

Meyer, of Leipzig, in 1889. T. C. Fyfe and Peter and Jack Graham climbed Mount Cook on Christmas Day, 1894. In 1897 an expedition led by E. A. Fitzgerald and S. M. Vines climbed the highest mountain in America, Aconcagua (22,830 feet) in the Argentine Andes. Hudson Stuck climbed Mount McKinley (20,300), the highest in North America, in 1913. In 1932, Richard L. Burdsall and Terris Moore climbed Minya Konka (24,891) on the China-Tibet border, a mountain which at one time was regarded as being higher than Everest. In 1950 the highest Himalayan ascent up to that time was made by the Frenchmen Maurice Herzog and Louis Lachenal to the top of Annapurna (26,493). All these are great stories, and there are many more.

One of the first recorded ascents was that of the Alpine peak of Rochmelen, which was climbed by a medieval anchorite in fulfilment of a vow. In the 15th Century, Charles VIII of France ordered the ascent of Mont Aiguille "in order to destroy its reputation for inaccessibility." His comment sums up well the story of the battle of men against mountains.

One of the less well-known climbs is that of Fitzgerald and Vines on Aconcagua, at the time the highest ever made, and from which one of the first detailed reports of the effects of altitude sickness was brought back. In his report to the Royal Geographical Society Fitzgerald said that at 18,700 feet "our pulses registered about 120 to 130 beats per minute, intermittent and flighty, while our blood-circulation was extremely bad." What followed he described in these words:

We had been stopping for the last few days at our highest camp and had suffered intensely from cold and want of sleep. On reaching this point (22,000 feet) I found that it was absolutely impossible for me to proceed further. As it was late in the afternoon, I sent Zurbriggen on at once to complete the ascent, although myself obliged to turn back. I had the greatest difficulty in crawling down; my knees were so weak that I repeatedly fell, cutting myself with the sharp stones that covered the mountainside. I crawled along in this miserable plight, steering for a big patch of snow. Here,

unable to stand any longer from sheer exhaustion, I was obliged to lie down and roll down the mountainside. As I got lower my strength returned, the increased pressure of the air seeming to act as a great stimulant. I returned to camp that night with one of the most severe headaches I have ever in my life experienced. Zurbriggen arrived later on, and reported that he had reached the summit . . .

The ascent was later repeated by Vines and Zurbriggen, who reported that on the highest slopes "the slightest rebuff sufficed to damp their spirits and give them an excuse to sit down and rest. . . they were continually falling on their hands and knees." These symptoms were to be experienced in greater degree by all those who later attempted Everest and other Himalayan peaks above 20,000 feet.

It is of interest that before making their ascent of Aconcagua Fitzgerald and Zurbriggen had visited the New Zealand Alps, although they were forestalled by a few weeks in their desire to make the first ascent of Mount Cook.

The Himalayas have always exerted the greatest fascination of all mountain ranges—2000 miles of mountains with innumerable summits exceeding 20,000 feet. According to Frank Smythe, they "produce impressions of wonder and awe of such intensity as can be conjured up by no other range in any quarter of the globe." He goes on to say that "it must be a source of wonder to many that out of the 50 or 60 summits in the Himalayas exceeding 25,000 feet, only two, Nanda Devi and Kamet, have been reached, whilst Mount Everest, Kangchenjunga, K2 (Godwin-Austen) and Nanga Parbat remain inviolate despite the best endeavours of British, American, German, Austrian and French Mountaineers."

Two disasters overtook German attempts to climb Nanga Parbat in 1936 and 1937. In the first many Germans and natives lost their lives in a storm before the higher camps had been properly established. In the second Dr. Karl Wien and his party were frustrated by an ice avalanche in which all but one in a party of eight with six Nepalese porters perished. In 1929 a German



MT. MCKINLEY, 20,300
Highest in North America



ANNAPURNA, 26,493
First 8000-metre peak conquered

party under Dr. Paul Bauer made an unsuccessful attempt on Kangchenjunga, and in 1930 an international expedition led by Professor G. O. Dyhrenfurth met with failure and further loss of life. Kamet was conquered by Smythe in 1931, and Nanda Devi in 1936 by N. E. Odell and H. W. Tillman. This last ascent, achieved after incredible difficulties, was regarded for long after as the greatest feat of Himalayan mountaineering ever accomplished.

The New Zealand expedition to Makalu may or may not be successful, but it is accepted now that the Southern

Alps provide some of the best possible training for work in the Himalayas. Its members will do well to remember the words of one of the greatest mountaineers, Edward Whymper, conqueror of many mountains including Chimborazo, the first peak of over 20,000 feet scaled. "Climb if you will," he said, "but remember that courage and strength are naught without prudence, and that a momentary negligence may destroy the happiness of a lifetime. Do nothing in haste; look well to each step; and from the beginning think what may be the end."



GODWIN-AUSTEN (K2), 28,250
Second to Everest



KANGCHENJUNGA, 28,146
Beat back an international assault



MAKALU, 27,790
Target for 1954



THE MUSTAGH TOWER, 24,000 (?)
Unclimbed—unclimbable?