

IN UNKNOWN BALTISTAN

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# In Unknown Baltistan.

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The narrative of a record mountaineering expedition. The authoress and her husband made the first ascent of the unexplored Hoh-Lumba glacier, and then accomplished an exciting traverse of a magnificent range hitherto untrodden by human foot. The striking photographs lend additional interest to this famous lady-climber's account of her unique journey.



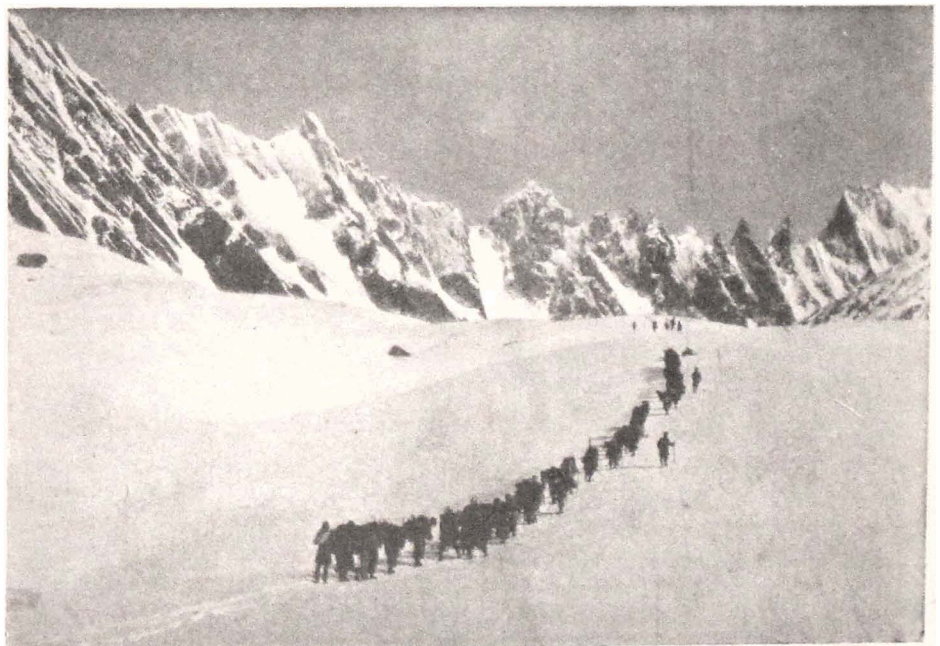
NE of the most exciting journeys of our last expedition to the North-West Himalayas was the exploration of the unknown Hoh-Lumba glacier and the first ascent of the great saddle at its source. After three weeks' marching from Srinagar, Kashmir, we came on June 18th to the small village of Hoh, at the entrance of the Hoh valley, which leads to the glacier. Our *munshi*, or interpreter, and a village chief had been sent on ahead to collect coolies and supplies, so no time was lost, and the following day the caravan—made up of six Europeans, native servants, a long file of luggage coolies, sixteen sheep, and ten goats—started up the Hoh nala, or ravine. A narrow, difficult path, often blocked by fallen rocks, winds upward along barren mountain flanks overhanging the narrow gorge, through which the noisy, khaki-coloured Hoh torrent fights its tortuous way to join the Braldu river far below. By 3 p.m. the caravan emerged on a wide green maidan, or meadow, sprinkled with trees, among which cows grazed or drank at musical rivulets. This was Nangma Tapsa (eleven thousand eight hundred feet), and here camp was pitched under the moraine end of the new glacier.

Rain and snow fell at night and most of the next morning, and while we waited a day for better weather coolies laden with wood were sent up higher to make a *cache*, for, judging

from appearances, we had nearly reached the timber-line. This means a lot of trouble when snow-camps are made, as coolies hired to carry wood will only take the smallest possible loads, and, if not watched constantly, will throw away sticks as they go along, so that by the time camp is reached the burdens of ten men equal about what two might carry. When the cook has taken what he needs, and the coolies begged or stolen what they want, little remains for future use, and it is therefore necessary to keep twenty men daily on the move, bringing up or transporting fuel to higher camps.

Starting again when the weather improved, a thousand-foot climb brought us to the ice, where a problem confronted us. A short distance above, at the base of a mountain promontory, two large glaciers ascended in slightly different directions. This was quite unexpected, for the Survey map indicates but one long glacier.

Having decided, with the aid of a compass,



From a)

THE CARAVAN ASCENDING THE GREAT HOH-LUMBA GLACIER.

[Photo.]

upon the one which ran in the direction we wished to go, we headed for this. Late winter snow covered everything—crevasses, moraines, and lower mountain spurs alike. Where on other glaciers patches of earth for tents had been found and a little grass for the goats, only a jutting ledge of rocks broke here and there the great white mantle that in June still held the mountain world in the sleep of winter. The only animal adapted to this environment is the ibex, which we saw in large numbers on the bare spots of the mountain-sides. Our goats and sheep were sent back to the meadow below—the sheep to be killed and forwarded as needed—

snow, presented one of the most impressive and bizarre mountain scenes I have ever met with. The “aiguilles” of the Mont Blanc chain if transported here would be but the veriest offshoots of these ethereal towering pinnacles of the Himalayas.

Well in advance of the lagging coolies the guides and ourselves climbed to the top of a large, snow-capped rock, where we are seen in the next photograph having a look around. In the vast ring of mountains there was but one depression, a snow *col* connecting the tall aiguille rising in the centre of the picture with a snow mountain, which was, perhaps, climbable,



From a) DOCTOR AND MRS. WORKMAN AND THEIR GUIDES MAKING A SURVEY.

[Photo.

and we continued onwards, prepared to camp on snow.

After a night of continuous snow and wind it cleared, and when we had torn out the hard-frozen tent-pegs the ice-coated tents were packed and the slow-moving coolies put in motion. They are seen in the first photograph ascending the great glacier, which is walled in by mighty peaks, increasing in grandeur the higher one goes.

The surface of the glacier is very undulating, rising and descending in snowy hillocks, appearing, as in this view, like the slopes of a snow-mountain. Toward its culmination the Hoh-Lumba, bending north, spread into an elevated snow-basin circled by lines of immense granite needles. At that early season their remarkable knife-like and sword-like forms, dashed with fresh

and would offer a view of the unknown beyond, so alluring to the mountaineer in unexplored lands.

To arrive at the base of this *col* there was still a sweep of ascending glacier, which would take the coolies at their waning gait two hours to reach, and we accordingly pushed on, leaving them resting and grumbling below. Arrived under the great ice-fall descending from the *col*, we had lunch on a snow-slope safe from avalanches, and discussed the chances of an ascent the next day. An hour passed and not a coolie appeared. At last two men came up to say the caravan would go no higher, as many of the men were mountain-sick, and there was neither wood nor water where we wished to stop. It was certainly an inhospitable place to put up in; there was not a rock in sight, and no water—

only the great snow expanse stretching below and the stern mountain sentinels watching above. Yet camp there we must, if the high saddle was to be climbed the day after, so I remained waiting while the others returned to the coolies to tell them that I could not remain overnight without a tent, and to drive them up.

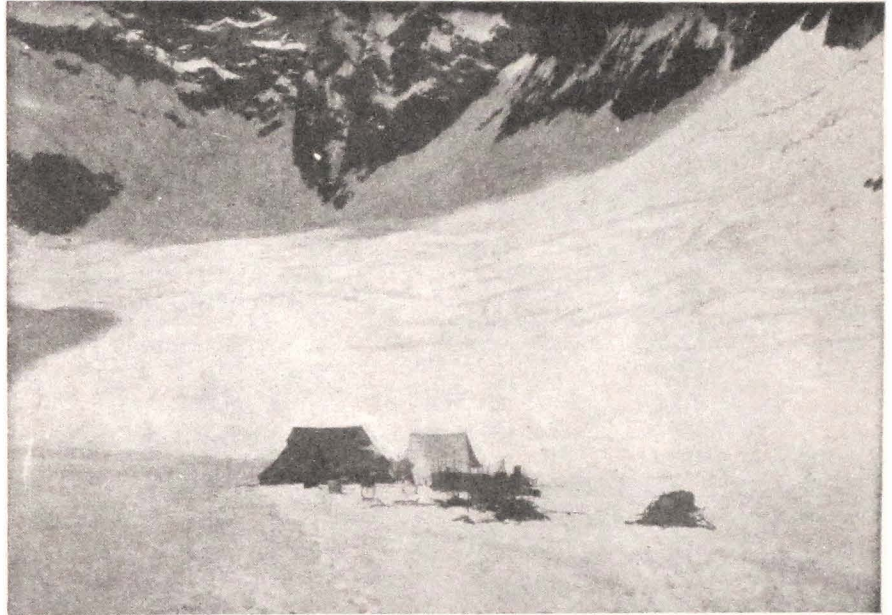
Two hours I waited alone in the heart of this stupendous ice-world, where the silence of Nature becomes at moments more oppressive and nerve-racking than the constant booming of cannon. This intense silence was pierced once or twice by the sullen roar of an avalanche, which could be seen starting like a snowball from a sharp slant, gathering force as it rushed downward, until far below, in immense blocks, bounding and leaping one over the other, it crashed upon the glacier, throwing out a blinding snow-mist that obscured the view for half a mile across. Here, at the height of Mont Blanc, it will hardly be believed that I suffered greatly from the heat of the sun; but such was the case, for between two and three o'clock the sun thermometer at my side registered one hundred and seventy degrees Fahrenheit.

Finally the coolies came dragging along, and when they had all arrived and deposited their loads we put them to work tramping down the soft snow to make places for the tents. The next photograph shows "Camp des Aiguilles" pitched at this spot, at an altitude of fifteen thousand eight hundred feet. The provision boxes and wood piles may be seen in front of the tents.

By the time the tents were furnished with our scanty camp furniture the sun disappeared, and at five o'clock it was freezing hard—a strange contrast to a temperature of one hundred and seventy degrees in the sun recorded three hours earlier. To make a fire at these snow-bivouacs a rough stove has to be improvised with three or four stones. As none were at hand, and the coolies had neglected to bring them up from below, we had to content ourselves with boiling snow for water to make tea, which is a long process, and our dinner consisted of tinned meats warmed over a Primus stove. Before I turned into my sleeping-bag

for the night I called the shivering cook to my tent and told him that, as we were to stay two nights at that place, he must see that there was a good dinner of roast meat and plenty of water for a bath when we returned from the mountain the next evening. He grumbled, saying he could not build a fire. "Send the men for stones; there will be time enough to-morrow," I replied, inexorably, and tied the tent flaps against the icy outside blast.

The guides called us at three-thirty the next morning, and in an hour we stood under a starlit sky in a temperature of twenty degrees adjusting the rope between us for the start for the pass. We had hoped to find a way up the high ice-fall, but on reaching the base the huge



"CAMP DES AIGUILLES," FIFTEEN THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED FEET ABOVE SEA-LEVEL.  
*From a Photo.*

*séracs* were found too formidable; so we decided to skirt the rock-wall to the right, crossing some yawning chasms and traversing the abrupt snow-slants perched above a series of perpendicular precipices upon the flank of the peak to the right of the *col*. By the time we arrived at the upper slopes it was necessary to eat something, for we were thoroughly chilled, in spite of the exercise. After a hasty lunch, composed of a kola biscuit and a bit of congealed meat, we were off again. Absolute silence reigned amongst us, broken only by the sharp click of the ice-axe on the frozen surface as the leader chopped out each step of the way.

On we went, higher and higher, catching now and again glimpses of the tents poised like flies on the snow-fields two thousand feet below. At last we arrived on a plateau, where a halt was

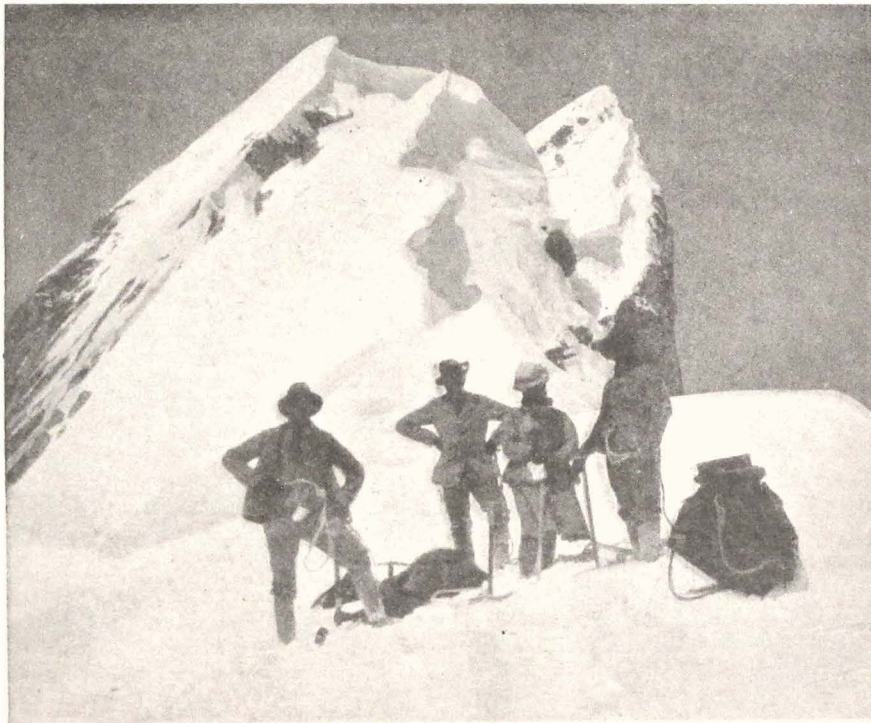
made before attacking the final thousand feet to the top.

The last part was less steep, but the heat became as oppressive as the cold had been painful in the early morning, and the effects of the rarefied atmosphere were obvious.

Such annoyances were, however, forgotten when, finishing a long slope, we realized that the top of the *col* was attained. Great peaks loomed ahead from the Hunza side, and we were pressing forward to see it all, when the head guide called, "Stop! it is a cornice." We halted instantly, realizing at once as we glanced around that we were standing on a huge curling snow-cornice overhanging a terrific precipice.

at a time could do this in safety he returned, and I went out next to where I could look over the wonderful cornice. The sensation was extraordinary. I stood alone on a glittering ice-shelf, suspended, as it were, in mid-air. To the right and left and in front, as far as the eye could reach, rose a mighty world of unexplored summits; and four thousand feet beneath, separated from me only by a snow-band, swept a placid white glacier.

As every Alpinist knows, such moments are stupendous—more awesome, yet filled with more keen enjoyment, than months of ordinary existence. The wind lashed my clothes about me; and suddenly appreciating its force, and



ON THE SUMMIT OF THE COL DES AIGUILLES—ASCENDED FOR THE FIRST TIME BY THE AUTHORESS AND HER PARTY.  
*From a Photo.*

This rounded ice-tongue projected far beyond the main mountain, and, having consequently no support, any sudden impact on its surface might cause it to cave in and disappear into the abyss below, taking us with it.

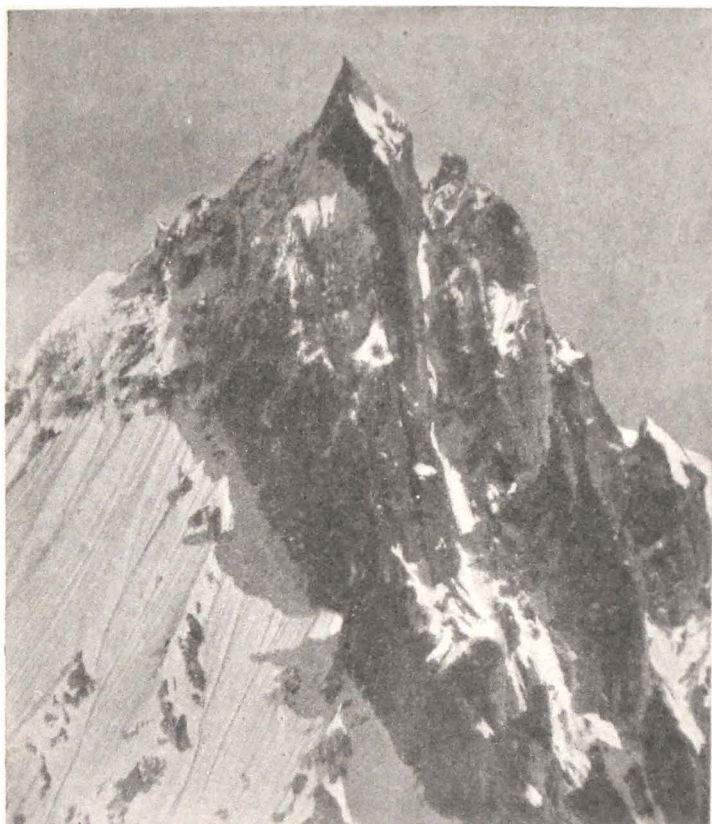
Cautiously we moved back to the solid snow-plateau, where, although a gale was blowing, the camera was extracted from the ruck-sack and a photograph of the party taken by the porter. The Col des Aiguilles, ascended for the first time by our party, proved to be eighteen thousand six hundred feet high.

"I must have a look over that cornice before I descend," I said to the guide, so, firmly held by us all, he advanced slowly out upon it, feeling each step as he went. Finding that one person

the fact that a few steps forward might precipitate me into eternity, I turned and joined the others in their place of safety. The descent to camp was made in safety, though we reached it cold and tired. The resourceful cook regaled us with a dinner of roast mutton and custard pudding, thus showing that he had managed to light a fire and conduct his culinary operations creditably even in the icy wilderness of Hoh-Lumba.

Descending again to its junction with the Hoh-Lumba, we ascended the Lasbon, the second long glacier, which runs nearly parallel with the Hoh.

Much later in the season of the same year, after completing our record ascents on the



ON THE WAY TO THE BOLUCHO—A BEAUTIFUL INACCESSIBLE PEAK, WITH A SUMMIT OF NEEDLE-LIKE SHARPNESS. [Photo.]

Chogo Loongma glacier, as previously described in *THE WIDE WORLD MAGAZINE*,\* instead of descending the Chogo Loongma to return to human habitation we decided to attempt the passage of the great range separating it from another glacier to the east.

Of course, this meant taking the whole caravan and camp kit, which was likely to be a difficult business, particularly as the passes, if traversable at a'l, were sure to be very high and snowy.

We selected the Bolucho, an east branch of the Chogo Loongma, and pushed up it with the caravan in quest of a practicable pass. The guides went two days' journey ahead to make a reconnaissance. Following them up we met at a camp at fourteen thousand feet, where they brought the news that there was a fine pass at the source of the glacier, which would probably prove practicable for the coolies. The telephotograph reproduced above shows a beautiful inaccessible peak, with

a summit of needle-like sharpness, which we passed on our way.

Next morning we broke camp before five, as the pass was three or more hours distant, and it was desirable if possible to take the caravan across the same day.

The hard glacier, which offered good walking, was soon reached, and in three hours we were at the base of the *col*, where, on a snow field just touched by the early sunlight, everyone had breakfast, the sheep and goats nibbling snow as placidly as they would have eaten grass. The chief who had charge of the coolies remonstrated, but I had insisted on bringing the animals for use in future camps, and, as it proved, they walked better and gave less-trouble in making the difficult passage than the coolies. After breakfast the guides led the way, over tracks they had made the previous day, up the rather steep slopes leading to the *col*. The unique photograph at the foot of this page shows our caravan.

With snowy heights expanding on all sides it was a pretty sight to see the long line of men and animals ascending the virgin pass, now traversed by human feet for the first time. All went smoothly until the narrow snow *col* was reached,



THE CARAVAN TRAVELING THE BOLUCHO PASS, NEVER BEFORE TRODDEN BY HUMAN FEET. [Photo.]

\* See our issue for January, 1904. — ED.

where we arrived before the porters soon after ten o'clock.

In a warm snow depression we took observations which made the height of the saddle seventeen thousand one hundred feet. The descent from this was evidently to be a difficult matter for the fifty-five men under our lead. First there was a cornice, through which the guides had broken a path, but which still looked formidable enough as a coolie passage. A rope was tightly fastened above it, to offer a handhold to the coolies as they trod backwards between the narrow sides of the cornice to the wall below. This snow-wall dropped below the cornice for about one thousand feet at an angle of sixty degrees, to where it ended in easy slants, and seemed at first glance an unconquerable barrier for coolies to pass. After heavy new snow it would have been dangerous even for experts, for its entire surface was furrowed by the passage of previous avalanches, but the weather was settled and the new snow of recent storms had already fallen, so there was no danger to be apprehended on that score. While the coolies were arriving on the saddle the two guides cut steps for several hundred feet on the other side.

The next picture, which shows me surrounded by the livestock, is probably the

first and only photograph ever taken of goats and sheep standing at over seventeen thousand feet above the sea-level.

On the return of the guides it was decided that I should lead the way down the wall roped between the head guide and porter, the second guide and Dr. Hunter Workman remaining above to assist the coolies.

Now the passage of even a broken cornice may be exciting. A solid but abominably steep kind of spiral staircase had been hewn out. Reaching the last step of this, with one foot suspended in the air, it was necessary to face inward and take a side leap to a distant step on

the wall. I held my breath, for the certainty of alighting on that step was not absolute, and the view of the downward vista was appalling. However, no accident happened. We next descended the wall straight, keeping the rope very taut between us, and had gone down about four hundred feet when the others began helping the coolies one at a time through the cornice. With this assistance and the aid afforded by the fastened rope they made the passage comfortably, and started down the big steps of the wall. In the meantime we had moved a few paces across the wall, out of their direct track, and in view of rapidly ensuing events it was fortunate that we did so.

The guide was busy cutting steps across an

avalanche-scored *couloir*, when we heard the sizzle of snow rapidly falling over the route just behind us. As we turned, startled, to see what had caused the avalanche, a coolie rushed downwards past us at lightning speed, with arms and legs in the air, grooving out the snow in his flight, and throwing a thick, powdery mist over us all.

There is a guide at Chamonix noted for making descents in fabulously short time, but his record is now broken, for this Balti coolie glissaded down that thousand-foot wall in less than two minutes! He landed,

too, safely head uppermost at the bottom, which is more than the mountaineer would probably have done. Although told by the guide how to step and use his stick, the coolie, being utterly ignorant of snow-walking, preferred his own way of treading, and had either made a mis-step or entered voluntarily upon that lightning glissade.

This exciting episode set the nervous ones, who were peering over the cornice above, to remonstrating, although it was not till a second coolie whizzed by that they became vociferous. This second unfortunate, with a tent on his back, was more erratic in his movements than the first, and treated us to the spectacle of a



MRS. WORKMAN, WITH THE SHEEP AND GOATS, STANDING AT OVER SEVENTEEN THOUSAND FEET ABOVE SEA-LEVEL.

From a Photo.



series of somersaults, at the completion of which he was seen sprawling at the bottom, while the tent, having extricated itself from his back, lay an eighth of a mile beyond him on the glacier.

Two other coolies had meantime, by careful treading, passed safely over more than half the wall, while we remained stationary, watching the progress of events. Finally a third blundered, and slid past us with a speed of the four winds. He carried a box of stores, which during the rapid gymnastics of his downward career left his back and burst, its contents of Bovril rations and Huntley and Palmer biscuit-tins flying in all directions through the scintillating snow-dust.

But the propitiation of the mountain gods with food offerings was getting a serious matter for us, and we began to tremble for the rest of our equipment. There were also other aspects to the case. The coolies below, while apparently unhurt, were calling out disparaging remarks concerning their tumble to their *confrères* above, who in turn opened a war of words on their two leaders. Meantime we waited patiently half-way down, standing first on one foot, then on the other, by way of resting, for sitting on snow at an angle of sixty degrees is more fatiguing than standing. Soon a call came from the chief in the cornice: "All the remaining fifty are in a panic and will not move," he said.

Next, the five at the base of the wall, who had our beds and other necessary effects, declared they would not ascend. The guide with me called up that he would return, and with the others make a new path down if all would descend; but no, they would not hear of it. We were indeed in a dilemma, but as noon was approaching, and the bulk of our kit was above, my only alternative seemed to be to climb to the top again and enter into further

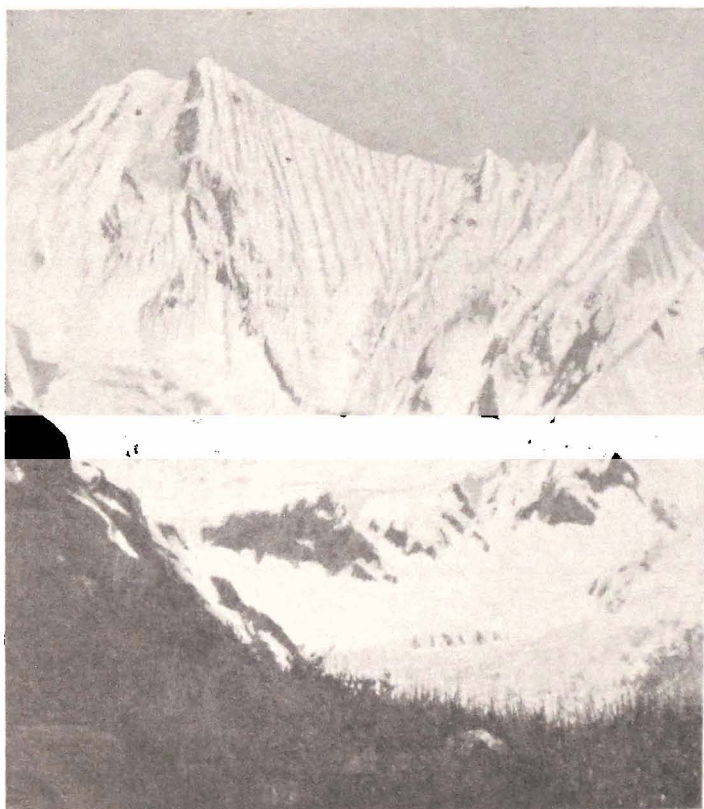
negotiations. We did this, and it was a hot climb, with the sun blazing from the zenith.

On arriving on the *col* again I sent the cook, who spoke a little Balti, to the group of coolies, who sat at a short distance without their loads. I took a firm stand, saying I would go by that route and no other. They were also told that the guides would remake the path to the base, and they were offered baksheesh. While they were arguing among themselves two hours passed, during which the guides reconstructed the path down the entire wall. This accomplished, I suggested that some of the coolies should inspect the path without their loads. A few consented to do this, and, having passed safely up and down the first fifty feet, after much parleying persuaded the others to reluctantly shoulder their loads and prepare to go.

This time, not caring to be called back again, I decided to remain behind with the others and see all the coolies down first. Assisted by the head guide, they filed down slowly, and by three-thirty all had passed, and we stood watching the sheep and goats jumping composedly and with perfect security from step to step in their descent of the wall.

Some anxiety had been felt as to how they would handle such a veritable Alpine descent,

but when we saw them do it we wished that all our coolies had been sheep, for had they been so a whole day would not have been passed in argument and ceaseless effort in the first crossing of the Bolucho Ia. When the whole caravan were at last sitting below on the right side of the pass we roped and descended. Before continuing down to the glacier a number came to be examined, one pointing to his ankle, another to his wrist or neck. But, in spite of their adventures, there was not a



A BEAUTIFUL SNOW MOUNTAIN, WITH UNCLIMBABLE WALLS CHANNELLED IN AN EXTRAORDINARY FASHION BY CEASELESS AVALANCHES. [Photo.]

sprain or a broken neck among them; all were as well as when they left camp.

When some hours later rest was found in a cold snow-camp on the glacier my satisfaction was complete, for by steady persistence we had accomplished one of the great tasks of the summer, and brought the whole caravan over the icy range separating the Chogo from the Kero Loongma, never before trodden by human foot.

We next turned our attention to the ascent of the unknown Hucho-Alchori glacier, at the entrance of which stands the splendid snow mountain seen in the preceding telephoto., the unclimbable walls of which are channelled and riven in an extraordinary manner by ceaseless avalanches.

The first two camps on this glacier were named First and Second Bear Camps, as numerous traces of bears were found near them. Behind my tent I found a large piece of white bear fur, which possibly the owner lost in an affray with some of his species. One of the Gurkhas encountered a big brown bear, which took to flight on perceiving the small Asiatic. Foxes ran about among the tent-pegs on moonlight nights and wolves made doleful music after dark, but by daylight they all kept at a respectful distance. In fact, it always seems to me that mountains, hard as they are to conquer, offer a better bag to the explorer in the Himalayas than do wild animals to the sportsman.

At Second Bear Camp, on the moraine of the Alchori glacier, we left the main camp, and with Mummery tents and a few coolies made a dash for the great ice-fall leading to the snow wall which forms the Alchori col.

After passing a long stretch of ascending

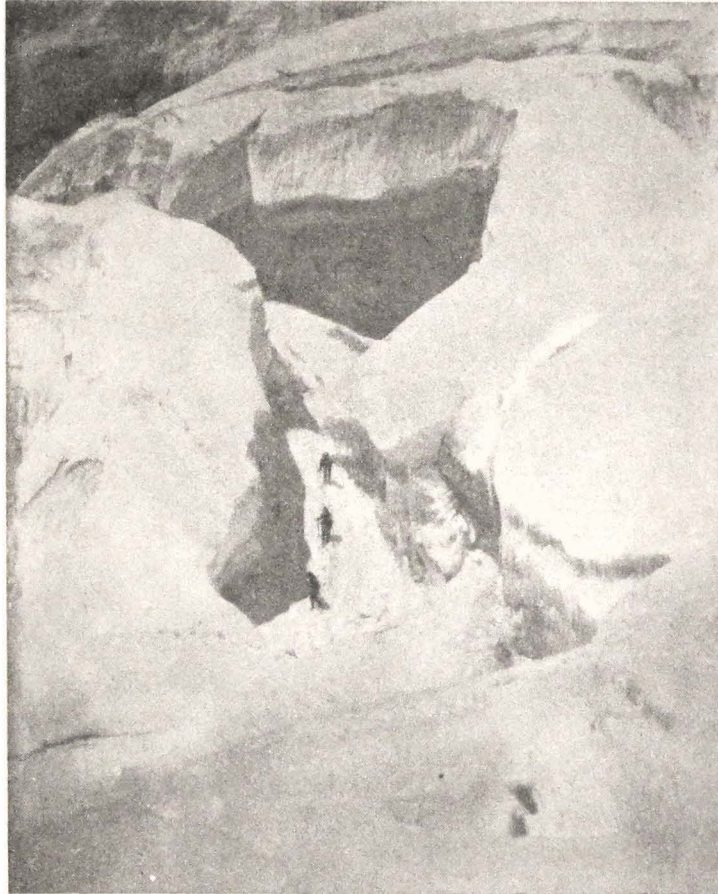
glacier we came to a great mass of high broken snow *séracs* which stretched upward and across, barring the way like a frozen cataract. With assistance from the guides the coolies surmounted these, and continued climbing fairly well up the steep snow-fields above, until another great barrier of snow-pinnacles and deep chasms loomed above us, around which

there was no way and through which a route must be cut. With difficulty we induced them to cross some of the jagged snow columns, but the hot sun was melting the snow with alarming rapidity, and after one or two snow-caps had fallen from the *séracs* into the bottomless blue chaos below, our men grew panic-stricken and refused to advance. While they sat waiting, the guides crossed to the left through a sort of valley walled in by crumbling snow-masses. The striking snap-shot here shown was taken as they returned, having found that, by moving quickly

before any new masses broke off, the caravan could pass over the snow-ledge above the line of icicles, which were shedding a continuous stream of water upon the path.

The steepness and gruesomeness of the route before us here may be observed from the photograph. I recall vividly the shouts of terror and prognostications of utter disaster which came from the mouths of the breathless men as, stumbling and falling, they followed us over the crazy path, menaced on either side by toppling snow-masses.

Half an hour later we were all climbing up a big snow-hummock and crossing a shaky snow-bridge, making fair progress, until more cracking, melting, and broken snow impeded our way. Two hours of such exhausting work saw us out



A DANGEROUS PATHWAY—THE GUIDES TRAVERSING AN ICY GULLY WALLED IN BY CRUMBLING SNOW-MASSSES. [Photo. From a]

of the dangerous ice-falls upon a beautiful snow expanse, where camp was pitched at near seventeen thousand feet. A small stream of water was discovered by one of the coolies, resulting from the melting of snow upon the rocks by the fierce heat of the sun, and here we filled all our utensils before the freezing night temperature silenced the musical cascade.

A gorgeous vermilion sunset illumined the line of high peaks rising from the darkening glacier winding below our terrace, after which the cold, darkness, and deathly silence of the uninhabited eternal snows encompassed the bivouac like a curtain.

From what seemed a few minutes of dreamless sleep I was startled from my sleeping-bag by the stentorian voice of the guide, calling "Four o'clock!" In an hour the three guides and I left, in a freezing temperature, to find a way to the pass. We cut a path up a sharp snow-wall leading to some granite rock battlements, which gave us plenty of climbing gymnastics, much needed to restore sluggish circulation. Then more snow-fields led to what we were always finding in this season's climbing—a projecting snow-cornice. We had hoped to find a practicable pass down which we could afterwards take the coolies to the Hispar glacier. But, no—far from it; we had to content ourselves with crawling out singly on the cornice and looking down thousands of feet upon the

broad expanse of the lonely Hispar winding its way toward the sun-baked plains of Hunza-Nagar.

Stepping back from the ice-shelf the porter took a photograph of us standing on the Alchori col over eighteen thousand feet above sea-level. The snow-peaks towering behind in the photograph are mountains of over twenty-five thousand feet, belonging to the wholly unexplored regions north of Hispar. The sight was glorious, and no fault could be found with this first ascent, except that it offered no passage to the other side, unless we cared to try our luck in sliding off the monster cornice.

A short stop for breakfast and we were again on the downward road. We had made the whole ascent and descent in the shade, the sun not touching the upper Alchori in August until after half-past nine in the morning. It was clear and still, and, although very cold, I did not realize the fact when on the summit I stripped off my gloves to handle the camera and barometer.

Finding that we only wished them to return to the lower camp, and that there were no new horrors in store for them, the coolies descended through the difficult places of the day before with astonishing swiftness, evidently eager for the comforts of lower regions. And so ended a summer of conquest among the unparalleled heights of the Himalayas.



ON THE ALCHORI COL, OVER EIGHTEEN THOUSAND FEET HIGH—THE MOUNTAINS IN THE BACKGROUND HAVE NEVER BEEN EXPLORED.

*From a Photo.*