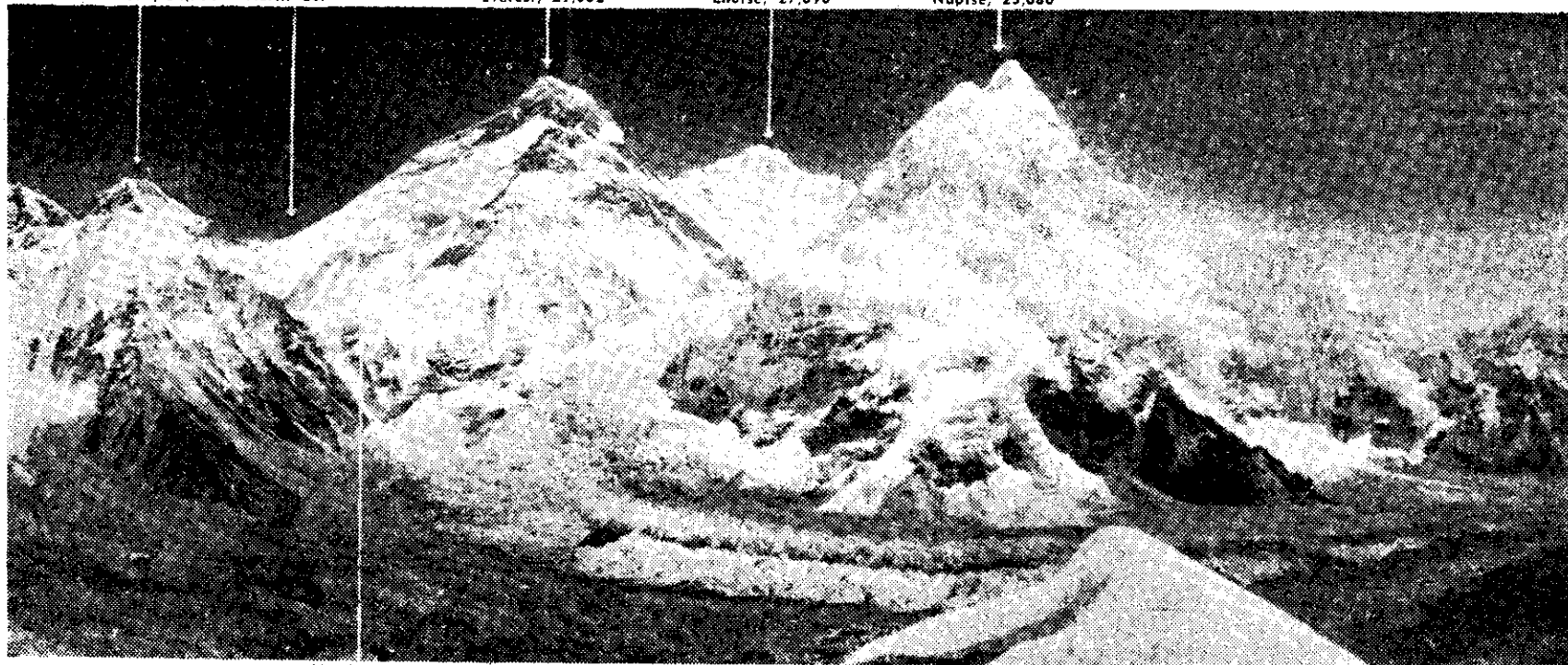




Lho La Pass

PANORAMA OF THE EVEREST MASSIF, showing the full extent of the icefall guarding the approach to the Western Cwm, and the Khumbu Glacier. Lhotse, to the right of Everest and behind it, is the fourth highest known summit

Twenty-Nine Thousand and Eight Feet Up!

SIR EDMUND HILLARY, the New Zealander who recently stood on the highest extremity of the earth's surface, must be one of the biggest men to win fame for a feat of prolonged physical endurance. At the limits of physical endeavour it has generally been the small men who have excelled — Nurmi, Lovelock, "Birdie" Bowers, for example, all travelled light. Hillary is lean, but broad-shouldered and six feet two. On the summit of Everest he must have stood a foot higher than his companion, the sturdy little hill-man Tensing.

But if the pair bear little outward resemblance, they have other things in common. From his companions of other climbs we know that Hillary is one of the most energetic of men, a dynamic, restless person who is never happy to sit calmly and wait. And of the Sherpa Tensing we know that he shares the characteristics of all hill-men: he is courageous and resourceful and never misses an opportunity. Both men have the ability to laugh which makes hardship endurable and boredom the occasion of a joke.

Hillary, with three previous expeditions behind him was probably the most experienced European Himalayan climber in the Everest party. Tensing, with experience gained during a series of Swiss expeditions to the central region of the Himalayas, is one of the three top Sherpas. Both men are in their thirties and have gained most of their climbing experience since the war. It will be Hillary's task to tell the world's mountaineers just what the final ice ridge of Everest is like.

The Sherpas, a mountain people, were first employed as porters by the climber Dr. Kell's late last century. They were drawn from the Sherpa colony at Darjeeling. Successive Himalayan expeditions employed them, but it was not till Shipton's 1951 Everest Reconnaissance

Expedition that Europeans gained admission to the Sherpas' home country — the Nepalese territory south of Everest. Buddhist in religion, the Sherpas are racially almost identical with Tibetans, but they have their own language, and, as several generations of mountaineers have testified, their own inimitable sense of humour. Several of those employed as porters have been inspired with the European passion for getting to the top, and there is little doubt that Tensing was no less enthusiastic than Hillary over the final subjugation of Everest.

Hillary first gained Himalayan experience with the New Zealand expedition organised by H. E. Riddiford in 1951. George Lowe was also with this party, which succeeded in making a first ascent of the 23,760 ft. Mukut Parbat, as well as four other peaks over 20,000 ft. The head Sherpa on this occasion was Pasanglama, one of the three prominent

head Sherpas of whom Tensing is the youngest. Later, the New Zealander joined Shipton's expedition which reconnoitred the south route up Everest. It was this route which was used by last year's unsuccessful Swiss expedition; and by this year's successful British one. Last year he was again in the Himalayas with the British expedition to Cho-Oyu. The climbers failed to reach the 26,850 ft. summit, but Hillary gained in fitness and in valuable experience from exploratory work done in the Everest region.

For all his lean fitness and engaging grin, however, Hillary can look forbidding enough after months of living in rough clothes and rougher country. When descending into the more settled areas of Nepal after the 1951 New Zealand expedition he and his companions were taken for a troop of abominable snowmen. The populace fled.

Having now attained his greatest ambition, Edmund Hillary is not likely to rest on his ice-axe. The desire to be up and doing has made him while away a day of bad weather in the Southern Alps by fashioning a bow and arrows and shooting at keas. That desire is not likely to desert him now. Next year he is expected to lead a New Zealand Alpine Club expedition to Everest's neighbour, the 27,850 ft. Makalu, fifth-highest mountain in the world. And after that, of course, there are mountains of lesser height which present greater obstacles to conquest by man. Such forbidding peaks as the Muztagh Tower, never climbed and perhaps never to be climbed, remain to stimulate the imagination of those who may feel a little sad that the highest of them all has yielded.

The Great Peaks

EVEREST is the highest of the world's great mountains, but not the last to be climbed, Godwin-Austen (28,250 ft.) and Kangchenjunga (28,146), Lhotse (27,890) and Makalu (27,790), the four next highest to Everest, are still unconquered, although Sir Edmund Hillary will lead a New Zealand expedition to the last-named next year. The ascent of Everest is, however, the climax of many successful attempts at great peaks throughout the world, for wherever mountains exist they have exerted an irresistible fascination over men's imaginations. The stories of these climbs, whether they have ended in success or failure, are tales of remarkable courage and endurance which take a high place in the record of man's indomitable will to master the world he lives in.

The record of high mountaineering, especially that of Everest, is on the whole dominated by British names, starting perhaps with Edward Whymper's ascent of the Matterhorn in 1865. The highest mountain in Africa, Kilimanjaro (19,321) was climbed by Hans



SIR EDMUND HILLARY

"Courage and strength are naught without prudence"



SHERPA TENSING