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**1954 IN THE HIMALAYA**

**A Survey of this Year's  
International Expeditions**

**By Hugh Merrick**

The years 1954 has witnessed far greater activity in the Himalaya than any previous season. attacks have been launched on at least eight major peaks, up and down the 1,800 miles of the great mountain tract from Sikkim to the Karakorum.

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Kangchenjunga, the world's third-highest peak, only 100 ft. lower than K2, survives as the highest peak unconquered. This vast star-shaped mountain mass, with its five summits and a like number of appalling rock-ridges, each some miles in length, their approaches wickedly ice-armoured with avalanche terraces, is still far from bowing its proud head, which presents such a glorious spectacle from Darjeeling.

Unlike Everest, Nanga Parbat and K2 before they fell, no one can yet say of it that the route by which it will be climbed has been established, let alone pursued. So it would seem that, in spite of frequent explorations and attacks dating back to before 1899, when Freshfield circled the peak at above the 20,000-ft. level and brought back grave doubts as to the possibility of climbing it at all, even the riddle of the route to the top remains as far as ever from being solved. True, twice, in 1929 and 1931, the Germans, approaching from the Zemu Glacier on the east, laid siege to the ice-plastered North-East Spur and by weeks of superhuman effort, living in ice-cave camps on its knife-edges crest, hacked a way to about 25,250 ft.—only to find themselves hopelessly sundered from the mountain's 3,000-ft. summit-mass by suicidally dangerous avalanche slopes. By contrast, on Everest, Nanga Parbat and K2, parties

have on several occasions been within less than 1,500 ft. of success during the earlier "failures." So it seems fair to surmise that much danger, toil and hardship will have to be endured before this third-biggest of the world's mountains yields to a successful assault.

This summer, attention has been focussed on the mountain's southern side, where a British party, led by J. W. R. Kempe, headmaster of a school in India, returned to one of the routes pioneered in the earlier part of the century, in an attempt to open up a route by the Yalung Glacier and the 22,000-ft. Saddle above it, on to one of the great rock ridges falling southwards on the face that fronts Darjeeling. It was on this glacier that the Swiss climber Pache and several porters died in 1905, while the notorious Aleister Crowley, on being informed of the fate of his comrades, continued to drink tea and draft his article for the *Pioneer*, remarking that he was not really interested in mountaineering accidents.

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