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## Another Mountain to Climb

grow upon us hereafter. With Zealander or a Russian. In one Swiss and British expeditions plan- sense we can say that the entire ning to follow the western ap- human race is engaged in the venproaches to Everest, in attempts to ture. If the climbers are successreach the summit, the next twelve ful, we shall feel the triumph; and or fourteen months promise to be if they fail, as others have failed rich in Himalayan experience. The in the past, there will be a geninclusion of three New Zealanders in Shipton's party will sharpen interest here, though if national pride were in no way involved the adventure would still be followed closely. Everest has been stubborn. Apart from its great height, and the difficulties of the climb, the mountain has the attraction of its wild and lonely region. It is indeed the summit of the world, standing among the supporting ranges like a rampart which in snow and mist may symbolise the uprising of earth from the profoundest depths of ocean.

No mysteries will be solved when men at last crouch briefly on the crest of that frozen wave. The achievement will mean little more in the white wilderness than the passing of a cloud or the fall of a stone into an abyss. Yet in all countries the fortunes of the climbers will be followed intently; and if at last the news is of success, it will bring wonder and excitement. Some may say that these expeditions have no value, by which they mean that no practical results can be looked for. It is true that men who climb mountains have little or nothing to offer in the market-place. If Everest were left undisturbed in the snows, human progress would be unchecked. Although the adventure may yield data of some interest to scientists, its true value will be this planet. Yet the allegory may found on other levels of experience. Here is an assault on nature which, as far as we know, has nothing to do with politics, strategy, or atomic physics. It is a safe arrival.

ALKS on mountains, de- of no real consequence whether scribed on the opposite page, the first man to reach the summit open a theme which should is a Swiss, an Englishman, a New eral and quite irrational disappointment.

> In these matters, there is no need to be rational. The great climb is most of all a testing of spirit. History is partly the story of a long struggle with nature. We have learnt to change the courses of rivers, to harness the lakes, to take food and fuel and metals from the earth, and in a thousand ways to master our environment. It has been a story of plans, machines and remarkable invention. Beneath it all, however, remains the individual - a twolegged creature with a useful brain but with limbs and organs much weaker than those of many animals. When he comes to the lower slopes of a mountain, and looks upwards to the peak, he is back near the beginning of the struggle, a man with only heart and lungs to sustain him against the iron facts of nature. Himalayan climbers need good equipment, and perhaps a few accessories or scientific aids: but ultimately they must depend on strength of body and spirit. And men have always delighted in their strength. The mountain journey is lonely and dangerous. It may not be fanciful to see it as an allegory for that other and longer climb to which man was committed when he first began to think of his situation on be closer to truth if the climbers fail, for in human experience there must always be another mountain, and the attempt means more than

> > N.Z. LISTENER, MAY 9, 1952.