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KANGCHENJUNGA.

**The Story of the Repeated Attacks on this
Still Virgin Peak is Here Told by**

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Kangchenjunga, or according to His Highness the Maharajah of Sikkim, on whose borders the great mountain lies, more correctly *Kang-Chen-mdZod-iNga*—"The Five Treasures of the Great Snows"—is as far as we know at present the third highest mountain of our earth. The latest calculations of the Survey of India attach to it a height of 28,227 ft., with a possible error of 12 ft. This brings it to within 23 ft. of K2, the second highest. Seen from Darjeeling, the hill-station in the Eastern Himalaya, it dominates the whole panorama of the snows. It lies on the boundary of Sikkim and Nepal, approximately 150 miles S.E. of Everest, and rises from a stupendous ridge running from north to south, culminating in a twin summit, the northern of which is 28,227 and the southern 320 ft. lower.

North and west from the higher summit and south and east from the lower, great ice-clad buttresses support the massif and enclose ice-filled basins which feed the four main glaciers of the mountain the Zemu Glacier, draining the N.E. quadrant between the northern and eastern aretes the Talung, that between the eastern and the southern the Yalung Glacier, the south western quadrant and the Kangchenjunga Glacier, the north-western. A subsidiary buttress supports the northern arete on its eastern flank and extends a short distance into the head of the Zemu Glacier this is known as the North east Spur. The approach to the highest summits of Kangchenjunga must lie by one of these glaciers.

But the climate here is treacherous and the climbing season short, two factors which increase the difficulties enormously. May 1 is the earliest that any attempt can be made, and less than five weeks of weather fit for climbing, in a good year, are then available before the monsoon breaks over the southern

faces. Under the lee of the east and west aretes, on the northern approaches to the mountain, finer weather may be hoped for, but not counted upon. In an average year the monsoon begins to clear from the Sikkini Himalaya about mid-September, and a fine spell may be expected for five or six weeks. But even these two periods of probable fine weather are broken by fierce blizzards, which render climbing impossible and living at high altitudes extremely perilous.

Serious, well-planned attempts to reach the summit of Kangchenjunga have only become possible during the last few years, for the ascent of a high peak in the Himalaya is dependent on the accumulation of knowledge. Sir Joseph Hooker, the great nineteenth-century naturalist, who explored a great part of Sikkini, did not approach Kangchenjunga, and it was not till 1881 that Captain H. J. Harman, R.E., of the Survey of India, penetrated the eastern gorges leading to the Talung Glacier. Two years later Mr. W. W. Graham made some notable ascents on the lesser summits in the Kabru neighbourhood, south of that glacier, while between 1889 and 1902 the late Mr. Claude White, Political Officer of Sikkini, carried out some valuable reconnaissances in the south east quadrant, between the Pandim and Simvu groups.

In 1899 Mr. Douglas Freshfield, accompanied by Professor Garwood, the brothers Sella and Rinzin Namgyal, a Survey of India "Pandit," made a complete high-level circuit of the mountain. It is on Freshfield's observations that all subsequent ideas for the conquest of Kangchenjunga have been based. Freshfield chose the post-monsoon period, and leaving Darjeeling on September 5, ascended the Tista Valley to Lachen. The party passed up the Poki Chu and the Zemu Glacier, but any attempt to force a passage over the range immediately north of Kangchenjunga was frustrated by bad weather. A long detour was therefore made via Lhonak and the Jonsong Pass further north, whence the Kangchenjunga Glacier was reached. From here Freshfield examined the north western approaches. In view of the attempt this year, it is interesting to recall his vivid description of Kangchenjunga from this side of the glacier, which fills the north western quadrant he writes "It has its origin in a snow plateau, or rather terrace, lying under the highest peak at an elevation of some 27,000 ft., that is only 1,200 ft. below the summit. This glacier affords what, in my opinion, is the only direct route to Kangchenjunga which is not impracticable." Freshfield completed the circuit by crossing the Singalila Range south of Kangchenjunga by the Kang La.

The first attempt to climb the mountain was in 1905, when Dr. Guillardmod, M. Raymond, M. Pache, M. de Righi, and Mr. Crowley attacked the mountain by the Yalung Glacier. Towards the end of August, after an early break-up of the monsoon, they cut up the ice below the south west cliffs of the main peak, and on September 1 established a camp at 20,500 ft., whence Guillardmod, Pache, and de Righi, with three porters, started to descend to a lower camp. While traversing a snow-slope two porters slipped and the whole party was dragged down, Pache and three porters being killed. The first attempt thus ended in disaster.

No further assaults were made until 1929, but in the meanwhile several valuable reconnaissances were carried out. It is sufficient here to mention that of Raeburn, Tobin, and Crauford in 1920, when both the south eastern and south-western faces were examined and ruled out as impracticable and those of Tombazi and Boustead in 1925 and 1926, who explored the southern approaches of the Zemu Gap in the hope of finding a quick route from the south eastern quadrant to the north-eastern, thereby avoiding the long marches by the Tista Valley and Poki Chu to the Zemu Glacier, and so saving valuable time.

Our knowledge at the beginning of 1929 may be summed briefly as follows. The three Mount Everest Expeditions had shown that, given favourable weather conditions, careful organization, determined leadership, and no insurmountable technical climbing difficulties, there is nothing to prevent an experienced party from attaining the highest summits of the earth. Everest had become politically inaccessible K2 is believed to be physically unclimbable. Of Kangchenjunga, the north-western and south western quadrants are to most of us politically inaccessible owing to the seclusion of Nepal. Raeburn, who had examined the south-western face, had pronounced it to be "vicious in the extreme, defended everywhere by overhanging masses of ice." Close reconnaissance had confirmed distant opinion that the ice armouring of the south-eastern face is impregnable. By a process of elimination we had at the founding of the Himalayan Club in 1920 come to the conclusion that the next attempt must be made in the more sheltered north-eastern quadrant, about which perhaps we knew least. The formation of this club has stimulated adventure in the high Himalaya, and no less than three attempts to climb Kangchenjunga have been made in 1929 and 1930.

The first of these ended in disaster. A young American, Mr. E. F. Farmer, set out in 1929 unaccompanied by any other

white man, without divulging his intentions to anyone competent to advise or dissuade him. His sole companions were Sherpa and Bhutia porters, ill-equipped for high climbing. His resolve was only disclosed on their return after his death. Crossing the Kang La in May into Nepal, he took the route of the disastrous expedition of 1908, and on the 26th, with three porters, started up the ice-fall below the Talung saddle, the south-west cliffs of Kangchenjunga being on his left. The snow became soft and the ill-shod porters were unable to proceed or to dissuade Farmer from continuing alone; he went on and on, into the mist, the porters waving to him to descend. He was still climbing upwards at five o'clock, after which the mist enveloped him. Throughout the night the porters continued to signal the position of the camp by means of Meta fuel and electric torch, and on the following morning they renewed their vigil. As the sun topped the Talung ridge they caught a glimpse of him far above them on a steep snow slope, moving wildly with arms outstretched, probably snow-blind. Then he disappeared to be seen no more. The second attempt, like the first, had ended in disaster.

Later in 1929 was made the third attempt, and there resulted one of the most brilliant exhibitions of climbing and endurance that has ever taken place in the Himalaya. The party comprised nine young Bavarians from Munich, all ardent mountaineers and first-rate climbers, led by Paul Bauer, who had already gained distinction in the Alps and Caucasus. At the end of July this party, with only three months' holiday before them, were at Darjeeling, where the Himalayan Club had collected the most experienced porters. After only three days' halt the party travelled by the Tista Valley and Poki Chu in the height of the monsoon, where a track had to be cut through the dripping rhododendron forest to the Zemu Glacier. After a month's hard work bringing up supplies, Camp VI was pitched at 17,000 ft. on August 28, near the head of the Zemu Glacier, where, after several reconnaissances, it was decided to concentrate on the north-east spur leading to the northern arete immediately north of the highest summit. The next few days were occupied in trying to reach the crest of the spur. On September 2, 3, and 4 three attempts to gain this crest failed, each party being driven back by overhanging masses of ice. On the 6th at last the spur was conquered, and a stair case cut for the porters. A violent blizzard on the night of the 6th drove the party right back to Camp VI, which also had to be evacuated owing to avalanches. The whole track, cut with so much labour, was obliterated.

In Bauer's modest account, published in the *Himalayan Journal*, he says: "We were now ready to start the real assault." The knowledge that they had once reached the crest was a great moral asset. Camp VII was pitched at a height of 18,700 ft., and on the 16th, after several days of heavy step-cutting, Bauer, Kraus, and Beigel conquered the spur for the second time.

The route now turned westwards along the crest of this spur and a track had to be cut over, across, and even through the giant ice pinnacles that barred the way. Ice-caves were cut at Camps VIII, IX, and X, the last of which was established at a height of 23,288 ft. on October 2. The next day Allwein and Kraus, during a reconnaissance from this point reached a height of 24,272 ft., and six Bavarians and three porters were concentrated at Camp X for the assault of the easier slopes beyond.

But Kangchenjunga, like Everest, has weapons in her armoury which, if she chooses to use them, render her invincible. On the night of the 3rd she brought out all these weapons—a bitter wind, a blizzard, and intense cold; and with these reserves she fought the climbers for four days. To economize supplies the upper camp had to be reduced and four climbers started down. A final attempt to advance on the 6th showed, however, that success was now impossible. On the 7th the snow-fall was terrific; within the twenty-four hours at least 6½ ft. of new snow fell, and all three parties were isolated on the mountain.

It is almost impossible to conceive the difficulties of the descent. The highest party, with Allwein in front, porters Keddar and Passang in the middle, and Bauer in the rear, all heavily laden, started to force a way down through the drifting snow. At one point Allwein, at another Allwein and the two porters were carried away by starting avalanches; on both occasions these avalanches were expected, and Bauer, on the end of the rope, held the others. The cave at Camp IX was deeply buried in the snow, and further advance was checked by the ice-pinnacles. Half the loads were then cast over the edge to the Zemu Glacier 5,000 ft. below. A track was re-cut over the pinnacles, and after two more days Camp VIII was reached.

Thus ended the third attack on Kangchenjunga; a brilliant attempt which, but for bad luck with the weather, might well have succeeded. It is too early to detail the experiences of Dyrenfurth's expedition this year. A change of plan at the last minute owing to permission to enter Nepal being received, led to this international attempt being made in the north-western

quadrant, the line communication to which is long and dangerous and liable to be cut by bad weather at the Kang La. The advantage of climbing on the north of Kangchenjunga is lost if the communications traverse the southern ridge. We cannot yet say definitely whether the mountain is impregnable from the north-west; at the moment it looks as though the "Munich Spur" is the only feasible line of attack. Nevertheless Kangchenjunga will yield one day.