CHAPTER XVII

THE CONQUEST OF JONSONG PEAK: THE SECOND ASCENT

The following morning, June 4, dawned mistily. A slight sprinkling of snow had fallen overnight, but this vanished with the first lick of the kindly sun. The weather *felt* good, and the air was fresh, with that magical tang of the hills that presages a brilliant day. The frost crystals on the grey rocks round glittered defiantly, but slowly, insidiously, the sun absorbed them and relegated them to the Infinite. As on the last occasion when we had left Camp One, so with this ; it was easy to imagine that somewhere hidden by the grey shawls of mist was a little llyn or loch, the still green waters of which had yet to be disturbed by the slim brown trout flashing upwards for their breakfast.

Wood Johnson was stronger, yet it was imperative that he should descend to the Base Camp for medical attention. What wretched luck ! Of all of us he was the one who most deserved to reach the summit. Among the porters who had come up from the Base Camp were some of the Bhutias who had previously grumbled at not being equipped to the same extent as the Sherpas. Several of them now took the opportunity of renewing their grievances, and declared it as their intention not to go on. Fortunately, they were prevailed upon to do so. It was unfortunate that Lobsang was still at the Base Camp, for his influence over the porters was great. Recently, he had completed the arduous task of

getting the remainder of the loads over the Jonsong La, and it had been arranged that as soon as he had had a rest, he should come up with a support party carrying food.

Our first ascent of the Jonsong Peak had been dependent upon speed and good weather ; now, with the arrival of food and fuel both over the Jonsong La and from Lachen, we could afford to play a waiting game should the necessity arise, not an indefinite waiting game, but one that allowed for two or three days' bad weather.

To avoid having to wade through the glacier morass, we left early before the sun had time to soften the snow. The going was delightful. Of all sounds there is none more pleasant to the ear of the mountaineer than the musical creak of frozen snow beneath the nailed boot in the early morning. It is one that to me, at least, is charged with as much delight as the thud of an ice-axe pick meeting ice or the soft silken swish of a pair of ski parting powdery snow. On our first ascent we had waded for hours across the glacier, and up the ice-fall above, now we strolled, conscious that each upward swing of the leg was bringing us with the minimum of effort towards our goal. The porters seemed to realise this, too, and the importance of gaining as much height as possible before the snow was softened by the sun, for they came on well, their tireless gait telling of perfect training, coupled with a physique which makes them the finest natural mountaineers in the world.

In spite of the last few days of hard work, I felt in good training too, and found myself sufficiently far ahead to be able to lounge for an hour in the sun, on the former site of Camp Two. While doing so, I ate a meditative lunch, washing it down with long pulls from a large, new Thermos

flask, which had appeared mysteriously in place of my last one which had been broken on the first ascent. It was my fourth Thermos, for three had been broken, but in every case a new one had appeared in place of the smashed one. I did not think it politic to question Nemu as to the means or methods by which these miracles were accomplished. Naturally of an untidy and careless disposition, I had lost or broken a number of articles, but replacements of these had invariably appeared. Once or twice, it is true, I seemed to detect growls of discontent from other members of the expedition, but it seemed to me tactful not to enquire into them. I preferred to think that Nemu had, in some mysterious manner, discovered the secret of reincarnating the spirits of broken Thermos flasks into newer and better Thermos flasks. In this particular instance the reincarnation had been so successfully accomplished, that I was now the proud possessor of the largest Thermos flask I had yet had. It was, in fact, the twin brother of one that I had seen Hoerlin using. While I was having my lunch, Nemu himself passed, carrying my tent and bedding. As he did so, I noted that his solemn brown eyes rested on the Thermos flask; they seemed to lighten a little, almost twinkle in fact; the creases in his forehead, which gave to him his habitual worried expression, were smoothed for an instant; something—was it a smile?—twitched at the corners of his broad mouth.

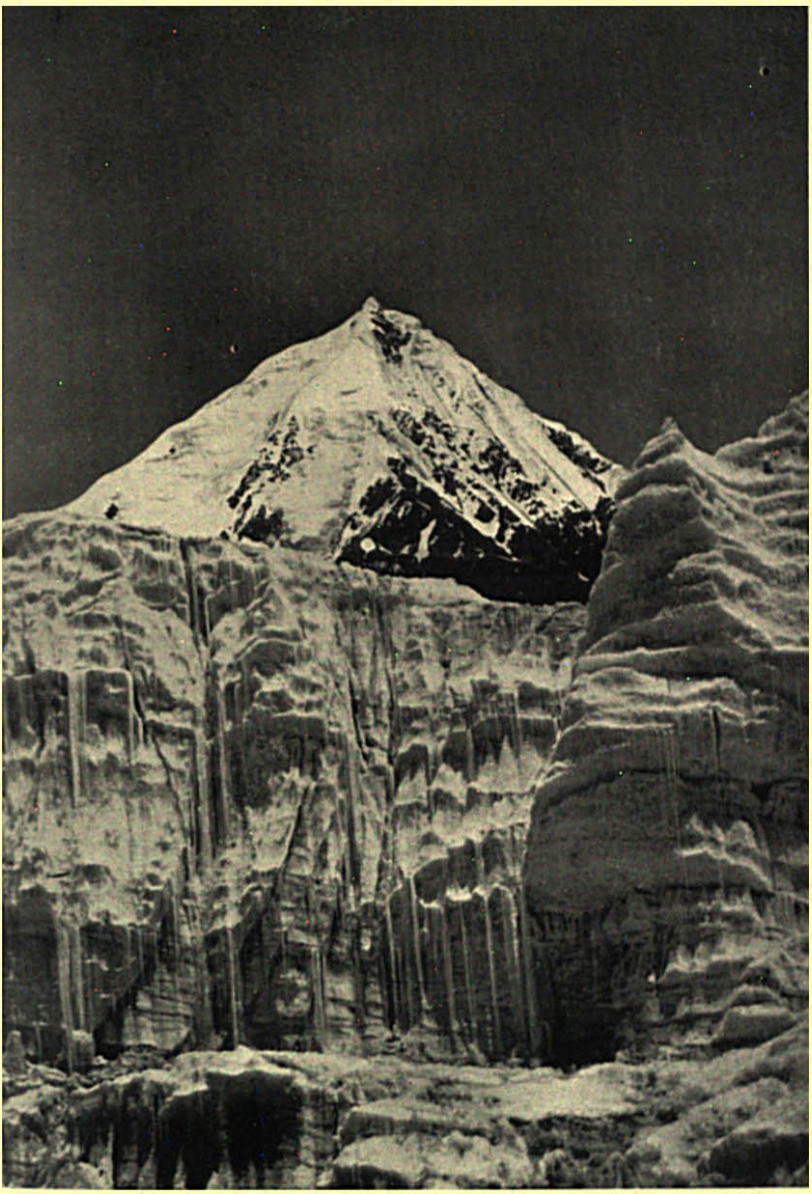
So good was the snow, and so easy the going, that Professor Dyhrenfurth decided not to camp at the site of the former Camp Two, but to push on up to Camp Three. In view of the fact that the porters were carrying very heavy loads, that the altitude was not inconsiderable, that the Bhutias

had before resented attempts to double march them, and that we had plenty of food and fuel, it would have been wiser to have stopped at Camp Two. At all events, by the time the platform beneath the icy waves, or bulges, below the ridge had been gained, it was obvious that a number of porters would not, or could not, proceed farther that day, and the camp *had* to be pitched.

Kurz suggested that he and I should go on and prospect a way down the ice slopes from the ridge on which we had previously pitched Camp Three to the glacier we must ascend. This was necessary for two reasons. We hoped to make a shorter day of the final ascent by camping at the head of the glacier, for we were anxious to have enough time to carry out topographical, photographic, and cinematographic work from the Jonsong Peak, then, while the ice ridge beyond Camp Three might be a reasonable traverse for Europeans, it was hardly suitable for laden porters. Whichever way we descended to the glacier a secure staircase and fixed ropes would be essential, and while we had enough rope for a direct descent to the glacier we had not enough for the ice ridge.

We ascended by the same route as last time until we came to the commencement of the roof-like ice slope. Across this we cut horizontally to join a steepish snow ridge falling from the main ridge just below the site of Camp Three. There I anchored myself, and payed out a long length of rope as Kurz descended in search of the easiest route to the glacier 500 feet beneath.

The slopes did not belie their appearance; they looked steep and they were steep, probably a good sixty degrees in angle. As I expected, Kurz returned with the news that a



THE LHONAK PEAK FROM THE LHONAK GLACIER

way could be forced down, but that it would entail hours of step-cutting and necessitate fixed ropes for the porters.

The afternoon was drawing on, and the declining sun had lost its white heat and was slowly sinking, a red-hot ball, into the black abysses of night, as we descended to camp. The day had fulfilled its early promise. If only the good weather would hold.

As I gulped my plateful of soup I peered out between the flaps of my tent on the beauties of a mountain sunset. Below in the Lhonak Valley a cold broth of mist was brewing. The glaciers and slopes up which we had passed had been won over to the advancing hordes of night, but above, the beautiful Lhonak Peak stood out like a glowing beacon, as though warning the fatigued and retreating hosts of day of their impending dissolution. Much later, when night had triumphed, and all the peaks about us had pinned its dark cockade on their crests, Everest and Makalu, like two great citadels, stood between night and the fleeing remnants of day. But, finally, they too were lost, and night's hosts bivouacked on the ground they had won round a million starry fires.

But night had allied itself to our old and capricious enemy, the wind. Impetuously, savagely, it smote our tents, and several times I awoke to listen to its futile snarlings and worryings.

On our last ascent, the wind had had the decency to drop by 9 a.m., but on this occasion it evidently considered that such perfunctory politeness was no longer needed, and instead of dropping, it became if anything more violent, and joyfully seizing up the loose snow, hurled it with shrewd aim at the camp.

Eventually, we decided to make a start. I was first away, with the idea I must confess of finding a spot sheltered from the wind on one of the rocky outcrops projecting from the ice slope and lazing away an hour or so. But as I struggled against the buffeting onrushes of bitter wind across the roof-like slope, it seemed to me that I should have been wiser to have remained in my sleeping bag until the last moment. Descending, where Kurz had descended the previous day, I found what I was looking for, a little rock pinnacle with a sunny sheltered alcove on the leeward side, the floor of which was paved by a granite slab obviously intended for a lazy mountaineer. There I sat, smoking cigarette after cigarette. The wind moaned and sobbed above the pinnacle, but I listened to it with the complacent assurance of one immune from its scoldings. The sun was warm, and I leant languidly back. The mountain world floated unsubstantially between half closed eyelids ; the smoke spiral of my cigarette ascended gently, until caught by the wind it was whirled into nothingness ; the peace that is engendered by an ordered digestion and a warm body stole upon me. . . .

I glanced at my watch. Something must have gone wrong with the mainspring. Two hours had passed in a few minutes. Where were the others ? They, too, seemed to have preferred to shelter from the wind, and were probably still in their sleeping bags. More anxious thoughts supervened. In the wind the roof-like slope would be no joke for laden porters ; a slip there . . . I hurried back.

My anxieties were relieved as I turned the corner. No one appeared to have left the camp. The situation was explained when I reached the camp. The long march on the

previous day plus the wind had been too much for the porters, and they had refused to start.

The camp was in a peculiarly shelterless position, and even though a day's climbing was lost we could, at least, find a better place for it. Between us and our old camping site on the ridge was the trough mentioned in the last chapter. Although formed by a choked crevasse, the snow was good and solid for the most part, and within an hour after my return we had broken camp and remade it there. At all events, there would have been little object in taking on the porters that day, for their presence during the cutting of steps down the ice slopes to the glacier would have been more dangerous than useful. Professor Dyhrenfurth and Wieland decided to spend the remainder of the day cutting some of these steps; Kurz and I, meanwhile, dug ourselves in, and built a wall of snow blocks as some protection for the tents against the onslaught of the wind. I felt proud of the work of Nemu and myself, a horse-shoe shaped wall higher than the top of my tent, and I had just stepped back with a sigh of contentment to admire it when I went up to my knees in a crevasse. It was not a particularly dangerous crevasse, but it was unpleasantly near to the door of my tent. Stepping out of one's tent door into a crevasse would be tantamount to stepping out of the door of one of those economically constructed seaside lodging-houses where the unsuspecting visitor steps out of his bedroom, not on to a landing, but straight down the stairs.

The evening meal had been cooked when Professor Dyhrenfurth and Wieland returned. They had done capital work, having cut steps about half-way down the slopes to the glacier.

The building of a snow wall was a cunning move, for shortly after it was completed the wind dropped, a phenomenon which reminded me of what promised to be a wet fortnight in the Isle of Skye, but which, after only two days of rain, had been changed to a dry fortnight by the zeal of two meteorologists, who planted a number of rain gauges round the district.

The atmosphere, if chilly, was calm when we left the next morning. Our camp had been a cold one, and we had started for once unwarmed by the sun, but that kindly orb made full amends for its tardiness on the slopes to the glacier. Indeed, it glared upon us so furiously that we felt our now leather-like face covering (it is scarcely correct to call it skin) regaining that unpleasant drum-like tightness which we knew only too well preceded the disruption of our countenances.

Professor Dyhrenfurth and Wieland had worked out a good route down to the glacier, and a straightforward bout of step-cutting was all that remained to be done. They had descended the same route as Kurz and I for some distance, then leaving it, cut downwards and across to a rib of rocks ; descending these as far as practicable, they had started to cut across steep and very hard ice towards a point where the bergschrund looked feasible. Wieland described the ice as being exceptionally tough and hard, a description that I was able to endorse as, held on the rope from the rock rib, I started on the task of continuing the staircase.

Whether a man is acclimatised to altitude or not, cutting in hard ice at nearly 22,000 feet will always be something more than a strenuous exercise. A minute or two's hard work, a few dozen blows, and the wind is *non est.*

Altitude has, metaphorically speaking, given you a straight left in the solar plexus, and you double up gasping for life-giving oxygen. Don't gasp shallowly, but deeply, using your will-power to force the air into the lungs. In the Alps the respiratory organs function automatically, but in the Himalayas they have to be forced to work if they are to give of their best, and the same applies to other parts of the body. It is not a brainless machine, however efficient at a low level, that will get to the highest summits of the Himalayas, but a machine ordered and directed by will-power, and not least, that other something we call the spirit.

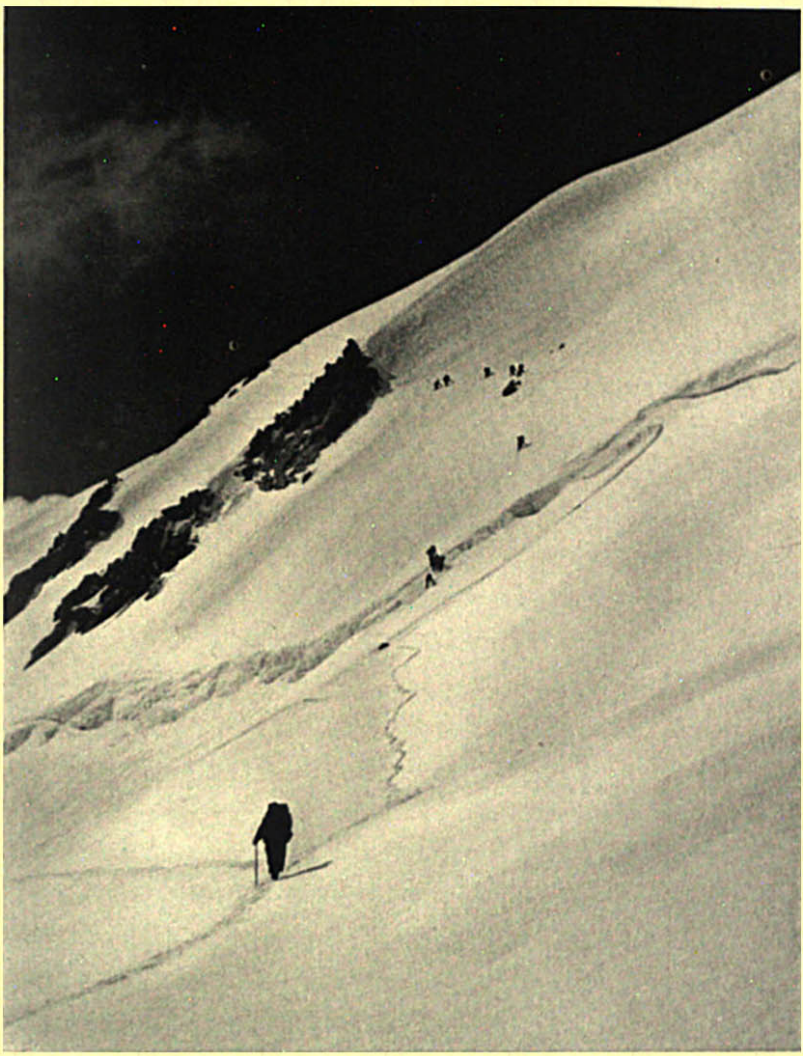
The axe hit the ice with a dull thud. Several blows were often necessary to dislodge a chip or flake. A step meant several dozen blows. A few steps, it was enough. I retired and Wieland took my place. Both of us could, of course, have gone on for a long time with intervals of rest, but it was much quicker to take turns, even though it meant retreating each time back along the line of steps to the rocks.

For twenty yards the ice was tough and transparent. Frequently, the pick stuck in it as it might hard glue, and had to be wriggled and coaxed out. Gradually it became more flaky, and easier to cut into. At last came hard snow with a soft ice under-stratum, in which it was safest to cut a step, for the sun would soften the snow by midday. We unroped, and while Wieland and Kurz proceeded to enlarge the steps, drive in pitons, and fix ropes I continued to descend alone in order to discover the easiest way over the bergschrund.

The slope here was in excellent condition, and a couple of good kicks sufficed to make a secure step. In a quarter of

an hour or so I had reached the bergschrund. At this point it was perfectly feasible for roped men, but if possible, I wanted to find a place where it could be crossed safely by an unroped man, or two men on one rope, in case we had to send porters back. I accordingly traversed to the left to a point where the moat seemed to be well bridged by a thick tongue of snow. The upper lip of the bergschrund was steep and icy, and I cut two or three large steps in it. Standing on these, I probed the snow tongue with my axe—it seemed safe enough. With the axe pick driven well in, I stepped down cautiously, holding on to the shaft with my left hand. It was fortunate I did so, for with startling suddenness my feet went through the snow tongue into nothingness. My whole weight came on my left arm and ice-axe, and for an instant I swung free across the upper lip of the bergschrund. The next moment I pulled myself back into safety. The wrench upon my left arm and wrist had been considerable, and the twisting effect on the wrist as I oscillated for a moment on the lip had sprained the latter. It was not a bad sprain, but one that reminded me many times during the next week of a nasty moment.

A yard or two to the right the bergschrund, although insecurely bridged, was so narrow that it was possible to jump it, and a few instants later I was gaily glissading down the snow slopes below it to the level floor of the glacier. There I sat down in the sun and watched Kurz and Wieland, followed by Professor Dyhrenfurth and the porters, enlarging the ice steps and fixing ropes. They came straight down, and crossed the snow bridge at which I had first looked, which proved, despite its appearance, to be perfectly safe. Helped by fixed ropes as well as good steps, the



THE ICE SLOPE ON THE JONSONG PEAK

porters soon descended, and the whole party forgathered on the glacier for lunch.

So far, so good. Everything, excluding my sprained wrist, had gone splendidly, but the ice slopes had taken us a long time to descend, and evening was drawing on apace as we trudged up the glacier. We had hoped to make our camp on the glacier at its head, on or below the broad col in the North-west Ridge, but our old enemy, the wind, thought otherwise, and as the day declined, so did it, like an habitué of a night club, gird up its loins and prepare to spend a night of revelry and devilry. But we were now used to its little tantrums, and its blasts elicited nothing more than a conventional curse or two as we approached the col, although, for comfort and warmth's sake, it was essential to find some place more or less sheltered from its venomous gusts.

The crest of the col was defended by two or three crevasses, over which the wind had laid a thin covering of pie-crust-like snow as innocent looking as the sands of Margate, but as treacherous as an elephant trap. Circumventing this, we reached the crest of the col and looked down the great ice face above Camp One. Just beneath us, and to the right, a little shelf ran along under an ice bulwark, below which the ice slopes dropped with appalling steepness for thousands of feet. It was the only break, and the only possible site for a camp where we might reasonably expect some shelter from the wind. We descended to it without difficulty, a shovel was produced, and we started to dig out platforms for our tents in a sloping snow-drift, as near to the protecting ice bulwark as possible.

If we thought to find shelter here from the wind, we had

made a sad mistake, for our relentless opponent poured over the col and descended upon us with a merciless *joie de vivre*. There is something almost human in the way it seeks out every niche and cranny in these Himalayan mountain-sides.

By the time the tents were pitched and the pegs driven firmly and deeply into the snow in expectation of a wild night, the sun was setting. It was invisible to us from our chilly shelf, but its rays lit the snow eddies as they were blown furiously over the ridge above us, until they resembled gossamer-like scarves of spun gold trailed negligently from the white shoulders of the snow maidens.

Wieland and I shared a tent, and after a chilly supper, Wieland, with characteristic enthusiasm, proceeded to indulge in what at first appeared to be some strange and mystic ceremony, but which he condescended to inform me is known as "Determination of Height by means of a Boiling-Point Thermometer."[1] For some reason this necessitated the use of alcohol, but it seemed to me that this alcohol could be more beneficially employed elsewhere. But Science must be served, even at the expense of numbed fingers in a small tent which the wind is doing its best to carry away. Perhaps I should not speak so lightly of sacred things, but I must confess that at the time I was concerned not with the determination of height to three places of decimals, but to having a good night's rest preparatory to a strenuous day. However, to cheer Wieland, I gave a short recital on my mouth organ. Beneath the insidious influence of "She's got Hot Lips," the water boiled in great style

[1] The height determined was 6,620 metres=21,720 feet, 2,624 feet below the summit of the Jonsong Peak.

round the thermometer, and the mercury rose to prodigious heights. Both performances ended in rum, and a sleep such as only rum can induce.

The wind was still blowing when we awoke next morning. My companions were pessimistic, but on the strength of our experiences on the first ascent, I ventured to indulge in a little optimism, and even went so far as to declare that it would drop by 9 a.m. The wind, however, objected to having its fortune foretold in this way, and instead of completely dropping, as it fully intended to do, it compromised with its dignity by only moderating.

Our start was a chilly one. We took with us our servants Lewa, Tsinabo, and Nemu: the name of Wieland's servant I do not remember.

Just before leaving the camp one or two of the party took a cocktail of oxygen to wet their appetite for the thin air of 24,000 feet. Personally, I refused this extraneous aid, as I wanted to convince myself that I was capable, not only of getting to the top of the Jonsong Peak on my own lungs, but of going higher.

The camp was reasonably sheltered, and the morning sun shone brilliantly over a cloudy carpet that covered all but the highest peaks in the east, but on the col above we met the full force of the wind, which seemed to cut into our flesh like a knife in spite of every stitch of spare clothing.

On the first ascent, the little couloir leading up into the rocks had contained good snow, into which steps could be easily kicked, but since then the wind had done its worst and had blown its surface hard and icy and steps were necessary. I led, deriving some measure of warmth by slashing out steps as quickly as the altitude would permit.

We might have saved ourselves twenty minutes' work by wearing crampons, but on such a cold morning they would probably have numbed the feet, and circulation once lost is hard to regain over 22,000 feet.

Arriving on the rock ledge where Hoerlin and Schneider had dumped their kit, we started to climb up the rocks of the face towards the ridge. They were easy enough rocks, yet a slip would have been hard to stop. They reminded me strongly of the photograph taken by Mr. Somervell of Colonel Norton at 28,000 feet on Everest. There, as here, were the same tile-like slabs of limestone, as dark and forbidding as the rock of the Coolin Hills in Skye. Only here the angle was steeper than on Everest, and powdery snow burdened every ledge, sometimes concealing a glaze of ice.

The wind was something more than unpleasant; it roared across the gaunt slabs, licking up the powdery snow, and beating us with its stinging particles. Sometimes advance was impossible, and we crouched in close to the rocks, with bowed heads and turning our backs to its fury. Nevertheless, we made good progress, although we knew that should the wind increase as we gained height, we would not be likely to reach the summit. The porters did not like it. At the best of times they hate wind, and no weapon that a Himalayan peak can produce demoralises them to a greater extent. Soon I noticed that Nemu was going badly. He was finding it hard to keep up with Kurz and myself, and was gradually dropping farther and farther behind. Obviously he was tired, and no wonder considering the work he had done on the expedition, especially since we had left our last Base Camp. In returning with me, instead of descending with the other porters of the first party

WIND ! PORTERS DESCENDING THE JONSONG PEAK

to the Base Camp for a rest, he had shown of what stuff he was made. He was not one to spare himself, and he would, I knew, go on until he dropped if by so doing he could serve his master. I waited on the ledge until he had joined me, then, taking the rucksack he was carrying, which contained food, photographic apparatus, spare gloves, etc., I bade him go back. At first he pretended not to understand. I shouted at him again above the roaring wind that he must do so, and pointed downwards towards the camp. And Nemu went, after one reproachful look, like a faithful hound that has been ordered home for he knows not why. I felt really sorry for him, but the Jonsong Peak is no mountain for a tired or exhausted man.

We had expected to find the wind worse on the ridge itself, but strangely enough, it was not nearly so strong. We could still see it sweeping the slopes below, driving the snow before it like sand. We seemed to have stepped from an area of storm into an area of comparative calm. In fact, once the ridge had been reached, there was no longer any doubt as to our gaining the summit so far as the weather was concerned.

For some distance the ridge formed a sharp snow edge, but Kurz and Tsinabo, who were first, had stamped an excellent trail. Above the snow, the ridge rose steeply for two or three hundred feet, forcing us out on to the western face. Never have I seen more rotten rocks. This part of the peak is nothing more than a festering sore of shale and limestone. There was scarcely a firm hold. The safest method of climbing such rock is to have always three points of attachment. This means that the climber should never trust to one hold only, but distribute his weight

between at least three hand-holds and foot-holds. This may sound simple in theory, but it is not so simple in practice. Many accidents have resulted from yielding to the temptation to rely on one seemingly good hold.

For two hundred feet the climbing was steep, and the inadvisability of not using a rope might have been argued. But I think that the rope would have been more dangerous than useful, and Kurz had evidently assured himself that Tsinabo was sufficiently expert at rock climbing to climb without its aid. Tsinabo was certainly climbing in splendid style, and seemed to enjoy the work for its own sake. Both he and Lewa are excellent rock climbers, and with their wonderful strength and agility would probably be capable of leading the most difficult rock climbs in the Alps.

Once or twice I glanced down the great mountainside. It was still in shadow, and looked terribly forbidding, its brutal black-jawed crags at savage variance with the peaceful serenity of the sunlit snow-fields. The peaks that had recently dominated our outlook had sunk beneath us. Even the Lhonak Peak looked formless and insignificant, and our gaze passed over the Dodang Nyima Range into the brown fastnesses of Thibet.

The steep rocks eased off. We found ourselves on a slope of slabs similar to those below. We were now definitely feeling the altitude. Each upward step was an increasing effort. I felt strongly tempted to leave what now seemed an abominably heavy rucksack, but which only weighed about ten pounds, and climb to the top without it. Photographic scruples came to the rescue. Had I not taken the expedition boots to the summit of the Ramthang Peak? And these with crampons had weighed nearly half as much

again as my present rucksack. Heartened by this reflection, I toiled on.

The wind had by no means dropped, but it had lost much of its former venom, and the sun was shining with great power. Climbing at high altitudes is a " slow motion " of climbing at low altitudes. Movement is the same, but it is slowed down, and the climber concentrates upon performing every action with the minimum of effort. Thus, the man who is accustomed to climbing neatly and with a minimum expenditure of effort on Alpine peaks will, other things being equal, be a better climber at high altitudes than he who always relies on brute force rather than skill.

Major J. B. L. Noel in his book, *Through Tibet to Everest*, wrote : " Collect an Olympic team of fine young men who represent the manhood of the world, and send them equipped with modern scientific appliances and devices. Let them not attack or assault Everest, but let them *walk up* the mountain and prove its conquest without loss, injury or suffering to themselves. . . . It would be a victory for modern man." These are magnificent sentiments. Unfortunately, however, the Olympic athlete without mountaineering experience would be of little more use on Everest, or any other of the big peaks in the Himalayas, than Falstaff with gout. Mountaineering experience, and in this I include development and training of mental as well as physical powers, is the first essential. How often do young and brilliant batsmen fail when tried out in a Test Match. It is simply lack of experience. The skill is there, but the brain is incapable of utilising it advantageously. Precisely the same applies to Himalayan mountaineering. Everest will be climbed not on a record

of super athletism, but on a record of all-round mountaineering experience coupled to a suitable temperament.

The slabs petered out into a long slope of scree stretching up almost to the summit. Easy technically, it was yet trying work, for while the scree would delight the heart of a roadmender, or one of those evilly disposed Urban District Councils that cover up a perfectly good road with small sharp stones, it awakened no such response in our hearts, for it rested upon a frozen sub-stratum, and slipped back at every step. A few steps, a bout of panting while leaning on our ice-axes, then another few steps, was our method of progression.

It is interesting to remember the thoughts that flash through the brain at such a time. My first thought was what an unutterably weary business it was, how " fed up " I was, and what a fool I was toiling up there, when I might have been sitting in the Planters' Club at Darjeeling, admiring the Himalayas through a telescope. I sat down for a rest. And as I sat fatigue magically departed, and I experienced to the full the joys of my wonderful position. But always, at the back of my mind like a cloud, hung the thought that I had to go on. I heaved myself to my feet, and went on. Two steps, and weariness returned, but this time, I was able to counter it. I remember thinking that it would be quite easy if I could discipline my brain to think of the same things as when sitting down for a rest, but such a task the brain seemed incapable of performing. At rest, æsthetic enjoyment had predominated, but it was impossible to experience æsthetic enjoyment when heart and lungs were beating like sledge hammers, legs felt leaden, and knees ached at every upward step.

What the brain did was to compromise with the body, and compromise so effectively that it made me more than half forget that I was toiling up a vile scree slope at a height of over 24,000 feet. It brought a power of mental detachment. Without bidding, a number of trivial thoughts and remembrances flashed through my mind. They are not worth repeating, even to a psycho-analyst, and not many of those are likely to read this book. They were quite trivial, quite ordinary, some of them absurd, so that I wanted to laugh, and lose the wind I was so carefully trying to husband. Then, quite suddenly, the little devils of weariness returned with redoubled force. I halted, but when I glanced back I was surprised to find how far I had climbed from my last halting-place.

I have mentioned these things because they are of interest to all who appreciate the real power of mind over body. I think the men who will eventually reach the summit of Mount Everest will not be of the type accustomed to set teeth and "bullock" forwards unthinkingly, they will be men capable of detaching their minds from the physical work which their bodies are performing. Nowhere else is the power of the mind over the body demonstrated to a greater extent than at high altitudes. It is not sufficient for the mind deliberately to force the body into action, it must humour it, even delude it into thinking that it is not working so hard as it really is.

So far I have only mentioned the conscious control of mind over body. I have not mentioned the subconscious control, yet that is what really counts, for when all else has failed, and the conscious mind and the body are united in one desire to quit, it is this subconscious "something"

that will drive a worn-out body beyond the ultimate limits of endurance.

The final slope was snow. Below it was a little outcrop of rocks on which we rested for a few minutes. Kurz and Tsinabo were first away. The summit was not more than a hundred feet above the rocks. After the stones, it was a relief to kick steps into firm snow. The worst thing about the stones was that rhythmical movement was impossible, but now, in spite of the height I found myself going much more easily than I had lower down.

The slope steepened into a little lip a few feet high, forming the sky-line. Kurz and Tsinabo climbed over it and disappeared. There came a thin faint shout. I followed. Even in the hard work of those moments there was borne upon me an intense feeling of excitement. On the stones there had been merely weariness, but now weariness was forgotten. I had no longer consciously or subconsciously to force myself to go on, I *wanted* to. To see over that snowy lip was my one dominant idea. Something wonderful was the other side. As a small boy I had often longed to climb a hill behind the house where I lived. I was certain that a new and wonderful world lay the other side. One day I did climb it, to see—factory chimneys. The feeling now was much the same, only I knew that whatever I should see it would not be factory chimneys.

My legs levered me up, my head rose over the lip, my eyes peered across a flat tabletop of snow and stones to meet vast pillars of cloud, blue depths, silver heights—Kangchenjunga and Jannu. The next moment my gloved hands were grasping those of Kurz and Tsinabo. The ascent of 2,624 feet from the camp had taken a little over

five hours, an average uphill speed of 500 feet an hour. This is fast going, especially taking into account the fact that the ascent had been by no means a walk, whilst we had been delayed a little by the wind on the lower portion of the climb. The wind had now dropped considerably, but what there was shortened a stay that will live in my memory.

A savage mountain world surrounded us; our gaze passed at a glance over inconceivable distances, resting on mountains and glaciers unknown to man, seeking languidly the infinitude of vast horizons in a subconscious attempt to escape from a nearer and an unvarying world of rock, snow, and ice. The atmosphere was wonderfully clear. Over the brown Thibetan plateau to the north-east rose two huge snowy peaks. Only their snow-covered upper parts were visible, their bases were beneath the horizon. We were 24,344 feet, the Thibetan plateau is about 12,000 feet, yet the lower half of these mountains was below the horizon. How far were they away, and what was their height? Their distance was so great that the tip of the little finger held out at arm's length would have covered them both.

I have seen Monte Viso from the summit of the Piz Bernina, a distance of about 180 miles as the crow flies, and these peaks were much farther. In direction, I should place them as being approximately in the same line as Lhasa. Lhasa is about 220 miles distant from the Jonsong Peak, so that it is probable that they were some 50 miles or more beyond Lhasa. On the other hand, 150 miles away, and slightly to the south of this last line are the peaks of Nangkartse Dz, but I am positive that they cannot have been

these. One hundred and fifty miles is no excessive distance to see in the clear air of Thibet. If these peaks were actually to the north-east of Lhasa, what could they have been? The only definite statement I can make is that a considerable portion of their height was concealed by the horizon, a horizon consisting not of a high intervening range, but of the rolling hills and minor ranges common to this part of Thibet. Anyway, I will not commit myself to any positive statements as to their distance or height or exact direction, for we had no means of determining them. They looked immense mountains even at that great distance, and dominated everything.

Westwards, and much nearer, were Everest and Makalu. From our lower camps we had seen them between gaps in the nearer ridges, and though these latter had not detracted from their magnificence, it was not so easy to appreciate their sovereignty over all other peaks. Seen from the summit of the Jonsong Peak, one realised to the full that Everest is indeed the "Goddess Mother of the World."

The whole country to the south-east was covered by the cloudy pall of the monsoon, above which the highest peaks stood out like a fairy archipelago. For the first time we saw Kangchenjunga without being misled by foreshortening. Had Mr. Freshfield seen it from the same vantage point, I doubt very much whether he would have held out any hopes whatever as to the possibility of climbing it from the Nepal side. Of course, looking at this side as we were from directly in front of it, we were liable to be deceived in the opposite extreme. Edward Whymper never dreamed of climbing the Matterhorn by the east face until he had

seen it in profile, for looked at from Zermatt, or the Riffel, it looks fearfully steep. The same applies, no doubt, to some extent to our view of Kangchenjunga from the Jonsong Peak, yet I am convinced that the impressions gained from what we saw were more accurate ones than those gained when viewing the mountain from Pangperma or the Jonsong Glacier.

For one thing, the terraces which had appeared flat, or gently sloping, were now seen to be set at a much steeper angle than we had supposed, whilst in many places they consisted, not of snow-covered glacier, but of bare ice. Furthermore, we saw the summit pyramid in its true proportions. It is not easy to climb, and is likely to prove much harder than the final pyramid of Everest. The Everest pyramid is about 800 feet high, that of Kangchenjunga about 1,500 feet high. It will not be possible for climbers, who may one day try to storm it, to keep to the crest of the North Ridge above the highest terrace, for this rises directly above the terrace in a Λ-shaped cut-off. They will be forced out on to the face on the western side of the ridge, where they are likely to experience little gullies and chimneys filled with incoherent, powdery snow and smooth granite slabs.

Because we failed, I have no wish to pour cold water on the aspirations of others, but let those who attempt the same route as the Munich expedition remember that the difficulties are *not* over when the upper and easier portion of the ice ridge is reached. Only the hardest of the *technical* difficulties are behind, the *real* difficulties, altitude, powdery snow, wind, and rocks are to come, and they will tax the climber to the uttermost limits of his powers.

Only with the aid of exceptional and superlative good fortune can he hope to conquer them, and Kangchenjunga is not a mountain that bestows good fortune on those that woo it.

We could see that the monsoon had already broken on Kangchenjunga and the country to the south. Indeed, we heard later that during the time that we were attacking the Jonsong Peak, rain poured for days on end at Darjeeling. It was difficult to believe that the sunny billows of cloud over which we gazed were in reality rain clouds, which were deluging the lower valleys. We were lucky to see Kangchenjunga, for it was smothered in new snow, and it was evident that the monsoon had already wreaked some of its fury on the great mountain. Even as we watched, we could see battalion after battalion of cloud marching up from the south endeavouring to encircle Kangchenjunga, and pour up the Jonsong Glacier. And the north wind was losing. Sullenly, doggedly, it was fighting a rearguard action. In a few days it would have been beaten back to its fortress keep, Thibet. There it would hold the monsoon, which would beat impotently on the ranges bounding the brown plateaux of that barren land.

The advancing tide of the monsoon was slowly creeping towards us; its streams were pouring up the Teesta Valley to the east, and the Arun Valley to the west, slowly outflanking the dry corners of North-east Nepal and North-west Sikkim. One could say definitely that two or three days' marching down the Lhonak Valley would bring one into the monsoon area. It was an interesting spectacle, and one which meteorologists would have given much to see.

Here and there above the cloudy carpet to the south, huge columns and towers of cumuli-nimbus projected far into the clear blue sky like scattered trees rising from a vast snow-covered prairie. One or two of them were drawn out at their crests like anvils by upper air currents, a typical thunder formation. Occasionally, bits would become detached, and swim placidly up into the blue heaven like Zeppelins. The mountaineer who sees these long fish-bellied, smooth-looking clouds in the Alps, knows that almost invariably they precede bad weather. Here they preceded more than a mere storm, they were the forerunner of the south-west monsoon, the rains of which bring life to the sun-scorched plains of India.

To the cartoonist, who is frequently led by some strange reasoning process to associate mountain tops with politics, there is only one type of mountain top. It is shaped like a dunce's hat, and its summit is a mathematical point, on which is seated, a trifle uncomfortably, a mountaineer, who usually takes the form of some striped-trousered politician, yodelling blithely some political profundity or sentiment. If there are other, and more fearful mountain tops, they are assuredly those that emanate from the fertile brain of Mr. Heath Robinson. His are too sharp even to sit upon, and are usually tenanted by a stout gentleman with a silk hat and spats, who, balancing upon one leg, operates some fearful and wonderful magnetic mechanism which draws more stout gentlemen to the top. Exactly how they are to crowd together on the top is never explained.

There was nothing so thrilling about the summit of the Jonsong Peak. It was, in fact, tame and dull, consisting as it did of a long drift of snow and a bed of loose stones.

The stones were all of the same size and were evidently intended as a reserve dump for the Borough Engineer, whose job it is to repair the ravages of climbing parties on the scree slopes below. We were even able to promenade up and down, while indulging in that vigorous arm exercise practised by the drivers of taxi-cabs. In this way we preserved some semblance of warmth in face of the wind, which cut across the summit, jabbing us cruelly with its icy stilettos. But even arm exercises and promenading cannot be carried out as vigorously at 24,000 feet as at sea level, and soon we decided that we had had enough, and after taking a number of photographs, and swinging our vision along that marvellous panorama in a vain attempt to capture some of its beauties, we turned to go.

What a difference there is in the Himalayas between ascending and descending. On the ascent, the last little bit above the rocky outcrop had seemed by no means inconsiderable. Now, we strode down it like giants. How wearying the slope of scree had been to ascend, how ridiculously easy to descend. The mountains that had sunk below the horizon seemed almost to shoot up at us as we rattled down.

In a minute or two we were off the scree, and scrambling down the slopes. There we met Professor Dyhrenfurth and Lewa. We had taken only a few minutes from the top, it would take them over another hour at least to get there, and perhaps longer, for as I shouted a greeting, I perceived at the same instant that Professor Dyhrenfurth was wearing the expedition boots. In what spirit of selflessness had he done this? Was it in the same spirit that a scientifically minded friend of mine once declared that it was easier to

climb a mountain with the climbing boots carried in the rucksack than on the feet? He urged me to ascend the precipitous slopes of Box Hill in this manner, first with boots, then without boots altogether, and then carrying the boots in the rucksack, while he timed my efforts with a stop-watch. In view of the broken bottles distributed there every week-end by motorists, I am happy to say that for some reason this experiment never materialised. Perhaps, therefore, it was something of the same spirit of scientific enquiry which led Professor Dyhrenfurth to don the expedition boots. Knowing that they weighed eight and a half pounds, and that they had to be carried through a height of 2,624 feet, should provide a basis for a pretty calculation in horse-power and foot-pounds.

I discovered what I had been looking for, a sheltered place out of the wind, where I could enjoy the view to the full. It was only 300 or 400 feet beneath the summit, and the panorama extended from Everest to Chomolhari, 23,930 feet, the holy peak of Eastern Thibet. On the summit æsthetic appreciation of the view had been numbed by the wind, now I could even take off my boots, and toast chilled feet in the sun. As I laid my boots carefully on a rock beside me, I could not help shuddering at the thought of accidentally knocking them down the mountainside. Once I had been with a friend on a long walk in the country. It was a hot day, and we had sat down on a river bank to dip our feet into the cold waters of a mountain torrent. We were many miles from the nearest village, and my friend remarked on the fact, and said what a terrible thing it would be to lose a boot. He had hardly said so when one of his boots was snatched, as if by magic, from his hand

and dropped into the mountain torrent. He never saw it again. Fortunately, however, we were able to discover lying under a hedge an aged and enormous boot which had apparently been discarded, after many years' wear, by a fastidious tramp. I have not forgotten my friend's remarks on his return to civilisation, or the size of his blisters when at length he did get there. To lose a boot on a Himalayan peak would be a much more serious business, and the man who did so would stand a good chance of losing his foot from frostbite, if he got down at all. I put my boots on very, very carefully.

From my vantage point I looked down to the long, unknown glacier which flows in a north-westerly direction from the Jonsong Peak. It is at least 15 miles long, but even from this height, it was not possible to tell which river received its waters. In this corner of the Himalayas there are many peaks accessible to ordinary mountaineering parties, and it is certain that a party making the Lhonak Valley its headquarters could scale a dozen or more fine peaks in the course of a comparatively short holiday. Naturally, ambitious minded man is more anxious to climb the greater peaks of the Himalayas, but one cannot help thinking that he is beginning at the wrong end, and that by neglecting the many fine mountains of 20,000 to 23,000 feet, he is denying himself the real pleasures of mountaineering. For instance, north-westwards of the Lhonak Peak there are a number of fine snow mountains, all of which can be climbed, whilst in the north-east corner of Nepal itself are dozens upon dozens of accessible mountains.

Kurz had gone on down, but presently I was joined by

UNEXPLORED COUNTRY TO NORTH-WEST OF JONSONG PEAK. A VIEW FROM THE SUMMIT

Wieland, whose servant had deserted him at about the same place from which Nemu had returned. Together we continued the descent, rattling down the rocks at an almost Alpine rate. With the approach of evening the wind began to rise once more, and by the time we had reached the lower slopes it was snarling at us with ever increasing ferocity. But, as we glissaded down the couloir and trod once more the friendly glacier, we could forgive it its spitefulness, for taking all in all, it had been a wonderful day and the fates had been kind to us.

We stood for a few moments on the col above the camp, bathed in the radiance of the reddening sun. Its gleams lit the steel heads of our trusty ice-axes, and our shadows were thrown blue and spider-like across the wind-rippled snow. Our eyes sought the long ridge we had descended for Professor Dyhrenfurth and Lewa. There was no sign of them ; obviously they would be late, but should they be benighted, the moon would aid them on their descent.

Darkness fell ; the wind steadily increased as we lay in our sleeping bags. Driven snow lashed the tent Wieland and I were sharing. At 8 p.m., there was still no sign of Professor Dyhrenfurth. We looked outside ; the air was full of snowy spindrift. Above the camp the wind was roaring over the col in a deep symposium of sound, like the bass note of a huge organ. Our anxiety increased. Ought we to get together a rescue party ? Even supposing we did, what could we do on such a night ? It was nearly nine o'clock when we heard a whistle. An ice-sheeted figure sank down in the snow outside—Professor Dyhrenfurth.

He was very tired, and no wonder, for not content with

having climbed the highest summit of the Jonsong Peak, his geological enthusiasm had caused him to traverse the ridge to the lower summit. He told us that the descent had been a terrible one. He had expected moonlight, but the moon had not risen sufficiently high to light the western face of the ridge. The wind had harried them continuously, and in the driving clouds of snow raised by it, the way had been hard to find. Lewa had done simply, magnificently.

It had been a great effort for a man of forty-four years of age, especially in view of having climbed in the expedition boots. The boots had triumphantly vindicated themselves on the descent, for in spite of the wind and the cold, Professor Dyhrenfurth did not have frostbite. On the other hand, Lewa was wearing only ordinary boots, and he also had no frostbite. It is perhaps doubtful whether the party would have been benighted had Professor Dyhrenfurth not worn the expedition boots.

The wind had done its worst, and we awoke to a morning of perfect calm. Leisurely we prepared for the descent, basking in the sunlight the while. We left at 9 a.m. and strolled down the glacier. If only we had known that the weather would hold like this, we should have postponed the climb, for no snow streamers were being drawn from the mountain tops, and the Jonsong Peak rose calm and untroubled into the blue.

Up the ice slope we went, releasing the fixed ropes as we did so, and down the other side to our former camp. There we were greeted by Lobsang and several tins of Christmas pudding. Personally, I found the presence of the former more acceptable than the latter, for if there is one thing more calculated to disarrange the digestion at a high

altitude, it is tinned Christmas pudding. So far as I remember there was only one member of the expedition who ever seemed to appreciate it, and that was Schneider, but even he used to find it necessary to help it down with salad dressing and Worcester sauce.

Had the weather turned bad, the advent of Lobsang and his men with the Christmas puddings might have enabled us to have stuck it out, but I shudder to think of what life without exercise in a small tent would have been like on a diet of Christmas puddings. Full of Christmas pudding I glissaded with great velocity down the snow slopes.

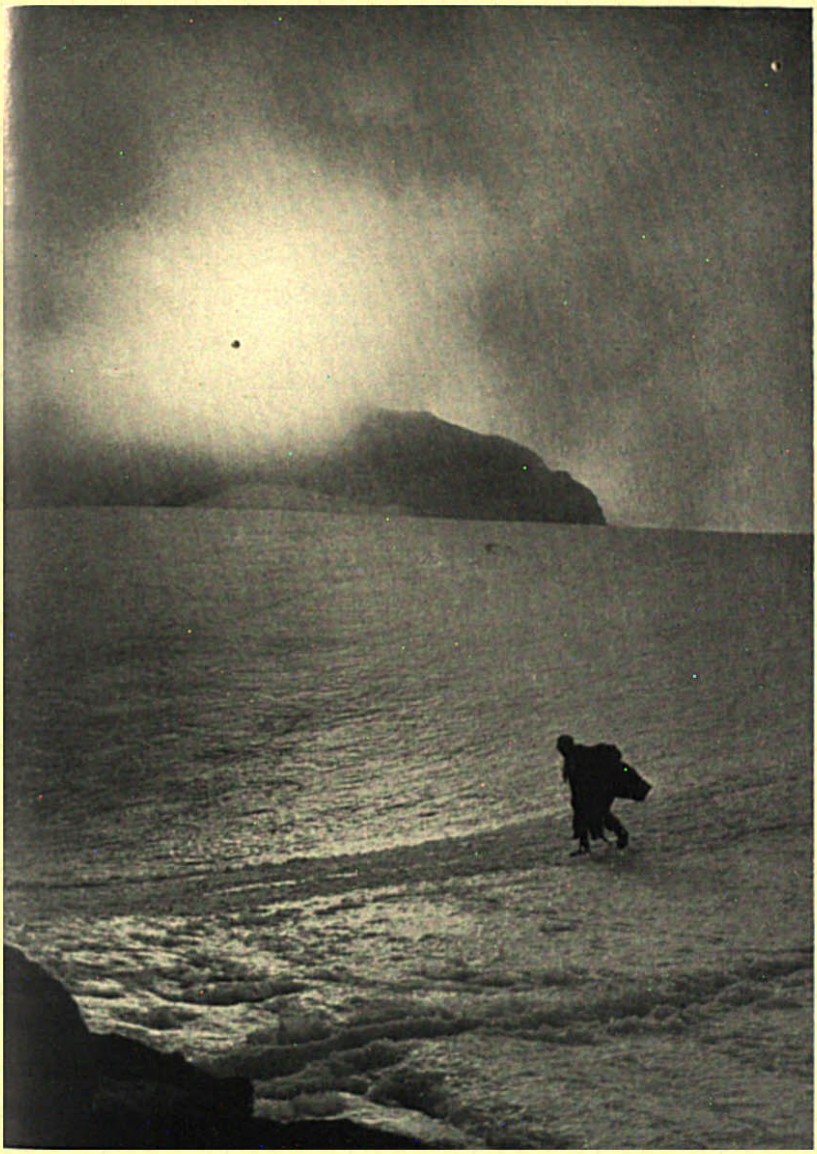
The day ended in a struggle and a wade through the inevitable glacier morass which, despite the passage of many porters and the ploughing out of a deep track, seemed to be worse than ever. After camping on snow for four nights it was pleasant to get back on to the stony ridge where Camp One was pitched. Seated on a granite slab, I watched the last of the porters swinging down the snow slopes. The sun was setting in a transparent bank of mist, and its rays lighted the ice crust already formed by Jack Frost until the snow gleamed like beaten silver.

Slowly the last man came trudging in with his heavy load, yet as he sank gratefully on to his haunches, and slipped out of his head-band, that cheery grin that knows no tiredness broke over his countenance. As he passed one ragged sleeve over his sweat-bedewed brow, his eyes swept upwards to the Jonsong Peak, and the grin was replaced almost by a look of awe. Was it possible that he had been up there near that great summit, glowing in the declining sun with the sahibs, so near to the gods?

The following morning we packed up. After leaving two cairns that the porters had built ornamented with prayer flags, and a number of empty oxygen cylinders, we set off for the Base Camp. With the arrival of all the loads over the Jonsong La the Base Camp had been shifted to the end of the Lhonak Glacier. It was better, therefore, to descend to the northern branch of the glacier instead of the southern up which we had approached Camp One. Easy snow slopes led us to the crest of a steep declivity some three hundred feet high, consisting of ice overlaid with soft snow. Had it been a little longer it would have been dangerous from avalanches. As it was, those detached by glissading porters were not large enough to harm anyone.

Nemu was the last down. Not for him the wild glissade, with load bumping one way and its owner the other. He followed Wieland, who thoughtfully cut steps for such porters who had to descend carefully on account of fragile loads. It was not until nearly half way down that he permitted himself to slide, using my tin box as a toboggan, descending with dignity and decorum.

Below these slopes were rocks, between which meandered a little rivulet fringed with flowers and mosses. They were the first flowers I had seen since I had left the Base Camp, and I greeted them gratefully. What would mountains or mountaineering be without its contrasts between the little things and the great things? These flowers were as important to me as the Jonsong Peak, and perhaps even greater, for they were synonymous with the small and homely things of life, and these are the things which the mountaineer turns to with rejoicing and gratitude. Only by knowing the ugly can we adore the beautiful, and only



THE LAST PORTER RETURNS TO CAMP ON THE JONSONG PEAK

by seeing the small can we appreciate the great. I remained behind to sit down and dream for a few moments among the flowers.

We followed the side moraine of the glacier. Lower down we encountered some of the most lovely ice scenery upon which I have ever gazed. There was a little glacier lake bounded on three sides by walls of ice. Sun, evaporation and melting had sculptured these walls into fantastic forms. There was the Gothic, with its flying buttresses and daring minarets, the Roman, with its superb solidity, and not least, the Victorian, for many of the pillars ornamenting these walls bore a striking resemblance to those that flank the doorways of the more respectable houses in Kensington. In fact had M. Karel Capek seen one stretch of this ice wall he would most likely have compared it to the frozen respectability of Westbourne Grove.

Apart from these things, there was in one corner a fine organ of ice with keyboard and pipes complete, and even as we passed there seemed to come from it a deeply resonant note—no doubt due to the movement of the glacier.

After this the way became duller. The glacier was moraine covered, and included among the moraines were many stones of singular beauty, mostly from the reddish-veined limestone of the Dodang Nyima range. I appropriated several as paper weights.

Traversing the junction of the east and west branches of the glacier was a tiresome business. Up and down we went over enormous moraine mounds, and soon any joy we might have had at descending to the Base Camp had completely disappeared. The trudge became weary and uninteresting, although brightened once or twice by little

clusters of Eidelweiss. We passed the pinnacled portion of the glacier, where I noticed that the beak-like structure which I had seen from Camp One was still preserved.

Near the snout of the glacier Professor Dyhrenfurth and I left the main party in order to have a look at the curious earth pyramids which we had previously noted. They are indeed weird structures, and appeared so unstable that we did not linger beneath them longer than was necessary. This peregrination brought us opposite to the Base Camp, but on the wrong side of the glacier torrent. Fortunately, the latter here divides into a number of smaller streams. We waded across these, but the last stream, a deep and swift-torrent, daunted us. We shouted lustily. Our shouts were heard, and grinning porters soon arrived to carry us pick-a-back across. Not the least humorous spectacle of the expedition was the arrival of the leader at the Base Camp, clad in his pants.

Wood Johnson was much better, and that night, before turning in, he and I strolled away from the camp. The soft turf muffled our tread. How pleasant it was to feel it again and scent its elusive fragrance. The moon was rising. Her soft rays illuminated the great terminal moraine of the Lhonak Glacier and the weird earth pinnacles. Almost, we fancied ourselves looking up at a titanic cinder heap, ejected from some mountain hell.

Up and down we walked, yarning over the events of the past fortnight, and when at last we turned in the moon rode high in the heavens and the great peaks around stood radiant against the stars.