THE STRAND MAGAZINE

Contents for June, 1935

Frontispiece: "I won't be cross-questioned," said Polly. "When you stay out I don't ask who you went with, and where you went, and what you did."

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LOOK FOR THE REGISTERED TAB. NONE GENUINE WITHOUT
HIMALAYAN ADVENTURE

By

F. S. SMYTHE

The huge rampart of mountains that separates the hot and fertile plain of India from the cold and sterile plateau of Tibet and Central Asia has long exercised the imagination of explorers and mountaineers. The Himalaya, or Himachal, the "Abode of Snow," is 1,500 miles long, and no other mountain range can compare with it in diversity of climate, beauty, and grandeur. And something more thrilling than physical perfection invests this amazing country of flower-filled valleys, icy peaks, and savage, wind-blasted wastes, something that time and mankind and

On the Zoji-La Pass, the Pass of the Birch Trees. The International Himalayan Expedition at the beginning of its adventure.
mysticism alone can give. The march and mess of our rushing western civilization means nothing to a sage who can write: "As the dew is dried up by the morning sun, so are the sins of man by the sight of Himachal. In a thousand ages of the Gods I could not tell thee of the glories of Himachal."

Mount Everest, Kangchenjunga, and Nanga Parbat are familiar names, but fewer have heard of the Karakoram range which lies to the north-west of the main Himalayan chain and extends for some 375 miles between India and the plateau of Central Asia. It is an intricate labyrinth of mountains, glaciers, and valleys from which rise some of the highest peaks in the world, greatest of them all being K2, formerly known as Mount Godwin Austen, 28,250ft., and second only to Mount Everest.

It was with the twofold object of attempting the ascent of some of the high peaks of this range, and of making a cinematograph film, that Professor G. Dyhrenfurth, the German geologist and mountaineer, last year organized an international expedition that included German, Austrian, Swiss, Italian, American, Bavarian, Hungarian, and British mountaineers.

As in 1930, when Professor Dyhrenfurth led the International Kangchenjunga Expedition, Frau Dyhrenfurth accompanied her husband. In 1930 she reached a height of over 20,000ft., but in 1934 she beat Mrs. Bullock Workman's record for women by over 1,000ft., reaching a height of no less than 24,000ft., an extraordinary feat bearing testimony to her courage and powers of endurance.

THE expedition, accompanied by hundreds of native porters and pack animals, left Srinagar on May 13th, and began its long march across Ladak (Little Tibet) to a previously planned base camp site on the Baltoro glacier.

Their way lay along the trade route that connects Little Tibet with India, but thus early in the year the Zoji-La pass, 11,570ft., was deep in snow, and considerable difficulty was experienced in getting the heavy transport and bare-footed coolies over it.

It was with relief that they descended to the Indus valley. Like most of Little Tibet and Baltistan, this valley is incredibly desolate, but here and there are little oases where villages and monasteries nestle amid a naked desert of sand and rock. Most remarkable of these monasteries is that of Lamayuru which must rank with the Shekar Dzong monastery near Mount Everest as one of the wonders of the world.

Against a background of snow-capped peaks rises a colonnade of natural eroded pillars of clay and conglomerate, 200ft. high, which forms a foundation to a mass of buildings, some of which are perched on the crest of the crag, whilst others cling precariously to its sides, a defiance of architectural laws only rendered possible by the extreme dryness of the climate.

In this monastery dwell some three hundred Buddhist monks, and also some nuns, governed by an abbot whose rule in the district is absolute.

The road to the monastery is decorated by rock carvings of various gods and goddesses, and rows of chortens, which are religious symbols originally intended to hold relics of Buddha. Some of these chortens contain the ashes of former lamas of the monastery, and some are painted red, blue, and white, the symbolic colours of the spirits of earth, sky, and water. It is an absolute rule in Tibet that in passing chortens or other sacred objects the wayfarer must always keep to the left, and for this reason roads always bifurcate, so that going and coming this rule may be observed.

Apart from rock carvings and chortens, there is much to be seen on the road to sacred Lamayuru to direct the thoughts of the pious traveller heavenwards. On the surface of rocks may be seen over and over again the Buddhist prayer "Om mani Padmi Hum" (Hail to the jewel and the lotus), and symbols such as the wheel of life, the ladder, the fish, the intestines of Buddha, drawn as a pattern, and the Swastika, the mystic cross, now the symbol of Hitlerism. And nearer the monastery are innumerable prayer wheels, packed with thousands of prayers which go out to the gods at each revolution, and many prayer flags fluttering in the wind to propitiate various deities.

When he reaches the monastery the devout Buddhist will circumambulate it from left to right, as the sun moves, by measuring the earth with his body; he will lie down at full length on the ground and, stretching out his arms to their full extent before him, make a mark in the dust with his finger-tips; he will then stand on this mark and again prostrate himself. A fanatic may travel thus a thousand miles to a sacred place and take a year or more on his arduous journey.

In Tibet life is essentially monastic. Where there are two sons or more in a family one, usually the elder, must become a monk. This often means that the other son spends his days in working to keep not only himself but his lama brother, but at many monasteries, including Lamayuru, the monks work hard in the fields in addition to performing their devotional duties.

Altogether, it is a terribly hard life being a Tibetan, if only because of the cold,
A small lake on the Baltoro glacier, a vast river of ice that had to be ascended before the attempt on the peaks of the Karakoram range could be made.
(Above) A magnificent view of the Queen Mary Peak, over 25,000 feet high.

(Below) Crossing the Indus on native rafts.
The Golden Throne. In the foreground is M. Roch, one of the three members of the International Himalayan Expedition who attained the eastern summit of this awe-inspiring peak, which is 23,787 feet in height.
Another view of the crossing of the Indus. The valley through which this river flows is a desolate and forbidding region, though relieved here and there by villages and monasteries.
(Above) Tibetan porters on the Baltoro glacier.

(Below) Ancient Buddhist shrines carved in rock near a Tibetan monastery.
(Above) Another group of "Chortens," the strange roadside shrines encountered in Tibet.

(Below) Pack animals and a barefooted coolie passing through the Indus valley.
The remarkable village of Lamayuru, in Tibet. Many of the buildings are perched on the crests of natural pillars of clay or conglomerate. Others appear to cling precariously to the rock sides.
A magnificent view of the George V chain of peaks in the Karakoram range. The photograph was taken from the Golden Throne, reached by three members of the Expedition, and shows the Hidden Peak and the Queen Mary Peak.

Lamas passing a sacred shrine.

(Above) Mr. James Balaieff, the Expedition's photographer.

(Left) On the Baltoro glacier, showing the Mustagh Tower and the Crystal Peak. The journey up this glacier occupied three days.
Equipped for a Devil Dance. Hideous masks of many forms are worn by Tibetans when performing the frenzied dances with which they honour or propitiate gods and devils.
(Above) A rope bridge spanning a ravine in Tibet. Many feet below runs a mountain torrent.

(Below) A Lama council meeting at Lamayuru. Several members of the International Himalayan Expedition were permitted to be present.
(Above) Camp on the Gasherbrum-Baltoro glacier. Looming behind are two of the forbidding Gasherbrum peaks.

(Below) Base camp on the Conway Saddle, named after Lord Conway, who first explored it.
A remarkable sculpture of a goddess, carved in the rocks on a Tibetan roadside.
Sacred shrines indicating that a Tibetan monastery is at hand. It is a rigid rule that the traveller must always pass these shrines on the left.
(Above) A magnificent view from one of the earlier base camps, showing in the distance the Golden Throne, the third highest among the world's summits that have yet been climbed.

(Below) An old Tibetan woman photographed at the strange village of Lamayuru.
The return journey. The Expedition making its way through the Pass of the Birch Trees.
discomfort, and meagre food, but for all this, the Tibetan is happy, and his primary desire is for spiritual knowledge.

One of the difficulties of Himalayan travel is the crossing of mountain torrents. On a main route there are usually simple rope bridges to assist the traveller, but those who dislike the type of bridge depicted in the photograph should avoid this part of the world. Sometimes the bridge consists of a sort of rope and "breeches buoy" arrangement by means of which the traveller is hauled over an unfordable river. It is an old trick to decoy your companion on to one of these bridges and splash him by throwing stones into the water, but it is wise for the stone-thrower to cross first!

Five days' march from Askole, the last village, reached on June 5th, brought the expedition to the snout of the Baltoro glacier, which is the sixth longest of the world's known glaciers outside sub-polar regions, being thirty-six miles from source to snout. Not far from the ice they were fortunate in discovering a camping site complete with grass for the transport animals, fresh water, and, most valuable commodity of all, wood.

Then began the ascent of the Baltoro glacier. This was explored as long ago as 1862 by Colonel Godwin Austen, and was subsequently visited by many explorers, including the Duke of the Abruzzi, who reached a height of 25,000ft. on the Bride Peak. Very few of the great peaks surrounding the glacier have been even attempted, much less climbed, for they are in their aggregate more formidable than any in the world. Being geologically young and relatively unweathered they are appallingly steep and elemental, and their sheer fangs of rock and ice strike dismay into the heart of the most optimistic mountaineer. And, above all, rises the superb spire of K2, from the foot of which the vast ice stream of the Baltoro glacier flows in sinuous curves between a bewildering jumble of giant Matterhorns and Weisshorns.

For three days the expedition marched up the glacier to the Concordia, the name given to the level place formed by the confluence of several glaciers that unite to form the single ice stream of the Baltoro. From this point they bore in a south-west direction, and after one more march pitched their advanced base camp at the foot of the Bride Peak and the Golden Throne in a situation of unrivalled magnificence and grandeur.

One of their objects was to ascend, if possible, the Hidden Peak, 26,454ft., which is among the first dozen of the world's highest mountains, but although they were able to note a possible route they were not able to reach a height of 20,000ft.

While engaged on this attempt and during many other occasions they saw some enormous ice avalanches. These fall from the edge of hanging glaciers, and if the reader can imagine walls of ice many hundreds of feet thick and weighing tens and hundreds of thousands of tons, collapsing and falling for thousands of feet, he need scarcely be told that an exceptionally large avalanche can sweep a mile of level glacier in its stride and hurl a wind before it that will blast every living thing from the face of the earth.

Defeated on the Hidden Peak, the expedition camped on the Conway Col, first explored by Lord Conway, and thence by a fine piece of mountaineering ascended the Queen Mary Peak and the Golden Throne, 25,174ft. and 23,787ft. respectively. It was on these expeditions that the intrepid Frau Dyhrenfurth reached a height of 24,000ft.

**VER**Y disagreeable weather was experienced by the expedition; blizzards and extreme cold made the ascent very trying and added considerably to the hardships of the expedition as well as exposing it to danger from avalanches on the slopes of the Queen Mary Peak. Only those who have endured it know what it means to be shut up in a small tent 4ft. high by 6ft. long and 4ft. wide, wondering whether the fabric can possibly withstand the fury of a blast that seems to emanate from the lungs of that frigid Mephistopheles that the Tibetan believes dominates a hell of eternal cold. And added to the discomfort is the constant drain of vitality due to the lack of oxygen at high altitudes, an effect that can render the best of men ill-tempered and undermine the resolution of the stoutest heart.

These continuous blizzards hampered the plans of the expedition, which was forced to return in August, and the only exploration made, apart from the ascents already mentioned, was that of the Bride Peak on which the Duke of the Abruzzi had failed only a few feet from the summit.

Despite the weather, the film operators worked hard, and films were taken at great altitudes. As one who has "shot" a full-sized cinema film at 25,447ft. (the summit of Kamet), I can appreciate the difficulties involved in obtaining records in the face of the blizzards experienced by the expedition. I can remember times when the only way to get the frozen camera to work was to take it to bed, and a very uncomfortable bedfellow it made. And I have known its cold metal sear my flesh as though it was red hot.