

New Zealanders in the Himalaya

IT all started a few years ago in a hut on Mount Cook. The talk turned to the Himalaya.

It always does sooner or later when mountaineers get together. No one disputes that New Zealand has enough hill country, and much of it pretty high hill country, to keep a climber fit and interested during a lifetime of average length; but climbers, it seems, like Flecker's pilgrims, must go "always a little further."

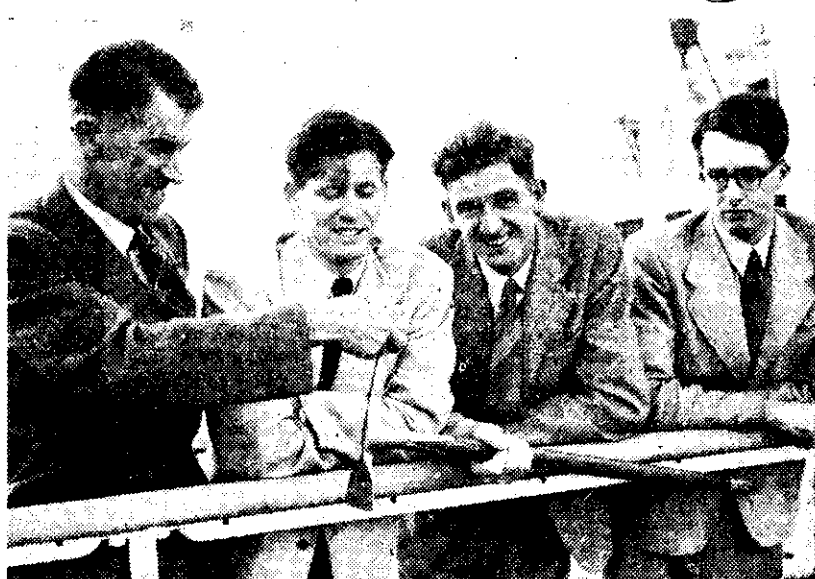
E. Hillary, E. Cotter, W. G. Lowe and E. Riddiford—these were the four in the hut—aren't the only New Zealanders who have wanted to go to the Himalaya. L. V. Bryant, now of Pukekohe, was a member of the 1935 Everest reconnaissance expedition, and in 1950 W. Packard, of Christchurch, went well up in the British attempt to climb Annapurna. But when Hillary, Cotter, Lowe and Riddiford got away last year for two months in the Garhwal Himalaya they were the first entirely New Zealand party to make the pilgrimage to the mountaineer's mecca. It didn't stop at the Garhwal Himalaya, either. Hillary and Riddiford later joined Eric Shipton's reconnaissance expedition, which was exploring the Western Cwm of Everest for a new route to the summit—the route which this year's Swiss expedition will be attempting—and these two, with Lowe, will be with Shipton again this year, in the preparations for a full-scale assault on Everest next year. This season the Shipton expedition will attempt to climb Cho Oyu (26,750 feet), a peak only a few miles from Everest. Like the Swiss, they will be

climbing this month and early next month, before the monsoon season begins.

While these expeditions are at grips with nature listeners will have a chance to hear two series of talks on last year's New Zealand expedition. North-West Garhwal, where the party went, is dominated by Kamet, over 25,000 feet high (which readers of mountain books will know from Frank Smythe's book *Kamet Conquered*). In July last year the highest unclimbed peak in this area was Mukut Parbat, 23,760 feet. This was the New Zealanders' main objective. But the first peak that interested them was Nilkanta. This rises to 21,600 feet, above the Hindu shrine of Badrinath, the base depot for the expedition. Badrinath had been reached after a march of ten days by the climbers, their four Sherpa porters and a party of coolies, across high passes—some of them at over 12,000 feet—and swift-flowing rivers. Nilkanta, it turned out, was a bit much for the climbers to attempt so soon after reaching the high country, though it taught them much that they had to learn.

But most listeners will find the ascent of Mukut Parbat the big story of these broadcasts. Like all big climbs it had to be made from a series of camps—Camp I on a carpet of mountain flowers at over 17,000 feet, camp II on snow at 19,000 feet, and camp III on an ice shelf at about 21,000 feet, "on one side . . . a creaking ice cliff and on the other a great drop." It was from this camp that Riddiford

"Letters from Listeners" will be found this week on page 12.



THE New Zealand mountaineering party whose adventures in the Himalaya last year are to be described in a series of talks from 2YZ. From left, E. Hillary, E. Cotter, W. G. Lowe (who recorded the talks for 2YZ) and E. Riddiford

and Cotter, with Pasang, one of their Sherpa porters, made the ascent of the peak, reaching the summit at an hour when most good children are getting ready for bed. Anyone who has had a long wait for a companion below any peak will consider that Hillary and Lowe, who had turned back that day, deserved the consolation prize that was later theirs.

Most people will know that climbing in the Himalaya is a different matter from climbing on the Port Hills or in the Waitakeres, in the Tararua or even in the Southern Alps. The New Zealanders like everyone else found that the high altitude takes some getting used to. Once acclimatised, the climber must bag his peak before physical deterioration sets in. (It seems to be a question of getting up among the heights slowly enough to become properly acclimatised, yet fast enough to sit on a summit before you fall to pieces.) Then he must get down hotfoot to the lowland for a spell of loafing and fresh food—the lowlands in the Himalaya being a mere 10,000 feet or so above sea level. The New Zealanders found that in climbing to the upper heights they struck at 19,000 feet a physical and mental barrier which they seemed to break through at about 20,000 feet.

The New Zealand expedition to the Garhwal Himalaya made the first ascent of seven major peaks, four of them of more than 20,000 feet, but from what they have to say there seem to be plenty more left for those who may feel they're missing out. The story of the expedition will be told first by W. G. Lowe, whose *Four Enzedders to the Himalaya* will start from

2YZ at 7.15 p.m. on Thursday, May 15. As well as giving a chatty account of the climbing, Lowe answers many questions of the kind the ordinary man who seldom leaves the lowlands is likely to ask. What did they eat? The food was surprisingly varied. Porridge from a pressure cooker will probably surprise some, but all who have spent their week-ends or an occasional Christmas holiday on the smaller peaks around Arthur's Pass—on the fringe of the band of heroes who scaled the heights—will recall many a meal above the snowline when they hear that at 20,000 as at 6000 feet a few dates and a bit of chocolate are the thing to keep you alive. What did they read? There were short stories, plays, poetry, light novels, Jane Austen, Don Quixote, Hassan. What did they talk about? Mountaineering was the most popular subject—and mountaineering in New Zealand, of all places.

The second series of talks, by E. Hillary, will start from 1YC at 7.30 p.m. on May 27, and later will be heard from other stations.

WHITE, DARK

"Mountains have been in all my life and in different ways."
(Recollections of a Mountaineer)

Despising the easy streets and simpering plain,
Adjuring to peril, towers of teasing white:
They could only take yes from my admiring look,
And from the spirit prompting hands and feet.

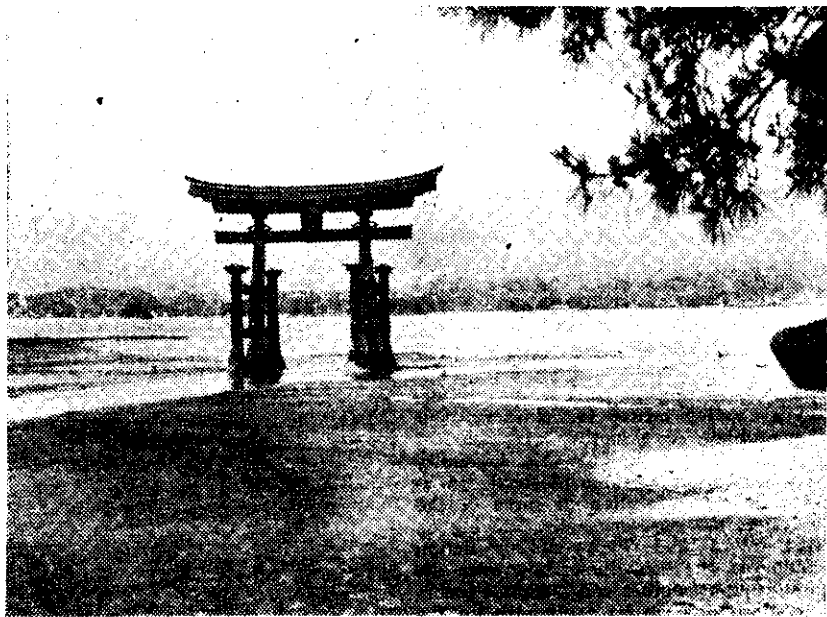
Not one such but the many mighty stood,
Posing their proud significance, they lifted
Me from the tinkling callow carnival
To the mature silence and grief to cast a man.

Mountains white, dark, piercing the midnight,
Lovers' revolt, revelation, anger.
Volcanic after many days and no
Return to understanding, death in dispute.

The flat deceit of snow where a foot may
Touch the trigger of an avalanche.
And one word releasing a mountain side
Of sorrow, leaves a mountain in the mind.

And that black mountain closing every road
That outsoars every sun-required peak.
That, too, is with me as a promised climb,
My life to plan a favourable approach.

—J. R. Hervey



THE STORY OF JAPAN and its people through the ages is the theme of a new NZBS Wellington studio production, "The Mist of Time," which will be first heard from 1YC at 9.30 p.m. this Friday, May 9. Essentially a documentary report on Japan, the wealth of material gathered has been worked into a dramatic dialogue by O. A. Gillespie, of the NZBS, and the story of the country—both from the historian's and the sightseer's point-of-view—is presented in dialogue by five main characters: a man, a woman, their Japanese guide, and the voices of History and Time. These roles are played by John Parker, Merial Fernie, Michael Cotterill, Wendy Gibb, and Ken Firth respectively. The religion of the people of Japan, their customs and their historical background, as well as the beautiful landscape, the cities and the farm lands, are all described in detail. "The Mist of Time" is scheduled for broadcast from other YA and YC stations during June or July.