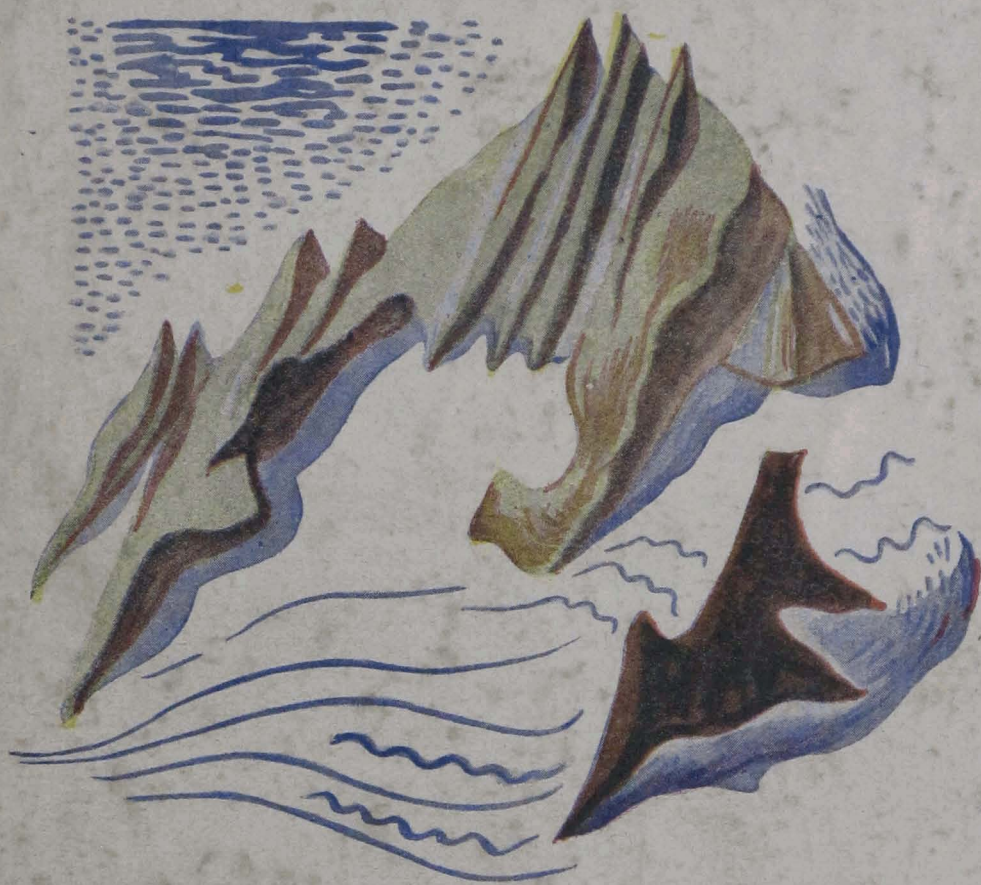
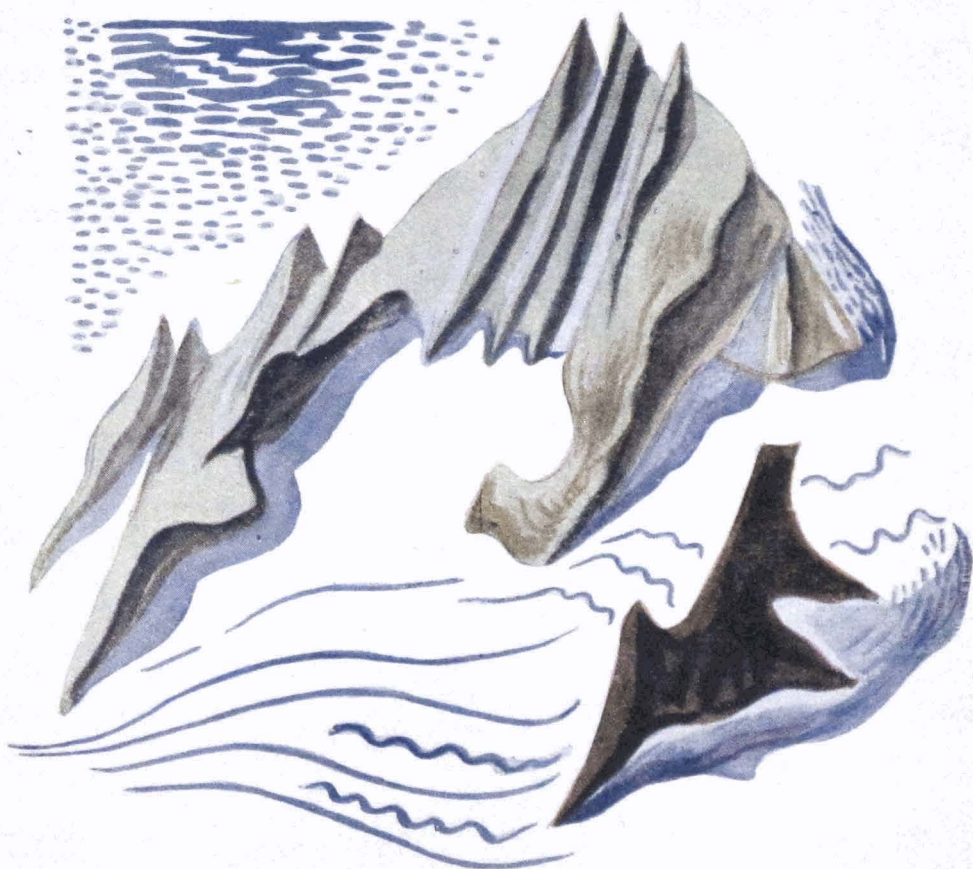


A CLIMBER'S GUIDE TO SONAMARG



KASHMIR

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GREAT COULOIR

CONTENTS

PREFACE

INTRODUCTION

	PAGE
Ziwan and Lidderwatt. by J. A. Jackson	... 1
Thajiwas : by C. W. F. Noyce	... 7
Durin Nar by C. W. F. Noyce	... 20
Amarnath Group and Neighbouring Peaks by T. H. Tilly	... 21
Ladakh : by G. Whittle	... 27
Nilanai Valley : by C. W. F. Noyce	... 45
Mountains North of Sonamarg : by T. H. Tilly	... 46
Nichinai : by C. W. F. Noyce	... 49
List of First Ascents	... 50

ILLUSTRATIONS

Great Couloir	Frontispiece
Glacier Three and Valehead Peak		...	9
Umbrella Peak		...	10
Innominate Peak		...	10
View from Peak 17,871 ft.		...	25
Near Matayan		...	25
Thajiwas (The valley of the Glaciers).		...	9
Peaks 17,871 ft. & 17,061 ft.		...	38
East from Amarnath		...	26
Locking S. E. from Peak 16,350 ft.		...	37
Diagram of Glacier Crag		...	51
Map		---	52

PREFACE.

The object of this tentative experiment is not the production of a guide-book of the Lakeland pattern. The district is not suited to such, nor is the knowledge of any man adequate to it. It is wanted by no possible public. But the need which has been felt during the war years, by Service personnel of British or Alpine experience, is of a part to which they can turn, on a fortnight or month's leave, and where they can be certain of good climbing of the standard to which they are accustomed. Many others too for years may not have time or money for a long expedition. They need a centre, such as Sonamarg, with its bungalows and camping grounds, seems almost ideally to be. They need indications of the main structure and disposition of the peaks around, as of the chief possibilities of exploration. They may require words from travellers who also have suffered from the peculiar problems of the district. For these reasons we have thought it worth while recording these climbs and parts, so far as our young knowledge goes; judging the 'non-exhaustive nature of the attempt to be an advantage rather than disadvantage, in that it leaves more to the initiative of those who come after. To those who went before we owe rather an immense apology. It has been impossible, except in a few cases, to trace previous routes; even some peaks which must have been ascended several times, such as Valehead Peak, have a history of which we are in the main ignorant. All the ascents described were carried out by instructors with or without pupils on the Aircrew Mountain Course at Sonamarg in 1944, and are therefore often simply an indication of the sort of lines conceived by the many who may have known this district earlier. Because this is a pioneer attempt, it should be considered the precursor of others. And because it is a Himalayan Club publication, any suggestions or enquiries by those who are interested might be made to the Secretary of the club at 7, Mahadeo Road, New Delhi.

The reason for choosing Sonamarg has therefore been partly fortuitous, in that it was the centre chosen for climbing by the organisers of this scheme. The establishment of the centre has moreover meant the further possibility of a hut whose use it was hoped might be taken over later by the Himalayan Club. But it would be hard to imagine a part accessible by car which would be better suited. We hope only that conditions may continue such that it can be explored further, and that this short attempt might be the beginning of the greater popularity which this region undoubtedly deserves.

The map is by G. Whittle; the cover design and diagram of Glacier Crag are the work of R. L. Taylor.

7 January, 1945.

C.W.F. NOYCE.

INTRODUCTION.

Sonamarg is set high in the Sind Valley, before the Westward flow of the river is turned South to the plains. At this point it cuts through a line of igneous rock running North West to South East, weathered and firm. Nichinai and Thajiwass valleys from North and South, run alongside these harder strata to join the Sind just below Sonamarg. Cut off by them, the rock to the East of these valleys is sand and lime, of frail quality. It is split by two more major valleys to the East, the Nilanai from the North and the Durin Nar from the South, descending to join the main stream. East again of the Nilanai, which descends from the Bot Kulan Ganj into Ladakh, lies a fine snow and rock massif culminating in peaks of over 17,000 feet. To the South, from the head of the Durin Nar, a pass leads over to Kolahoi and the Southern Hills. Further East still, the valley divides. The true head is towards the Zoji La; a Southern tributary joins from the direction of Amarnath and the Harinag lakes. Notes on the geology of the area will be found in the section dealing with Ladakh.

The best climbing in the immediate neighbourhood of Sonamarg is therefore in the Thajiwass valley to the South, or a little further off in the line of peaks West of the Nichinai to the North West. Due North of the village the summits are yellow and dolomitic in appearance, but utterly fragile, the strata running vertically upward to end in a fantasia of tottering pinnacles reminiscent of a Walt Disney background. For Alpine or sub-Alpine glaciers, and firm Lakeland or Alpine rock, the Thajiwass provides in any degree of difficulty. But it must be emphasised that on many of these smaller glaciers the danger of falling stones from the higher cliffs is considerable. The bigger glaciers and peaks East of the Nilanai are accessible on a two or three day expedition, while for the same length, or for a week at time, the peaks above Amarnath and on both sides of the Zoji La provide in every contour the nearest that we know to the Alps in their olden days, before exploitation. Valleys

branch to right and left, beckoning towards bright summits of rock or snow, unclimbed and unnamed. Camp may be set on glacier or meadow, as Whympers set it. And conditions of ice and snow on the peaks, as well as the length of climbs, are very similar to those familiar from Switzerland. Generally, if you take some 3,000 feet off the height of a Kashmir peak, you will have very roughly its counterpart in the Alps. On lower hills more severe rock climbing is possible; and in Thajiwas Valley very severe rubber climbs, on Glacier Crag and other buttresses, climbing that in Wales or the Lakes would be enthusiastically elaborated, firm and clean.

It follows that equipment will be much the same as for mountaineering in the Alps, except that tents and camping kit are needed as substitute for huts. Conditions may vary more here. There may be greater cold in winter, with the snow lying longer into the summer. Then the glaciers stand out so dry that the crevasses are obvious and safe even to the solitary adventurer. But the similarity is in general striking; in August and September every type of Alpine climb is well possible under weather conditions far happier than those which harassed us nearer home.

The worry of guides and porters which upset the best laid plans of Alpine pioneers is replaced here by the all-Indian problems of transport pony or coolie. The ideal would be to travel light enough to be able to take sufficient for two or three day excursions oneself. This should be possible with light tents, sleeping bags and dehydrated rations of the American pattern. For longer journeys coolies or ponies or both are needed; though here too the coolie worry could be cut down by establishing a base at Baltal, Mecchoi or in the Nilanai and carrying from there. It is hard to blame coolies in their demands; but it is harder to accede willingly to them. At Pahlgam in October, 1944, Rupees five a day were demanded by coolies; at Sonamarg something like Rupees two a day for coolies and four for horses. This compares very unfavourably with the rates for Dhotiyals in Gharwal. But Kashmir has no hard and fast rates. The bargainers, as in the bazaars

of Srinagar, stand the better chance. As an alternative it might be preferable to put oneself in the hands of one of the big Srinagar agencies, and allow them to make all arrangements for transport, coolies, and as much equipment as possible, bequea-irritating thing the sum in lump rather than having it frittered by the irritating processes known only to Kashmiri pony wallahs.

Something should be said on 'Corrective Method' On the hills round Sonamarg the chances of rescue in the event of accident, unless one were to have an organised party below, are very many times smaller than in the Alps. The practice of solitary, unrestricted climbing holds only the pleasures of forbidden fruit among new peaks. And most of the Thajiw glaciers, for instance, have objective dangers from stones that for the solitary are very real. In these hills there is no help; an extra care must be taken, an extra eye kept on weather, and as much First Aid kit as possible carried.

In classification of climbs that seemed to need classifying we have taken as pattern the system used in the Welsh guide-books. Both standards and lengths necessarily suffer from being subjective, some of the climbs having been done only once, and under peculiar conditions.

There is a Dak Bungalow at Sonamarg, another bungalow and a new Rest House being built. But in the summer months the numerous Camping Sites will be irresistible. Food to a limited extent, and fuel can be obtained locally; while for transport there is an abundance of coolies and ponies. The village boasts also a post office and policeman. From Ganderbal it is accessible by irregular motor road, and though we were fain not mention it, even the path to Baltal should under good conditions be 'jeepable'.

ZIWAN AND LIDDERWATT

Ziwan and Lidderwatt are in separate valleys, the quick approach to the Lidderwatt being via Pahlgam and the west Lidder valley, that to Ziwan being via Ganderbal and the Sind.

These two valleys are separated by a range of hills running roughly South west to North East from Ganderbal up the Kashmir Vale to Thajiwas above Sonamarg.

Such a pass as the Yam Har (13,448 ft.) provides an appropriate central crossing point for this range and a very useful focal point for the country between Ziwan and Lidderwatt. It is this which, by its provision of an easy crossing from one valley to the other, gives the walker and climber (in all probability encumbered by much equipment) an extensive area in which to roam.

Lidderwatt Area : Approach.

Pahlgam like Sonamarg is both well situated for the hills and provided with coolies, ponies and food. From this village the West Lidder River trends North West, and for 15 miles to Lidderwatt the walk is a gradual rise from 7,000 ft. to 9,000. Aru, 7,920 ft. is a very pretty little alp half way between these two points and provides good camping sites with plenty of fresh water and fuel. Ponies can be hired and food purchased at the tiny village. There is also a Forest Hut providing sleeping accommodation and cooking facilities. (Aru is a good centre for the Southern ridges and peaks of the Kolahoi Massif).

Facilities and Possibilities around Kolahoi.

At Lidderwatt there are many good camping grounds. The situation is beautiful, amid thickly fir clad slopes and with pinnacled ridges springing out in each direction of the compass. From Lidderwatt it is but another 9 miles to the snout of Kolahoi's North glacier, the route following the river to its main source at the glacier (N. E. for the first 6 miles bending sharply due E. for the last 3).

A mile from the snout there are fine camping sites, which immediately make available the many peaks on either side of the upper reaches of the west Lidder.

Kolahoi N. Glacier is of easy access and provides the quickest route on to the unclimbed North Ridge. Ascent of the glacier in a South East direction brings the climber to the base of the East ridge; the distance is considerable but the difficulties will be found negligible owing to the excellent conditions prevailing in the summer months. Probably the rock island which divides the glacier provides the most appropriate place at which to spend the night before the E. Ridge ascent.

West of the Kolahoi peak (17,799 ft.) is a fine rock ridge belonging to Kolahoi group and culminating in a particularly striking rock peak which towers above the camping ground. The North, North East Ridge would be steep and probably tough, but an absorbing proposition for a strong party.

North East of the camping ground is the Point 16,041ft, Hur Baghwan, the slopes mainly grass, old moraine boulders and scree, with a final short rock buttress. (16,041 is the Eastern termination of the long ridge which ends in the west at Lesser Thajiwas Peak).

North West of the camping ground the most striking peak is Basmai, 15,638 ft. The greater part of its bulk is bare rock of poor quality. Best approach from this side is by the Ruyil or Basmai ravine, offshoots of the West Lidder valley.

Lidderwatt to Yam Har.

If instead of following the river to the North East and round the Kolahoi valley, you turn west at Lidderwatt, you enter the nullah leading to Sekiwas and the excellent walking country around that area.

Sekiwas (I believe this is a local name not marked on the maps) is a pleasant alpine meadow set at 11,200ft. and

at a distance of 7 miles from Lidderwatt. Good camping ground with water and fuel. (Milk procurable from Gujars and probably sheep also). The outcrops of sedimentary rock serve to accentuate the strong resemblance that these hills bear to the British fells (Yorkshire Dale country in particular). To the south are many points over 14,000 ft., and pretty little tarns such as Tar Sar; to the west the hills are of the same type, with Des Masjid 14,562 ft. the central and dominating peak.

Yam Har is four miles North of Sekiwas. The structure of the hills is such that one feels oneself to be walking at the bottom of a gigantic pudding basin. The East wall of this "rock bowl" sweeps round to Point 15,404 ft. and Yam Har in the North, curving on to Point 15,118 ft. ("Sentinel Peak") in the West; from here, instead of continuing its sweep to complete the full circle, the ridge curls tightly to form the wall of a very striking rock amphitheatre at the foot of the Yam Har South side. One of the many interesting features of this amphitheatre is the large isolated rock pinnacle bearing strong resemblance to the Sphinx.

Here, also at the foot of Yam Har, is a little unnamed tarn which would provide a very pleasantly secluded and convenient camping site if wood were brought from Sekiwas.

The whole ridge of the "rock bowl" is sharp and pinnacled like the Cuillin Ridge of Skye; the curve from East to North is particularly well defined and in most places the ridge will be unavoidable owing to its steep sides.

The two main peaks, Point 15,404 ft. and 15,118 are described later.

From the tarn over the pass to Ziwan is but another 6—7 miles.

ZIWAN AREA.

Route to Ziwan and Facilities.

The Ziwan Forest Hut is situated on Southern slopes of the Sind Valley at a height of 10,400 ft. and is reached by crossing the river at Kulan (4 miles beyond Gund) and ascending through pleasant coniferous forest for 3,000 feet. Its situation is ideal; within range of a day are many high peaks, ridges and glaciers; ponies, coolies and food are available at Gund.

Due East of the hut is the Basmal ridge, Basmal (15,638 ft.) and subsidiary peaks. The rock is mainly sandstone and slate, not conducive to climbing.

Four miles South is the Yam Har and the rock ridge for which it conveniently supplies the only practicable crossing.

Route.

Very rough pony track behind the hut rises steeply for approximately 1,500 feet to above the tree line. From here it can be suitably termed a "High Level Route" along the 12,000 ft. contour until reaching Yem Sar, a very pretty tarn within half a mile of the Yam Har, where camp could be placed if fuel were brought from Ziwan. The hills form roughly a horseshoe around this high valley, of which the two dominating peaks are 15,404 ft. above Yem Sar and 15,118 ft. above Kem Sar. Beginning from Ziwan the ridge rises to 13,800 ft. (approx.). It is mainly grass with slate pinnacles and bears a resemblance to Zabnar in the Thajiwass district. It is a good view point. From the highest summit it falls gradually to 13,000 feet forming a small col divided by a little pinnacle East of Yem Sar. From the col the ridge rises steeply in a series of buttresses leading up to Point 15,404 feet. Here the ridge branches East and West.

The East branch extends to the West Lidder valley and consists of many unclimbed peaks. There is a short branching of this ridge which curves East then South, forming the East wall of the "rock bowl".

The West branch descends in a series of pinnacles (Striding Edge type) to Yam Har pass, 13,448 feet, rises again buttress peak fashion to Point 15,118 feet and there divides again. The South branch curves to form the rocky amphitheatre; the North branch softens out in a number of rounded peaks which descend to the tree line. There is a little col between the last of the buttress peaks and the final East Ridge of 15,118.

Point 15,404 Feet.

The best approach to the summit would seem to be the Yam Har pass along the exposed pinnacle ridge. Owing to the loose slippery nature of the sedimentary rocks this would require great caution.

Again, the steep buttress route from the col above Yem Sar seems practicable and would constitute a really fine expedition from Ziwan hut or a camp at the tarn. Different methods of approach would be numerous, and the future climbing possibilities are good.

The two glaciers at the base of its North face would ensure many glacier expeditions as a change from climbing.

Point 15,118 feet. ("Sentinel Peak")

This is the most striking peak. Its well defined ridges sweep down majestically from a final cone which dominates the whole area.

It was decided that the best approach would be an ascent from the South Side up to the col between the buttress peaks and 15,118; from the col a climb along the East Ridge. The South Ridge also is moderate, but from Ziwan or Yem Sar would necessitate a much longer walk before commencing the final rock ridge. This would also be the case from the little unnamed tarn on the South side of the Yam Har (from which place incidentally it would be best to begin the East Ridge route). The ridge ascending from Yam Har to the col, during the long days of summer, would provide the more interesting

route to the final rock ridge and give the longer and more satisfying expedition.

The West Ridge is steeper than the East but the rock would commence at the same height.

The North Ridge is the longest and steepest; and would probably require a very strong party for its attempt. All the faces are uninviting.

This mountain country around Ziwan and Lidderwatt, with its close proximity to Thajiwas, is a fine holiday playground for walker and climber. Mountain Forest Huts, camping grounds and convenient passes enable great flexibility in the planning of such a holiday, amid truly lovely mountain scenery, bonny little tarns, high hills, clear atmosphere and grandeur of panorama.

THAJIWAS

The valley runs South East to North West to join the Sind river just below Sonamarg. It is characterised by the two very different types of rock of which its bounding hills are composed. On the left, as one climbs up it, is the soft lime and sandstone which at one time may have formed a great dome of the whole. This in places outcrops in startling pinnacles and ridges, to slope back at last into the easier grass mouldings of Zabnar, 13,334 feet. This peak, a climb of Cambrian scale, gives from its position perhaps the best views in the district, and in particular of the steep row of buttresses opposite. Here the lines of tougher, igneous rock jut upward in sharp pinnacle ridges. Between the ridges, which pile themselves higher and higher to culminate in the peaks bounding the valley on this side, six fairly well defined glaciers are at present in action. But Nature appears to be stripping and carving the valley so fast that these glaciers, which at one time perhaps joined to flow down it, are retracting their tongues at a speed perceptible in years, to leave smooth ice worn slabs of an increasing steepness below them. Only that which we call Number 3 seems to start from an extensive snowfield and to be actively pushing. Yet even as it pushes it is being cut off, threatening in its retreat to leave its hollow by Valehead Peak in the condition of Cwm Llydaw under Snowdon. The glaciers are steep, harder of ascent than the average Alpine glacier, and the main climbing starts from and between them. For its purposes, there is a convenient camping ground at some 11,000 feet between Glaciers 3 and 2, directly under Glacier Crag. To start from here saves 2 hours walk, and makes more solid climbing possible in the day. We will take the glaciers as landmarks in their order, beginning with that which overlooks Sonamarg and is the first seen on approaching the valley.

GLACIER ONE

The glacier immediately overlooking Sonamarg and directly under the 15,928 foot "Thajiwass Peak" is, on the pattern of the others steep of snout with more level middle portion

leading up to the high rock curtain of the watershed. Thajiwass peak leans over on this side in a series of fierce cliff faces broken between the two summits by the Great Couloir. The couloir appears the best line of approach on this side. It is perhaps 1,000 feet in height, steepening in places to 70° but very much dependent for feasibility on seasonal conditions. It was first climbed by J. Waller in 1937, and the summit of the peak reached by the final rock pyramid. In October 1944 it was found suitable to crampons, with a hard crust of snow overlaying and ice pitches in some places. But the route remains perhaps the most impressive in the valley; particularly if, as would now seem necessary, (Waller bivonacked at 12,000 feet on the glacier and descended by Glacier Two) descent has to be made by the same way.

Another possible route, which was very nearly completed by A. J. M. Smyth and Dr. Graham, would be to ascend to the very head of the glacier, and climb back along the watershed curtain of the North East Ridge.

The right (true left) flow of the glacier descends from a peak of lower calibre, Lesser Thajiwass Peak, just on 15,000 feet in height. This is separated from Thajiwass peak by the steep rock buttresses which head the glacier and which are themselves higher than it is. If the glacier is climbed (easily) to the col joining Lesser Thajiwass to the main peaks, a 300 feet rock buttress completes the route with really sound rock climbing. Descent can be made more easily from between the twin summits, down a boulder-filled depression to the lower glacier.

GLACIER TWO

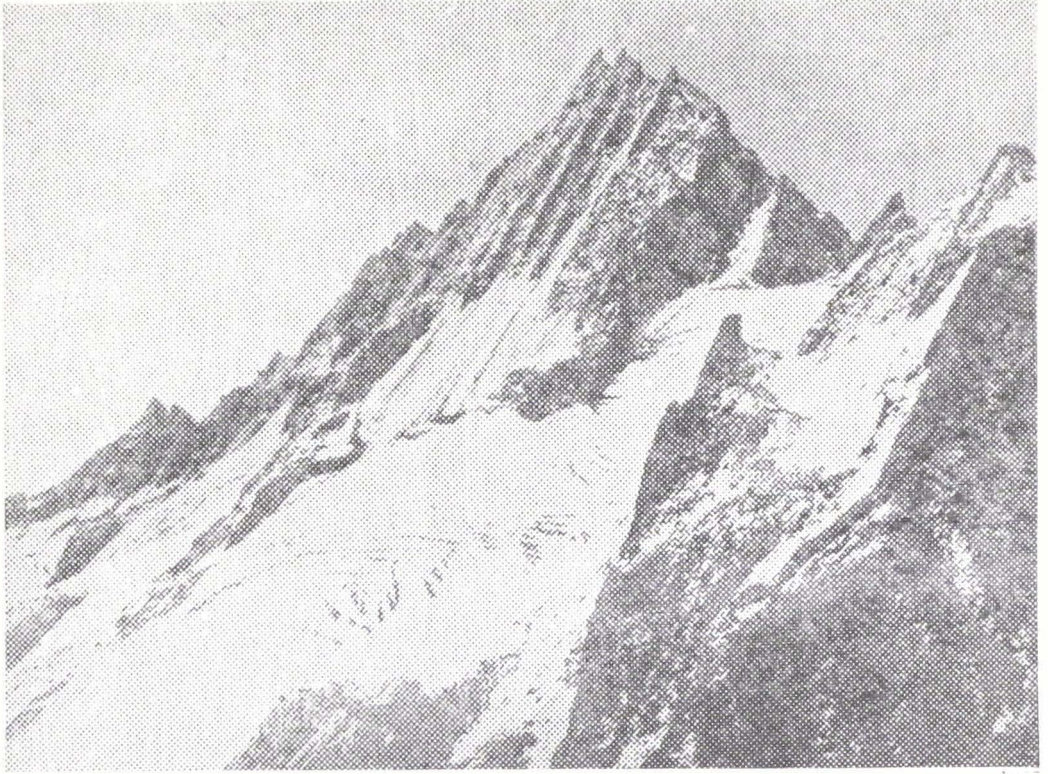
Glacier Two is divided from One by two parallel rock ridges running up to the higher buttresses of Thajiwass Peak. The main glacier descends from close under the final pyramid, flowing evenly for a while before the jumble of the lower icefall. A broad level terrace extends the whole way under the watershed rock curtain.



GLACIER THREE AND VALEHEAD PEAK.



THAJIWAS (THE VALLEY OF THE GLACIERS.)



INNOMINATE PEAK.



UMBRELLA PEAK.

It is impossible to give information of the glacier itself that could be of value. In 1937 Waller descended from Thajiwass Peak "straight down the middle of the icefall". In 1944 the centre appeared hopeless, but an easy line was discovered under the rocks up the left (true right) side, until the climbers were stopped by a chasm at a point where the peak itself appeared within easy reach by walking along the snow terrace. Descending disconsolately, they found a traverse into the chasm and ice chimney between the glacier and the rock buttress. This they climbed with some ado, but too late in the day. The line cannot be a certain quantity, while the chasm might under very little different circumstances be bridged and easy. Or a way up the steeper right (true left) flank of the glacier might be possible in crampons and with good conditions.

Some good rock-climbing, of Welsh type, is to be found in the continuation of the Thajiwass Peak ridge bounding the glacier on its North side. The ridge rises in a series of steep pinnacular jerks. At about 11,000 feet a colossal slab, very visible from the South, forms the jerk; to its right a Yellow Crag about 500 feet in height, and right again a sharp pinnacle with some 400 feet vertical drop—Suicide Rock.

YELLOW CRAG.

Between Great Slab and Suicide Rock; inconspicuous at first in the bulk of the ridge side. The construction is simple; an ill defined gully running into the cliff, bounded by two main ribs—on the left that of Knee Climb, on the right Straight Rib, a sharp and continuous landmark on the cliff.

Knee Climb.

450 feet. Starts up the first major rib on the right of grassy gully dividing from Great Slab on the left. The rib line is followed as accurately as possible for 200 feet—and it is customary, when in doubt, to make tactful use of the knee. Passage of a rock window seen on the main rib to the right (that bounding Finishing Gully) lands upon more broken ground, juniperclad, but with good pitches if the line is preserved direct.

Standard : Very Difficult. Rock sound, clean in the first part.

Window Cracks.

Finishing Gully, which splits the face, ends in a series of ill-defined caves and overhangs. But for the first 150 feet it is easy, groove-gully pitch type. Then from the bed a line of minor gully, in the form of parallel cracks, starts left to end under the window of Knee Climb ridge. This gives 130 feet of good climbing, in places delicate. Descent can be made from the window by an easy broken gully into Grassy Gully.

Standard : Very Difficult.

Straight Rib Climb.

The rib bounding Finishing Gully on the right, the straightest and the cleanest of the cliff, is not climbed through from the base. A chimney immediately right, vertical at the start, leads after 150 feet to a birch tree terrace. Thence the true ridge is reached by traverse left, and the edge kept direct to the summit. Route is straight and unartificial. At one point a lasso was needed on the first ascent; the pitch has been climbed without but not led. The line eventually joins the Knee Climb rib very shortly below the summit of the Crag.

Standard : Severe.

Further right the cliff becomes broken and vegetational. To its right again Suicide Rock, which gives a sheer drop of 400 feet to the South, provides interesting scrambling ways by the back stairs.

Yellow Crag is but one of the cliffs of this bounding ridge of Thajiwās Peak. Higher the same structure continues over many towers and buttresses, with infinite possibilities.

BETWEEN GLACIERS TWO AND THREE.

The structure of the rocks between these glaciers is of two prominent low-lying cliffs buttressing two higher peaks. Glacier Two is bounded to the South by a series of very steep tilted cliffs, similar to those of Thajiwās Peak overlooking

Glacier One, These culminate in an unnamed Peak of some 15,700 feet height. The lower buttressing oliff, **Swallow Crag**, is broad and split by a deep central gully. Only one climb has been worked out on it: the ridge immediately right of the gully leads, 300 feet up, to a picturesque rock finger, **Peggy's Pinnacle**. The climbing is of **Difficult** standard, reminiscent of **Tryfan** in North Wales. 200 feet higher another needle, of similar structure but more impressive scale, gives 150 feet severe rubber climbing by its direct face: **Thajiwas Needle**. The ridge continues above. It has not been explored further.

Between **Swallow Crag** and the next buttressing cliff, **Glacier Crag**, is a broad rock and snow amphitheatre, providing easy descent. **Glacier Crag** itself juts boldly into the valley, of which it is the most prominent cliff.

GLACIER CRAG (see diagram)

The Crag is about 2,500 feet in height. In scale and structure it resembles some magnified Scottish cliff, and the routes so far worked out on it have the same feel. On the **Glacier Three** side its wall is vertical and split by ferocious cracks; turning the corner to face across the valley the slab sides are uncovered, steep in the lower part, tending more brokenly as they rise. At the centre of the cliff a line of crack splits the face, bounded on the right by a real rock—nose, **Brother's Buttress**, which is the true dividing line of the structure and continues in a direct line to the summit. To the right again a jumble of aretes converge at a prominent rock pinnacle, **Leaning Pinnacle**.

The rock is in the main clean and sound, even when, as on **Brother's Buttress**, it is a sequence of sharp spiky steps. Belays are bollardic. It is very often impossible to finish to the summit and walk down the **Amphitheatre**; Nature has provided in the run of ridges down to the right a series of easier gullies, juniper filled. But it is a cliff upon which one might easily be benighted.

CLIMBS

Rainy Traverse.

The scramble round the base of the cliff towards Glacier Three in search of an opening led to the first baby cleft upon the Southern face, a steep open chimney with good holds. The climb takes, from the top of this, such grass and juniper ledges as will lead most conveniently over the bulge of smooth slab that is the feature of the lower left hand corner of the cliff (as it faces the valley); and works across to descend a diagonal fault ending near the foot of Central Cracks. The pitches taken may be varied, but the line is inevitable: Climbing in the first chimney and on one slab pitch of the traverse is standard Very Difficult. Elsewhere, too much vegetation.

One Way Slab Climb.

The lower left hand section of the crag facing the valley is steep and slabby. The only direct ascent done so far is One Way Slab Climb, which takes the steepness at its shortest, and escapes right so soon as possible. A good Lakeland rubber climb for the sunny weather. Length 250 feet. Stars at the highest part of a broad terrace, Lord's Rake pattern, crossing under the steep cliff at this point.

A Crack starting left and overhanging slightly leads to a noble belay; 30 feet. To the right a series of ledges gives 80 feet of delicate traverse before a more direct line can be struck up to a high rock pinnacle conspicuously ridging the cliff face. In the latter part, to the pinnacle, there is a variety of choice. After it, Rainy Traverse is joined.

Standard: Just Very Severe, Rubbers.

Bending Gully.

The wide open rift starting up left from the foot of Central Cracks. In its lower 200 feet snow worn, delicate slabs. Higher, an excess of juniper. But a small rib to the right, First Day Rib, on a level with the steep section of Brother's Buttress across Central Cracks, gives 150 feet of sound climbing. Difficult standard.

Central Cracks and Brother's Buttress.

The buttress divides the face, of which it is the most prominent feature, in a series of steps leading direct from base to summit of the crag. In height it is over 2,000 feet. The climbing is everywhere steep, nowhere wanting in just adequate hold. Even the spikes appear to be firm. It is in fact perhaps the best rock climb of the British pattern in the district.

Start is made in Central Cracks to the left. These are forsaken when they become too grassy to be of interest, and the steep section of the buttress, Kestrel Crag, very soon towers above. This can be taken direct over some startling pinnacles. Above it, the ridge leans back in a series of 300 feet stretches, upon one of which is the hardest pitch, technically, of the climb. But the line is unmistakable.

Standard: Severe, just, in Boots.

Leaning Pinnacle Aretes

The right of Brother's Buttress, seen from below, a high pinnacle leans out towards Swallow Crag, at two thirds height up the cliff. A number of long ridges lead up to it, the most conspicuous rising from the wall of the Amphitheatre. All give rock climbing of a good Difficult standard. They are divided by gullies suitable for descent. Above the pinnacle, which is climbed around its right hand shoulder, connection can be made with Brother's Buttress.

UMBRELLA PEAK (15,700 feet, approx.).

Glacier Crag is a separate jut of rock. From the col which joins it to the main massif behind, descent can be made quickly by the wide amphitheatre on the right, or to Glacier Three on the left. The peak which it buttresses rises in a series of rock escarpments more broken than is usual in this part, to a summit cone of rock bounded on the right by a sweeping snow ridge. The peak is accessible from Glacier Three. When it was first climbed in October 1944, very heavy powder snow made an early, laborious ascent of the rocks to the right from the glacier necessary. But under better

conditions it would be easier to ascend the full height of the glacier and traverse back along the summit ridge.

GLACIER THREE

The largest of the six glaciers is also the most active. In form it is roughly triangular. One tributary starts under the Umbrella Peak skyline; a broad level terrace stretches South, under the steep cliff of Nasim Pahalin Bal, to meet the main glacier head. The Twin ridges of Nasim Pahalin Bal, unclimbed and uncharted, remain a challenge. From the end of the terrace, from the col between Nasim Pahalin Bal and Valehead Peak, the main glacier descends jumbled to break in a confusion of seracs over smooth slabs at its base, into the valley. A feasible line was found up the centre of the glacier in 1944, but conditions vary greatly. The upper part is level and stable and more closely resembling a Swiss glacier than any other in the valley; the seracs at the bottom are breaking off with a rapidity, that makes the shrinkage almost noticeable during a month's climbing.

VALEHEAD PEAK (15,528 feet)

Stands at the head of the valley, buttressing Glacier Three with its right flank; while on the left, as seen from down the valley, it throws an arm, in the form of a miniature Péteret ridge, to connect with its 15,100 feet satellite, Mosquito Peak. Another main ridge extends roughly due North into the valley and divides Glacier Three from the two smaller glaciers that succeed it, Four and Five.

Routes

Four routes have been worked out, so far as we know, up this peak from Thajiwass valley.

I. Glacier Three Route

Takes Glacier Three as directly up its centre as possible, starting under Glacier Crag. From the head, an easy snow couloir leads direct to the summit of the peak, some 600 feet above the glacier. The route depends on conditions on the glacier; but they are never likely to be easy.

II. North Face & Ridge Route

The North Ridge of the peak, long and serrated, divides Glaciers Three and Four. Its lowest buttress, Sunday Crag, dominates Glacier Four. The route takes the face directly above the head of Glacier Four, which is reached easily either from Glacier Five or up the rocks of its right (true left) flank.

- (a) *The Face*, An irregular couloir splits this, narrowing later to an ice-bedded rock gully. This steepens uncomfortably until it becomes clearly advisable to traverse right on rocks to the sky line North Ridge. The exit from the gully's embrace is awkward; followed by slabs which under new snow conditions may become dangerous. The traverse is some 300 feet and without really good belay.
- (b) *The Ridge*: Rises in a series of huge monolithic blocks, after the type of Glyder Fach in North Wales, towards the summit; at first steeply, then after 300 feet as a nearly horizontal, much battered edge. From the point where the angle eases the summit is seen still some way distant. It is simpler, rather than follow the ups and downs of the crest, to take to a series of block ledges that lead more easily off right, close above Glacier Three, and to join the easy couloir of the Glacier Three route below the summit.

The expedition involves as much serious mountaineering as any in the valley. Particularly in the couloir and on the traverse a party of three would be useful. On a summer's day it should be possible to take the whole ridge, with Sunday Crag.

III. Mosquito Peak Route

As seen from lower in the valley, the buttress to the left of Valehead Peak presents somewhat the appearance of the Aiguille Noire de Péteret, joined to the parent mountain by a sharp rock ridge. To the North, the cliffs plunge from this

ridge steeply down to Glaciers Four and Five. (Both Glaciers are useful practice grounds: from Glacier Four interesting rock routes have been worked out on Sunday Crag to the right).

The skyline, (N. E. Ridge) of Mosquito Peak (15,150 ft. approx.) descends to the skyline col at the head of the valley, But this col, on arrival, proves to be not yet the true col, 14,200 feet; quarter of a mile of the easy snow of Glacier Six must first be crossed. Glacier Six bends down from the very heart of Valehead Peak, beyond Mosquito Peak, in a smooth curve. From their Southern and more broken side Mosquito Peak and ridge are easily accessible.

Thus the traverse of Mosquito Peak and Valehead Peak is a route with a safe walk off. From the lower col, the ridge and N. E. face of Mosquito Peak give 800 feet of rock, difficult if it is plastered in its Northerly frontage with snow. From the summit descent is made to a gap in the ridge (and from here can if necessary be continued easily to Glacier Six). Continuing, the climber follows up the obvious block structure of the ridge, with sharp views down the precipices to the right, until the line steepens to the final section of Valehead Peak. The ridge ends in a series of sharp pinnacles, cut off from the peak itself by a narrow col. From this a broad easy gully descends to the head of Glacier Six. The simplest line circumvents two pinnacles to reach the col. The wall of the main peak remains. A line of traverse to the left, on very steep rock reminiscent of the Devil's Kitchen traverse, lands after 200 feet on easier ground and a scramble to the summit.

The route is therefore safe and easy of retreat. The rock is in the main sound. Time taken by a single climber from the summit of Mosquito Peak to the summit of Valehead Peak was one and a half hours. A good continuation returns by Pinnacle Ridge to the 14,200 ft. col, and along the whole remaining crest to Zabnar.

IV. Glacier Six and Pinnacle Ridge Route.

By crossing Glacier Six to the 14,200 ft. col overlooking Durin Nar, the further arm of Valehead Peak is reached. It

sweeps round with and on the Southern side of the glacier, to give the easiest line of approach to the peak. Glacier Six, which is practically uncrevassed, is crossed easily; from the col the ridge is unmistakable. After a rock scramble for some distance, a pinnacle buttress must be traversed over its left shoulder, the one tricky patch of the climb. Some of the rocks are unstable. Above this, the ridge continues round to the right, almost level in its upper portion, to the summit cairn. For descent, a couloir dropping to the glacier just short of the pinnacle buttress, seems more suitable. But it is a tempting glissade line, and may be iced near the bottom. It can also be used for ascent.

The ridge is the usual and quick way down from the other routes on the peak.

THE EAST SIDE OF THAJIWAS VALLEY.

The change from igneous to lime and sandstone is abrupt. At the 14,200 ft. col at the head of the valley it is possible to stand with one foot on the firm, the other on the fragile. For the Valehead Peak ridge continues in shaly form over a line of pinnacle peaks gradually descending as it curves round North with the curve of the Durin Nar, towards the easy grass ridge of Zabnar. The pinnacles are not too difficult for their instability to matter. From the col to Zabnar summit takes about two hours, and the scramble gives among the best views around Sonamarg, including Nanga Parbat, Nun Kun and the Ladakh peaks.

Zabnar can also be ascended from Sonamarg. The most usual path leaves the Thajiwass track about a mile and a half from Sonamarg, among the woods. It rises in zig-zag through forest, striking finally high grass slopes reminiscent of the Lakeland fells.

DURIN NAR.

The village of Saribal lies four and a half miles from Sonamarg up the Sind Valley. To it from the South descends the Durin Nar, whose stream rises close under the 14,422 feet col which gives access to the Kolahoi Valley. Four miles up the valley is a level space and suitable camping site, with wood, 11,600 feet. This is Nilanag.

We do not know whether Kolahoi has been approached and ascended from the Durin Nar. But the route might be more suitable than that usually taken from Sonamarg, via Baltal and the Harinag. It has also been found possible to reach the 14,422 ft. col from the 14,200 ft. col at the head of Thajiwass Valley, by traversing rough ground under peaks that continue the Valehead Peak Ridge. The traverse takes about 2½ hours unladen. Or a first Camp could be set at Nilanag, on the second day the col would be reached (three hours approx.), and the valley traversed until camp could be set as high as possible on the Kolahoi glaciers—perhaps on the prominent rock island above the first seracs. From there the East ridge would be easily accessible; or the unclimbed North Ridge could be attempted.

To the East of the Kolahoi col, a sharp rocky ridge-peak, challenging yet so far apparently un-named, obviously demands attention. It might be best attacked from the col, where the rock of the Southern side shows a slight shattering. The texture should be good, and the peak itself worthily 16 000 ft. It might be christened provisionally 'Innominate Peak'.

Other climbing can be done from the Durin Nar on the buttresses, 15,000 feet and over, to the East of Valehead Peak. This would be preferable to the attractive looking but unstable rock pinnacles due East of Nilanag

AMARNATH GROUP AND NEIGHBOURING PEAKS

Maps.

The area is covered on Survey of India one inch series, Kashmir and Jammu, Sheet No. 43 N/8 and N/12 up to the border of Ladakh, beyond which is the subject of another article. These sheets are quite adequate.

Approaches.

1. By the "Pilgrim Road" from Pahlgam in the East Liddar valley to Amarnath Cave. This track is an excellent piece of engineering; hills and corners well graded and the surface is for the most part very good. There is a small Dak Bungalow at Panjtarni amid magnificent scenery. This is only available during the summer months. The route is the easiest in the area and ponies may be taken up to Amarnath Cave at 12,700 ft.

2. From Baltal in the Sind Valley up the difficult nullah of the Upper Sind which is only accessible for ponies for about 3 miles from Baltal, that is, to the top of the steep hill beyond the point where the Sind river takes a sharp bend to the Southeast. The track then crosses a small stream and soon afterwards becomes indefinite, traversing very steep slopes of mud and detritus in which steps may have to be made. In places projecting buttresses enforce a crossing of the river though the rocks can be passed if the river is in spate. There is a Dak Bungalow (no food) at Baltal.

3. The Amarnath peaks may be approached directly from the Zoji La up the Kainpathar Nar. Dr. E.F. Neve describes this interesting route in the Himalayan Journal (H.J.) Vol. II. (1930) p. 63.

4. A route to Amarnath Cave from the Zoji La near Mechhoi is by way of the Lokut Gumbaz Nar which is on the opposite side of the valley to the Bod Gumbaz Nar. This route crosses the Seki Pansal pass into the high, scree-filled valley East of the Amarnath group. This leads into the Amarnath Nar just above the Cave.

Amarnath Group.

This fine group consists of a horse-shoe shaped ridge of typical Sind Valley limestone orientated Northwest—Southeast. The apex of the horse-shoe is in the Southeast at the

highest point, 17,290 ft., and the valley enclosed by the arms of the horse-shoe is the Kainpathar Nar which debouches into the valley of the Zoji La on the Kashmir side. The group is bounded by this latter valley on the Northwest, by the high nullah leading to the Seki Pantsal Pass on the East, by the Amarnath Nar or the South, and by the Upper Sind Valley to the Southwest, and also to the West where a Subsidiary peak, Baltal 14,512 ft., is connected by a ridge to the main mass. Southwest and West of the highest point are the other peaks of the group, of the following respective heights:— 16,427 ft., 15,815 ft., and 16,094 ft.

From many viewpoints, notably perhaps from Zabnar above Sonamarg, the Amarnath peaks are a magnificent sight and the great snow and ice North-West face above the Kainpathar Nar affords a splendid view from the track up the Zoji La. Dr. Neve has penetrated this nullah and suggests that the highest point might be reached from the ridge on the left which is the North arete of the mountain. This ridge could probably also be reached from the route from Amarnath Cave to the Seki Pantsal Pass. Its upper reaches look difficult. The peak has not yet been climbed.

The triangulated point to the Southwest of Peak 17,290 ft., marked on the map "Amarnath 16,427", is merely a small rise on the Southwest ridge of Peak 17,290 ft. It was first reached by Mr. W.H. Johnson in 1856 and used by him as a survey station. The writer with Messrs. J. Begg and A. Pike, both Australians, reached Point 16,427 ft., in October 1944 by the easy grass ridge at the junction of the Upper Sind Valley and the Amarnath Nar. High up the ridge becomes rocky with three rather rotten rock towers. The ridge leading to Peak 17,290 ft. was plastered with snow and impossible but it appeared that, even under good conditions, the passage of the mile-long ridge to the summit of Peak 17,290 ft. would present serious difficulties. Col. Kenneth Mason (H. J. Vol. II (1934) p. 132 footnote) expresses doubts whether peak 17,290 ft. is accessible from this direction and the present party formed the same impression.

Point 15,815 ft. is an easy little rock peak with a steep final stretch. It is less than a mile West of Point 16,427 ft. and is accessible by the ridge from that point or direct from the Upper Sind up long and steep grass slopes. It was first reached by Col. Mason's Survey Party in 1911 by this route, starting up the Kuthpathar Nar.

Point 16,094 ft. has not, so far as is known, been climbed, but it appears to be accessible from Point 15,815 ft. The ridge connecting these two summits is about a mile long. The peak could also probably be climbed direct from the Southeast.

Amarnath Cave is best reached by the splendid Pilgrim Road. This eventually crosses the nullah by means of long, permanent snow beds, under which the stream flows. The Cave itself is high, shallow, and rather unimpressive, with dressed stone terraces inside surmounted by iron railings of the type found round the "area" of a Bloomsbury boarding house.

Peaks S. and E. of Amarnath Nar.

Point 15,474 ft. Southeast of Amarnath across the nullah looks difficult on all sides. The easiest approach, though a laborious one, would probably be from the Upper Sind at Sangam. The rock climb along the Northeast ridge from Bhairo Ghati Pass would probably be a fine expedition, though the rocks are likely to be friable. The intense folding of the rock strata beneath this ridge on the precipitous Northwest face is an astonishing sight. Beyond Amarnath Cave good tracks continue up the nullah with impressive views of some extraordinary brown limestone peaks on the right. These peaks form the connecting ridge from the Bhairo Ghati Pass to a magnificent snow peak of 17,061 ft. on the Kashmir-Ladakh border. The peak nearest to Peak 17,061 ft. is a stupendous crooked tower of orange-red limestone. About four miles from Amarnath Cave a pass of 15,208 ft. is reached leading over into Ladakh. The ridge of which the pass is the lowest point is the Northwest ridge of peak 17,061 ft. Northwest of the pass two peaks of over 16,000 ft. look accessible but dull, the ascent being largely over scree.

Peak 17,061 ft.

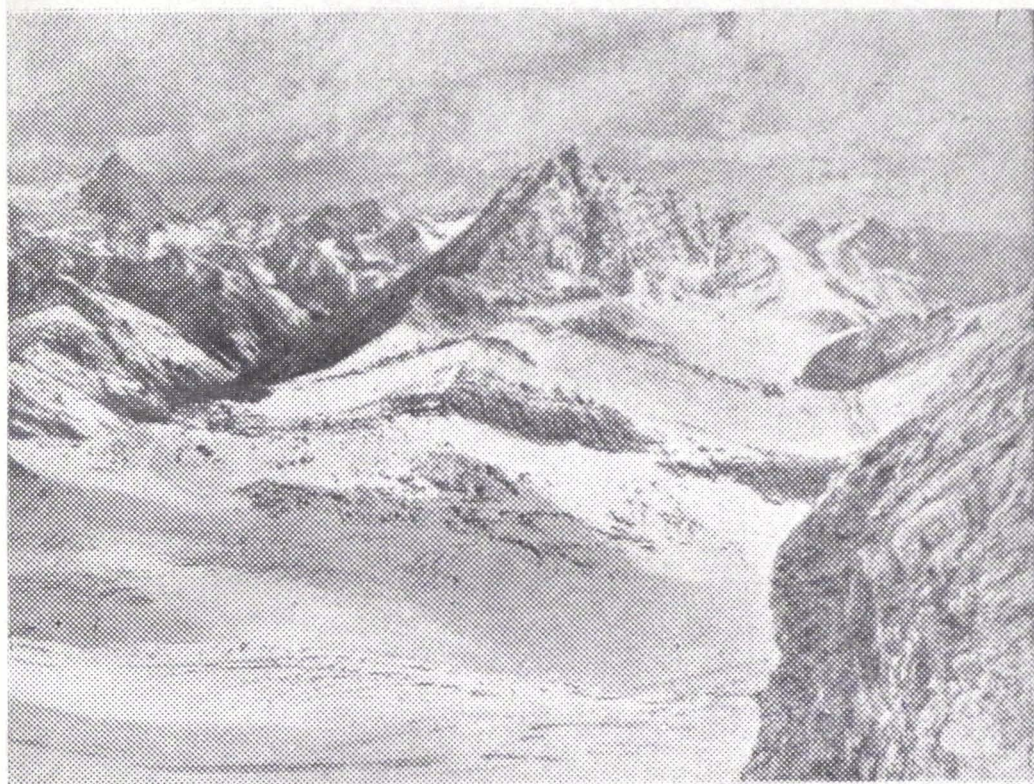
This splendid mountain, of noble form and somewhat isolated, draws the eyes from all around. It is particularly well seen from Peak 17,871 ft. an equally fine mountain across the large, heavily crevassed, glacier to the North (See Ladakh section). The tapering summit is supported by four ridges, probably all of which could be climbed if they could be reached. The South ridge of the peak has an enormous gendarme about 1,000 ft. below the top which might give considerable trouble. The Northwest ridge looks narrow and difficult. The writer, with Messrs. J. Begg and A. Pike, made what may be the first ascent of the peak in October, 1944, when the mountain was deep in new snow. They ascended the glacier on the West which is steep in its upper part. The crevasses might be troublesome in a dry season. The glacier leads to the lowest point of the Southwest ridge which was climbed without difficulty to the summit ridge slightly west of the highest point. Under the snowy conditions prevailing, the final ascent up very steep snow lying on frozen slaty scree was not easy. The summit itself is very small, and large cornices overhung the precipitous North face. The view was magnificent, Peak 17,871 ft. and Nichhang being especially fine. The great peaks to the East looked menacing as desultory snowstorms passed over and between them. The peak is well worth an ascent and probably the route described is the easiest.

Nichhang (17,862 ft.) - Southeast of Panjtarni.

This great rocky mass with hanging glaciers on its Northwest face may be accessible by the long glacier in the Neh Nar to the Southwest. Point 17, 243 ft., one mile to the South, was the scene of a fatal accident during an attempt on it in 1932 (H. J. Vol V. (1933) p. 108)

Peaks South of the Upper Sind.

Several peaks, between 15,000 ft. and 15,500 ft., and a number of smaller peaks, look accessible but are rather dwarfed by the proximity of Nichhang and Amarnath. To the west of this group great limestone ridges and towers rise to a peak of 15,043 ft.



VIEW FROM PEAK 17,871 ft. KOLAHOI (left) AND AMARNATH PEAK.



NEAR MATAYAN.



East from Amarnath: Nun Kun just visible left centre, Peak 15,474 ft. and Nichhang on right.

LADAKH

I. Introduction.

Southwest Ladakh is within easy reach of Sonamarg and offers mountaineering possibilities of a high order.

Within the limits of Sonamarg and the Upper Sind Valley to the South and West, and the line of Muski River to Dras on the Northeast, is a tract of country averaging 15,000-18,000 feet, readily accessible from the well-known Treaty Road of Ladakh which, from Zoji La, follows the course of the Gamru River in a general Northeasterly direction to its junction with the Muski to form the Dras River just west of Dras itself. The part of this tract in Kashmir, lying between the Valley of the Upper Sind and the Kashmir-Ladakh border, has already been described in the sections dealing with Nilanai and Amarnath.

II. Maps.

The area is covered by Sheets 43N/SW (out of print) and N/SE (not issued) of the half-inch series of the Survey of India. Except for the parts of Ladakh immediately adjoining the Kashmir border appearing on one-inch sheets 43 N/7 and N/11 and 43 N/12, reference must be made to the quarter-inch sheet 43N (Dras) which covers the whole of the area. This Quarter-inch sheet suffices for general appreciation of the area but lacks necessary detail for climbing purposes.

III. Geology.

Igneous rocks of Cretaceous age, belonging to the Dras Volcanic series, are traversed by the Gamru River in its lower reaches, and yield sound but unimportant rock climbing in this area immediately south of the Muski River. But by far the greater part of the region is made up of rocks of sedimentary origin of varying age and type, which were subjected to considerable regional stress during the mountain-building movements responsible for the uplift of the Great Himalayan Range. The effect has been to produce an area of considerable structural complexity, with strata, frequently vertical or

overturned, aligned along a general Northwest-Southeast axis. This alignment reflects the drainage of the country, consequent streams flowing N.W.- S.E., subsequent streams N.E. -S.W.

Along the Northern side of Sind Valley above Sonamarg are tremendous walls of grey limestone of Triassic age, with vertical or almost vertical dips; a feature reproduced in section in the splintered crags above Saribal village on the Southern side of the valley. Care needs to be exercised when dealing with this limestone series, for its more fissile members may disintegrate suddenly.

Northeast of Baltal the Zoji Nar has carved a spectacular gorge through crumbling slates of uncertain age. Beyond the Zoji La (11,557 ft.) these slates give way to more highly metamorphosed rock types: massive phyllites (micaceous slates), phyllitic and mica schists, sounder than the slates in texture, and offering more interesting and reliable climbing. The Mechhoi Peaks, and other peaks flanking the Suweke Nar, are representative of this class.

At Matayan, forming precipitous flanking walls rising several thousands of feet above the valley floor and extending downriver for some 4 miles to Pindras, is a great thickness of Upper Triassic Limestone. This limestone, part of a great overfold, gives rise to the prominent scarp features so conspicuously seen South and Southwest from the vicinity of Dras, and culminating in the peak of Beraz (17,881 ft.). Despite the impressive nature of this wall, climbing prospects are disappointing. Much of it is impracticable, and where routes do exist the going is so interrupted by frequent terraces surmounted by short overhangs that continuous climbing is hardly possible.

The volcanic rocks of the Dras area have already been mentioned briefly. They encroach along the northern edge of the present area as part of an extensive igneous series covering a great part of western and Central Ladakh. In such a land of plenty these outcrops south of the Muski River could only

attract when higher peaks are for the time being deemed impracticable.

IV. Weather.

Numerous crossings of the Zoji La into Southwest Ladakh were made between early September and mid October of 1944, and ascents ranging from 16,000 to 17,500 ft. were accomplished during this period in the Mechhoi area. The following remarks must therefore be treated with caution as not necessarily indicating the customary weather conditions prevailing during this particular period of the year.

In the first place it seems more than probable that a greater reliance can be placed upon weather conditions in Ladakh than in the neighbouring parts of Kashmir. Bad weather coming up from the South and West has been observed encroaching upon the Sonamarg peaks when still higher peaks East of Mechhoi remained largely immune.

Secondly, occasional snowfalls may be expected after the beginning of September. Later on, in October, the higher peaks tend to become more heavily invested; the oncoming of increasing cold failing to remove or to cement earlier snowfalls, and except where wind-crusting has played a part, this cold, new snow seldom compacts and progress is exceedingly slow and laborious and can be impossible.

Prior to the onset of snow, in August, lower reaches of glaciers may well be dry, and if at all steep their passage will involve much step-cutting unless crampons are worn.

APPROACHES

1. By the Ladakh Treaty Road.

This route, the chief trade route between Kashmir and Central Asia via the Karakoram Pass, affords rapid and easy access to the heart of the area from Sonamarg, and is valid both for animal and coolie transport. Rest Houses have been set up (each with a resident Chowkidar) by the Kashmir Government at appropriate stages en route. The normal rate

payable for accommodation at these Rest Houses is R. 1. per head for every 24 hours, with a fixed limit for continuous occupation of three days. But to members of H. M. Forces for the duration of hostilities a reduced rate of 8 annas applies.

(a) Sonamarg to Baltal (8 miles)

The Sind River is crossed by a substantial bridge immediately East of Sonamarg (8,750 ft.) and a good road almost (but not quite) suitable for light motor vehicles is followed along the northern side of the Sind Valley. At Baltal the Sind River divides, the main stream coming in from the Southeast, the Zoji Nar from the Northeast. At the junction is located the Rest House (9,500 ft.), and immediately behind on a terrace screened by trees is the far more acceptable Dak Bungalow. Firewood can usually be purchased from the Chowkidar, but local foodstuffs are scarce or completely unobtainable.

(b) Baltal R.H. to Mechhoi R.H. (9 miles)

Mechhoi (11,265 ft.) is an intermediate Rest House on the normal stage from Baltal to Matayan. Food is unobtainable and it is well not to rely upon firewood being available as tree growth hereabouts is almost entirely lacking.

From Baltal the Zoji Nar is crossed by a bridge and a steady ascent of 1,800 ft. over 3 miles high up on the right flank of this river leads into the short but exceedingly impressive Zoji Gorge. Beyond this the valley opens out and 2 miles of easy going leads to the Zoji La (11,557 ft.) in about 2 hours from Baltal.

The descent into Ladakh from Zoji La is exceedingly gentle. After $\frac{1}{2}$ hour the Telegraph Rest Hut is reached, situated at the entrance to the Lokut Gumbar Nar, at whose head is the Seki Pantsal Pass (15,253 ft.) leading to the Amarnath Cave. Immediately below the Hut and opposite to the Lokut Gumbar Nar is the entrance to the Bod Gumbar Nar. The Rest House at Mechhoi lies 2 miles further downstream from this junction of the Gamru Nar and Bod Gumbar Nar.

(c) Mechhoi R.H. to Matayan R.H. (6½ miles)

After 1½ miles a steep descent of 500 ft., with the entrance to the Suweke Nar on the right, leads to an enclosed flat traversed throughout its length of 1½ miles. The Gamru is crossed by a footbridge and yet again 10 minutes later, and for the remaining 3 miles to Matayan the route adheres to the right flank of the Gamru Valley.

The Rest House (10,430 ft.) lies a few hundred yards beyond the village. Firewood can be purchased through the Chowkidar at rescribed rates, and milk, eggs and butter can usually be obtained.

(d) Matayan R.H. to Dras R.H. (12½ miles)

Four miles below Matayan the Gamru River turns East and for a while its course approximates with the junction of the Dras Volcanics and Matayan Limestone. Just below Pindras village, 4½ miles from Matayan, the Gamru River is crossed by a bridge, and thereafter the Treaty Road follows the northern bank, entering volcanic territory about one mile below Pindras. Just beyond the village of Bara Shah the valley opens out considerably, and in less than a mile a further bridge leads over the Muski River. The Rest House (10,660 ft.) is a conspicuous whitewashed building set alongside a small copse, 1½ miles further on. Firewood is obtainable here (though with difficulty) and sometimes eggs, milk and chickens, at prices considered excessive.

2. By the Nilanai Nar (Kashmir).

A description of this valley and of its approach from Sonamarg already appears in the Nilanai section. Suffice to say that this high-level route between Sonamarg and Dras via Bot Kulan Ganj Pass (14,766 ft.) and Muski Valley affords quick access to a number of fine peaks in Ladakh rising from the large glacier system lying immediately East of the Pass. From Sonamarg this route is practicable only for coolies, and fuel and food must be taken.

VI. CLIMBING.

A. Mountains East of the Gamru Nar.

These peaks form the Northwest fringe of a large and heavily glaciated area bounded on the North by the Dras River, on the West by the Gamru Nar, on the South by the Upper Sind Valley and Batkol, and on the East by the Suru Valley. On the East this fringe links up with the part of this area visited by Gueterbock and Marriott in 1936 ("The Mountains South of Dras", E.A.L. Gueterbock; H.J. Vol. IX (1937) pps. 44-57). Outside of this article recorded evidence of ascents is exceedingly scanty.

1. Beraz Group.

Bounded on the West and North by the Gamru Nar and on the East by the Chiskam Nar, and includes the following peaks appearing on quarter-inch sheet 43N.

(a) **Beraz (17,881 ft.)**

A prominent limestone peak most effectively seen from just west of Dras. Summit crowned with a thick, inclined slab of limestone with vertical sides which may prove hard to overcome. Ascent likely to be difficult and perhaps best made from Chiskam Mar by route up the Northeast wall to the North ridge South of a prominent rock pinnacle. Thence by a much steeper continuation of this ridge to the summit. Snow is quite likely to be a permanent feature of the upper part of this mountain.

(b) **Peak, 17,423 ft.**

From Beraz a high, rocky ridge at over 16,000 ft. continues Southwest for three miles to this peak, which may differ from Beraz in not consisting of limestone. Approach may best be made from the Upper Chiskam Nar by way of the indefinite South face.

(c) **Peak, 16,478 ft.**

A rather inconspicuous top overlooking the Gamru valley below Matayan and located on the Northwest ridge of Beraz.

Ascent most likely from unnamed valley, carrying small, steep glacier at its head which joins the Gamru Nar 2 miles below Pindras village. Alternatively, a way could probably be forced up the great wall overshadowing Matayan.

2. Peaks North of Suweke Nar.

Access to these peaks is by way of the deep, narrow valley of the Suweke Nar, which drains several large glacier basins at its head before trending Northwest for 8 miles to unite with the Gamru Nar some 2 miles Northeast of Mechhoi Rest House. They are partly seen from the Mechhoi-Matayan road before the steep 500 ft. descent; in particular two fine, rocky peaks c. 17,300 ft. connected by a high rocky E-W ridge.

North of these twin 17,300 ft. peaks, separated by a deep lateral valley, is a horned peak of 16,350 ft. North again of this peak, at the entrance to the Suweke Nar and separated by a further lateral valley, a broad shoulder rises to a rather broken summit ridge at c. 16,000 ft.

Seen from Mechhoi R.H. behind Peak 16,350 ft., and connected with it by a rocky ridge, is a peak of 17,150 ft. This in turn, is linked with a summit of 17,200 ft. also included in the group.

(a) Peak 16,350 ft.

Follow up the Suweke Nar for $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles bearing first left and then right around a conspicuous bend in the river. Ascend steeply the right flank to a grassy shoulder at 12,000 ft. overlooking the first right tributary encountered (fine view of Peak, 17,871 ft. to the South). Continue up this tributary to a camp site adjoining at 13,350 ft.

Ascent:--By G. Whittle on 9/Sep/44 by West ridge attained at c.14,500 ft., thence mixed rock and snow without difficulty for $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours to lower of two summits at 16,150 ft. A further 20 minutes of steeper climbing to higher summit at 16,350 ft. Magnificent view especially to East and South. Descent by

North ridge to foot of glacier at 15,000 ft. and back to camp in 2 hours from summit.

(b) Peak 17,150 ft. ("Cumberland Peak").

Connected with Peak, 16,350 ft. by a curving rock ridge approximately a mile long falling to c. 15,500 ft., and enclosing a moderately-crevassed glacier basin. Approach as for Peak 16,350 ft. to higher camp site at 14,250 ft. near foot of terminal moraine.

Ascent:—By G. Whittle and R. Stokoe on 19/Sep/44 under snowy conditions. To glacier snout at 14,500 ft. then by medial moraine to foot of névee slope leading to Northwest ridge. This ridge can be followed without difficulty to the summit, but initial ascent was continued by a rising traverse to centre of west face névee. Two bergschrunds were crossed at 16,000 ft., whereupon a steep rising traverse was made back on to the upper part of the Northwest ridge followed to the summit. Descent by Northwest ridge to rejoin earlier route at foot of lower traverse. Ascent $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours, very laborious on upper slopes owing to deep new snow. Descent 2 hours to camp site, followed by further $1\frac{1}{4}$ hours to Mechhoi R. H.

(c) Peak c. 17,200 ft.

The culmination of a rocky ridge running East from Peak 17,150 ft. Accessible from the valley immediately South of Peaks 16,350 ft. and 17,150 ft., probably with a difficult glacier approach, by steep and broken rock of south face. Alternatively from Matayan by gorge immediately behind village to badly-crevassed glacier at the head leading to snow-covered Northwest face. Thence on to Northwest ridge and by steep snow to summit. This alternative has not been prospected in detail and may well offer difficulties for laden coolies.

North of Peak, 17,150 ft. is a col of c. 16,000 ft., easily attained from the West but descending much more steeply to the East on to the glacier under the Northwest face of Peak, 17,200 ft.

(d) Twin Peaks, c. 17,300 ft.

An extensive tri-lobed glacier system guards the northern approach to these fine peaks, and the ascent of either peak from this side will call for mountaineering technique of a high order. No reconnaissance from the East was attempted.

West Peak.—(? Peak, 17,273 ft. of quarter-inch Sheet 43/N) A fine rock pyramid the ascent of which looks feasible from the Suweke Nar by way of the long Southwest ridge. The attainment of this Southwest ridge proper from the nullah will involve an exceedingly steep and tiring ascent.

East Peak:—Approach from the West and North should entail a long and difficult glacier ascent before attaining the high nevéé basin under the Northeast face of the mountain. From the junction of the northern and western ridges an almost level ridge, likely to be corniced, leads East of South in about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile to the highest point. Access to the final steep slope leading to this summit ridge from the nevéé basin is barred by a large and continuous bergschrund.

3. Peak South of Suweke Nar.

Included here are the Mechhoi Peaks and Peak 17,871 ft. further to the Southeast.

(a) Mechhoi Peaks.

This fine group is well seen from Matayan. Although only one peak (17,686 ft.) appears on Sheet 43/N, at least three distinct masses will be found to surpass the 17,000 ft. mark. These are ranged around the head of the Mechhoi glacier, a steep and broken ice-stream the snout of which terminates a short distance above Mechhoi R.H. From the group of peaks previously described to the Northeast the Mechhoi Peaks are separated by the deep trough of the Suweke Nar: to the West the Lokut Gumbar Nar leading to the Seki Pantsal Pass (15,253 ft.) intervenes before the Amarnath Group.

Peak c. 17,200 ft.

A wedge-shaped peak carrying two small glaciers under the Northwest and Northern faces. A long and prominent

Southeast spur descends from a point on the East ridge not far short of the summit ridge, and this provides probably the easiest way of ascent. Under favourable snow conditions the North ridge is likely to offer an interesting and more difficult route to the summit.

Mechhoi Peak (17,686 ft.)

Attempted by J. Waller on 7-8/June/37 by the North ridge (H.J. Vol. 10 (1938) p. 160, and "Everlasting Hills" by Waller). Camp established at 15,200 ft. on ice-fall of Mechhoi Glacier and foot of North ridge attained at 16,400 ft. on morning of 8th June. Further progress abandoned owing to onset of bad weather. Return to foot of glacier proved easier by following under length of ridge and down western side of glacier.

This fine peak is easiest of approach from the South to the foot either of the Southeast or of the Southwest ridge. Both ridges are likely to provide steep and exposed climbing on rock largely snowfree.

Pinnacle Ridge c. 17,800 ft.

Northwest of Mechhoi Peak and separated from it by a col probably over 17,000 ft. not attainable from the North owing to hanging ice, is a long, be-pinnacled, NW-SE, rock and snow ridge. This very broken ridge, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles in length, has four recognisable peaks all apparently higher than Mechhoi Peak. Northwest and Southwest faces are sheer, whilst to the N.W. the ridge terminates abruptly in a sheer descent of several hundreds of feet to a well-defined col before rising again to a pyramidal shaped peak bordering on 17,000 ft., accessible by the North ridge.

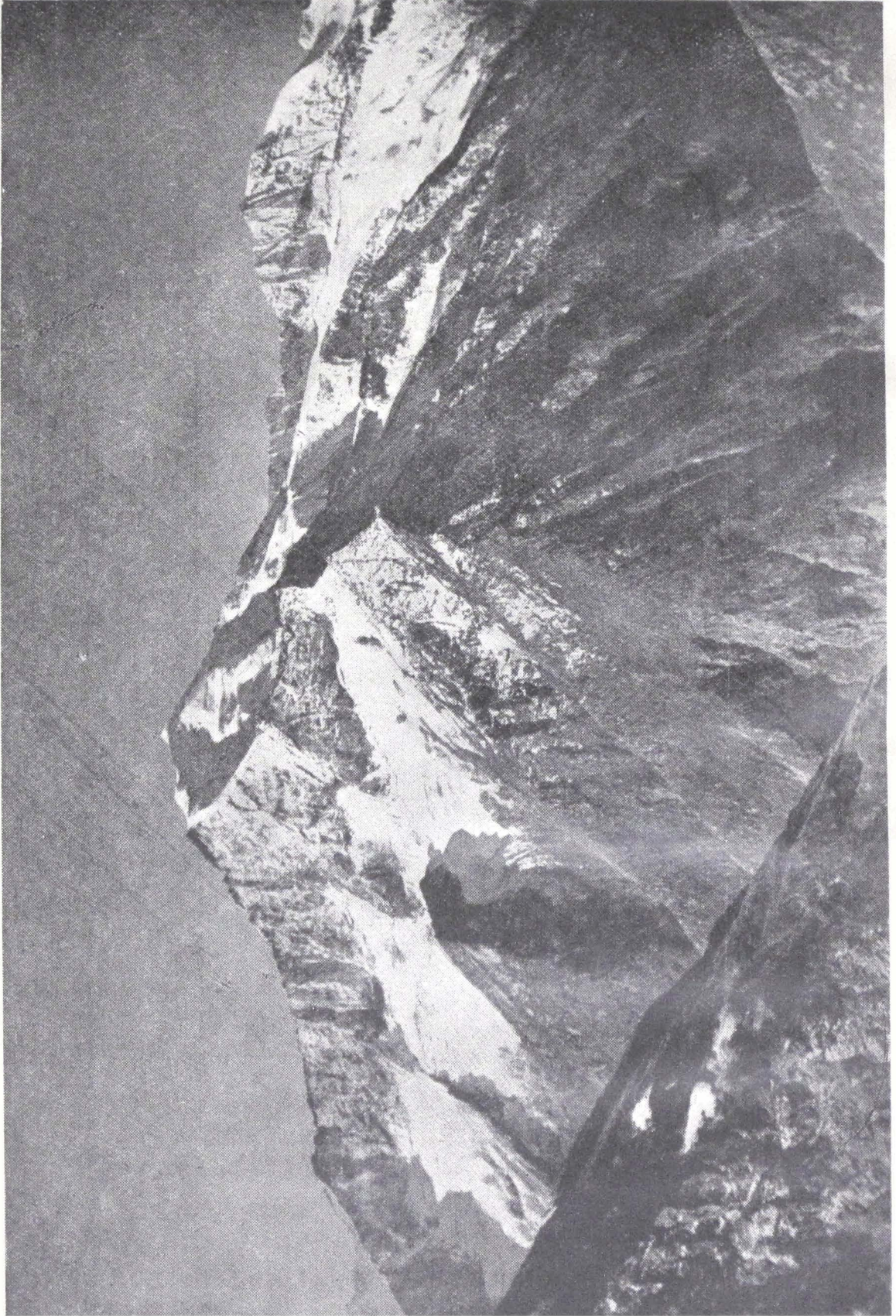
Behind Mechhoi R. H. a ridge leads up to a minor peak of approximately 15,500 ft. overlooking the Mechhoi Glacier, from which a more detailed examination of the Mechhoi Peaks from the North can be made.

Peak 17,871 ft.

Some four miles upstream the Suweke Nar receives a tributary from the Southwest. This lateral valley can be



LOOKING S. E. FROM PEAK 16,350 ft. : PEAK 17,273 ft.



PEAKS 17,871 ft. and 17,061 ft.

ascended without difficulty for a further three miles to an excellent camp site at approximately 12,000 ft. just short of the snout of a large glacier having a source in the large nevee fields on the western side of Peak 17,871 ft. The Amarnath section describes a way from Amarnath Cave leading East for three miles to a col (15,208 ft.) on the Kashmir—Ladakh border at the foot of the Northwest ridge of Peak 17,061 ft. This is followed by a descent to the North skirting the western edge of this large and much-broken ice-stream.

From the entrance to the Suweke Nar and as far as the suggested camp site it should be possible to utilise lightly laden ponies for transport. The route follows the righthand side of the valley for 2 miles then fords the Suweke Nar and takes to the left flank well above the river to the junction with the Southwest tributary. The latter can be ascended along its western side.

Ascent: Attempted by C.W.F. Noyce and G. Whittle on 28/Sep./44 after heavy snow.

From camp site indicated the lower ice-falls of glacier were avoided by an ascending traverse along right retaining wall, first South and then veering East, to a broad ice-saddle at foot of the steep and rocky West ridge. The crevassed ice of the saddle was crossed to the foot of the West ridge which was then ascended over snow-plastered rocks to a height of 17,400 ft., just below a conspicuous rock mushroom at the commencement of the final snow arete. The party was obliged to turn back at this point as it had been arranged to spend the night at Mechhoi R.H. Descent first by upper part of ridge, then by snow couloir on its South side to upper nevee. Nevee descended to saddle and alternative and more direct route to camp site adopted by following down subsidiary branch of main glacier originating in the steep and broken ice of the upper West face of Peak 17,871 ft. From the highest point reached, no obvious difficulties could be seen above.

4. Peaks of Upper Suweke Nar.

No reconnaissance of the extensively glaciated area around and beyond the headwaters of Suweke Nar has been possible, but sufficient of the area has been seen from completed ascents on the Northern side of this river to enter a strong recommendation for its exploration.

From the junction of the Suweke Nar and the Southwest tributary valley leading to Peak 17,871 ft., the view up the Suweke Nar is dominated by a splendid snow peak of c. 18,000 ft., the ascent of which, from the North, under good snow conditions would yield a splendid climb.

So far as can be ascertained no serious mountaineering has yet been accomplished in this area lying immediately West of the region visited by Gueterbock and Marriott in 1936 (see H.J. Vol. IX (1937) pps. 44-57).

5. Peaks of Lokut Gumbar Nar.

The possibilities of the upper part of this valley were not examined. The view from the vicinity of the Telegraph Rest Hut reveals the existence of an extensive snowfield at the head of the valley traversed en route to the Amarnath Cave via the Seki Pantsal Pass (15,253 ft.) (see H.J. Vol. 2 (1930), p. 63, and *ibid* Vol. 6 (1934) p. 131).

The eastern flank of the valley is impressively steep and culminates in a highly serrated rock ridge some 4,000 ft. or more above the valley bottom. On the western side easier slopes lead to a peak of 15,854 ft., overlooking the Kainpathar Nar on the West, offering a magnificent view of the northern glacier cirque of the Amarnath Peaks (17,290 ft. and 16,427 ft.)

B Mountains West of the Gamru Nar.

The information recorded here is taken from their description of explorations undertaken by R. V. M. Garry and J. Harrison in the Bod Gumbar Nar in July, 1933 (see H. J. Vol VI (1934) pps. 128-131), supplemented by observations of a more generalised nature from the Bot Kulan Ganj and Mechhoi areas.

In general it comprises an area roughly circular in shape dominated by a small knot of peaks ranging from 17,000—18,000 ft. set slightly Southwest of centre and culminating in Peak 18,098 ft.

Approaches.

Several approaches to this high knot of peaks are available.

1. **By the Bod Gumbar Nar :** Probably the easiest and most accessible of all the approaches. From Sonamarg the Zoji La (11,557 ft.) is crossed and an easy descent leads to the entrance of Bod Gumbar Nar (5½ hours in all). Ascent of nullah by left bank for two miles until opposite mouth of Kiblar Nar when main stream is forded. Right bank is then followed for two miles before returning to left bank by a further ford. Upstream another mile is a small mound utilised for a camp site.

A mile and a half above this camp site the main nullah divides. The northern branch has its source in two small glaciers rising out of an extensive snowfield with Peak 18,098 ft. set in its midst, whilst the western flank of this branch is formed of two large and imposing hanging glaciers apparently leading to smooth snow surfaces above. The old track leading to the Bot Kulan Ganj Pass (14,766 ft.) would seem to follow up the left bank of the more northerly of these two glaciers, and this route offers probably the easiest approach to the snow on which lies Peak 18,098 ft.

The eastern branch turns sharply from the line of the main nullah and narrows considerably. After ascending for 1,500 ft. and following along the left bank of a large glacier of black ice for another 1½ miles, the first ice-fall is reached. This can easily be turned, and beyond it gentle snow slopes lead to two further ice-falls with the furthest visible col a mile beyond. A possible route leads to the snowfield by Peak 18,098 ft. from above the first ice-fall.

Ascents.

(a) **Peak C, 16,400 ft.** By Garry and Harrison on 18/July/33, up western glacier of Gumbar cirque by snow gully and rock rib forming left edge to easy snow slopes above ice-fall ascended for $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles to rock peak at head. Rock friable and with nearly vertical dip. Peak 17,178 ft. highest peak of Sirbal Group, located on ridge forming right retaining wall of this glacier, but ascent from this side is likely to be very difficult.

(b) **Adventurer's peak (17,134 ft.)** Traversed from North to South by C. W. F. Noyce on 29/Aug/44 (see Nilanai section). Approachable from Bod Gumbar Nar via Bot Kulan Ganj track ascending large glacier with Peak 17,134 ft. at its head.

(c) **Reconnaissance of Kiblar Nar,**

Ascended by Garry and Harrison on 17/Jul/33. West South West up left bank above fine waterfall then over snow bridges for two miles to foot of rock ridge (limit of pony transport) with waterfall and small half-frozen lake above. Valley curves round to the North and terminates in magnificent ice-wall. Practicable routes for lightly-laden coolies lead from Kiblar Nar (between the lake and main glacier) across the Kashmir-Ladakh divide into the upper reaches of the Ranga and Kokurun nullahs. Ascent of Sirbal peaks flanking main glacier likely to be difficult owing to vertical strata and 70° snow slopes overhung by cornices.

(ii) **By Nilanai Nar and Bot Kulan Ganj Pass (14,766 ft.)**

For route to Bot Kulan Ganj see Nilanai section. On the East side of the pass is an extensive glacier system arising from which are a number of fine peaks ranging from 16,500—18,000, ft.

(a) Peak 18,098 ft.

Reconnaissance from Bot Kulan Ganj Pass discloses a possible line of ascent from low col overlooking right arm of glacier by rock ridge leading up to western end of E-W trending summit ridge. This summit ridge, flanked on the North by steep snow slope, is then traversed to reach the apparently higher Eastern summit.

(b) Peak 17,408 ft.

From low col described under Peak 18,098 ft., an obverse ascent up a well-defined rock ridge leads to the summit of this peak. A small glacier lies under the northern face of this peak with its snout terminating high above the lower end of the main glacier.

(c) East of Adventurer's Peak are a number of rocky summits of slightly lower elevation, ascent of which, from the North, would be over steep and doubtful rock.

(d) Route from Nilanai Nar to Bod Gumbar Nar.

From Bot Kulan Ganj Pass the way over the divide to Bod Gumbar Nar some distance East of Adventurer's Peak is by no means obvious.

(iii) By Unnamed Valley lying East of Peak 18,098 ft.

Entering the Gamru Nar from the West halfway between Mechhoi and Matayan is a narrow valley whose upper reaches terminate in a rock and snow divide separating Peak, 18,098 ft. from an attractive peak of 17,841 ft. to the South. The southern scarp face of peak 18,098 ft. is steep and looks difficult and its rocky East ridge, which turns North or Northwest before abutting against the western end of the main summit ridge is long and appears difficult.

(iv) By Valley to West of Gamru—Suweke Junction.

A long and narrow glacier with its source in the névée basin under the Southern wall of Peak c. 17,500 ft., fills the greater part of this small, hanging valley.

Peak 17,841 ft.

From the eastern end of this névée basin a steep and obvious snow or ice couloir offers possible access to the main ridge a short distance East of the horizontal summit ridge.

Peak 16,923 ft.

Nothing can be said relating to the ascent of this peak from the North. The easiest route to the summit is probably from the Southwest directly up from near the entrance to Bod Gumber Nar, or by first taking in a sharp, rocky summit of almost equal height lying a short distance East of it. Both peaks are well seen from Zoji La and no difficulties in ascent are apparent.

(v) By Gamru Nar.**Peak 16,741 ft.**

This triangulated limestone peak occupies a commanding position overlooking the eastward bend of the Gamru Nar above the village of Pindras. A partial ascent was made by Graham and McArthur on 28/Sep/44 by a route more or less directly up the East face, to approximately 15,500 ft. An alternative and perhaps more interesting route would be by the Northeast ridge.

NILANAI VALLEY

Nilanai Valley.

A deep valley descends to join the Sind some two miles above Sonamarg. Its stream starts close under the Bot Kulan Ganj, the pass into Ladakh (14,766 feet), $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the North. In its upper part the valley is comparatively flat, hemmed in on the West by startling rock configurations. But its chief merit is that from the East three glaciers give access to the peaks of the 17,000 foot group that is visible and challenging from above Sonamarg.

Adventurer's Peak (17,134 feet)

This is the only peak of the massif that we know certainly to have been climbed. The route up the valley leaves the the Baltal path 2 miles from Sonamarg to climb the steep grass spur of the valley's western flank (nearly 4,000 feet). Traverse is then possible into the more level bed, and camp was set at a camping ground half way up, 12,700 feet. Bot Kulan Ganj is reached thence easily in 3 hours. Adventurer's Peak is that overlooking the pass to the South East. It was taken direct by frontal snow slopes, until a ricketty but not technically difficult rock traverse could be made across the face to the left, towards the final snow (or in summer ice) arete. The traverse is unpleasant but seems preferable to the serrated rock edge above.

Descent was made by a milderice and rock couloir giving on the Northernmost of the three glaciers descending into the valley. Conditions on these glaciers were in August 1944 so dry that they could be traversed quite safely by a solitary climber. The day after this ascent, exploration was made of the Southerly glacier; from a bivouac near the pass at its head ascent of the highest of the peaks (17,179 feet) should be possible. But indeed there is a wealth of possibility in the whole group; with perhaps, for a climbing holiday's end, the circuit to Mechhoi and including Peak 18,098 ft. to the East of Adventurer's Peak (see Ladakh Section).

MOUNTAINS NORTH OF SONAMARG

Sonamarg Nar.

This nullah trends Northeast from Sonamarg village, turning Northwest after about a mile. About $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles further up, at a point marked 10,863 ft., on the map, the nullah bifurcates. One branch, the Kainsum Nar, runs N.N.E., while the other, the Ludarwas Nar continues Northwest for about another mile before taking a wide sweep to the N N.E. These two nullahs enclose a ridge and are bounded by two other ridges. All three ridges run N.N.E., for up to two miles where they abut on the Eastwest watershed ridge at about 15,000 ft. The most westerly of the three ridges has a southward extension bounded on the Northwest by the Lashipathar Nar, which is the valley West of the Ludarwas Nar, on the Northeast and East by the Sonamarg and Ludarwas nullahs, and on the South by the Sin Valley. This hill, called "Ludarwas" is over 12,000 feet in height and is a grassy alp on which cattle, sheep and goats are pastured during the summer months.

Beneath the three great ridges, particularly on their West sides, are enormous limestone cliffs, as yet unattempted, providing a superb gymnasium for those who enjoy climbing of a very high standard on very friable rock. A wall of this character overhangs the Sonamarg Nar a mile above the village.

The Easterly Ridge

This rises to a peak of 15,412 ft., where a ridge of shattered limestone, supported by huge precipices, runs two miles N.N.E. to a peak of 15,572 ft., on the watershed ridge. So far as is known, no climbing has been carried out. Peak 15,412 ft., is probably accessible by ascending the long grass slopes at Pokhribal, reaching the Southwest ridge above the row of limestone towers with which it is decorated, and following it to its junction with the Southeast ridge, along which the route would lie to the summit. The expedition would be a long one. Peak 15,572 might be accessible from below Shalamar in the

Nilanai but looks awkward of access from all directions. The terrific, shattered ridge between the two peaks seems likely to remain unclimbed for a long time.

The Central Ridge

A grassy ridge in the angle of the bifurcation of the Sonamarg Nar, this becomes rocky higher up. An easy gendarme precedes the final tower of rotten limestone at 14,582 ft. This was climbed by the writer and G. Whittle in August, 1944 up a disintegrating gully in the East face. A precipice of holdless slabs descends towards Ludarwas Nar on the West. The ridge continues N.N.E. for two miles to join the watershed ridge at over 15,000 ft. There is one rather attractive looking rock peak about midway along the ridge which could probably be climbed from the ridge without great difficulty but might prove impossible to traverse. The writer has not seen the N. side of it.

The Western Ridge

This is similar in character to the Central Ridge but its crest appears to be more shattered and consequently serrated. It has not, so far as is known, been climbed. It has the same trend as the other two and forms the South ridge of a peak of 15,630 ft. on the watershed ridge which looks steep and difficult, except perhaps from the East.

Ludarwas

This grassy hill makes a good training walk from Sonamarg or Shitkari. Its Southeast ridge can be reached about half way up to the summit plateau. The climb goes up tilted limestone slabs, through bushes, up trees, amid a riot of vegetables.

The Lashipathar Nar.

The best route into this narrow gorge crosses the home-made bridge over the Nichinai River at Shitkari and goes directly up hill, trending left until some huts are reached amid

pine trees high up above the lower nullah. The nullah is rough and snow beds are used. An easy route to Newas, 14, 083 ft., lies up the tributary on the left. The watershed is reached up easy but tiring slopes of scree. Peak 15, 630 ft. may be accessible from this point but looks steep. Peak 15, 631 ft., to the West, reminiscent of mountains in the Scottish Highlands, seems easily accessible from here. In August 1944, Dr. Graham and the writer climbed a conspicuous gully in a bay in the cliffs above a small waterfall in the upper nullah. This gave 300 feet of interesting but not difficult climbing to the slopes of Peak 15, 631 ft., whence the South ridge was reached and followed to a series of large and rather awkward gendarmes. About 400 ft. below the summit the climb was abandoned in bad weather, but the route would undoubtedly go under good conditions and should prove interesting.

General Note.

It must be repeated that while the rock scenery in the area described is often very fine, too great care cannot be exercised in attempting climbs on the cliffs hereabouts. The rock is quite untrustworthy, except perhaps in gullies where it has been bound with water. In this respect it has obvious affinities with some of the Eastern Alpine districts.

NICHINAI

The valley opposite and to the North of Thajiwass Valley descends from the West, bending South in its lower reaches to debouch into the Sind just above the village of Shitkari. Running roughly South East and on a line parallel with the stream, a rock ridge of the same formation as the buttresses of the Thajiwass peaks ends abruptly over the Sind Gorge. The rock, too, is the same firm quality; good shorter routes might be worked out just above the road up from Gund.

Nichinai Peak (16,141 feet)

This should be the chief climbing attraction in the range of which it is the culminating point. So far as we know it is unclimbed. The track up the valley, over to the Vishin Sar lakes, crosses the watershed at the Nichinai Bar, a pass of 13,387 feet some 10 miles from Sonamarg and directly under the cliffs of Nichinai Peak. From the pass, assault could be made direct up the 2,800 foot buttress reaching towards the summit, or under certain conditions up one of the snow gullies. The rock is of the sound Thajiwass variety. The camping ground at 11,908 feet, 7 miles up the valley could be used. But to give the whole day, it would be convenient to bivouac on the level stream bed close under Nichinai Bar itself.

An alternative line of attack would be to take the road down towards Gund, and strike up one of the Southern Valleys. This would be a two or three day job, needing coolies. Or from the Nichinai Bar path a lesser track branches left to cross the snowbeds under the southern face at 14,279 feet. An interesting circuit including attempt on the peak would be to carry on by this path, descend to Sangam and reach Gund over the Daktang Bar.

Other Climbs.

For long range purposes there are fine peaks over the pass, and in particular a 15,685 ft. height above the Vishin Sar lake. On the southern part of the range, the only climb that

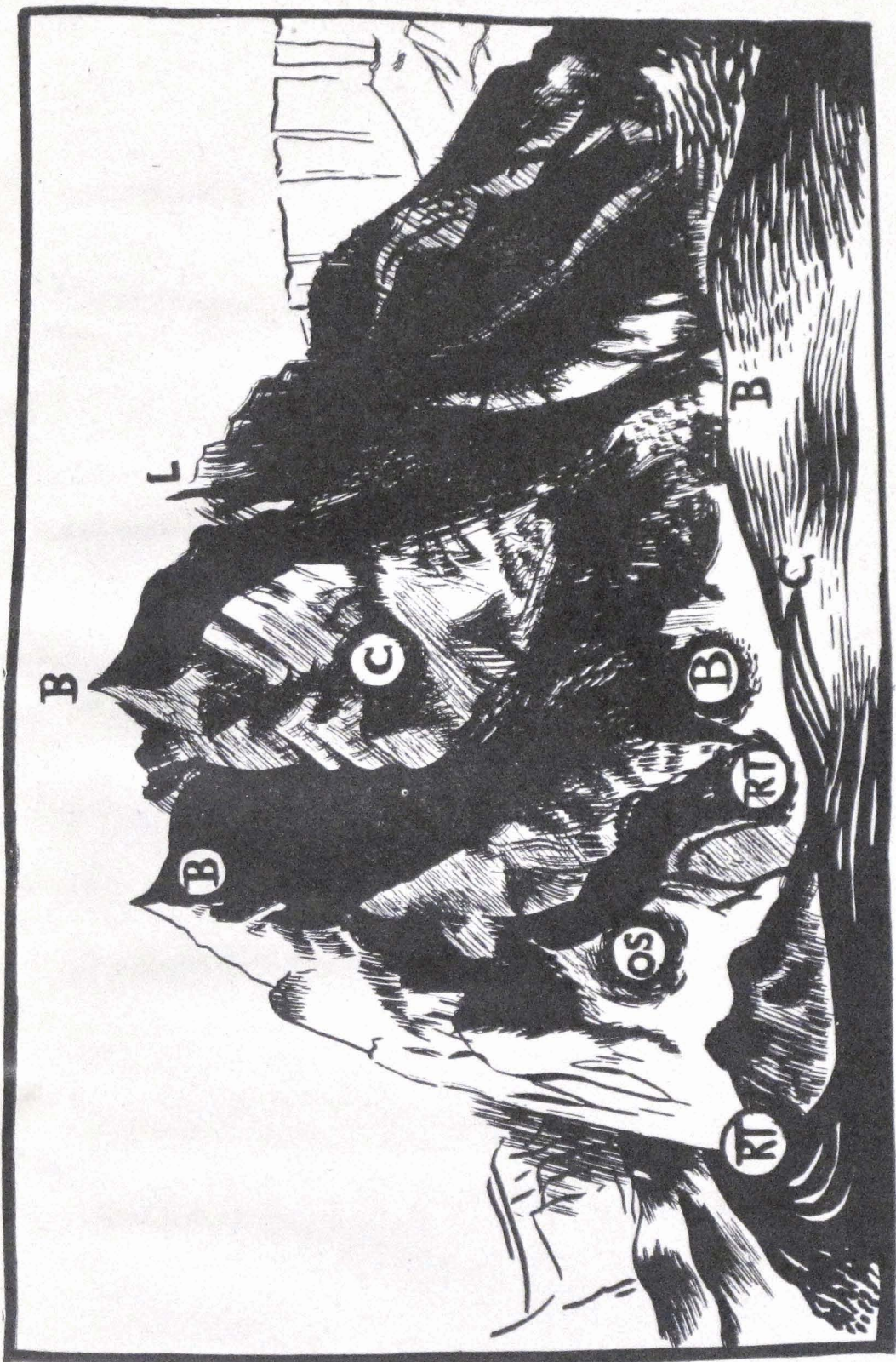
we know to have been done is that up 'Cathedral Peak' (12,506 ft.) the rock buttress overlooking Sonamarg itself. The ordinary ascent takes an average of two and a half hours from Shitkari. The first part is steady slogging; the last a rocky scramble. It gives good views and a good general idea of the district.

The hills North of the Nichinai suffer from the change in rock structure. They are composed of lime and sandstone; more noticeably further East their upper portions rear fantastically skyward, crumbly and pinnacular. The best walking is towards the West: Newas, a grassy mound accessible in the day from Sonamarg: or the enjoyable traverse from Nichinai Bar (3 miles from Camping Ground) over its shaly highest point (14,681 feet) and descending one of the scree gullies into Bushabpathri Nar, rejoining the Nichinai valley lower down. Time from Nichinai Bar back to Sonamarg would be perhaps seven hours average.

VERY PROVISIONAL LIST OF FIRST ASCENTS

Peak 16,427 feet	...	W.H. Johnson, 1856
Peak 15,815 feet	...	Col. K. Mason, 1911
Valehead Peak (15,528 feet)	...	L. Watts' Party, 1933
Thajiwass Peak (15,928 feet)	...	J. Waller and Party, 1937
Adventurer's Peak (17,134 feet)	...	C.W.F. Noyce, August 1944
Peak 16,350 feet	...	G. Whittle, September 1944
Cumberland Peak (17,150 feet)	...	G. Whittle, R. Stokoe, September 1944
Peak 17,061 feet	...	T.H. Tilly, J. Begg, A. Pike October 1944
Umbrella Peak (15,700 feet approx)	...	C.W.F. Noyce, A. Jones October 1944

DIAGRAM OF GLACIER CRAG



RT — RAINY TRAVERSE.
 OS — ONE WAY SLAB.
 BB — BENDING GULLY.

CC — CENTRAL CRACKS.
 BB — BROTHER'S BUTTRESS.
 L — LEANING PINNACLE.

SONAMARG and adjoining districts KASHMIR

	Foot-path
	Mule-path
	Glacier

