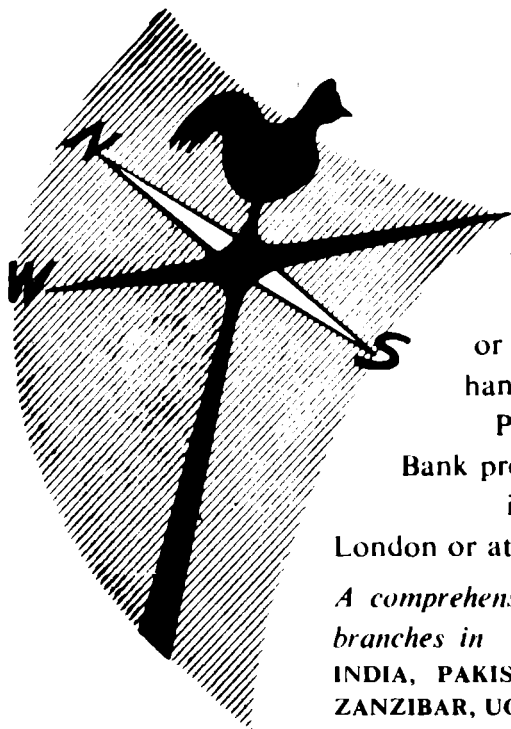


ASIAN REVIEW

INCORPORATING
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AND
THE JOURNAL OF THE EAST INDIA ASSOCIATION



RUMELI CASTLE OVERLOOKING THE BOSPHORUS



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ASIAN REVIEW

VOLUME LII

NUMBER 190

71st YEAR

APRIL 1956

NEW SERIES

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am going to follow the same course to-day. I do not believe that any expression of opinion by an individual outsider about that very thorny question can advance its solution at all. I hope the speaker will forgive me and not feel that I am being discourteous to him.

Sir FREDERICK BOURNE: I have the very easy task of conveying your gratitude to Sir Percival Griffiths. I know no one with such extraordinary mental and bodily activity and such clarity of thought. I will ask you all to register your thanks in the usual way.

The Ascent of Everest

Address By WILFRID NOYCE

“THE ASCENT OF EVEREST” formed the subject of an address, profusely illustrated with lantern slides, given by Mr. Wilfrid Noyce, a member of the party which climbed Mt. Everest in 1953, to a joint meeting of the East India Association, the Pakistan Society and the Overseas League at Over-Seas House on Wednesday, February 22nd, 1956. His Excellency Mr. M. Ikramullah, President of the Pakistan Society, presided over a large attendance.

In opening the proceedings the Chairman paid a warm tribute to the lecturer's father, the late Sir Frank Noyce, under whom he had served most happily in Delhi. He recalled the long personal friendship of Begum Ikramullah and himself with Mr. Wilfrid Noyce and the pleasure which his visits had given to them during the war. When they were in the hills it was an attractive habit of his to call in for lunch when he was on his way, laden with all the heavy paraphernalia of a mountaineer, from one peak to another. He was a man who always seemed to keep himself fighting fit.

Mr. Noyce, as some of the audience would know, had won a double First at Cambridge and was the author of a number of excellent books. What he had to tell about the Everest expedition was a story of courageous and admirable team work.

Mr. WILFRID NOYCE: Looking round I can see a number of people who were most kind and hospitable to us when we were in India and far from least, of course, His Excellency and Begum Ikramullah themselves.

There were many times during the hot dry summers when I would be seen rather less respectably clad than now, in fact clad in nothing, as far as I remember, except a towel and a pipe in the garden of their house; and also I am delighted to see I have managed to lead His Excellency astray in one very important respect. He had taken a vow not to smoke during the war and so it was a great pleasure when v.J. day came to present him with a pipe and a couple of ounces, and I was delighted to see by the pipe down there just now that, having once trodden the primrose path to the everlasting bonfire, he would never look back!

Well, I am going to talk now—rather less formally perhaps than usual—about the Everest Expedition and show you pictures of it. I suppose every one knows that Everest, the highest mountain in the world, is on the border of Nepal in the South and Tibet in the North. The first expedition went in 1921, although it had been projected a long time before. When asked why one wants to climb Everest I think there is certainly no answer better than Mallory's classic one: "Because it's there"; simply because this bit of rock and snow is a little higher than anything else, and also for us mountaineers because it's a mountain, a thing to which we are used, that we being humans have to get to the top of it, just as we have to try to cross the Antarctic or fly as fast as we can or go down to the bottom of the sea, or any other of the thousand and one crazy things that the human race does do. It's an adventure, and the adventure began in 1921 in this case. The 1921 Expedition found what they thought was the only route to the top, up the North Col and then up the not very difficult slab at the North side. Several British parties followed that route and two of them, as you know, got to within a thousand feet of the top. After the war for political reasons—Tibet is a closed country and it was a great surprise when Nepal to the South, which had hitherto, as far as its mountains were concerned, been a closed country—Nepal gave permission for the first expedition to go out and have a look at the southern side. Mallory, looking at it from the front, said the southern side was probably impossible, not only because it was much steeper, but also because of the great icefall which guarded the route into the western Cwm, a hollow which lies just to the south of Everest. Anyhow, it was worth having a look, and in 1951 Eric Shipton and a party found that there was a route after all. They climbed the icefall, but were stopped by a crevasse beyond its top and in 1952 the Swiss put in two tremendous efforts at that southern route. They got very high indeed. When we started planning in the autumn of 1952 we did not then know whether the second Swiss attempt had succeeded.

The party which Sir John Hunt had invited to make up the Expedition included Charles Evans, a brain surgeon, a job he fortunately did not have

to exercise on the mountain, and he was in charge of the packing and stores. Tom Bourdillon is a research scientist and was in charge of the oxygen. George Band, a geological student, looked after wireless and meteorology, as well as helping with the food, the least popular task of all. Michael Westmacott, a statistician who had also been a sapper, ordered our tents and bridging apparatus. Gregory is a photographic expert as well as the director of a travel agency, and was in charge of still photography, while Thomas Stobart looked after the film. Edmund Hillary regards bee-keeping with a scientific eye, and the remaining members of the climbing party, George Lowe, a school teacher, and Charles Wylie, a Gurkha officer, both had a meticulous thoroughness about them which I could only admire. Our doctor was Michael Ward, and it must be said at once that the health of the party was excellent; although poor Mike was always gently teased for two stock remedies when people were sick high up. The first was "go down lower," and the second, if he did give you a pill, was always said to be: "Try this, it's no use at all." Besides these men, we had Dr. Griffith Pugh, a research physiologist. My impression of him, not altogether wrong, was that he would lurk at the top of the ice fall, and when you heaved yourself exhausted out of it would make you jump up and down on to a box in order that he might tell you in scientific terms that you were exhausted.

I will pass over the rather tiresome journey from Bombay, involving getting our $7\frac{1}{2}$ tons of stores first along three different gauge railways inside India, then on to the Nepalese railway, then on to lorries in Nepal and then on to a perilous looking rope rail which slings the loads over two 6,000 foot ridges and down to Katmandu where the expedition met for the first time, and on March 10th we left. I think I am right in saying that Nepal is about the size of the British Isles and has two roads—one about 20 miles long and the other not yet finished—and so six miles east of Katmandu everything was taken out from the lorries and carried on the backs of men or women. Local porters recruited as we went along—who must not be confused with Sherpas—carried sixty pounds and jogged along with that. Sherpas thought it rather *infra dig* to carry on the march and if we did give them something they generally managed to palm it off on their girl friend or wife in exchange for some cigarettes. We had with the expedition a number of Sherpanis—Sherpani being the female of the species Sherpa—and they were a splendid race; the women carried on the whole better than the men all round. I have seen them carry about ninety pounds and if there was a baby it just seemed to sit on top of the load. They were always cheerful, always in first; they beat the men a long way and would have a fire going for tea. Moreover, they never seemed to smoke or drink or quarrel, whereas the men did

too much of all three on occasions, and we sometimes wondered whether we could stock an expedition with Sherpanis. Unfortunately, the delightful costume—the Tibetan apron of many colours which they weave in their own country and which they will never in any circumstances take off—is a hindrance in climbing steep ice, but it was a very decorative addition to the march and with their beautiful Mongolian features they certainly added to our rather drab line of march. We started the day's march at about six in the morning—to avoid the heat of the day—and tottered along for about two or three hours on a cup of tea, and hoped to find a river to bathe in, while the Sherpa cook prepared the breakfast, an English affair of porridge, bacon and eggs and marmalade. It was getting pretty hot by then and someone had the umbrella up already. The umbrella has become an indispensable part of a Himalayan climber's equipment; you carry it on the walk in to keep off the sun, and on the walk out to keep off the monsoon rain. The coolies straggled in during the afternoon, having to travel more slowly with their sixty pound loads, and that was a very good excuse for us not going too far either. In the afternoon you could either join John Hunt or Mike Westmacott looking for butterflies, or George Band on beetles, or merely lie flat on your back on a lilo in what came to be known as the "Everest position" and read your Agatha Christie, Tolstoy or Peter Cheney. This idyllic existence went on till we came to the country of the Sherpas. We discovered that the local Sherpas have an average expectation of life of 35 years, and it was suggested by someone that the bridges across the river might have something to do with it, because they always seem very dangerous structures. We never saw one being repaired; they seem to go on the principle that they will last until someone actually falls in.

On March 26th we arrived at Thyangboche, which is without doubt the loveliest spot I have ever been in. It is a series of green grass meadows surrounded by woods of silver birch, pine and juniper and backed by the astonishing satellites of Everest, and, twenty miles away, Everest itself. We stayed here a couple of days and unpacked, tried on our climbing kit, and in the intervals we visited the Buddhist monastery. The Abbot was away, but we were entertained by the deputy Abbot to tea. The Sherpas, like Tibetans, think nothing of getting through fifty or a hundred cups of tea a day, and in some monasteries the Lamas think their duty in life is to keep the pots going. The deputy Abbot told us stories of the yeti, or abominable snowman. He is apparently seen in the winter sometimes in the woods around and the Lamas blow the monastic horn to chase him away.

We were still too early for Everest, as the snow was being driven at tremendous speed off the ice ridges of Lhotse, the South peak of Everest.

The winter wind was still raging high up and our hope, of course, was to climb Everest between the ending of the winter winds, say at the end of April, and the onset of the monsoon, say somewhere in June. However, we arrived early on purpose, as we intended to spend three weeks in small groups exploring south and west of Everest, climbing quite a number of peaks of about 20,000 ft. to get acclimatized and these acclimatization periods were very happy. While most of us were still exploring, John Hunt, on April 10th, sent up the first party to establish base camp and have a look at the icefall of Everest. On 13th April, Hillary, Band, Lowe and Westmacott first set foot on the icefall at the head of the main Khumbu glacier. The photographs show that our problems on Everest were divided into three distinct stages. First was the icefall, negotiated by Eric Shipton in 1951. Up this huge, moving maze we must transport not only ourselves but three tons of equipment into the western Cwm of Everest by the middle of May. The Cwm was so named by George Mallory who saw into it from the Tibetan border, and must be one of the strangest valleys of the world. It is flanked on the right by the immense yellow granite buttresses of Nuptse, a ridge several miles long and nowhere lower than 25,000 feet, which leads to Lhotse, the south peak of Everest. 27,890 feet. On the north the Cwm is bounded by the west shoulder of Everest and the 7,000-foot precipice rising to the summit itself. When we had reached Advanced Base near the head of this valley, our second problem would be the climb to the South Col, the 26,000-foot gap between Everest and Lhotse. The third problem would be the south-east ridge.

Hillary's party found the icefall more intricate than two years previously. It is a mass of enormous blocks slowly nosing its way down to the Khumbu glacier. A way must be found which is not only climbable but which can be made safe for laden porters traversing it day after day. By the 19th April, a great piece of work, the party had reached the top of the icefall and a tentative Camp 3 was established. Camp 2 was on an uncomfortable shelf near two large ice towers about half way. A number of days were spent making the route safe: I well remember pulling down one *serac* or ice tower, with a rope round it as one pulls down a tree; and chipping away at the base of another until it was possible to batter it down, using an eight-foot pole as a ram. Besides this large steps were cut—though all wore 'crampons' or ice-claws—log bridges and ropes were fixed. It was amusing to see how cautiously the Sherpas crawled over these bridges to begin with; later on, their natural gaiety prevailing, they would career over them upright, and when one of them looked like falling in he was greeted by roars of laughter from his comrades.

On the 24th April a regular ferry service started. All this time and till 14th May, we were having regular afternoon snowfalls. Parties of some

eight Sherpas led by a climber (and Tenzing was, of course, counted as a climber) went up with loads to Camp 2 one afternoon. Next morning they would go on to Camp 3, dump their loads and return to Base Camp that day. Towards the end, Camp 2 became so unpopular because of the subterranean noises and the holes that used to appear from nowhere outside tent doors, that the Sherpas insisted on abandoning it and doing the carry to Camp 3 in one day. If you reckon Base Camp at 17,900 feet, Camp 2 19,600 feet, and Camp 3 20,500 feet, this was no mean effort. Meanwhile another party, consisting, at the end of April, of Gregory and myself with seven Sherpas, stayed at Camp 3 to carry the loads on for the three and a half hours' journey to Advance Base or Camp 4. On 18th May the last load came up from Base. Thereafter the whole expedition was self-supporting at Camp 4. J. Roberts had appeared with our main supply of oxygen.

I once met Griffith Pugh on his way up the icefall. He took longer to acclimatize than most, but he was struggling gallantly up to do some scientific experiments at Camp 3. Unfortunately, when he opened his box and felt for the precious test tubes, he discovered to his horror that it was not his box at all but an exactly similar one, out of which he drew bottle after bottle of mango chutney. Poor Griff. He was subsequently rewarded at Camp 4 by being allowed to weigh us, and to make some victims step up and down on to packing cases, breathing the while into Douglas bags. He also removed a small amount of blood from our thumbs. This he pipetted on to circles of blotting paper, so that each could go and admire his particular hue. Our blood up here was a very dark maroon colour, and it was interesting to notice, when he repeated the test down in the valley later, how quickly it returned to normal red.

When Gregory and I were staying at Camp 3, it seemed very high. We were afraid of loss of appetite, sleeplessness and so forth. By the time we were all established at Advance Base, 21,200 feet, we were all eating like horses and sleeping like the proverbial logs, with no real worries of that sort until our very last week. One word about the Cwm itself. Shortly above Camp 3 we met the enormous crevasse which stopped Shipton's party and gave such difficulty to the Swiss last year. Here Mike Westmacott's ladder came into action. This was a fine Duralumin affair, in five six-foot sections, any number of which could be spannered together. We needed three of them here, and though the bridge sagged somewhat it provided a safe and very pleasant crossing. Further on, in the walk up to Camp 4, there were many equally enormous crevasses requiring long detours. I remember chiefly here the heat of midday. I climbed in a cotton shirt, cotton pyjama trousers, and over them windproof trousers. Even so, I watched the sweat dripping down

my ice-axe shaft. At Advance Base it was too hot to sit outside. The granite walls of Nuptse and the cliffs of Everest seemed to deflect every ray of the sun down on to the poor climber.

The next problem was the Lhotse face, which had already been reconnoitred by Charles Evans, Tom Bourdillon, Charles Wylie and Mike Ward at the very beginning of May. There were several features about this problem. Last May the Swiss underestimated it and tried to climb the whole face in one, a rise of 4,000 feet, alongside the rib known as the Geneva Spur. In the autumn, more prudently, after an accident which killed one Sherpa, they turned to the glaciated face on the right: more broken, it allowed them to place two camps. From the top they did a long traverse to the left, over the top of the Geneva Spur and down 300 feet to the Col. This route, with some modifications, we followed. For the work of preparing the Lhotse face no oxygen could be spared, and on 10th May George Lowe, with the Sherpa Ang Nima, went up to install himself at Camp 6, at 23,000 feet, above the staging Camp 5 at 22,000 feet, below the face. They spent four days cutting steps, fixing ropes, and exploring the route on to Camp 7, another 1,000 feet higher.

On 15th May I joined George at Camp 6, an airy little tent perched above a steep ice slope on which hung three hundred feet of rope. Ang Nima went down, Edmund Hillary and three Sherpas took up a tent to the site of Camp 7, and returned. On the 16th, Camp 7 was to be established.

It would have been established that day, but for a sleeping pill. These artificial aids were used by some of us to great effect. Gregory took one every night above 20,000 feet. On the evening of the 15th the wind had risen. Booming over the South Col, it was showering pellets on to the little tent, straining and tugging the fabric. We had an uncomfortable supper, with the nasty business of climbing out to chip off snow for the pot, unfreezing fingers while one watched a great lump melt to half an inch of water, and then climbing out for more. I felt to-morrow to be an important day and took my first sleeping pill of the trip. George said, "I think I'll have one too," and we each swallowed an innocent looking green object. The pill did not affect me and I woke at six to a cloudless and windless morning. Unfortunately George did not wake. The hours between six and nine I spent pushing and pleading: George could hear every word but felt utterly drugged and unable to move. Once he knelt up and went to sleep in that position. It was not until 10.30 that two figures emerged, heavily laden. We wound our way slowly up the slopes towards Camp 7, stopping every twenty minutes so that George could relapse upon his rucksack and go to sleep again. My anxiety increased. At 12.15 we had made only some 400 feet out of a

thousand, and George suggested that food might wake him. When he actually went to sleep with a sardine in his mouth it was clear that the game was up, and after only one more halt we turned, myself acutely conscious that the binoculars below would be on us, wondering what had happened. We reached Camp at two, George relapsed on his lilo and I spent the evening making contact by wireless with the camps below.

The doctors helpfully told me that he would 'sleep it off.' Most fortunately he did, and on the 17th woke up bright as a new pin. We reached Camp 7, put up the tent, and after a rest crossed the crevasse which protects it and climbed some 500 feet above. We were now, at 24,500 feet, going very slowly and not taking more than five steps at a time before stopping with head down on the ice axe. When we returned to camp I found Michael Ward there with the Sherpas. I had to go down, for John planned to have the first loads up with me to the South Col by 21st May. You see our second problem was not only to reach the Col ourselves, but to get 500 lb. of oxygen, tents and food to about the height of Annapurna, the highest mountain yet climbed. I had therefore to go down and organize the first carry, while Mike and George, with the Sherpa Da Tenzing, continued on the face. The next two days they had bitter wind and were unable to reach a point much beyond our highest of the 17th, before two of them feared frostbite and they returned.

On the 20th May, therefore, when I reached Camp 7 with eight Sherpas, there was still 1,500 feet of new ground to the Col. My men had been carrying more than they bargained for, and they were very sorry for themselves. Headaches and coughs in every tent. Aspirin was of no avail, and on the morning of the 21st I decided on our alternative plan. I took on my sirdar or chief Sherpa, Anullu by name, with oxygen, leaving the others to acclimatize and add strength in numbers to Charles Wylie's party, which was to do the carry next day. Both of us were using oxygen. It is difficult to describe the sensation that oxygen gives. When all the fiddling and clumsiness of putting the equipment on is past, I can only compare it to a metallic breath of new life that makes the world seem good again. We made our way up the remainder of the Lhotse glacier, missing our course twice and once having to jump over a nasty crevasse, from one apparently unsupported ledge to another. Then the traverse, which Anullu led in extremely quick time. We had started at 9.30 a.m., to avoid frostbite; by 3 o'clock we were looking down from the top of the Geneva Spur, on to the desolate plateau which the Swiss said had the smell of death about it. Everest still beckoned mysteriously into the mist beyond, and in the centre of the plateau were the pitiful tattered remnants of the Swiss tents of last year, yellow rags that make the words "conquest of Everest" seem absurd. We descended the slope and Anullu fixed to

his back a fine Swiss rucksack containing felt boots, on the ground that Tenzing had said that if he was first to the Col he was to have the first spoil. Then we returned up the slope, a slope that had worried us so much that I had some benzedrine tablets in my pocket, to be used here by the Sherpas in the last resort. We had tried them lower down, with the most unexpected results. One man said that it was wonderful stuff, it had cured his cough. Another said that it made him sleep excellently. Fortunately, they never had to be used.

At the top of the Spur we halted. The effect of the oxygen on me was to give me a lively interest in the scenery, and I remember thinking that but for the scientific aids with which my body was plastered it would have been impossible for me, an aesthete having no knowledge but a great admiration of things scientific, to be up here enjoying the beauty of Nuptse's wind-torn razor ridge. On this common ground poets and scientists meet. I even pointed out its beauties to Anullu, who thought me quite mad.

At Camp 7 we received a tremendous welcome. Charles and nine Sherpas had come up, together with Hillary and Tenzing, who came to give moral support and to help make the track. So vital was it that the loads go up. We were a happy crowd, but certainly a crowd. The expedition was always a little short of utensils, but it was here that I actually found Charles eating grape-nuts off a spanner.

May 22nd was a red letter day. No less than thirteen loads were deposited by Charles on the Col, and it was a tired but very happy party which reassembled at four next day. Because of this magnificent lift, Evans and Bourdillon, the two closed-circuit experts, left Camp 4 on the evening of the 22nd. The plan for them was that they should make the attempt direct from the South Col, since the closed-circuit allowed faster movement and would obviate the unpleasant ridge camp. Having reached the south summit, 28,700 feet, they were to go on if the summit ridge looked easy. They were supported by John Hunt himself, and two Sherpas. On 24th May the party reached the Col and pitched camp in a wind, that wind which moans perpetually over the highest saddle on earth. One of the Sherpas was unwell; his main function was to lie in the tents as a weight and prevent them being blown away while they were pitched. On the 25th this wind continued and the party lay low. But on the 26th the weather was good enough for an attempt. Hunt and Da Namgyal, the fit Sherpa, went ahead first, as Evans was having trouble with a broken valve on his set. This more delicate apparatus had more that could go wrong with it. However, rather later, Evans and Bourdillon were able to start: steaming ahead at a very good speed for that height, almost 1,000 feet an hour, they passed the other two and went on up the

ridge. On reaching this ridge, Hunt found the little tent used by Tenzing and the Swiss guide Raymond Lambert last year, at 27,200 feet. He and Da Namgyal halted here, trying to clear the ice which tended to block the outlet valve of the open-circuit set. Then they pushed on another 150 feet and left loads of over 40 lb. for the Ridge Camp to be set by Hillary and Tenzing, the second summit pair. They turned back, very tired.

Meanwhile the first summit pair were making good time up the ridge to the south summit. I have still a piece of paper, signed by John Hunt, which reads: "1 p.m. Tom and Charles seen at South Summit going strong for top. Great excitement here." "Here," of course, is the South Col, seen from which the South Summit masks the summit. In fact, Evans and Bourdillon had shot their bolt. They had performed an amazing feat climbing such a height in one day. They stood higher than man had ever stood before. But the hour was late, and they might not have enough oxygen both to reach the summit and to return. Moreover, seen from here in a mist that half veiled it, the summit ridge looked very formidable. They retired prudently and reached the Col very tired. I was able to judge next day how tired they were, and what an effort it had been, when I met them with Mike Ward at Camp 7. Unlike the open-circuit, which left us an exhilaration lasting on through the night, the closed-circuit leaves a sense of exhaustion.

On the 26th the second summit party had reached the South Col also. Hillary and Tenzing were accompanied by Lowe, who brought up Sherpas with extra loads for the Col, Gregory and three picked Sherpas for the highest carry. On the 27th this party also was compelled by the wind to lie low, and on the 28th, our friend Ang Nima was the only fit Sherpa. The party set out, carrying loads for the final ridge Camp, up the broad snow couloir which leads to the south-east ridge of Everest. They halted at the ruin of last year's tent, and Tenzing must have had curious memories of that night when he and Lambert, without sleeping bags and without cookers, had huddled for warmth and spent their time trying to melt snow over a candle for something to drink. At the point where John Hunt had dumped his loads this second party had to increase theirs. They were carrying 40, 50, and in Hillary's case, over 60 lb. They went on, first over rock and finally snow. They were determined to find a camp site higher than a camp had ever been placed before, at 27,900 feet. As time went on they became a little desperate. Every ledge looked level from below, and 45 degrees when one came to it. At last, after 2 o'clock, they found one of only some 40 degrees, and the supporting party dumped its loads with a sigh and returned. Hillary and Tenzing dug themselves in, a two-hour job, though even then the tent was at an angle.

Hillary sat against the slope trying not to roll on to Tenzing; Tenzing lay below, trying not to be rolled on by Hillary.

They had four hours' sleep on oxygen that night, using the special device whereby a cylinder is connected by tubes to face masks and a low flow rate of one litre a minute ensures sleep. In the daytime we used two to four litres as a general rule. They spent the rest of the night, from what we gathered next day, making lemonade. Griff Pugh drummed into us that because of the ventilation rate at high altitudes we must drink a lot, six pints a day if possible. This was one way of absorbing our 14 ounces of sugar. Fortunately, Hillary and most of us liked lemonade, with which they ate sardines and biscuits.

At 6.30 of the 29th they set off. The snow slope below the South Summit was in an unpleasant and dangerous condition, but they went on in the knowledge that others had done it before. At 9 o'clock they reached the South Summit. The day was comparatively fine and windless, but even so the summit ridge was narrow in the extreme. Great cornices bent over to the right and would very soon, if trodden on, bear you down to the Kangshung glacier, 12,000 feet below. On the left was the 7,000-foot precipice above the Cwm. Fortunately snow was hard and good, and they were able to chip along in between. At one point Hillary noticed Tenzing in difficulty, and released him from the ice which had frozen up on the outlet valve. Thereafter they kept a close watch. Some way along they encountered the rock step, which we had studied through glasses. It was a 40-foot obstacle, which would have been impossible but that the snow on the right had melted away, forming a gap up which it was possible to wriggle. After that they felt that nothing could stop them, but the bumps seemed to succeed interminably, one after the other. It was 11.30 before one bump revealed nothing beyond, and they stood on the summit of Everest.

Hillary took off his oxygen mask and felt no ill effects. Tenzing buried a Buddhist offering of food in the snow and identified places in Tibet, while his more prosaic companion took photographs down the ridges. After a quarter of an hour they returned, for Hillary had been doing mental arithmetic about their oxygen supply, and was preoccupied with an anxiety as to whether they could reach two cylinders left by the others below the South Summit.

At 12.50 I was coming up the last slope to the Geneva Spur. There was a shout from behind: I looked up to see two small figures descending, for all the world like a party coming off Snowdon at Easter. This time, owing to an oversight, I was without oxygen. No more could I admire the view; three steps, and I was gasping over my ice axe. Besides this, I was carrying over 40 lb., and my Sherpa, Pasang Phutar, 60 lb., for we

had had to send down two others. But the pleasure of seeing those two descending spurred us on. When we reached the Col, George Lowe was preparing to go up and meet them. He had prepared soup, I followed with a thermos of tea. We met them on the slopes under the south-east ridge, looking remarkably fresh, as I thought, but not talking much as the oxygen had by now given out. They descended, not with the elastic step of before, but steadily, Tenzing and Pasang retired to a tiny tent, while we three crowded into a two-man Meade, since the wind had blown a hole in the big pyramid.

I remembered a promise to John Hunt. This was to lay two sleeping bags in the form of a τ on the slope of the Spur, if they had succeeded. If they had not, my job was to rescue or reinforce. Poor Pasang I dragged wearily up the slopes, and as there was a wind, we had to lie on the sleeping bags watching a nasty little cloud playing between us and the camp 5,000 feet below. After ten minutes I gave up, but I am told that there is still a legend in Nepal of the mad Englishman who wanted to sleep out in the snow above the South Col.

We had the happiest of discussions that night. We felt that we were part of a great company of climbers who had accomplished this ascent. We felt too, that we had in no way "conquered" the mountain. We had conquered nothing except unruly bits of ourselves. By the artificial means of oxygen, the trustiness of the equipment and the kindness of the weather after the afternoon snow falls of early May, we had been allowed to tread a narrow path to a summit, in one month of that year among all the years of time. All these factors we had to thank, and Everest itself for being no enemy, but a friend which had allowed us to do so much.

Next day we descended to Advance Base, where the news was now for the first time known. But we had still the return through the icefall, which the Swiss compared to a Sword of Damocles hanging over them while they were in the Cwm. Thanks to Mike Westmacott, who had lengthened bridges, cut new steps, and in many places altered the route completely, the whole party descended safely, and on 1st June was re-assembled at Base Camp, in time to hear parts of the Coronation Service. On the evening of the 2nd, we were delighted to hear the cultured voice of the B.B.C. announcing that Mount Everest had been climbed by a British party. Until then, we had hardly dared to believe it ourselves.

QUESTIONS

Mr. HANCOCK asked what was the longest time that a man could wear an oxygen mask, and what was the effect on the heart.

Mr. NOYCE said the mask could be worn from eight in the morning until sunset without harmful effects.

Mr. N. M. SHAH asked for information about the Abominable Snowman.

Mr. NOYCE stated that about four-fifths of the stories was legend, but there was a hard core of truth. Tracks (not easily identifiable with the human species) had been seen by numerous expeditions and identified as belonging to no creature of which man had proper knowledge. At one place two longish, reddish hairs had been found. The Abominable Snowman was assumed to be an anthropoid creature. The tradition was that the man who had seen him got ill for three months afterwards. Also the Abominable Snowman was, by report, immensely strong and was said to feed on rats, etc., but to be able to kill an animal as big as a yak.

In proposing a warm vote of thanks Sir JOHN WOODHEAD stated that he had never seen anything finer than Mr. Noyce's pictures and he knew that all present had greatly appreciated his enthralling account of a most courageous adventure.

India's Five Year Plans: Old and New

By T. SWAMINATHAN

MR. T. SWAMINATHAN, Minister (Economic) at India House, addressed a joint meeting of the East India Association and the Overseas League on "India's Five Year Plans: Old and New" at Overseas House on Wednesday, 14th March, 1956. Sir JEREMY RAISMAN, GCIE, KCSI occupied the Chair.

India has a population of over 350 millions. Three-quarters of this enormous population lives in villages. For the most part the people live in conditions which are very close to a mere subsistence. If anything, there are a tremendous number of people living on the wrong side of the level of subsistence. The *per capita* income in 1950-51 was Rs. 255/- per annum. Because of the drop in the value of money this was, in