

RAYMOND LAMBERT & CLAUDE KOGAN

WHITE FURY

Gaurisankar and Cho Oyu

Translated from the French by
SHOWELL STYLES

WITH 21 PHOTOGRAPHS

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Raymond Lambert
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Raymond Lambert and Claude Kogan on the Menlung La.
Background left, Everest, Lhotse, Makalu

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Foreword

BY MAURICE HERZOG

IN 1950 Lachenal and I came back from the ascent of Annapurna to rediscover Chamonix. We had been racked with the pain of frostbite and snow-blindness and our spirits still bore the scars of suffering. The mountains of home, more beautiful than ever in the radiant weather, awakened in us half-forgotten emotions.

Raymond Lambert was there to meet us. His tall figure dominated all others; his smile radiated delight, but what we had been through was better known to him than to any other man. He had come specially from Geneva to meet us, and his presence meant, for us, the certainty of spring, of life beginning again—an assurance that the mountains would always be ours and that friendship was a force never to be doubted.

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Claude Kogan, that small brave woman who is known and loved by mountaineers the world over, had suffered the tragic loss of her husband at the close of a fine mountaineering expedition. Husband and wife had shared a common ideal—to find adventure in the high mountains of the world. Claude continued to follow this ideal even beyond her tragedy, and in the hard school of silent suffering earned the supreme rewards of friendship. In different ways, big Raymond Lambert and small Claude Kogan have each had to give their all to mountaineering. This blue-eyed giant and this slip of a woman take pride in their joint achievements—he to have performed his greatest Himalayan feats in her company, and she to have played her full part in them.

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Of Raymond it may be said that he finds his mode of self-expression in mountaineering. He likes the relationship of man and nature to be simple and direct. He wants an exchange between the climber and his mountain, an exchange which shall be regulated by a subtle but (to his mind) indispensable balance between the two. "Balmat," he writes in this book, "possessed no compass, no oxygen apparatus, no radio transmitter. He had only his ice-axe and his determination. I have always felt myself closer to Balmat than to any other man."

Harmony disappears the moment the extraneous element of mechanization is introduced. It should, however, be possible to recapture the ease and freedom which are the symbols of this new-found balance without deliberately harking back to the days of Balmat, if we can achieve a thorough integration of the modern tools which are to extend our experience. Technical evolution at an ever-increasing rate stimulates departure from our traditional ideas; this is a fact that cannot be ignored. Yet the venturesome reach into the future is as essential as the confiding love we bear towards the past. To prepare for the future in terms of the present, to promote harmony, to avoid the clash between facts and human nature—these things demand unceasing effort and constant care. Beyond doubt, they constitute one of the great problems of our time.

In his own person, Raymond Lambert seems to me to have resolved this problem. He is in close touch with facts as with human nature; but he also lives with progress. He loves what is, conceives what is to come, and manifests that which wisdom could not fail to bring: happiness.

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Introduction

BY RAYMOND LAMBERT

IN June 1953 Colonel H. C. J. Hunt (now Brigadier Sir John Hunt, C.B.E., D.S.O.) sent off two telegrams, one to London and one to Geneva. The first informed Queen Elizabeth the Second that Colonel Hunt and his companions begged to offer her, on the solemn occasion of her Coronation, the conquest of Everest. The second, addressed to the Geneva Section of the Swiss Alpine Club, said simply, "To you a great share of the glory." Those eight words contained the spontaneous gratitude of the conqueror to those who had opened the way for him. They contained also the explicit recognition of the year of unsparing effort which we had devoted to breaking the road to Everest.

No one had ever been so near the goal as we had. When, on May 28, 1952—one year to the day before the British success—I had found myself with the Sherpa Tensing 900 feet below the summit, I had thought to grasp the dream, the crowning of twenty years of mountaineering vocation. I do not know what unknown god sent the mysterious warning that reached my dulled and struggling consciousness; but from the depths of that stupefaction which high-altitude climbers knows so well I heard the call and obeyed the danger-signal. I threw one last glance at the summit of the sacred mountain. There it was, alive, close to me, under my hand, crowned with white vapours and compact mists which shredded into feathery plumes as I watched. To me it was as beautiful, as alluring in its imposing mystery, as when I had seen it like a vision in my childhood dreams.

Nine hundred feet separated me from it. Nine hundred feet. Thirty seconds for a sprinter, ten seconds for a motorist. The distance round my garden fence at Geneva. Nine hundred feet.

I devoured it with my eyes. A westerly wind dispersed the shifting plumage of the peak. And then—all was blotted out by

mist. I grasped Tensing's arm and we started down again, staggering, only half-conscious on that mighty wall of rock and mist.

To this day I retain the absolute conviction that if I had ignored that imperious, unmistakable signal which drew me towards the valleys as the shepherd's horn draws the strayed flock in the mountains, we should have disappeared, just as Mallory and Irvine disappeared for ever one evening in the year 1924; for they also must have heard that warning, though they did not wish to listen to it.

I forget which mountain writer it was that likened the assault on a great mountain to the gymnast's building of a "human pyramid", but nothing could be truer concerning Everest. It is not too much to say that for thirty years each expedition has climbed on the shoulders of the one before it, which has hoisted and pulled and carried it—in a word, made it the beneficiary of its own ascending force. If the English party under Sir John Hunt mounted on our shoulders, it must also be recognized that we had no less than ten "shoulders" to climb upon when our turn came to spring to the attack in 1952. We had thought to be the final conquerors ourselves. Fate willed otherwise. To us remained the pride of having carried our labours and our faith—our building-stones—to the erection of that immense human cathedral, the conquest of Everest.

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The British 1953 Expedition to Everest was the triumph of organization and method. It was also the triumph of science over chance, of progress over risk. In the remarkable documentary film of their epic climb which Sir John Hunt and his comrades brought back one of the dominant impressions was, for me, the magnitude and quality of the means employed. The troop of climbers manœuvred like an army on campaign, each chosen fighting-man at his post, while all possible use was made of perfected equipment to overcome the physical shortcomings of the human units. As I watched this extraordinary deployment of forces—by far the

most powerful ever used in attacking a mountain—and saw the oxygen apparatus, the ladders, the walkie-talkie radio sets, it was not the picture of the majestic and terrible Everest with its drifts and séracs that burned before my eyes. Another picture rose before me: that of a bearded peasant with red-rimmed eyes and drawn features, shivering in the summer dawn, dancing for joy in the sunshine before the god whose temple he had just discovered and made accessible to the world. The man was Jacques Balmat. The god was Mont Blanc.

Balmat possessed no compass, no oxygen apparatus, no radio transmitter. He had only his ice-axe and his determination. I have always felt myself nearer to Balmat than to any other man; and it is my most ardent wish that the important rôle that science plays today in our expeditions shall not crush out the marvellous and primordial part played by human adventure.

When the wonderful news of the success of the British Expedition reached the world, when broadcasts and newspapers had multiplied the details of the victory for our further astonishment, a somewhat misleading reaction might have been noticed in some of the comments made upon the event by the uninitiated. To hear them speak, one might have thought that alpinism, the craft of mountain climbing, had no longer any real reason for existing. The victory of Hunt and Hillary and Tensing, they hinted, had put a final end to the adventure of Everest. What use was there in struggling up lesser peaks when the highest summit had been reached—when, try as one might, one could climb no higher?

We may answer, simply, that the conquest of Mont Blanc did not end, but gave birth to, Alpine climbing. The craft and the allurements of mountaineering began with this ascent of the highest summit. In the same way, the British conquest of Everest did not “put a final end to” the conquest of the Himalaya—it opened its history.

One of the aforementioned commentators quoted a tragic saying of Henri de Montherlant, “*Tout ce qui est atteint est détruit.*” But for the lover of mountains that which is attained is not destroyed but multiplied.

I venture to say that we leave for the Himalaya today in much the same spirit, and in any case with the same ambitions, as those that inspired M. de Saussure when, one year after Balmat's triumph, he ascended Mont Blanc with other objectives than the climbing of the mountain. De Saussure was not indifferent to the pleasures of mountaineering, but for him they constituted a means rather than an end.

What motives impel the climbers of today to attempt great ascents? First there is the call of adventure, the challenge of hazard and uncertainty. Then there is the desire to tread unknown country, a desire which will never cease to breed new Christopher Columbuses of both sea and mountain. There is the part played by pure sport, the athletic side of mountaineering. And lastly there is the objective of exploration, a long scroll on which may be inscribed all the scientific preoccupations such as geology, medicine, paleontology; in this objective resides one of the principal *raison d'être* of the Himalayan expedition.

If I am asked: "What's the good of going on when the highest summit in the world has been reached? Isn't it merely dangerous and useless?" I answer with one of the illustrious Thierry Maulnier's reflections: "Sport is useless—useless as are all those things which sustain, justify, and ennoble life—useless as a game played for the sake of the game—useless as poetry itself. For what use does poetry serve?"

I have nothing to add to that.

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For three days, on the march from the Cho Oyu base camp to Namche Bazaar, where we halted to pack up our things, I walked with a bowed head and a heavy heart.

It was all over. The mountain, cruel for all its beauty, had beaten us. It had beaten us with the aid of tempests and an abnormally early winter; and the fierce wind that tore the snow from ridge and ice-slope had whipped us downward with its icy flail.

During those three days of descent I thought of the hours I

had lived through—hours I would gladly have lived again, in spite of that Gehenna of storm and cold.

A medley of pictures danced before me: the overwhelming landscape that had risen in front of me day after day; the life with Claude in our ice-grotto at Camp IV, recalling Scott's South Pole expedition; the Sherpas, our comrades in the fight; and that long struggle to maintain in ourselves the bodily heat essential to our fitness if we were to make a bid for the summit.

Yes, I had been happy up there. But it was the return journey now, the long days of marching back to southern Nepal; sixteen or seventeen days on foot, to cover a hundred and twenty-five miles. The adventure was indeed over, too soon over. The smiling valleys of Nepal were well enough, and so was the friendly welcome that met us all along the return route as it had done on the journey out. But this time we were heading for Europe, marching back again to the cares of civilized men. . . .

It had been hard, as always, to get together a party strong enough for conquest on the roof of the world. No leader can foretell which members of his party will be steadfast in emergency and which will not, unless he goes out with no one who has not climbed to 25,000 feet—and climbers of that description are far from numerous.

I could be satisfied. I had led successful reconnaissances of both Gaurisankar and Menlungtse. Above all, I was proud to have given my utmost to Cho Oyu with Claude Kogan for comrade.

Claude showed splendid pluck and tenacity. She willed to succeed and she succeeded. This amazing little woman has won the admiration of everyone. Her astonishing vitality and her resources of energy and will-power have set an example not only for the mountaineers of the future but also for those men and women who—far down in the valleys—have yet to learn the joys of courage.

CHAPTER ONE

Preparation for Adventure

AFTER taking part in the two Swiss Everest expeditions of 1952, I felt myself drawn afresh towards the mountains of Nepal and the magic valleys of the Himalaya.

But it is no easy matter to organize such an expedition. I knew that the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research, of Zurich, possessed an authorization for the whole of 1954 to explore the Solo Khumbu region of Everest and in particular the Cho Oyu area. During 1953, therefore, I was meditating and planning a new expedition. First of all, I had to make contact with the Foundation; after that, I would have to seek the means of financing my party. I put forward my application to the Foundation in the autumn of that year. But the months passed, and matters were still dragging on.

I had asked M. Feuz, quite simply, to be good enough to forward to the Nepal Government the names of the members of my party. Round about Easter 1954 M. Feuz, overburdened with his many tasks, begged me to try to obtain the visas myself. I could hardly write direct to the Minister for Foreign Affairs in Kathmandu asking for an authorization which had already been given to the Foundation in Zurich, and I shrank from doing it. It will be seen later on that the Austrians, who put in their request for the Cho Oyu expedition in April 1953, had already obtained the required permit.

So I was reduced to falling back on another mountain, one less well-known and less-explored—Gaurisankar.

During all this period of waiting we were getting on with the preparations. These consisted primarily of making out lists—lists of stores to be obtained in Switzerland and abroad; lists of equipment for the Sherpas; lists of food supplies to be taken with us. Some of these were sent to Father Niesen at Patna, some to

our friend Manick La at Kathmandu. The arrangements necessitated a voluminous mail.

As soon as I received the letter from the Foundation I cabled to Kathmandu on April 21, to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, asking him to grant a permit for me to take a reconnaissance expedition into the Gaurisankar region. In all the correspondence, which had to be done in English, I was very much helped by Miss Philla Crocker, a young American lady who had lived in Geneva for several years and with whom I had made the ascent of Mont Blanc. She translated all the letters I received and took charge of the mail for India and Nepal.

But once that telegram was sent off we had to face the major problem of expedition preparation: the getting together of a party suitable to the finances at our disposal, a party in which every member would have a well-defined part to play and the qualities necessary to that part.

First of all, obviously, we must have a doctor. It was to Dr. Franz Lochmatter, who had just completed his military service, that I telephoned one fine day. This is how I put it to him:

"I've asked the Nepal Government for a permit and I think we'll be able to go out. Are you with us?"

"It's the greatest dream of my life," was his reply. "I've two more big climbs to make in the Alps, but I'd like to get acquainted with the Himalaya."

I told him the conditions attached to our plans, and he accepted.

Next we needed an expert in photography and ciné-photography. Denis Bertholet, from Verbier, was put in charge of all the work of photographic record.

Then came Jean Juge, who had been with me ever since I began planning the expedition. From the first he had helped me with the organization and now I turned over to him the weighty responsibility of keeping the accounts.

Lastly there was Madame Claude Kogan, whom I had met at Mürren in March 1954 during a ski-course. She took over the French side of the organization; that is to say, the centralizing of food supplies and equipment obtained in France.

And now, before I begin the story of this expedition, I want to introduce my companions, the folk who are to set out with me on the great adventure. I selected them from dozens of other candidates because I knew their qualities of heart and physique and loyalty. I shall present them to you as individuals; but that is really a paradox. For we were one entity, a team, and from the date of starting out our individualities were merged to form a collective soul—the soul of the expedition.

To every nobleman his proper place of honour. I shall begin with Claude Kogan.

She is *petite*, slim, graceful. But hidden beneath this frail outer shell is one of the most forceful wills I have ever encountered. Set in a smiling face crowned with rebellious fair curls, two blue eyes dance with a tiny but very brilliant light. Claude had already taken part in four big climbing expeditions. I know no other woman so rich in contrasts, so strong in determination. She never bows before adversity. She dares the highest summits and the fiercest storms with the same serenity, with the same rather shy smile that welcomes her clients in her shop at Nice. For half the year Claude manages the sale of her stock of swimming-suits; but that is only for the purpose of making a living. Her real purpose in life is to climb mountains.

I will add to complete the picture that she possesses a keen sense of observation, an ever-wakeful critical intelligence, and—if I may say so—a lyric taste in adventure. For her an expedition is not only an athletic feat; it is an essay in the poetic. She brings to it the same passion that filled the first seekers of gold or the companions of Magellan. For Claude, mountaineering is one long search for the Route to the Indies—and be it understood that this is no play on words, seeing that we are bound for the Himalaya!

Jean Juge is quite another matter. He is forty-six, a Doctor of Science, of a dogmatic turn of mind, a rationalist always on the lookout for the whys and wherefores of everything. Thirty years bear witness to his love of mountaineering, every winter and

summer. He is, one may say, an old stager of Alpine climbing. I was glad to be able to count on such a companion, a man who could conjugate the whole art of climbing as well as the science of rocks and mountains. His scientific knowledge always rather dazzled me, but he never paraded it, for he is modest, discreet, equable of humour and very forbearing. Tall, thin, rather ungraceful, he knows better than anyone how to fight and win "the long combat between the Vision and the Peak". He was to be the philosopher, as well as the geologist, of the expedition, and I may call him a "basic element" of the team. The only thing with which I could reproach him—if indeed it can be called a reproach—was that he *reflected* too much. When he speaks, he weighs every word before uttering it; when he climbs, he tests every rock. When I mentioned this opinion to him, he replied gravely, "Those are the qualities of the senior member of a party."

Denis Bertholet is the exact opposite of Juge, not only in his rôle of junior member of the party, but also in his impulsive nature. With him—unlike Juge—the physical, intuitive spirit prevails over the reflective or intellectual side of life. His is a mercurial temperament. Of the same breed as Balmat and the early adventurers who climbed to the Talèfre and discovered its enchanted gardens, he is incapable of affectation or dissimulation; his generous and ardent nature embraces all the vision and restlessness of his twenty years. All of which doesn't prevent him from being extremely efficient as a photographer and ciné-cameraman, the two jobs he undertook for our expedition. He takes a craftsman's pride in his work. To him, negatives and prints and maps are not merely technical successes—they are works of art; and he uses light and shadow like a poet. You may judge the excellence of his work from the pictures that illustrate this book.

And in addition to his artistic gifts he brought to our little team the shining qualities of youth and youthful laughter.

Franz Lochmatter is a grave and methodical person. With him nothing is ever left to chance; not even his love of mountains, which is hereditary and traditional, for he is the son of the famous

guide Franz Lochmatter who was killed on the Weisshorn in 1953. He has an account to settle with mountains. The Himalaya are for him a kind of revenge upon the Alps. The hand which takes the torch from his father's is vigorous as well as pious, for Franz is a mountain athlete. Taciturn, loyal, and very competent in his profession, he was extremely valuable to us. He knew what responsibility would be his, and he did not take it lightly. He knew that he would have to be bone-setter, nerve specialist, masseur, sick-bay steward, dentist—perhaps all of them on the same day. We hoped he wouldn't have much work to do; but we set out confidently in his company, knowing that whatever he had to do would be done well.

Albert Zimmermann—"Zim" to his friends—was to be the Jean-Jacques Rousseau of the expedition in more ways than one. For he is a citizen of Geneva, a lyrical dreamer, and a hunter of flowers and plants. He carried along with him a mass of botanist's gear which made him look like part of one of Bernadin de St. Pierre's illustrations, and a kind of tranquil faith that nothing could disturb. His adventuring saw a different world from ours. While we were gazing above our heads, he was peering at his feet; we sought the clouds while he looked for gentians. The snowdrop was his symbol and his mascot.

Zim has an equable temper and a slightly caustic humour. Our continual desire to be going higher struck him as disagreeable and even indecent. There were so many flowers to be gathered on the way! As a botanist, indeed, he proved to be a veritable pundit, and knew the names of more flowers than we knew names of towns. He was the one person in the party who was certain of gathering a full harvest.

I had less knowledge of Stangelin, Zim's assistant. But I know that he fitted in with our designs from the first, and that Zimmermann testified to his worth—two facts which rendered unnecessary any further consideration.

Once the climbing-party of five was definitely established, we could go ahead with the final preparation of the lists of

supplies to be obtained from France and from Switzerland, lists which must be particularly clear and free from mistakes. Everyone got to work. But though we were by now heavily involved in expense the permit had still not arrived. The delay worried us all. For my part, I was beginning to wonder whether I might not be obliged to do some guiding in the Alps; and I now threw up all my engagements in case the permit came through and I could not be informed in time by telephone. For I had decided to allow myself a few days' holiday. I went down to Nervi, a little Italian coastal town near Genoa, where I served my apprenticeship in the craft of undersea fishing. With Professor Mercante, a well-known instructor in this kind of sport, I spent some wonderful days discovering the beauty of the sea-depths. And it was at Nervi, on June 18th, that the long-awaited message at last reached me. A wire from Geneva told me that the Nepal Government had given me my permit.

You can imagine how hastily I packed my bags and abandoned the joys of undersea initiation. I hurried to Nice, where I met Madame Kogan and told her the good news. From there I flew by the first plane to Geneva.

Luckily our preparations were well advanced. If we had waited for that permit before starting them—well, the expedition would never have left Europe. I could congratulate myself on having taken chances and got away with them; for we had sent off some of the orders, warning the suppliers that if the permit failed to come through we would have to return the goods or keep them until we could definitely get away.

On my return to Geneva I imparted the glad news to the Himalayan Committee of Geneva. This Committee included René Dittert, president; Paul Gilliland, treasurer; Francis Berthoud and myself as secretaries; with Tensing having the post of delegate-deputy to the Sherpas. During the meeting, it was decided that our sporting venture should be supplemented by a Genevan scientific expedition composed of Albert Zimmermann, Keeper of the Gardens at the Botanical Gardens of Geneva, and his assistant M. Stangelin.

Zimmermann quickly packed up his gear. He had some

difficulty in financing his part of the expedition, but he finally succeeded thanks to M. Berthoud. Everything seemed to be coming out all right. For my part, I packed up all the Swiss supplies which I had stored in my mother's flat in Geneva. That gave me an incredible amount of work, for the packing-cases which I had had to get up to the fifth floor now had to be brought down again, weighed, put on board lorries, and—above all—notated down item by item on lists in both French and English; what was more, their exact value had to be quoted.

As to the French supplies, we had them all delivered to the address of our friend Louis Revollat in Lyons. And the whole team spent a Saturday and Sunday in packing up the foodstuffs and equipment provided from France.

I should say here that suppliers helped us splendidly, providing special equipment and food without charge. Their co-operation enabled the party to take its departure in good order.

At last all this work was finished. All our cases of stores were stacked at the Botanical Gardens waiting for the firm of Danzas to pick them up for onward transmission to Genoa. Between times, an inordinate amount of correspondence had taken place in organizing the outward journey from Geneva.

The Lloyd-Triestino boat *Asia*, leaving Genoa on July 30th, would carry to Bombay all the members of the expedition except Claude Kogan and myself (who were travelling later by plane), together with all the luggage. Our cases of stores had to arrive at Genoa at least eight days before sailing-date; our companions would leave Geneva on the 29th, the day before they were due to sail.

Preparations went on—and so did the correspondence. Berths had to be booked for expedition members, places booked in the plane for Claude and myself. Inoculations must be arranged—all those necessary for a journey to India: cholera, small-pox, and so forth. Finally, each member was handed a list of the tasks entrusted to him.

Everything was ready in time. The only notable incident was that on the day of departure our friends very nearly missed the train. We were all gathered at the station on July 29th, the

farewells were being as interminable as usual, and no one gave any warning that the train was about to start. It was already moving at a good speed when my comrades took flying leaps on to the footboards.

That departure relieved me of one big worry. At last they were safely away with all their gear. All the cases of stores were already at Genoa, where they would be embarked in the *Asia* and eventually sail for India.

We had taken the precaution of establishing between ourselves a contract—that is, with the exception of the botanists, who were financially autonomous. The five members of the mountaineering group had formed themselves into a company, in which all rights of publication, broadcasting, film or photography belonged to the shareholders. This is nowadays a usual precaution in all expeditions. At the same time, the laws of this company provided that no one of the signatories could detach himself from the leader, or from any other member, even in the event of accident. All this may appear as a rather disagreeable aspect of the beginning of a great adventure; but experience in the Alps had shown us that it was a very desirable step to take—to form the party into one team bound together by a mutual agreement which no fortuitous circumstance could break.

After my friends had left on July 29, I once more considered the various questions that concerned my own profession. If I had not been haunted by so many cares, I might have gone into the mountains and undertaken the guiding of tourists on the Alpine routes. But I decided to let all my engagements go, one after the other; I could not bring myself to go climbing in the Valais or on the Chamonix Aiguilles when the slightest accident might prevent me from leaving for the Himalaya.

I felt myself too heavily loaded with responsibility, for upon my shoulders rested a little of everything—the permit, the finances, the organization of the journey. I was beginning to be prudent. I decided, therefore, to snatch some rest while I waited for Claude Kogan to finish putting her affairs in order at Nice.

Then we would make the most of our holidays—by flying away to India.

CHAPTER TWO

The Journey

SO ON the 18th of August we boarded our plane. As for our comrades, they would have reached Bombay several days ahead of us.

We flew Air-France from Nice to Rome; and in the plane I experienced my first relaxation of care. At last we were leaving Europe! We had turned an important page of our story. To have been able to get clear away after surmounting all our initial difficulties, I calculated, represented half the success of the expedition.

At Rome we went to look round the city with the crew of the Air-France plane. Neither Claude nor I had visited the Italian capital before, and for us this first visit was a prodigious eye-opener. But we made a vow to come to Rome again, for we had to see everything much too hurriedly for our liking.

We got back to the airport about midnight and took our places in the big Air-France "Constellation" which links Paris with Saigon. It was late, we were tired, and almost before we had taken off we were sound asleep, in spite of the roaring of the four enormous engines which were bearing us towards the Sacred Mountain—towards the Himalaya. At dawn we touched down at Damascus, one of our stopping-places. Here we had to get out of the plane and spend an hour at the airport, where a moist and very oppressive heat enveloped us. Passports and papers had to be produced and forms filled up. Then we got back into the plane, where they gave us back our passports before whisking us off in the direction of Baghdad.

It was noon by the time we reached Baghdad, and the heat was even worse than at Damascus. We perspired freely, while the Constellation stayed for an hour in the burning sun storing itself with the heat of the airfield. Here the fuel-tanks were refilled and

the engines checked. Then away again, this time with a long stage to cover across Saudi Arabia before landing at Karachi about nine o'clock in the evening. Before we touched down we were somewhat surprised to be asked for our papers and required to fill in a detailed questionnaire showing where we had slept for the past *fourteen* nights!

After that we had to go through the Customs again before being driven to our Karachi hotel. It was the airport hotel, and as we did not possess visas for Pakistan we had to remain in it while we waited for the connection which would leave next morning for Bombay, through which city we had to make a detour for the purpose of settling some business with the Customs.

Next day it was a plane of Indian Air Lines Corporation that flew us southward. After four hours' flying above the west coast of India we landed at Bombay, where we were met by a delegation consisting of Dr. Sonderegger (Swiss Consul-General), M. Wild, M. van Gessel and M. Bouheret. Customs formalities were quickly dealt with here, for we had hardly anything with us except a small case weighing forty pounds. We spent a short time at Dr. Sonderegger's house refreshing ourselves and stayed the night at the Taj Mahal Hotel; tomorrow we should have to leave again. All was in order, our companions having very quickly got the stores, brought with them in the *Asia*, through the Customs. Except Dr. Lochmatter, who was waiting for us at Delhi, they were already at Patna.

At eight o'clock the following day we took off at Bombay for Delhi, where M. Suter of the Swiss Legation met us and drove us to the Hotel Cecil. Here we began to appreciate that we were back in India again—and to appreciate a swim in the magnificent bathing-pool of the hotel. M. Hotz, who is Swiss, received us in so cordial a manner that we should have liked to stay longer in Delhi; but expedition cares called us away. Our comrades were waiting at Patna, and we had received a letter that betrayed their impatience and a certain restlessness. They were anxious to get away from Patna, where it was far too hot, and reach Kathmandu as soon as possible. But plane services were still interrupted by the monsoon and the weather continued hostile.

Delhi welcomed us with open arms. We were invited by the Swiss Minister to attend a reception to which were bidden the French Ambassador, the Austrian Minister, the Nepalese Ambassador, Major-General Williams and Professor Tucci, of Rome. We were also received by the Nepalese Ambassador, who gave us visas for his country. Eventually Claude Kogan and I, with Franz Lochmatter, once again set off by plane and reached Patna, where we were met by Father Niesen of the St. Xavier School. All our packing-cases were there, and all the purchases which were to be made in India had been completed, which cheered us considerably.

In this matter of provisions, we had brought from Europe the foodstuffs known as "high-altitude rations": crispbread, nougat, ovomaltine, chocolate, pemmican, sweets, bacon, and packet soups. But the basic foods, such as sugar, jam, Quaker Oats, butter and tea, were to be bought here in Patna. To them we now added cigarettes. The seaborne cases had been opened and we had now small expedition boxes and transport sacks. All these stores were going to be put on board the special aircraft chartered by us. But now we had some bad news. A violent rainstorm had burst upon Kathmandu, where the plane which was to pick up our stores was waiting. Hour after hour, and then day after day, its arrival was delayed. Thus we languished in Patna for more than a week.

This delay was of no great importance in the long run, for the monsoon was still in full force. What inconvenienced us more than anything was the temperature at Patna—nearly 104°F. in the shade, a moist, unhealthy heat that kept us damp and sweating day and night. At night, if we had had no mosquito-nets, we should have been literally devoured by the insects. Bertholet, absent-minded or homesick, forgot to put up his mosquito-net one night; next morning he was unrecognizable, red and swollen from head to foot. We still marvel that he didn't get malaria from so many bites.

We explored Patna, with its sumptuous river-scenery—the Ganges, wide and sombre. The river was in flood and had overflowed its banks, submerging trees and dwellings. One Patna

college asked me to give them a talk about Everest, and I did so. Of course, I lectured in French; but an Indian doctor translated the lecture sentence by sentence. Everywhere we found a warm welcome and had to sign many autograph-books.

Meanwhile, the organization of our journey had been minutely planned and we had hardly any more obstacles to pass before beginning our approach march. I should add that Father Niesen helped us considerably in this, smoothing out our difficulties as he had done for the two earlier expeditions to Everest. And at last Claude Kogan, Jean Juge, Lochmatter and I took our seats in the aircraft of the regular air service. We were going ahead of the others to prepare for the arrival of all our stores, which would follow in charge of Bertholet and Zimmermann in the special plane.

As we flew, our companions told us about their outward journey, with plenty of details. They had had time on the sea-passage to visit the Pyramids and to see something of Aden, Karachi and Bombay. They had also done the three-and-a-half-day crossing of India from Bombay to Patna, an exciting journey in spite of the two hundred and fifty stations where the train stopped on the way! I had already made that train journey; but I envied them the sea voyage, as much for its restfulness as for its sight-seeing opportunities.

We reached Kathmandu without incident. Telegrams had been sent to warn M. Mulli of our coming, but they had not yet reached their destination. (They did not arrive until the next day.) So there was nobody at the airport to welcome us. But Madame Métha, of the Indian Embassy in Nepal, offered us her car to drive to the house of Dr. Hagen, where we found our friends Hans Mulli and Schultess. Here we made our arrangements, and then went to the Indian Embassy to settle some Customs matters which awaited attention.

Later, by invitation from the former Nepalese Ambassador in Lhasa, we assisted at a typical Nepalese party. We were obliged to sit on the floor to eat, with our legs folded under us—and a most uncomfortable posture we found it. Using our fingers, we ate a typical Nepalese dish, highly seasoned with curry and chillies, which nearly took the roofs off our mouths. I succeeded

in breaking two glasses—happily we had so far drunk nothing but water. But now the meal was over the ceremony was continued in a standing position, and the water was replaced by whisky and beer. In short, our first contact with Nepal was very friendly, and we spent a delightful evening which we still remember with pleasure. That night we slept at the Swiss Technical Mission and in the morning went to wait for the special plane which was bringing Zimmermann and Bertholet.

We had arranged beforehand to camp close to the airport. Why? Because transport in Kathmandu is a difficult business. There is a shortage of petrol and taxis are therefore few and expensive.

We were also waiting for our Sherpas, who had not arrived on the prearranged date. Coming by train from Darjeeling, they had taken many more days on the journey than they had expected, on account of the chaotic state of roads and railroads following the monsoon. In Nepal the rain had been unceasing. Houses at Kathmandu had collapsed. The walls separating gardens had fallen down, but that was hardly surprising since they were made of bricks cemented with a mixture of earth and cow-dung; when it rains, this primitive amalgam disintegrates. As soon as the monsoon is over the Nepalese philosophically build up their walls again.

Well, we had decided to camp at the side of the airfield, and there we awaited hourly the arrival of our plane. At last it was signalled and I was soon busy organizing the coolies into transporting the cases to the camp-site ten minutes from the landing-strip. There we pitched camp. An Indian officer helped us by putting some large military tents at our disposal.

Lastly arrived Stangelin and the Sherpa Dawa Thondu. They had come from Patna, and had managed the transport of nine loads—by train, lorry, and plane—to Kathmandu. They, too, had been held up by weather conditions. And now we were complete at last: sirdar, Sherpas, all the Europeans—and all the stores. But we had still to visit the bank and the Treasury to change money and obtain new banknotes, for in the foothills of Nepal they will not accept used notes and prefer coin.

In 1952 they had refused paper altogether. They wanted hard cash, and full-weight coins at that. On the next expedition, warned by this experience and thinking two precautions better than one, we took half in notes and half in coin. It was then that these same foothill-dwellers refused to take coin and wanted nothing but notes. However, we stuck to our guns and ended by persuading them to take coin.

We spent a long time at the bank. Many little heaps of coins and many packets of banknotes had to be counted out, for we were taking with us nearly twelve thousand Nepalese rupees. The Indian rupee is worth 92 Swiss centimes (1s. 6d.), and with 100 Indian rupees one can buy 182 Nepalese rupees—an extremely favourable exchange from our point of view. The question of finance was thus satisfactorily settled. Meanwhile, the loads had been made up with the help of the Sherpas, making certain that each one weighed 60 lb., and we had lined them up ready for the day of departure.

Every evening we were at a reception. One of the first was held at the Swiss Technical Mission, where the ministers of the Nepal Government were invited with the British Ambassador and Professor Tucci of Rome with members of his party. We also met the Austrian expedition, Dr. Tichy and his two companions, and dined with them. Three expeditions were at Kathmandu, united by a common enthusiasm: one Italian, one Austrian, and our own.

We went from one reception to another. The most important of all was the one given to us by the Nepalese Minister for Foreign Affairs on the eve of our departure, in the Governmental palace itself. The entire Cabinet was represented, as well as members of the Royal family.

The next day, Sunday, the coolies were got together very early in the morning (as is usual when this sort of expedition sets forth) and lined up in squads of ten. Each man was given a load and an advance of 20 rupees, plus three cigarettes, after which they were lined up again in a new position. The Minister of National Defence had lent us some soldiers to help with the whole problem of getting the coolies under way, and thanks to good discipline and rational organization everything went through

very quickly. Afterwards we were visited by the British Ambassador, who offered us a jeep in which two of us could travel to Bagdaon; and M. Boris of the Royal Hotel lent us two more jeeps as far as the same place, where we would await the Sherpas and coolies.

The coolies were on the way by now, marching across the plain of Kathmandu towards Bagdaon Banépa, the first stage of our long journey. We left in our jeeps and set out for Bagdaon, passing pagodas and temples and stopping to look round the ancient town and visit the entrancing Temple of Love. Bagdaon must be the most amazing city accessible by car. But from here the road was completely demolished by floods and we were obliged to take to our legs. Taking leave of our friends M. Boris and his wife, and of Mulli and Schultess, we began our long trek across Nepal.

On our way we called in at the house of our Sherpa friend Tensing. Here lives his aged mother, very brisk for all her eighty or more years. This is a traditional halt, and each time we pass this way we look in to find her always smiling, pleasant and welcoming.

A good deal has been said about these men who carry the mountaineer's luggage at high altitudes and constitute such valuable auxiliaries. What are these Sherpas, and where do they come from?

They are a likeable race, always cheerful, who came from Tibet to settle in the neighbourhood of Namche Bazaar, a small village not far from the Khumbu Glacier that descends from the Nepalese face of Everest. Their features are Mongoloid, with narrow eyes and high cheekbones. At first they were called "Bhotias", but by the third generation after their arrival they had taken the name of "Sherpas".

Namche Bazaar is 11,500 feet above the sea, and its dwellings are built in a little basin formed by old moraines. The ancient houses are all built on the same plan. On the ground floor a room shelters the owner's animals—yaks, goats, sheep. A wooden staircase, very steep and dark, leads to a spacious room where, in

huge vessels, are stored the reserves of water, rice, flour, maize, and so forth. At the far end of the room coverlets made of sheep-skin or yak-skin are piled. A little altar consecrated to the worship of Buddha is fixed in the centre of one of the wall-panels; a shelf in front of it supports several small cups each containing yak-butter in which floats a lighted wick. On the left are a few mats, and a hearth at the level of the floor. Behind it are ranged the household utensils, small in number and variety. There are little unglazed windows provided with shutters. There is no chimney; the smoke goes out through gaps in the roof.

The Sherpas live on the products of the soil—potatoes and such other vegetables as they can persuade to grow at such an altitude. They also eat tsampa, which is roasted barley cooked with water and butter. They drink salted tea, flavoured with rancid yak-butter. One of their alcoholic drinks, chang, is made from barley and fermented millet and tastes something like cider, and they also make a special sort of liquor which they call arak; a sip of this recalls the delicate taste of fuel alcohol.

Why did they leave the high plateaus of Tibet to come and settle here, south of Everest? Because here existence is less hard, the climate more agreeable and the earth more fertile than on the plateaus. Potatoes can be grown at a height of 14,000 feet and they can graze their herds of yaks and sheep right up to 17,000 feet. Moreover, the men can make a living by providing transport between Tibet and the south, even as far as India.

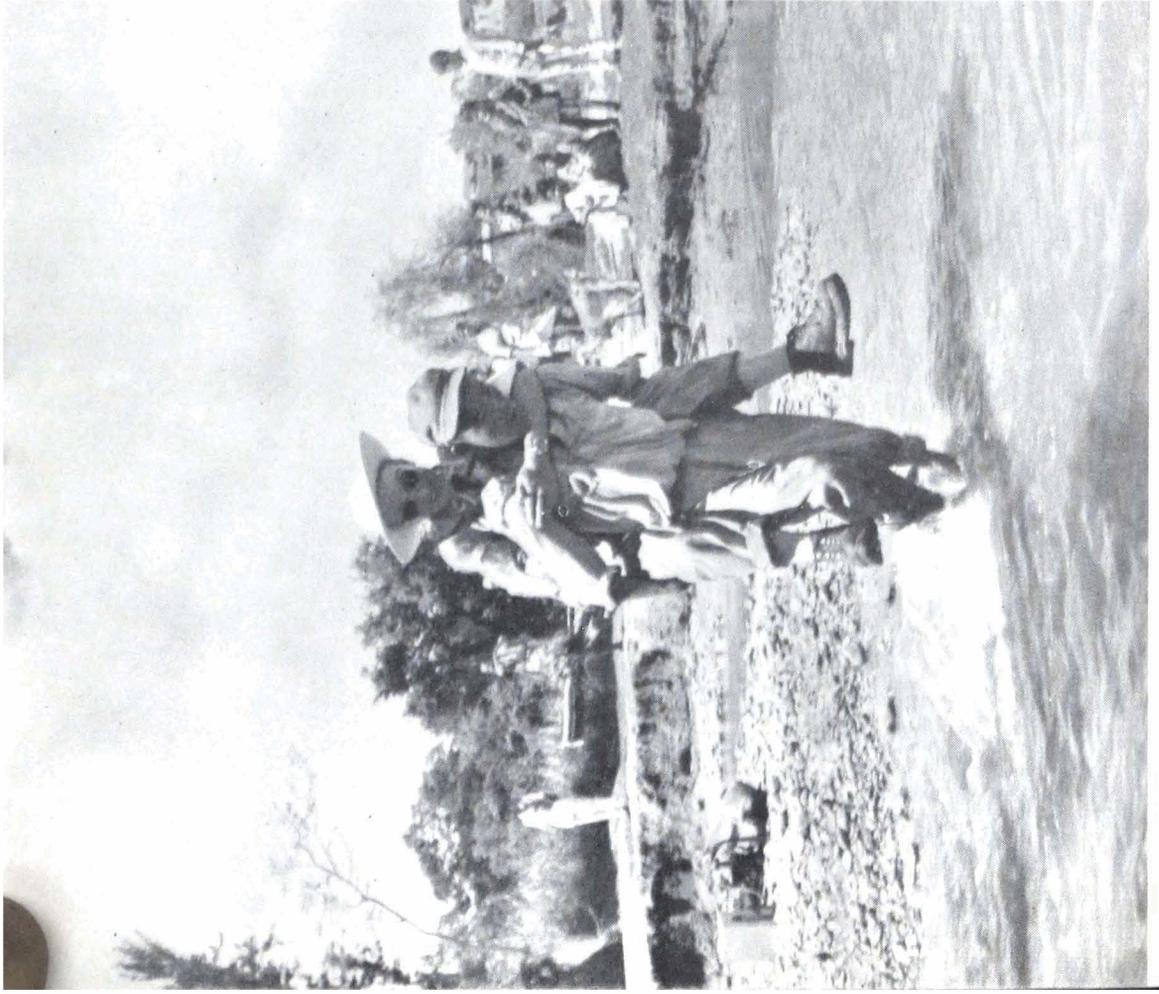
It was here that Tensing arrived as a young immigrant at the age of six. He was a shepherd first, then a load-carrier or porter like all his brother Sherpas at Namche Bazaar. One day these porters heard that some white men had arrived in Darjeeling with the intention of travelling through the high mountains of the Himalaya, and needed porters and servants, so several Sherpas set off on the road to Darjeeling, whither they had never before been. They approached the Sahibs and offered their services on this and subsequent expeditions. Willing, intelligent, very strong, able to endure at high altitudes and loyal unto death, the Sherpas quickly won the approval of the British expeditions who employed them on all the attempts to climb Everest from the north. Certain



Our column on the march



Sherpa sirdar piloting coolies



Claude Kogan on Sherpa-back

of them revealed themselves as leaders by the authority they wielded over their companions, and these were called "sirdars". Others, very resourceful fellows, engaged themselves as cooks. On our expeditions we always had one who devoted himself entirely to our messing arrangements. This time it was Thondu, a Himalayan veteran, who had been on many expeditions; he was very clean and tidy and went to a lot of trouble to please us.

We Europeans should not forget that these Sherpa cooks have taught themselves everything, for clearly they have not served an apprenticeship or taken a course. But where they really showed up as aces, where they drew forth our wondering admiration, was when they performed the feat of making—in rain and mud, with soaking-wet wood—a good fire for the cooking of rice and the making of our tea.

When we wanted to engage Sherpas we wrote well in advance to Darjeeling, indicating how many we wanted and, if we had any preferences, the names of those we wished to engage for the duration of the expedition. An association of Sherpas has recently been founded, directed by Tensing, and it was with this association that we made our contract. The chief of the team, the sirdar, gets seven or eight Indian rupees a day. The cook gets six and the other Sherpa porters four or five rupees. On top of this each man receives a 15 per cent tip at the end of the expedition. The expedition also undertakes to indemnify them in case of accident. Before leaving Darjeeling they must in every case pass a medical examination. They receive a sum of money in advance that pays for this and also for their travel expenses in getting to the place of rendezvous with the expedition.

The Sherpas, who are known as high-altitude "porters" to differentiate them from the coolies, were equipped by us from top to toe and victualled during the whole time of the expedition at our expense. During the approach march they carried only light loads, including part of their own equipment; but they acted as our very zealous and attentive servants, putting up the tents, helping with the cooking, supervising and disciplining the coolies until we reached Base Camp.

As for the coolies, they were engaged on the spot and paid

three and a half rupees a day, and were expected to feed and clothe themselves; they were, indeed, very lightly clad and marched barefooted. Coolies seldom go higher than 12,000 feet.

Between 12,000 and 17,000 feet, at which height our Base Camp would probably be situated, we would call on men more experienced in the terrain and less fearful of the great mountains, more suitably clad and accustomed to wearing boots.

Once we reached the end of the approach march, the place where Base Camp would be established, our high-altitude porters would take over the load-carrying, moving up the units of the high camps. They would carry 50 to 60 lb. each. Equipped like ourselves and sleeping in tents, they could expect some very hard work, exhausting and sometimes dangerous.

I have often noticed that most Sherpas are unable to find their way unaided on a virgin peak. The task of opening the route, of making the tracks and marking them with pegs or little flags, would be ours entirely. The sole exception is Tensing Norgay, with whom I opened the way to Everest and who had the joy of making the final triumphant assault. Tensing is capable of route-finding, step-cutting, or safeguarding with the rope; I have twice seen him at work on the slopes of the South Col. Pasang Lama is an excellent sirdar also but those able to perform such feats as Tensing's are very rare indeed.

When a man has learned how to live with them, to understand them, and when they feel that he likes them and that they themselves are members of the great family of mountaineers, then he will get full measure from his Sherpas. They will become his friends and indispensable helpers; for at high altitudes Europeans lose a part of their ability and need the help of Sherpas.

The Sherpa who looked after me did his utmost to spare me any domestic worries. My tent was pitched in a twinkling; tea was brought to me every morning, my sleeping-bag spread out to air in the sunshine, my shirts folded up. A professional manservant could have done no more. One should avoid speaking harshly to the Sherpas; the success of the expedition might well suffer for it. And that means taking care to maintain an even

temper, for at high altitudes even the sweetest characters become touchy. For my part, I cannot imagine climbing in the high Himalaya without Sherpas, and would prefer to take more Sherpas and fewer Europeans.

At Darjeeling Claude Kogan and I visited the dwellings of the Sherpas, a little village of corrugated-iron huts built very close together. Our gallant Sherpas were somewhat out of their element here. They had left behind the soil that nourished them, abandoned the life of agriculture which gave them their natural food of potatoes and grain and meat—things which in Darjeeling had to be bought. For a means of living they had now to rely solely on the wages paid by expeditions. There is here, perhaps, a social problem of adaptation worthy of some reflection.

Are the Sherpas following a mirage? Dressed like Europeans (thanks to the generosity of their foreign "sahibs"), invested among their fellows with a sort of legendary glory which their visits to the god-inhabited peaks give them, they have left their homeland and their home-loving fellow-tribesmen in order to be near the departure point of the big expeditions who can make them rich. They are in the position of country-bred folk living in a town. And they are not entirely happy there.

The first stages of our approach march were those I had travelled twice before, in 1952. Well though I knew them, it was none the less a renewed pleasure to follow those familiar paths through the hundreds of little cultivated fields, to halt in the shade of the same big trees, to bathe in the same streams. I recalled pleasant days of the previous year with the companions of that time—Dittert, Auber, Flory, Hofstetter, Asper. Where were they now, I wondered, so far away from this countryside which we had explored together?

We were still in the monsoon period, marching through green paddy-fields, with green plants everywhere, continual proof of the patience and diligence of the Nepalese farmer. We left Kathmandu on September 5 for the first stage to Banépa, and after marching for about three and a half hours reached our pre-arranged camp-site, the same that I had used twice before in 1952.

Being well in front of the coolies, we decided to wait for them in the shelter of a small house.

In no time the whole village had assembled, including the children, to stare at us, and the circle closed in more and more tightly. We had to try and frighten them to make them move back. But everyone was friendly, smiling, and curious.

Along came the coolies at last, having carried their loads for 18 miles across the plain and over a little pass. Camp was quickly pitched, and we slept that night in tents for the first time. During the night rain smote angrily down on the tent roofs, but in the morning there was bright sunshine, and we were able to dry out our things before striking camp.

CHAPTER THREE

The Adventure Begins

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 6TH.

About five in the morning we cleared for action—the coolies turned up early and camp was struck at once. By half-past six we were away.

I stayed on the camp-site until the last load was shouldered, to see that nothing was left behind. The march began with an ascent to a small pass, followed after 45 minutes' going by a descent into a valley covered with little paddy-fields. From ten o'clock onwards the heat was very oppressive, and we stopped for lunch in the shade of a tree. Then on again, beginning now to suffer from painfully blistered feet. Lochmatter, our medico, had some work in store for him.

Another laborious climb up a sunken track brought us to a ridge-crest, and another descent led down to the river-junction of the Indravati and the Sun Kosi to end this hot and thirsty stage of our journey. Nothing specially worthy of note, unless it was that we were glad when this day was over; it was the most trying day we should experience, for it must be remembered that we were not yet in training. Luckily there was no rain. Several of us bathed and had difficulty in tearing ourselves away from the cool waters which were so soothing to our overheated systems. With Bertholet, Juge, Lochmatter and Stangelin, I reached the camp-site at 3 in the afternoon. Claude Kogan enjoyed a swim in the Sun Kosi.

One of our Sherpas turned up with the leading coolies. Among the latter were several remarkably sturdy women carrying loads of 60 lb. and keeping in the forefront of the party. What was more, they were singing as they came. One of these girls carried the recording apparatus, and we now recorded the description of our first two stages for Radio Geneva. Camp was made, and we settled

down to a good night's rest, though nights were still rather hot at this height of only 2,200 feet.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7TH.

Heavy showers fell in the night. The first leeches appeared. I had made the acquaintance of these creatures in 1952. They were as hateful now as they were then, but I was used to them. My companions, who were experiencing their horrible bites for the first time—behind an ear, underneath a wrist-watch, inside a boot—tried to revenge themselves by hunting the things. The only way of getting rid of a leech, once it has attached itself, is to press a burning cigarette against it.

Last night the coolies didn't get in until seven. They had made a very long march, so we distributed cigarettes—three to each man.

Our route now lay uphill from Dolalgath to Chyaubas, and it seemed interminable. We set out at 5 on a cloudy morning. No rain, but an oppressive heat and thunder rumbling in the distance. We had to climb from the Sun Kosi-Indravati junction at 2,200 feet to Chyaubas at 6,700 feet. Lochmatter, who headed the column of march, generally went at a good pace. Zimmermann, on the other hand, didn't even follow the same paths as ourselves; he would wander off to the left, then to the right, bending down, busily gathering, collecting, noting in his little book the place where he found each plant, together with its height above the sea and the direction it faced. He did an enormous amount of work and marched twice as far as anyone else. As for the rest of us, we marched head down but without a glance for those secret, mysterious, and often invisible plants.

Claude and I went slowly forward on painful feet. Our muscles were still stiff and incompletely warmed up. True muscular warmth, in fact, would not be attained for another four or five days. But today's march was a beautiful one. We mounted between terraces planted with rice for more than 6,500 feet. The little houses were clean and attractive and we came across many herds of cattle and goats, not to mention the water-buffaloes whose stare held "*cette stupidité qui peut-être est stupeur*".

I sweated a great deal and soon emptied my water-bottle, but Claude shared hers with me when we halted for a snack on the crest of a ridge. From here it was only 35 minutes' going to our camp-site at 6,700 feet, where we breathed at last a cool and healthy air; the slight gain in altitude made this our first really pleasant camp. It was perfectly placed, commanding a wide view to southward over the foothills of Nepal and looking down on the cultivated slopes of this fruitful countryside, home of a friendly and hardworking folk whose agricultural tasks are performed with only very primitive tools.

I found myself very well satisfied with our team. Jean Juge, for one, had put himself in sole charge of the accounts, that disagreeable but indispensable task. I must say I envied him the accuracy with which he kept them. Every day we knew just how we stood financially. He likewise looked after the recordings for Radio Geneva, and took notes of temperatures and heights.

Claude Kogan seconded me very ably. She had, of course, had previous experience of the Himalaya and was a thorough initiate of high-altitude climbing, for she had been on Nun Kun with Bernard Pierre the previous year. She took charge of the obtaining of fresh food, the Sherpas, the cooking, and in particular of what I may call our "Menu for the day". With Thorndu, our head cook, she was admirably firm. I saw already that Claude was to be my right-hand man on this expedition. She could always be relied upon. She might weigh only 7 stone, but she could stand heat, cold, or damp remarkably well. Plenty of spirit as well as gentleness made her a truly perfect expedition member, and I was already looking forward to making other climbs with her in the future. To me she was a pleasant and valuable assistant.

Bertholet was fully occupied with his photography. He had a big job to do and was doing it with precision. I was very satisfied with his collaboration.

Lochmatter, our doctor, spoke little but acted when necessary. He was showing himself a capable organizer and presented the perfect type of Himalayan climber-doctor. He could speak English, and helped me in my conversations with the notables of the various countries we passed through.

We were expecting rain on the morning we left this camp at Lichenku, but as we marched the weather cleared and the sun came out. We had nothing to worry about except the leeches. Claude, Bertholet and I left camp at 6.45, leaving Franz to see that all the loads were started on the road. At first we mounted along grassy crests sprinkled with small shrubs, and then a long descent brought us to a little river where we had a refreshing bathe. Juge and Lochmatter were in front, and our two Sherpas went ahead to take rations for the journey to the leaders.

Next we climbed up again by a pretty side-track flanked by little fields of maize and rice. Higher up we came to terraced Nepalese farmhouses, clean and well-kept. This was a rich countryside, for the peasant of Nepal looks ahead and collects reserves of maize and flour in his house against the lean years.

Here and there we saw signs of the damage done by the monsoon of 1954, which had been very violent. Whole houses had collapsed, for they are built of earth and cannot withstand a landslide. Some of the paths were literally devastated. It was at times difficult to travel in this fascinating country of shy, simple, and hardworking people.

We found a camp-site at the side of a Buddhist monastery, whose prayer-flags waved overhead in the breeze. We went inside to look at the image of Buddha, a golden Buddha surrounded by objects of worship. My companions busied themselves taking photographs, and some contrived to do their washing. In spite of the arduous marches we were making, we had some unforgettable hours in those first days. But next day we were to move on once more, to Charicot.

SEPTEMBER 9TH.

This was our fifth day of marching. Our westward trek was finished, and now we left the route to Everest and began to climb again, northward. Passing through the fine village of Charicot, in the heart of its flourishing countryside, we came down into Dolakha and there made camp.

A veritable army of leeches attacked us at Dolakha, where we arrived after a heavy rainstorm, and we sought temporary

shelter in a Nepalese peasant's house. Jean Juge, not content with this, thought it was foolish to spend the night in our tents when there were houses available; but it would have been a difficult job to get the whole expedition into houses already too small for their owners, and we took to our tents, which were sufficiently waterproof. Juge, our treasurer, was accustomed to keep his account-book in a polythene bag, and during the night we spent at Dolakha he used it as a pillow. Next morning all the pretty figures he had so carefully entered in their columns were smudged across the page. This disaster naturally increased his wrath, and he argued the case for his theory "that it is necessarily better to sleep in a house than in a tent" all the way from Dolakha to Syra, our next stage.

We were still not out of the monsoon period, and must expect rain for several more days of the northward march. For the moment we were in the full humidity of the season; and once more the expected leeches put in an appearance.

I had a slight attack of angina, which Franz dealt with effectively. In the Himalaya one must go on even when one is ill, and thanks to Franz's care I was fit again by the next day.

Each day I was trying to work out in advance where we would halt for the night. But this valley was unknown to me, and I had some trouble to ensure that the day's march was long enough. If we were forced to pay for extra days, we were likely to find our finances in a precarious state.

CHAPTER FOUR

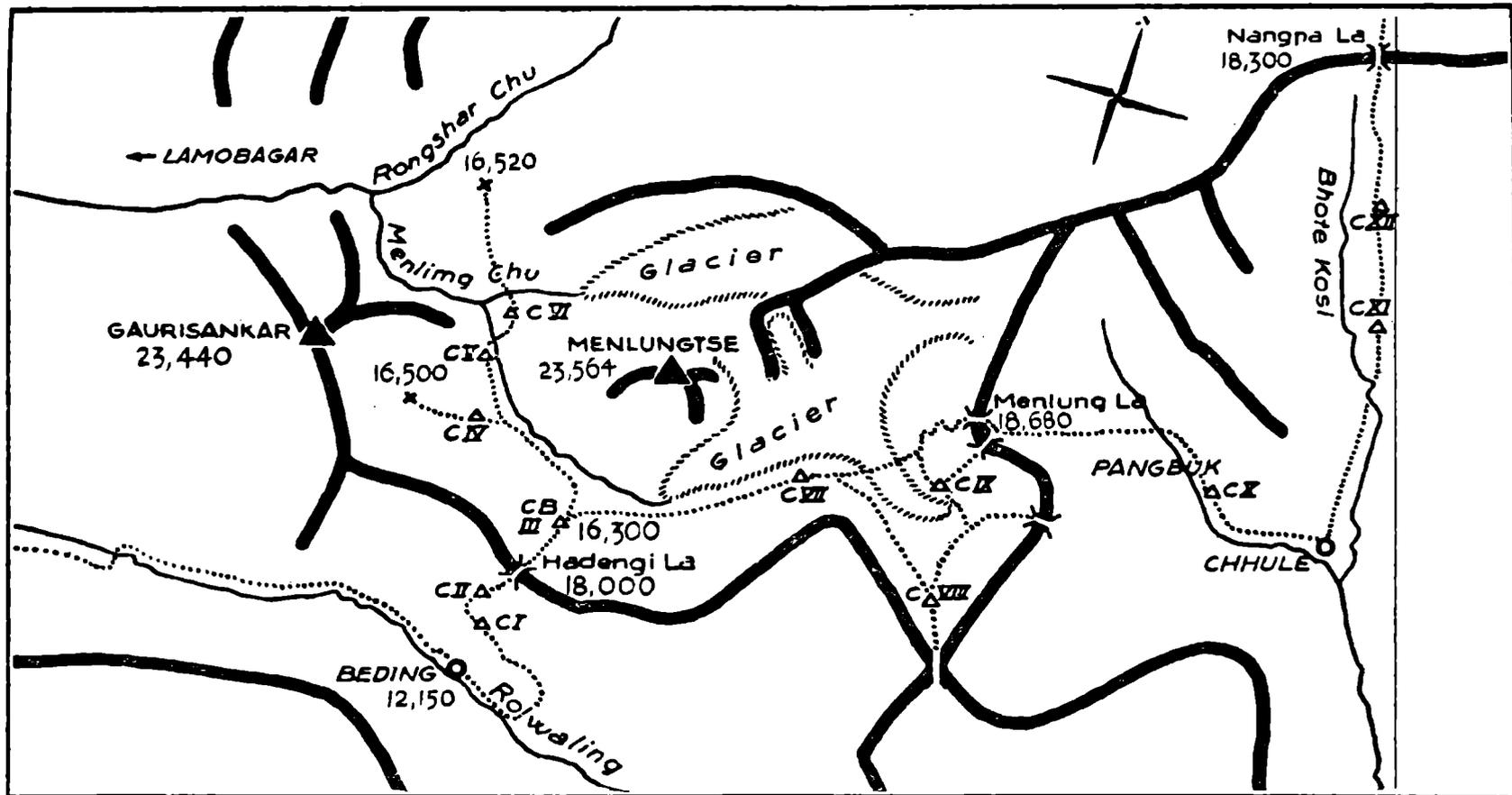
In Which a Lama Loses His Hat

ON THE seventh night of our march we camped at a slightly higher altitude. We were now slowly drawing nearer to the valley of the Bothe Kosi, marching always northward and looking eagerly for our first view of Gaurisankar. There were fine-looking mountains to be seen in the far distance but it was impossible to say whether our peak was one of them.

On the 12th we reached Laduck. Here we wrote as many letters as possible and brought our records up to date, for on the following day the first outgoing post would leave. Our Darjeeling Sherpas had brought out with them two or three companions, Sherpas like themselves, who had not been equipped by us and had until now been acting as coolies. As we advanced, consuming sugar and rice daily, our coolie-loads had been diminishing in proportion; thus we could use the two most reliable of these Sherpas as postmen and at the same time reduce the number of coolies. We handed our mail to them and they set off back to Kathmandu. It had taken us nine days to reach Laduck from Kathmandu; these "postmen" would take only six days to get our European mail to our Nepalese friend Manick La in the capital.

After carrying our letters, the two men were to retrace their route and try to catch up with us, and this they eventually succeeded in doing in record time, recalling the feat of the runner we used on the Everest expedition, who took eighteen days over a two-way journey of more than 300 miles. Such rapid going over such a distance is nothing short of miraculous. These men, gifted with legs as wiry and untiring as those of wading-birds, must travel for nearly twenty hours in every twenty-four. They make few halts, are very abstemious, and scarcely sleep at all.

The next stage, from Laduck to Tari, was a very pretty march along the hillsides, looking down from above on the valley of



THE RECONNAISSANCES OF GAURISANKAR AND MENLUNGTSE

- C I. Pasture Camp
- C II. Sérac Camp
- CB III. Lake Base Camp
- C IV. Reconnaissance Camp
- x 16,500. Limit of Lambert-Lochmatter Reconnaissance
- C V. } Reconnaissance Camps
- C VI. }

- x 16,520. Limit of Lambert-Kogan Reconnaissance
- C VII. Green Moraines Camp
- C VIII. Camp below southern col
- C IX. Camp above Menlungtse Glacier
- C X. Camp at Pangbuk
- C XI. Camp at Lunack
- C XII. Camp at Zasenba

the Bothe Kosi. It ended with a descent to Tari, where we withstood a new offensive by the leeches. Following the ritual method, we decimated the enemy cigarette by cigarette. This was a very damp camp-site, and again there were mosquitoes and little flies of repulsive habits.

Next day we left Tari and the Bothe Kosi valley and took to the Rolwaling Khola. We marched close to the river in an overpowering heat, but the scenery was astonishingly beautiful. The vegetation was almost tropical in its lushness. Many birds sang and whistled in the forest and we saw some small monkeys. And I discovered a magnificent natural swimming-pool, which those in the front of the party had missed. I was at the rear with Claude Kogan when I spotted this kingly bath. Its water was far from cold, for the cascade that fed it fell from high above and ran down over immense sun-warmed slabs towering eight to nine hundred feet above us. A little torrent poured from the overflow of this natural bath-tub. Into the ideally clear and warm water I plunged with delight. It was neck-deep and the bottom was sandy, and I prolonged the divine pleasure of that bathe as much as I could. I soaked, swam, and dived, while Claude Kogan, prudently avoiding the risk of a cold, watched me from the bank. That watery relaxation, which I left at last with regret, was a happy diversion before the rough ascent which awaited us.

We now found before us a climb of 5,000 feet before we reached a village named Simigaon. We had been under the impression that the monsoon was drawing to its end, but at early evening the clouds descended and so did the rain. The path from Simigaon continued to climb very steeply, through very wet forest. Every tree was covered with thick moss and we walked on a spongy carpet of it. The rain overtook us at 11,200 feet, hissing down upon the sodden ground. We got the tents up after a fashion and did what we could to protect the loads, managing both tasks with difficulty.

Another problem was to find shelter for the Nepalese coolies. We were here at 11,200 feet, and these men from Kathmandu were inadequately clothed, being barefooted and having only thin cotton garments. Some of them hadn't even got trousers, wearing

instead a long linen sash wound round their loins below a ragged shirt. We made all our spare tents and coverings available to them, and they rapidly set up poles made from boughs and stretched the coverings over them, or made roofs from branches. Then they lit fires and settled down huddled close together round their rustic hearths.

We had about a hundred coolies with us, scattered about in the forest. I made a round of their encampments to see that they were all well installed. They didn't look particularly delighted with their lodgings, and I decided to make a supplementary distribution of cigarettes to induce patience and help them through the night; for at all costs they must go on with us next day.

Happily, next day was fine. We climbed from 11,200 to 12,700 feet. And from a little col we saw with quickened pulses, on the far side of the Rolwaling valley, the face of Gaurisankar.

On this, the twelfth day of our march, having met with no transport problems in spite of the monsoon and the difficulties of traversing unknown country, we arrived at last at the little village of Beding, 12,150 feet above the sea. Beding was drowned in mist. It had the look of a dead place, a village abandoned, for we could see no one among its houses. At length one or two curious inhabitants appeared, and the Sherpas got to work. They made contact with a reliable man from the local monastery, and one of its dependant houses was put at our disposal for setting up our kitchen. The coolies arrived very tired, too late to allow of camp being pitched, and we sought permission to sleep in the monastery. At first the nun who had come out to welcome us told us we might do so; everything seemed to be going well, and we gave her another rupee for the temple. But now abruptly appeared a Lama, who had come to pray to Buddha and to light the little butter-lamps and fill the sacred vessels. This Lama categorically refused to let us spend the night in the monastery. In vain we tried to talk him over. He informed us—and, what was more, made us understand, through the intermediary of our Sherpas—that while he agreed to let us eat there and leave our loads in shelter we must go outside to sleep. We argued a little longer, but he would not give

in, so we had to get out our inflatable mattresses and place them round the monastery under its eaves. Four of us eventually got permission to shelter in a nook under the prayer-mill at the side of the monastery.

I don't know why the temple was forbidden to us. Perhaps it would have been sacrilege for unbelievers to sleep there.

The night passed somehow, but the mist remained, and the morning light blessed us but feebly. We were badly lodged here, and decided to move out and camp by the riverside, where a plot of level ground made a site for the tents. We had part of our baggage carried to this place; first the gear belonging to the climbing party and then Zimmermann's effects, which were scattered all over the temple. Then we began to pay off the coolies, who demanded more cigarettes in addition to their pay. After which, disdaining the difficulties of finding lodgings that beset us, they went off to sleep in the houses close to our tents.

We engaged two more coolies, Nepalese, to act as postmen. This was our second outgoing post, for the two men who had left several days earlier had not yet returned. The two Nepalese men spoke a little English and seemed content with the arrangements; they were to go from Beding to Kathmandu and rejoin the party about October 3rd at Base Camp—if and when Base Camp was established, for we didn't even yet know where it would be. The Nepalese, however, appeared to be resourceful men. Once they were back at Beding they would seek information from the Lama and the villagers and come to join us, even though it would mean crossing high snow-passes bare-footed. Still, we must soon decide upon a place for this much-talked-of Base Camp.

We bought tsampa and meal at Beding, and sought coolies to replace those who were returning to Kathmandu. It was not easy to find them in this valley, for there were only small villages and the Sherpas had to go through all the hamlets like beaters before they could get the number we wanted. At length we collected eight men. And the 18th September saw the setting forth of these eight coolies, with three Sherpas, the sirdar Dawa Thondu, Bertholet, and Juge. Their mission was to get up the

mountainsides above Beding and try to find the way over a pass which would take us into the Menlungtse basin. We had at present no idea of the way.

I remained behind with Claude Kogan to check the loads. We opened all of them and profited by some hours of rare sunshine to dry out most of the contents. Thanks to the good packing provided by our suppliers, nothing had deteriorated. A little damp had got in but soon disappeared in the sun's heat. There was not much time allowed to us for this task, for between 10 and 11 o'clock we had to pack everything up again and wait for the next morning's sun.

In the evening the Lama of Beding invited us to the temple, whither, of course, we went. First we assisted at a religious ceremony in the monastery, and after this he gave us tea. Not to be behindhand in courtesy, Zimmermann got a hatchet out of one of his boxes and presented it to the Lama, who was absolutely delighted with it since it would help him to go on with the monastery repairs which were in progress. And now another ceremony took place before the Buddha in the temple.

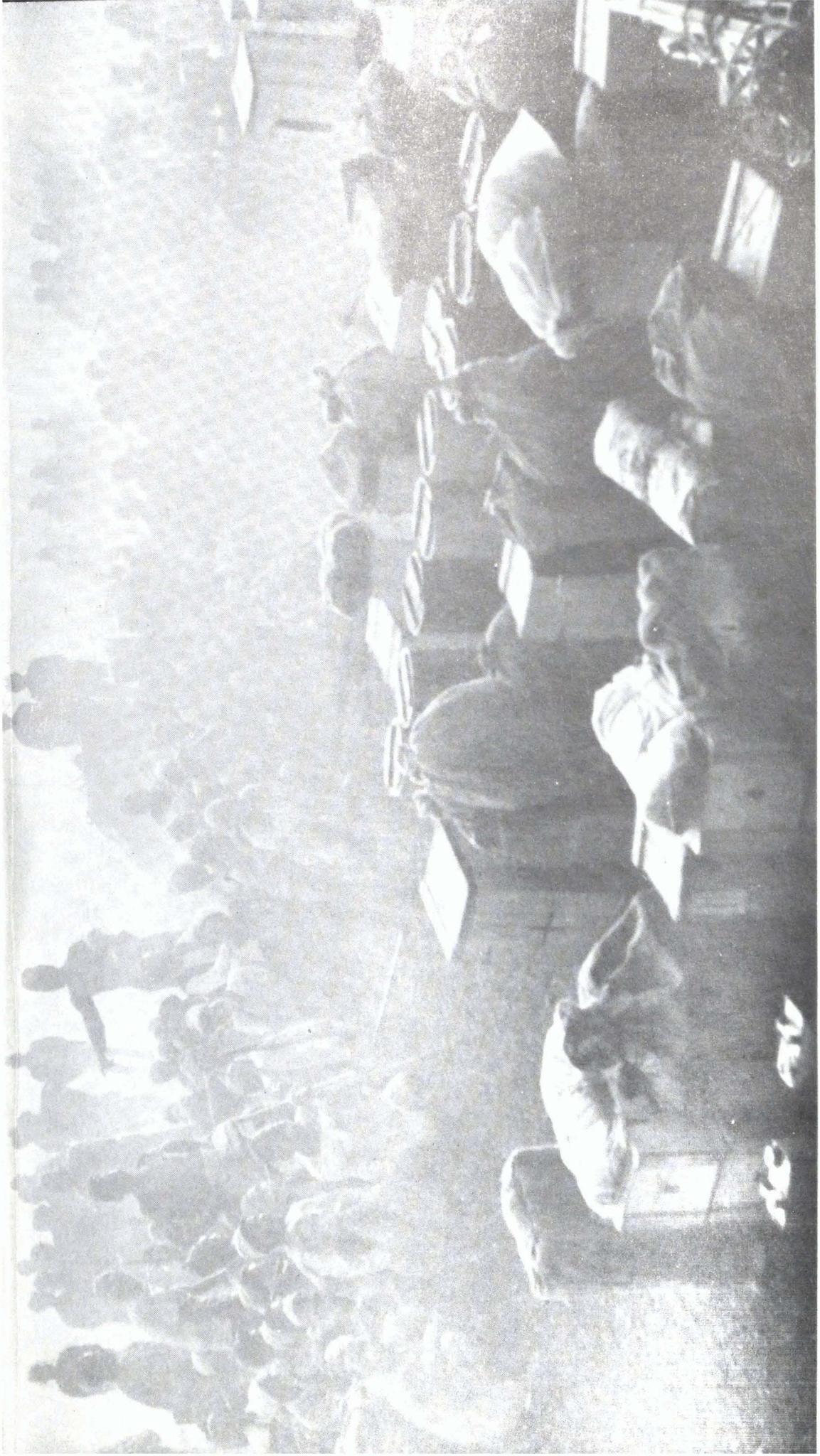
On leaving Kathmandu we had been given by M. Boris, the manager of the Royal Hotel, 35 quarts of whisky; a gift which obliged us to engage two extra coolies to carry all this alcohol for twelve days. I had been anxiously wondering how the whisky was going to get across passes of 18,000 feet. Now we decided to present it to Lamas, nuns, Sherpas, and (in smaller doses) to coolies. So, in the temple of Buddha, the coolies distributed it with the aid of teapots.

The whisky was pure; so were my intentions. It was served in bowls, first to the Lamas, then to the nuns, and lastly to the Sherpas. The result of this ceremony may easily be imagined: songs, toasts, jests—and a warmth of companionship freely communicated in spite of language difficulties. Stangelin and Zimmermann both drank rather more than Claude and myself, rather more in fact than was prudent. We picked them up one after the other and carried them out. Zimmermann was put to bed on his mattress in the temple, and we went back to help the nuns to carry away their Head Lama, who was quite unable to

stand. After that, the Sherpas tidied up the temple. Order and seemliness returned, and we returned to our tents.

It had been an epic party and I think everyone present had pleasant memories of it—especially the Lama. We saw him passing by next day. He gave us a furtive greeting and withdrew hurriedly. He was no longer wearing his hat. He had lost it at the party.

Claude Kogan has handed her Log over to me, and in its pages I live again these early days of our expedition. Just as Bertholet, our radio-operator, shouts into his microphone "Over to you, Geneva!" I shall now cry "Over to you, Claude!" And it is Claude who gives her own impressions of days already described, in the two chapters that follow.

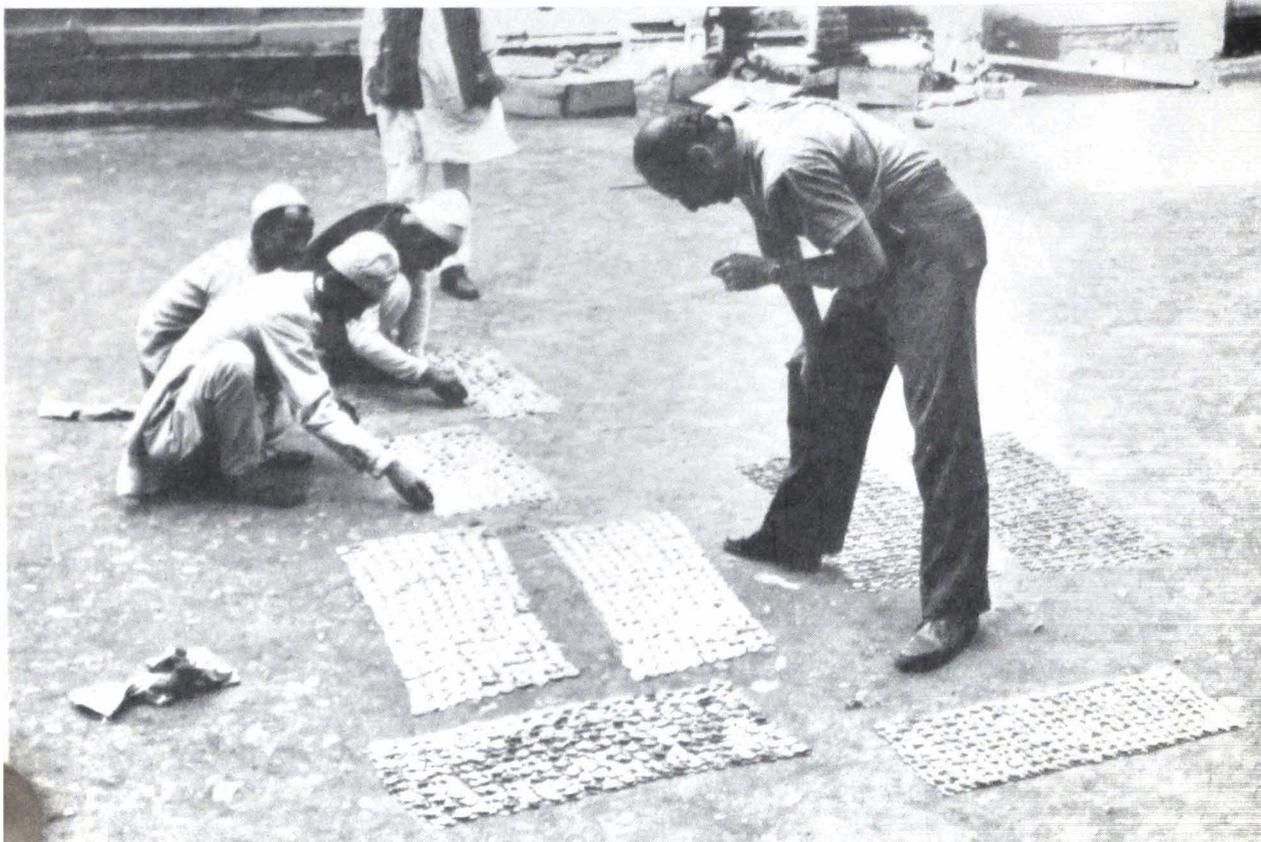


Sherpas and coolies assemble at daybreak



Our team of Sherpas

The "counter" in the Bank of Nepal



CHAPTER FIVE

Professor Blossom and Miss Lama

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16. "Decay Camp", 11,200 feet.

This day's stage was long and toilsome. After the night in this muddy camp I felt soiled and sticky, and longed to escape from the realm of dampness—an escape only attainable when we had crossed a pass 12,650 feet high.

At 7 we were ready to start. Under such grey skies and in such gloomy weather there was scarcely any talking. And from the outset of the march the party was strung out in an interminable forest which clothed the slopes right to the col.

It had a Dantesque look about it, this forest, which impressed me all the more because I was by myself. I went fast in order to get through it quickly. For here was the very kingdom of damp. Moss and lichens covered everything, muffling all sound. The trees were nearly all broken off, decapitated by some ancient storm or forest fire. In their desperate efforts to escape from the imprisoning, stifling moss, they had twisted themselves (it seemed) into all sorts of diabolical attitudes. They looked to us like symbols of despair. At every step the water which the sodden earth could not absorb squelched underfoot. Dampness pierced to my very bones. No sunlight ever penetrated to this place, and I who love light and sunshine felt ill at ease and distressed; the bitter-sweet of perpetual autumn dwelt there. I walked more swiftly, for I had an increasing feeling that if I stayed too long in the forest the moss would seize upon me also. Nothing seemed able to escape it.

Happily my solitude didn't last long. I suddenly came upon Zimmermann, whom everyone called "Zim" for short, but for whom my name was "Professor Blossom". He had his nose in the grass on the trail of some rare species. The sight brought back my spirits. Zim himself always wore a smile, and presented so

picturesque a figure with his linen hat all bashed in and his turned-up trousers and his plumber's toolbag that he might have been a botanist escaped from the pictures of Epinal. I always felt he was on his way to repair a leaky pipe, or that he had forgotten his butterfly-net; but in that toolbag there were neither monkey-wrenches nor captured butterflies—only flowers. Flowers which he had carefully placed there after giving each a number, waiting to be placed between two sheets of blotting-paper and flattened in Zim's press.

The forest didn't seem to have impressed him, but it had excited him. Such an amazing variety of ferns there were! He had found a wonderful yellow flower with a barbarous name and also some orchids. As for me, I had seen absolutely nothing.

"A tremendous day!" he said again and again. "I've got at least twenty numbers!"

By the end of the expedition, in fact, Zim would have collected a thousand different species of plants, representing about six thousand actually gathered.

As we talked we climbed gradually higher. The forest thinned out and the twisted trees gave way to rhododendrons. I felt the nearness of the pass; and knowing that from it I would see Gaurisankar's South Face I suddenly lost interest in Zim's modest flowers.

"I'll wait for you higher up," I said as I left him.

But nobody ever waited for Zim. You walked with him for a moment and then left him behind, forgotten, with his flowers. Although we followed each day the same paths, lived together in the same camps, took the same rests, we were pursuing different ends. Zim's kingdom was daily at hand, belonging to earth. He gathered the rare and marvellous flowers which we trampled on the paths without even seeing them; sometimes, as a special favour, he would show them to us in the evening after the march. For us a flower was just a flower—lovely in colour and shape and scent but posing no problem. Our own goal was higher up for the present, lost in the monsoon clouds and far above all things that live and breathe.

It was in the valley that Zimmermann's work lay. He would

climb with us as far as the point where he could find no plants, and at that point we would separate, the climbers to go higher—always higher—and he to descend and prospect in other valleys or merely on the slope opposite the one he had just climbed. His labours were more exhausting than ours. In Zim's company we others felt like mere tourists in the mountains. He was always leaving the track to gather some plant or other, and the number of times he bent down was incalculable. He spent his days doubled up.

Zim was always the last to reach camp in the evening, followed by his faithful Sherpa carrying the flower-press. Sometimes he arrived two or three hours after we did, his face streaming with sweat and his eyes looking tired; but he was invariably content with his day. Afterwards, while the rest of us lounged in our tents, talking or sleeping, he would go on with his work of classification by the light of a candle. He was setting down his report on each plant: the place and the height at which he found it, its colour, its aspect towards the sun. . . .

No—it certainly isn't a holiday to be a botanist with a Himalayan expedition!

The party, scattered when it set out, forgathered on the summit of the pass. Luckily we reached the col before the clouds descended, for from it we saw the whole South Face of Gaurisankar, its great walls and ridges soaring straight towards heaven. And there we stayed for some time, dazzled by its purity and audacity of line and the splendid sheerness that confirmed what we already knew—that any ascent from this side was inconceivable.

But Beding was still three hours away, and we now made all speed to get there, for this village was the terminus of our approach march. From there we would have to mount the right bank of the Rolwaling Khola in order to get into the basin of Gaurisankar and Menlungtse, where it was hoped to establish Base Camp. We passed through a magnificent forest of rhododendron and juniper and then through a jungle of young bamboos whose small leaves discharged their loads of water upon us as we

pushed through. Down we came to the torrent of the Rolwaling Khola, which we had been chasing for twelve days. A good solid bridge, made of two tree-trunks rested on a massive boulder in the middle of the torrent, allowed us to cross to the right bank. A tuft of tall reeds grew on this boulder, and the natives had fastened little white flags to them so that they fluttered ceaselessly in the wind and in doing so repeated an endless and creaking prayer for all who passed by.

It was now two o'clock and Beding was still not in sight. The valley here was narrow and wild, rain started to fall, and the day's march began to seem interminable. We were all tired out. At long last the first little houses came into view, surrounded by an area of freshly ploughed black earth. But Beding turned out to be a series of little hamlets, and it was another hour before we reached the real centre of the village, where a monastery stood.

In this part of the steep-sided valley flat surfaces were rare. Houses were, for the most part, dispersed along the hillsides on a sort of shelf. Higher up still, perched on a 200-foot rock wall beside the river, was the retreat of the Grand Lama. He lived up there winter and summer with a few monks for company, and never came down from his eyrie.

It was already much colder, for we were 12,150 feet above the sea here. Our clothing was soaked and nobody was very keen on camping. Our hopes of finding shelter in one of the houses were increased by the fact that, at first sight, Beding seemed to have been deserted by its inhabitants. The Sherpas, who had arrived before us, had already resolved the problem for themselves and were installed in a small shed, where they were sitting on the ground and blowing energetically upon a fire they had lit in the centre of the floor. We pushed in with them. The smoke made my eyes water and I couldn't see what was going on, but Chef Thondu was evidently at work because I could hear someone rummaging in the food-boxes and a comforting noise of saucepans. Soon we would have a drink of hot tea. In spite of the thick smoke, which made us cough, we stayed there packed in with the Sherpas to wait for someone to hand up the steaming mugs, forgetful for the moment of our sleeping-quarters problem.

The Bara Sahib¹ said we had better put up the tents, but the rest of us put up a stubborn opposition to this proposal. For twelve days we had spent our nights in the midst of rain and mud, and—quite frankly—we were fed up with it. Like wayward children, we insisted on our house. We wanted a house and we weren't going to be done out of it.

When we had somewhat warmed ourselves we went out into the only open space in the village—6 paces by 4—which was enclosed by the hovels requisitioned by the Sherpas, another small block of buildings surrounding the prayer-mill, and a temple in course of being repaired by the monks. It was upon this latter that we had designs. Unfortunately it was locked up, but the sound of our voices brought upon the scene a nun, whom we afterwards used to call "Miss Lama". She was dressed in a long garnet-coloured robe and a small pointed hat, and carried at her girdle a huge bunch of keys. Among those keys, doubtless, was the key of our future paradise. With the Sherpas to interpret for us we made our request and the door was unlocked.

We followed the nun into the temple. The interior was a veritable workshop, but the altar was finished and the little butter-lamps were burning before the image of Buddha. We promised the nun that we would put our bedding right at the back, that we wouldn't smoke, that we would be respectful, devout, and do nothing sacrilegious. She said Yes. Then she said No. Juge slipped her a ten-rupee note and placed his hands together. "*Marmé*," he murmured. This was the sacred word which, according to the celebrated Tibetan scholar Professor Tucci, would open all monastery doors for us. It appeared to work. The nun lit some more lamps to Buddha and went out, leaving the door open for us.

At once the Sherpas placed some planks on the floor and laid our mattresses on them. But now we began to perceive the drawbacks to our new premises. The windows were unglazed, for glass is unknown in the high villages of Nepal; we were going to try and sleep in the middle of a current of icy air.

Having pressed the Bara Sahib so hard to let us sleep under a

¹ "Bara Sahib" = Expedition Leader.

real roof, we could hardly change our minds now. Better to shiver and get a chill than to lose one's dignity! Raymond probably knew what we were thinking.

"Well, we shall all catch our deaths," he remarked with a faint smile.

But hard upon his words a Personage entered the temple, a Lama who was to be the arbiter of our fate. After topping-up the little butter-lamps, muttering prayers as he did so, he explained to us that it was quite impossible for us to spend the night in the temple. It would be sacrilege. It would excite the wrath of the gods against us and we should incur the most frightful maledictions—the first to arrive, no doubt, being a bad cold in the head!

We bundled out of the temple without needing further persuasion, glad enough (though we didn't admit it, even to ourselves) of this happy solution.

Round the Prayer-Mill

WE NOW found ourselves out in the street again with our mattresses and sleeping-bags under our arms.

We had still no desire to put up the tents, and thought of sleeping in the "kitchen" with the Sherpas. But the Sherpas, by diplomatic intervention, won permission for us to spend one night in the small building which enclosed the prayer-mill.

The mill itself filled most of the building and left us very little space. It was a colossal affair, quite 40 feet in diameter and 80 feet high, decorated with bright colours and pictures of various divinities. Stout ropes were stretched from its base by which the mill could be turned, and each turn operated a bell hung from the roof. All round the walls of the building were painted Buddhas, squatting in the usual hieratic posture.

There wasn't much room. But—more important—there were no windows. We were at last assured of a sound sleep.

The day's march had been a very long one, and it was night-fall when the coolies got in. They were to go no farther with us and would be replaced by men from Beding who would be more warmly clad and more accustomed to the altitude. The Kathmandu men were paid off that evening.

By the light of a paraffin lamp stuck on a pile of boxes in the open, Juge, our Treasurer-Cashier-General, got ready his little piles of ten rupees, a task in which I helped him. But it proved impossible to get hold of all the coolies, for they were unused to cold and had fled for shelter into the houses. However, we issued their pay to the "corporals" or file-leaders, who re-issued it to their men.

SEPTEMBER 17.

According to custom (a bad one when there was no march to do) the Sherpas woke us at 6 a.m. with a cup of tea. Raymond

got up at once, and so did Franz. But Juge and I buried ourselves once more in our sleeping-bags: this morning we were strongly tempted to stay in bed. But that would hardly do, for there was much to be done.

To spend another night in a prayer-mill was out of the question. We must make camp somewhere where there was plenty of room; then we must repack all the loads, check the supplies, issue the high-altitude equipment, and make quite certain that nothing had been badly damaged by the rain. Moreover, there were letters to be written, for the coolies were starting back for Kathmandu today, a journey which would take them a week.

There was indeed plenty to do, and in doing it we were inclined to run round in small circles—much to the annoyance of the Bara Sahib. He had already found a camp-site on an island in the river-bed, the only spot providing enough flat space for our tents, and he was anxious to get camp pitched.

Someone remarked at breakfast that Raymond kept a close eye on us on our "bad days", and if he saw us idling loved to find us something to do. But in fact Raymond disliked giving orders and handing out fatigues, especially to his friends whom he was afraid of offending. So he used to wait, and ruminate, and fidget, until such time as they decided to bestir themselves—which was often a considerable period.

The day's work was always done by the end of the day. But whereas we sometimes liked to start with independent pottering and a leisurely exchange of chaff, Raymond invariably started by attacking the most tiresome jobs first and clearing them out of the way before attending to his own personal affairs. On the whole his system was more successful than ours.

SEPTEMBER 18.

Lambert decided to send out a first reconnaissance party today. It included Juge, Bertholet, Lochmatter and three Sherpas, and its purpose was to fix on a site for our Base Camp at about 16,500 feet on the approaches to Gaurisankar. When they had

found a site they were to send back a message, and we would follow with the equipment and the rest of the Sherpas.

While the reconnaissance was being made Raymond and I remained at the Beding camp to recruit the necessary coolies for the carry to Base Camp, buy rice and other food, and reconstitute the leads. And every day from noon onwards the weather deteriorated and we had to work as best we could in the large mess-tent. The monsoon, apparently, was still not over.

Our two botanists, Zimmermann and Stangelin, stayed with us. Zim was making a check of all the plants gathered on the approach march before finally drying them.

It was now exactly a month since Lambert and I had boarded the plane at Nice. We had not really lost much time since that day. We seemed rather to be ahead of our programme, in spite of the six days lost at Patna owing to the damage done to the Kathmandu airfield by the rains.

The climate of Beding was nothing to boast about. It was cold and very wet. I decided to unpack my down-filled jacket and put it on, which brought derisive laughter from the men.

"How d'you think you're going to manage higher up?" they demanded.

Lambert now caught a very heavy cold, which seemed to me to need treatment.

"I am going to treat it," he announced, "with contempt."

It laid him low, none the less. But at lunch-time, when we were chatting peacefully with Zim and Stangelin, he suddenly came out with an announcement which caused some hilarity.

"We must get to work and finish those loads," he declared, "and as I'm not well I shall turn in—but I'll direct operations from my bed."

Up to now Raymond had set the example of hard work and initiative. What aroused our friendly merriment was that he could still manage to assert himself as our unrivalled leader.

However, he was persuaded to swallow aspirins and hot drinks, and buried himself in a regular poultice of sleeping-bags until next day.

SEPTEMBER 21.

Two hours of fine weather this morning. But as usual cloud soon began to come up the valley, following the bed of the torrent and climbing along its walls, to swathe first the camp and then the high-perched houses above us in its cotton-wool wrappings. Towards noon a thin cold rain began to fall.

By now all the loads were ready to go up and time was hanging on our hands. We filled in the waiting period by doing odd jobs and writing letters. At last, at 4 in the afternoon, three coolies came down with a message from Juge.

A place for Base Camp had been found at 16,300 feet by the side of a lake. Juge described the route for us and indicated a spot where an intermediary camp could be placed, for heavily laden men would be unable to reach Base Camp in a single day. From Beding we must first follow the Rolwaling, crossing the torrent and about 600 yards from the village taking a little path running along the mountain-walls overlooking the prayer-mill. Above some rocky barriers we would come to the first pastures, at 13,200 feet. This footpath was quite easy to locate. Higher up we would find another pasture at 14,500 feet where some huts provided shelter from bad weather. Juge's note finished by giving brief directions for the rest of the journey.

"Now climb up east-north-east and follow a moraine to 15,300. Traverse horizontally for 1,000 feet to another moraine (large cairns here). Cross the escarpments on a level with, and on the left of, the glacier coming down from the col which you must cross. Take the left side of the glacier right up to this col, the Hadengi La, 18,000 feet. Descent on the far side is by the left bank of the glacier and then by a moraine to the lake.

"This crossing is practicable for coolies wearing boots in two days, possibly three. (Snow-goggles for them if possible.) At 17,000 feet the rate of climbing is 800 feet an hour for sahibs, 400 to 600 for coolies. Today, Monday, we are bivouacking at 16,500 on a rock-shelf. Awaiting your arrival.

"Regards,
"JUGE."

Raymond at once sent Wongdi up the valley to the little village of Nagaon, where our "scouts" were. He was to bring back as many load-carriers as possible for tomorrow morning; we expected between 30 and 50. Even with 50 coolies, however, we would not be able to take all our loads in one journey, so Raymond decided to split the party into two. He would establish a camp on the pasture at 14,500 feet and work the two parties as a ferry, one party operating between Beding and the pasture and the other from the pasture to the lake.

The evening passed quickly in feverish last-minute preparations. Lambert, Zimmermann and I were to start first in the morning, while Stangelin stayed at Beding until the last load had been sent off.

But here I shall "give the word" to the Bara Sahib and cry, in my turn, "Over to you, Raymond!"

CHAPTER SEVEN

Barefooted in the Snow

WE WHO had been waiting for Jean Juge's message were a trifle disappointed when it arrived, for the news it contained was not particularly good. The pass of the Hadengi La, across which we must go with a small army of laden coolies and Sherpas, appeared to be difficult as well as high—18,000 feet is very high for a pass.

Another day was spent in bargaining to obtain coolies before, at last, we left Beding. Two hours of marching brought us to the pasture at 14,500, where the Sherpas made camp. This was a yak pasture, and there were several huts round the camp-site. When it wasn't raining the wet mists enveloped us, and it was in a bog that we put up the tents and piled the loads, protecting the latter from the weather as well as we could.

Transport was already presenting something of a problem. The party ahead of us had taken with them supplies for only a few days, and had sent us an S O S urging us to join them as soon as possible as they were running short of food.

We had not enough coolies to get all our stuff across in one crossing of the pass. Moreover, we were unable to equip these men with crampons or boots. Most of them would tackle the pass in their Tibetan boots and without snow-glasses, substituting for dark goggles bunches of yak-hairs which, held in front of their eyes, would decrease the harmfulness of the brilliant rays. And there would need to be many transport-ferries before all the loads were across.

As for me, I went on with a second column composed of eight coolies and two Sherpas to place another camp at 16,300 feet, just below the pass and higher than the summit of Mont Blanc. That made a second day, the first day's march being from Beding to the pasture. We went on again, taking only a day over it, but the rest of the party would have to make it a three-day trip.

I crossed the pass, reaching its crest (18,000 feet) at 2 in the afternoon; and I had all the trouble in the world to get the men to put on the rope. Those coolies went marching up the glaciers as if they were on a footpath—until of one the Sherpas, the man carrying our money, slipped into a crevasse. Thanks to his load, he was prevented from falling into the depths. After this incident I succeeded in getting them to uncoil a rope and rope-up all the party, though at first they refused to be tied on and wanted merely to hold the rope in one hand. Eventually we got safely down on the other side, gained the moraine, and soon found ourselves at Base Camp, where I was very glad to find Lochmatter, Juge, and Bertholet.

Next day we sent back the coolies with a message to Claude Kogan, Zimmermann and Stangelin, indicating the best way of getting all the stores over the pass in the shortest possible time. In spite of the persistent monsoon the sky had cleared, and to save time while the carry over the Hadengi La was taking place I decided to make a reconnaissance with Lochmatter towards Gaurisankar.

The reconnaissance began on September 27th. I set off with Franz, heading downhill in the direction of the south face of Menlungtse, a tremendous white pyramid which revealed to our questing gaze no possible route of ascent. We turned westward towards Gaurisankar and descended a long valley broken up by interminable moraines. Franz, a much faster walker than myself, soon disappeared ahead. I didn't see him again until noon, when we had lunch together; after which he put on pace again and I only caught him up in the evening, at our camp-site. I was content to camp at only 16,000 feet, for we had made a long descent before climbing to that point.

We had taken only two Sherpas with us, Wongdi and Migma Srita. The rain was once more with us and Gaurisankar was hidden. We spent that night in two tents, the Sherpas in one and ourselves in the other.

In the morning the sky was clear once more. We climbed to a small hillock of rocks at a height of about 16,500 feet, whence we could examine in detail the east ridge of Gaurisankar, the

south ridge, and the great face between the two ridges. It was immediately obvious that there was no way up the face; we could see avalanches falling almost continuously on its slopes. As for the ridges, they were both cleft by enormous gaps. Moreover, their middle sections were embellished with snow-cornices on both sides. We retraced our steps, descended by the way we had come and climbed once more up to Base Camp.

We had recorded a first reconnaissance of Gaurisankar, but there was more to do yet. We should have to go farther round to see what was hidden behind that east ridge. On the north face we might have the luck to find some good-natured little glacier that would make our task easier; if there was such a glacier, we might even be able to place camps on it and mount towards the summit.

It was good to learn, on returning to camp, that the mail had come in. These letters were the first we had received, and were brought from Kathmandu by the two Sherpas we had sent off from Laduck. We paid these men 150 Indian rupees a month for their services as postmen—a small fee for the feats of pedestrianism they performed. Our outgoing letters had to be hurriedly written, for the “postmen” were going to set out at once, for the second time, for Kathmandu. When this was done we made plans for the immediate future.

We had no time to waste, since Gaurisankar was evidently not going to provide an easy ascent. I decided to send off Juge and Lochmatter to try and reconnoitre the Menlung La. This pass, if practicable, would enable us to get into the Bothe Kosi valley direct from Base Camp and so advance towards Cho Oyu. It would be a three-day reconnaissance trip.

Meanwhile I set off with Claude Kogan and three Sherpas to make another examination of Gaurisankar with the aid of binoculars. This reconnaissance was a pleasant one. We camped the first night under a great rock, and on the second put up the tents in the midst of lush vegetation with huge rhododendrons and junipers all round us. On the second day we climbed to a small summit and spent nearly two hours in examining the Gaurisankar north face and ridges with the glasses. The most hopeful of the

ridges held out no chance of placing camps on it. The labour of dealing with the ice-towers which stood, seventy or eighty feet in height, on the crest of the ridge, would be enormous, and this we would have to do before starting to carry up stores or establish camps. Two sections only looked as if they would go: the lower section of steep moraine leading to the foot of the ridge, and the upper section—the last thousand feet to the summit. Between them was nothing but an extremely narrow arête with overhanging cornices on both sides. As for the walls of the arête, they were typically Himalayan, being furrowed by great grooves down which avalanches thundered incessantly.

The whole climbing-party forgathered on September 30th at Base Camp, whither the Menlung La reconnaissance party had returned. We went into conference. It was clear from our reconnaissances of Gaurisankar that we were too few in number, and had not enough Sherpas with us, to undertake the Herculean task of trying to climb those great ridges. It seemed preferable now to cross the pass into the valley of Namche Bazaar and go up it in the direction of the Nangpa La and Cho Oyu. And the crucial problem once more confronted us—the problem of transport. Jean Juge and Lochmatter had returned from their trip tired and somewhat depressed, to give an unfavourable report of the pass. Its moraines were extremely steep and insecure, it appeared, and half the coolies would be killed in trying to get up them. Though I was inclined to be sceptical about it, this report set me wondering what to decide; but after a mug of tea our two companions altered their tale. They explained that on weighing the matter carefully those moraines were not, after all, so very steep; that they might possibly be attempted if it was really necessary; that they would, however, prefer me to judge for myself—and so on. And after sleeping on it I reached the decision that we could certainly get over the pass, for I knew that the local coolies were perfectly used to traversing moraine.

The next day was spent in camp doing repairs; that is to say, in drying out our clothes, greasing boots, and reorganizing the loads. Also I sent off two Sherpas to bring over a team of coolies for the crossing of this much-talked-of Menlung La.

This same day, to our amazement, the two mail-carriers we had parted from at Beding arrived. These two Nepalese, who had come from Kathmandu, had reached Base Camp after crossing a snow-pass 18,000 feet high in a snowstorm and intense cold—*barefooted!* They came up to us with simple cheerfulness.

“How are you?” they beamed. “I hope you are well?”

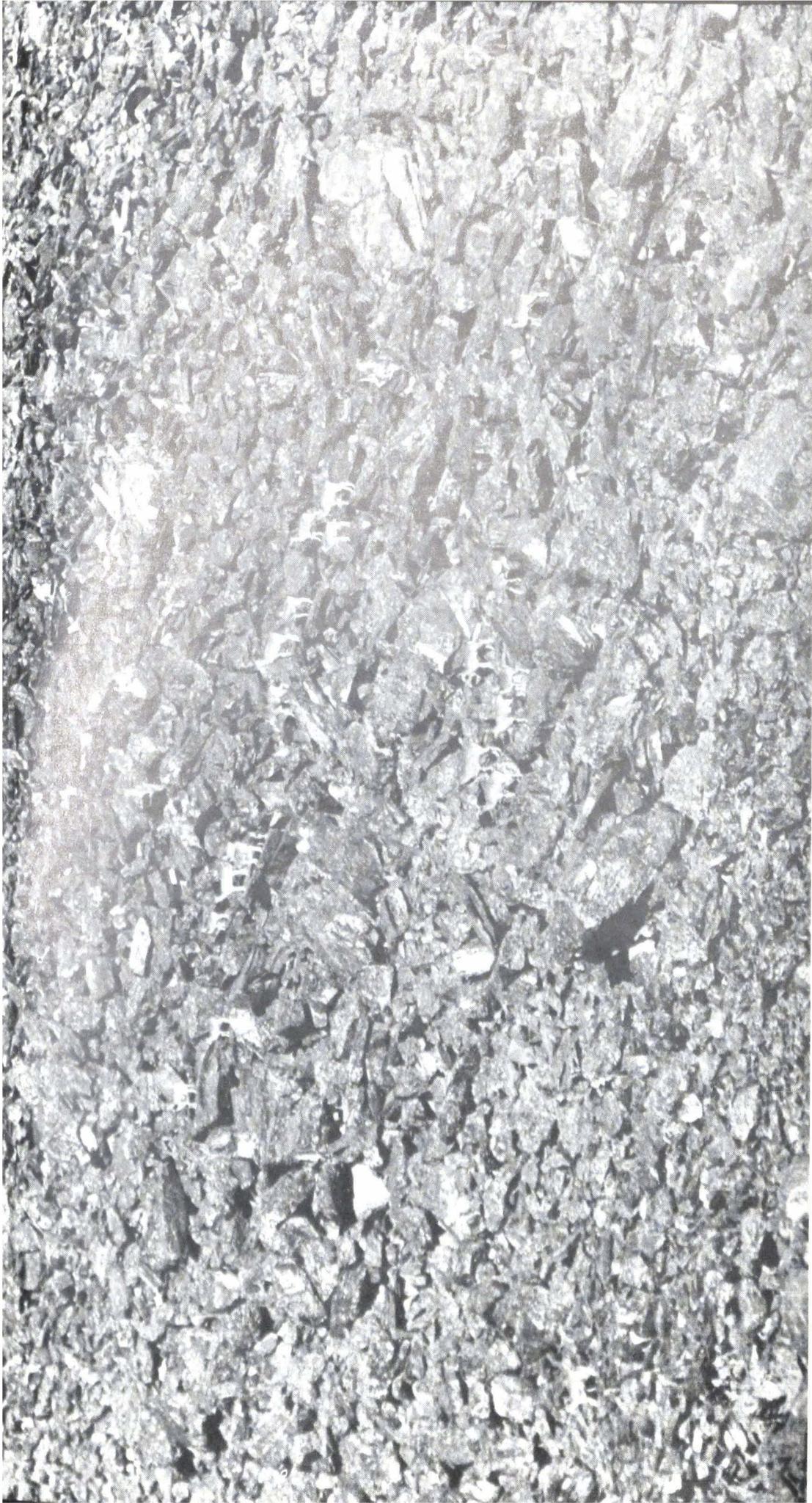
“Quite well,” we returned mechanically. “And you?”

After this exchange of politeness we were dumbfounded to see them indulging in somersaults and waving their naked toes in the air as if they had not just toiled for four hours across a high snow-col. We warmed and fed them, and Juge, to their gratification, presented them with a pair of good boots each.

They spent two nights in our tents at Base Camp, and we made use of the time to write some more letters for carrying to Kathmandu. As these two postmen were rather close on the heels of the two who had left before them, I got them to take a message to our Kathmandu correspondent who was responsible for forwarding the mail, asking him to keep our postmen there for six days before sending them back. These instructions were punctiliously carried out, and henceforth our men came in at six-day intervals.

The splitting-up and reorganizing of the loads went on. Some of them had to be made up again, for the coolies had not arrived and it had been decided that Bertholet, Claude Kogan, and I should go on ahead to find the true Menlung La. The reconnaissance of Lochmatter and Juge had brought them to a pass which descended southward on its far side, and we were not satisfied that it was the real La. The only information we had about it came from Shipton, who had crossed the Menlung La in the opposite direction to the crossing we proposed. Shipton had recorded that the position of the La was exactly on an east-to-west line drawn from the summit of Menlungtse to the summit of Everest. So all we had to do was to go forward until we found ourselves due east of Menlungtse, when the col should be somewhere close at hand.

I set off at about 2 in the afternoon of October 3rd, with Kogan and Bertholet, and made camp at 18,000 feet on the end



A herd of Na among the moraines



Halt on the snow-line
(Left to right) Bertholet, Juge, Sherpa, Kogan, Zimmermann,
Lambert, Sherpa

of the moraines we had named "The Green Moraines". At this point of our reconnaissance we were not a large party, having only five Sherpas with us. We had supplies for three or four days, in which time we had to find the Menlung La and satisfy ourselves that coolies could cross it. It was agreed with Jean Juge that if I sent no message back he would strike Base Camp and follow us, with Zimmermann, Stangelin, Lochmatter, and our hundred coolies. The route was to be marked out with the little flags and small posts which we had with us.

The morning after the night spent at the Green Moraine camp we climbed to the col (which had been named "Col Juge") at a height of 18,950 feet. Our suspicions proved to be correct—the "scouts" had made a mistake. This col descended to the south and did not lie on the Menlungtse-Everest axis.

Before we could descend again we were assailed by bad weather and had to make camp, in a fearful storm, a little way below the col. It snowed all night, and at daybreak twelve inches of snow had fallen.

We were to learn later that this same storm had overtaken the Austrians on Cho Oyu, and that as a result Dr. Tichy had had his hands so badly frostbitten that he lost several fingers. But the Austrians were slightly higher up than we were, on a side of Cho Oyu very exposed to the wind.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Why Not Cho Oyu?

AFTER that night of snowstorm we came down from the col and set out to take a look at another col we had spotted. As we came nearer to it we saw that it was rocky and extremely steep, so we halted the Sherpas with their loads on a level spot on the glacier while we prospected further.

Bertholet went off with one Sherpa, unladen, towards a small shoulder on the left, to try to see what lay beyond. Meanwhile Claude Kogan and I started to climb to the col, intending to have a look down the other side and assure ourselves that it really gave on to the right valley.

The slope was a nasty one to climb and gave us plenty of work. The snow was in bad condition and the rocks were snow-covered. After some step-cutting, however, we reached the little gap of the col to see a prodigious panorama spread before us. Right in front rose Everest, Lhotse, Makalu and Khumbu, with nothing to separate us from them but the valley into which we wanted to descend. There was a good way down not far below us, but the col on which we stood was quite impossible for laden coolies. It was out of the question to make them go down that steep snow-slope, which ended in rock-walls where fixed ropes would have to be placed unless the men roped-down them.

We went back again to the Sherpas and had another conference. Bertholet, returning from his own reconnaissance, reported that there was no practicable route by the shoulder. We went down the glacier again, passing close to a fall of séracs which had come down just before we reached the spot, and made camp at about 18,300 feet on the Menlungtse glacier. Menlungtse itself reared its mighty obelisk high overhead. We had looked at every aspect of this mountain and had a presentiment that it was not yet ready to be climbed.

From the rocky col we had seen that there was a possibility of descending from another point quite close to it. This was a third little col, which we had examined closely. I therefore sent two Sherpas back to Base Camp to inform Juge that he could come up, and also to guide the column of coolies on the right route; for we had made so many tracks in all directions that there was considerable possibility of error. Next day we set off towards this other col, the third.

We climbed straight to a small snowy knob at 19,100 feet, whence we had another splendid view of Everest. The weather was fine and the monsoon seemed to have ended at last. After examining the region below us and taking many photographs, we began to look for a way down on the other side. And we found it—a steep of screes and rotten rock ending in a narrow gully, fairly dangerous to get down owing to the likelihood of stonefalls. The three Sherpas we had with us were very heavily laden, so Bertholet and I carried a tent each and Claude Kogan added a similar weight to her own pack, to lighten their loads. Then we started down very slowly, on slopes which recalled those of the Col des Cristaux in the Aiguilles of Chamonix.

The dangerous looseness of the screes worried me continually—not on our own account, but because I couldn't see how a hundred coolies, descending one behind another, were going to get down without killing themselves or hurtling to the bottom with their loads. However, I had a certain amount of confidence in the coolies and in the Sherpas and Sahibs who would be with them, and I could only hope that they would organize themselves so as to avoid accidents.

After three hours of marching across interminable moraines we reached the plain of Pangbuk, where we set up our tents at 15,782 feet—the exact height of Mont Blanc. At last we were out of the deserts of rock and snow. The Menlung La was behind us and we were in the valley of Namche Bazaar.

Next day we went on down the valley to a little village named Chhule, at 14,700 feet. Though the loss of height was small, the distance covered was great. At Chhule we halted finally, for we had to await the arrival of all the coolies and stores. Our sirdar

was sent down to another village, which we knew to be seven hours' march below Chhule, to buy rice and a chicken or two so that we would not be short of food while waiting for the main body to catch us up. It was now October 9th. We could wait without undue worry, because on the evening of the previous day, after keeping watch with the binoculars for some time, we had seen—with pleasure—the coolies arriving on the Menlung La. We could even assure ourselves that the whole party had crossed, by counting them as they passed in single file across a little tongue of snow.

The monsoon seemed to have cleared off for good, and several days of fine weather set in. To make the most of them, I sent off Claude Kogan and Denis Bertholet to be a day ahead of us. They took with them two Sherpas and two coolies engaged locally and were to push on in the direction of the Nangpa La, making Lunack their first stage, Zasenba the second, and the Nangpa La itself the third.

I stayed where I was to await the arrival of the main party. The same day Franz Lochmatter turned up—by himself as usual—and swooped upon me accusingly. He asserted bluntly that I had failed to indicate the route properly. Now, I had given explicit instructions to the Sherpas as to how they were to guide the party; but Zimmermann, when he passed that way before them, had scratched some erroneous directions in the snow which had confused Juge and Lochmatter when they reached the spot. This had caused them to hesitate and lose several hours in searching for the col. However, everything was now all right. Juge arrived next, then Zimmermann with all the coolies except the few who would come over next day with Stangelin. I told them that Kogan and Bertholet had gone ahead to prepare the stages towards the Nangpa La and that the rest of us must get away tomorrow, October 10th, to follow them up one day behind.

Meanwhile, Jean Juge had a broken tooth which must be dealt with. In trying to extract the stubborn root Lochmatter butchered him sadly, and the camp resounded with the yells of the patient. The injections Franz was able to give were not strong enough to deaden dental nerves and Juge endured a martyrdom lasting

nearly an hour and a half. By that time I had had enough of this painful scene and left it to go on up the valley with the Sherpa sirdar. Doctor and patient rejoined us at the end of the day, at the camp near Lunack. Juge looked rather pale after his sufferings and was evidently in poor form.

This camp at Lunack brought us to 16,000 feet again. All the supplies were brought to it and we turned in. The tents were bathed in a moonlit vapour, and the coolies were lying in little stone huts near the camp. I heard Jean Juge go out of his tent and begin a vague discussion with Ang Namgal, one of his Sherpas—something about yaks, and Namche Bazaar, and rupees. Juge, who didn't seem to grasp much of it, came into my tent and spun me a yarn which I couldn't grasp much of myself. Ang Namgal, it appeared, wanted to go down to Namche Bazaar tomorrow to buy a yak.

This seemed odd to me. Ang Namgal was necessary to us, and in any case I didn't see why he had to go all the way to Namche Bazaar. I got out of my tent and took a turn round the camp in the direction of the huts where the coolies and Sherpas were arguing noisily together. They came out when they saw me coming, and it was immediately apparent that they had drunk plenty of chang. They approached with a stumbling gait to explain, in chang-thickened voices, that they were engaged in buying a yak from a Tibetan who had halted for the night at our camp before going over the Nangpa La on the morrow with his herd of yaks. I had often talked of buying one of these hardy ruminants and my sirdar had already started the bargaining. He took me into the presence of a magnificent beast, and I decided to let the bargaining go on. In the end, I agreed to buy it for 200 Nepalese rupees—about £10.

It was a good bargain. The great argument had started because the animal's pack-saddle, which we could have done with for loading our things on the yak, was not included in the purchase but would have to be sent down to Namche Bazaar. This, I now realized, was the explanation which Juge had failed to grasp.

The bargain was concluded; I paid over the 200 rupees for

the yak whose saddle must go back to Namche Bazaar. By the light of the moon the Sherpas managed to catch the animal and tethered it to a rock with a nylon climbing-rope. Henceforth—for a time at least—the yak would be a part of the expedition. On this commercial victory I lay down to sleep.

Next day there was another argument, nearly a small revolution, in fact. The coolies wanted to wait here and rest for a day, claiming that they had not enough food. I addressed them diplomatically.

“If you stay here an extra day,” I pointed out, “in two days’ time you’ll have no food left at all, seeing that there will be no possibility of getting any farther on.”

After long discussion they at last consented to move and we left the Lunack camp, taking a path which was at first a very easy one. The famous yak had been loaded, and marched with 130 lb. on his back. He was accompanied by Ang Namgal, who kept him going in the right direction either by throwing stones first to one side of him and then to the other, or by whistling shrilly in the yak’s ears. And the yak continued to climb onward, its neat and active feet shaping a path across scree and moraine.

Ahead of us a herd of yaks was climbing up the valley, and the leader of this convoy, a Tibetan, was directing the whole herd by whistling. I tried to imitate him, and soon discovered that it worked all right—providing one was prepared to whistle an air which would go on for the duration of the march.

The little path we had followed at the outset now began to lose itself in a maze of stones, a desert of bare scree.

But nothing could better illustrate this march—the days I have described and the days that were to come—than Claude’s journal. Claude may pretend not to see the flowers, but she sees and feels and vibrates with every particle of mountain country, and lives each minute intensely. So—
“Over to you, Claude!”

CHAPTER NINE

Women in the Himalaya

SEPTEMBER 22.

We turned out early this morning and packed our things while waiting for Wongdi to return. (It will be remembered that he had been sent from Beding, where we had now arrived at the end of our approach march, to collect as many coolies as he could from the village of Nagaon.) But at nine o'clock there was no sign of Wongdi or the coolies. We began to worry, for their non-appearance rendered our departure today problematical.

What was more, we noticed that the Sherpas were by no means anxious to get away. They were "putting the brake on" as much as they could. The solution of this mystery was provided by Zim.

"The Lama," he explained, "has told them that the monsoon will be at an end in three days."

So that was it! It was as clear as day that the Sherpas thought that by delaying for another twenty-four hours they would escape a day's soaking. But what was the Lama doing among the weather-prophets?

About noon Wongdi came back from Nagaon. He had managed to engage 36 coolies, but they would not reach Beding until tomorrow.

SEPTEMBER 23.

Same procedure as yesterday—we dragged ourselves out of our sleeping-bags very early.

This morning the Sherpas showed themselves more keen to work. And—an astonishing thing—the expected coolies arrived on time and all present. Among them were ten or eleven women.

The men were cheerful and sturdy, clad in Tibetan gowns of

a garnet-red or maroon colour. The gown was a sort of peignoir-kimono caught in at the waist by a girdle or woven scarf whose colour contrasted with that of the gown. What gave them a particularly picturesque look was that most of them had only one arm in a sleeve; the other sleeve hung down their backs, an arrangement giving them greater freedom of movement. They had no pockets, and kept all their possessions—money and food for the journey—in the loose breast of their gowns. Under the Tibetan gown they wore cloth knee-breeches, and some of them had boots of red cloth slashed in motley fashion and soled with yak-hide. They wore their hair long, in plaits all round their heads. One or two had thick woollen helmets, and nearly always several locks of their shaggy tresses hung in disorder round their faces, making them look oddly like women who had decided to rebel against feminine smartness.

In contrast to the Kathmandu porters, who came from the flat lands and were composed and docile, these coolies appeared like mischievous youngsters. As soon as they arrived they invaded our camp, poked their noses into the tents, and hefted all the loads to see which they liked best, changing burdens several times. They were quite impossible, in fact, and it was clear from the first that they would have to be regimented. So Lambert instituted the ticket system he had used on the Everest expedition of 1952.

“One ticket one load is the rule,” said he. “For—as you’ll see—there’ll be thirty-six of them when they leave here this morning, but when they get in tonight there’ll be fifty at least. They’ll pick up their families on the way and share their loads with the women and children. Then everyone will guilelessly line up to be paid!”

By the ticket system we could establish control over the “gate-crashers”, for only the ticket-bearers would be paid. This method proved to be practical and even indispensable, for at the end of the day quite ten youths had attached themselves as “extras”.

Zimmermann had left early, wishing to “work” as he climbed. He hoped, he said, “to make an interesting collection”.

By half-past nine all the loads had gone off, and Raymond and I didn't leave until we were sure that all the coolies were in front of us. Little by little we caught up and passed the laggards. The path we were following was a pleasant one, winding airily along the precipices and gaining height very quickly. But, as happened every morning, the clouds rose to the assault and Beding, almost directly beneath us, disappeared completely, swallowed up in the mist.

At the first pasture we came upon a score of coolies sitting on the ground with their backs against their loads, some of them with the head-straps still across their foreheads. They were smoking and chattering ceaselessly. In contrast to the mountaineers of Europe, who are rather surly and taciturn, our Tibetans appeared to be cheerful and full of humour. They were also very fond of banter, and when we arrived they went into fits of laughter at our hats, Raymond's small feet, and the ski-sticks we were using as walking-canes.

Farther on we caught up with two of the Sherpanis¹ who were carrying our loads. These women often go faster than the men. The first we passed was a small thin woman; she was carrying a sack of rice weighing 60 lb., and on top of that, riding at his ease astride her neck, a three-year-old boy sucked his fingers and surveyed the landscape. The next was a fine stout girl, young and bursting with health. She also carried a 60-lb. load, a sack of atta (flour for making chapatis), on top of which she balanced like a juggler a small wicker basket. In the basket was her baby, three months old, fast asleep in its enveloping coverlets. Both women were carrying heavier loads than any coolie would carry, and in addition to that made two load-carrying journeys that day between Beding and the pasture camp at 14,500 feet.

We reached the pasture camp two hours after leaving Beding. Rain was beginning to fall and we sought shelter in one of the huts where Chef Thondu had already established his kitchen. Only three of the huts were provided with roofs. One was occupied by the Sherpas and the other would shelter the coolies

¹ The name usually given to women porters on Himalayan expeditions.

who would carry right to the col, so we were obliged to put up tents for the Sahibs. This was by no means a pleasant task, for one had to paddle about in yak-dung liquefied by the rain.

Little by little the loads came up and we signed the tickets as they arrived. Raymond now offered double pay to any coolie who would go over to the Base Camp with him one day from the pasture camp. In spite of the Lama's prophecy it was obvious that the monsoon was still not at an end, and the weather was far from promising; but twelve of the men accepted Raymond's offer.

For my part I was inclined to tear my hair, for I had been given the job of bringing up the rear. I was to supervise the ferries between Beding and the pasture camp, and—most worrying, because we had so few men at our disposal—to arrange for 2½ tons of stores to be taken over to Base Camp. Twelve men at 60 lb. a day—I decided not to go on with the calculation. It looked as if I might have to spend eight days here—paddling—instead of climbing!

“Leave it alone,” said Lambert, always a fatalist. “Don't worry—things will sort themselves out in time.”

As the botanists were less pressed for time than the climbers, their boxes were to be taken last. Zimmermann was busy in his tent-laboratory, classifying the flowers he had gathered during the day. He was much taken with this place and wished to stay there for some days, so matters had arranged themselves very well—for him.

Lambert's twelve men retired into their maisonette. Nearly all the others went down again to Beding in the afternoon, as the route was short and easy and they could earn double wages by doing it. We had two rates in operation: three-and-a-half rupees for the journey from Beding (for which every youngster in the village had volunteered) and four rupees for the carry towards the col and Base Camp.

“*Mousson non finish!*” as we often used to say. It rained all the afternoon and a good part of the night.

SEPTEMBER 24, FRIDAY.

At half-past seven Lambert was ready to start with his eleven

coolies (one man had changed his mind because his boots were badly worn). They set off early, because this would be a difficult march—a climb of 3,500 feet to the col, then 1,700 feet of descent to the lake—but chiefly because Raymond wanted to get over the pass before bad weather set in. Two hours after they left, just before the clouds began to gather, I got the glasses and watched the route they were following, making a sketch of it in case I had to go that way in a mist.

Then I discussed with Zim how the operation should be conducted. We came to the conclusion that it would not be possible to go from the pasture camp to Base Camp in one day. Lambert was doing so, but only by necessity and because those at Base Camp needed food. A camp or an intermediate depot would have to be made near the rocky barriers before reaching the glacier, at about 16,500 feet. We hoped the coolies from below would want to go that far, because it would shorten the stage for the men carrying higher up. Lambert had always told me that the biggest worries of a Himalayan expedition were those of transport, and now I was in a good position to appreciate his dictum.

Only thirty coolies came up from Beding with fresh loads. It was midday, and I could have wished they had been earlier, for I had resolved to go up to the depot camp myself with a certain number of loads. At half-past two, after resting, some of them were disposed to go on again—seven women, two men, and two urchins—and we started off, Zim accompanying me.

There was some risk of that journey ending in an impromptu bivouac; but we could not lose any time now. Each day must mark an advance. It was necessary for someone to go with the coolies because we were afraid that if night overtook them they would throw down their loads just anywhere without bothering to cover them from the weather. However, we all reached the spot fixed upon for our depot at five o'clock, in a thick mist, and Zim and I supervised the arrival of the eleven loads and covered them with a tarpaulin. Luckily all the coolies had kept close behind us.

At six o'clock we left the depot and began the downward flight before the coming of night. The coolies, always ready to

play and laugh as they marched, now did all they could to leave us behind. Freed from their loads they leaped from stone to stone like chamois, emitting little shrieks as they dodged back to see if we were following. This greatly amused Zimmermann.

"Hey, Sherpanis! Wait for me!" he shouted; and then, to me: "The bitches! They're out to make me burst!"

At which I reminded him that our dignity was at stake and that we must behave ourselves.

We got back to the pasture camp in pitch darkness, sweating mightily. As we were so few in number, we all crowded for shelter into the same hut, Sherpas, Sherpanis and coolies pressing in upon us. We gave them tea and stayed there a long time chatting round the fire. Outside it was still raining. We wondered whether Lambert had reached Base Camp with his team or had been forced by the bad weather to bivouac before getting there.

Then we turned in, content with the work accomplished. Six hundred and sixty pounds lay that evening in the depot camp at 16,500 feet.

SATURDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER.

I put my head out of the tent at 7 a.m. The sky, as on every other morning, was blue. But unlike other mornings when the camp-site was the colour of yak-dung, everything this morning was sparkling, for it had snowed in the night. Zim, always an early bird, was outside his tent taking photos of the camp, and I hailed him.

"Good morning, Blossom!" I cried, and added, to tease him, "Which plants are you watering this morning?"

For he had formed the habit of early rising at the Botanical Gardens, where he was accustomed to water his flowers first thing in the morning.

"Hail, Myosotis!" he retorted with a grin. "You ought to be ashamed to wallow in bed on a morning like this!"

Stangelin had been left at Beding to supervise the departure of the loads. He arrived at the pasture camp with the last loads during this morning. And about eleven o'clock five Sherpas, Dawa Thondu, and the eleven coolies came back from Base

Camp bringing a message from Lambert, which I transcribe below.

“September 25. I am staying at Base Camp—I’ve had enough of it for two days. Wongdi stays with me. Juge is going off for a couple of days to reconnoitre the Menlung La, if the weather is good. Franz and Denis are making a trip towards Gaurisankar. There hasn’t been anything to see up to now—weather foul all the time.

“I had a frightful crossing yesterday. By 10 I was at the camp-depot with the coolies and away again at 10.30. Left some yellow bunting to mark the route. Ascent of the glacier very laborious—sinking to the knees in the snow—snowstorms and mist very trying for everyone. I wasn’t on the col until 2 p.m. Very cold—boots soaking, also clothes. Not a bit funny!

“Went down the other side at once. No tracks, no posts to mark the route. Mist—and crevasses. Wongdi fell into one of the crevasses. Luckily his rucksack checked his fall in time. I had all the trouble in the world to make the porters rope up. They were very cold and wanted to go all ways except the right one. To cut the story short, I managed to get out a 150-foot rope and tie them all on to it, after which I went ahead to break the trail—while my insufferable coolies quarrelled together in the rear!

“Snow very deep, many crevasses. I had to cut steps down across the bergschrund. At last I reached the steep moraines. At 4 p.m. I was at Base Camp, soaked to the skin and feeling pretty bad. The boys are all well. I’m writing this lying in the tent and slowly warming up again.

“Here are the plan and instructions for the next few days. Instructions: I am sending back Dawa Thondu plus all the available Sherpas and the coolies. They have the necessaries for sleeping and eating at the depot camp. During the trip they are going to mark out the route. The crossing of the pass will be easier in two or three days’ time.

“For yourself, Claude: try to bring up as much of our stuff as possible to the depot camp, also some firewood. You can put up the big Raclet tent—it’s very roomy—and supervise the

sending-off of the charges for Base Camp from it, both days. That's all there is to do. If possible, get more of the coolies to come over the pass. But *be careful!* Sixty pounds is too big a load for the climb—it's asking for trouble. Also insist that they put on the rope for the descent. I've impressed this on Dawa Thondu and he has the necessary ropes. By means of the coolies, buy in some more potatoes and tsampa.

"I think I've said all I want to say. Our kitchen gear can come over last, with Zimmermann's loads.

"Well, you've got the whole problem in front of you. Do your best with it.

"R. LAMBERT."

Don Quixote and the Roman Slave

IT WAS clear that the system for getting all our loads on the way to Base Camp would require some adjustment. The Bara Sahib might have his plan, but the Sherpas had theirs; in particular they were not keen to go and sleep at the depot camp, where there was no wood and—above all—no Chef Thondu to cook for them.

I called Dawa Thondu and asked him how it came about that all his party had come right down to Beding when it was plainly understood with the Bara Sahib that they should sleep at the depot camp. He answered that the coolies' boots were soaking wet and in some cases badly cut about, that there was neither tent nor firewood at the depot camp and that they wanted to sleep at Beding and go up again tomorrow early in the morning. I was not content with this, but for the moment I let them warm themselves up and take food and drink; when they had full bellies I would attack once more.

Meanwhile, to show them that for my part I was fully determined to go up, I packed my tent and got my things ready for a Sherpa to carry. Then I went to see Chef Thondu and explained that it was necessary to liquidate his kitchen and re-install it at the depot camp, so that men coming down from higher up would descend no farther. Thondu pulled a wry face at this, so I promised to see that plenty of firewood was sent up and told him that I myself was going up to the depot. These supreme arguments decided Thondu. But the men were still arguing among themselves, and I therefore started the Sherpas off ahead. They played the part of a locomotive, drawing after them, little by little, their train of coolies until the whole troop was got under way willy-nilly. Unexpectedly, everyone carried a load with him. I went last to round up the stragglers, Zimmermann accompanying me for part of the way.

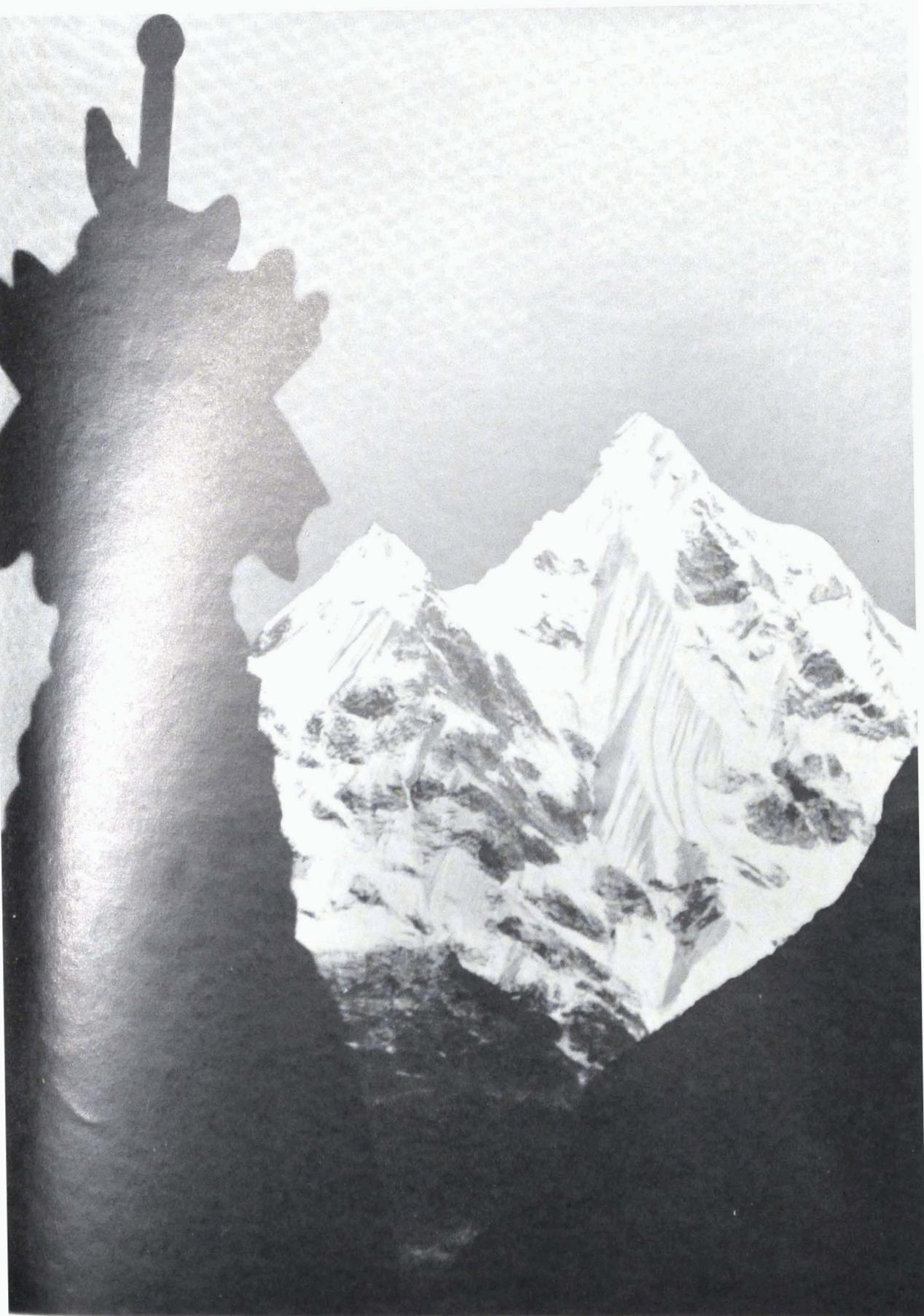
At 4.30 p.m. I reached the depot camp to find Chef Thondu already arranging his kitchen and hanging up a tarpaulin to shelter his fire. The camp-site was rather limited in extent and not very comfortable, for it was situated on the biggest of the banks of scree below the glacier. The big Raclet tent was put up as a shelter for the coolies. Behind it the Sherpas pitched a little high-altitude tent for me.

By nightfall all the loads had been brought up. It was a very cold evening, and to reward the coolies who had come up—and also to warm them—Dawa Thondu and I made a distribution of whisky. Of the 35 quarts presented to us by our friend Boris at Kathmandu, there still remained a four-gallon can to be used for such purposes, a few glassfuls of which were to be set aside for our high-altitude camps. Soon five or six little fires were glowing in the stony hollows, and round them, huddled up in their gowns and with their hoods pulled down over their ears, the coolies prepared their usual supper of tsampa and tea.

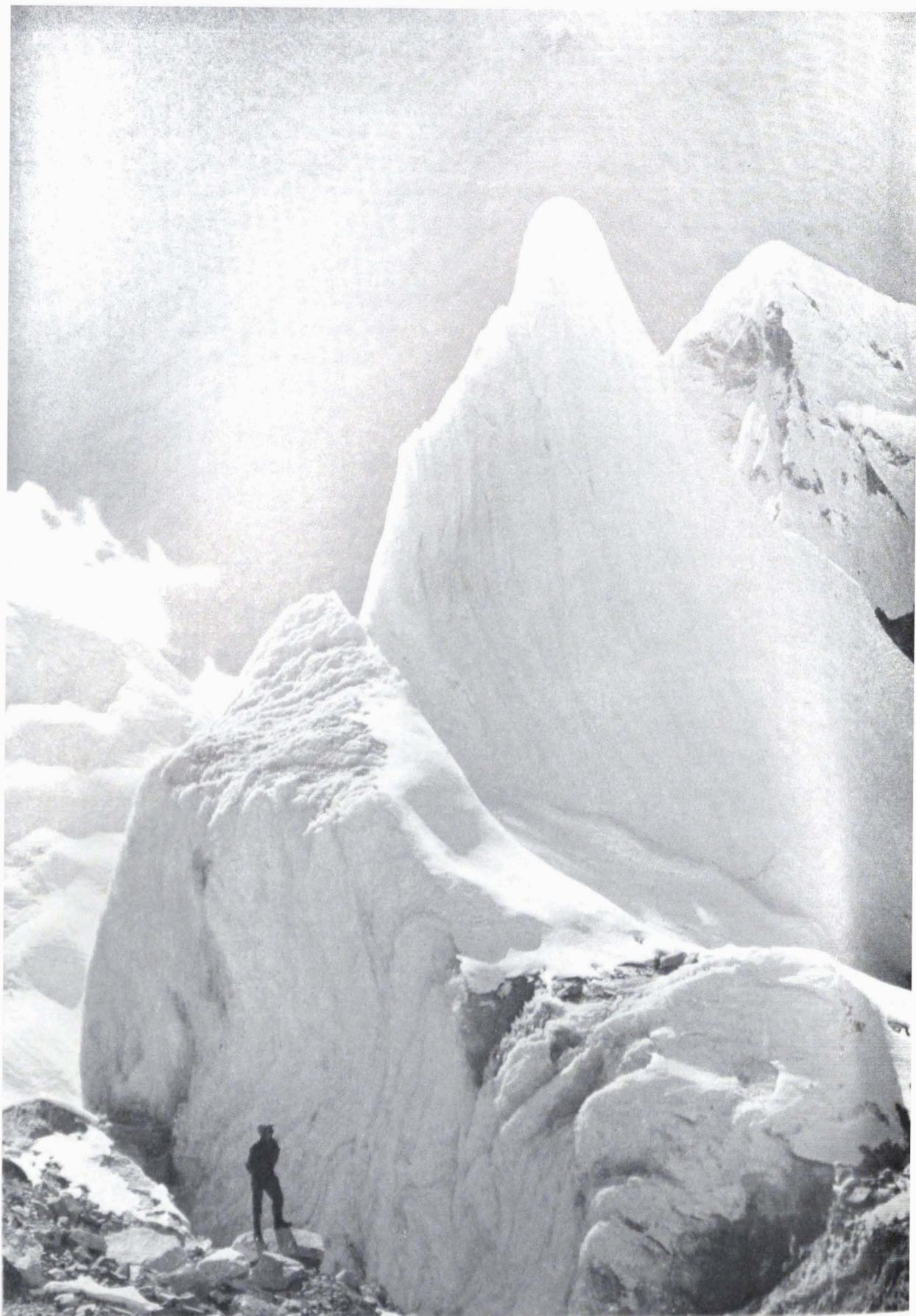
I was pleased with the day's work. Everything had gone according to the Bara Sahib's plan. Another rung of the ladder had been climbed—2,000 feet of height gained—and the pasture camp seemed a long way below already. I had no intention of going down to it again; I had had enough of staying there to paddle in yak-dung.

That we were penetrating into very high mountains was evident now from a thousand indications. The fall in temperature showed it and so did the increased brilliance of the sunlight. The only water to be seen was flowing in little threads among the bare stones; the glacier rumbled with noisy explosions all night, and the ice-towers shattered in the grip of the frost and changed its appearance every day.

Like the Sherpas, I went and sat by the fire that evening to wait for Thondu to finish cooking. Thondu was being particularly attentive to me as I was the only Sahib present, and had prepared some special treats for me; but unhappily I couldn't do justice to them. I don't know whether it was because of the tiring day or the result of the bad news I had received in my mail, but I had bad stomach pains. The climb to the depot camp had kept me so busy that I hadn't had time to open my letters until the



East Face of Gaurisankar from Beding



Claude Kogan below an ice "penitent"

end of the day, and the first I opened was from my mother telling me that she was ill and unable to do any work. This letter was more than three weeks old, but of course it was impossible to get any later news.

I slept badly, thinking of this mail of ours which we all await with such impatience and which always brings us pain as well as joy. The coolies sang and chattered nearly all night.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 26.

Snow had been falling without pause during the night. I turned out at 6 a.m. and with the help of a Sherpa sorted out all the loads which would take priority in today's carry. It was very cold and the numbed and sluggish coolies took a long time to move.

With the coming of the sun the weather cleared, and at 8.30 twenty coolies and all the Sherpas, each man carrying a load, started out for Base Camp. They took the big tent with them, for the coolies wanted to sleep at Base Camp, which, although it was at the same altitude as the depot camp, was more comfortable and less cold. Dawa Thondu assured me that he would be back early on the following morning to take a load over to Base Camp the same day.

When they had all gone I sat down in the sun to write letters and bring my journal up to date. Stangelin was coming up to the depot camp today, and if all went well Zimmermann would come up in the evening with all the remaining loads. Everything, in the end, had gone more quickly than we had expected, for our bait of extra pay had attracted many more coolies and a good number of them were making two carries a day. In the afternoon I lay down to try to make up for my sleepless night; but I was still suffering from digestive trouble.

Zimmermann arrived at 5 o'clock, and from this I concluded that all the loads had left the pasture camp. Tomorrow I would be able to go over to Base Camp. Chef Thondu, when I announced this to him, was delighted; and I was not less so, for with the huge séracs of the glacier leaning over dangerously 1,500 feet above our heads the hours of waiting were fraught with anxiety. Our situation didn't please Zim either; but nothing ever upset him.

SEPTEMBER 27.

I was up at 6 and Zim helped me to make up the loads. The route to the col was in good condition at the moment and the coolies would carry 60 lb. The loads had to be got ready before they arrived. More than thirty loads containing climbing-party stores remained, and it was not certain that everything would go over the pass today.

At 9 o'clock the coolies were there as promised, and by 10 they were all on the way up. Zim, leaning against a huge stone, ticked off the loads as they passed: twenty-one coolies, two Sherpanis, four Sherpa-coolies and five Sherpas, carrying a full load each. Unexpected and impressive as these numbers were, three high-altitude loads still remained, and Zim undertook to send these over next day with his own equipment. And he added, with a glance at the leaning séracs overhead, "Don't waste any time up there—I don't want to stay here to rot!"

I had no intention of wasting time. If Zim had to stay there many more days, I felt, he would get a stiff neck through peering continually overhead.

My stomach was leaving me in peace this morning and I was in good form; the 1,700 feet up to the Hadengi La at 18,000 took me an hour and a half. The coolies were doing well, too. Two of them even deposited their loads on the col and sped down again to bring up two more. In front of me as I climbed the silhouette of Chef Thondu stood out against the strong light—tall, thin, and bony, the silhouette of Don Quixote himself. But this morning, instead of bestriding Rosinante, the Don was on foot, marching with long slow strides and aiding his steps with a seven-foot pole which he used to prop up the tarpaulin that sheltered his kitchen, so he also reminded me of those engravings of the year 1800 showing the first climbers on Mont Blanc.

On the summit of the pass I found Denis, who had come up to take photographs and film the coolies coming over the col. I was pleased to see him and to think that very soon the whole team would be together again. I went on down, accompanied by my Sherpa, Migma Srita, and reached Base Camp about 12.30.

The camp was situated by the side of a huge lake, whose area

Juge was engaged in measuring. A range of fine 20,000-foot peaks was reflected in its clear waters. The tents had been pitched ten paces from the margin of the lake, on a sandy and comfortable site carpeted with dry grass. It was an idyllic spot, the kind of place where one would have liked to spend a fortnight idling in the sun and bathing and picking flowers.

Thondu the cook was evidently of the same opinion. His smile, which displayed all his teeth (or, to be exact, those that remained to him), showed his happiness. This place was to his taste, and he spent as much care and attention to detail on the arrangement of his "kitchen" as if he was going to stay there all the winter. As I watched him at work, he would often turn and grin at me with his hands on his hips, repeating in English, "Good place, Mem Sahib—good place!"

For the moment no Sahibs were at Base Camp. Lochmatter and Lambert had gone off on a reconnaissance towards Gaurisankar and were due back that evening, while Juge, with a Sherpa to assist him, was somewhere in the neighbourhood working on his survey.

Lochmatter and Lambert got in at 5 o'clock to report that their reconnaissance had been inconclusive. Lambert was going off again tomorrow, taking me with him and three Sherpas, for a more extended trip—three or four days. Meanwhile Lochmatter and Juge would be carrying out a reconnaissance of the Menlung La. This pass had only been crossed once, by Shipton in 1951 from the reverse side; and all we knew about it was that it led over to Chhule in the valley of Namche Bazaar. Denis would remain at Base Camp to finish his photographic survey of the region and watch over the arrival of the loads that were still to come.

The mail was distributed to the returned Sahibs and each man lay reading it either in his tent or out in the sunshine. Those little envelopes with their scrawled contents, I reflected—expressions of love or friendship—had made an unconscionably long journey to reach us here; four or five days by plane, then fourteen days by the "postmen" who chased after us with such enthusiasm and never found us at the same camp. I sensed a miracle here:

posted in a far-away letter-box in the Champ-Elysées or the Promenade des Anglais, these little squares of paper had ended by reaching us in the heart of the wildest mountains in the world.

All the coolies arrived by the end of that afternoon, even the two porters I mentioned as having made two carries from the pasture camp to the col and two from the col to the lake, representing a total ascent of 5,000 feet and a descent of the same height, in one day. Among the coolies was Chyta.

Chyta was a remarkable youth who made me think of a handsome Roman slave in some American super-film. A crop of short curly hair clung to his well-shaped head, and his profile was that of a classic medallion. His gown was negligently thrown open to reveal his bare chest. He possessed unusual stamina and had the pulse of a champion—the Fausto Coppi of the coolies—for it registered 78 to the minute when he arrived with his load and 48 an hour later. He was courting a Sherpani from Beding who was carrying a load in the same party. As Chyta was always one of the first to get in, he invariably deposited his load with all speed and hastened up again—or down again—to meet his beloved. Then he would take her load on his own shoulders, and she would trip lightly behind him, with smiling lips and velvet eyes shining with love and promise.

Our Sahibs were full of admiration for Chyta. After such devotion as his, they averred, it would need a superman to win the lady of his dreams from him.

SEPTEMBER 28TH.

The two coolie-postmen left for Kathmandu on the morning of this day. Besides our letters they carried the reels for Radio Geneva on which we have recorded our progress so far.

Juge lost the filling from one of his teeth and decided to have the tooth out. Lochmatter, our medico, extracted it *con brio* while Denis filmed the scene. Franz was establishing a regular practice, for he had taken out a tooth on the previous evening from a coolie who turned literally green with fear at sight of the forceps.

Racing Against the Clouds

MEANWHILE Lambert and I were getting provisions and equipment ready for the two reconnaissances.

At noon, after dealing with a lunch of fried potatoes and a rice-pudding—Chef Thondu's extra special—the two parties set off in different directions; Lochmatter, Juge and their three Sherpas heading eastward to begin their search for the Menlung La. The three Sherpas accompanying Lambert and me were Dawa Thondu, Migma Srita, and Wongdi, the latter being the Bara Sahib's personal Sherpa. In theory we all had a Sherpa specially detailed to look after our personal affairs—to keep an eye on our rucksacks, wash our clothes, and arrange our beds. Wongdi was the youngest of all the Sherpas, but he was intelligent, lively and confident. If he continued to show enthusiasm, we agreed, he would certainly make a stout companion for the final assault.

Before leaving camp Lambert sent off two of the remaining Sherpas to Thami to recruit coolies. We would need sixty or seventy men to establish a Base Camp for Gaurisankar, if an ascent of the peak turned out to be possible, and if it wasn't we would still need them for moving camp into some other mountain basin. Our Beding coolies had work to do in their valley and could no longer remain with us.

Leaving Base Camp, we descended a moraine which brought us to a torrent flowing from east to west, with Menlungtse towering above its right bank and Gaurisankar above its left. We kept to the left bank at first, striking downwards across steep pastures some three hundred feet above the water. And here, for the first time, I came to close quarters with a yak.

There was a considerable herd of them—at least a hundred animals—and I was not frightfully happy, for this animal is quite as imposing as a bull and stares at you as if it is preparing to

charge. The yak is something of a "fabulous monster". Imagine a kind of buffalo with long silky hair coloured black, white, or grey, short in the leg, with the hindquarters of a pony and a long tufted tail. The female yak gives milk, from which is made ghi (the local butter) and the dry cheese which Tibetans eat when it is absolutely hard. But the yak is not a bit fierce by nature; on the contrary, he is a timorous beast and the first to turn tail in an encounter. The handsomest yaks in this herd—the stud beasts, probably—had pompoms of red wool hanging from their ears.

Farther on we came to a few little huts with walls hung with yak-skins, standing on a flat shelf of land. These housed the keepers of the herd. Two tall girls with prominent cheekbones were outside churning cream, and we stopped to watch them. But they were as curious to see strange folk as we were, and stopping their work they came to stare at us. And there we stayed for some little time, planted face to face and exchanging grins, before going on.

About 4 o'clock the mist which had enveloped us for the last hour or so changed to rain and we halted at a height of 14,000 feet. We had reached the valley-bottom at a point where it broadened out, and here we had the luck to discover a shepherd's bivouac-place under a big rock. The Sherpas, rejoicing to find a dry spot, got to work preparing a cooking-place. The rain stopped again later in the afternoon, so I got up on to a nearby moraine to take some photographs and make a sketch of Gaurisankar's east face, which had already been examined by Lambert and Lochmatter on their previous reconnaissance.

Down again at our bivouac, I found tea ready. We drank several mugs of it while we discussed our plans for the next few days. Lambert wanted to get up into a glacier cirque close under the east ridge and from there to cross a secondary ridge, behind which he thought there might be that hoped-for friendly glacier which would lead us towards the summit. I thought otherwise. I was afraid that, glued against the mountainside, we would fail to get any clear view for our subsequent operations. I proposed that we should go downstream and then climb a rocky eminence on the opposite side, about 16,500 feet, which ought to give us a

splendid view of the whole north face. Raymond came round to my way of thinking, and presently we turned in, agreeing to strike camp very early next morning.

SEPTEMBER 29.

At 7 a.m. we were away. Still downhill at first, looking for a bridge. Lambert thought we would find one all right, for he had spotted a track on the other side and a horse in a walled enclosure. The torrent was too considerable to wade across.

In trying to jump a side-stream I slipped on an ice-glazed boulder and went in to the ankles. The water—frightfully cold at this time of day—poured into my boots and soaked the right foot. Luckily I had dry socks in my rucksack, but I would not be able to change them until we got into the sun, for it was as yet much too cold to stop. My first steps after this impromptu foot-bath were not at all pleasant and I pulled faces as the water squelched in my boot. Lambert, however, was quite pleased.

“At last,” he grinned, “I’ve got an incident to report to the Press.”

Just as I’d ceased to believe in its existence, we came upon a little bridge and crossed it to the right bank. We had reached a junction formed by the torrent we had been following, which came down from the south face of Menlungtse, and the Melung Chu, which had its source on the north-west face. *Chu* is the Tibetan word for “torrent”.

The viewpoint we were trying to reach stood above the right bank of the Melung Chu, and we had now to cross this other torrent. Luckily it proved to be less violent than the other. We had to climb for an hour over very difficult ground with no sort of track, where I disappeared to the waist in the thickets of tall juniper, before crossing the Melung Chu by jumping from rock to rock. Now we could set foot on the mountain we had spotted before starting out.

At this point we left Wongdi and Migma Srita behind with all our kit, taking Dawa Thondu with us to carry the lunch. We had binoculars and a map, but it must be explained that the map of this region was literally a *carte blanche* and gave no indication of the nature of the terrain. We were on virgin ground here.

The ascent turned out to be more complicated than we had supposed when we were looking at it *en face*. Our mountain was split by several gorges and we found ourselves struggling across torrents which we had previously failed to notice. We had also to cope with moraines, which threatened at every step to crumble beneath our feet. But at last we found a little path made by yaks, and when we reached the pastures higher up the juniper thickets disappeared and the going became easier. At 15,000 feet we allowed ourselves the first halt of the day and Dawa got out the provisions. We munched them somewhat abstractedly, for the tremendous scene that confronted us was quite overwhelming.

To our left glittered the west face of Menlungtse, an abrupt face of bare rock so steep that no snow rested on it. Ten thousand feet above, the unconquered pyramids of the twin summits reared themselves, seeming to defy the whole world, mountaineers included. I longed to take a camp to the big snow-saddle connecting them and bag those jewelled peaks—but how were we to get there? How were we going to force a way up those huge defending walls and vertical ridges? The breach that would allow some chance of assaulting the fortress was certainly not on this side.

Dawa Thondu, who had been watching our eager gazing, remarked that the people of the valley claimed that there was an easy way of ascent on the east face. . . .

Now we turned to the north face of Gaurisankar, to scrutinize that with even more interest, for one of the objects of our expedition was to explore this mountain and if possible find a likely route up it.

Compared with Menlungtse, a massive mountain formed in one great block, the structure of Gaurisankar was very complicated. From the summit, an imposing snow-cap, numerous ridges ran far down towards the valley, hanging from the snow-cap like monstrous tentacles, their steep sides furrowed by deep couloirs. The ridges were like masterpieces of Gothic art—over-full of detail and ornamentation. They were extremely narrow, serrated and cut into deep gaps; no possibility of an ascent there. On the whole face there was not one ledge where a camp could be placed,

nor was there any sign of that "friendly glacier" that was to have led us easily upward. If the great mountain had been less perfect in its beauty and strength, it might perhaps have left us a little hope. But we were too small a party; an attempt would involve too many risks and put too many lives in hazard. And so, for the moment, we preferred to leave to others the solution of this great Himalayan problem.

The mountaineer (I reflected) is certainly born with a refined taste in achievement, since in a range like the Himalaya, where hundreds upon hundreds of peaks are still unconquered, he is drawn not by facility but by perfection, choosing invariably to attempt the most challenging peaks of all. . . .

I took many photographs; and then we decided to leave Dawa Thondu where he was and climb another 1,500 feet to a height of 16,500, whence we could take photographs of the upper part of the peaks and bring back the fullest possible information about a part of the world which had never before been explored. And this last stage of the ascent became a veritable race with the clouds. As had happened every afternoon, the clouds were mounting to the assault of the heights. We put all we had into the contest, all the speed we could manage at such an altitude, and managed to gain sufficient distance on our pursuers to enable us to photograph all the great faces within range, including Gaurisankar and Menlungtse.

I found it exciting, this work of mountain exploration—this advance into unknown country. At every upward step we discovered new summits; glaciers rose into view, cols showed themselves and the secrets of the valleys into which they led. Great was our desire to push on farther still into those wild and barren valleys, to discover the keys to their hidden mysteries. But 1,500 feet below us the sight of Dawa Thondu, lounging in the sunshine, recalled us to our immediate purposes. Our present mission was fulfilled and we must leave this fascinating region—never, perhaps, to come back again.

Some day it may be that our labours will help other expeditions who—like us—will be drawn to attack the bold and alluring lines of these two mountains, Gaurisankar and Menlungtse.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Attack on the Moraines

DURING our absence the Sherpas had pitched camp beside the Melung Chu. A juniper fire was blazing between the two tents and Wongdi and Migma Srita were busy preparing a meal. We were pretty tired after being on our feet for ten hours, but the sight of this comfortable and welcoming camp did wonders for our weariness.

While we ate our supper we struck a balance. Our reconnaissance work on Gaurisankar was finished. Juge had done his part in making topographical surveys which would be used to make a new and more complete map of the region, and Bertholet had collaborated by photographing the whole massif. It was now the end of September, and we had time, if we selected some not too distant objective, to try and climb another mountain.

In the fire-lit tent, lying on our down-filled bags close to the warmth, we talked for a long time that evening of Cho Oyu. . . .

SEPTEMBER 30.

In the night the weather broke. There was first a violent thunderstorm and then rain and snow. Four inches of snow lay on the ground when we looked out in the morning. The sky was overcast and peaks of 20,000 feet and over were hidden. It was lucky that we had gone up to our viewpoint yesterday; today we would have been unable to do anything.

We left our camp-site at 8 a.m. Its altitude was 14,000, so we had to climb well over 2,000 feet to get back to the Base Camp by the lake—a hard march up a very long valley. Our route was the same we had used for the outward march. Half an hour after starting we were soaked to the knees, for the wet snow clinging to the undergrowth transferred itself to our trousers; but about 10 o'clock the sun broke through the clouds and we halted on

some flat rocks to take off boots and socks and dry them. The sun was now pleasantly hot, and the reflection from the new snow was so brilliant that we were dazzled in spite of our snow-glasses.

It was a good spot and we stayed for some time, teaching the Sherpas how to make iced Ovomaltine. We also spared a thought for Zimmermann; this weather would infuriate him—he would lose a day because everything was buried in snow. Bad weather for botanists, and for yaks too. There they stood, disgruntled and immobile, waiting for the thaw which would cause their fodder to appear once more.

The return journey to Base Camp seemed interminable, and the higher we got the deeper became the snow. But we arrived at 2 p.m., to find Lochmatter just arriving from the opposite direction. He was alone, and wore such a gloomy aspect that we began to think something unpleasant had happened to his party. He sped like an arrow to the "kitchen" and halted there to refresh himself with a snack. We followed him.

"Well?" we asked fearfully. "Everything all right?"

His answer was blunt. "No. That route's not possible."

And he disappeared into his tent forthwith. No use pressing the matter; we should get nothing out of him. Better to wait for Juge, who was less taciturn and would tell us about their two days.

But when Juge arrived he was just as pessimistic. Nothing had gone right. The Menlung La was impossible for coolies; to get to it we would have to spend two days crossing endless crumbling moraines, very dangerous terrain for laden men. The ascent to the col was steep and difficult because of the deep snow. They had seen nothing of the descent on the farther side. Above all, they were not at all certain that they had reached the right col.

Juge explained that both of them had suffered from "alt", had slept very badly and eaten very little. This trouble with altitude was no doubt the reason for Franz's ill-temper. Raymond then gave Juge the results of our own explorations and explained the necessity of getting over this elusive Menlung La so as to reach as quickly as possible the Bothe Kosi valley and go up it towards the Nangpa La—in the direction of Cho Oyu. The

argument for this was that by using this route we should gain at least three days; but Raymond was also keen to cross the pass.

Juge showed plenty of enthusiasm for the Cho Oyu plan, but repeated that it would be madness to try and get coolies over the Menlung La; if we did, he said, some of them would leave their bones on the pass. Lochmatter, who was feeling better and had left his tent to join us, supported him with even greater emphasis.

When we separated to turn in for the night, I prophesied to Lambert that after a good meal and a good night's rest the route would be certain to become possible and those moraines less murderous. Wait for tomorrow—we should see matters in a different light. For this was not the first time I had seen how great a depressing influence bad weather, fatigue, and insufficient food can exert on a man, especially when that man is with an expedition spending a long time at high altitudes.

It was very cold that evening, and the Sherpas sang and danced round the camp-fire to warm themselves.

OCTOBER 1.

Rest-day—if you could call it that. For today it was our business to check and make up again all the loads. With Bertholet, I got to work on the food supplies while Lochmatter, Juge, and Lambert checked all the equipment. After that each of us overhauled his or her personal climbing gear.

Our new objective was now established. The whole party was keen to have a go at Cho Oyu, that fine peak of 26,750 feet. We possessed a photograph of this mountain, and we knew from the reports of previous explorers that the easiest way of getting at it was by the west face. Admittedly, this summit was more than 3,000 feet higher than Gaurisankar. But we had the equipment, the fitness, and the morale to attack this "Eight-thousander" and we were going to try it.

The most pressing problem was once again the problem of transport. How were we to get two and a half tons of equipment over to Chhule, in the Bothe Kosi valley north of Namche Bazaar? To go from Beding over the pass of the Tesi Lapcha, the normal route from the Rolwaling to the Bothe Kosi, would

take seven days; but if we could start from our present position and cross this notorious Menlung La we could do it in three days. Raymond therefore decided that a lightly equipped party should go ahead to make a new reconnaissance of the col, while the rest supervised the sending-off of the loads. According to what we had been promised by the Sherpas who had been sent to collect them, the coolies would arrive about October 4th. The scouting party would leave the day before, so as not to get too far ahead.

About 4 p.m. two Kathmandu coolies who were performing the duties of postmen reached Base Camp. They were clad in thin cotton garments and shivering—and they astonished us by saying that they had just crossed the Hadengi La, three hours of marching in the snow with bare feet. Overcome by the spectacle of two men barefooted in the high snows at 4 in the afternoon, our picture-hunter ran to get his apparatus. As he approached the two, one of them smiled broadly and said in English, with scarcely a trace of accent:

“How do you do?”

It was all rather humiliating for us, who could hardly keep warm in our layers of sweaters and our quilted jackets.

There was more mail for Denis than for anyone else. True, he was engaged to be married. . . .

But there were letters for all, and each member of the expedition retired to his tent, impatient to have the latest news from home; and each, that night, went to sleep with joys or anxieties renewed.

OCTOBER 2.

At Base Camp, waiting for the coolies. Prepared loads for the advance party who would leave next day. All the Sahibs wrote letters, for the Kathmandu men were to depart in the morning. The weather was becoming more and more settled, but the temperature fell during the day.

OCTOBER 3.

Our fourth mail went off. Coolies still not arrived, but Raymond decided that the advance party should start all the same.

It consisted of three Sahibs—Lambert, Bertholet, Kogan—and five Sherpas—Wongdi, Migma Srita, Dawa Thondu, Numbey, Ang Namgal.

We started out very late in the day, about 2 p.m., and went up the moraine bordering the Menlungtse Glacier. Pitched camp at 17,300 feet.

OCTOBER 4.

Camp was struck at 7.30 and we attacked the interminable moraines—the purgatory of Lochmatter and Juge. After receiving such a very striking report of them, we found them in consequence absolutely normal, moraines like any others, neither more nor less crumbling and dangerous. It was only necessary to tackle them with patience. At 17,500 feet we left them at the bottom of the glacier to begin the climb to the col which Juge and Lochmatter reconnoitred (19,000 feet).

As we had expected, the col descended on its farther side to the Tesi Lapcha, not to Chhule in the Bothe Kosi. It was therefore not the Menlung La.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Rendezvous of Giants

WE NOW had to look somewhere else and do the work all over again. Where was this very retiring col? On the line of crests enclosing the glacier basin east of Menlungtse there were three at least. Which was the right one?

The problem would not let me rest; I wanted to start for the nearest possibility that same afternoon. But it would take at least four hours to reach it from our present position, so we had to restrain our impatience and conserve our energy for the days to come. The Sherpas made camp on a plateau just below the col, at 18,000 feet. The tents were pitched by 5 p.m.—luckily, because “*mousson non finish*”, as the Sherpas put it. A fierce thunderstorm burst upon us shortly afterwards, and all night it blew and snowed and hailed.

OCTOBER 5.

Four inches of fresh snow, and very cold. We stayed in the tents until the sun reached them at 8 a.m.

To find the true Menlung La we proposed to act on a plan of simple elimination. We were going to climb first to a rocky col which we had observed on the previous day, the nearest of the three. The Sherpas would wait below with all the equipment, for this col appeared to be very steep and it was not certain that coolies could get over it. To save time, while Lambert and I climbed to the rocky col Bertholet and Ang Namgal would try to reach a crest which might allow them to spot the true col.

The ascent to the rocky col was very tricky. I had started out like a complete novice, without crampons or ice-axe, and had only my ski-stick with me. It was absolutely no use on the steep final part of the ascent and I left it behind.

We reached the col. And there we looked upon a legendary

sight—the giants of the Himalaya, the great “Eight-thousanders”. Everest was there with his plume, Lhotse, Nuptse, and Makalu. We stayed on the col for a while, dazzled by the tremendous panorama and rejoicing to be there.

We could see, moreover, that we were not far off our course, for the valley into which we looked down evidently debouched into the Bothe Kosi at Chhule. Three hundred yards along the crest from us we spotted a good route of descent which could only begin from the true Menlung La, hidden from us behind a craggy summit. We went down again very pleased with ourselves to join Bertholet and the Sherpas, and Lambert had camp pitched at 18,000 feet. Then he sent down two Sherpas with a message to Juge at Base Camp, telling him that all went well, that we had found the true col, and that he could follow up with all the stores, the two Sherpas acting as guides. In the meantime Bertholet and I went down again to the glacier to examine the route giving access to the Menlung La and so save time in the morning. When we reached the glacier we discovered some big paw-marks on the edge of a crevasse; they were undoubtedly the tracks of a snow-leopard, and we keenly regretted missing a meeting with him.

The weather was magnificent that evening, and it was 6 o'clock before the sun left the camp. Bertholet took many photographs, especially of Menlungtse's east face—a face which we had studied through the binoculars without discovering any sign of the “easy route” Dawa Thondu had mentioned.

All three of us were pleased with the results of this day's work.

OCTOBER 6.

A late start—9 o'clock. After two and a half hours of pleasant climbing we were on the saddle of the Menlung La—at last!

The weather was fine, and Bertholet “shot” the enchanting panorama we had seen yesterday. It was a job to tear ourselves away from that splendid view, but after a brief snack we attacked the descent on the farther side. An hour of zig-zagging down scree-slopes brought us to the glacier below the col; a steep



Our postman, bearing our letters from Europe, arrives barefooted at 15,000 feet



Lunch-hour at Cho Oyu Base Camp (18,800 ft.)
(*Left to right*) Bertholet, Claude Kogan, Lambert



North Face of Menlungtse (23,564 ft.)



Climbing the slopes of the Menlung La

descent, but practicable for the coolies. For another three hours we descended through the moraine zone, and finally made camp on the pastures of the Pangbuk valley at an altitude of 16,000 feet.

The tents were pitched close to a stream of clear water, a mirror that reflected the surrounding peaks. We were fairly tired after a long day; the laden coolies would certainly have to halt higher up on the descent. Our own burdens had been extra heavy, and we more than once deplored the absence of the two Sherpas who had been sent back to Base Camp. Our remaining Sherpas made a big fire and served us with delicious hot tea.

This camp-site pleased us exceedingly, and we would have liked to spend another day there. But until we found ourselves another Base Camp we would be living like nomads, packing our houses and our food on our backs every morning and trudging off to select another camp-site in the evening.

OCTOBER 7.

There was no hurry this morning, so we waited for the sun and did not get away till 9 a.m.

The stage was not a long one, and we halted at Chhule (13,500 feet) after a two-hour march. Chhule is a flat place where the torrent descending the Pangbuk valley from the Menlung La joins the Bothe Kosi. At this time of year there was no one at the pasture, and we installed ourselves in a yak enclosure. It was surrounded by a wall of stones balanced delicately on top of each other—a veritable lace-work of stones—and I wondered how so fragile a wall could withstand the contact of yaks.

Lambert sent off two Sherpas straight away to Thami; it was the nearest village, but even so Dawa Thondu and Numbey would take three hours to descend to it. They were to buy food supplies. We had scarcely any food left and were beginning to feel the pinch; it was time for the rearguard to catch us up and revictual us. I reminded Lambert that, as in the song *Il était un petit navire*, when famine threatened it was always the biggest who was sacrificed first. . . .

A very restful afternoon. I walked exactly 300 paces in order

to take a look at the final summit of Cho Oyu, framed in the V-shaped walls of the valley. It was nearly 13,000 feet higher than we were and looked terribly far away.

After this, there was nothing left for us to do except to act firmly on the proverb "He who sleeps, dines" and turn in for the night.

OCTOBER 8.

A lovely morning. We idled about and checked our equipment. I washed some socks and made some repairs to a tent.

"*No cana!*"—which is to say, nothing to eat! That's what Migma Srita said as he spread out his empty hands and let them fall again. For lunch he made us a dozen little chapatis with all that was left of the meal, and we divided two small triangles of cheese and a tin of meat paste into four. After this copious repast Raymond and I went to sleep sitting in the sun, while Denis took the glasses to scrutinize the exit from the col, which was just visible from the camp.

Suddenly there was a shout from Denis—he had seen something move on the col. Raymond grabbed the glasses, but could see nothing. I hurried out of my tent and gazed in my turn, but with no better luck; nothing moved up there. Disappointed, I went back again and lay down.

Two minutes later Denis shouted again, "I can see four or five of them!"

This must certainly be the coolies, I thought, and once again hastened out of my tent. But once again there was nothing to see. I told Denis that if hunger was upsetting my vision, as he seemed to think, it could also be giving him hallucinations. But a little later we had better luck and succeeded in catching sight of the tiny silhouettes, minute black dots, moving across the tongue of snow before disappearing among the scree. Denis counted more than forty of them, so all the coolies were following us and tomorrow they would be here with all our stores—and the food. Raymond was very glad to see that all were present; to have got the whole party over the Menlung La was an appreciable gain, and tomorrow they would continue the descent.

At 5 p.m., when our empty stomachs were beginning to make us despair, we saw our two Sherpas coming up from Thami with the provisions. But—no meat. And to think that we had counted on mutton at least—dreamt of it, provided it in imagination with every conceivable sauce!

For an hour we squatted round the fire eating potatoes and rice and eggs, but so fierce were our appetites that we couldn't succeed in satisfying them. Raymond decided that tomorrow Bertholet and I would go up towards the Nangpa La as an advance party to select a site for Base Camp. We were also to try to make contact with Professor Tichy's Austrian expedition, who should be somewhere in the neighbourhood of Cho Oyu on their scientific mission.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

In Which the Children Enjoy Themselves

OCTOBER 9.

Another fine day. After a lordly breakfast of potatoes in yak-butter, Quaker oats, and eggs, Bertholet and I left camp about 9.30 a.m.

We had with us two Sherpas, Migma Srita and Numbey, and two coolies who had come up from Thami carrying the provisions on the previous day and would assist the Sherpas to carry our loads as far as the Nangpa La. One of them was to wait for the arrival of the coolies and then follow us with extra food supplies and some butane-gas stoves. Lambert was staying at the Chhule camp to organize the rearguard, who would come up behind us one day later. We adjured him not to forget us, especially where food was concerned, and if possible to buy us a yak as he had promised some time ago. We had eaten no fresh meat for ten days, and we had a terrible craving for it.

An hour after we had left camp we saw Lochmatter and Juge on a distant crest. They had failed to spot our tents and were happily progressing in the wrong direction. We hailed them and they came down towards us, and we crossed the stream to meet them and find out how they had got on with the crossing of the col. All had gone well, it appeared. They went on down towards the tents and we continued our climb towards the pass. Three hours of marching on a good sandy path brought us across some moraines to Lunack, at 16,200 feet, an important stage on the passage of the Nangpa La.

Some shepherds' huts, in ruins, provided shelter for the coolies and the Sherpas put up a tent for us—they themselves preferred to sleep in the hut where their fire and cooking-place had been installed. We sat in the sun writing up our journals and then joined the Sherpas.

A solitary coolie, carrying a heavy load of paper for Tibet, set down his burden in the doorway of the hut and came to settle himself opposite us. He first obtained from the stream a pannikin of water and then, sitting cross-legged, built and lit a fire made with the dry yak-dung he had gathered in the course of the day's march, for there is no wood at these altitudes and yak-dung is the only fuel used by the coolies. While our visitor's supper was cooking he never ceased to encourage the flame by fanning it, his imperturbability unyielding, his movement so regular that he seemed to have a clockwork mechanism in place of arms. A single earring hung from his left ear, a turquoise set in gilt metal.

Later in the evening ten more coolies came in and settled in the next hut. When they found out that some Sahibs were next door they came to have a look at us, handling all our things and lingering curiously over the fabric of our nylon tent, which seemed to them extremely fragile. After which they stared at us and we stared at them, with an equal interest.

Denis succeeded in photographing an immense eagle which planed over the camp, flying very low.

OCTOBER 10.

The weather now looked as if it was set fair. If only it would last!

We continued to climb for two hours by an easy and well-marked track which invited confidence. In a hollow we came face to face—if I may use the expression—with ten or twelve fat chukor, the Himalayan grouse. These trusting birds, much fatter than European grouse, allowed us to approach within five paces of them, and we regretted bitterly that we hadn't Juge's pistol with us. The fact of the matter was that as we were always hungry we looked upon every living thing as a potential dinner, including the rats and mice that lived in the neighbourhood of the pastures. Indeed, our eyes were so much bigger than our stomachs that we sometimes mistook the latter for marmots!

The path now abruptly disappeared, lost in a desert of stones, and for four hours we wandered in a veritable labyrinth, a fantastic chaos of crumbling moraines that stretched as far as the

eye could see. Faced with this purgatorial scenery, I reflected that if there was a particular Hell reserved for the mountaineer it would have a *décor* like this. . . .

It was a weary march—up and down all the time. There was only the trail of yak-dung to indicate the route, and we were filled with admiration for the adroitness of the heavy beasts who could carry big loads over ground so difficult and dangerous for them. Slippery ice, rotten rock, crevasses—nothing could stop them. The moraines of the Menlung La, denounced as “fearful” by Franz and Juge, were an easy walk compared with these.

About 4 p.m. we stopped to bivouac and the Sherpas installed themselves at the foot of a great wall of rock. The two coolies who had come with us carrying our loads now refused to go any farther—in spite of what they had promised when we started out—and abandoned us. We were furious, for had they stayed we could have done the same as the coolies who were with us at the Lunack camp the previous evening, who had left early and would reach the col itself that night. We made them aware of our displeasure by means of heartfelt curses; but as we cursed in French our wrath merely made them laugh. Nothing could be done about it—they insisted on going down the same day. We therefore entrusted them with a message to the Bara Sahib, requesting him to be particularly sure to send up food supplies as quickly as possible.

In spite of this unforeseen setback, which upset our plans for the morrow, we regained our optimism as soon as our anger was extinguished and managed to pass a very pleasant evening after all. But we were once again very short of food and unable to assuage the pangs of hunger which inevitably attacked us after so long a march.

We ate tsampa, soaked in tea, with the Sherpas. And then Denis was seized with a brilliant idea. He got a piece of charcoal and with it wrote, on the vast white surface of the rock-wall, these words:

“WE’RE HUNGRY!
CLAUDE AND DENIS”

To which I added this challenging and imperative sentence:

“NO MORE TSAMPA!
WE WANT YAK!”

Numbey, the Sherpa, obviously thought our inscriptions were prayers (and in a way they *were* prayers, of a somewhat imperious kind), for, seized by a spirit of emulation, he took the charcoal in his turn and inscribed on the rock the following Buddhist formula:

“OM MANE PADME HUM”,

meaning “*Hail to the jewel in the lotus!*” Which was a very poetical thought but had little connection with the obsession which gnawed at our hungry stomachs.

It was now 5.30 p.m. and we were by no means keen to lie down in the tent, which the Sherpas had pitched between the huge boulders of the moraine. One of its two entrances was definitely a “No Exit” door—it opened on a deep chasm. It was not advisable to do any sleep-walking during the night!

Denis and I wanted to go out for the evening—not to the theatre or to dine with friends, but to have a scamper on the glacier.

At this point the glacier was very much broken up. We began by searching for firewood which we thought the coolies might have hidden; but in vain. By way of compensation, we discovered a grotto to explore. The ice which formed the grotto’s walls had been marvellously polished by melting water running down them, and we had almost the impression of being in the Room of Distorting Mirrors at the Musée Grévin. We continued to explore, and next it was a wonderful little frozen lake that presented itself to our delighted gaze. For the moment I thought myself transported to the ice-floes of Paul-Emile Victor. The lake’s surface was absolutely smooth, and we got some flat stones from the moraine and played at curling.

On the way back to camp we found crevasses fringed with

long icicles, blue-tinted and transparent, and amused ourselves—like truant schoolboys—by making them targets for our stones and sending them down one after another into the depths.

But there is another side to every picture. We soon became aware that these minor amusements were dangerously sharpening our appetites. And we sensibly went back to our tent.

OCTOBER 11.

As soon as we woke on this morning an important problem faced us. The two coolies had deserted, and even with us to help them the two Sherpas could never carry up all our stores. Nor was it possible to leave part of the stuff behind, for the route was much frequented and there would be every chance of their vanishing.

However, with or without coolies—and with or without food—we must still advance and keep our distance in front of the main party to fulfil the mission assigned to us by the Bara Sahib. So we took with us Numbey, loaded with a tent and bedding for three, our last cylinder of butane gas, and such little food as remained; while Migma Srita was left to guard the rest of the stores and come up after us as soon as the coolies arrived from below.

There was another hour of marching through the stony waste before we set foot on the glacier, here level and very little crevassed, sloping gently up to the Nangpa La at 18,300 feet. This pass is a spacious one—at least a mile wide—and is an important trade-route between Nepal and Tibet. At this time of year many caravans of yaks were using it every day, carrying the salt and cloth of Tibet to the Nepalese and returning laden with leather or paper.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

“No Cana!”

THE caravans we passed were of at least twenty yaks, shepherded by only four or five men. To keep the animals moving their drivers emitted very piercing whistles, especially on an uphill road; when they wanted to direct a yak that was beyond their reach, they threw stones to left of it to make it turn right, and *vice versa*.

On the col itself the scenery changed completely. Behind us, to the south, one beheld all the great range containing the highest mountains in the world—sheer walls, cupolas of snow and ice, a serried rank of impenetrable peaks; as if the earth, in some last convulsion, had formed a natural barrier forbidding all human penetration into a region peopled by legend with monsters and divinities. But man, patient and tenacious, pushing back the Himalayan gods ever farther towards the summits and chasing them from their ancient haunts one by one, had made a way across this snarling chaos of rock and ice. Nature is not easy to tame in the Himalaya. Every year the deluges of the monsoon swell the mountain torrents until they surge out of their beds, carrying away bridges in their headlong race, cutting off the retreat of adventurous Man, and ending by spreading their floodwaters across the wide plains of India. And the glaciers shake themselves, the mountains hurl down stones, the snow thunders down in avalanches engulfing every road, wiping out every track. Next spring there is nothing for Man to do but begin again. So he builds another bridge where the old one used to stand, and cuts a new trail over the high snow-passes.

But to northward of us, as we stood on the pass, the mountains appeared gently rounded, inoffensive hillocks merging into the high plateaus of Tibet. A purple land, barren, dried and

flattened by the wind. And yet a majestic landscape, fascinating in its utter desolation.

We made only a slight descent from the pass, for Cho Oyu soared close at hand on our right. It towered 9,000 feet above us, displaying an easy and engaging appearance. The whole of the west face stood revealed, and between 20,000 and 22,000 feet we could make out tracks at the foot of the wall of séracs, suggesting that the Austrian expedition had made an attempt to get up by that route. But no sign of life was discernible on the mountain.

It was now noon. After nibbling our last bar of chocolate Denis and I decided to start at once to look for a site for Base Camp, a site as near as possible to the huge shoulder which supported the west face and would provide a route to the upper plateau of Cho Oyu. We also hoped to come upon the Austrians, who would probably be in some lower camp. We left Numbey by himself. He was not at all happy although we promised to return quickly.

For an hour we followed the medial moraine of the glacier abutting on the shoulder, where it branched. We saw no one, but our conviction was that the Austrians—if, as seemed to be the case, they were out to climb Cho Oyu—must have made their attack on the right, or south side, and we headed in that direction. Another hour's going and we spotted, in a fold of the moraine, the tents of the "scientific mission".

The Austrians recognized us and came to meet us. Dr. Tichy's hands were frostbitten and seemed to be causing him pain, and he was evidently worn out with fatigue. Three or four Sherpas also had frostbitten hands and feet. Only Jockler and Heuberge had nothing wrong with them and appeared to be fit.

They told us that they had made one attempt on Cho Oyu, during which they had been caught in a violent gale. The tent was in danger of being blown away and Dr. Tichy, in getting out to fix the guy-ropes more securely, had had his hands frozen although he had not been outside barehanded for more than ten minutes. They were now awaiting the return of their sirdar, Pasang Lama, who had gone down to Namche Bazaar to bring

back food and some additional Sherpas. Then they would make another attempt to reach the summit of Cho Oyu.

Our astonishment at this news was considerable, for when we had met in Kathmandu the Austrians had spoken only of the “scientific ends” of their expedition.

The Sherpas served us with tea and hot chapatis and we sat talking in the sunshine for some time. The rôle of Ambassador-Plenipotentiary stimulated and amused me. In the name of Lambert, I at once confirmed our own intention of climbing Cho Oyu and the impossibility of our changing to any other objective. I then suggested that as winter was approaching and time was getting short, we should collaborate, it being understood that they should have priority over the final summit.

Dr. Tichy rejected this proposal at once, which was indeed only to be expected. This was an Austrian expedition, sent out with Austrian funds, and it was pretty difficult for them to transform themselves all of a sudden into an Austro-Franco-Swiss expedition. On the other hand, Dr. Tichy had evidently conceived the idea of climbing Cho Oyu, one of the eight highest peaks in the world, with a very small party, for there were only three of them. (At the time, we considered this project a little rash; but by reaching the summit of Cho Oyu on October 19 Dr. Tichy and his companions proved that they had the situation in hand and brought off a magnificent performance.)

Before leaving them, we renewed our assurance that we would only attack the mountain after they had done so, and would leave them the priority of the summit. They seemed to have some difficulty in believing us and didn't appear very reassured. They would no doubt have preferred us to go lower down—back into the valley, for instance. But that was hardly possible, seeing how little time remained to us; moreover, we couldn't turn back now, for if all went well our caravan would arrive to establish Base Camp tomorrow. We assured Dr. Tichy that Raymond Lambert would pay him a visit next day.

This meeting had been so exciting that—absorbed in our conversation—we had forgotten not only the time but also our poor Sherpa, left solitary and shivering by the tent. And we got back

to camp to find Numbey terribly worried and restless. Migma Srita, who should have caught us up by now, had not arrived. Our Sherpa wanted to know how we were going to sleep three in that little tent with only two inflatable mattresses. I explained that there would be one mattress for him and one for Bertholet; I, being the smallest of the three, would sleep in the middle.

But what worried Numbey still more, it soon appeared, was the shortage of food. He made a despairing gesture, clutching his stomach with his hand, and looked at us.

"*Mem Sahib*," he articulated in a weak and shaking voice, "*no cana!*" And tears glistened in his eyes.

The sight of this big fellow in such a pitiable state was really extraordinarily funny and Denis and I—who were quite as hungry as he was—burst out laughing. I explained to him that this evening we were going to divide everything equally into three: the tent, the bedding, and the remains of the *cana*. Tomorrow morning, I added, we would have a really big meal. But he was not to be consoled; he knew quite well that the main body of the expedition was gathered only two hours' march below the col, and that at this very moment his fellow-Sherpas were probably sitting round a mighty dish of rice or tsampa. I really believe the smell of his favourite food ascended to tickle Numbey's nostrils. At any rate, he couldn't resist the temptation, and begged our permission to go down and sleep at Zasenba, where we had been the day before.

We let him go, reflecting that we would be more at ease without him—and that there would be all the more to put in our own mouths. Numbey was recommended to make haste, for it was already 6 o'clock and the light would go terribly quickly; he was also warned to be very careful on the glacier. Then we decided it was time to look after ourselves, and shut ourselves up in the tent.

Everything left to us in the way of food was collected and set out. Two slices of bacon boiled in porridge constituted the main course of our dinner that night; for dessert we had a few fragments of chocolate retrieved from the bottom of the rucksack. Stretched out face downwards in our sleeping-bags, we

watched over the cooking of our supper and eagerly discussed the events of the day.

On the whole, we were very pleased with ourselves. Our mission had been entirely fulfilled; the site for Base Camp had been selected and we had made contact with the Austrians. However, we were so excited that we couldn't get to sleep for some time. Just as we were dropping off to sleep one of us would always say something that would start the discussion off again. Our imagination roamed far beyond the tent and we placed all the necessary camps on the west face of Cho Oyu without leaving our sleeping-bags.

At last I said to Denis: "Let's stop! That makes three times we've reached the summit!"

And we roared with laughter at our own enthusiasm.

Poor Yak!

I ENJOYED working with Denis very much. Considerably younger than I am—eight or ten years, perhaps—he was very outspoken in his ideas, but often made me laugh with his youthful reactions. He was even-tempered and cheerful by nature. He was very conscientious about his photography and put all he had into his work, which was often very laborious and tiring at these high altitudes. But what I liked best in this excellent member of our team was his tenacity and keenness. “He wills himself to do it”—that is the indispensable virtue for the man who tackles the Himalaya. If he could stand the altitude, Denis would be a useful element in the final assault-party. At this time I could only find one fault in him: he had a ferocious appetite and ate enough for four. But I must add—to his credit—that he had endured several days of acute food shortage with plenty of pluck. I never heard him complain.

We ended our discussion in the tent at last and went to sleep full of optimism for the future.

OCTOBER 12.

At 4 in the morning I was awakened by Bertholet’s shivering. He was “sugaring strawberries”, as they say, in his sleeping-bag. I was cold too, for the temperature had been between 10 and 15 degrees Centigrade below freezing-point in the night, and our tent was exposed to all the winds from the col. At 5 a.m., unable to stand it any longer, we lit the stove and brewed piping-hot mugs of Ovomaltine, after drinking which we were sufficiently warmed to fall into a deep sleep.

Our slumbers were not interrupted until 8.30—really, we might have been on holiday!—when we heard two Sherpas arriving. They had been sent up as advance-guard by Lambert, and brought us food and the information that the whole party would reach the col during the day. As we ate our breakfast,

standing outside in the early sunshine, we could already make out black dots on the col moving slowly towards us. Lambert was the first to arrive. We at once told him what had passed during our interview with the Austrians. Then Lochmatter arrived, and it was forthwith arranged that he and Bertholet should go up to investigate the route for attacking the shoulder while Juge, Lambert and I directed the coolies and Sherpas to the site chosen for Base Camp.

A Grand Council-of-War was held in the tent. We had to take a vital—and urgent—decision. What attitude should we adopt towards the Austrians?

I propose here to allow each interested person to take the floor in turn, as they do in the Council of Ministers or the Jury of Assize—though in our tent there was no Council Table and no personal dossier for the Members. Juge shall speak first.

Jean Juge: Mountains are there for anyone to climb. We aren't bound to Tichy by any agreement, written or verbal. There's no sentimental or diplomatic reason why we should give anything away. My view is that we should attempt Cho Oyu.

Bertholet: The sooner the better.

Lochmatter: The thing that gets my back up in the Austrians' behaviour is the distrust they've shown us from the first. More precisely, the lack of trust. This camouflage of theirs is enough to remove any sympathy we may feel for them. Have they acted in a friendly manner towards us? Why should we act otherwise than they have?

Claude Kogan: Why? Because Tichy is seriously hurt—frost-bitten—and because his obstinacy and daring command respect. If we disregard that, there'll be plenty of people who'll say that we profited by his misfortunes.

Raymond Lambert: It's not a question of disregarding anything. In mountaineering there is a kind of law that puts competition, in the commercial sense of the word, out of the game, even if there are rival parties—even if, as in this case, they're of different nationalities. If the word wasn't so hackneyed, I would say that there is a chivalry of mountains, a moral code which is none the

less binding for being unwritten. In short, there is a principle of priority to be considered.

Juge: In another five minutes Raymond will be lecturing us about the Fashoda Incident. I don't think this is the moment for an exegesis of mountaineering ethics. It's the moment for coming to a decision.

Claude: But the decision depends upon the ethics.

Lochmatter: Where was this code of friendship and solidarity when we were in Kathmandu and the Austrians talked of nothing but the 'scientific ends' of their mission?

Bertholet: As they're a scientific mission, I suggest we leave the 'scientific ends' for their share and take the ascent of Cho Oyu for ours.

(*"Laughter and cheers"*, as they say in the Parliamentary reports.)

R. *Lambert*: Do unto others as you would they should do unto you.

Juge: If it's a matter of proverbs, let me remind you of this one: In life there are many ways of looking at the same thing. All we want to do is to make sure we're looking at the same thing and choose the right way. And for us the right way——

Bertholet: Is to have a crack at Cho Oyu.

R. *Lambert*: You're not thinking what you say. It's easy enough to get out of it with proverbs—there's always one of them to contradict another. Forget our own ambitions and point of view for a moment and put yourself in their place. What obligation was there for them to reveal the true goal of their expedition? What right had we to demand to be taken into their confidence—men we hardly knew? Can we accuse them of disloyalty because of that initial subterfuge, and then go and act disloyally towards them ourselves? Who can say that we would have acted any differently in their place? You're allowing disappointment to take sole charge of your opinions. I'm as disappointed that the way's not clear as you are, but I'm trying to be fair.

Claude: The Bara Sahib is right. My own opinion is that we should talk the whole thing over with the Austrians—give full value to our own rights and point of view and come to a decision of common consent with Tichy. One reservation only—we make as few concessions as possible. If they attack and fail, we attack

POINT REACHED BY
JUGE 24,800 ft

CAMP IV 23,800 ft

CAMP III
23,000 ft

CAMP II
21,600 ft

CAMP I
20,300 ft

BASE CAMP
18,700 ft

Dr TICHY'S
BASE CAMP

ROUTE OF
AUSTRIAN EXPEDITION

ROUTE ON CHO-OYU (26,750 ft)

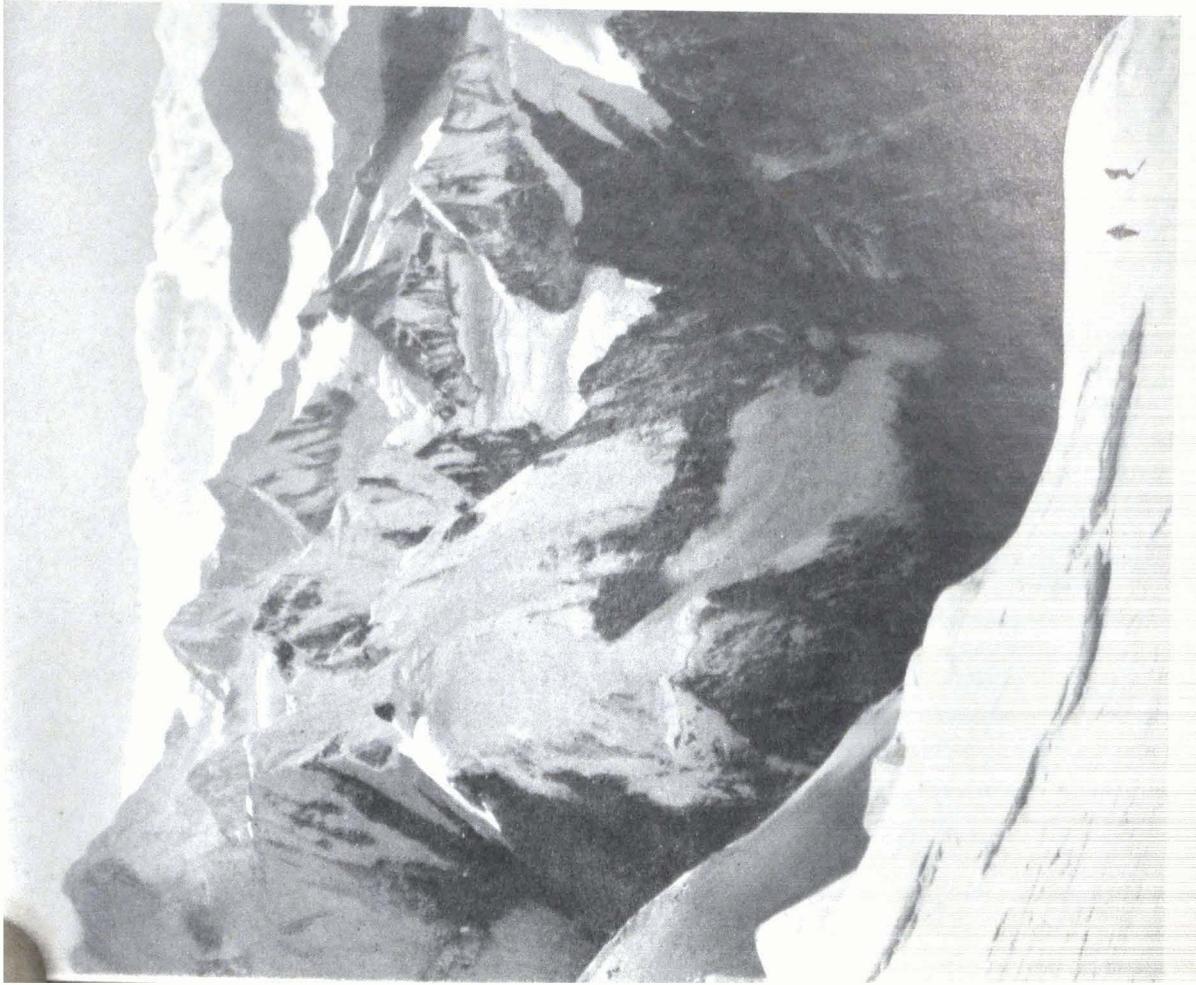
△ 25,600 ft

POINT REACHED BY
KOGAN & LAMBERT





Ice-wall above Camp II on Cho Oyu



From Camp II (21,600 ft.) on Cho Oyu; Gaurisankar on left

immediately after them, if their failure has been due entirely to their physical shortcomings.

Juge: And suppose the weather's bad?

R. Lambert: In that case they'll have the right to make two attempts. And whether they succeed or not, we'll make an assault in any case. From now on, we'll start placing our camps.

This resolution was adopted unanimously and we agreed to make contact with the Austrians as speedily as possible.

The Bara Sahib had a pleasant surprise in reserve. At last I had *my* yak, bought for 200 rupees from a caravan on its way to the pass. He was a fine animal, still young if one could judge from his figure. His hair was smooth and shining; and when I advanced to stroke his head he offered his horns to me. He advanced towards the camp somewhat reluctantly, poor yak—as if he knew the evil fate that awaited him. The Sherpa who led him had tied a rope round his horns and was obliged to pull with all his strength. Someone, wishing to exploit the poor thing right up to the last minute of his existence, had tied two immense loads on his back.

It was a beautiful yak; and I was moved to momentary pity when I thought of the fate we had reserved for him. But my longing for fresh meat was stronger than my remorse and I resigned myself to seeing him disappear. After all, it would be *Juge* who had the unpleasant job of slaughtering him.

Base Camp was set up at the foot of the central shoulder at a height of 18,700 feet—in a rather makeshift fashion, it was true, for flat places were rare in that terrain. We had found a hollow in the moraines, somewhat wider than the others and allowing us to build platforms to take the tents. Close at hand was a little glacier-lake which constituted our water supply.

All the coolies were paid off and dismissed except twelve whom Lambert retained to bring up firewood at 25 rupees a load. The wood-bringers asserted at first that it would take them five days to go down and return; but as we paid on delivery we saw them coming back on the third day, rejoicing at the good bargain they had made.

It was not possible to erect the big tents in the moraine hollow. We lived in the high-altitude tents from now on.

OCTOBER 12.

Today was a great day of organization. Everyone took a hand. The Sherpas levelled the ground and stacked the loads. Chef Thondu arranged his kitchen as well as he could, though he obviously regretted his lakeside camp.

Juge, pistol in belt, disappeared into a moraine hollow some distance from the camp with a Sherpa and the unfortunate yak. A little later we heard two shots, and the Sherpa came to tell us that all was "okay".

Franz Lochmatter set off with Ang Namgal to reconnoitre the snowbridges on the way to Camp I and choose a site for it. Lambert and I got ready the loads for the high-altitude units—Camps I and II—which would begin the attack tomorrow. Bertholet, his nose buried in his packing-cases, prepared his ciné and camera equipment and thoroughly checked it. Nobody idled amid this intense activity.

I left Lambert and the boxes for five minutes to go and see what was happening in the Butchery Department. The yak had been disembowelled, and the Sherpas were collecting the blood into saucepans to make black-pudding. The entrails had been packed into a basket.

Juge, who was watching these operations, gave me his account of how he performed the execution.

"I was in a blue funk," he said, "that I wouldn't bring him down with the first shot. If he'd started to get wild and lash out I don't know what I'd have done—it wasn't the sort of job I like. Anyhow, I fired my first shot into the joint of the shoulder, and—believe it or not—the beast didn't even jump. You'd have thought it didn't concern him at all, that I hadn't done anything to him. The Sherpa who was holding the rope shook his head, so I reloaded and fired four inches higher up. Just before the yak collapsed in a heap, Migma exclaimed that this time he'd got it—he'd seen it in his eyes!"

The Sherpas were now laying out the guts, and with the aid of a funnel—which I sincerely hoped wasn't the one used for filling the petrol cans—were filling them with blood, packing yards and yards of black-pudding for Chef Thondu to cook later on.

About 3 o'clock, when we had finished our work, Lambert briefed Lochmatter as interpreter and got ready to visit the Austrian party. But the Austrians, no doubt anxious to get confirmation of our plans and intentions from Lambert's own lips, came to meet him.

We all sat down together in the largest of the tents, which we used as a mess-tent, and the Sherpas served us with tea, biscuits, and yak cutlets. While we ate heartily, Lambert confirmed to Dr. Tichy the statements we had made the day before. He assured him that we had no intention of attacking the mountain before the Austrians.

OCTOBER 13.

In the tent we recorded another reel for Radio Geneva. We were beginning to get enthusiastic, and could now talk fluently about the events of the day. Ideas came to us well enough, but we were terribly short of breath and couldn't manage to end a phrase without stopping to breathe. Quite often we forgot how high we had climbed to already. We were 18,700 feet up, and quite ordinary actions, like moving a box or tidying a tent—even speaking for long—had become fatiguing efforts.

We lingered for a long time in the mess-tent over the evening meal which Chef Thondu served us. Soup, potatoes, and yak meat it was, and when he began to serve the latter Thondu found it hard to keep up with us—especially with me, Carnivore Number One of the party, who had skipped all the rest in order to eat nothing but yak. We still cried "More!" though Thondu dished it out in panfuls, and our cook's rueful grin displayed anxiety as to whether he would ever succeed in satisfying us. Happily our yak had weighed nearly 450 lb., so we were able to eat with a carefree joy that took no thought for the morrow.

But that "tomorrow" was worrying Raymond Lambert, our Bara Sabib, the man who watched over our health and our form and was the soul of our expedition. It is he who must now take up the story; he who felt so intensely the smallest moments of our great adventure.

Over to you, Raymond!

Whose Turn?

Very well. But on that particular day there wasn't much talking, Claude, if you remember. Or rather, we spoke little and acted instead. To go back a day—

JUGE and Lochmatter had a horror of moraines and looked reproachful when they saw those above Lunack. I made the journey alone, sometimes walking with a Sherpa, or a Tibetan, or a yak, and after marching all day reached the Zasenba camp, situated close to the foot of the Nangpa La.

It was good to know that the moraine was finished with and that next day we would take to the glacier which led to the Nangpa La, 18,300 feet, on the frontier between Nepal and Tibet. I was also glad to have bought that yak. For some days now I had had to listen to my companions clamouring for fresh meat, and at last I could give it them. And before being killed, the yak would do two days' work for us by carrying up loads, thus helping the convoy to reach Base Camp.

Next morning I was the first to leave the stony camp at Zasenba, in company with the yak and Ang Namgal; the rest of the party were to follow several hours later. I was in a hurry to catch up with Bertholet and Claude and find out what they had done during the past few days. I climbed swiftly up the snow-slopes of the picturesque Nangpa La and reached its summit, whence I looked out over an amazing landscape.

All the plains of Tibet seemed spread before me in that panorama. I could admire those infinite domains, the red Tibetan lands stretching far away until they were lost in distance. There was still a little snow lying on the hills. I felt a great desire to continue my northward journey, straight ahead and across Tibet; but unfortunately such an adventure was forbidden to us. We must remain on Nepalese territory. I turned towards Cho Oyu,

and there, in a moraine quite close to the pass, I perceived Claude Kogan and Bertholet crawling out of their tent. They had camped here, a little below the pass, waiting for food, which they were beginning to run short of.

I told them that most of the main body was on its way, and presented the yak to them. Claude ventured to extend civilities to the new arrival, but as she was received with a jab of a horn and a threatened kick, she didn't insist on them and confined herself to watching from a distance while Bertholet took a photograph of the scene.

My friends then told me about their first meeting with the Austrian party; they had visited Dr. Tichy and his companions in their base camp at the foot of Cho Oyu. The Austrians, it appeared, had made a first attempt on the mountain but had been halted and seriously shaken by bad weather. Tichy's finger-tips had been frostbitten; he had lost his voice and looked tired and worn-out. What was more, he was extremely annoyed to see us arrive in the area—fresh, in strength, with plenty of equipment, and ready for an immediate attack on Cho Oyu.

We discussed briefly the arrangements to be made. After all, I thought to myself, we could always place a base camp one hour away from theirs, at the foot of the shoulder which led towards the summit. We could hardly go and plant ourselves in their immediate neighbourhood, so we wouldn't start from the same base camp; but from then on we would have to see what happened. When all the personnel and loads were collected at base, when all the coolies had been paid off and sent down, when Sherpas and Europeans were left alone together—then we would be better able to consider and decide.

In the meantime, it seemed to me that the best thing to do was to go and visit the Austrians. I set out to do this, and had gone about a quarter of an hour on the way when whom should I see approaching but the three Austrians. They had had the same idea.

13 OCTOBER.

We chatted for a while where we stood and then we invited them to come and eat some yak with us, an invitation which was

accepted as simply as it was given. For in the interval Jean Juge had killed our Himalayan "war-chariot" with a couple of bullets, and the Sherpas had set to at once to convert him into steaks and blood-puddings for future use. We were happy to be able to offer our guests yak-liver, biscuits, tea, and coffee. Then the conversation between the three of them and the five of us began.

A surprising conversation, this, and one I remember very clearly, though it gives me some pain to recall it now. It had to take place, it could not be avoided. Yet the memory of it remains bitter; for in it was born our final lack of success. There could be no equivocation. Our honour as mountaineers forbade it. The sacrifice we agreed to was nevertheless heavy, and did not make for gaiety of heart.

The Austrians were first on the scene. They had just been severely handled by the mountain, flung back from the first assault with frostbite and injured Sherpas, and they were getting their breath before beginning a fresh attack. It was morally impossible for us to deprive them of their second chance. We recognized their priority, and although our time was so limited we agreed to wait. They were to have one more try. If they were forced back by the weather, they would still have the right to start again, and meanwhile we would be establishing our Camps II and III so as to be ready to get away as soon as they returned. But if they failed because of their physical condition, then we were free to set out at once towards our own success—or failure.

We wished the Austrians good luck. We parted from each other and returned to our Base Camps, we to remain in ours preparing our first three camps, they to get their own camps ready for the moment when their Sherpas would rejoin them.

We saw nothing more of them for several days.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Men in the Tempest

14 OCTOBER.

Eight Sherpas, led by Juge and Bertholet, started out with the Camp I unit at 9.45 a.m. Two of the Sherpas, Dawa Thondu and Migma Srita, were to stay with the Sahibs and reconnoitre the way to Camp II next day; the other six would come down. Claude, Franz and myself remained at Base Camp to prepare for our own departure on the following day.

The work of preparation was painful, for we were nearly 19,000 feet up in a desert of stones where the wind blew perpetually, stinging our faces. Every passing minute was a minute of struggle, an effort of will to accomplish the job in hand. Higher up, in the upper camps, it would be worse still.

15 OCTOBER.

Base Camp. A fine morning.

Claude and I got ready our high-altitude equipment, for we did not intend to descend to Base Camp again before reaching the summit—at least, we hoped not to.

All our light clothing was packed into a kitbag which a Sherpa would take up to Camp I. Claude slipped a small first-aid outfit into our rucksack; it might perhaps be needed. We were ready at 10 and left Base Camp with the six Sherpas.

Steep climb up loose stones. Laborious going. Wind light, raising much dust. Gained a small col at 20,300 feet whence we had a view of Cho Oyu; its snow-slopes had a resemblance to those of Mont Blanc and the wind was whipping powder-snow from its summit-crests. Away on our right glittered a small plateau in the glacier, where we could see Camp I not far from us. To reach it we had first to descend 300 feet of loose stones, which slid from under our feet, and then climb up the glacier.

At 12.45 we reached the camp, to discover that the tents had been placed over a hidden crevasse and would have to be moved.

A little later we saw Juge and Bertholet with two Sherpas on the ridge above, coming down from the reconnaissance which had determined the site for Camp II—in a hollow among the séracs at 21,600 feet. It was decided that Denis should go down to Base Camp with six Sherpas while Juge remained at Camp I; two Sherpas would stay with us.

A cold night—20° Centigrade below zero and much wind.

16 OCTOBER.

Today Claude and I set off with Dawa Thondu and Migma Srita to occupy Camp II. Juge stayed at Camp I to maintain our supply line.

The sun did not reach Camp I until 8.30 a.m. and preparations for the climb were slow. Breakfast gave us some trouble; we had to melt snow before we could make porridge, Ovomaltine, etc. Nearly three hours had gone before we set out, wearing crampons, at 10. We climbed unroped up windblown snow. Claude had trouble with her crampons and got her hands frozen in adjusting them.

That is the Himalaya—the endless upward struggle, the battle against the wind, the war with cold or with heat. On the ridge it was easier going on good footing; we had a magnificent view over Tibet as well as of Gaurisankar and Menlungtse.

The tent of Camp II was erected in a hollow while a violent wind hampered operations. As soon as the tent was up the Sherpas went down again to Camp I, leaving me alone with the ever staunch and resolute Claude. We started to heat some food, but the violence of the wind rendered the task almost impossible. We crouched in the tent wrestling with the making of soup and tea, and I opened a tin of bacon. It was 4 p.m. when I made a sortie from the tent, and I got in again very quickly; the situation outside was truly untenable, and I resolved not to go out of the tent again before 9 the following morning.

We passed a dreadful night, shaken by the wind and unable to sleep, hoping that the Revollat tent would stand up to the

blows of the storm. In future days, we decided, we would have to carve some sort of igloo out of the snow, for that would be the only way of protecting ourselves in a tempest like this which threatened to rip the tent fabric to shreds.

17 OCTOBER.

After that hellish night we breakfasted on porridge and Ovomaltine at 10 a.m. and then started out to establish Camp III. We were roped, and carried a 150-foot line to facilitate the route for the load-carriers up the ice-wall that rose ahead.

The ice-wall was in shadow and the work exhausting. I fixed ice-pitons and attached the line as I moved up, while Claude did her best to help me by straightening out the line which the wind was continually tangling up. At last the line was fixed and we gained the top of the ice-wall, where we planted a ski-stick upside down to belay the line. The others could fix a second line when they came up.

The sun shone brilliantly. We were on a charming crevassed plateau, which led us gently up to about 22,200 feet, where we were joined by two Sherpas, Wongdi and Tzong. They brought a message from Juge saying that he was ill with acute tonsillitis and would have to go down to Base Camp.

Claude was not so well either—she had the beginnings of throat trouble; there was nothing for it but to give up and go back to Camp I. We did so, pausing at Camp II to take down the tent, leaving it there with the equipment. At Camp I we found Juge ready to go down and consult Lochmatter about his illness. He departed, leaving Claude and me to spend the night at Camp I. The mail had arrived, and we wrote several letters to send off the following day. The inward mail included a cake sent by M. Boris of the Royal Hotel at Kathmandu, which had turned up at a very suitable time since the next day, October 18th, was my birthday.

The night of October 17th was a bad one for Claude. She had developed white spots at the back of the throat and would have to go down to recuperate at Base Camp. I hoped that Bertholet would come up in support.

18 OCTOBER.

Four Sherpas went up with loads to Camp II, and Denis came up to Camp I. Seven Sherpas would come down to sleep at Camp I, and Claude would go down to Base Camp on the 19th. Weather still fine, but the furious wind never ceased to blow. I hoped Juge would make a complete recovery, for in this kind of "cold war" (no pun intended!) it would not do to stop fighting for a second.

Today was my birthday. I was forty years old. This was the second time I had spent the 18th of October at a height of more than 20,000 feet, for in 1952 with the second Swiss Expedition to Everest I was higher still. Why, I wondered, had I come back again to the Himalaya?

The question was difficult to answer. The taste for travel, the love of the unknown, the cheerful busy-ness of the approach marches with the companions of my choice—yes, there was a little of all those things. But when I thought of the many grim hours spent in camps above 18,000 feet, tormented by wind and cold, where every day vital problems have to be dealt with and danger and conflict faced, I found it hard to explain, even to myself, the reason for this strange attraction.

One day the Sherpas come to you and say "*no more tsampa*", next day it is "*sugar finish*". Luckily the revictualling is provided for and I can answer in English—for I too am a linguist to that extent—"*Tomorrow*". Another day it's a member of the expedition who falls ill—I had envisaged him going up to Camp II, instead of which he must now go down to Base Camp. And so on.

And now the days were passing quickly, and growing shorter. We must go higher and place our camps. For twelve months I had worked for this expedition and now we were within reach of its goal, on an easy mountain—but struggling in terrible conditions of wind and cold. What, I wondered, would tomorrow bring forth?

A clear sun shone upon the tents at 8.35 a.m. Bertholet went up to Camp II with seven Sherpas to dig a snow-cave large enough to shelter seven or eight men; that was our last resource

for establishing a camp at such an altitude and in such hostile weather conditions. The work would take them hours, and hours at 21,600 feet are the equivalent of years in a valley. I had confidence in Denis, who was stubborn and likely to do what he set out to do. I remained at Camp I to arrange the details of Claude's descent to Base Camp. Poor Claude was very sorry for herself; she dreaded not being fit enough to take part in the final assault. My wonder at this small woman grew with every day that passed. She stood the rough weather and the altitude as well as we men did, without complaint. All she wanted was to climb higher, still higher.

Our doctor now arrived in camp, having come up very quickly. He was always a fast climber—too fast, for he tired himself too much and suffered from troubled sleep as a result. Lochmatter was prodigal of advice to others but would not conserve his own physical strength; I wished he would look after himself better. I shared my tent with him; he couldn't get to sleep and passed a miserable night. At daybreak—6 a.m.—on October 20th, I heated some fruit juice for him, which he drank very quickly. And at 8.45 I got up.

The weather was heavily overcast and the wind very strong. I was puzzled. It should have been a fine day like the preceding ones. The Sherpas looked far from happy about it and I understood why; I hesitated to give the order to go up to Camp II and sleep there. Bertholet, when I went to see him, agreed with me that they should go up, and I therefore asked Dawa Thondu to start out with three Sherpas. Then I watched the four men set off into the storm, up and up and ever up, their tiny figures clinging to this great mountain we hoped to conquer.

When I went to visit Juge in his tent he assured me that he would never again return to the Himalaya; too arduous for his forty-six years, he confided dolefully.

“At my age,” he added, shaking his head, “one clings to one's life.”

I didn't know what to say to that; it was not certain that I would ever come back to the Himalaya myself. But my case was different, for I loved the savage environment, the daily struggle,

the life with the Sherpas—those admirable comrades who fought at our sides, smiling, devoted, with no ambition and no illusions.

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At the moment when I was recording these words and thoughts, I was sitting hunched in a little tent so battered by the wind that I wondered if it would stand up to such an onslaught. Juge, prudent as ever, had just informed me that he was keeping his boots on in case the tent blew away—an odd sort of wager, I thought. I lit a candle to finish writing the page of my journal.

In eight or ten days the die would be cast: we should have succeeded, or we should have failed. Those who would read our story or see our film would never realize the extent of our battle with the elements, with wind, thirst, cold, and altitude. We had the best of equipment to help us—true enough. But there was a multitude of exhausting details demanding at every instant the exercise of will-power, of an indomitable stubbornness. Well I knew that if we failed there would be many to criticize us. But for us, whatever happened, there would always be the undying memory of these hours, these days spent in the high Himalaya.

At this point I stopped writing; I would write no more until the assault had been made. For next day I was to leave for Camp II, and there would be work more urgent than scribbling impressions in a notebook. Feminine sensibility shall fill the gap. Calling my team to order and giving to each his share of work, I hail among others Claude Kogan. Several acres of snow away, Claude was dreaming of Cho Oyu. So—

Over to you, Claude!

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Sun Goes Off Duty

—And I answer "Present!" and take up the story at a point four days earlier than Raymond's last entry.

14 OCTOBER.

The first party left with the complete unit for establishing Camp I. All the other Sherpas would come down to spend the night at Base Camp, thus helping Lambert, Lochmatter and myself in the preparation of other high-camp units. Franz also prepared a first-aid outfit for each camp.

This work of preparation was very fatiguing—you longed to give up and rest before the job was finished. But you had to go on, because soon there would no longer be any Sahibs down at Base Camp. All the loads had to be got ready in advance, so that the Sherpas would have nothing to do but carry them up to the high camps in their proper order.

We ate yak every morning and every evening. Chef Thondu, whose culinary ideas were very English, served yak-liver for "brekker".

15 OCTOBER.

Fine weather continued. We breakfasted out-of-doors, our table placed on a level space constructed by Lochmatter yesterday. Afterwards, Raymond and I got ready our high-altitude things. Raymond, who was counting on not coming down again before the assault, took up all his equipment, but I left behind several oddments. I regretted leaving them later on, but for my part I was hoping to come down to Base again, if only once, to acclimatize myself better. I always remembered what Herzog had recommended when I first set out for the Himalaya: "Go up—come down—go up—come down, as often as possible. You'll

find it's the only way to get into form and acclimatize." I had always followed this advice on my other expeditions and it had served me well; I counted on doing the same this time.

Lochmatter remained in camp, having several matters to settle, including the payment of the coolies who had brought firewood for us. Lambert and I left at 10 a.m. with five Sherpas.

The ascent to the shoulder leading to Camp I was extremely laborious. The shoulder was very steep and covered with loose scree which slid down with us at every step, raising a cloud of dust which set us coughing. To make headway on such a footing required infinite patience, but we gained height quickly. Below our feet, Base Camp soon became ridiculously small, lost in its desert of stones. The ascent of the shoulder culminated in a narrow snow-gully, where Juge and Bertholet had placed a fixed rope to make it easier for the laden Sherpas. On the other side of the shoulder we descended into a glacier cwm and reached Camp I, situated on a flat shelf at 20,300 feet.

The tents had been put up on the slightly hollowed surface of a snow-bridged crevasse in order to give more shelter from the wind—at least, that was our companions' idea in putting them there. Personally, I would have preferred them to choose another site; but everyone opposed this suggestion, except the crevasse, which took my part with a loud creak of protest. Luckily for us, its protest was courteous, though energetic. It yawned a little wider every day, and some time later, coming down to Camp I, I was glad to see that the tents had "retreated" before this menace to more solid ground.

Shortly after our arrival we saw Juge, Bertholet and two Sherpas returning down the snow-ridge above from their reconnaissance trip to find a site for Camp II. They had left two small flags on the chosen spot, at 21,600 feet. Denis was not at all well; on the previous day he had eaten rather too much yak fried in rancid butter. He had slept very badly—his first night at high altitude—in spite of a sleeping-tablet, and as he could keep nothing down it was better that he should go down to Base Camp and get himself better again. Juge stayed with us at Camp I.

He told us that the wind on the arête leading to Camp II had been very violent and that he had suffered much from the cold.

At Camp I the sun hid itself very early. By 3.30 we were taking refuge in the tents, where the Sherpas brought us our food. It was meat, and since Juge was still having trouble with his teeth I asked the Chef to make a hash. Juge showed his appreciation by eating it with relish.

Perhaps it seems ridiculous that we should have attached so much importance to our food. But at these high altitudes lack of appetite and lack of sleep are both grave dangers. At all costs we had to keep up the will-power which was needed in carrying out the smallest action, and that will-power is nearly always closely connected with physical condition and therefore with appetite and sleep. Some of us had to make ourselves eat from a sense of duty in this respect.

16 OCTOBER.

During the night the temperature fell to 4° below zero.

At 10 Lambert and I left Camp I with two Sherpas to establish part of Camp II, at 21,600 feet. Juge stayed at the camp to maintain liaison. While we were away the five Sherpas would come up from Base Camp to Camp I with loads. And so the transport problem worked out smoothly. The ferries between the camps never stopped, and the files of laden Sherpas bringing up our rations and tents made me think of those columns of labouring ants which go up and down the same track unceasingly with their stores for the coming winter.

To reach the ridge which would lead us to Camp II we had to climb a big snow-slope. The snow was hard-crusting but gave way beneath our boots in places. I had some trouble with my crampons, which I had not put on properly before starting; they slipped round on my boots, and several times I had to stop and adjust them, after which it took me some time to get my hands warm again. I breathed maledictions on my own carelessness. On the snow-ridge the wind was very violent. I pulled on the down-filled cap of my padded jacket, and over that wore my windproof hood, but though I made everything as windproof as possible

the wind cut my face so painfully that I resolved to contrive some sort of mask for the higher climbing; otherwise I wouldn't be able to stand it.

We reached the hollow among the séracs which was to shelter our Camp II. It was the only possible place on that windswept ridge and we hoped to find a little protection there. As soon as we arrived we began digging out a platform for the tent. It seemed to me that the Sherpas were excavating too near the wall of séracs, so I took my ice-axe and started to enlarge the platform in the opposite direction. This little stratagem made Lambert grin.

"You're never satisfied with our camp-sites," he said banteringly.

"And why," I retorted, "do we have to cram ourselves up against this ugly-faced sérac when we can easily get a bit farther away?"

The fact was that since the avalanche engulfed our Camp III during last year's expedition to Nun Kun I had an instinctive fear and repulsion towards the neighbourhood of séracs. I went on widening the platform away from the ice-wall, telling Lambert as I did so that he had brought back from his Everest expeditions a morbid taste for séracs. The situation reached its climax when the moment came to erect the tent, for—both being of a rather stubborn nature and wishing to drive home our arguments—we each dragged the tent towards our own side. Which ended the dispute in a roar of laughter.

As soon as the tent was up the Sherpas went down again to Camp I with instructions to come up tomorrow with the equipment for enlarging and completing Camp II. Left alone for the night, we got to work organizing ourselves before the sun disappeared. I piled blocks of snow near the tent entrance, where I had placed the stove, to form a "water" supply.

The sun still shone, but the wind dispersed all warmth. It became impossible to remain outside without being frozen. Before getting inside we had to make certain that all the equipment was under cover and put everything we might need close to the tent. Then we got into shelter. It was 4 o'clock and we would not go outside again until 8 next morning.

How good it was to be in the tent, with the storm raging outside! It was nearly warm in there, and you felt extraordinarily secure behind those frail walls of fabric. We took off our boots and wriggled our legs into the sleeping-bags. But it would not do to relax entirely in this spurious well-being, which was due chiefly to its contrast with the stern and precarious conditions of life outside. On the contrary, we must profit as much as possible from the warmth stored in the tent by the sun. We had to goad ourselves into doing the actions necessary to getting a meal (lying flat on our stomachs or crouching bent double), changing socks before turning in so as to avoid frostbite, getting our rucksacks ready for the morning—forcing ourselves to do the most simple things, merely in order to survive.

I made oatmeal soup while Raymond opened a tin of bacon a few inches away from my cooking operations. We ate the bacon raw. Then we munched chocolate and biscuits. Happily we both had an appetite; but in the matter of food also it was necessary to be rational. Some things must be eaten out of duty to our health, others which we liked better must be taken in moderation so as not to lose our taste for them.

At 5 o'clock, suddenly, I had the impression that someone had switched off a light. The sun had just left us, dropping below the rim of the crest above on its way to awaken the other side of the world. It plunged us at a stroke into shadow and cold. In the tent the temperature fell immediately; and once again we had to make a fight against cold. Getting well down into our sleeping-bags, we lay waiting for sleep—sleep which never came that night, for it was swept away by the wild gale which savagely worried our tent as if it wished to shake us out of it. It tore up the snow and pulverized it, and this icy dust filtered into the tent to deposit itself on our faces, making us shiver. I closed the tent apertures more firmly and pulled my hood over my face. The tent swelled out like a balloon, vibrating under the extreme tension and thrusting hard against Raymond, who was lying on the windward side. Would it hold the attack? It was a new tent, made of nylon and windproof, but several times we had the impression that it was about to split under the pressure. We held our breath

and waited for the final sabre-cut that would slash it open. The wind slackened for a moment or two as if it was tired—only to return to the charge with redoubled violence.

What a night! On top of it, Raymond was suffering from an inflamed throat, the inevitable result of the cold he had “treated” with contempt.

At midnight, unable to stand any more, I suggested a hot drink. It was hard work to make it. The small amount of liquid remaining in the billy was frozen. The snow had blocked the holes of the gas-stove. I scraped up some of the drifted snow from a fold of the doorway with a spoon and managed to fill a billy-can. It took us an hour to obtain a pint and a half of warm water. Raymond took a cachet, and after finishing our hot drink to the dregs we went to sleep until 7 a.m.

17 OCTOBER.

At 7 I commenced the same operation to get breakfast. Everything was absolutely frozen. It took us two and a half hours of preparation. The sun reached our hollow late and we had to wait for it before going outside. This night's experience brought home to us the necessity of digging holes in the snow to live in, like marmots, if we and our equipment were to survive in the gale.

At 9.30 a.m. we roped up and set out in the direction of the future Camp III. Lambert slung at his waist a supplementary 150-foot line to be fixed in the very steep section through the séracs to make a handrail for the Sherpas coming up with the loads. The ice-wall was in shadow, which made the work still more arduous. Lambert fixed the ice-pitons for the line, while I did my utmost to disentangle it from the other rope which the wind kept winding round it or blowing clear as it pleased. At the top of the pitch the ice gave way to hard snow, so we sacrificed a ski-stick and thrust it handle-downwards into the snow as far as the *rondelle*, to make a belay for the line. Later on our friends would reinforce the line with another and strengthen the belay. This steep section gave access to a wide plateau, where the sun at last reached us.

We zigzagged between crevasses, ascending towards another

ice-fall. At about 22,200 feet we stopped to wait for two Sherpas who were obviously trying to overtake us. They bore a message from Jean Juge. "Acute tonsillitis," he wrote. "I am treating it with the remedies we have at hand, but I fear I shall be obliged to go down to Base Camp."

It was no good going on any farther. Camp I could not possibly be left unoccupied. One Sahib or two must be there without fail to supervise the loads coming up from Base and send other loads on to Camp II. So down we went again to Camp II with the Sherpas and there stowed all the equipment in a hole to prevent it from being blown away. Then we went on down to Camp I.

I was now feeling unwell myself. I felt exhausted, my legs were very shaky, and I had a bad throat. I could only hope that this descent would benefit me in the end.

At Camp I Juge was waiting for us to arrive before going down to Base where Lochmatter would look after him. Lambert gave him some directions and asked him to send up Bertholet as quickly as possible. I thought Juge didn't look particularly ill, but his high colour was certainly due to fever, for he stumbled into Base Camp with a temperature of 103.1°.

Lambert and I stayed on at Camp I with four Sherpas, who would climb to Camp II with loads next day. I took some sleeping-tablets before turning in; my throat was as raw as if I had swallowed several razor-blades.

At the Limit of Our Strength

18 OCTOBER.

In the morning I still had a very bad throat, in spite of taking eight tablets of Elkosine. I remained inside the tent as much as possible while Lambert got ready the loads for the Sherpas to take up to Camp II.

About noon Bertholet came up from Base Camp with three Sherpas. In spite of the wind the sun warmed the interior of the tent quite pleasantly, and I wrote three letters, for Denis had brought up some mail for us; it had arrived the previous day and the men would leave tomorrow with the outward mail. I had better news from my mother.

Seven Sherpas would sleep at Camp I this evening and make a mass ascent to Camp II next day with the unit for Camp III. In the afternoon we all got into the same tent to devour an almond cake which Bertholet had brought up for us from Base Camp. This cake had come a very long way, for it was the gift of our friend Boris at Kathmandu and had travelled for fifteen days on a man's back across the breadth of Nepal to reach us here at 20,300 feet, on Raymond's birthday. Dear Boris! He would never know how much pleasure that cake gave us. We would have been wiser to keep some of it for next day, but we couldn't resist it; so that when the Sherpas came to ask what we wanted for dinner we answered "tcha only". One cannot be rational all the time, however, and we liquidated that cake entirely, not without a tender thought for Boris whose idea it had been. Afterwards Bertholet, who was feeling much better, went back to his own tent at the side of ours.

I went to sleep while Lambert, lying on his stomach, wrote letters by the light of a candle. A little sputtering sound woke me, and I saw that he was thawing out a tin of bacon in the candle-flame.

"Take it easy!" I managed to croak at him.

In two seconds he had swallowed the lot. After which, not unnaturally feeling the need to quench his thirst, he disappeared for some time into the Sherpas' tent and came back with a flask of hot liquid.

"Well!" I said. "You've got a nerve, waking those poor lads in the middle of the night to make tea for you!"

"Just as you say," he answered, grinning broadly. "But I didn't tell them it was for me. I tried my English on your Sherpa. *Mem Sahib no good, I told him, tea necessary.*"

Then, very pleased with his guile, he went off to sleep with his flask inside his sleeping-bag. Thus he had a hot-water bottle as well as a supply of tea.

19 OCTOBER.

Inside the tent where it was warm I felt that I was getting better; but as soon as I got outside the cold air rasped my throat like a file. It was clear that I was unlikely to make any improvement here and had better go down to Base. Descent to a lower altitude was the only cure.

The Sherpas had plenty to do today, with all the loads to be carried up. Lambert got breakfast for us at 10 and then Bertholet started for Camp II with the Sherpas to help them dig out the indispensable grotto for Camp III and also to take ciné shots of them. At noon Lochmatter came up from Base Camp and after he had examined my throat I went down.

The wind was less violent than yesterday, and at Base Camp there was a vast difference in temperature. I was met by Juge and Chef Thondu, the latter of whom greeted me with:

"Nice day for the summit, Mem Sahib—no wind!"

Evidently he thought it better not to say that the Austrians would probably reach it today!

Juge was feeling better but was still having trouble with his teeth. Later, Thondu served our dinner in the mess-tent.

"Look at that," Juge said to me. "Thondu knows what's wrong with me. He gives me old man's food—broth and minced meat. Well, I'm fed up with yak and fed up with this interminable

manceuvring for position. It's going on too long. Come out here for four months and only spend ten or fifteen days on a mountain? Never again! It isn't worth it. I shall never come back to the Himalaya after this." He paused, and then continued: "I'm forty-six, you know, old enough to know the value of life. I consider one loses too much time here for the little one gets out of it."

I lowered my head. I didn't want Juge to read my thoughts, for I understood too well what he meant. He felt youth leaving him, and he was divided between two desires. First, he wanted to achieve his ambition in the Himalaya quickly. He found it hard to wait when time, which he felt he could ill spare, was flying through his fingers. The long approach marches, and now these small and searching trials, had too long delayed the moment of attained desire. In a sense, his discouragement was only the result of his unsatisfactory passion for action. And the other thing was the memory of his youthful triumphs. Would he ever be able to experience again that glorious sense of well-being he had felt on the mountain-tops when sun and wind had brought out the fullness of his strength? Since then life in its progress had revealed the secrets of other joys and other desires, and these were calling to him now. His serious mind had developed a leaning towards other problems than those which the rest of us were striving to solve at this moment, and he dreaded the disappointment the latter might bring.

"Yes," Juge said slowly. "Mountains no longer give me what they used to give." I looked at him quickly and he saw that I was surprised to have my thoughts divined; after a pause he added, in a lower voice: "I mean it. I shall never come to the Himalaya again."

I hardly thought he was serious, for Juge was a first-rate mountaineer and had made some great climbs in the Alps, often in very bad conditions. I reminded him of this, hoping that he would explain himself further.

"Quite," he replied. "But in the Alps such things take three days, four at most, while here you have to endure a long and monotonous approach march which wears you out before you

get near your mountain. When I changed my clothes this afternoon I noticed how terribly thin I've become."

"Well, then," I persisted, "it means that you're a mountaineer without any taste for exploration."

"I am fond of adventure," he returned thoughtfully, "but not particularly of exploration." Then he added abruptly, "You're of Breton origin, aren't you?"

I thought he was thinking of my surname (from Kogan to Kerrigan is only a step) until he explained, "Because you're so persistent!"

An odd man, Jean Juge. But I like to be in his company. We went on talking for some time, trying to understand what it was that forced mountaineers onward until they reached and passed the limits of their strength. Then we passed to matters of less importance and finished our meal.

As there were only two of us Chef Thondu was solicitous in his attention. He provided each of us with a hot-water bottle. Juge believed in avoiding contagion, so I had a tent to myself for once. After asking Thondu not to wake us too early, we picked up our hot-water bottles and went to our separate tents.

20 OCTOBER.

Extraordinary! The sky was overcast this morning, upsetting all the theories of the Bara Sahib. "Once the monsoon's finished," he had told us, "there won't be a cloud, and you'll have as much blue sky as you want."

Juge was far from anxious to go up from Base Camp today. But a Sherpa arrived from Camp I with a message from Lambert asking Juge to come up, and that decided it. The message also said that Lochmatter and Bertholet had gone up to establish Camp II. The weather was cloudy but it was not snowing. After a light lunch Juge set off, accompanied by three Sherpas who had brought down with them another message from Lambert. This second message asked me to send Lakpa, Chef Thondu's assistant Sherpa, to Namche Bazaar as quickly as possible, to put back to October 30th the arrival of the coolies who were to have come to Base Camp on the 26th. Lambert had realized that we could not hope

to finish our task by the 26th and wished to postpone the date of our departure. I wrote a letter to go with Lakpa to Zimmermann, who had proceeded directly from the Menlung La to Namche Bazaar and was probably plant-collecting there.

I spent the remainder of the day resting and keeping warm in the tent while I wrote letters and mended clothes.

Before finally going off to sleep I thought again about yesterday's conversation with Juge. I tried to understand his attitude of mind. How could one be a mountaineer and yet have no taste for exploration? The two things went together, it seemed to me. Yet Juge had found no interest in all the things that had had to be done before we could reach and climb our mountain. For me it was quite the opposite—in my eyes its attractiveness was so much stronger, its value greater, when all these preliminaries were required before we could hope to conquer it.

"Keep me, O Lord, from happiness too easily attained."

The desire to find a way to some mountain that hides itself for days from our vision; the long march up unknown valleys; the eventual unveiling of the mountain's real countenance and the penetration of its mystery—these are among the essential attractions of mountaineering. I look upon it as a kind of pilgrimage, necessary to my physical and intellectual preparation; a pilgrimage which breaks the last of my ties with the outside world, making me forget all matters of lesser importance in concentrating on the immediate goal and keeping undiminished my desire for conquest.

A good climber is not necessarily a Himalayan mountaineer. In addition to the indispensable qualities of expert technical skill and good physique, the Himalayan aspirant must possess unlimited patience. That is why choosing a party from among men who have never been out before will always be a difficult and delicate business, for a man does not reveal his true self until he reaches the testing-place, the *terreno de verdad* of the Spaniards—the "land of truth".

21 OCTOBER.

Fine weather back again. I looked up at the blue sky with

gratitude, and thought that I could never grow tired of seeing it thus.

Lakpa was ready to start for Namche Bazaar with his message. I gave him ten rupees for journey-money and sent him off. Then, after getting the loads ready for Camp I, I got busy on my high-altitude equipment. From a woollen cap I contrived a mask by piercing holes for nose, eyes, and mouth. When I put it on and had a look at it in a mirror, I was pleased with my invention; it would certainly ward off some of the cold higher up. Of the thing's aesthetic aspect it would be better not to speak. If an Abominable Snowman had met me in that get-up he would have hesitated between laughter and flight.

I gave my throat a test by strolling about in the neighbourhood of the camp, and got Chef Thondu to serve my lunch outside in the sunshine. I had been teaching him how to cook underdone steaks, and ate practically nothing but these all day; but Thondu was quite unable to understand how I managed to swallow almost raw meat, for he had been used to cooking it for hours.

Our cook didn't look at all pleased at having to stay on the mountain ten days longer than had been expected, and often talked of the ideal camp-site by the lake below the Menlung La. He had obviously had enough of this camp in the stony wastes of Cho Oyu. I could quite understand that staying alone in such a desert was far from pleasant. True, he had plenty of big crows for company, but these birds gave him a lot of trouble. They were always flying down to peck impudently at the legs of the defunct yak, which Thondu had stowed heels uppermost in a crate, and he had to chase them off with stones. The head of the yak who had so prematurely roused my remorse had been stuck up on a boulder a few yards away with its tongue hanging out; it had, I thought, the air of reproaching me for eating its steaks.

Before turning in I drank a hot toddy well laced with whisky.

22 OCTOBER.

Fine day. My throat was no longer painful and I was itching to be on the move again. I re-read the message Lambert had sent down yesterday to make certain I had forgotten nothing. Isolated

down here at Base Camp I felt cut off from my companions, no longer one of the team, and I was anxious to join them and take my part in the assault.

I got ready another two loads to be carried to Camp I by the Sherpa coolies next day and then ate an ample breakfast prepared by Chef Thondu, who knew I was going up this morning. Before I left I called his attention to the fact that as he was staying alone with the Sherpa coolies he would be the Bara Sahib of Base Camp. He asked me if I intended to come down again tomorrow, and I explained that I would be coming down with all the Sahibs when the show was over.

"All right," he said resignedly; then he looked up at the sky, grinned at me, and added, "Nice day for the summit, Mem Sahib!"

At Base Camp we were too low down to be able to form any idea of what it was like 7,000 feet higher up. I felt pretty well, but I was anxious to find out how my legs would stand up to the steep climb to Camp I, for I was afraid the medicines I had been taking might have weakened me. Happily they had done nothing of the kind. I made very good going. In the long run this descent to Base Camp had benefited me and I felt much better acclimatized.

“The Austrians Have Done It!”

I FOUND myself going faster than before though inclined to lose my breath. Migma Tensing and Chotoray went up with me carrying food and my sleeping equipment. Migma Tensing was going strongly and was well in front and above me when I saw his load bounding down the scree-slope at full speed.

My only reaction at the moment was to hurl curses at him, for I dared not think what sort of state that sack and its contents would be in when, after bounding from rock to rock, they finally reached the moraine hollow and perhaps fell into one of the many glacier tarns 700 feet below. I sat down philosophically to wait while Migma Tensing descended with all speed to discover the damage. It was a nasty few minutes, for all my high-altitude equipment and my sleeping-bag were in that sack and if it couldn't be rescued there would be nothing for it but to go down again and keep Chef Thondu company at Base Camp. But by some miracle the sack had stopped itself in an accessible place and had not even come open.

Reassured, I went on again and reached Camp I, where only Chotoray stayed with me; Migma Tensing went down again, there being insufficient equipment for him to sleep at Camp I.

In the tent I found a message from Juge telling me that he had gone up that morning and that I was to follow next day. This was a disappointment; I had expected to find Jean here and now I was alone once more. I had had enough of chasing the others and had a strong inclination to go straight on up to Camp II. But that wouldn't have been very reasonable, and I restrained myself and got into the tent to explain to Chotoray how to work the stove.

In the afternoon Ang Namgal came down with another message from the Bara Sahib. All our plans were once more changed. Here is the text of that message:

“22 October, Camp II.

“Denis and Franz have gone up to Camp III with five Sherpas, three of whom will come down again tomorrow. The party of four will try for the summit. Time is passing and we must attack.

“Tomorrow I shall go up to Camp III to wait for them with Sherpas. I shall wait there for Claude and Jean so that we can make a second ascent as soon as possible afterwards.

“Later on we shall see if a Camp IV can be established; at the moment it seems unnecessary but I will see about it.

“In any case, I shall wait for you, so don't worry. Ang Namgal and little Chotoray had better bring up your kit and two tents first, though there is an igloo at Camp III in case the tents won't stand up to the high wind.

“Come up slowly to Camp II tomorrow and to Camp III next day. I shall be there with Juge. We have plenty of food. Perhaps you could bring up some fruit juice, and that's all.

“I hope you are better. No more equipment is needed, we can provide everything. Bring only some candles, if possible.

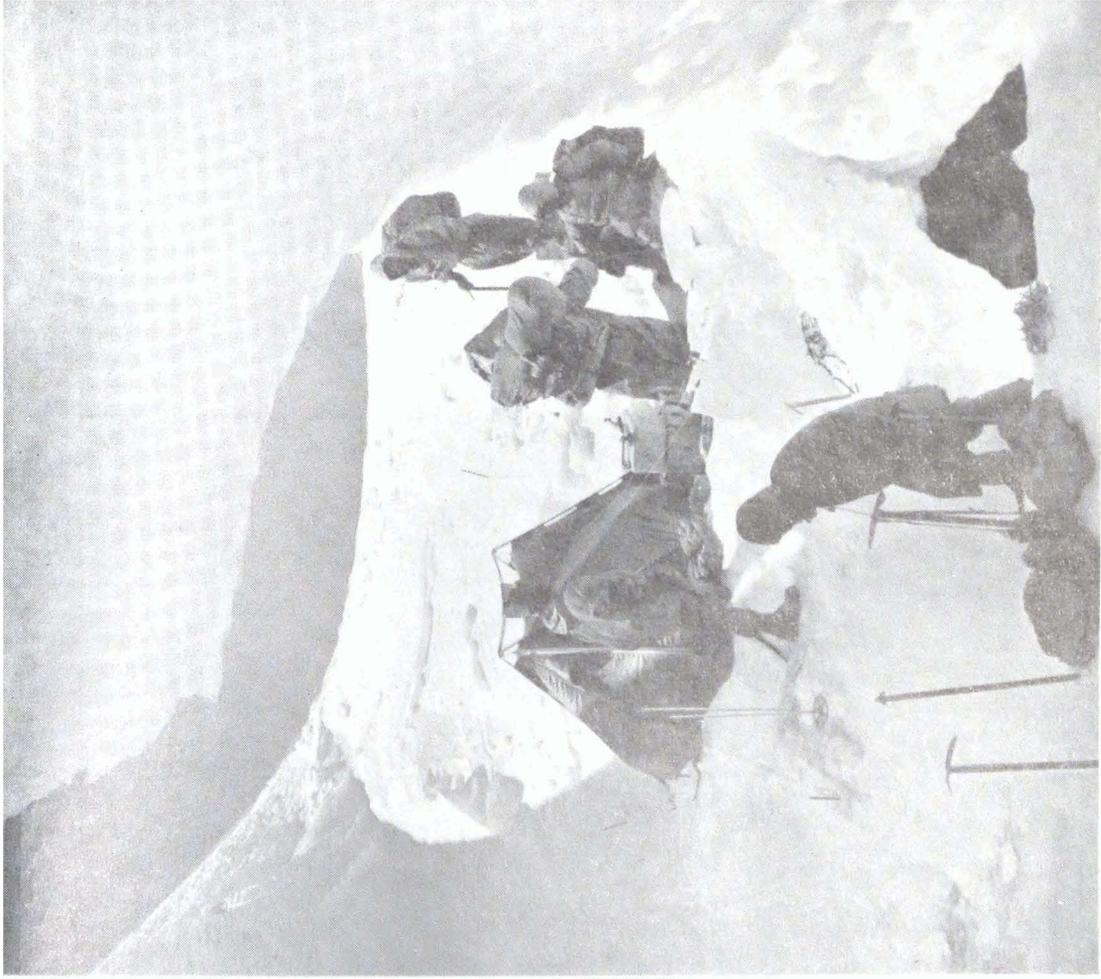
“That's the latest news, Claude. See you soon.

“P.S.—The Austrians have done it. I saw them coming down from the summit.

“Lambert.”

This message left me in perplexity. I had a moment of despair. I would never catch them up—I should have followed my first impulse and climbed straight to Camp II—I had been left here alone, isolated, separated from my party who were making fun of me up there. A lot of good it had done me to get myself in form! However, I knew quite well that they couldn't wait for me, that it was impossible to lose a single day, that if the team at the upper camp were also in form they must make the assault. To occupy my mind and soothe my impatience I went into the tent with the Sherpa and got my own supper.

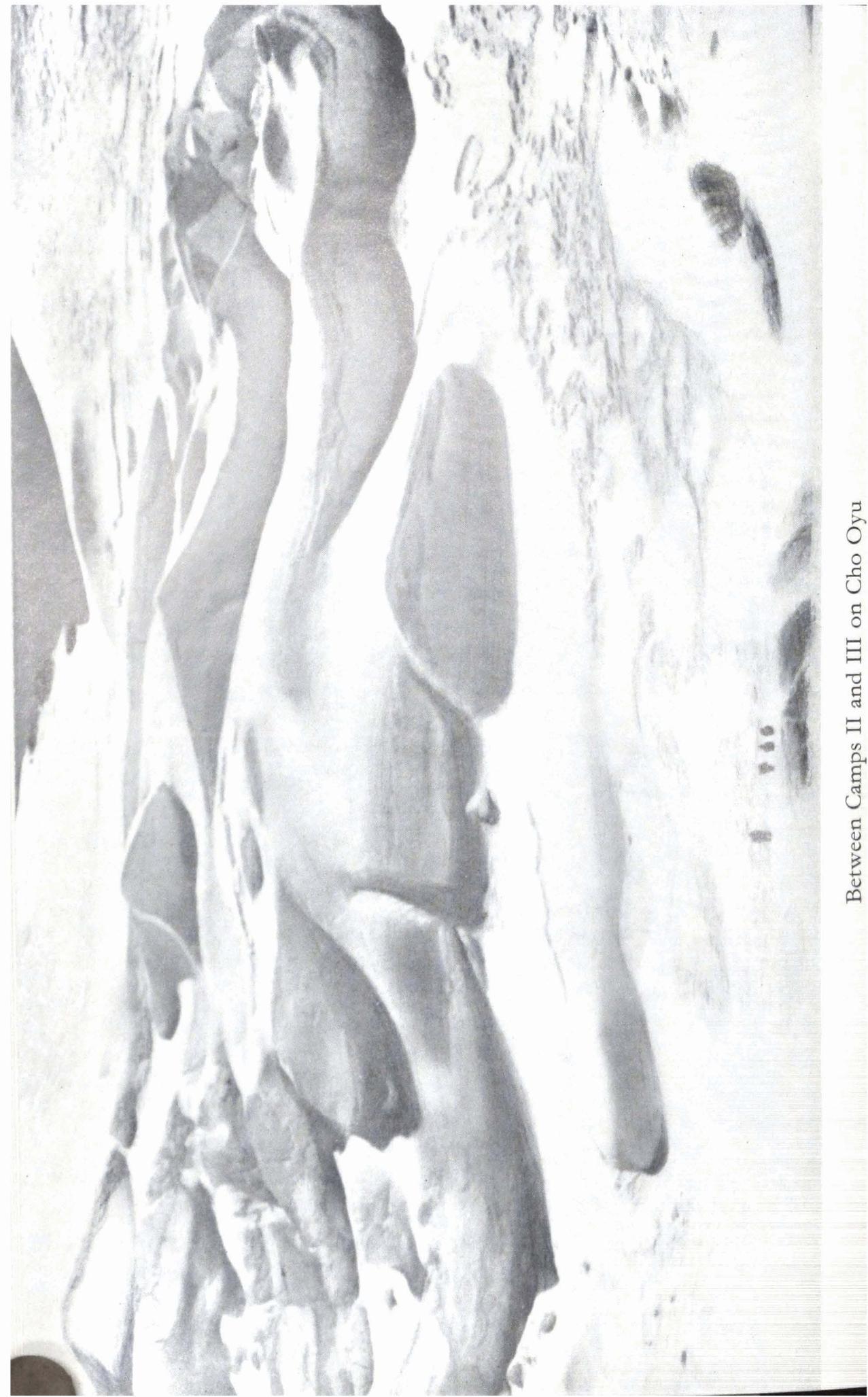
At 6 p.m. I lay down, but sleep refused to come. And in the end the injustice of my reaction made itself apparent. I was attaching too much importance to messages which might already



Dawn at Camp II in the icy heart of Cho Oyu



Crossing the Hadengi La



Between Camps II and III on Cho Oyu

be meaningless. Up above, events were dependent on wind and sun and cold, and circumstances were changing all the time.

23 OCTOBER.

I slept badly. All night I was wondering what was happening higher up; I was in a hurry to know as quickly as possible. In theory, Lochmatter and Bertholet would be starting this morning for their attempt on the summit.

Technically, Cho Oyu is not a difficult mountain. The difficulty resides, in the first place, in its great height—26,750 feet—and in the second place in the fact that on this west face the placing of a camp between 23,000 and 26,000 cannot be contemplated. One therefore has to climb more than 3,000 feet in a single day, which in our case would be a notable feat at such a height, considering that we were not using oxygen on the climb. Happily the snow was hard at this time of year and good for crampons, so that we could climb more easily and—above all—more quickly.

Our great enemy was the wind. If that remained normal, we could climb at the rate of 500 to 600 feet an hour; which under good conditions would just give us time to reach the summit and return to the highest camp, at about 23,500 feet, before nightfall.

When I came out of the tent I was disagreeably surprised to see the sky once more clouded over. The wind was again blowing violently and even at Camp I it was far from pleasant. What would they be doing up above in this weather?

At 9.30 a.m. I left Camp I with two Sherpas carrying extra food, a rope, and my own equipment. On the way up I stopped frequently to scrutinize the upper slopes of Cho Oyu, hoping to spot the two roped teams moving up towards the summit. But nothing stirred except the snow blown up by the wind. I was expecting to find Juge at Camp II, but as I climbed up nearer to the camp I could see a rope of three Sherpas, followed by Juge, attacking the sérac wall, obviously on their way up to Camp III. Somewhat disappointed, I stopped for a moment to follow them with my gaze. There was no mistake about it—I was condemned to be the rear-lamp of the party right to the end. I would never succeed in catching up with the others. I went on a little sadly towards the

hollow that contained Camp II. And it was a very pleasant surprise to find Lambert there. He was on the point of starting out when he saw me coming up, and had waited for me before following Juge up to Camp III.

He asked about my health and then explained his new plans—for everything was once more changed. Bertholet and Lochmatter were here at Camp II; because of the doubtful weather, they had not made their attempt. They were both suffering from bad headaches and had decided to come down to get rid of them.

“And that’s all,” said Lambert. “We go on from there.”

It was several days since I had seen the Bara Sahib. His features were emaciated, but I was impressed by his calm and resolute bearing. As I watched him set out with his steady stride, leaning on his ski-sticks, I had the impression that the elements had no longer any hold on him, that he was detached from the material world. The mountain, I thought, had an especial care for him—he had united himself with it. I felt that he would never come down until he had tried everything within the bounds of reason to reach the top. And, as the two of us were of the same mind about that, it gave me renewed confidence.

I got down on all fours and crawled into the ice-grotto. At the entrance Migma Srita was preparing hot drinks. From farther in, lying in their sleeping-bags on inflatable mattresses, Franz and Denis cried a welcome. I told them how surprised I was to find them here and said I was glad the bad weather had enabled me to catch them up.

“That’s a catty remark,” snapped Denis. “We ought to have been on the summit today.”

Then he explained what had happened during the last few days. Things had not gone well, for they had passed a very bad night at Camp III, both suffering from violent headaches. However, they had felt quite well yesterday morning and had assisted the Sherpas to enlarge and finish off the ice-cave. This morning, in spite of another bad night, they had fully decided to try their luck; but unfortunately the weather was bad at daybreak. They had waited until 9 a.m., but as there was no improvement they had come down again.

We passed a pleasant afternoon discussing past events and—more particularly—events to come. Denis still retained his aggressive spirit, but I had to laugh at Lochmatter. He had as many obsessions as a pregnant woman, among them an urgent longing for a hot bath. He had no more desire to go high. He had made his attempt and it had failed; so much the worse. I wondered whether his headaches and lack of appetite had not been determining factors in sapping his moral fibre. At this altitude a man can do nothing unless he is impelled by the absolute will to do it; to insist or to force him is impossible.

But in any case it was more normal that the expedition's doctor should remain at this lower camp. He could look after the camp and be there to give us medical attention in the event of emergency.

24 OCTOBER.

I had a good night in the shelter of the grotto. Bertholet and I were preparing to go up to Camp III when Wongdi arrived with a message from Lambert:

“Arrange that all the Sherpas come up today with equipment, food, and gas to complete Camp III and establish a Camp IV tomorrow. I am going to find a site for Camp IV today. This evening Bertholet and Lochmatter will sleep at Camp II and come up to Camp III tomorrow, the 25th.

“Claude, Juge, and Lambert will sleep at Camp III this evening and establish Camp IV tomorrow. For the establishing of this camp we shall need five Sherpas, who will sleep tonight at Camp III with us. Afterwards, from Camp IV into the blue. . . .

“I will send a Sherpa to tell Bertholet and Lochmatter when to come up. See you soon.

“Lambert.”

This was all very fine; but the whole arrangement was put in question again from the very first, since Lochmatter had no wish to go up. As for Denis, he didn't want to stop at Camp III and preferred to climb next day from II to IV, where he would join

us in the assault which would be made on the 26th if conditions permitted it.

At 10 a.m. I left camp with Numbey, Tzong, Wongdi, Ang Namgal, and Migma Srita. Dawa Thondu, our sirdar, stayed behind at Camp II. He was sick and had completely lost his voice. Franz was giving him injections and seemed hopeful that he would recover fairly quickly. The weather was still fine; moreover, the wind had dropped considerably. I hoped it would stay like that.

Camp III was not distinguishable from its surroundings until one was close to it. It was completely subterranean, like a marmot's burrow, and a small mountain of snow excavated from it rose outside its door. Lambert and Juge were outside levelling a platform for the tent which would shelter three Sherpas that night, for the grotto would only hold five persons. I had not seen Juge for four days. Since he had recovered from his tonsillitis he had recaptured some of his toughness, and it was a pleasure to see his eye sparkling with determination.

Lambert told me that he considered it advisable to establish a Camp IV. There was a possibility of placing one at about 24,000 feet; he had spotted a place that morning.

The ice-grotto here was a trifle smaller than the one at Camp II, but when the opening had been closed with a tent it was quite passable.

And before passing a very good night there I shall hand over to Lambert, who now has all the cares of the expedition on his hands.

Over to you, Raymond!

Heroic Madness

You may say "à toi", Claude, but it is "à moi" in earnest, for I had learned that the Austrians had made their final attempt on the summit on October 17, 18, and 19.

THE Austrians' sirdar, Pasang Lama, had gone down to Namche Bazaar to look for reinforcements. In returning he made a remarkable effort, for he went in one day from Namche Bazaar nearly to Camp I, and from there he went direct to Camp IV, and the next day he reached the summit. To climb 16,000 feet in three days and cover such great distances represents an extraordinary feat.

The Austrians reached the top on the 19th. We learned of their success on the evening of the same day from a Sherpa who was on his way down.

At once we occupied the upper camps to make the attack in our turn. Unfortunately the weather of the 20th October was bad, with a snowstorm and high wind. We were halted in our camps, unable to do much of what we wanted and constraining ourselves to patience. On the 21st I went up to Camp II at 21,600 feet and there discovered that it was impossible to put a tent up, so violent was the wind. We were obliged to dig out holes in the snow and ice and establish our camps in temperatures well below freezing point. And in going up that day I met the Austrians.

I began by meeting Tichy, whose hands were badly frost-bitten. In spite of his injuries he had succeeded in getting to the top. For my part I call that an heroic madness; he was bound to lose several fingers. A little higher I met the second Austrian coming down. His feet were slightly frostbitten and he told me he would never go to 27,000 feet again. They had, of course, climbed very quickly, and being thus incompletely acclimatized

had had to suffer considerably at this altitude. Higher up still, near Camp II, I encountered the third Austrian and the Sherpas coming down with their equipment.

I slept at Camp II. On the preceding days, the 20th and the 19th, Bertholet and Lochmatter had already been high and had slept at Camp II and Camp III; I would await the result of their efforts.

22 OCTOBER.

Today Bertholet and Lochmatter went up to Camp III with Dawa Thondu and Tzong. From there they were to go on towards the summit to reconnoitre the route and perhaps find a site for Camp IV—if we ever established a Camp IV.

Camp III at 23,000 feet was in fact too far from the summit, for a difference in height of more than 3,000 feet was too much for us to go up and down in a day. The Austrians had done it in twelve hours, but it would be more prudent to place one more camp. I had had experience of this policy on the South Col of Everest in 1952. I had great hopes from the work of Bertholet and Lochmatter, from whom I awaited precise information about the next step in our operations.

In the afternoon Juge came up to Camp II with Ang Namgal. I was expecting Claude Kogan later on.

Night in the ice-grotto. The wind blew and the cold was more bitter than ever. Winter had undoubtedly reached the high Himalaya.

23 OCTOBER.

At 9 a.m. Bertholet and Lochmatter came down from Camp III!

I decided to go up to Camp III, halt there, and then go on higher. Sent Juge and the Sherpas to go up first.

Halt finally at Camp III after having struggled so hard to get the expedition away from Europe? Never!

Tomorrow I would explain the situation to Claude Kogan and she would join me at Camp III. I could rely on her.

Had a good ascent with Juge after catching him up. I was in

fine form, my health and morale were good, and I enjoyed the struggle against the wind. If we were to climb this mountain, I felt, we would have to hang on to it hard.

Night at Camp III—pretty fair. We ate and ate well. One must live if one is to fight!

24 OCTOBER, 1954.

I climbed alone from Camp III to 24,000 feet looking for a crevasse where we could make a Camp IV. This work should have been done by Lochmatter and Bertholet; a day had been lost—a day that might have gained us the summit. I was alone up there, alone on the tracks of the Austrians.

I reconnoitred the route to the summit and spotted a crevasse where Camp IV could be placed. Then I went down to Camp III with bitterness in my heart. When I reached camp I found Juge lying in his sleeping-bag. He had been out looking for geological specimens and was tired. However, I decided that we must make a platform where a tent could be pitched. Claude Kogan arrived with five Sherpas. She was well and in excellent form, and I felt my hopes reviving. She, at least, was holding firm. I went off forthwith to have a look at the route taken by the Austrians.

Jean Juge, Claude, and I were at Camp III that evening, and we talked of our plans for tomorrow. Then we settled down to spend the night there. The nights in these ice-grottoes were far from pleasant. We were crowded close on one another with the "kitchen" in one corner and our food set out on the snow; our inflatable mattresses were sheeted in white hoar-frost, but we slept on them, more or less.

25 OCTOBER.

A tremendous wind this morning—a wind from the North Pole. We had great difficulty in getting the Sherpas to start out with the loads for Camp IV, but at 10 a.m. everyone decided to get outside—five Sherpas, Juge, Kogan, and myself. I went ahead to break the route and the Sherpas followed, with Claude behind them and Juge hard on our heels.

As soon as we reached the crevasse I gave instructions for the

digging out of the shelter. We were very high up there, at 24,000 feet. We got our breath with difficulty, the wind smote us in savage gusts; but our igloo of refuge had to be constructed. I took my turn with the shovel and got my feet frozen through working in a squatting position. However, the refuge had to be finished before nightfall, which was now fast approaching.

Then Bertholet arrived, having come up from Camp II. That made six who would spend the night at Camp IV: Juge, Kogan, Bertholet, myself and the two Sherpas, Wongdi and Ang Namgal.

I was surprised to see how enfeebled the expedition was becoming, with the exception of Claude Kogan and myself. Our companions were no longer putting up a fight; they could hardly struggle against the cold and were letting death creep upon them without striking a blow to defend themselves. This was the usual ill-effect of altitude. But the wind, too, was sweeping all before it, corrupting moral strength as well as physical.

We had soon made a shelter in the piled snow in the crevasse and got into it at once. The entrance we closed with a tent—not erecting it but merely using the fabric. Against the fabric we piled blocks of snow to make it as proof as possible against the wind.

That night was a grim one. There were too many of us in the ice-cave and the snow drifted for hours on to our hair and faces. This very fine white powder, hunted by the wind, ended by spreading itself everywhere like flour—in our clothes, on our heads, over all our equipment.

The Mountain Defends Itself

27 OCTOBER.

The night of the 26th dragged itself out slowly. Outside the wind raged, slowly and deliberately spreading its accumulation of snow upon us. We could not go out of our ice-hole, even to satisfy the needs of Nature; we dug holes in the snow beside us, like animals, and then covered them in again.

Bertholet and Juge would have to go down. Two others, Sherpas, who were also far from fit, would go with them.

After interminable preparation the four started down at 4 p.m. I remained alone with Claude. We cleared snow out of our house of ice and tried to stop up the holes where the wind rushed in. We ate pemmican, Ovomaltine, nougat and porridge. Our appetite remained good; that was the main thing. We were using butane gas for cooking; those stoves were immensely valuable.

Everything was got ready for tomorrow, for we were quite decided to give battle to Cho Oyu in spite of the wind. The day passed quickly. Outside the sky was clear but violent gusts were tearing the snow from slope and ridge—all of it seemed to be flung down on us in minor avalanches. But we were no longer surprised at that. If one can fight altitude one can fight the rest. And we were fighting—against wind and cold, especially against cold.

Claude was truly extraordinary. Nothing could shake her. She continued to be very active, doing the cooking, arranging the provisions, busying herself with everything; and I knew she was firmly determined to climb tomorrow. I had seen men give up in much less trying situations, but Claude worked in that camp like a Sherpa.

What caused me most anxiety was that if we went up next day we should have no one in support—no members of the expedition,

no doctor, no Sherpas. We should be alone and we could count on no one but ourselves.

But tomorrow we were going to climb, the two of us, alone.

28 OCTOBER.

At 6 a.m. the violence of the wind obliged us to wait; we would have to start out later. However, we were completely ready. We wore all the garments we had—I had seven layers on the upper part of my body and five on my legs.

At 9 a.m. we put on crampons and tied on the rope. Ski-sticks in hand we set out into a slightly diminished wind which nevertheless grew ever stronger as we got nearer to the summit. The snow-crust broke under us in places, making the going very toilsome. Then the slope steepened and we got out the ice-axes and went on more slowly, buffeted by furious gusts, creeping from rock to rock, while the wind increased noticeably.

There was no technical problem confronting us. The effects of altitude were perfectly supportable—we did not suffer from that. We suffered from the wind. It smote us continually, forcing us to climb one at a time belaying each other with the rope. Sometimes we crawled on all fours; and when the worst gusts struck us it was fall flat on the stomach or be blown away. But we kept on moving upward.

My crampons came off. Claude held on to my shoulder while I fastened them on again, for the wind would have flung me off my balance. We could no longer stand upright at all now—we crawled on the snow-slope, clawing upward with the picks of our axes, advancing one at a time.

Some distance higher up the wind suddenly hurled me ten feet to the left. I recovered myself in the nick of time as I began to slide downward. This struggle to hold on, to go on climbing, was frightful. All our strength of will was needed to prevent ourselves from being swept off the mountain. But we couldn't go on struggling for a whole day and night. . . .

As we climbed we always belayed for each run-out of rope. At every sixty feet I thrust in my axe and safeguarded Claude, who

climbed up and passed me, going on for sixty feet before halting to belay in her turn.

We looked at the time. It was 2 p.m. and we were at 25,600 feet. Still another 1,100 feet to the summit. We could never climb it in the time and still get back to Camp IV before night. We could make a bivouac—but that might easily prove fatal. I looked at my watch and then at Claude, who averted her eyes and would not look at me. She didn't want to hear what I had to say to her.

We discussed the situation. Were we to chance the almost certain loss of limbs through frostbite in order to gain the summit? The danger was too great. In the end the wise decision was made: to descend to Camp IV. We were beaten, after struggling so far and hoping for so much.

At 4 p.m. we were back at Camp IV and making plans for another attempt tomorrow or the day after.

I thought hard for a long time about the decision I had taken. It was the only possible one. It was forced on me by the wind, by the cold, by the night—for we could never have got down again to Camp IV before dark. And the possible bivouac? That would have meant frostbite and perhaps a fall to death, for the wind would have gone on shaking us and in our exhausted state and at so great an altitude we would have had no defence against it. We were in good physical condition and our keenness was undiminished; but the elements had been too strong for us.

Wisdom is sometimes the opposite of daring. Prudence has her victories; daring and rashness have their victims.

During the whole of this day, the 28th, we were alone—absolutely alone—on the mountain. Lochmatter and Bertholet were at Base Camp. But in the late afternoon Jean Juge arrived with one Sherpa—he had felt bound to come up and try to help us and back us up. We were delighted to see him. He was suffering from bad circulation and his hands and feet were all extremely cold. We had to get hot-water bottles filled and make hot tea before we could get his circulation going properly again. And, in my opinion, he was not eating nearly enough; he had great difficulty in keeping down pemmican or fat, and his stomach gave him perpetual pain. He also found it difficult to drink.

The following day, the 29th, we had decided to make another attempt. But the weather was worse than ever and we didn't even succeed in getting out of our hole. About 10 a.m., however, a slight lull took place and Juge decided to make a sortie alone and gain a little summit about two hours from the camp. This summit had a height of 24,800 feet and interested him chiefly because he wanted to get rock samples from it. He returned safely to Camp IV after being lucky enough to stop himself from falling after an involuntary glissade. But this time his condition was alarming. We were obliged to massage his feet and hands, to undress him and dress him again, before we could revive his circulation.

We strongly advised him to go down again with his Sherpa to Camp II, for he was useless at Camp IV. He could do nothing more by himself, nor could he help us in any further assault, and meanwhile he was consuming precious food and gas. It was far better that he should get down to the lower camps. He agreed, and went down shortly afterwards.

My own feet and hands were atrociously painful from the cold and I suffered from a most inconveniently-placed boil which prevented me from sitting down. In spite of all, it was decided that Claude and I should stay on for another night in the hope that on October 30 the bad weather would have abated a little. I remembered that on October 31st, 1952, we were on the South Col of Everest in shirtsleeves with no wind to trouble us.

So I hoped and dreamed. Perhaps one day of calm weather would follow. We had still sufficient toughness, will, and morale to make a second attempt.

30 OCTOBER.

The wind was more violent than ever. The temperature had fallen considerably—35° Centigrade below zero outside the crevasse, 20° below inside our hole.

The storm had gained strength. Nothing could be done. The butane gas was running out. We might hold out for one day, even two, but the situation was desperate.

With death in our souls, we decided to give up and go down.

Two years before on November 20th I was on the South Col

of Everest, at 26,000 feet. Today, October 30, we were being forced to descend—sadly, but with the relative satisfaction of having done our duty to the utmost. We left Camp IV with infinite sorrow. We might have stayed there a little longer, but what good would it have done?

And so we came down to Camp III. There was no one there at all. I took one load for the onward descent and then we went slowly down through the storm to Camp II, where we found Juge and the Sherpas. Juge was buried in his sleeping-bag, which he had not quitted since his return on the preceding day. The Sherpas wore glum faces and the camp showed every sign of neglect and disorder. I felt that this was indeed the end of our adventure.

Claude Kogan decided to stay at Camp II with Juge to organize the withdrawal. A quantity of valuable equipment, including Bertholet's camera, had been left at Camp IV, and we induced two Sherpas, Wongdi and Tzong, to assist in bringing it down. For this they were to receive a supplementary bonus of 10 rupees for each load carried down. As for me, I ate freely—for I was terribly hungry—before continuing straight down to Base Camp, thus descending from 24,000 to 18,700 feet in one day. I wanted to organize our return, send off the loads by the coolies and see how things were at Base.

I found that Bertholet and Lochmatter had regained much of their strength and appeared in good health. I myself was nearly dead with fatigue, but my appetite was undiminished. I spent a good night and next day sent off every available Sherpa to Camp II to bring down the equipment. Very late that evening the whole party from above reached Base Camp; the mountain had been completely and very rapidly evacuated.

31 OCTOBER.

Clear and cold. We were now all gathered at Base Camp. Claude and Juge went on down today. Everyone was in good health; no frostbite.

The coolies were on the spot. Next day, November 1st, we would leave for Lunack, a long and toilsome march; over the

Nangpa La and then another three days of marching to Namche Bazaar.

I felt very sad. The expedition had done its work of reconnaissance on Gaurisankar, on Menlungtse, and on Cho Oyu. Our attempt to climb the latter could have succeeded, but we had been beaten by storm and by the unexpectedly early coming of winter. We had given our utmost and failed only by a little. Yet I was sad. . . .

It is curious to observe how the human organism behaves in the course of an expedition. Above 22,000 feet it tends to develop an aversion to porridge and pemmican; it ceases, in some cases, to have the will to nourish itself, or even to try and keep itself warm. I had observed as much in 1952, and now, in 1954, it was the same. Nothing had changed.

On the return march I meditated on these things. And my conclusion is that though many men go out to climb in the Himalaya, very few of them are gifted with sufficient toughness for their task.

But of all these days I have described I see most clearly the day when our hopes began to sink. I hear again my voice saying, "It's cold, Claude—my fingers are freezing on the pencil—over to you, Claude, quickly—over to you!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

If the Wind Relents . . .

At Camp III I am listening to the roar of the storm outside our igloo. The Sherpas, huddling together in a snow-whitened heap beside us, show no sign of life.

25 OCTOBER.

The calm weather had gone for good. A fearful tempest of wind raged outside. During the night the snow driven in by the wind had choked up almost every hole in the grotto and buried our feet, which were near the entrance. We had to dig out the stove and the food supplies with the shovel.

The Sherpas in the tent beside the grotto, who must have had a very bad night, looked as if they would never budge an inch. Would they go up to Camp IV? We shook them into life and began to pack our things, both to set them an example and to make them understand that we were determined to climb on.

At about 10 a.m. Lambert started off alone in the lead. But the Sherpas lingered, messing about, plainly unwilling to start. I had stayed in the igloo to arrange the food and Bertholet's camera in a safe place, and they may have thought that I wasn't going up. "If the Mem Sahib stays behind," they were no doubt saying to themselves, "there's a good chance that we also can stay."

Juge had already gone. I put on my woollen mask and set off in his tracks. The wind was so violent that we had to advance crabwise in order to breathe, turning our heads into the gusts. Sometimes the squalls were so strong that we were flung over, and at such times we would thrust our ice-axes in deeply as anchors and wait until the tempest abated a little. On the snow-slope the snow, though hard enough, had been completely

scoured by the wind, which attacked the surface like some powerful acid, eroding it and breaking it off in thin slabs which were blown to dust in no time.

For the site of Camp IV Lambert had chosen a *rimaye*, a large crevasse at 24,000 feet, at a place where the upper and lower lips of the crevasse were joined by a snow-bridge. The crevasse was not deep, having been filled up by wind-driven snow. Lambert got down under the snow-bridge and with the help of three Sherpas shovelled and hewed to enlarge the cavern. While they were at it Bertholet arrived from Camp II with his Sherpa, and Lambert at once asked him to help me construct a wall of snow to block one side of the bridge as far as possible, for at the moment it formed a tunnel through which the wind roared angrily. Denis didn't like it; he had come up to take photographs and ciné pictures of the work. But there was nothing else for it—our shelter had to be finished first and night was rapidly approaching.

Navvying at that altitude was frightfully hard work. Our breath came in gasps and the wind exhausted us. At 4.30 p.m. the cold was too bitter to go on and we got into the snow-cave. Three of the Sherpas went down again to Camp II; we kept with us Wongdi and Ang Namgal. The cave was not really big enough for six and we had a lot of trouble to sort out our possessions and stow ourselves away.

Lambert, who had spent a long time crouching down while he cleared the igloo's interior, had frozen feet, and I massaged them to bring back the circulation. Bertholet was brave enough to stay outside taking photographs before joining us. I admired his professional conscientiousness.

We ate soup and a little fat and then huddled together as well as we could. The song says that when there is no food it's the fattest person that is eaten; what it doesn't say is that when there is no room it's the smallest that gets the worst of it! Since we could only lay out three mattresses for four Sahibs, I found myself—when the larger persons had settled themselves—between two mattresses with my behind on Denis's and my legs on Lambert's. Having no special aptitude for all-in wrestling I used my boots as a pillow and tried to sleep.

The night was far from pleasant, for we had not had time to stop up the openings of the cave and the wind drove snow in from outside. It filtered even into our sleeping-bags.

26 OCTOBER.

Our awakening was by no means pleasant. Our sleeping-bags were white all over, and we had to shake off our coverlet of snow like Eskimo dogs before getting up. It was 5 o'clock in the morning and bitterly cold.

We couldn't get the Sherpas to budge. Ang Namgal was ill, it appeared; he stuck out his head, shook it, and disappeared again into his sleeping-bag. At last Wongdi, always the most devoted of them, lit the stove.

The wind outside seemed as violent as ever. Lambert and Bertholet went out to look at the weather but soon came back, numbed and red in the face. An attempt on the summit while the wind kept on like this was not to be considered. We got back into our sleeping-bags to wait for the sun before going out again, and to warm ourselves we drank hot tea and took a little oxygen.

Bertholet was having more trouble with his stomach. He could swallow nothing—everything gave him nausea—but he felt a longing for vegetables, though I doubted whether tinned spinach would have been of any use to him at this altitude. We chaffed him a bit, accusing him of being influenced by Walt Disney and Mathurin, but the poor fellow couldn't get himself warm. He shook and shivered and eventually decided to go down again to Camp II to try and buck himself up.

Juge was in no better shape. He could not get his toes warm.

"In any case," he said, "I consider myself incapable of reaching the summit in such a storm as this. I shall go down to Camp II with Denis and leave you more room."

He added that he would come up again tomorrow or the day after, if the weather got better, for he was anxious to climb to Point 24,800, which was just above the camp, to collect some rock-matrixes which would complete the work which Lombard had begun in this area in 1952. The Sherpas, who were also no longer very dynamic, would go down with them.

The preparations for this departure seemed to go on for ever, but at last they started down. Raymond watched them go with a somewhat melancholy air. Only two of us remained to attempt the summit tomorrow. Only two who were determined to hang on. "If the wind relents," we told each other, "perhaps we can do it. . . ."

As soon as we were alone we got the shovel and started to try to make our ice-hole more comfortable. We enlarged it, and exerted ourselves particularly to block up the holes through which the wind rushed in with its jets of snow. Lambert dealt with the floor and I with the ceiling. It was exhausting work, but kept our circulation going and so maintained our bodily warmth. After this I got our supper ready. Fortunately we were both hungry—a good omen. In one way, I was glad that the Sherpas were not with us and that we were obliged to do everything for ourselves, for that helped a good deal to keep up our morale as well as our circulation. And in the end that day passed fairly quickly.

I decided not to take off my boots for the night; it would be too laborious putting them on in the morning. I merely unlaced them and then got into my sleeping-bag with them on. We had only one flask between us and Lambert filled it with hot water and put it under his feet. He was much more sensitive to cold than I was because the amputation of some of his toes and fingers caused slowing-up of his circulation; he had to sit up and massage them several times during the night.

To gain better protection from the wind we had changed the position of our mattresses. Mine was placed along the back wall of the grotto, but that night the cold emanating from the wall penetrated my body like an icy breath and gave me nightmares. I dreamt that the wall was clinging to me like a vampire; and I instantly recoiled from it—so thoroughly that I found myself lying on the ice beside my mattress. In order to remedy this awkward situation I spent the rest of the night trying to raise myself so as to place the extra tent between me and the wall. In the morning my first care was to look for this tent, and it was then that I realized that I had been dreaming—there wasn't one.

27 OCTOBER.

The wind was just as violent as it was yesterday. Useless to try to go out today. We were beginning to doubt the solidity of the snow-bridge above our heads and again changed all the interior arrangements of the grotto, altering the position of the "kitchen" and putting our mattresses in its place so that we had our heads towards the slope. We also put the shovel between the mattresses so that we had a chance of digging ourselves out if the snow-bridge fell in.

Our rucksacks were ready packed so that we could get away at once if the weather allowed us. For the moment our strength was intact, and to keep it up I got ready a large meal. It was cooked on the butane gas stove—to me an unfailing source of amazement; these stoves always worked well in no matter what conditions. We ate porridge and bacon, with nougat as dessert. Raymond filled his hot-water flask and used it as a smoothing-iron, trying to dry out his sleeping-bag a little; in the night our body-heat and breath had condensed and turned into hoar-frost, which melted and wet our things. Raymond's sleeping-bag was much damper than mine, but I had the impression that my own bag was steadily shrinking.

But it was very necessary to keep a clear mind and not to disperse one's thoughts over these and similar little details of comfort; to dismiss everything not absolutely vital, to avoid all that might diminish us morally or physically. We had to remain calm and confident, thinking only of our goal and maintaining our keenness and will to conquer.

I went out for a moment to look at the weather, but the gusts were so violent that I had to shield my face with my hands in order to look upward. There wasn't a cloud. The wind tore up the snow in white whirlwinds that blurred the icy-clear sky of winter.

Before going to sleep we lay on our backs talking for some time, our eyes fixed on the vault of ice overhead to which our breath ascended like steam, only to fall again in grains of hoar-frost.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

"Que ta vie soit un perpétuel départ"

OUR third day at Camp IV ended. We began our third night.

Raymond found the very low temperature disconcerting. In the ordinary way winter should not be here yet. At the same time of year in 1952 he had been at 24,000 feet on Everest; the wind had started already, but blew much less fiercely, and he had not gone down until November 22. It was now beyond doubt that this year the winter had come earlier. But we continued to hope against hope that the tempest was merely a passing storm and that the weather was going to improve.

However, as we saw the temperature getting lower and lower each day, we began to ask ourselves how much longer we could hold out in our little hell of ice. It wasn't only that it was cold around us—it was cold within ourselves; it seemed to penetrate each day a little farther under our skins, and this cold was more difficult to fight against. And so we decided that tomorrow, wind or no wind, we would make an assault on the summit of Cho Oyu. For it was impossible to remain inactive any longer. Tomorrow the two of us would go up, alone.

28 OCTOBER.

6 o'clock in the morning. Lambert lit the stove. I made thick chocolate from some crumbled bars and we dipped biscuits in it and ate heartily. At 7 we attempted to go out, but the wind and cold were atrocious—the temperature must have been at least 30° Centigrade below zero—and we decided to wait. In the end we didn't start until the sun reached us at about 9 a.m.

Leaning on our ski-sticks, we set off up the big plateau above our crevasse, making for the centre of the face. The snow-crust gave way beneath us in slabs, making hard going. Then the slope steepened and the snow became hard and good for crampons.

We left our ski-sticks behind at the bergschrund and got out our ice-axes.

The wind was still with us, blowing as furiously as on the other days, charging into us and thrusting us back. When we tried to make headway against it, it shook us so violently that we lost balance; we were forced to use the rope and belay at each run-out although the ground was not difficult and we would normally have moved together. We advanced like blind folk, groping, seeing nothing of our surroundings, until at last we spotted a rock, black amid the whiteness and on the right line, and made for it with our heads bent into the wind.

Raymond would gain sixty feet of advance, halt, thrust in his ice-axe; then I would come up to him and pass him, go on for another sixty feet, and belay him in my turn. Several times he had to stop to adjust a badly-fitted crampon and on each occasion I had to hang on to his shoulder to prevent him from being blown over. We had to be unceasingly on our guard against the treacherous wind, which blew by fits and starts. Like coolies too heavily laden we crept forward, stopping at regular intervals to recover our breath. When at last we were driven to go on all fours up the slope I felt a surge of anger—I wanted to yell at this stubborn wind that it was useless to go on making life impossible for us, because we were just as stubborn as it was. A forgotten couplet came into my mind:

*The mad wind seems alive and does his worst;
Fight if you must, but you will die the first.*

It was better to stop worrying and try to advance methodically. I tried to make the wind help me by leaning forward on it—but immediately it dropped and I found myself face downwards on the snow with all my breath gone and my mouth wide open gasping desperately for oxygen. Never have I had so furious a struggle with elements.

At every gust we shut our eyes tightly and the whipped-up snow lacerated our skin, its frozen dust stifling us and penetrating every chink in our clothing. But we went on, bent double, step by step, willing ourselves onward.

We spoke little.

“All right?”

“All right!”

And that was all.

Once more Raymond stopped to refasten his crampon. And this time he looked at his watch and at the altimeter. I knew what he was going to say and I dared not look at him. We had reached 25,600 feet and the time was 2 o'clock in the afternoon. It would take us, we reckoned, at least three hours to reach the summit at 26,750 feet in such conditions, and at best we would need another three hours to get back to Camp IV. That would bring us to 8 p.m.—and night would be upon us by 6 p.m.

The devilish wind had slowed us up too much. It was no longer possible to go on. We could reach the top before nightfall but we would have to bivouac on the descent, ten hours to wait without shelter in a wind that pierced us to the very bone. Such a bivouac would mean the end of us.

I had a great lump in my throat and hardly dared to say anything, for I was ready to weep. To abandon the ascent, to give up when we had suffered so much! I felt myself boiling with impotent rage, ready to dare anything if only we could continue the struggle. It was the most trying thing I had ever known. Though my reason saw the only logical decision to take, my heart refused to accept it. I didn't wish to bow my head before the wind and the snow which must eventually hurl us back, I wanted to climb, to get up at least a little farther.

“Don't turn back yet!” I gasped out.

As soon as I said it I knew how vain was this desperate desire. Go on for another 300 feet, another 400? Why? If we couldn't come to the mountain, the mountain wouldn't come to us. . . .

Lambert was experiencing the same internal struggle. I saw and felt that he was torn by the same agitation as myself.

“It's no use, Claude,” he said at last. “There's nothing for it—we'll have to go down.”

For a long moment we stayed motionless, as if refusing to let go before starting down again. Indeed, that moment, when we had to turn our backs on the objective for which we had sacrificed

so much and for so long, was a terrible one. Tomorrow, we told ourselves, we would climb up here again.

In two hours we were back at our ice-cave. The Sherpas Tzong and Choteray had arrived with food and Juge's sleeping-bag. Juge himself came up shortly afterwards and gave us the news from down below. It was disappointing. Lochmatter had found himself unable to remain at Camp II—he was too hungry. Bertholet would not come up again. He had not yet gone down, but was lying at Camp II to wait for us in spite of stomach trouble and an ocular congestion.

Juge had come up, however, and we were glad to see him, for his presence made us feel less abandoned by the others. He was as keen as ever to reach his “Point 24,800” and had come up with that intention; although he was unable to stand the altitude and cold as well as we did; although he knew that he was going to suffer for it, he came up all the same. I admired his pluck. In spite of today's attempt Raymond and I were not very tired and ate with good appetite. We were determined to lose no chances, and intended to begin the assault again tomorrow or the day after if the wind would only slacken.

Juge had brought up our mail with him. I received six letters here at 24,000 feet—surely a world record for postal delivery. Lower down we always tore open our letters with wild impatience; but at Camp IV I scarcely felt like touching them, for beside our besetting problems they seemed empty of all sense. For the moment I was too far away, too high up, too detached from all that went to make up life in the lower lands. I felt myself a stranger to the proofs of friendship and everyday interests into which these letters would plunge me once again; I would obtain, I felt, neither pleasure nor regret from them. I opened one only, from my mother, whose health was worrying me.

By 6 p.m. we had all turned in, the Sherpas—those habitués of the Camp II Igloo Palace—looking as if they didn't much appreciate their quarters. Raymond and I were beginning our fourth night here. His sleep was fitful and disturbed. Most of the time he was sitting up to massage himself, lighting the stove to replenish his hot-water bottle, or sucking in a little oxygen. In my

half-slumber I had the impression that this business went on for hours and hours.

At such a height everything reacts on one's nerves in a way that would be quite incomprehensible at lower altitudes. The smallest things are excuses for irritation or excitement, tiny details make one wince. Thus with the candle which Raymond kept burning all night.

"What are you up to?" I grumbled. "Haven't you finished cooking yet?"

He was merely cold, and in my sleepy, sluggish state I had failed to understand that.

To add to his troubles, the zip-fastener of his sleeping-bag had jammed so that he couldn't close it. His feet gave him terrible pain; he could not lie still and kept moving all the time to conserve what bodily heat the pitiless cold had not stolen from him.

How many more days and nights, I wondered, could we hold on at Camp IV?

29 OCTOBER.

The same story as before—the wind was unabated in its violence. In spite of it, Juge went out at 10 a.m. after much preparation to make for his "Point" on the summit of the west shoulder at 24,800 feet, just above our crevasse-refuge. Two and a half hours later he was back again, completely done in. He dropped limply on his mattress.

"It's sheer madness to try and get higher," he gasped. "Take my advice—drop the idea altogether."

When we had a look at him we found that his hands and feet were absolutely frozen. He was mainly concerned about his hands, which he held first between his legs and then under his armpits to try and warm them, while I took off his boots and massaged his feet energetically. When the circulation had returned he got into his sleeping-bag and we gave him hot drinks and put a hot-water bottle under his feet. Then he took a little oxygen and went off to sleep like a child.

When he woke we advised him to go down to Camp II to sleep. Lambert asked him to wait for us there and gave him

instructions for evacuating the camps during the coming days. The coolies were to arrive at Base Camp next day, the 30th October, and we wanted to stay high until the last possible moment; tomorrow, perhaps, the wind would drop and we wished to be quite ready to leave for the summit.

Choteray was completely useless—a dead weight on our hands. It was the first time he had been to this altitude. He had had a splitting headache since the morning and hadn't stirred out of his sleeping-bag. We had to pull him out of it in order to get him to go down to Camp II with Juge.

Later in the afternoon, when Juge and Choteray had left, Raymond told me that even if the weather was fit he wasn't certain that he could climb tomorrow. A painful and inconvenient boil was preventing him from sitting down and also from walking for any length of time. He had decided to stay up another night in spite of his bad state but didn't know whether he would be fit to climb. Tomorrow, if the weather was good enough, I could still try to reach the summit with Tzong, the only Sherpa remaining with us; but this Sherpa was hardly enthusiastic about going on—he was thinking of nothing but getting down to Base Camp as soon as possible.

One bottle of oxygen remained. We were not using it for climbing but keeping it in case of illness and to revive us when we came down from the summit. As we were only staying high for one more day and night, we took a little oxygen each to warm us.

Our fifth and last night in our “icy hell” was also the worst, one of the worst I have ever known. All the time we were fretted by a dull unrest, born of the imminence of the issue. Tomorrow would be the “day of truth”—a phrase of Hemingway's which Georges, my husband, had quoted to me for use in a mountaineering narrative. It was so apt to the climber's case and so often confirmed in practice that I liked to remind myself of it. Raymond made no complaint but he was obviously suffering; he could find no comfortable position and massaged his feet continually. Seeing him like this I regretted having insisted so strongly on staying at Camp IV. I was confused and unhappy about my insistence now, especially as there was very little chance that the

wind would abate and we had only the slenderest hope of success. I couldn't sleep, either. I listened, I waited for each fresh shriek of the wind. Some time before dawn I slept, and when I woke it was 5 a.m.

I had an impression that the wind had dropped, and went out to see for myself what was happening. Outside there was a complete unloosing of the elements and I got back again quickly and continued to keep my watch. I was ready to start, hoping that with the coming of the sun there might perhaps be some abatement, and several times I went outside to see if this was happening. I was out at 8, when the sun tipped the upper part of the face with fire and the whirling snow-wreaths torn off by the wind caught fire in their turn—an extraordinarily enchanting sight but for me more tragic than beautiful. For it meant that winter had beaten us back with its savage ambushes. We would have to go down, bruised in body and hope and pride.

And by a refinement of irony this same winter which was hunting us off the mountain had today unveiled for us the mountain's supreme and eternal beauty, as though to drive home the bitterness of our failure to conquer it.

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That was the end of it. We gave up. Raymond and I exchanged one glance only and understood each other. The adventure was ending without a word, without one useless phrase or superfluous remark. But our silence was heavy with inexpressible and tumultuous feeling.

Adieu, Cho Oyu! Or rather, au revoir!

And now that the die was cast, now that we could not climb Cho Oyu or Gaurisankar that year, now that all regrets were vain, it remained for us to take the long homeward road—and to sum up our adventure.

These log-books we resolved to keep have given sufficient account of routes and nomenclature, enough details of our labours and our days, our thoughts and our nights, to make it unnecessary to go over them again. What matters, now that the dolour and

progress of every day is founded in memory, is to count up our gains; to muster the main currents and recollections and information which make up our winnings.

We set out with two precise aspirations: Gaurisankar and Cho Oyu. We had planned also to bring back valuable botanical and geological specimens, and we hoped to perfect our experience of the Himalaya. Well, we had brought back a mixture of defeats and victories, a taste both of triumph and of bitterness. And, after all, the alternate successes and defeats through which we had known now the rapture of triumph and now the chagrin of retreat was the very image of life itself. It was the variations of chance and weather that gave me this record of our doings, a record which I thought little of at the time and which was in any case one of the minor products of the expedition; and it was those same variations that deprived us of the peak for which we had put forth all our strength—and which we were forced to give up. However, to give up an ascent often demands of the mountaineer more courage and clearness of thought than daring requires of him.

Where the opinion of the general public is concerned, it is true that our victory would have made more noise than our defeat. But we attached little importance to the trumpets of fame. More important for us was the fact that from the first this hard-fought battle had conformed to the uncertainty and unfairness of all battles. And the most precious thing we brought back from it was probably the unassuaged desire of achievement which was already making us say “We will come back again.” We had given our best to this expedition. We had struggled to the very frontiers of exhaustion. We had turned back because in going on we would have risked death uselessly.

Jean Giono has written, “They tell you that it is necessary to succeed in life, but I tell you that it is necessary to live.” To this axiom, which is an exact illustration of our mountaineering philosophy, we could answer, “We have lived.”

We had lived as intensely as man can live. The best and most valuable gift this attempt had brought us was the feeling of dissatisfaction, the desire for revenge which, dully, we began to

experience. Subconsciously we were already laying the foundations of a return in the distant future—"Or perhaps next year." True, we were bringing back in our bags and cases strange stones, unknown plants, photographs of legendary places, a film recording adventure itself; all this was safely stored, indexed, and in its proper place, and alone sufficed to justify our journey. But the most precious part was not written in any log-book or pictured in any film. It was within us—the host of stirring memories and vivid pictures; the multiple wonder which words cannot convey and which the tricks of writing would distort if one tried to express it.

What delighted me most of all, at the end, was to find intact within me the impulses and longings I had cherished at the beginning of the expedition. "Intact" is not quite the right word. For these were new longings, quite new desires, that were already bubbling up in us. We would go out again and climb that peak—and then go on and climb others—and then on again, to other mountains. For, if I were asked to put into one phrase our conception of existence, I would choose the words of the poet, "*Que ta vie soit un perpétuel départ!*"

With the Botanist

THE uninitiated, even some mountaineers, may be asking themselves what on earth a "gardener" can find to do on a Himalayan expedition.

Generally speaking, he is tolerated. More often he is left rather on the fringe of things; for folk suspect that he detracts from the epic and sporting aspect of an expedition with his big aluminium collecting-box, his packing-cases, his lenses, and his botanist's outfit—the attire made familiar by old engravings. In addition, he takes along innumerable presses to hold the day's harvest between two sheets of blotting-paper, and these must travel in the rucksacks or on top of the loads of the coolies. Finally, this bizarre individual is invariably the last to reach camp in the evening.

Some praise is due to the climbers, hurrying to get within reach of their coveted objective so as to attempt it at the most favourable time, for bearing with him. Similar problems, however, confront the botanist, especially when (as is nearly always the case) his time is very narrowly limited. During the approach and return marches difficulties crowd upon him. From the very first day until the end of the journey he is collecting, recording, drying and packing seeds and plants. If he is a climber himself he has often to gaze up at summits which he cannot try to climb, and must chafe under the grins and gibes of the mountaineers; his mission lies elsewhere and his days for accomplishing it are numbered.

This expedition lasted for one hundred and thirty-three days. Sixty-two of them were occupied by the voyage out and back, buying food, dealing with exchange, official visits and so forth. That left only seventy-one days available for effective work, from which another fifteen must be subtracted for waiting for coolies when

moving out of one valley into another. Without counting days lost through snowfalls, repairing packing-cases, and drying plants and seeds, there were only about fifty-six days for botanizing, and the work had to be unremitting if we were to bring back a rich harvest.

The English scientists who had already—in 1952 and in 1954—botanized in the area west of Kathmandu were lucky, for they had the whole period from March to November to work in. They were spared the long approach marches, and the coming of the monsoon found them established in high villages in a position to study the flowering of the plants at the right season—July to September. For us the problem was very different. We had to march along with the climbers in order to reach our site at the proper time for collecting plants and seeds, and ten days' lagging behind might well have meant returning with empty hands. And the monsoon lasted for an abnormally long period in 1954. High up, bad weather prevailed every day, and snow and cold put a sudden and complete stop to all life on the high plateaus of Tibet and Nepal. Never have I seen such an abrupt arresting of growth as I saw then.

Nethertheless, we were lucky enough to find the autumnal flower-limit waiting for us when we reached the higher lands. As we crossed the upper pastures, the green moraines, the rocks and the scree, we found numerous Gentians, both annuals and perennials. There were also *Anaphalis*—the “everlasting-flowers” of the high Himalaya—growing from 4 inches to a foot in height; they looked like wax or paper flowers, put there out of respect to the Buddhas which inhabit such places.

The many Edelweisses, from the very small ones to those 20 inches in height, with greenish-yellow or dirty-white flowers, did not impress us so pleasantly as the pure-white woolly flowers of the Alpine variety. Perhaps it was because our Alpine flower is less common in its habitat than its Himalayan sister. But what delight it was to find the lovely Himalayan Poppy still flowering and seeding in the middle of October! With its blue or violet corolla and its downy foliage of tender green, usually ornamented with a plentiful brown or red fleece, this elegant and decorative

plant seemed very frail to survive at heights of 17,000 to 20,000 feet. I always felt remorseful as I gathered these flowers to dry them, and wondered how such delicate corollas would react to the blotting-paper.

On the pastures we found small late *Primulas* still trying to flower. Near Menlungtse it was the Sikkim *Primula* that showed us its last greenish-yellow flowers, but the Burhel—the Himalayan Bouquetin—had completely eaten off all the leaves. Speaking of Burhel, I am reminded of the numerous skulls of this animal, still bearing the magnificent horns, which we found beneath rocks and steep walls and among moraines, without ever finding any of the other bones of the skeletons.

After we had botanized along the walls of Menlungtse and up to the Gaurisankar Glacier we were overtaken by the bad weather, which did not make our work any easier. Besides collecting, this work included the usual annotations consisting of a label bearing the name of the plant (if it was known), its number in order, the date of collecting, and the height at which it was found. These details were repeated in the Record Book, together with its habitat, a description of the terrain where it grew, its colour, its height, its position with regard to the sun, and its possible association with other local vegetation.

Fine weather facilitated our work; but when the monsoon continued beyond its time things became a little complicated, especially when we had to dry our plants in the evening on little makeshift heaters contrived from two or three hot stones. It only needed one moment of inattention, one piece of thoughtlessness, to destroy half our collection. And if that happened we knew (for it is a classic fatality) that it would be the most precious plants that would be destroyed. The everyday Himalayan problems, problems of weather, wind, sun, and snow for the mountaineer, had their equivalents for the botanist. There were unpleasant surprises on the journey; water getting into the tent, a porter letting the "herbarium" box fall into a stream, getting up at first light to find everything white outside and the thermometer fallen considerably.

I was astonished to observe how well certain flowers resisted

the cold, especially the Gentians and Anaphalis, which suffered little damage through the alterations in temperature. But if the cold and snow persisted for several days the Alpine vegetation went into complete retirement, and seed-bearing plants stretched themselves on the ground to give new fruition to the earth. Then, for the botanist, there was only one thing to do: go down as quickly as possible to the neighbourhood of the villages and prospect in the valley-bottoms.

At Namche Bazaar, the village 11,500 feet above the sea where the route for Everest branches off, everything was already in a state of repose except for a few Gentians, Edelweiss, Aconites and Anaphalis. But 1,700 feet lower down, as we followed the deep gorge of the Bothe Kosi, we were welcomed by the song of Cicadas, reminiscent of semi-tropical forests. What a contrast in a few hours of travelling! Pteris, Adiantum and numerous other Ferns which at home we cultivate in cold frames were growing among the wet boulders where the sun could scarcely penetrate. On the heaps of damp and mossy rocks grew graceful Louseworts with blossoms of a tender rose-pink, so small (little more than an inch) and so delicate that it was difficult to gather them. Rhododendrons were still met with, their flowers of red or yellow opening their last buds; and by the river-side we saw that delicate and charming member of the Papilionaceae called *Parochetus Communis*, with trefoil leaves, whose blue flowers turning opaline gave us confidence of future collecting. When one considers that this plant is met with in the mountains of Central Africa, just as some other Himalayan species are found in the Alps of Europe, one realizes the vastness of the dispersion of species which presents such a problem to botanical geographers.

I must also mention the thrilling discovery of the Unknown Flower—a new species never before described. Such a discovery often causes the botanist much perplexity. What meticulous cuts to dissect it, what books to consult, what plants to compare and information to obtain before naming it for eternity!

But I, who am a gardener, found many other absorbing problems in this kind of botanizing. For instance, the observation of the conditions of life among plants. I remember the orchids

we found; some on the branches of trees in perpetual shade or in full sunlight, others growing on rocks facing east or north, still others in undergrowth or on the grass-lands, and those which flower once only, completely exhausting their reserves.

What lessons there are to be drawn from these!

Then there were the plants that live at high altitudes (21,000 feet, on Everest!) like the Snow Rhododendron observed at 20,000 feet, which resembled a dwarf arborescent shrub creeping on the ground. The same species collected at 13,500 feet grew to a height of 12 to 16 inches. Again, there was the immigration of certain species to be observed, especially those from America. I was most astonished to find, in a wild state, large colonies of *Tagetas* with red and yellow flowers, little *Zinnias* with red flowers, and *Asclepia Curassavica*, scarlet flowers with yellow coronules, which according to horticulturists are only a variety of the type but which in Nepal are found far away from the neighbourhood of villages. I must mention, too, the composition of the soil—an essential matter in flower-culture; the majority of Himalayan plants grow in non-calcareous regions. All of which may help us to understand the disappointments we encounter when we try to cultivate these flowers in our lower lands.

The aim of the foregoing few lines is chiefly to illustrate the work and craft of the botanist, rather than the large number of plants collected. They are addressed primarily to our mountaineering friends, to show them that they should not omit to add one or two naturalists to their party when they undertake big explorations—even at the risk of making their programme more complicated. For then, whatever degree of success may be theirs, they can be happy to bring back a new contribution to Science.

ALBERT ZIMMERMANN,

Geneva, 13 January, 1955.

APPENDIX II

Medical

1. IN preparing our medical outfit, Dr. Berthoud of Geneva based it on the experience gained by Dr. Chevalley of Bex (Switzerland) during several expeditions, including the two Swiss Everest Expeditions of 1952. The conditions directing the choice of medicines were the presence of malaria in the lower regions of the Himalaya, and of intestinal bacteria to which European systems were unused; from this arose the necessity of taking a large supply of Paludrin and of disinfectants for the digestive apparatus.

On the approach marches at moderate altitudes and as far as Base Camp, the commonest diseases were skin infections, necessitating the use of Sulfanimides, or for more serious cases (and at high altitudes) the Antibiotics, especially Penicillin, Aureomycine, and Terramycin. In the higher camps, where the circulation was slowed up by thickening of the blood, it became advisable to use the Vaso-Dilatators: Acetylcholine, Pricol, Ronicol and particularly Trafuril Ointment. The drawback to Acetylcholine is that it requires the use of ampoules of distilled water, which usually break due to congelation. These products have to be used with great care, for there is a danger of promoting a fatal haemorrhage.

We also took the necessary instruments for operating for appendicitis or strangled hernia with a local anaesthetic, and were provided with enough medicaments to give medical attention to some few of the population. The latter swarmed round our tents at the end of each day's march, usually bringing hopeless cases to us.

2. Health of Expedition Members.

Before setting out all members were inoculated against Smallpox, Tetanus, Cholera, Typhus, and Paratyphus A and B.

Thanks to the exclusive use of boiled water intestinal illness was almost entirely avoided.

As a prophylactic against Malaria we used Paludrin in doses of .1 gram three times, or .3 grams once, per week.

During the approach march we had chiefly to look after foot blisters and small infected wounds.

Throat infections were combated successfully by using Elkosin in very large doses, 2×5 tablets at intervals of eight hours. We did not have to deal with a single accident.

3. *Sherpas and Coolies.*

All of these, both men and women, possess iron constitutions. Without injury to themselves, they carry loads of 60 or 70 lb. up hill and down dale for 12 to 16 miles every day, and that during bad weather and for weeks at a time.

The most common maladies were Pyodernia and infective sores. At times the coolies suffered from fever, fairly acute but very transitory. In some cases it had the nature of Malaria.

4. *Native Population.*

When camp was made near villages on the approach march the local people came to consult us. Most of them suffered from skin infections, chronic purulent Otitis or Panaris (Whitlow). It was not possible to make diagnoses of internal complaints as the patients could not be interrogated owing to our ignorance of the Nepalese language.

5. *State of Health from the Base Camp Onwards (16,300 feet and 18,700 feet).*

During the acclimatization period, which lasted about 15 days for all members of the expedition, each person suffered from breathlessness and Cephalæa. At Chhule on October 10 a molar was extracted; the patient could not be anaesthetized so the means utilized was Novocaine at 2 per cent, a strength sufficient for some purposes but used at 4 per cent by dentists. The forceps could not be employed, for the teeth had split vertically and then broken across. It was necessary to release the maxillary and push the gum

and then to use a lever between the maxillary and the tooth. The operation lasted an hour and a quarter. The open sore, like all wounds incurred above 17,000 feet, did not close until much later (about thirty days), when we had returned to the plain of India.

From Camp II onwards, that is to say above 21,600 feet, some climbers suffered from Cephalea, vomiting, and loss of appetite. Everyone had insomnia, in spite of using sleeping-tablets, and displayed the phenomena of "Cheyne-Stokes breathing". The Sherpas displayed the same symptoms but, in general, less markedly.

At the end of several days Anorexia produced a progressive weakening; it appears important to combat this Anorexia rather than the lack of oxygen properly so-called.

The Himalayan cough resisted the use of Codeine. The cold, Enemy Number One, produced only superficial frostbites, more especially on the extremities of those of us who had already undergone amputations. Loss of weight was considerable, amounting to about 10 per cent of the weight of each European.

DR. FRANZ LOCHMATTER.