fire, and we wondered if this was their breeding ground. They flew circling, circling, then appearing to commit suicide as they dived into the holocaust, but as most reappeared we decided it must have been small insects they were after.

Bill Edgar and I had the first look up the Chola Khola, reaching the yak-huts within an hour of leaving Tola. Dumping the packs, and leaving our three Sherpas behind, we continued upward to the glacier at the head of the valley. At about 17,000 ft. we followed a set of strange large prints, softened and spread out by melting. They were not very clear; any large animal could have made them. Great undercut boulders, the glacial gravel bases part washed away by floods, provided excellent hides for animals, and we crawled beneath to look for signs of habitation. Many of them had been used. More tracks appeared. Here the prints of a snow leopard or a fox, there the scurrying prints of a vole or mouse-hare, now once again in the snow strange large prints quite different from those others. These we photographed, and later
when I found similar tracks again I partly realized how they were made.

Below the glacier moraine where I found the prints there was much springy grass. It appeared to me that some animal on the move to shelter in a storm had, in placing its feet, bent the grass, which had been quickly buried in the snow-fall before its elasticity had time to spring it back into position. A trace of the original animal print remained, and round it the snow was being pushed up in an oval pattern as the grass re-erected itself. Beneath each oval examined was a stem of the springy bent grass, and in some places it had pushed its way through altogether, the sun melting the snow quickly and leaving a clear patch of ground around it. As the original cause of the phenomena was the footprint of an animal, the effect was that of a large toeless creature walking in the snow.

Returning to Chola, we spent a pleasant evening chatting to the Sherpas, and settled down to sleep upon the sweet-smelling hay. I had made the mistake of not bringing the Everest book or the Alpine Journal with me, for if I had done so I would have known there was a pass over to the Dudh Kosi. As it was I merely had an idea that Charles Evans and Da Tenzing had been up the valley the year before. There appeared to be three possible crossing-points, and during the next day the two of us with Ang Dawa and Nima Tenzing ascended to Chola Khola Col III, as we named it. A steady plod up the steep true left side of the glacier, a short snow gully, a scree scramble, and by midday we were looking down into the Chugima valley and across to the Upper Dudh Kosi. Though a possible crossing-place for climbers, it was very steep and dangerous, owing to loose rock, and impossible for laden porters. A mountain immediately to the north, which later we found to be named Pointed Peak, would have been quite a short scramble, and we almost decided to go for the top. Fortunately, we didn’t, for a great wind blew up from the north-west, rushing and screaming over the col, whipping up the snow and blowing stones dangerously about us. It was impossible to stand, difficult to breathe, and up on the rock ridge we should have been plucked away like the leaves on a tree.
We all sheltered among a giant rubbish-heap of boulders until the wind subsided. After a little while, when we could look around for the first time, we saw Makalu, a great peak of reddish rock beyond the Imja Khola basin. Everest and Lhotse were visible. The ice flutings of the great Ama Dablam barrier stood out in bold relief, and the eye scanned beyond to a big peak southwest of the Barun Saddle—Chamlang. Cho Oyu and Gyachung Kang were clear to the north, and somewhere among the host of crazy peaks was the Nangpa La—the highest trading route, the glacier pass over 19,000 ft. high, between Tibet and Nepal. Banks of cumulus clouds were building up over the other side of the Tesi Lapcha, in the Ralwaling area. There was no sign of a party in the Chugima valley. We descended to Chola, picked up our loads, and returned to Tola to give our news to the others, urging a complete move of the party into the valley.

Six of us had just ascended an old glacial moraine. Ang Dawa was pointing excitedly to the ground. "Meh-Teh, Meh-Teh," he was shouting, and we all stepped forward carefully to avoid disturbing those strange prints in the snow. They seemed very near together and very large, but the closeness was only at one place. There were prints of a snow-cock in the snow near by, and apparently the animal had been stalking it. There were no feathers or specks of blood, so the bird must have got away. But these prints! We examined them carefully, and photographed them too. At least three toe-marks were visible, the rest of the front part of the foot being indistinct. There was a deeper depression at one side of the heel than the other—the same side as the toe-marks. We measured them for length and breadth, finding them roughly eleven inches by six inches. The snow was crisp and sparkling, and the tracks were crisp too—none of the edges rounded by the sun. They were made within twenty-four hours, we estimated. No, they were unlike any bear tracks I had ever seen. but they did remind me forcibly of the footprints photographed by Eric Shipton and Michael Ward on the Menglung La. The big toe was not so prominent, but the size and shape were similar. To one side and some fifty yards away the tracks were lost on the stony moraine. We followed those leading to the
dip down the valley, keeping well to one side to avoid spoiling them. A hundred yards or so and they too were lost on rock and grass. Later, perhaps, we could cross the moraine and pick up the trail again. Now it was late in the day, dusk was already upon us, our height was approximately 18,000 ft., and we must find a place to pitch our camp.

With Bill Edgar and four Sherpas I had left Tola with heavy loads late in the morning, intending to reach the top col of the valley and camp. The day following we would if possible descend into the Dudh Kosi and contact the Izzard party at the Dudh Pokari. I wished Stan Jeeves were with us, and knew he was wishing it too, but Tom Stobart had decided to keep the film unit down at the sub-base. Finding the prints delayed us, and the col was now too far away, so we placed camp on a convenient shelf near the glacier snout. Azalea twigs brought up from below gave off a rich aromatic smell as they burned and heated up for each of us a simmering cup of coffee. Soft grey clouds crept slowly up the valley, racing the night to hide the peaks from our view. At six o'clock we used the walkie-talkie sets as prearranged, and informed an excited Charles Lagus of our find. A further call was arranged for 7 P.M., and this time at one moment or another all three came on the air to discuss the matter. Finally this is what was decided. My party would place the camp on the col, assuming this was the only route out of the valley. Charles Lagus and one Sherpa would attempt to keep watch, and block up the entrance to the valley at the bottom. Stan Jeeves would stay midway up the valley, while Tom Stobart placed a camp in the area of the tracks. Such a small party had little hope of flushing anything. A certain amount of speed was essential.

At the same time as these happenings in the Chola Khola Ralph Izzard and Gerald Russell were having exciting times in the Dudh Kosi. With Ang Tsering, they had found tracks which they had been able to follow for two days—tracks considered to be two or three days old. Allowing for spread due to sun-melt and snow-drift, they estimated the size to be nine inches by five inches, with a stride of two foot three inches. Though a little smaller, they also had the same appearance as those photographed on the Menlung
The ‘Yeti Scalp’ at Pangboche:
Dr Biswas points out the
Prominent Crest

The lady on Biswas’ right has a very advanced goitre—a common sight in Sola Khumbu.

Sola Khumbu: Yeti, or Meh-teh, Footprints
Lingtren, from the Site of the 1953 Everest Base Camp
La. There was a clear impression of toes. Tracks were found as high as 17,000 ft. at Thonak, beyond the Dudh Pokari, and whatever animals were making them (tracks indicated at least two) appeared to be rather shy, avoiding habitations and any contact with human beings. If we could have known of their find at the time I should have left Bill Edgar with two Sherpas, crossed the col, and gone to strengthen the Dudh Kosi party as originally intended. As it was we stuck to the newly arranged plan in the hopes of sighting the animal making the Chola Khola prints. As it was not a big valley there was just a possible chance of doing so. Tom Stobart sent a runner to the Dudh Kosi informing Ralph Izzard of our plans, but it would take him several days to reach there.

During the night the low temperature was offset by our sleeping three together in the small tents. In the morning the crossing of the glacier to the col involved three of us in almost one thousand feet of ascent, and in distance proved to be much further than we anticipated. No prints were visible on the snow-covered shelf near the bottom of the glacier, which relieved the anxiety that the animal would already have escaped this way. Taking a middle course, we ascended two ice-falls, one of which involved us in about seventy feet of step-cutting on moderately steep ice, which we much enjoyed. Once above the second fall we were assailed by a powerful and bitterly cold wind of the strength of some sixty to seventy miles per hour. Ice particles stung our faces, and at times we had to sink down on our knees to escape the full force of the icy blast, and to breathe an adequate amount of air. Some ten minutes before we looked down from the col on to the pass between the Khumbu and Dudh Kosi—named Chakri La by the Swiss—we were astonished to find a clear track made by human beings—unmistakable boot prints on the hard snow-ice—astonished because they could have been made only in the previous October of 1953 by Charles Evans and Da Tenzing. A powerful wind must blow fairly permanently over the col and remove any snow almost as quickly as it falls; this is the only explanation we can give for this phenomenon.

The ice slopes leading to the Chakri La and Chakri Kang
(Ramparts Glacier) were steep, and we returned to the camp-site of the previous evening confident that no animal would attempt to escape by the Chola Khola Col I. We felt the same about Col III, to which we had previously been, and there remained but one more possible escape route—Col II, or "Kang Cho La," we named it later. Not a good name, possibly, as it appears there is more than one peak named Kang Cho.

We moved our camp to a position where we could observe the route to this pass, then contacted the lower parties by wireless. Charles Lagus had moved into position, Stan Jeeves was sleeping under a boulder somewhere, and Tom Stobart was ensconced in a yak-hut at a place named Zongha. Stan and Tom joined us the next morning to look at the footprints, taking several ciné shots of them while they were being examined. A heavy grey sky warned us of bad weather, and the two returned to Zongha in quite a heavy snow-fall. We who remained removed our gear and holed up in a huge cave at the foot of the great rock towers below Kang Cho Shah. For two cold and rather miserable days and three nights we stayed there, feeling safe at first, but as the odd stone rattled down from a black and gaping chasm above, and as we noticed the newly fallen rocks on the floor below, our doubts and fears of the security of our dwelling increased. We both climbed the twenty-foot wall leading to the gap above, and found a further shallow cave with openings leading off in two directions. Great slabs and blocks of rock were bound together by ice. Water had dripped on to the floor from the high-vaulted ceiling, and, though they have been found many times in French and British caves, the drips had formed the first ice 'stalagmites' I had ever seen.

The nest of a swallow or house-martin was built in a cranny at the entrance to the cave, and though probably I was being very imaginative and unscientific, this unusual, rather homely sight led me to theorize that the cave might be the home of a bear or an anthropoid—an hypothesis for which there were small grounds, and which is probably best forgotten. The fact that the nest was there was rather comforting, nevertheless. With little to do but write, talk, and eat, I shall always treasure the memory of eating
Ang Dawa's fried rice and bacon fritters, and remember his astonishing memory. Ang Dawa was a very religious Sherpa, as was Phu Dorje also. Sangi Lama at Thyangboche had given Phu Dorje a book of Tibetan stories, which he was learning by reading aloud. He read quickly, but faltered at frequent intervals, stumbling over some difficult word or phrase. Immediately he was corrected by Ang Dawa, who hardly seemed to be listening as he prepared a meal, yet his corrections, made purely from memory, often stretched out the full length of a page.

Each morning we found fresh tracks of wolf outside the cave, but at no time did we see or hear one. It was another month before I saw my first wolf.

Eight to ten inches of new snow quickly covered the valley, and on the morning of the third day we descended to Zongha. There we joined the other three around a warm yak-dung fire, welcoming the comfort of a solid stone dwelling. Yak-dung fuel was here in such large quantities that the flat dried discs were piled to the roof on three sides, and completely hid the only aperture in the wall. We fed the dung to the fire, sat upon it, slept upon it, and no doubt consumed a certain amount with our meals. Its smoke has a peculiar sweet odour. One other occupant of the hut was a balu (bear)—a cantankerous Himalayan black bear, quite young, that had been captured in the forests below Namche at about 10,000 ft. It had been sent along from Base Camp as a creature of interest. We were able to examine the footprints it made in the snow outside the hut, and marvel at its splendid rock-climbing ability when the opportunity arose for a scramble to the roof. It is said these bears do not move up above the snow-line in Sola Khunibu, but they certainly do in the Kashmir mountains. I never saw them, or their tracks on the snow during the six months of the expedition, whereas in the Valley of Glaciers the prints were common, and we had an occasional sight of a bear.  

While we were having our dinner Mingma Gyaldzen stopped eating, appeared to be listening for something, and seemed petrified with fright. He had heard a strange high-pitched cry from across the valley. Quietly we went out into the darkness, Mingma being too frightened to follow. Nothing was seen or heard,
though the original cry may have been made by a wolf. Charles Lagus found a wolf track several miles from the hut the following day.

As soon as possible three of us visited 'Kang Cho La' to establish it as a crossing-point. It was a day we very much enjoyed, because of the clear views, the lovely flutings and great columns of green ice, as we ascended the glacier. With four Sherpas, Bill Edgar, Tom Stobart, and I then crossed the Pass on the next day, and descended the Chugima Valley to Churchung, in the Dudh Kosi. Later I was pleased to confirm that we had thus made the same circuit of the Taweche Peaks as an Everest acclimatizing party the year before. From Nah, a large village below Churchung, we obtained the information that Izzard's party were now down the valley at Macherma, intending to trek to Base Camp the following day. Tom Stobart left us in the morning to catch up with them, while we who remained walked up the ablation valley on the true left of the Ngojumba Glacier to Taknak—Black Rock village. We enjoyed our stay at Churchung and Taknak, for the villages were high, and commanded a good view of the surrounding hills. The small fields were pock-marked by the pits from which the Sherpas had lifted their stored potatoes, and the deserted houses were filled with a good store of dung and dwarf juniper. At Churchung we stayed at the yak-hut of Ang Tsering, the young Ang Tsering who was one of those who had climbed to the South Col with the final Everest expedition. He had run away from here to go to Darjeeling, and after locking the door had covered the lock with an enormous cake of soft dung. Locks on the other huts had been treated the same way. Green and orange-coloured lichens grew in patches on the stone slab roofs, and at each end a small lung-ta—a bamboo shoot with prayer flag attached—curved artistically into the air.

For our move to Taknak we engaged a man from Nah, whom we recognized again later by his enormous goitre. As we continued further up the ablation valley beyond Taknak we were impressed by the immensity of the Ngojumba Glacier, which Ralph Izzard had described as "the largest rubbish-dump in the world." Twice we picked up beautifully coloured insects—one
of them similar to a dragon-fly. Blown willy-nilly up the valley, they seemed to be slowly freezing to death as they became encased in icy particles.

Stones rattling down dirty slopes on to the glacier and the occasional rumble of an avalanche on the Gyachung Kang massif were the only signs of restlessness in the valley. These things we saw or heard as we sheltered from a chill wind in a sunny hollow, and once again I was able to appreciate the slow but implacable change of the mountain scene.

The man with the goitre moved swiftly over the snow and ice on the return to the Kang Cho La. His clumsy-looking felt boots seemed no inconvenience. Once again here was an example of the superb balance of these people, and their natural ability for mountain travel. Without any preparation he was prepared to journey with us, the difficulties unknown to him, and to be faced at the end with a lonely return. Pointing to two of the peaks, he named them both Kang Cho. One to the north he called Kang Cho Chang ("North Snow-sided Peak") and to the mountain which dominated the pass, the mountain we hoped to climb, he gave the name Kang Cho Shar ("East Snow-sided Peak"). Both were over twenty thousand feet. Ang Dawa pointed out the tracks of snow leopard on the snow below the pass, and excitedly picked up exquisite examples of hexagonal quartz crystals—little dog-tooth crystals, with each facet catching the light, reflecting it back, and splitting it into minute fans of concentrated colour.

Once at the top of the pass we pitched our tents in a small wind-break. Frequently we looked across the glacier for the little black dots that would mean Stan Jeeves and Charles Lagus were on the way to join us. This we had arranged, and if the weather was kind to us we would use a day to attempt the peak. From it we might gain a clearer idea of the topography of this maze of mountains, valleys, and glaciers. The pattern of the weather was changing. Already in mid-March we could see the yellow heat-haze filling the lower valleys and stretching extensively beyond into Southern Nepal. Clouds driven up from the south-west would obscure the hills during the afternoon, bringing with them a fresh fall of snow that would melt quickly away in the morning.
sun. Temperatures were still low at night, and whenever the north wind blew, the cold was intense.

That evening was warmer than usual, and while the other three (Stan and Charles had now arrived) struggled into their sleeping-bags I sat down to enjoy the last moments of dusk. Occasionally I heard sharp cracks and musical creaks from the glacier. Between times there was infinite stillness and silence. The huge valley of the Dudh Kosi was but a dim and hazy rift between me and the great peaks on the far side—peaks cold, aloof, and unfeeling. Somewhere, perhaps, there would be living creatures on the move—hunting—hiding. I thought of the large footprints on the snow in the Chola Khola, and it was easy to feel that somewhere in the great vastness there could be strange creatures wandering about in search of food and shelter. Shelter was difficult to find by man—these hardy creatures were eking out a bare existence in a harsh world. If they were there then I felt sorry for them, for it would perhaps be their last retreat, as with the cave bears of Europe during the Ice Age, the last phase of their existence. A gentle breeze blew over the La as I stood up to go, and as if in agreement with my thoughts came a soft sigh on the wind from out of the silence.

We let the early sun warm the rocks a little before we left the camp, for it had been a cold night, I wondered if my companions were feeling in good form as we climbed over the loose rock to the ridge. This was their first high mountain—a natural progression after their experiences with the high valleys and glaciers in the previous weeks. Charles Lagus came with us over the boulders, then wished us well as he waved us good-bye. Climbing varied in difficulty. Often great stretches of shattered rock were loose, and therefore a great danger if a careless rope was allowed to pull on them. I need not have worried, for every one climbed with care and proper caution, enjoying the occasional sensational traverse at the pinnacles. Soon it became a race with the clouds which threatened to rob us of a summit view; the rotten rock near the top was all the more exasperating because it prevented quick progression. Stan, I know, felt as I had felt in the beginning on Sentinel, in Kashmir, that the high mountain ridges seem inter-
minably long. He and Bill Edgar were doing very well, keeping up a good speed on this their first time over 20,000 ft. Finally we came to the last hundred-foot sweep of snow to the crest of Kang Cho Shar. Within minutes I was testing the summit cornice, then bringing in the rope as the others climbed. Their happy smiles and warm, friendly handshakes made the heart sing with gladness. Time for a few photographs before the clouds came down around us, then we scampered down the mountain in high spirits, arriving back at camp eight and a half hours after our departure. The Sherpas were pleased, and shared in our happiness. It had been a memorable ascent, and for a few short hours we had been able to

"Live life at the full, blend dream with the deed, drink deep of the draught."  

Ang Nima, Pasang Phutar, and Tsuong ascended the glacier to join us by six-thirty in the morning. A new keenness and pleasure was evident because of our climb. With everything packed, we descended to Tola, and decided to reach Pangboche the same evening. Pemba brewed tea, Ang Dawa organized the porters, and Balu the bear tried to chew my leg—the only gesture of friendship he ever showed. We arrived at Pangboche in mist after a fairly long day. Lamas were everywhere in evidence scrutinizing the bearded strangers. Throughout the night they kept up a monotonous dirge, a dreary clashing of the cymbals and a blowing of the trumpets. The patriarch of the village, an old man of ninety-two, had just died.

We walked to Base Camp the following morning on the last day of winter, and already there were plentiful signs of spring. A few purple primula were showing, and wet rhododendron buds shone brightly in the sun. Little tits and wagtails hopped swiftly about in the fir-trees, singing cheerfully, and dozens of grey-and-red blood pheasants scurried swiftly away into the undergrowth.

Sangi Lama, one of the elders of Thyangboche, invited us to have butter tea at the Gompa, a gesture of the friendliness that was always so delightful among the people in Sola Khumbu. It was, too, a splendid opportunity for a glimpse at a lama’s private cell. A shrine and prayer mat occupied one corner of the room,

1 G. W. Young, On High Hills.
which had been decorated by the painting lama of Kumjung. Besides the Buddha was a small table on which lay a dorjé (brass thunderbolt) and a ceremonial bell (tril-bu), while a small bowl gave forth a light blue smoke of aromatic fragrance—incense made from the dried leaves of azalea and dwarf rhododendron. That the old monk was acquisitive of Western equipment was obvious. Here was a pressure lamp, there a punctured air-mattress, along the ledges of the window an incongruous array of medicine bottles, empty beer cans, and brandy flasks.

A trapa—the lama’s spiritual son—administered to our wants, then squatted down cross-legged to watch our actions carefully. We were shown gilded statues, bright paintings of the Round of Existence, and beautifully embroidered thankas—cloth pictures—depicting scenes from the life of Buddha. The love and devotion to Buddhism of the artists and craftsmen who had made these things was clearly seen in their work. The last article the lama showed us before we left was a small double drum, the nga-chung, made of skin from the human scalp. The ways of man are indeed strange.

Base Camp seemed crowded and noisy after the comparative peace of the previous weeks. Mail had arrived a few days before, so we busied ourselves with answering the dozens of letters that accumulate in Katmandu before they are carried by runner to Sola Khumbu. Pupils from my school at Redcar had written many refreshing and amusing letters to each member of the expedition, and, having recently seen the film Conquest of Everest, inundated us with questions about our everyday life. Many asked us what we would do if we suddenly met the yeti face to face, and if we would shoot the animal. I was happy to be able to tell them we had no intentions of shooting the yeti, but I am sure I avoided the issue about the sudden meeting. One felt the burning question would be: what would the yeti do? Tom Stobart was once again requested for information by the income tax authorities, a letter similar to the one he had received the year before on Everest. Even in Sherpa-land we were not free of the red tape that enmeshes all of us who live in the West.

Charles Stoner and Dr Biswas were still away in the Bhot
Kosi, and not expected back for several days. Tom Stobart, Stan Jeeves, and Charles Lagus began the organization of a camera expedition to film the rhododendrons and magnolias along the valley below Namche Bazaar. Bill Edgar and I were to join Ralph Izzard and Gerald Russell for another search in the Upper Dudh Kosi. We were soon organized for a prolonged search of that huge valley.

There was a heavy fall of snow on the day we were due to leave, and because Charles Stoner arrived unexpectedly our departure was delayed until the late afternoon. We stayed the night at Ang Tilley’s home in Phorche. Snow lay deep, and silenced the usual noises of the village. Children played indoors, yaks were tethered in their ground-floor stables, and blue smoke curled lazily into the air from the walls of each house. Occasionally a Sherpani carrying a heavy water-bucket on her back would be seen trudging her way home between the snow-covered shortens. It was a wintry scene.

Snow continued to fall during each afternoon of the following two days as we ascended the valley towards the Dudh Pokhari. The lake and its surroundings are very pretty. A number of yak huts and walled fields straggle by the water’s edge. The unfrozen part of the lake was a rich green colour, and on it were a pair of ruddy sheldrake, providing a striking contrast of cream and gold against the water. A bar-headed goose guarded a small territory near a curve of stepping-stones, that ran across a broad feeder stream—a stream of pure blue melt-water, that rushed and gurgled over smooth stones. The scene was so rustic in appearance that it was amazing to think that only two hundred yards away stretched one of the world’s largest glaciers—the Ngojumba. In summer there must be quite a busy population of yak-herders at the Dudh Pokhari, for there were many well-built mani walls, and each stone hut had its spray of bamboo with prayer-flags.

Several days of searching the valley without result were disappointing. Nothing was heard; no prints seen. Each of the five lakes that lay along the ablation valley was visited, and three of us explored the area to the north, where a great ridge of towering pinnacles stood out against the white ice-wall of Cho Oyu. The
only sounds we heard were the chatter of choughs, the shrill cry of a golden eagle, and the dull roar of stones that frequently toppled from the lateral moraine on to the glacier. Each cannonade shot a pall of sulphurous dust towards us, but the roar of the cannon was no danger, and its shot too far away to harm. Finally we moved our camp to Thonak, near the fourth lake, where Ralph had found tracks on his previous search. Maybe our activities in most of the higher areas had frightened the yeti, causing it to move away from the vicinity. Whatever had happened, there was a lack of clues, a lull in the search for the animal. The trail had gone cold.
A tiny but powerful roarer Primus was making its cheerful din in the pyramid tent. It was melting snow at a quick rate, and the water thus produced I handed over to Pembi. Through the crook of his arm I caught a glimpse of Ang Tilley, stirring a great *dekchi* of *tsampa* over a juniper-wood fire. Every few moments he would beat his arms, and scatter the newly fallen snow from his hair and shoulders. He was a tough little man, maybe fifty years of age, and his toothy grin belied the fact that he was probably very cold. We were camped at over 19,000 ft. immediately below the top col of the Dudh Kosi, and the weather was now at its very worst. Ralph and the Doc snuggled in their bags trying to read. As volunteer for the task, I continued to melt pan after pan of snow until there was *sufficient* for all to have really hot tea. On arrival we had hastily hacked out little platforms from the snow on the glacier and pitched our tents—only just in time. Our tent was soon warmed by the hot blue jets of the roarer, Ralph fearing for the safety of the walls, I somewhat lulled by the fumes and steady rumble. While the water heated I thought quickly over the day’s events, and pondered on the possible difficulties of the next day.

The lull in the search for the Meh-Teh had caused us to remember the story told us by “Prometheus” Danu, and to remember that his story had also been known to H. W. Tilman, where it is mentioned in his book *Nepal Himalaya*. A close friend of Danu’s—one Lhakpa Tsering—had been attacked by a *yeti* while crossing the Nangpa La, and in his efforts to escape had tripped, been severely mauled, and had eventually died of his wounds. It was a slender straw to clutch at, but I suggested that we might make the
journey to the La in the hope of making some contact with the animal again.

We had left Thonak with very full loads early in the morning, bringing with us Narayan the cook, and two extra men to carry wood. For several miles we followed the ablation valley on the true right of the glacier, which led us to the fifth of the frozen lakes—Masamba. Once again we were able to admire the fine aiguille at the foot of Cho Oyu, and the eye followed the glacier leading to the Nup La to the south of the giant Gyachung Kang. Walking had been enjoyable most of the time, until we reached the final rough slopes of talus below the glacier. There it had been too much for Narayan. He was ill and, like many of his race, he had quickly succumbed to a feeling of isolation, being a Southern Nepalese among the Sherpas. Unfortunately, too, the Sola Khumbu men had been sarcastic with him, and made matters worse.

Some one must take Narayan back to Thonak, and the Doc unselfishly agreed to do it, taking Nim Tenzing along to help. With that problem solved, I had to face the next most important one—the crossing to the Bhote Kosi the following day. Arriving a little before the others, I had scrambled to the top of the pass, and had not liked the appearance of the slope we must descend. Now the turn of the weather and the new snow would make matters worse, especially if there was a freeze during the night. Ang Dawa I could rely upon; Nurbu was still an unknown quantity. Ralph Izzard, I knew, would give all the help he could, but it still left five local Sherpas wearing felt boots, which would grip little at all on a steep icy slope. Ang Dawa poked his happy face through the tent flap and I began to feel more cheerful. We should do it together. A quick turn of the valve silenced the Primus, and all that could be heard was the soft slither of snow down the fabric of the Pyramid tent. Quickly I unrolled my sleeping-bag and snuggled in to sleep.

In the morning the tent walls were covered by a sheen of glittering ice particles which fell upon the face and neck when the struggle to move began. Ice formed by the condensation of our breath sheeted the tops of our bags. The cold had been intense,
and my fears for the slope redoubled. Narayan was worse, and once we had eaten he began the return to Thonak, helped by Nim Tenzing, Ang Tilley, and the Doc. The remainder of us scrabbled up the last two hundred feet to the pass, and for a few minutes paused to admire yet another magnificent view of the Everest massif. The old north route from the North Col was visible, as well as the Geneva Spur, South Col, and the route to the summit along the south ridge. Gyachung Kang and the Ngojumba Glacier looked immense. What little hope we had of ever finding anything there, I thought! The terrain was too complicated, too difficult for finding anything in hiding.

As we expected, the steep scree slope leading to the Bhote Kosi was bound together by frost and covered by a nasty layer of slippery snow. Direct descent was not feasible, but by traversing seven or eight hundred feet we could reach a rocky outcrop that might lead to easier slopes. Ang Dawa reconnoitred the ground, and, once my camera was away, having been handed to the returning party, I crossed to join him. With ice-axe and boots it was easy; only care was required. Together we could have descended all the way in thirty minutes, but that was not to be. Packs were dumped at the outcrop, and we returned slowly, hacking steps out of the snow and scree for almost an hour. Chunks of ice and showers of stones rocketed quickly down the slope for about a thousand feet. We knew the steps must be good, if the rest were to cross safely. Unfortunately, there was a misunderstanding, or else over-keenness, for I had intended to rope every one together at the pass. To my surprise, on looking up I saw the whole party on the move, following Nurbu, who was cutting steps down to join us. He and Ralph passed us, making steady progress, and we two gave up our axes to the ill-shod coolies. Slowly we shepherded them across, having but one bad moment when Tsangi slipped, but I grabbed his pigtails, took his load, and pulled him back on to the rough-hewn track. Below the outcrop was a steep funnel of snow, quite hard. Once we were down it there would be an easy snow traverse above a gully, the bottom of which we could not see. This time the rope was used as originally intended, and the reliable Ang Dawa cut steps down
as I played him out from a firm belay. The rest followed him, using the rope for a hand-rail. Ang Dawa's brother Temba went first, and, once over the difficulties, unaccountably slipped, releasing his load of tents, which careered rapidly down the gully. He followed. Ang Dawa made an attempt to stop Temba, then to my amazement jumped behind him, and, locked together, they made a beautiful sitting glissade round a bend in the gully and out of sight. Never have I felt so useless to help, and never have I felt so relieved when at almost the same instant I saw Nurbu, who was in a position to see everything, laughing uproariously. His laughter meant they were safe, and that the gully was not a dangerous one. The brothers reappeared, and Ang Dawa waved, a grin splitting his classically Mongolian face. All was well. One more steep snow slope remained, but this time the hand-rail was sufficient to take every one to complete safety, and, four and a half hours from the start of descent, we were eating lemon-snow at the foot of the pass.

Nim Tenzing and Doc Edgar joined us the next day, which we purposely made a short one. Finding our well-trodden path down from the pass, they made quick time, and crossed the glacier to join us. Sunning ourselves as we lay on the soft turf of the ablation valley, we traced their journey through the ice cliffs and moraine heaps—two very tiny dots in among a gigantic jumble of mountain debris. Pembi began digging up the scrub to reach its roots, then passed the delicacy around. "Ram chikor khanna," he said, as we tried some. It was quite good, being a tender, juicy root with a flavour of nuts, leaving the mouth refreshed.

The party reunited, we crossed over grassy moorland country and camped at Lonak—a small halting-place on the yak trail to Tibet. A group of Tibetan children and their parents, carrying huge loads, trailed past us where we camped. Clothes were ragged and patched, feet were barely covered, lips were cracked and bleeding; they were obviously extremely poor. Before reaching our Jasamba camp the next day we saw them again huddled together for the night. There was no fire for warmth, or a roof to their heads, merely a rough-built wall to shelter them from the chill wind that blew over the Nangpa Glacier. Their toughness is
incredible. It was a monotonous day ascending a stony glacier, and Ralph, who was experiencing this for the first time, described it as the “world’s worst foot-going.” Despite the tiresome wandering in and out of rock piles, or over pebble-strewn ice, it gave me pleasure to hear him exclaim at the splendour of the ever-changing view or at the savagery of the surrounding walls of rock, ice, and hanging glaciers. Here the mountains rise steeply; the high hanging corries are numerous, and seemingly very remote. Jasamba—which means “new rock”—is not a village—just a name among a chaotic debris of rock and silt-covered ice, desolate, unfriendly, and cold.

Before dawn I was awakened by the clatter of many feet, and, struggling outside the tent, saw some dozen men, women, and children moving towards the bare glacier that led over the Nangpa La to their homeland—Tibet. With them came Lobsang, a Sherpa from Namche, who was carrying matches, cigarettes, trinkets, and felt hats to trade at Tingri, in the Kharta valley. Later, on top of the 19,050-ft. pass, I bought one of his felt hats. My highest purchase yet.

Ralph, Doc, and I soon set out on the same ‘road,’ a steady rhythmical plod taking us over snow-covered glacier, amid a rugged scenery of high, impossible peaks, bare brown rock, and steep couloirs. Soon a pale blue sky and curving line of snow told us that we neared the top of the Nangpa La—and what should we see? I think we expected to see once again the immense peaks and glaciers and an unfriendly land—further hardships for the ill-clad, cold, and shivering travellers with bleeding lips and hungry eyes. First we saw a curve of bamboo, festooned with fluttering prayer flags, and round it the squatting figures of the early-rising Tibetans. They appeared happy, so we followed their gaze, and our previous ideas were swept away on a flood of amazement, and appreciation of a view indescribably beautiful and unexpected. A new land, new colours—almost it seemed a new world. We were through the Himalaya, and could now see, beneath a fine line of copper-tinted cumulus clouds, the plateau of Tibet. Here were gently rolling hills, showing various pastel shades of green and

1 Lobsang was a very popular Sherpa in the 1955 Kangchenjunga Expedition.
ochre, a glimpse of pale blue lakes, a country much more serene and peaceful than that from which we had come. We knew that beyond the hills lay the barren lands, the stony wastelands, the land of vast horizons, space and clear blue skies, but here we could only see a beauty of a more gentle kind.

On a bundle of rags lay an old toothless Tibetan woman. She was dying, but, looking at the country of her birth, she seemed at peace, and the young man Lobsang kindly picked her up and carried her on his back across the ice and into the promised land. Children clamoured for sweets and mint cake, and their parents for cigarettes, which we gave freely. One Tibetan woman asked for my empty cigarette tin, offering an amber bracelet in exchange. We traded, but, knowing the tin to be valueless, I enclosed a silver rupee. She went on her way delighted. Just as when I had caught my first glimpse of the Himalaya from Chergand, in Kashmir, so I felt now a great desire to journey into the country which lay ahead. I think we all did, but had to turn away reluctantly an hour later and return to Jasamba. We didn’t contact a yeti, or even see any sign of one, but I’m sure the journey was well worth while.

On the afternoon of the following day I left the main party to reach a small yak village called Langden. Ang Temba, Ang Tilley, and Ang Dawa went with me. The others trekked down the valley to Base Camp. An amusing cretinous yak-herder gave us shelter for the night in an ill-lit, dirty hut, piled high with paper bundles, packed in yak pelts. Later these would be carried over into Tibet. The happy and perky yak-man, looking just like a Court jester, bouncing and hopping about, kept my Sherpas roaring with laughter, so contagious, that I began to laugh myself, though not understanding the reason—perhaps I was the joke. His sister was a quiet, shy little thing who sat in the corner eating Kendal mint cake with silent satisfaction. After a meal I discussed with Ang Dawa the journey we intended to make the following day.

While we were in the Dudh Kosi I had visited a corrie above the Dudh Pokari with Ralph Izzard and Bill Edgar. From the corrie we had ascended a pleasant and easy peak over 19,000 ft. high. It was Ralph’s first ascent of a mountain, and therefore a
Crossing the Awkward Couloir on the Ambu Lapcha

The glacier in the Imja Khola basin can be seen in the top left-hand corner.

[p. 167]
Ama Dablam, from Chukung

Morning Mists retreat, and unveil the Wind-blown Summit of Ama Dablam
memorable occasion. It became more memorable still when we found tracks of leopard-cat and mouse-hare in the summit snow, and found fæces in among the rock pinnacles of the Skye-like ridge leading off to the north. During the descent we noticed deep tracks zig-zagging across the glacier which led to the rocky watershed separating us from the Bhote Kosi. We examined them with care, for from a distance the size of them created great excitement. They were wolf tracks. On returning to the yak huts we heard that the Sherpas had seen two large wolves crossing the frozen lake. Trailing the wolves the following day, we ascended the true left side of the glacier to a huge ice cave with a gaping mouth lined by glistening tooth-like icicles. Still following the tracks, we crossed the glacier, then scrabbled several hundred feet over boulders to the rock curtain. At one steep place the wall was pierced by a narrow cleft, from which the tracks plunged downwards over snow-covered talus across a small glacier, and disappeared into the haze-filled valley of the Bhote Kosi. Here we had proof that, not only did animals live high in the Himalaya, but that they were also able to cross difficult country to reach passes over 19,000 ft. high between one valley and another. The cleft we had found we named the Changu La—"Wolf Pass." From the yak village at Langden we hoped to find the pass once again, and make a crossing from the Bhote Kosi side.

By strange coincidence we were wakened in the morning by a loud shouting from the yak-herder, and when we stumbled out into the pale light of dawn we saw a large cream-coloured Tibetan wolf dragging at the hind leg of a struggling yak. Upon our approach it loped away disdainfully in the direction of the Changu La. I had time to admire the smooth rhythm of its movements, and the fine picture it made, silhouetted against the sky above the rugged hills.

Our brisk pace soon took us to the small deserted village of Henjo—a sandy place. I had not slept well, and felt very weary. Each step up was a great effort, and I wished myself elsewhere. Ang Dawa was coughing often, and perhaps all of us felt tired. Wisely we lounged for an hour well below the tiny glacier, and brewed tea. It was a lonely, remote corrie we were in. A small
frozen lake nestled in the heart of it, pink primulas were pushing their way through the top-soil, and half-a-dozen yellow-billed choughs circled overhead. A sweet smell of crushed azalea leaves filled my nostrils as the sun lulled me to sleep. A shiver ran through my body as I wakened, and a cool wind rustled the dry grass in the corrie. Low clouds skirted the cirque of rock pinnacles above, and soon the skirts of grey mist swirled tantalizingly about the defensive bastions that seemed to guard the entrance to a secret valley. Refreshed and inspired, we crossed to the glacier which was small indeed, but steep. Wolf tracks went straight up the middle. Wolves can climb. Once again they led us to the narrow cleft, and we made our first crossing of the pass.

Glissading down the snow towards the Dudh Pokari was a great relaxation, and on arrival at the huts by the lake we had Sherpa aloe cooked by Ang Darmi, Ang Dawa’s wife. Leaving Ang Dawa behind, I went on to Thonak during the evening of the same day. There I found Gerald Russell, who was not feeling well. Several days previously he had left a lamp burning in the tent all night, and had inhaled its noxious fumes.
GERALD hadn’t seen anything of great interest during his stay at Thonak, but had received a lot of the latest information from Base Camp about the other parties. Tom Stobart, Stan Jeeves, and Charles Lagus were still in the Khoria Khola area photographing flowers. The weather had not been kind to them, so they had been delayed; hence the prolonged stay. One other interesting reason for their delay was that a Sherpa living in the vicinity of Ghat village had given them news of a Meh-Teh. Strange cries attributed to this animal had been heard in the valley, and many of the local inhabitants were frightened. Several days had been used to search the hills above Ghat, and they had reached a pass of 16,000 ft. Unfortunately, they had searched the wrong area because of a mistake in interpretation, and the supposed Meh-Teh was somewhere on the other side of the Dudh Kosi.

Charles Stoner had been busy negotiating for the loan of the scalp at Pangboche without success, because the people of Phorche, to whom the scalp belonged, insisted that parting with it could only end in some horrible disaster for them. Charles, giving up the idea of getting the scalp, had then proceeded to search the grassy slopes leading to Khumbila, above Namche Bazaar, for any possible clues. He also started a collection of rhododendron specimens. I believe that eventually he collected almost thirty different types.

‘Bis’ had returned to Base from Thame village with a large collection of specimens of the local fauna, and was now preserving and mounting them with the help of Akhia Bhutia, the skinner.

I was able to bring Gerald’s information up to date, and tell
him that Ralph and Doc would be arriving at Base some time in the evening. In actual fact Doc stayed on at Namche Bazaar, attending to several people with smallpox—and there seemed to be cause for alarm, as news had arrived that over thirty people had died of this disease in Junbesi.

We too were due back at the Base Camp, and we called Ang Tsering over to tell him we would move as far as the Dudh Pokari the next day. Before leaving the Upper Dudh Kosi I had hoped to climb Kang Cho Chang, and also to reach a third col leading to the Bhoté Kosi, from where I might climb a fine-looking glacier peak of 20,000 ft. These hopes had to be quashed, because the expedition came first, but I was still determined to reach the col on the last day, and had arranged for Ang Dawa to meet me early the next morning. He turned up faithfully at the appointed time, though obviously suffering from an extremely racking cough, and I decided to abandon the idea altogether. However, he insisted that he looked forward to our having our one day together. At the last moment we discovered that Ang Tsering had sent the only rope down to the Dudh Pokari, and we were delayed for a further two hours. Any possible chance of ascending the peak was out of the question, but we had time to journey out to prove the glacier col to be practicable, and on the return ascended a pleasant rocky hill of 19,000 ft. by its north-west flank, enjoying several entertaining rock pitches of varying difficulty. As is usually the case with these peaks in the Dudh Kosi, the north face was a perpendicular precipice, and the walk off the south face extremely easy. It was well so, for it enabled us to loiter, and Ang Dawa to show me how to find the nesting-sites of snow cock, which were nearly always located beneath dense shrub or the undercut of large boulders. Another time we were able to lie back on spring juniper watching a number of yellow-billed choughs mobbing a pair of ravens, and, once they had gone, to let our eyes wander over the ridges, glaciers, and tops of the giant peaks that seemed so near. We both enjoyed our day, for Ang Dawa likes his mountains too.

We returned to Thonak feeling very lazy, and trudged slowly along the ablation valley to rejoin the rest of the party in the
Dudh Pokhari. The next day, when I had organized the coolies and taken care that Ang Dawa did not carry a load because of his bad chest, I changed my boots for plimsolls and walked down to Base Camp in just over five hours. I hurried, because the mail was due to arrive, and the following day, April 12, was my little boy's birthday. As it turned out it was a day of great sorrow for me, as the first letter I opened informed me that my mother had died in March. It was shattering news, and for several days I have nothing written in my diary.

Now I began to organize my loads for a journey across to Kangchenjunga which the *Daily Mail* was generously allowing me to make later in May. On the way there I should perhaps be able to send back a runner with any fresh news of the Meh-Teh, and at Kangchenjunga would be near the Zemu Gap, where John Hunt and C. L. Cooke found footprints in 1937. I should, too, meet my brother Ron, who was with the Kangchenjunga Reconnaissance. The leader of the Reconnaissance was my old friend John Kempe, whom I had been with in Garhwal.

This period was the longest stay in camp for every one except Charles Stoner, and the days were varied in their interest. Sherpas who were strangers to us began to arrive in dozens early one morning, and with them came the famous sirdar Ang Tarkey. They were the Sherpas and Sherpanis who had carried loads for the American expedition to Makalu, and once they had been paid made an amazing journey, without ropes and ice-axes, across the Barun Saddle to Sola Khumbu. Over twenty were snow-blind, and many were very fatigued, but there had been no fatalities. When Ang Tarkey returned to Makalu Charles Stoner went with him, but turned back at the East Col of the Barun, thinking it would soon be impossible to recross the various passes back to Sola Khumbu.

One day we were all invited to a ceremonial dance at Thyangboche Gompa, so, complete with cameras, flash-guns, tripods, and a large supply of films, we ascended the path to the monastery.

An oxygen cylinder from one of the pre-war Everest expeditions was used as the Gompa bell, and was suspended from the
roof beside an open window from which I looked out over the *chortens* and into the glacier-gouged basin below Kantega and Thamserku. The snow on the steep flanks of these two peaks had melted away, leaving glistening bare blue ice. Turning at the sound of music behind me, I saw that several of the monks led by the Sangi Lama had entered the Gompa courtyard. They were playing a variety of instruments—cymbals, gongs, silver trumpets, horns, and a large drum. The monks on the veranda above the courtyard set up a muttering and a chanting; then from the monastery doorway four figures swirled and danced down the stone steps into the sun. These were the dancers, dressed in brightly shining and voluminous garments that swept the ground. Their faces were covered by masks each differently coloured—blue, green, yellow, and red, and each with features painted on them in white and gold. The bulging eyes were solid, and the only way in which the dancers could see was through the open nostrils and down to the ground. Small grinning skulls were attached to the top rim of the masks, giving them a weird and grotesque appearance.

Two great *tung-chens* boomed sonorously, and as the dancers paused a lama masquerading as Shindje—Lord of the Dead—strode majestically into their midst. He began to revolve slowly, then speeded up the tempo, and all the dancers followed his example. The horns boomed louder and more frequently, silver trumpets screamed falsetto, and the Gompa-yard became a mad whirl of spinning, twisting, pirouetting figures with silken robes swirling high and wildly, dazzling the eyes with riotous colour. Suddenly there was a loud, brassy clash of a cymbal, and the dancing stopped. The dancers' awkward run back into the monastery was an anticlimax. The ceremonial dances went on for another hour and a half, but after those first inspired moments lacked vigour and life. Perhaps it was too hot, or perhaps it was that we, not understanding the inner meaning of each broad gesture, became wearied by the seemingly endless repetition.

Shortly after noon we were invited to enter the main Gompa building and there allowed to eat our lunch surrounded by the many fantastic masks we had seen earlier. Several of us slipped
away and examined the contents of various rooms. No one seemed to object, and I began to take flash photographs of the various Buddhas that were set back in tiny alcoves. One of the lamas posed for me in front of the main shrine, which consisted of a tiny gilded chorten with two figures squatting on either side, and another lama proudly showed me one of the many Gompa books that were kept in pigeon-holes on one side of the room. The leaves of the book were separate, and made of crude parchment-like paper on which the text had been block printed. Cloth-bound boards covered the back and front of the book, and the whole was tied together with a length of coloured ribbon. As quickly as the blue flash bulbs were removed from the camera small trapas put out eager hands and took them from me. Before we left the bulbs had been tied to a piece of string and strung out across the room like the fairy lights on a Christmas-tree.

One of the lamas at Kumjung was a renowned artist, and he had been busily working at Thyangboche. Walls that were not already covered with books or thankas were patterned with strange geometrical designs, or painted with lively figured frescoes. One of these was of great interest, because it depicted a symbolic Meh-Teh being chased by several brave men on horseback. The creature’s body was painted blue, and had a repulsive green face topped by long hair of the same colour. A blue and red tongue at least a foot long protruded from a gaping mouth, and snakes writhed about its neck and shoulders. It appeared to be bounding wildly on its two feet, and had a gruesome barbaric appearance. None of us had seen or heard of such a painting before, and it is probably one of the very few in existence. A few days later I was pleased when the same Kumjung artist gave me a less symbolic water-colour painting of the Meh-Teh, and also included the Chu-Teh and the Dzu-Teh. These were the three animals that Charles Stoner had had described to him on first arriving in Sola Khumbu, and subsequent interrogations of numerous Sherpas had verified the common usage of the names. From the painting we got the clear impression that the Dzu-Teh was in fact a bear, probably a Himalayan red bear, and we could clearly see that the artist intended to depict the Meh-Teh as a
much smaller animal, more in keeping with the commonly given descriptions. Charles during his investigations among the people had come across many who professed to having seen the Meh Teh, either walking on two legs or bounding away on four. One old man told a story of having been attacked by a Meh-Teh, and showed him a badly mangled hand that he said had been damaged during the fight. But mainly the descriptions suggested a timid animal which was seldom seen at close quarters, but which could, however, be extremely ferocious when annoyed. Size, shape, hair-colouring, and other characteristics invariably agreed with the descriptions given by Sen Tenzing to Eric Shipton during the Everest reconnaissance in 1951, and several times during the *Daily Mail* expedition I was interested to hear Sen Tensing's account from his own lips. The paintings of the Meh-Teh, symbolic or otherwise, provided more detail that we could add to the total picture.

On the way back to camp from Thyangboche several of us met Professor Snellgrove, of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, who was in Sola Khumbu to study life in the monasteries, and to examine *thankas*, books and paintings. Discussing the matter of the Meh-Teh painting with him later in camp, I got the impression that he considered it comparable with a painting from a book of myths and legends, but unfortunately he had left the area when I received the more realistic pictures from the Kumjung lama.

In 1953 Tom Stobart had witnessed the Sherpas' delight when flares and mortar bombs had been let off after the successful ascent of Everest. Because of this he had brought out a ten-guinea display box of fireworks, and arranged to have a gala night at Kumjung after the dance. In groups of two and three we made our way up to the village, where we were invited to eat and drink at the painting lama's home. His workroom was brightly decorated in the same manner as the monastery, and many finished or partly finished scroll paintings covered the walls. Ang Tarkey was there with many of the other rich Sherpas of the village, and we were made to feel very welcome. There was an awkward moment when the lama provided us with a large pile of delicious-looking
The Meh-Teh, the Dzu-Teh and the Chu-Teh,
three-cornered meat pies, which unfortunately stank appallingly once our teeth laid bare the contents. It was sheep-meat that had been dead a very long time. No one ate the pies, as far as I can remember and, feeling a little shame-faced, I gave mine away to a group of Sherpas who accepted them with obvious delight. A move was made towards the village square, where people from miles around had gathered in a noisy, milling throng, many of them in advanced stages of drunkenness.

The display opened with a barrage of signal rockets, quickly followed by a shower of fire from half a dozen Golden Rain. The white light of photography flares lit up the smiling faces of the people, who at times cried out in astonishment and wonder at the appearance of a Catherine Wheel, or a Ball of Fire, and screamed with pleasure at the sudden eruptions of the final super Jack-in-a-Box. It was not a long display, but it was jolly while it lasted, and provided a show that all will remember for a long time. The walk back to camp in the moonlight and on the narrow path high above the valley was the most satisfying memory of all, for the silver rays played upon the high snows and the lower grassy shoulders of Taweche, and from the dark cleft below came the gentle murmur of the Dudh Kosi.

In the early morning I had the habit of taking a walk away from the camp into the woods to reach a grassy knoll that overlooked the Dudh Kosi. Very few days were left to me in this valley and among the Sherpa people. At times it was a pleasure to lie back and allow myself to remember the various hill-men I had known during my travels in the Himalaya, people with whom I had shared enjoyment just as I had in Sola Khumbu. I jotted down some of my memories of them at this time.

First came Illia, my Kashmir pony-man, or Gorah Wallah. I first met him while crossing the Zoji La. He was urging a couple of stubborn ponies past a narrow section of the winding, precipitous track with cheerful whistles and the pony-man's throaty "Hoesh-hoesh." He was wearing a dark tweed jacket of Western cut, a close-fitting balaclava, black and greasy with dirt, voluminous pantaloons, and grass shoes that partially covered his well-arched feet. I never saw him wear any other type of clothing. His
features were sharper than most Kashmiri hillmen, and when newly washed his skin was a lighter brown. Hard-working, with a quicker brain than most of the pony-men his colleagues, and eyes that often twinkled with some secret pleasure, he stood out as an individual. After our first meeting he became my head pony-man on most treks, and I got to know him well. He was less frightened of *baraf*—snow—than most Kashmiris, and once with C. W. F. Noyce in 1944 was the only native prepared to follow him over steep frozen slopes. Perhaps, too, Illia was the only pony-man who understood there were other reasons for climbing mountains than searching for gold, for the others could never excuse our mysterious wanderings on the high hills in any other way.

Many of our pony-men in Kashmir came from the village of Sonamarg, but most came from Shitkari, two miles farther down the Sind river, and Illia was the leading light of that village. He owned four ponies, and there was great rivalry between him and Gual Mohidin, the headman at Sonamarg. Whenever they met we used to hear their shouted cross-banter as far away as our camp on the hill between the two villages. Buda the old coolie would shake his head knowingly, as if to say, "Listen to those two young fools! If only they could work together they would earn many rupees."

After returning from Ladakh for the last time in 1945, Gual Mohidin gave me a chicken; and, not to be outdone, Illia invited me to his home at Shitkari. His house, like the others, was built strongly of pine-wood throughout, and a line of steps led me to a veranda from which I could enter the main room. It was shockingly filthy, bare of furniture, and possessed very few cooking utensils. Several bare-footed children clad in rags pranced about the floor, hindering Illia’s rotund wife, who was preparing a meal for us. Her clothes, which were without shape or cut, were plain and drab, but in the lobe of each ear she wore a collection of half a dozen large silver earrings, which twinkled in the fire-light as she laughed and giggled, or hid her face shyly. Being a Mohammedan, she probably felt she should be wearing a veil. She regaled us with roasted maize cobs and honeyed *trombas*
(similar to muffins), which we washed down with tea made with milk and salt—a variation of butter-tea. It was a simple meal, which we ate while squatting on the wooden floor; but it was presented with great excitement, and with many sidelong glances to see if I was enjoying it. I felt pleased and proud to be there at all, for it was a kind gesture from a poor but endearing people—not as uninhibited, as carefree, or as intelligent as these in Sola Khumbu, and certainly not as honest, but with a somewhat childish charm that rarely failed to please.

After the meal Illia produced his favourite "hubble-bubble" pipe—this is a tobacco bowl attached to a curved flask which is filled with water. A long, hollow tube is attached to the side of the flask, and the smoke from the tobacco is cooled by drawing it through the water—as a result of which there is a horrible gurgling and bubbling noise from which it derives its name. The tobacco smoke smelled sweet, for Illia, like all Kashmiris, mixed sugar with the tobacco. The end of the War meant the end of Aircrew Mountain Centre, and so too for the Gorah Wallahs it meant the end of a period of relative prosperity.

I last saw Illia in Srinagar, and he told me that he was going to take up the work of dak runner through the Gagangir Gorge and over the Zoji La. It was dangerous work in the winter, and I admired his pluck. I've often wondered what happened to him during the Kashmir fighting, but hope he is still able to drive his ponies twenty miles for two rupees a day, and I like to think that his piercing whistle still echoes among the crags of the Zoji La.

There is a vast difference between Illia and Ang Dawa, my Sherpa in Sola Khumbu, I thought. But then their lives are very different too, and I must remember that their homes are a thousand miles apart, even though they are both hillmen of the Himalaya. Ang Dawa was twenty-five years of age, and had been born at Thame,1 west of Namche Bazaar. His mother, though old, was still living, and only a few days earlier she had been to Base Camp to meet me. His father was dead, but the memory of him was strong in Ang Dawa, and an inspiration, too, for he had been the famous Sherpa Ang Tsering III, who was finally killed on

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1 This is the village where the famous Tenzing grew up.
Nanga Parbat in the great avalanche disaster with the German expedition in 1937. The year before he died he had been the only Sherpa to reach the summit of Nanda Kot with the Japanese expedition, and he had received a medal for his achievement. Now his son carried it at all times in the breast-pocket of his shirt, and every so often gave it a shine and proudly showed it to me. Apparently Ang Dawa had left Sola Khumbu to go to Darjeeling before he was twenty-one, and since that time had been a high-carrying Sherpa for many expeditions. In 1952 he had climbed to a height of 24,000 ft. on Kamet, in the Garhwal Himalaya, and then in 1953 he again reached the same height on Manaslu with the Japanese expedition. On rock he was far more confident that the majority of Sherpas, he had a healthy respect for crevassed glaciers, and on snow and ice was further advanced in technique than the average Darjeeling Sherpa. He had one half-brother, Ang Temba (of the same mother, but a different father) and quite obviously Temba looked upon Ang Dawa as a hero—perhaps the more so because Dawa while in Darjeeling had taken to wearing Western-type clothing and to smoking cigarettes; could now speak Hindustani; and had his hair cut short. To Ang Temba and Phu Dorje he was a man of the world who had travelled far, but apart from that he was very religious, like Phu Dorje, and, as was shown in the Chola Khola cave, had a prodigious memory for the religious books. For this too he was respected.

Ang Darmi, his wife, was a Sherpani from Thammu who could, and did, carry 60 lb. and 70 lb. loads throughout a long day. Unlike Illia’s wife, she wore bright clothing and faced you squarely as she gave you the smile of freedom-loving people. She and Ang Dawa were married in Darjeeling, and had a little home of their own in the Tunsung Basti, near the centre of that town. Often they would go on separate expeditions, and while Ang Dawa had been on Mansalu Ang Darmi had been with Dr Biswas in Sikkim. However, they had always contrived to meet again as soon as possible, and this Daily Mail expedition had been perfect for them, for in Sola Khumbu they could work together, and perhaps, if given the time, go to see their parents together. This
they had done, and I hoped they both might stay together and come with me to Kangchenjunga. In many ways, perhaps, these Sherpa people have been more fortunate than other Himalayan people, for the attempts at Everest have brought their name to the fore, and now they are recognized as the élite among mountain carriers.

Even so, I knew there were men over on the west side of Nepal who rank second to none in the matter of carrying a great weight throughout a long day. Such a man was Karen Singh, a Dhotial—a native from the village of Dhoti, in south-west Nepal—who for most of his life had lived in Garhwal, carrying loads for the local administration officials. In the winter he goes back to Dhoti to his wife, but in the spring returns to Garhwal at the earliest opportunity. Perhaps if he is fortunate he will find a small expedition waiting at Ranikhet, and he will be taken on the strength as a coolie carrying an 80 lb. load. If this is so he knows his pay is secure for many months, that he will have a full stomach at the end of each day, and that probably he will see much new country with friends and companions. It will be a life of temporary freedom from worry and want; a hard life, nevertheless, but he will enjoy it.

Unfortunately, expeditions are not very numerous, and for most of the time he will carry loads on short journeys interspersed with long periods of unemployment. There is a chance that when the pilgrims move up the valley to Kedarnath and Badrinath he will be engaged to carry an old lady in a frame on his broad back, or join with three of his fellows in carrying a wealthy Hindu in a *dandi*—a covered couch suspended beneath two poles. Though he is a devout Hindu, I doubt if he will have much respect for those who make the pilgrimage in this way.

During the journey to the Satopanth Valley on our Garhwal expedition in 1952 he carried the medicine chest—a task which he performed most diligently, and of which he was very proud. He treated the awkward wooden box with great tenderness, and at each camping-place ensured it was the first load under cover when it rained. As I lay back on the grassy knoll I could bring his picture back to mind—a good-looking man with a broad fore-
head, wide, honest features, and eyes that expressed gratitude for the slightest word of thanks. His clothes are old and patched, but not ragged, because the Dhotials soon sew up and repair the smallest rent. His feet are bare, even when crossing snow, and the thick skin is cracked wide open in places, like the marginal tension crevasses of a glacier. His legs are covered by pantaloons and very long puttees, which are always tightly bound round the muscular calf.

Like Zungia and the other Dhotials, he was fond of knitting or spinning wool. Though he left the Satopanth with the other Dhotials, I met him again at Vishnu Prayag when I descended to Chamoli with David and the two French climbers. The monsoon rains had made a squelchy, muddy mess along the narrow street, and raindrops dripped dismally from the wooden eaves of a tiny tea-shop. Here Karen Singh and Zungia were sitting together, looking cold and wet, so we bought them tea, which they accepted eagerly. When we left they were still sitting beside the charcoal fire at the tea-shop, and Karen Singh was taking out his knitting.

Perhaps in the simple, unspoiled Phu Dorjé were embodied most of the things I liked about the Himalayan peoples. He had Illia’s simple charm, the strength and devotion of Karen Singh, and Ang Dawa’s ability in the mountains; he had too the same cheerful disposition and the faithfulness that the other three had always shown me. Phu Dorjé was a Sola Khumbu Sherpa through and through. He lived with his wife and his parents in a simple home in Kumjung. No hair-cutting for him: this burly, jocular Sherpa who twice carried loads to the South Col of Everest in 1953 liked his hair plaited into pigtails and decorated at the ends with vivid coloured tassels of red, green, and gold. On the mountain he wore climbing-boots and carried an ice-axe, but down in the valleys preferred his yak-soled boots, a short stick, and the rough woollen Tibetan chuba. Though all his life he had lived in Sola Khumbu, the expeditions coming to Everest and Cho Oyu had given him an insight into other men’s lives, brightened the days of the pre- and post-monsoon, and created an excitement in life that he would long remember.
These things had not given him the desire to go to live in Darjeeling, and already, now the *Daily Mail* expedition was nearing its end, he was looking forward to the day when he could drive his yaks up the Dudh Kosi to Gokyo, beside the Dudh Pokhari. There it would be quiet, and along with other young Sherpas and Sherpanis from the village, he would live for a few months the simple life of a mountain shepherd, or yak-man. Almost every day he would see the plume blowing from the top of Chomolungma—Everest. Perhaps prior to 1953 he briefly dismissed the mountain as an abode of lamas and of gods, but I wonder what it means to him now. I cannot believe that his climb to the South Col had no meaning for him at all—I think he will remember with pleasure his many weeks on the mountain with the British expedition, and think back with pride to the part which he played in the great adventure.
Bhotia Woman and Child at Chyamtang
The roofing of the hut is made of bamboo.

The Arun Valley: A Bhotia Woman weaving
A Narrow Escape, and My Last Days in Sola Khumbu

Your glance is kind as I step slowly forth from your valleys. I am always welcome at your feasts. I have loved you well and you have rewarded me.

JULIUS KUGY, Alpine Pilgrimage

In April, the bridge below Dolle, in the Upper Dudh Kosi, was swept away by flood-waters, caused by the melting snow from Cho Oyu and Gyachung Kang, at the head of the valley. As the days went by, the roar of the river increased in intensity, and the swift-moving, ice-cold water surged over the tops of huge rocks in the river-bed, forming raging waterfalls, each with a seething cauldron at its foot. Some one, I don't remember who, suggested that we search the opposite bank of the river, and we crossed without the aid of a bridge. A section was found where the water was confined between steep, smooth walls of rock and though the water moved powerfully it was deeper and smoother than at any other place. We were all sceptical about the possibility of crossing, but in the end I suggested it would be possible if some one could be lowered over the wall on the true left bank of the river on to a tiny rock projection. With a dry take-off, a neat shallow dive, and a few quick crawl-strokes I was sure that some one could reach a projecting boulder two-thirds of the ways across. Once he had scrambled on to the boulder, one more powerful plunge was all that was required to reach the opposite bank. I volunteered to swim a rope across. Stanley Jeeves and I tied ourselves to each end of the rope, and made a strong belay on top of the wall. It bulged out slightly at the top, and with a large measure of assistance from the rope, and use of the small finger-holds that were available, I descended to the small projecting lip.
The roar of the river drowned my voice, and Stan continued to let out the rope so that I was unable to maintain my position for a dry take-off and swung out into the river. My feet rested on a rounded boulder, but the water was surging past me above the hip. Already I felt the numbing cold creeping through my body, and in a few moments I knew it would be hopeless to attempt to cross. I waved and pushed, but my feet slipped on the slime of the boulder, giving me no start at all. A start from scratch—and quickly the river was plucking at my body with icy fingers; my legs beat rapidly, and arms flailed at a pretence of a neat crawl. A surge of joy—I had reached the rock. It was under-cut, the current running strongly below it, and soon my hands, which were searching for a good hold, began to claw wildly at the water-worn surface, smooth as marble. There was a fraction of time to realize the implication of the one important fact I had left out of my calculations, and then my legs were dragged round and down into the powerful current. My hands were torn from their flimsy friction grip, and I was whisked like a cork into mid-stream.

Fear is sometimes your partner before the event, but seldom at the moment of crisis. I have noticed this before in other people, and in myself when flying, and when in the avalanche in Garhwal. Events happen too quickly, and there is too much to do. It was the same now. I rolled over and looked at Stan. Afterwards he said he knew why I looked; that I was helpless, and everything depended on him and the strength of the rope. There was time to roll back and let my body go slack; time to breathe deeply and catch a glimpse of wild waters curving powerfully over rocks, then I was over the falls into a watery world deep down that consisted of millions of shining bubbles streaming past me to the light above. There was no feeling in my body, but for a fraction of time my mind registered the beauty of the bubbles, then I followed them to the surface. The rope jerked round my waist, stopping me within a few feet of ferocious rapids, and at the same time I noticed Ralph throw a lasso, which I caught with my left hand. With the rope I swung round into calmer water behind a large boulder, but the anxious Sherpas pulled hard, dragging me back.
into the foam and under the waterfall, where it was impossible to breathe. One determined heave on the lasso, and I was able to clear my head from the water to shout, “Stop pulling, stop pulling!” The message was relayed across to them, and once again I swung round behind the boulder into the calm water. It was far too deep to reach the bottom, but, clinging to the rope, I was able to breathe in the life-giving air. Ralph and Tom grasped my rope, shouted “One, two, three!” and pulled me out and up the rock on to the smooth top, where for a few seconds I lay gasping like a landed fish. My right shin was bleeding profusely from a narrow gash, but otherwise I felt all right, only too frozen to feel the effects of the buffeting I had received, and I managed a smile. Every one was obviously as relieved as I was, for apparently from the bank it had appeared to be the last moment of one of the expedition members. Danu kindly loaned me his shirt, and I walked back to the camp for a hot drink, feeling vitally alive as my skin warmed up and began to tingle. The following morning I felt very stiff, my back was bruised, and both my legs were yellow and blue from the thigh to the ankle. Clearly if I had received one of the bangs on my head the story might have had a different ending. I had been extremely lucky.

Two days later we put a line across the river by a different method and crossed over it as originally intended, by placing our hands and feet over the rope and dragging ourselves along above the water. An extra safety line plus a sling and karabiner (snap link) safeguarded each person crossing.

On April 19 the Sangi Lama again visited the camp, and ate a large breakfast. Later he took Tom Stobart on one side and informed him that there was a second Meh-Teh scalp at the village of Kumjung; that he would make arrangements for the loan of it, and was willing to accompany it to London to ensure its safety for the Sherpas. A meeting of the villagers and the lamas was arranged for the next day, and Ralph Izzard as well as Tom Stobart went along to the meeting. The scalp was identical with the one at Pangboche, but though the lamas were agreeable to our having it on loan, the lay-men of the village objected strongly saying, “If you take the scalp it will be very bad luck, and we will
cut off the noses of the elders if they allow it.” The elders, not liking this idea at all, conformed to the popular wish.

The following day the Sangi Lama revisited us, looking a little crestfallen, for he was now looked upon by the inhabitants of Kumjung as we would look upon an incumbent trying to sell the church plate. However, he still had an interesting specimen for us to examine, a piece of skin covered with reddish-brown hair. There had once been an entire skin of an animal at Kumjung which had disappeared after a wild party. “I cut this piece off the skin before it was stolen,” he said, and then he gave it to the expedition. Ralph Izzard dispatched it by runner to Kathmandu, from where it was flown to London, but I haven’t heard anything of it since.

Stan Jeeves and I camped at Pangboche on the evening of April 24 after leaving Base Camp late in the morning. On the way we stayed at Thyangboche Gompa for half an hour, drinking butter-tea with the Sangi Lama and his spiritual son. He had heard that I would soon be leaving for Kangchenjunga and presented me with a white silk scarf (ka-ta), which he placed around my neck. This was gratifying, for it was intended both as a sign of friendship and as a good omen for the journey.

In the evening we were treated to a grand display of lightning during an electrical storm, and, while loud peals of thunder echoed from peak to peak, vivid flashes outlined Ama Dablam and Kantega against a dark sky. The storm did not last long, and in the morning we walked farther up the Imja Khola in brilliant sunshine. Almost six weeks had intervened between this and our last visit, and the fields were beginning to turn green with fresh young shoots of barley. *Primula denticulata* and *Primula sikimensis* were now in flower, as were the medium-sized bushes of yellow rhododendron; and the walk to Chukung yak village was exceedingly pleasant. The two of us were out for photographs—Stan with the ciné-camera for Tom Stobart, and I for the *Daily Mail*, who wanted a climber’s appreciation of Ama Dablam. Other members of the expedition were to meet us at Chukung in two days’ time. We both agreed that to photograph Ama Dablam only from the valley was of little use for an appreciation,
and the following morning we left the yak-hut with three Sherpas who were to carry our tent, food, and juniper wood to the Pokalde Col. This is a pass sometimes used by the yak men in summer for crossing over into the Khumbu valley. I doubt if yaks actually cross it, for it is much quicker and easier to traverse the grass slopes above Dingboche to reach Lobuje. Raymond Lambert crossed this pass in 1952, and in 1953 it was again crossed by several members of the Everest expedition. From it Tom Bourdillon, Wilfred Noyce, and Michael Ward ascended the peak named Pokalde (20,000 ft.), and we wished to do the same thing, killing two birds with one stone—that is, having a climb and still sticking to our main task. From the summit we would obtain excellent telephoto shots of the ice crest on the north ridge of Ama Dablam, and see the whole length of the western spur. It is a fine walk to the pass, taking you close to the great wall of Lhotse and Nuptse, and the spiky ridge which leads down from Pokalde to Dingboche reminded us of the Cuillins, in Skye—particularly Gillean and the Bhastier tooth. Below the pass we pitched our tent on a soft piece of ground close to a frozen stream, and the Sherpas returned to Chukung. Darkness soon descended upon us, the last few rays of sunlight tinting the rock and ice of Nuptse high above the tent. Quickly we lit the fire and sat talking for a little while about the events of the previous months. The juniper blazed merrily, sending showers of dancing sparks high into the air, and the frosty snow around us reflected the golden glow of the flames. It was a beautiful evening, still and frosty, but once the fire died down we became very cold, and sought the warmth of our sleeping-bags.

We left the tent just after 4 A.M. to watch the dawn, but the lights were cold grey and blue—a disappointment. After a quick drink of thick soup we made the ascent of Pokalde, which entailed the negotiation of much rotten rock and stretches of snow which were in poor condition. As a view-point the summit was extremely good, giving us a clear, uninterrupted view of Ama Dablam and the great barrier wall that separates the Imja Khola from the Hongu country. We could just pick out Lobuje, on the far side of the Khumbu Glacier, and take in at one glance the
whole of the Chola Khola peaks, then our glance swung round to Cho Oyu, Gyachungkang, and Pumori. Though we were at 20,000 ft., the massive wall of Lhotse and Nuptse seemed just as high as it had done from Chukung, and it gave us some idea how formidable and huge Everest must still have seemed to the mountaineers who reached the South Col. For many minutes we indulged in an orgy of photography, then descended quickly to the camp. Our Sherpas arrived early to carry down the gear, and after an hour or so of practising step-cutting on the snout of a glacier leading to Chukung Peak we returned to the Imja Khola.

Though already a day late, the rest of the Base Camp party had not arrived at Chukung, and as there was little time left for the search in the Hongu country we decided to go on our way the next morning. We left early, finding that the streams filled with melt-water were difficult to cross, but Phu Keepa, a newly engaged Sherpa from the American Makalu expedition, showed enterprise by constructing temporary wooden bridges. As we walked along the ablation valley on the true left of the Imja Glacier we enthused about the ice-draped and fluted walls of the Ama Dablam barrier, and discussed the wonderful freedom of the last four days. Looking back, we could see beyond Chukung, and our eyes were led upward by the rock spires of the Pokalde ridge, so that once again we could feel the joy of movement among its shattered rocks. The terrain varied greatly, and sometimes we jumped across the narrow stream, ascended steep and loose moraine, or wandered along paths strewn with boulders from past glacial action. Ahead of us Lhotse, Pethangtse, and other high, unnamed peaks formed a high wall to the glacier basin at the head of the Imja Khola, and we were almost rubbing our noses against the southern curve of the wall before we saw the turning to the foot of the Ambu Lapcha—the pass over the barrier which leads to the Hongu country.

We entered a rocky corrie, at first seeing no route for laden porters across the surrounding rock ramparts. To the east a wall of snow, ice, and jagged rock terminated in a furious-looking peak of 23,000 ft., and on the opposite side a steep rock wall was festooned with giant icicles that hung threateningly like the sword
of Damocles above us. The rim ahead held the key that opened the door to the Hongu—a long, raking gully above a bergschrund which led to the top of the pass at 19,500 ft. Our tents were pitched by the shore of a small tarn that was slowly being filled with the muddy water from a stream that descended the icicle-draped wall. Cirrus clouds high in the deep blue sky contrasted with a low grey cloud-scut filling up the basin of the Imja Khola, and a little later low, slanting sun-rays rose-tinted the snow of Pethangtse. Stan, I’m sure, would have liked to sit down to enjoy the beauty of the evening light, but instead conscientiously set up the ciné-camera and filmed the effect.

During the crossing of the Ambu Lapcha the next day we found the route covered with thick layers of snow, which made it an arduous task for those porters carrying loads of juniper-wood. We had eight such loads, because we suspected the New Zealand Himalayan expedition might be in the Hongu area, and new juniper would be a welcome addition to their stores of fuel. Much step-kicking in soft snow took us to a buttress of loose rock, over which we were able to ascend quickly until stopped by a deep groove or couloir which eventually plunged over a steep precipice. As if to pin-point the dangers of a slip, my balaclava toppled off my head, and before I could catch it, tumbled down the couloir, gradually becoming smaller and smaller as it fell the full 2000 ft. to the foot of the pass. Deep snow hid awkward juts of rock, and the icy footing underneath increased the difficulty of fixing a satisfactory hand-line across the gap. Once again I watched the porters anxiously, and felt alarm as one of them stopped nervously, then swung away from the rope. Nang Tsering pushed him rudely from behind with his ice-axe, and, grabbing his arm, placed his hand back on the rope—a bad moment was over. Two hundred feet of loose, scrabbly rock remained to be ascended, and within minutes we reached the shattered top of the pass, and then added our quota to the slender cairn.

Looking southward from the cairn, we could see into a broad valley surrounded by peaks and glaciers—a lonely place. In the centre of the shallow valley, still frozen and white, was the Hongu
To Khola A,

The heavy black line represents the lower summit ridges connecting the high peaks. The dot-and-dash broken line denotes the border between Tibet and Nepal.
Lake, one of the Panche Pokhari ("Five Lakes"), and after scrambling down the south side of the pass we walked across its surface to the east end, where we camped by the shore. On the way we passed a Hindu prayer bell attached to a long pole—a sign, this, that the Nepalese of Mera Kharka use the valley for grazing their cattle in the wet summer months. There was no sign of the New Zealand expedition, so we stored the dwarf juniper behind a low wall of rock in case we should see them the next day—the only day we could possibly have in the Hongu if we were to return to Lobuje, in the Khumbu valley, before I left for Kangchenjunga. On this one day we hoped to reach some high vantage-point from which we might see the New Zealand tents and photograph Chamlang and Ama Dablam and perhaps the two passes—Ama Dablam Col and the Mera La—which lead to the Mingbo valley. The obvious choice was an easy glacier peak with a little rocky summit on the far side of the Hongu Lake. Late in the afternoon clouds obscured the hills and it began to snow. Our Sherpas congregated in the large ten-man tent, singing cheerful Sherpa melodies, and I should think the desolate Hongu valley sounded as merry a place as it had done for many a day. The snow continued to fall thickly throughout the night, which was very cold, but shortly after dawn the sun shone, and the light reflected from the new snow changed our surroundings to a dazzling white frost-land.

Our Sherpas rested in camp, a few scouring the countryside for scrub with which to make a better fire. Stan and I crossed the frozen lake to the glacier peak and ascended the easy glacier to a ridge of shattered rock. The weather was once again changing for the worse, so we quickly ascended a pleasant ridge of snow, then a few hundred feet of easy scrambling took us to the summit at about 20,000 ft. Our choice of view-point had been good (later in the year Charles Evans used this summit as a survey point), enabling us to obtain the pictures we required. Of greater interest to me personally was that I had an excellent view of the Barun Saddle—the pass I would have to cross to reach the Barun Valley on my way to Kangchenjunga. This was the pass which the Makalu Sherpas had had to cross, and which was first explored by
Charles Evans, Eric Shipton, Edmund Hillary, and George Lowe in 1952. Apparently beyond the West Col which I could see lay a broad plateau glacier, at the far side of which I would find the eastern pass leading to the valley and the foot of Makalu. Seen face-on, the ascent to the saddle looked steep, and there was sufficient to be seen of the peaks beyond to make it appear an interesting crossing. Again there was no sign of the New Zealanders, though we had hoped to see their tents dotted on the plateau which stretches eastward from the Mera La towards Chamlang—a bulky peak, the highest in the area, and over 24,000 ft. in height. Chilly mists surrounded us as we prepared to leave the summit, but tantalizingly swept away again, to reveal the solid ranks of mountains to us once more. This temporary clearance lasted until we had glissaded down the glacier to a clear pool of melted ice where we assuaged our thirst. Then the snow began to fall in earnest, and we arrived back at the camp looking true ‘snowmen’ of the mountains.

Our time had run out, the short sojourn was ended, and the following morning we left early to return to Chukung. The crossing of the Ambu Lapcha was difficult once again because of the great mass of newly-fallen snow, and just below the top an awkward moment arose when Da Temba kicked down a large stone which landed on top of a Sherpani’s head. Fortunately, the thickly folded towel which Karmi Dormu habitually wore on top of her hair saved her from a severe wound, and us from an extremely difficult job of getting her safely down. A rueful smile, a rub of the head, then she picked up her load, and off she went. At the bergschrund every one glissaded down the last steep slope, and as the Sherpas collapsed in the snow with arms and legs flying their loads shot off in all directions, with pots and pans clattering noisily and swiftly towards the camping-ground. As each descended there were loud squeals of joy and delight from those irpressible people.

Tom Stobart and party had been at Chukung two days before, and had departed for the Pokalde col to cross over to Lobuje. The Sherpas who were to be my companions on the journey to Kangchenjunga were either with me or had assembled at
Chukung, and I decided to let them rest there and enjoy a life of ease until I returned from the Khumbu valley.

Mingma Gyaldzen received news that his youngest child was dying, Ang Nima that his wife had given birth to a son, and so both went down to Namche Bazaar.

From Chukung two of us walked across the grassy slopes above Dingboche, enjoying the amazing transformation in the country—now more brightly coloured, yet more serene than the hard blacks and whites of the snowy days of February and March. Near Lobuje we met Gerald Russell, who with tent and food intended to camp out alone for three nights in a grassy corrie several miles from Lobuje. His idea was to keep a good look-out from the tent in the hopes of seeing a Meh-Teh on the move. Apparently Gerald’s pendulum indicated that the animals were in that vicinity. This pendulum was used by him much as a water-diviner uses a rod, though its ‘extraordinary’ powers were even greater, for by merely placing the pendulum over a map it would swing and indicate the position of our quarry. At least, that was his idea. Once the pendulum stopped above the fantastic, impossible summit of Cholatse, and I felt like taking off my hat to the redoubtable Meh-Teh. Perhaps, I thought, there was after all some truth in the amusing story I once heard at a climbing-club dinner: Hillary and Tenzing were supposed to have met a Snowman of doubtful parentage on the top of Mt. Everest, and this explained the remark which Hillary is said to have made on the return to the South Col: “Well, we knocked the bastard off.”

Within an hour of our reaching Lobuje Ralph Izzard arrived. He had been searching the area near the Chakri La. Apparently there had been reason for excitement during the previous days, when Ralph had found indistinct footprints that might have been made by a bear, and certainly by some large animal. Tom Stobart, while sitting on a rock in the ablation valley of the Khumbu glacier, had noticed high above him a reddish boulder of peculiar shape. He turned away to look elsewhere, and on turning back was surprised to realize that the boulder had disappeared. The natural question was, had he seen a red bear or
had he seen a Meh-Teh? As nothing more was ever seen the question was never solved.

We learned that Dr Edgar, Charles Lagus, and Tom Stobart had taken tents and porters to the Everest Base Camp of 1953, where they intended to spend some of their time filming. We were asked to join them for a token climb on the lower part of the Everest ice-fall the next day.

Dr Biswas was camped in the Mingbo valley, still collecting animal specimens, while Charles Stoner had remained near Base Camp collecting flower specimens and making anthropological notes on the life of the Sherpa people. Only three days remained to me in the Sola Khumbu, and I didn’t see them again.

On May 5, six of us left the Everest Base Camp and walked along icy lanes through a fairyland of ice pinnacles to the foot of the great ice-fall. A number of Sherpas went with us carrying food and ciné equipment, but it was Phu Dorjé and Pasang Phutar II who proudly led the way. It is true that Pasang sang, and it was a song of pure joy at treading once again the route he and Dorjé had used so often the previous year. It was their day, really— theirs and Tom Stobart’s—for almost a year before they had been members of the team that eventually climbed the mountain.

I had looked at so many photographs of the ice-fall, and either read or heard so many descriptions of it, that it was almost like meeting an old, familiar friend. The yawning crevasses, the tumbled blocks, and menacing seracs were what I expected to see— there was nothing more and nothing less— so that, although it was obviously formidable and extremely dangerous, I felt happily at ease during our few hours of gently wandering in and out of the maze. Ralph Izzard, Phu Dorjé, and Charles Lagus were on my rope, and unfortunately our progress was punctuated with frequent stops for taking ciné films of the other party. I knew I was fortunate to be there at all, and my good companions quite obviously enjoyed this day of standing on the threshold of Everest, but I longed for just a few hours of free movement without the many halts. More than anything else I would have liked the other reserves who stood by in 1953 to have shared the day on the ice-fall with me.
On returning we found a few Swiss containers that had obviously been brought down by the ice from the Swiss Camp II during the many intervening months. Ralph found a Swiss marker flag, but apart from these two signs no one could tell that human beings had been there at all. Only the Base Camp was littered with tins and cast-away batteries from walkie-talkie apparatus. The ice caves that had proved so useful in 1953 were now some fifteen to twenty feet above the glacier surface, so that we needed to cut a staircase of ice before we could enter. We ate our first meal in the ice cave, feeling comfortably sheltered from the glacier wind outside. Our comfort was short-lived once the Sherpas brought a fire, which quickly smoked us out, eyes smarting and cheeks streaming with tears.

The next day the Sherpas packed the equipment and every one prepared to walk back down to Lobuje. Two days previously Tom, Doc, Ralph, and Charles had been to the site of Parek's Camp I on Pumori, and were enthusiastic about the view obtained. Stanley Jeeves and I broke off from the main party and ascended to the same site, which is perhaps 19,500 to 20,000 ft. Eric Shipton, Michael Ward, and Earl Riddiford took the first and possibly the finest photographs of Everest from this side. There is no doubt about its excellence as a view-point, now possibly one of the most famous in the world.

The North Col, the long ridge, and the rock steps high up on the old northern route to the summit were plainly visible, and from the Khumbu side it was easy to follow the way through the ice-fall to the Western Cwm, Lhotse Face, South Col, and South Summit to the top. For one brief hour we sat back content to look at the magnificent scene, talking quietly now and again of the mountain's history.

Yes, there was the North Col, the camp-site for many fine attempts along the ridge. "Those are the two great steps," I said, "quite clear to see." In actual fact the weather rapidly worsened during our short sixty minutes, and as the mist swept across the great west shoulder, hiding the steps from our view, we could imagine the feelings of Odell thirty years earlier as he looked up and saw for the last time Mallory and Irving moving along the
crest of the north-east ridge. The names of great mountaineers who had moved up the slopes from that same North Col were legion; their deeds were so clearly imprinted upon my mind that it was difficult to tear my eyes away to the southern route. There our thoughts dwelt upon the mountaineering reconnaissance that sought out the first way, and then upon the mountaineers who followed to force the first route up to the South Col. "Somewhere up there Raymond Lambert slept out for a night with Tenzing," Stan said, and pointed vaguely to the great peak above. Finally there was that great team led by a remarkable man which had eventually tried and won to the top, and which in the end generously conceded a greater share of the glory to those who went before. For that one glorious hour Everest—or Chomolungma—revealed herself intimately to us; then at the last she hid all from our view with slowly moving veils of grey mist that draped down from her high, remote ridges.

We descended the lower slopes of Pumori, and then walked along the ablation valley to Lobuje. I didn't see Everest again until over three weeks later, when I reached the top of the Mergin La on my way to Kangchenjunga. Though looking distant, tiny and remote, I remembered once again the intimacy of that hour on Pumori, and in my mind could picture every indelible detail of the great mountain.

At Lobuje I found Mingma Gyaldzen waiting for me. His child had died, yet he appeared amazingly cheerful, and was looking forward to our departure for Chukung. The dak runner arrived from Katmandu, and I spent the whole of the day scribbling letters to my wife, friends, and the school, then on May 8, after saying farewell to Ralph at Lobuje, I walked down to Tola with Charles, Gerald, Tom, Stan, and the Doc.
Journey to Kangchenjunga

Often and often it came back again
To mind, the day I passed the horizon ridge
to a new country.

Edward Thomas, Over the Hills

Above Tola I shook hands with and said farewell to the members of the expedition. Da Temba put the white scarf from Sangi Lama round my neck, and placed a cup of rakshi in my hand. Sherpas and Sherpanis gathered round, giving me their blessing for the road. It was so spontaneous and honest I was sorry to be leaving these fine people.

Nim Tenzing, Phu Keepa, Norbu, and Mingma left with me. At Dingboche we were given chang to drink, and we took a supply for those waiting to join us at Chukung. Twenty-five Nepali rupees bought us a sheep for the pot—the greatest problem being the killing of it. Buddhists should not kill, the more devout ones not even eating food that has been killed. In this case the Sherpas solved the problem of killing by drawing names from a hat. Little 'Henry' was the unfortunate slayer. Apparently the problem of eating did not exist. With Danu staying behind, I was one short in my bandobast, but was relieved of the trouble at Chukung. I recruited Karmi, sister of Nim Tenzing, a strong, good-looking Sherpani who from then on carried my heavy kit-bag all the way to Kangchenjunga and Darjeeling. Her presence was a great influence on the good spirits of the Sherpas throughout the journey. A few local yak-herders joined us in a dance that night. Later sleep came slowly as I tossed and turned, thinking of the days to come. On what might be a long and difficult journey I was
"The Five Treasures of the Great Snow"

The Kangchenjunga massif, as seen from Rungneet, Darjeeling.
The Author and his Brother meeting, at Tseram, in the Yalung Valley

Four Mountaineers

Left to right, Victor Russenberger, Lucien George, John A. Jackson, David Bryson.
responsible to some extent for eleven people. None knew the
country beyond Makalu, and I hadn’t a map. Nevertheless, it was
the type of mountain travel that fascinates, and I was sure it would
be full of interest.

Ang Dawa, who was now my sirdar, gave out the loads in the
morning. For several reasons the start was delayed—an important
one being the chasing and removal of three fat fleas from my vest.
Ang Dawa and Ang Dami said good-bye to Ang Temba, and I
gave him a liberal bucksheesh for his faithful work in the Khumbu.
It was a hot day, and a slow march was brightened by the ruby
of a newly opened azalea and the delicate lavender of *Primula
denticulata*. Yaks were calving by the banks of the Imja Khola—
May 9, 17,000 ft. Once again we camped by the lake at the foot
of the Ambu Lapcha. My pyramid tent was occupied by four—
Ang Nima, Nim Tenzing, Ang Temba II (Nima’s cousin), and
myself. It was a crush and the air none too sweet, but by the end
of the trek I became immune to it. Straight away in the morning
Ang Nima established his routine—for having his simple un-
spoiled Khumbu cousin was a godsend. Nang Tsering always
brought me tea, and this day I had to burrow in my sleeping-bag
to chuckle when Ang Temba brought the same for Ang Nima,
who took it with a very lordly air. Something new and amusing
was often turning up when Ang Nima was around.

Starting early, we crossed the moraine to the foot of the Ambu
wall. Avalanches had swept the steep gullies and the pass from top
to bottom, leaving hard snow-ice to contend with. Difficulties
were honest and straightforward. With the long file of Sherpas
behind me, I cut steps across the bergschrund and up the steep
gully to the rock. With tricounis in my boots it was sound—but
it was with heart in mouth I shepherded those in yak-soled boots
over the tricky portions. A cold wind swept down the gully.
Crisp slivers of snow and ice tinkled round us from all sides. The
warm sun and hard work brought trickles of sweat on every face.
All were jolly and joking, and for some reason a carefree spirit of
freedom was abroad. Again, at the steep couloir I had to fix the
rope for a hand-rail, aided by Ang Dawa and Ang Nima. Here
the snow still lay deep, dangerous, ready to slide. A few soft blocks
did slide away from my feet and axe, but, adopting snow-plough methods, I pushed and kicked huge masses down, laying bare the hardened surface beneath. It was the only safe method for the party—that, and cutting bucket steps. Once across, Ang Nima saw the rest secure before they followed. Ang Dawa, the last man, looped in the rope as he came. No stones were kicked loose this time, and a cheerful party crossed the pass. It felt fine to have such good company.

In the afternoon the sky clouded, and we had snow—the pattern of the weather for most of the journey. Phu Keepa soon found the stored juniper and built a huge fire. As there was no sign of the New Zealand expedition, I decided no difficult peaks were going to be attempted on this side. However, we still left a little wood before leaving in the morning, and I placed a book with a note on top of a large stone. If I remember rightly, it was a thriller called *The Case of the Abominable Snowman*.

Several dreary hours were spent boulder-hopping that day before we placed our tents among the large rocks near the foot of the Barun West Col. From the camp we had good views of Chamlang, and also of Ama Dablam, over in the Imja Khola. I was sorry to be leaving, though looking forward to the new experiences to come. The next day I would cross the saddle, out of Sola Khumbu, away from Sherpa-land. A freezing wind rustled ice particles across the glacier ice, and drove fine powder-snow through cracks in the tent. In the large tent a roarer Primus stove heated the food efficiently, and we all sat close together for warmth, laughing, talking, and eating large amounts of *tsampa* with chillie water, but I jibbed at butter-tea with salt, and had mine with sugar. Prior to sleeping we sang a few Sherpa melodies, and a clear evening inspired me to talk to the Sherpas of Dawa (the moon), Nima (the sun), and Karmi (the stars).

There were many clouds in the morning—too many, though at first we had welcome periods of sunshine. A south-west wind whistled softly among the rocks as we ate breakfast. Soon away we plodded slowly over the glacier, crossed an incipient bergschrund, and began the scramble over loose rock to the top of the West Col—maybe 20,000 ft. Loose snow was blowing in a cold
wind, but between lulls I was able to take a few snaps of Makalu and the Barun Plateau. Wonderful country: this, I felt, is what it must have been like had we been able to go to the Bank Plateau, in Garhwal—high-level mountain country isolated from the rest of the world, and good peaks for the climbing. I had a great desire to stay for three or four days and climb. This could easily have been done, but it was only too obvious I must keep moving to Kangchenjunga if I were going to climb there at all.

Strung out on the rope, we wore a great furrow across the glacier. Crevasses were extremely difficult, if not impossible, to detect, owing to a wind ripple and crusted surface that gave not the slightest clue of a bridge or a crack. Of 140 Sherpas who had crossed two weeks before we saw no sign—not even a shadow of a track. North-west of the East Col is a peak of 21,300 ft., first climbed by Edmund Hillary, George Lowe, and Charles Evans. There was no time for the climb, but I compromised by ascending to an icy promontory at approximately 21,000 ft., where I was quickly surrounded by cloud and robbed of a view. If the height of the peak is correct, then I put the col at 20,500 ft. It was corniced, and the view down set me back a pace, as at first sight it looked fantastically difficult for heavily laden porters. A rope or ropes would be indispensable. Phu Keepa and several of the Darjeeling Sherpas helped me fix a hand-rail of over 300 ft. for the first horizontal traverse, over snow-covered and icy rocks. By this time there was a strong wind, and a fierce snow blow. Feet soon became numb, and two of Phu Keepa’s fingers changed to an ominous putty colour with slight frostbite. A good descending snow traverse followed the tricky rock section, and a jump across a deep bergschrund found us trudging over the glacier to the lateral moraine. It is quickly told, but the fixing of ropes and the slow progress due to difficulty, cold, and poor visibility meant two and a half hours of real struggle. This was followed by two hours of boulder-hopping which took us to a number of caves, where we camped for the night. Kerosene was very low, so that a normal meal, with a drink of tea, was impossible. A lukewarm communal soup was all we had.

Makalu looked imposing, and on its south-east col we could
just see a small group of tents. There was also a small orange tent on the moraine-covered Makalu Glacier. At the end of my diary for the day I wrote the following: "Makalu a lovely mountain. More rocky than I thought. Today the Sherpas carried superbly, in very trying conditions and for a long time—13½ hours. All carried between 60 and 80 lb. Phu Keepa extra good."

No kerosene, no breakfast, was the simple truth. A small party left especially early to seek wood in the ablation valley of the main glacier. We who remained descended the true left of the glacier stream at a steady pace, until it was soon obvious the tent on the glacier was a new-type ‘Hillary.’ It would hardly belong to the American Makalu expedition, and I was feeling delighted that the New Zealand Makalu expedition members would be in the valley. Soon we saw three or four figures moving outside the tent and crossing over the lateral moraine. Ang Nima and I met Sir Edmund Hillary and Brian Wilkins with two Sherpas. This was their Camp I, and they were preparing to leave for a higher camp, where there would be Charles Evans and George Lowe, along with Bill Bevan and Norman Hardie—two Kiwis I had met at the Outward Bound School in Eskdale the previous year. It seemed there was going to be temptation to linger all the way to Kangchenjunga. This fortunate chance meeting resulted in my obtaining a map of the area, stretching between Makalu and the Yalung Valley, for, hearing of my lack, Ed Hillary immediately gave me his. It was like giving sight to a blind man, and contributed immensely to the enjoyment and success of the journey. I had last seen Ed with George Lowe in Robert Lawrie’s the day before I sailed. He looked much the same now—a little browner, perhaps, with a thriving beard, and just as cheerful. Certainly he didn’t appear to have any illness, and both he and Brian Wilkins were loaded with 35–40 lb. packs. However, Ed Hillary had been resting for many days, having had several ribs cracked by compression of the rope when being lowered into a crevasse.

At the end of April Brian Wilkins and Jim McFarlane had gone down a crevasse on one of the glaciers to the north. By great efforts and good icedmanship Wilkins had struggled and cut his way out, after leaving Jim McFarlane comfortably placed. The
only chance of saving McFarlane's life was for him to warn the others. This he did. Hillary and a number of Sherpas had immediately gone to the rescue with food and clothing. There was an overhanging lip to the crevasse over which Hillary was lowered; unfortunately, he was left dangling for some time ten feet or so above the floor, because the Sherpas would not approach too near the lip. The rope cracked his ribs, and when he was pulled up it was only a great effort on his part that got him over the overhang. Food, clothing, and sleeping-bags were lowered to the injured McFarlane, who was rescued the following morning. A trying time followed, and great efforts were made by members of the expedition to carry McFarlane down. But that is not my story. I mention the above because later at Chepua I had to go to great pains to correct false rumours that indicated things were far worse than they really were. Also on arrival at Darjeeling, some twenty-three days later, I was amazed to read that Hillary was reported seriously ill with pneumonia. Immediately I wired the Daily Mail that when I last saw Hillary he was fit and well, and certainly hadn't pneumonia, though it turned out he did become ill (but not with pneumonia) two days after I had left the New Zealand Base Camp.

Leaving the two with best wishes for good climbing on Makalu II, Ang Nima and I walked down the valley to the Barun river. Here we found the Base Camp of the Californian Makalu expedition. I was made welcome by two of its members—Dick Houston and Fritz Lippman. Not having eaten for some time, I'm afraid I made rather a hog of myself, gorging all they gave me. Their food was good, and meeting expeditions, as we had done in Garhwal, gave me great pleasure. We talked all afternoon and until eight in the evening of mountains, and mountain-men, and later of teaching, for we were all three schoolmasters.

My Sherpas had pitched camp by the New Zealand tents ten minutes farther down the Barun, and I arrived there long after dark. An enormous avalanche wakened us in the morning, and I dashed out to take photographs, meeting Doc 'Mike' Ball in the midst of doing the same thing. He and Jim McFarlane made me very welcome, and were such good company that I cherished the
memory of my day with them all the way to Kangchenjunga. ‘Mike’ Ball was looking after Jim McFarlane, who was immensely cheerful, though suffering greatly from frostbite in hands and feet. I stayed until the following day in the hopes of being some use, and of providing a change of conversation. I often wonder if I talked too much, for Jim, who hadn’t been sleeping well, slept soundly for ten solid hours that night—but there, at least I must have done some good.

McFarlane and Wilkins had met the same conditions as I had on the Barun Plateau, and the crevasses were not detectable by sight. I could understand the difficult time they must have had, being only two, for we had been a large party, and therefore safer.

Phu Keepa and Tsangi were supplied with ropes and ice-axes and sent back to Sola Khumbu, as I had previously arranged. Letters, films, details of the crossing, any yeti news, and the news of my meeting with the two expeditions went with them. They made the reverse crossing safely, following our tracks, and posted on the various items to Ralph Izzard. Unfortunately for the Daily Mail, a photograph I had taken of Hillary at Camp I was held up at Katmandu owing to heavy storms; thus a useful picture at the time when fears were being expressed about his health arrived eight days late, but in time to be of some use, nevertheless. The paper also pressed the point that Jim McFarlane was cheerful, and rapidly improving; this was true, and I was pleased they printed it. They thoughtfully published news of every one on our expedition at regular intervals throughout. At this camp I met Nimo Tenzing again—our young Garhwal Sherpa. Garhwal had been his first expedition, but he was now well seasoned, having been on Manaslu with the Japanese, and on other expeditions in Nepal. Now he was helping the Americans to place camps along the south-east ridge of Makalu. He was just as happy: the same wide grin, and presumably the same prodigious carrying capacity.

On the next day I left the Barun Camp and proceeded on my way down the valley. Yak tracks were fairly numerous, so in summer, presumably, the pastures are well grazed. Crossing
shingle flats, and meandering through lovely rhododendron forests, we eventually arrived at a small bamboo *sangar*, or hut, where we stayed the night. Ang Tarkey and Da Tenzing, sirdars to the two Makalu expeditions, arrived before dusk. From them I was able to glean information about the various possible routes. According to Da Tenzing, the route to Hatia that Charles Evans and he had used in 1952 was not practicable with such a large party, and at the time of year. I took a 'local' man on to our strength who professed a knowledge of the area. At the time he was driving sheep for Da Tenzing, and certainly looked a jungly type who might be useful. Eventually he was.

During the next day we followed a steep and stony path which led us to a small rock shelter on the path to Sedua. This was Dopathi. Small ground primula grew in bonny clusters around the base of small boulders, and the yellow-flowered rhododendron were already beginning to turn a drab russet colour. For an hour Ang Dawa and the rest interested themselves with the pictures in my book—Holmes' *Principles of Physical Geology*. The usual snow-flurry obscured our surroundings in the afternoon.

Dawn at Dopathi was cold and cheerless. A soft blanket of snow covered the rhododendrons, and damp-looking clouds scudded over the pass to Sedua. Not many days before two dak runners from the New Zealand expedition had spent a night holed up at this pass, frightened by some prowling animal—*yeti*, they had surmised. Certainly it was an area suitable for a shy animal—an area of dense bush, caves, and many a hideout under large boulders. We saw and heard nothing. For the first hour we moved slowly. The Sherpas stopped frequently for cigarettes, and for the first time I had to speak sharply to them. Throughout the rest of the day they were examples of perfection. And it was a day of many incidents—a trying day.

Our pass lay east of Dopathi, and at the top I took many compass bearings. It was well I did. Soon we were in thick mist as we crossed several snow flats to gain the ridge—the local man at a complete loss. The compass became our only guide for many hours. At midday the sky was dark and threatening, and somewhere snow cock scared off noisily, the sound contrasting strongly
with the snow-buffered silence. Here there was a difference in height, and in fauna, but it was similar to the Brontë moors in winter, I thought—it was like the snow-covered, wind-swept moors, with the call of a solitary grouse. Rocks and stone-strewn ground took the place of snow flats, and occasionally we found a rough path, probably used by sheep-men in the summer. Great walls of rock forced us into steep, snow-filled gullies which required great care, and much use of the axe. Though spaced out at only ten-foot intervals, my companions seemed but dim shadows, dancing and gesticulating on a grey wall of mist, and the next instant all were gone, leaving just the sound of Sherpa voices as they called cheerfully to one another through the gloom. It was here the storm broke. Hailstones the size of peas sizzled down and around us, filling the steps cut laboriously in the snow. Mauve lightning flashed eerily, and was followed immediately by great cracks of thunder. It wasn’t enjoyable, just cold and tiring work, as—wet, frozen and struggling with heavy packs—we covered some 150 ft. in an hour. As quickly as it came the storm swept away along the mountain ridge, to be heard rumbling and grumbling among the higher peaks to the north-west. Snow turned to sleet, then to rain, as we descended to the tree-line, and suddenly we broke cloud to see a green forest-covered ridge, with here and there a brown track showing. Ang Dawa gave me some shakum to chew. This is dried yak meat. Fibrous and salty, it promotes saliva and assuages hunger—a useful emergency food to have in mountains, and not unlike the South African biltong. Dried food is not uncommon in Sherpa country, and dehydrated potatoes must have been in use there long before they became popular in the West. Dried yak cheese, hard as quartz, is also a popular food for travellers.

However, on the ridge we found a derelict bamboo sangar, probably made years before by sheep-herders, and, though wet, the bamboo burned well enough for a brew of tea, which we ate mixed with tsampas. Thus cheered we pressed on in pouring rain for another two hours. We began to pick up leeches on our boots—thin, mean-looking leeches, bloodless.

I decided to camp after a hard eleven hours, and we chose a
small ridge clearing on which stood another dilapidated hut. No sooner was it chosen and tents put up than half the hut was burned to the ground by over-zealous Sherpas. At least it must have removed a good number of leeches, which were all too numerous. Bamboo burns readily, with a fierce white heat, and soon our clothes were steaming. We all had chocolate, a hot cup of cocoa, and a cigarette. Before dusk the heavy rain stopped falling, and the subtle odour of wet earth mingled with the smell of the hot meal, which all of us soon consumed.

A bright moon lit to silver the cloud-layers formed below us, and a calm and stillness, all the more penetrating after the violence of the stormy day, pervaded the Himalaya. In the east, peaks of the Kangchenjunga massif were darkly outlined—the first sight of our destination. Smoking a pipe, I walked a little way along the ridge, supremely satisfied with the beauty and the silence of the evening, and feeling the satisfaction of a day’s travel well done and well ended.

As often happens in mountain country after a storm, the day following was sunny, clear, and fresh. Green-clad slopes appeared new-washed, each type of vegetation with its own slight difference of colouring standing our clearly. Male and female minivets flashed golden and scarlet in the sun as they hovered over the pink and purple rhododendron. Rain-washed, the grass around us appeared juicy and well-fed—no wonder the cattle- and sheep-herders feel the arduous journey to the ridge well worth while. Our path for the day was not visible beyond the ten yards to the edge of the clearing, but one knew the confluence of the Barun and Arun rivers lay to the east-north-east—a great blue cleft beyond a roll of green-blue hills.

Strung out, we made quick time for many miles through thickly forested ridge country. Occasional lush clearings with their large clumps of yellow primula and ranunculus reminded me of English meadows—an illusion often quickly dispersed by the clinging of a leech and the clatter of a monal pheasant. Ang Dawa and the rest were quite excited, realizing that on this day they would reach the village of Mankim. A small rock spring was sufficient excuse to stop; ablutions began, and a most remarkable
transformation of clothing brought about. Ang Nima produced the shortest of short blue shorts, a yellow shirt, white socks, and a useful white cotton cap. Others endeavoured to emulate this amazing example. Only the Sahib remained unchanged—breeks torn, shirt hanging out, windproof ripped, and balaclava awry. My show would have to wait until Darjeeling (or so I thought, but even there Ang Nima confounded me by wearing smartly tailored clothes complete with jockey cap, and carrying a tightly rolled umbrella!)

At midday the local man made amends for past failings. So far he had had every conceivable dirty job dumped on him, and undoubtedly carried some fifteen pounds more than anyone else. Sherpas can have little feeling for those not Sherpas, and he who is born a Darjeeling Sherpa need not be born again—quite obviously the local Nepali was considered lucky to have been born at all. The ridge had narrowed, and dense clumps of bush closed the path on either side. Suddenly he disappeared to the left, and as we followed, pushing away the undergrowth, all realized this was his finest hour. Only he could have known the turn. There followed an hour of acrobatics as we pushed, grunted, struggled, and kicked our way down through the very densest of bamboo. The slope was exceedingly steep. Occasional crags, almost vertical, were made easy even with heavy loads, for bamboo hand-holds stuck our everywhere—a fall would merely have stopped some feet lower in a tangle of this abundant jungle plant. Soon we could see the village—the first village since leaving Chukung nine days earlier. It seemed but a mile or so away, yet our progress was such that we arrived some three hours later.

Mankim, squalid and filthy, was perched on a westerly spur above the river Arun, and, as was to be expected, bamboo was used in the construction of most things—huts, baskets, mats, fencing, even hats are made of this useful material. Unfortunately, it is not the cleanest substance, for bugs and fleas seem attracted by its hiding potential, and dust clings to its fibrous sides. At the most imposing hut we were greeted by a very jungly native who wore the largest of bamboo hats and the smallest possible G-string. His children swarmed everywhere—two of the older ones tending
mats on which they were drying barley prior to making tsampa. Unlike Father, they wore clothes, a thick blue material edged with red, in a style not unlike that of a lascar seaman. Small necklaces of Indian four- and eight-anna pieces, were worn by the boys and girls, who also smiled charmingly and showed a simple friendliness. I was the first white man they had ever seen. Ang Nima’s broad grin was self-explanatory—chang could be had—all was well with the world. Tsampa or barley chang, it was; a particularly revolting sample, with the appearance and consistency of porridge. Aloe or potatoes were cooked—well cooked, as we were low enough for boiling—and not steaming. Some twenty pounds were flung into a heap by the squatting Sherpas and Sherpanis—Ang Darmi and Karmi of the flashing smile no less greedy than the rest. Drinking a huge pot of tea, I was content to rest and smoke—satisfied that by cutting Sedhua, we had saved at least one and a half to two days.

Chang was drunk, and soon Ang Nima’s seraphic smile implied his now complete lack of interest in the outside world—in carrying a load, or in ever reaching Kangchenjunga. One could see he would have sung with fervour the old chant:

I have no pain, dear Mother, now,
But oh, I am so dry;
Connect me to a brewery,
And leave me there to die.

For two hours we fed and drank; bought eggs and tsampa, wild spinach and onions, and then departed. A traversing descent of 2000 ft. took us along a narrow path and round a spur for two miles, where we found a suitable camping-spot 1500 ft. above the river, and quite near the village of Sibrung. Unknown to me, Nima, Mingma, and ‘Little Henry’ had stayed behind drinking more chang, and they arrived very merry when all the work was done. Our height here was around 7000 ft.—very much lower than the 13,000 ft. and above we had been used to for many months. The heat was oppressive. All of us lay on top of the sleeping-bags, but few slept, and at 3.30 a.m., without breakfast, we continued the march to Chepua.

The headwaters of the river Arun rise at a height of 22,000 ft.,
where they are known as the Naktang Chu. At first the flow is from east to west, but eventually the river passes through a stupendous gorge between the Everest and Kangchenjunga massifs, the rocks of which were at one time continuous. As it passes through the rugged country of north-east Nepal the river presents a great difficulty to the traveller; that of crossing over its raging, foaming surface. Bamboo solves the problem, and within two hours of leaving camp we were carefully negotiating a bamboo bridge with a span of 250 ft. At each end it was approximately 50 ft. high, but it sagged to 15 ft. or so in the centre. The main bamboo ropes were very thick, and between them was an interlacing of thinner rope that gave it the appearance of the geodetic construction of a Wellington bomber. Thin strips of bamboo matting were placed along the bottom for the traveller to walk upon, and though the whole contraption swayed alarmingly it was obviously strong enough to carry several people at a time. Even so the Sherpas took great care that no more than two crossed at any one time, and the second Sherpa only stepped on to the bridge when he saw the first man was over half-way across.

This was a very hot day, for we had reached the lowest part of the whole journey to Kangchenjunga—6000 ft.—and from the river made a long ascending traverse, a steady grind which took us to the straggling village of Namoche. We camped 1500 ft. above the village at a height of 10,500 ft., near the pine woods that grow thickly up to the ridge almost two thousand feet above. There are no yak in the Arun valley, but sheep-herders were camped near by, and through the night they lit fires and beat drums to keep black bear away, just as they do in the Sind Valley of Kashmir. I gave Ang Dawa and Mingma Gyaldzen thirty rupees to buy a sheep, and very quickly they returned with a fine ram. This time there was no drawing out of the hat, and the animal was quickly dispatched by Dorje, who severed its head from its shoulders with one swift blow of his kukri. Ang Nima used a bowl to collect the blood, which later they mixed with tsampa and made into puddings; then he quickly removed the skin and wool from the dead animal, and within half an hour some of the tenderer portions were being eaten.
Our next day’s journey took us over the well-wooded ridge and down a steep path to the river once again, where we crossed by a rickety bamboo bridge. The people here were Bhotias, a group rather more punctilious than many Himalayan folk, and this being so several of the women surprised me by being very casual about their clothing, many of them wearing little above their waists. Once across the river we ascended steeply to the large village of Chepua, and there I was surprised to find an Indian Army check-post which was keeping watch on the movement of people across the Nepal-Tibet border. Charles Evans had passed through Chepua on his way to Taplejung in 1952, but at that time the check-post was not in existence, and I was the first European they had had to deal with. Far from being suspicious or difficult they met me with a great show of pleasure and Mr G. P. Singh, the Indian officer in charge of the camp, quickly supplied me with rum and fried eggs. I can only assume I must have looked a very weary specimen in need of immediate resuscitation. They were very kind, and gave me much news from India, but I was horrified when they told me that Sir Edmund Hillary was suffering severely from frostbite and broken legs, and was not expected to live. After much persuasive talk, I finally succeeded in convincing them that this was not so, and that he was in fact walking about in the mountains on his own sound feet. Members of the American expedition were credited with having caught an Abominable Snowman, which they were keeping in a cage until they were ready to leave for home. But for the fact that it was only seven days since I had left the Americans I might have thought I was mixed up with this strangely twisted tale, having a sturdy growth of beard and rather wild appearance—my hair hadn’t been cut for over five months. I was invited to stay the night at the check-post, but, wishing to reach Kangchenjunga as soon as possible, I continued for a few miles and camped at a chorten outside the village of Chyamtang.

There it rained very hard, the tents were not waterproof, and we spent an uncomfortable night avoiding the drips and removing several cadaverous-looking leeches, probably attracted by our very strong body-smell. We packed our equipment as quickly as
possible in the early-morning light, and at Chyamtang purchased a quantity of *tsampa* which had to be ground while we waited. The people here were degenerate Buddhists and the *chortens* and *gompa* were in a very dilapidated condition. Prayer wheels sagged sideways from broken spindles; there was no paint or colour wash on the *gompa* walls, neither was there a door at the entrance. The people too were dressed in ragged clothing, and their houses, though built with stone, had bamboo roofs that rarely seemed to fit snugly into position. I was an object of great interest, and those who had seen the only other white man to pass this way—Charles Evans—were obviously explaining the phenomenon to their friends.

Somehow I had to cross over the Lumbasumba Himal to the Tamur river and reach Walungchung if I was to arrive at the Yalung Glacier, below the south-west face of Kangchenjunga, before June. There was a route from Chyamtang leading eastward along the Bagang Khola to the village of Thudam, where, turning south, the traveller crosses the Thoga Bhanjyang (pass) to Topke Gola. From Topke there is a long detour to the south before reaching the Tamur Valley and ascending to Walung—unless a way can be made across the mountains. This is feasible enough, but not practicable when in a hurry. From Thudam I was told of another route leading towards the Umbhak La, from which pass it is possible to cross the Lumbasumba Himal and arrive at the headwaters of the Tamur river. This was the route I decided to take; but shortly after leaving Chyamtang it rained heavily, and while we sheltered two strangely dressed Tibetans talked with us. They were brothers, and their names were Ang Tsering and Ang Pinzo. They lived at Goyem, on the way to the Rakha La, they told us, and they condemned the Thudam route, saying it was not a quick way in bad weather. The alternative, they said, was to cross the Rakha La and descend to the Naktang Chu, in Tibet, where we would find conditions sunnier and drier, and though the distance would be greater we would in fact save time. Quite apart from the saving of time, the temptations of the route were great, as it entailed crossing the pass and travelling along the upper reaches of the Naktang Chu before finally cross-
ing the Umbhak Himal by the Tipta La to reach the Tamur Valley, and so I changed my plan. It was also a great temptation to stay the night with our new-found friends at their home in Goyem, for rarely before have I been so attracted to strangers, or amused by them so easily. In the way they winked, joked, pulled each other’s leg, and every one else’s they were like a couple of cheery Cockney barrow-boys; and their features, too, were strangely Western in type. Both wore yak-hide boots and clothing of a grey material that was nipped in at the waist by a sash. Ang Pinzo wore a felt hat with feathers sticking from the rim but Ang Tsering’s headgear was a grey balaclava from the folds of which protruded several dry and brown rhododendron leaves. As we walked along he occasionally removed a leaf, rolled it round, and smoked it with obvious pleasure. In the middle of the afternoon, after a drenching walk up the Wakong Khola, we arrived at our destination.

Having expected to see a busy hill village at Goyem, we were taken aback to find just one large wooden structure. It was the home of our hill-billies. Soaking wet and muddy, we were made welcome by the women of the house—straight-backed, dignified, handsome women, who wore their clothes with an air, and without any of the fleshy freedom of those in the Arun Valley. The home had inside a similar layout to those of the Sherpas, with perhaps larger rooms but fewer windows. It was certainly cleaner. An outside veranda was stacked with bales and baskets of Nepali paper—the paper probably made at Sedua. But I was more surprised to see baskets of fire bricks—neat, square blocks of pressed yak dung and straw, which, along with the paper, would be taken across the Rakha La to Tibet for trade. As a calling-point for Tibetan and Nepali traders this house must do well, one sign of this being the beautiful silver bangles and necklaces of turquoise, amber, and jade worn by the women. These women and the two Sherpanis took a great interest in each other, seemed to like what they saw, and soon became friends, for they had much in common though living far apart.

During the night we had a violent storm and our warm sleeping-bags were enjoyed the more because of it. Our leaving
was delayed until 7 a.m., because Ang Dawa, Mingma, and Nima had drunk a little too much chang. It was infuriating, but their remarks and antics amused the rest; nevertheless, I made sure they never drank to that extent again. Everywhere was damp and sluiced with water, and the sun shone feebly for perhaps an hour, the leaves dripping water and glistening in the yellow light. A few specimens of the giant Himalayan blue poppy drooped a little dejectedly, yet still possessed the quality and beauty of plants growing in high places. The hairy green leaves had caught tiny drops of water that now sparkled—splitting light to many colours as does a diamond. These 'poppies,' *Meconopsis grandis,* are long-stemmed, and, as with *Meconopsis regia,* the stems are cut, the skin peeled from them, and the stalk then eaten. In appearance the stalk resembles rhubarb, but these almost tasteless watery stems are quite refreshing, and have a slight astringent effect.

Soon we were in mist, and the temperature dropped. Slushy sleet, cold and wetting, clung to our clothes, sliding icily down our necks. This went on for many hours. Time went by, and still we climbed up and up, past lichen-draped and dripping trees, over barren slopes of slimy moss and snow-mush. The map indicated a spot named Jalong, and soon we could hear the snort of yak, and the occasional tinkle of a yak bell. But Jalong was only the name of a watering-place. Here a Tibetan yak-man was living a lonely and harsh existence. Perhaps in a few days' time he would cross the Rakha La with his yaks, and descend into the drier, more hospitable Tibet. It would depend on grass-supply. He would have no qualms about the dreariness and extreme hardship of his environment, these being merely a part of the continual struggle for existence. This was the only life he would know, as had his parents before him, and their parents also: love of life would be strong, and reactions to hardship natural.

We drank his yak milk, and paid him well. Nothing could be seen of Jalong within a minute of departure, then as the mist swirled and lifted a little one caught a glimpse of the whitened and sagging roof of the yak-herder's tent. A drift of blue smoke, another swirl of the mist, and all was gone. Another hour and a fierce, cold wind was blowing snow horizontally at us—powdery
A Chorten, or Prayer-shrine, and the Great ‘Basin’ of Kantega and Thamserku

A Himalayan Village awakens

Early morning at Walungchung Ghola, in the Tamur Valley.
Changtse and the Lho La

In the foreground are the towering ice pinnacles near the 1953 Everest Base Camp. Note the tiny figure at the foot of the prominent pinnacle.
snow, that formed a covering some half an inch thick on our chests. Rock gendarmes, looming large in the mist, appeared above us as slowly we climbed to the pass—then I saw the flutter of flags, and knew this was the Rakha La. The mani prayers and the yak-dung in the snow told us that here was the trade route between the Tibetans and the people of the Arun Valley. With Mingma and Nim Tenzing, I smoked a cigarette crouched and sheltering in the lee of a large boulder. They too seemed indifferent to the cold and fierceness of the day. Bodies steamed, cigarettes were enjoyed, and they knew some time a fire would burn. Clothes would dry, food fill the belly, a laugh ring the air, sleep and warmth would end the day—this was their philosophy.

One hour down from the pass we were below cloud. No rain fell. The sun shone. The transformation was almost unbelievable as one looked along smooth, grass-covered valleys, and the eye leapt from top to top of rolling green hills. “Tibet side,” shouted Nima, and his face seemed one huge smile.

We walked over carpets of primula, anemone, and poppy. Dense clumps of pink and yellow rhododendrons lined a stony yak path down by the river. It was the upper reaches of the Arun, here in Tibet named the Naktang Chu. A mile from the village of Kudo a river terrace, ablaze with the red of azalea, became our resting-place for the night. Thus ended fittingly a harsh ten-hour trek.

Sleeping time was short. At 3 A.M. we were once again on our way, for I had the idea of reaching the Tamur Valley and descending to Walung Chung in a day—a hopeless task, as I soon found out. For an hour all trudged sleepily along in the dark, resting frequently. The shallow waters of the Naktang Chu rippled and gurgled over the stones of the river flats, and a welcome sun first lit the snows of the high Umbhak Himal, then enhanced and brightened the lovely pastel colouring of the Tibetan landscape.

I kept within a group of my Sherpas as we passed Kudo, now awakening—the blue spirals of smoke indicating that life was on the move again. A few herders whistled at the yaks, and women were carrying gourds of water from the river for their daily requirements. My ragged clothing and dark skin might disguise
me, but I felt my rather long and flowing beard would soon give me away if I were stopped and questioned. I wore running-pumps all day. A handsome Tibetan woman hailed us from the door of a yak tent, and the Sherpas deserted me for the joys of *tsampa*, and hot yak milk on empty stomachs. Hunger overcame timidity, and I followed. Sheepskin blankets covered the floor of the tent, and two almost naked children played happily among the array of butter-tea tubs, chang bottles, water gourds, and a pile of dried yak dung. A very tiny baby clung eagerly to the mother, who was still breast-feeding it as she continued with her chores. My presence seemed scarcely noticed—either the Sherpas had fixed the matter, or I was thought to be a follower of this élitist company. Fortunately, my camera was loaded with colour film though I was a little loath to produce it, in case it attracted too much attention. But I had a great desire to record the colouring of the valley, and the setting of the yak tents.

Rocky peaks of from 18,000 to 19,000 ft. rimmed the valley on its south-west, and opposite them the soft-coloured hill slopes and the flat-roofed village of Kudo bore a striking likeness to Ladakh in autumn. A pair of ibis-bills flew swiftly down the river—the lovely fluting call seemed to belong here, and I wondered if it was along the Naktang Chu that Biswas or some other ornithologist would find the marshy breeding-grounds of that shy bird.

Trekking beyond Kudo, we met yak-men and their animals throughout the day—along the Naktang Chu and the side valley up which we turned a mile or two from the village of Tashir-haka. The track was broad and good leading over the Tipta La and out into Nepal. It is the most important trade route between the two countries across the Umbkah Himal, and all day long large herds of yak and nak (female yak) plodded up or down the valley carrying loads of salt, cigarettes, paper, kerosene, borax, felt hats, and grain, to and from Walung Chung Gola, in the Tamur Valley. Dorjé became sick, and the strong Ang Dawa complained of muscle pains. Nim Tenzing had slight blood-poisoning in his left arm, owing to a nasty leech-bite sustained at our Chepua camp. Aureomycin was all I could give him on the walk, but later I bathed it, for at half-past three in the afternoon
I decided to camp, twelve and a half hours after leaving the terrace of azaleas. All were tired, and Ang Nima's muscles "too hard," he said.

Now, almost at the crossing of the watershed, we were leaving the drier Tibet behind, and the rain poured down in torrents as we put up the tents just in time. High winds rattled the canvas all night, and as the temperature dropped driving snow filtered in through every tiny crack. We wakened to find a cold white world; and, wasting no time, crossed the pass. The weather worsened rather than improved, sleet changing to soaking rain as I left the party and descended quickly to the Tamur river. Two Tibetan mastiffs set upon me, and for once were not discouraged by liberal application of the ice-axe. The sortie was won eventually by throwing stones—hard. Of the wet and dreary trudge to Walung I will say no more. I had difficulty in locating the Indian Post, but once it was found we were made welcome by Mr Kashmiri Singh, who provided tea, rum, cigarettes, eggs, and conversation. I was rather shaken by my inquiries as to the earliness of the monsoon, for Singh, probably in good faith, made haste to reassure me that it wasn't early—the weather was always like this at Walung, and even over by Kangchenjunga. At Walung I was introduced to marwa—an intoxicating drink much superior to chang or rakshi. Fermented grain is placed in closed wooden jars, and through a hole in the lid a hollow bamboo stick is fitted. Hot water is then poured on the grain, and the liquid sucked through the bamboo. It tastes rather like hot cider. We all had a jar at the house of the village headman, and as Ang Nima glanced coyly at Karmi I solemnly contemplated the consequences of "sipping cider through a straw."

Walung is a large trading village, its populace wealthy. Few carry out manual tasks, and as a result they are quite a reserved and haughty group of people. All are Buddhists, and large sums of money must have been spent on the upkeep of the large gompa and the many gaily coloured prayer wheels. Streets are partly cobbled, and on either side stand large wooden buildings for storing grain and other goods. The Municipal Cleansing Department can be seen busy at all times—herds of small but long-
snouted pigs that grunt and guzzle in the evil-smelling runnels leading from each house latrine. All houses possess such a drop latrine on the inside; a brush and a pile of shavings are kept handy. All buildings are built of wood, and the roofs made of wooden slats, and each displaying a bunch of prayer flags. Windows are ornate, and the interiors again rather similar to those in Sherpa country. Much brass and copperware from Tibet is used for kitchen utensils, and old but beautiful thankas drape the walls. By contrast the Western hurricane lamp now coming into use looks ugly and incongruous.

Before leaving the next morning we bought eggs and grain, and I had the assurance of the friendly Kashmiri Singh that he would help any expedition that might go to Kangchenjunga in the future. This was good, as I learned that the people of Ghunza, who had partly supplied the reconnaissance, bought their grain at Walung anyway—and, as it turned out, charged much more for it.

Two days later we arrived at Ghunza. The two days’ march had been wet and misty, and I was feeling downcast at the thought of an early monsoon. Occasional views had given glimpses of high rock peaks of fine shape, but there was no time to linger, though possibilities had seemed attractive. Rations were reduced to a minimum, but we enjoyed the plentiful supply of wild strawberries and rhubarb; and flavoured our hot soup with onion plants, that grew in profusion. Ghunza village is very Swiss in appearance, and its monastery and monastery buildings are built on the true right bank of the Ghunza Khola. On the opposite bank some thirty or so large wooden structures house the families and the animals of the Ghunza populace. Bhotias—“people of Tibet”—like the Sherpas, speak a Tibetan dialect, cultivate barley, drink butter-tea, tend yaks, and burn dung. It would have been interesting to learn more of the people, but their news gave me other things to think about. Two of the Kangchenjunga Recce had returned to Darjeeling two days before—the doctor and one other, who was injured. Ang Dawa’s quietness implied reluctance to talk of bad tidings. Uneasily I thought of my brother Ron, and tried to put from my mind that he might be
badly hurt. There was no use in pushing on; I couldn't catch them anyway. The final piece of news was that the remaining members of the Reconnaissance were leaving on the morning of the 28th. It was then the evening of the 26th—only thirty-two hours to go. Disappointed at the turn of events, I wrote in my diary: "Hope Ron and I can be together in the Himalaya. This rotten weather must be the reason for their leaving early. Looks as if I'll miss Kangchenjunga, and I'd hoped for a week at least."

I arranged with Mingma Gyaldzen that he look after the bandobast while Ang Dawa and I left early with light loads to reach Tseram and locate the Base Camp. The journey normally took two days, so it was going to be a push. By the worst possible piece of luck, the coolie-contractor at Ghunza volunteered to join us, and at the same time show us a different but quicker route to the Yalung Glacier. I have no doubt such a route exists, but he had forgotten it. The pace was quick as we ascended the Yamatari Khola to the Yamatari Glacier, and turned north-east up a steep rise to a stony glacier. Heavy clouds sank down and around us, and sleet obscured all but the nearest ground. Our friend was completely lost. I felt we must try to the limit as we ascended a steep glacier, cutting steps for most of the way. Seracs surrounded us. The ice became steeper. The contractor's yak-soled boots were giving trouble—a danger to us all. Up and up we went, but suddenly immediately to our left ice was falling—the roar of it all the more threatening because nothing could be seen. Our surroundings merged into one greyish-white void. With heavy heart I decided to turn back—it wasn't fair of me to expect them to go with me any higher to try to find the ridge, though Ang Dawa firmly announced, "Where the Sahib goes, I go."

The dreary return through dense and dripping rhododendron and along swollen stream-beds is best forgotten. We arrived at Ghunza wet through thirteen and a half hours after our departure, and no nearer the Yalung Base Camp. Almost three hours later we again left the village and walked through the night—a drenching, stormy night spent squelching and skidding on the

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1 The pass is the Lapsong La (17,500 ft.). This I crossed in 1955, when I returned to Kangchenjunga.
track by the light of one dismal hurricane lamp. Though wet and cold, we dozed for forty minutes at four o'clock—we had been on our feet over twenty-four hours. As often happens, the mountains gave us their reward, for the dawn was sufficient compensation for any disappointments. A sea of cloud, a roof to the world, stretched from Jannu across the ranges of hills over which we had travelled during the past twenty days. Now I was gazing back at Makalu and Everest, Cho Oyu and Gyachung Kang. Quite small, very white, they had had the weather too.

Wearily we crossed the Mergin La and looked down into the valley of the Yalung. Here at last we sat down, and faithful Ang Dawa produced at this fitting moment a small bottle of chang, which we drank contentedly. Ang Dawa, I knew, was extremely proud and happy, for this was the first time the journey from Everest had been made across the Barun through North-east Nepal and Tibet to Kangchenjunga; he, as sirdar of the eleven, had most reason to be proud.

Kangchenjunga, Talung, Kabru, Rohtang, Koktang—all the peaks of this tremendous area were before us. Each face of flutings, each ridge, each rock, stood out sharp and clear. Two thousand feet of descent remained. I gave the cuckoo call, and received no answer. My happiness changed to sadness, for my brother was not there. At Tseram I could see a line of Meade tents, and soon I was shaking hands with John Kempe, Gilmour Lewis, and Jack Tucker. There was a loud cuckoo call, and to my intense joy there was Ron running out of the woods above, where he had gone to meet me. My journey to Kangchenjunga was at an end.
Fortunately, the four members of the Kangchenjunga Reconnaissance that remained had delayed their departure by one day, or otherwise I would probably have had to push off at full speed after them. It was a relief not to have to do so, because Ang Dawa and I had already been on our feet for twenty-nine hours. Instead of further vigorous activity I was able to masquerade as Father Christmas for the day, and bring forth from a voluminous kit-bag a variety of tasty foods. My new-found companions had been living on small quantities of soup and tsampa during the previous three days, and for several weeks had been desperately short of meat. This was not because of any fault in organization, but that they had had the misfortune to have several loads lost or stolen on the march out from Darjeeling. With a certain amount of showmanship I produced my pièce de résistance—a two-pound tin of ox-tongue. Throughout the previous weeks I had resisted all temptings to open the tin, even when on short rations. Instead I had consoled myself with visions of six bearded men in the Yalung Valley eventually cutting neat slices off the meat, and consuming it with the green garden peas I had also packed with the food. In actual fact there was little delicacy about the proceedings that followed the disclosure of the tongue, for quite literally the tin was torn asunder, its contents crudely carved into four chunks, and wolfed down savagely without peas, potatoes, or anything to keep it company. A large tin of Cumberland cake was demolished at alarming speed in the same manner, and as a small tin of lobster was opened I saw my folly, and I hastily stored the remaining food away for another day.

Several hours earlier at the Mergin La I had been ready to put
my head down anywhere and sleep, but the excitement of meeting up with John, Jack, Gil, and Ron drove all thoughts of sleep from my mind, and for most of the day we exchanged information about our respective expeditions. To be meeting Ron was a great thrill, for it was a culminating point in twenty years of climbing together in the British Isles, and also in Switzerland—and now we were together in the Himalaya. I had been greatly interested in the reconnaissance from the beginning, and listened eagerly to all they had to tell me, so that gradually as the story unfolded itself I could see that in a short space of time they had achieved much. On the south-west face of Kangchenjunga there had not been a clear-cut problem of ascertaining the certainty of a way through one ice-fall—a task quite formidable in itself—but they had to explore and try out four or five possibilities of making a way upon the mountain.

John Kempe, leader of the reconnaissance, had the previous year climbed the north shoulder of Kabru and from it looked across to the south-west face of Kangchenjunga. He had seen that at a height of approximately 23,000 ft. there was a wide glacier shelf that sloped back towards the mountain rock wall for over a mile. From the shelf the ascent to 27,000 ft. did not appear too difficult, and gave promise of a route to the summit ridge. The fact that there did seem the possibility of opening up a way on this side of the mountain is important, because permission to climb on the Sikkim face is now impossible to obtain. Gilmour Lewis, who was John Kempe’s companion, examined the lower slopes of the mountain from the Yalung Glacier, and felt that from 18,000 ft. up to the shelf there were three possible routes.

John Kempe had originally invited me to join him on the reconnaissance of the south-west face of Kangchenjunga he hoped to organize in 1954, but with great regret I had to decline, as I was still working most evenings of the week to defray the expenses of the expedition to Garhwal in 1952. At the time there seemed little hope of seeing the Himalaya again for many years, and then to my great delight the invitation from the Daily Mail made it

1 The recent Kangchenjunga expedition ascended to within five feet of the summit by the south-west face from Nepal.
possible, for they generously paid all expenses. I did know of two other mountaineers, Jack Tucker and my brother Ron, who were hoping that some day they might climb in the Himalaya, and who were keen enough to work to pay most of their own costs to go. I had sent their names along to John, and as a result of that I had now met them again in the valley of the Yalung.

Avalanches had been seen or heard throughout the expedition at intervals of approximately ten minutes, and because of this remarkable activity they told me of many a superb spectacle of great masses of ice falling thousands of feet from the huge mountain walls above. First they had explored the way to the Talung Cwm via the Talung ice-fall, for from the Cwm there was a possibility of reaching a snow ridge which led on to the ice shelf at 23,000 ft. Trevor Braham and my brother had almost reached the Cwm on the first venture, and later all members of the expedition made determined efforts to enter it, but each time were prevented from doing so by a great crevasse some fifteen feet wide. Later, almost at the end of the expedition, Trevor Braham and Ron had once again explored this possible route, and succeeded in entering the Cwm. Unfortunately, at the very moment of success they had been smitten by a fall of stones which lacerated Braham’s head, and demoralized “Balu,” their Sherpa companion. In 1921 Raeburn and Crawford described the ice-fall as “vicious in the extreme,” and I could well imagine the disappointment of Ron and his two companions when, after a successful ascent, they had to cut short further exploration and return to Base in very trying conditions.

Other possibilities or routes on the mountain had been examined at different times, but the Talung ice-fall and the exploration of a steep glacier they named the Main Ice-fall had taken up most of their time.

This last-named route consisted of two steep ice-falls connected by a long, practically horizontal section. On May 13, only two weeks prior to my arrival, the reconnaissance had divided into two sections in order to examine as much of the main ice-fall as was possible in the time available. John Kempe, Trevor Braham, and Jack Tucker, thinking the better route might be up the true
right side of the ice-fall, made a determined effort to ascend to
the horizontal section on the 14th. They found the way intricate
and difficult, so by midday returned to Base Camp. The other
two, Ron Jackson and Gil Lewis, intended ascending the true left
side of the glacier for some way, then at a suitable point hoped to
gain the top of a rock rib which bounded the ice-fall. For nine
hours they worked their way through the tumbled, frozen mass—
by-passing threatening seracs, jumping yawning crevasses, and
ascending steep ice-ribs—then at last made their way on to the
rock rib, and ascended to the top by three o’clock in the after-
noon. The climb had been a fine piece of team-work. The two
climbers had a long day, and did not arrive back in camp until
darkness was descending upon the valley.

This route, though practicable, was not felt to be suitable for
porters because of the unstable conditions of the ice-fall, and the
next day all the members of the expedition had attempted to find
a route on to the rock rib at a lower point. Little time was wasted
in trying to do this, as it was soon realized that such a route was
extremely dangerous. The party split up as on the previous day,
and while the string of three climbers re-examined the Talung ice-
fall route and the crevasse, Ron and Gil had explored the exposed
cliffs to the east of the ice-fall to see if there was a possible way on
to the rock rib from that side. Over difficult rock they had
succeeded in reaching the top again early in the afternoon, and
during their descent they were elated to find a simple and un-
suspected way, which consisted mainly of scree slopes and steep
rock over which it was possible to walk.

The entire expedition then established camp on the rock rib
level with the top of the lower ice-fall at a height estimated at
21,000 ft.1 While at this camp the party received disturbing news
that the doctor of the expedition had been severely shaken by
avalanche blast, and because of this and various other reasons they
returned to advanced Base Camp.

After the final and successful attempt to reach the Talung Cwm
the party again broke camp and descended farther down the
valley to the original Base Camp. Trevor Braham and Don

1 This is now known to have been 19,000 ft.
Mathews, the doctor, were the two people who had returned to Darjeeling. It was they whom I had heard of at Ghunza the two days before.

A few days earlier, probably the day I left Walung chung Ghola the remaining four had made an attempt at Talung Peak, a mountain from which they were able to make a final survey of the routes explored on Kangchenjunga. At a height of approximately 23,000 ft., and some 500 ft. short of the summit, they had had to return owing to the danger of wind-slab avalanche.

Finally they told me that at one of their camps Gil Lewis and several Sherpas had heard strange cries during the night, which had been attributed to the yeti, and the following day there had been a deputation of Sherpas requesting that the camp be moved to safer surroundings. All these things I learned while sitting round the camp-fire at Tseram, and during the subsequent days while trekking out to Darjeeling along the Singalila Ridge. It was a happy march back, with Ron and I sharing a tent and talking about our experiences until late into the nights. At Nyathang we met with the occasional leech, and were surprised to discover that a water buffalo had been killed by a tiger only the previous day quite near to our camp-site. On arrival we had met a voluble hill-man, followed by a sturdy hill-girl, who had blood streaming from leech-bites on her feet. Both of them were carrying huge chunks of buffalo meat to numerous tiger traps near by, and Jack Tucker convulsed us all with laughter as he pretended to dig a trench beneath his tent in which to sleep.

Nyathang was our last camp, and in the morning before we left we had a remarkable view across a great silvery sea of cloud that stretched far away into the distance above Sikkim and Bhutan. A long line of mountains, seeming very remote, was just discernible, so that then perhaps more than at any other time I thrilled at the vastness of the Himalaya. During five visits of varying length during the previous ten years I knew I had seen a fair share of this great 1500-mile stretch of mountains, yet I realized I had merely scratched the surface. Was I looking at the Himalaya for my last time? I did not know, but I felt immeasurably grateful
that since the day I had looked at Nanga Parbat from the CHER-
gand ridge my desire to see and to know some of the mountains
and the people had been generously fulfilled.

We arrived in Darjeeling on June 5, and because of the kind-
ness of Mr and Mrs Henderson were allowed to stay at the
Rungneet tea estate. The estate commands a magnificent view of
Kangchenjunga—the “Five Treasures of the Great Snow”—and
despite the monsoon clouds massing huge between us and the
mountain we occasionally caught a glimpse of the glistening white
giant, with its five pointed summits thrusting boldly up and high
towards the Central Asian sun.¹

¹ Soon after completing this record of Himalayan memories I was to learn the
answer to the question I asked myself on the Singalila Ridge at Nyathang.
Early in 1955, as one of the members of the Kangchenjunga Expedition, I did
return to the eternal snows, and as one of a team helped to seek out and reach
the highest of the “Five Treasures” of Kangchenjunga. The first ascent of the
mountain was made on May 25, the expedition stopping five feet short of the
summit, in deference to the wishes of the Sikkimese (to whom the mountain
is sacred).
Glossary

*Ablation valley*: A small grassy valley between the side-moraine of a glacier and the actual mountain. Often a good grazing area for yak or sheep.

*Aloe*: Potatoes.

*Along*: Large round earring.

*Amgra*: Pouch or pocket.

*Atta*: Wheat flour.

*Bandobast*: An agreement with porters about wages or conditions; a caravan, or preparations for one.

*Baraf*: Snow (Hindustani).

*Bergschrund*: A crevasse which separates the upper slopes of a glacier from steep ice or rock above.

*Bhotia*: Man of Tibet.

*Chang (1)*: Beer brewed from rice or tsampa.

*Chang (2)*: North.

*Chapattie*: Unleavened bread made in the form of a pancake.

*Chorten*: Buddhist prayer-shrine.

*Chuba*: A woollen smock or gown worn by Tibetan people.

*Chu-Teh*: A name said to be used in Tibet for a strange hairy animal which possesses a tail.

*Col*: Pass.

*Cornice*: Overhanging mass of snow or ice on a mountain ridge.

*Couloir*: Steep and narrow gully in a mountain-side.

*Crampons*: Metal frames with spikes which fit on the soles of the boots.

  Used when climbing steep ice or snow.

*Cratpa*: Boots soled with yak-leather, worn in Ladakh.

*Crevasse*: Fissure in a glacier.

*Dak*: Mail; letters.

*Dawa*: The moon.

*Dorjé*: Buddhist bronze thunderbolt—one of the insignia carried by the lamas.
"Dzu-Teh: Probably the Himalayan red bear.
Gendarme: Rock pinnacle or tower along a ridge.
Glissade: To slide down a snow slope—a skiing action.
Gompa: Buddhist monastery.
Gyaling: Small silver trumpets.
Kang: Snow (Tibetan).
Ka-Ta: White scarf or sash made of silk.
Karabiner: Metal spring-loaded clip which can be fixed to a rope or a piton.
Karmi: The stars.
Kau: Brass box for carrying Buddhist prayers.
La: A pass.
Lho: South.
Lung-Ta: Small bunches of prayer-flags attached to a bamboo shoot.
Marwa: Alcoholic drink made from millet-seeds.
Massif: Group of mountains.
Meh-Teh: The Sherpa name for the animal commonly known to Europeans as the Abominable Snowman.
Mehto Kangmi, Mi-Go, Mirka: Names used for the Abominable Snowman.
Névé: Snow areas usually above the permanent snow-line or the head of a glacier.
Nga-Chung: Drum made of the skin from the scalp of a human being.
Nima: The sun.
Nup: West.
Piton: Metal spike with a ring in the head which can be driven into rock or ice.
Rakshi: Distilled rice spirit.
Sar: A tarn, or small lake.
Scree: Slope of loose stones.
Seracs: Large blocks or towers of ice.
Shar: East.
Shindje: Buddhist Lord of the Dead who overlooks the Round of Existence.
Talus: Steep slope of small stones.
Thanka or T’hanka: A painted or embroidered scroll.
Threng-Wa: Prayer-beads.
Torcho: A long pole with prayer-flags attached. May be as high as forty feet.
Tril-Bu: Ceremonial bell."
**Tromba**: Similar to a girdle-cake or muffin.

**Tsampa**: Roasted and ground barley.

**Yeti**: A name commonly used for the Abominable Snowman. Possibly a name that refers to the Dzu-Teh as well as to the Meh-Teh.
Appendix

I. Insects Collected

The list of insects is not as large as I would have liked it to have been, but the collecting of specimens was very spasmodic, being done mainly on occasional rest days. Sometimes odd specimens were caught or picked up during the various journeys. I did not collect them all myself, but many specimens were caught by the Sherpa Da Temba, and some by Stanley Jeeves. We collected fungi as well as insects, and though they were difficult to keep, several specimens of pleurotus and puff-balls were brought back to England. The highest-growing specimen of fungi was a puff-ball I found near the Changu Glacier at about 18,000 ft.

Butterflies and other insects are among the many attractions of Himalayan fauna. Hitherto I have never attempted to collect anything other than a few high-growing plants, but during the Snowman expedition I found the added interest of insect-collecting well worth while, and I have decided always in future to carry a collecting-box. More than anything else it would be satisfying to photograph the butterflies, birds, and flowers in full colour, but then there just isn’t time to delve fully into the many attractions and interests that are a part of a mountaineer’s day in the Himalaya (or anywhere).

The following were identified for me by Allan Brindle, of Nelson, to whom I acknowledge my thanks here.

**Butterflies**

*Papilionidae* (Swallowtails)

1. The Common Rose butterfly (*Tros aristolochiae aristolochiae*). A black-and-red Swallowtail, generally common throughout India. Thami, 12,000 ft. (3 specimens.)
2. The Common Windmill butterfly (*Tros philoxenus philoxenus* Gray). Another black-and-red Swallowtail, ranging from Kashmir to Nepal. Thami, 12,000 ft. (1 specimen.)

3. The Banded Apollo butterfly (*Apollo delphius* Evers.) One of the Apollo butterflies, which are only found in high altitudes. This specimen seems to be uncommon. Tola, 15,000 ft., March 6, 1954. (1 specimen.)

*Pieridae* (White butterflies)


5. The Large White butterfly (*Pieris brassicae* L.). The same species as our own English Large White. Found along the Himalaya. Kumjung, 12,000 ft., March 21, 1954. (1 specimen.) Ghat, March 1954. (2 specimens.)


8. The Clouded Yellow (*Colias croceus* But.). Closely similar to the English Clouded Yellow. Ghat, March. (3 specimens.)

*Nymphalidae* (Brown butterflies)


10. *Neptis hylas astola* M. A black-and-white butterfly having the same style of flight as our White Admiral—gliding along with wings outspread. Ghat, March. (1 specimen.)

11. The Blue Pansy (*Precis orithya swinhoei*). A pretty blue butterfly generally common in India. Namche, May 28, 1954. (1 specimen.)

12. The Brown Pansy (*Precis iphita iphita* Cr.). A dull brown butterfly, the dullest of this genus. Namche, May 28, 1954. (2 specimens.)

13. The Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui* L.). The same species as the English one. Occurs along the Himalaya. Ghat, March. (2 specimens.) Dudh Kosi, 16,000 ft. (1 specimen.)

men.) One flew past David Bryson and I at 20,000 ft. on Avalanche Peak, in Garhwal, in 1952.


16. The Queen of Spain (*Argynnis lathonia L.*). This fritillary is a rare species in England. Occurs along the Himalaya. Ghat, March 29, 1954. (2 specimens.)


*Lycaenidae* (Blue butterflies)


**Dragonflies**

20. *Pantala flavescens F.* A widespread species, but uncommon at such altitudes. Changu La, 19,000 ft., March 30, 1954. (1 specimen.)

**Bees**

21. *Apis dorsata*. The Giant Honey-bee. Closely related to our Hive Bee, this makes huge double-sided combs hanging free, fastened to the underside of rocks, trees, or even from buildings. Kumjung, March 21, 1954. (1 specimen.)

**II. Photography**

Ever since 1944 I have been taking photographs in the Himalaya, using a variety of cameras and types of film. All but two of the illustrations contained in the book are my own, 70 per cent. of them being enlargements made from 35 mm. negatives. In this case they are not necessarily my best for technical quality, but are the most suitable for illustrating the text of the book.

Monochrome negatives are not to be scorned, and though the Himalayan traveller is in ideal surroundings for taking colour photographs I would never be without two cameras, one for black-and-white and the other for colour.
Neither type of photography is difficult providing the photographer adheres to certain rules, and ensures that in the field exposed films are kept properly to avoid the effects of heat and humidity. The following are a few brief notes that may be of use to persons about to visit the high mountains for the first time.

1. *Keeping the Film*

Always I have kept my films in one or two medium-sized biscuit-tins which could be sealed tightly with adhesive tape. Inside the tin the films are packed in a polythene bag which is kept thoroughly dry, and contains a small amount of silica gel.

I keep to certain rules with the film itself, never taking an exposed film out in the early morning because of the condensation that tends to cover the camera and the metal spool, or cassette.

(a) Wait until the camera is warmed up.
(b) Take out the film and place it in the spool tin, which has been thoroughly dried in the sun or near a fire. In the case of Kodachrome I then place the spool tin inside the cloth bag and the cardboard carton, both of which have been made very dry. This precaution is useful just in case any moisture should get into the polythene bag, for the carton and the cloth as well as the silica gel will tend to absorb any moisture. Once sure the film, the cassette, and the spool tin are dry, I always seal up with tape. This, I feel, is a further precaution against moisture getting at the film, and though we are usually advised to leave the spool tin unsealed, I have always had good results. Because of the dry atmosphere at high altitudes it is easy to ensure the film itself is dry. Once a biscuit-tin is filled, seal it and don’t open again until ready to send the colour to be developed or to develop the black-and-white yourself.

2. *Cameras and Accessories*

The camera will always be a matter of personal choice, and to some extent determined by the size of one’s bank balance, but if possible I would always aim at buying a camera with interchangeable lenses. A telephoto is always useful when mountain views are distant, or when wishing to obtain close-up photographs of a particular ridge or face. The wide-angled lens is extremely useful when the photographer is among a high mountain group and wishes to photograph as much of a mountain as possible when at close range. Nothing would be more annoying than having to step back a pace to bring a summit into view
and then to see it rapidly disappear as you made the acquaintance of the inside of a crevasse!

Other essentials to be carried are:

\((a)\) A lens-hood.

\((b)\) A small camel-hair brush for cleaning away dust and dirt.

\((c)\) A reliable light-meter.

\((d)\) A light tripod (though I have never used one myself, and find an ice-axe to be a convenient and steady rest when required).

\((e)\) Filters. An ultra-violet or haze filter is essential—either Kodak Wratten IA or the clear Actina Filter. Either of these can be used for monochrome as well as colour film. When the sun is high, and detail of a mountain face or of snow structure is lacking, I have found it best to use a yellow or an orange filter with monochrome. The most pleasing results are obtained in the morning or late afternoon, when shadows have brought out the detail.

3. Film

Colour. With my 35 mm. camera I use Kodachrome, and I have always been well satisfied, as a result of which I wouldn’t like to change to any other. If anything, I think Kodachrome gives the photographs a little more scope when the contrast is fairly high, and also gives a fairly true colour rendering if exposed correctly. No doubt all colour films are good, and the most essential thing to do is to become conversant with one kind.

Don’t forget it is possible to make good negatives from colour transparencies.

Monochrome. Any make of medium speed fine-grain film is probably the best. For snow and rock or any bright subject I find it best to under-expose slightly and develop a little more fully in D.K. 20 to obtain fine-grain enlarging negatives. Because of this it is important to be able to develop your own films, or to know of some one who will give them individual attention. It would be good to develop a few films in the field; only once have I been able to do this, but it was a useful check.

4. Notes

Colour (i) It is cheaper to take two or three shots of a particularly pleasing scene than to have copies made.

(ii) For portrait shots vary the angle, and remember that natives have a darker skin, which when greasy reflects light. With mono-
chrome this doesn't matter so much, but with colour and because of the contrast it gives displeasing results.

(iii) When there is much cloud the results often look a little overexposed in mountains, but decreasing exposure gives an even worse result.

(iv) For indoor flash photography, huts, monasteries, etc., daylight film with blue flash bulbs is highly satisfactory and less trouble.

(v) For my own preference I never expose slower than a 1/40th and faster than 1/100th. I also never stop down below F9; and remember that miniature cameras have a good depth of focus.

(vi) There is a high contrast with cross-lighting, and results are not good except on very rare occasions.

My Camera

It is better to have any sort of camera than none at all, and nearly all the Kashmir and Ladakh photographs in the first part of the book were taken in 1944–45 on H.P. 3 film, using a battered Kodak Hawk-eye box camera that had been partly burnt in a fire in a Blenheim. As luck would have it the lens was a good one, and with a careful choosing of subjects I found it possible to obtain pleasing results. I didn’t possess filters, and on occasion brought up the clouds and a graduation of tones by using my orange snow-goggles.

Now I use a Finetta 99 35 mm. camera for colour photographs and a Finetta IV D for any 35 mm. monochrome negatives. A reflex camera taking 2½ by 2½ negatives is better still if very good and big enlargements are required. I use a Rolleicord for this purpose.