

## THE MOUNT EVEREST EXPEDITION.

By J. N. COLLIE.

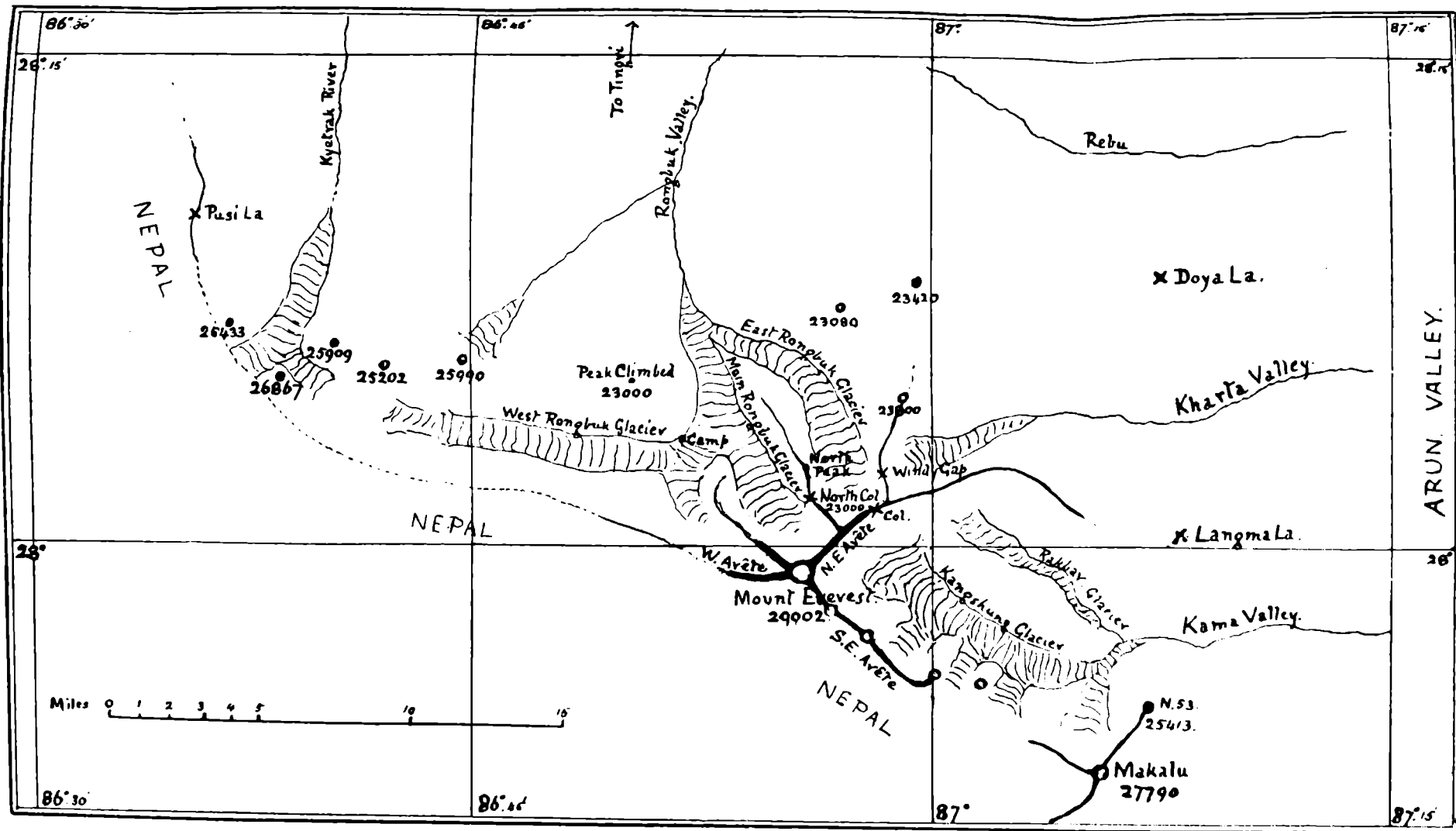
THE expedition started from Darjeeling on May 18, travelling to Tibet up the Chumbi Valley via Phari. The frontier was then crossed and Kampa Dzong reached on June 4. A fortnight later they arrived at Tingri Dzong, having travelled 300 miles in thirty days. The headquarters of the expedition were placed at Tingri. On the 23rd Messrs. Mallory and Bullock started for Mt. Everest, which lies some 40 to 50 miles to the S. of Tingri. They ascended a valley, the Rongbuk, that drains the northern slopes of Mt. Everest. Here they established a camp at 18,000 ft. On July 5 they ascended a peak over 23,000 ft. The coolies, however, who accompanied them were unable to reach the summit. During the time spent at this camp they were able to make a complete reconnaissance of the northern face and western arête of Mt. Everest. The northern face of the mountain is a forbidding precipice of 10,000 ft., and the arête appears also impracticable.

A word may here be said of the arêtes of the great mountain. There are three main ridges—the W. ridge, the N.E. ridge, and the S.E. ridge—that runs from Mt. Everest to Makalu (27,790 ft.).

The whole of the snows on the northern flanks of Mt. Everest drain into the great Rongbuk Glacier. This glacier is split into three—the main glacier, the eastern, and the western glaciers. The West Rongbuk Glacier drains the southern side of a great group of mountains (25–26,000 ft. high) that lie about 15 to 20 miles N.W. of Mt. Everest, and at the head of the main and the eastern glaciers is the great N.E. arête of Mt. Everest. Apparently from this side no easy route on to the N.E. arête could be found. From what, however, was discovered two months later, it is possible that the best route on to the comparatively easy N.E. arête may be up this East Rongbuk Glacier.

During the month that was spent by the climbing party in the Rongbuk Valley, the surveying party went W. and S.W. of Tingri, while Colonel Howard Bury went S.W. up the Kyetrak River to a large glacier, the Khombu. To the W. of the Khombu Glacier lies the Pusi La (19,000 ft.), a native pass into Nepal. This was crossed into the Rongshahr Valley.

As time was getting on, and the reconnaissance of the



SKETCH MAP OF MT. EVEREST.

northern slopes of Mt. Everest had not revealed any easy route on to the mountain, the base camp at Tingri was moved on July 24, in order to investigate the nature of the approaches and possibilities of the eastern side of Mt. Everest.

The route chosen was down the Rongbuk Valley, which apparently after running N., at Chhobuk turns E., then bending to the S.E. it passes Rebu, finally joining the Arun River. Leaving the valley of the Rongbuk they crossed a pass, the Doya La, and established their new base camp in the Kharta Valley, at 12,800 ft. From the lower part of the Kharta Valley it did not seem at all likely that the glaciers at its head would lie near Mt. Everest, and only later was it found that the Kharta Valley, like the Rongbuk, bends round in a half circle, and that the sources of the East Rongbuk and the Kharta Glaciers lie just at the foot of the great N.E. arête of Mt. Everest.

The climbing party, therefore, left the Kharta Valley by a pass, the Langma La, and entered the Khama Valley that runs S.E. from Mt. Everest. Both in the Kharta Valley and in the Kama Valley they found a new vegetation and a new climate. The barren, dry, stony wildernesses of Tibet were left behind, and a luxuriant vegetation filled the lower parts of the valleys. The upper alps were covered with wild flowers of every different shade of colour. This was at the beginning of August, and the weather was at its worst. Although no serious climbing could be attempted, a large number of magnificent photographs were obtained of Mt. Everest, Makalu, and N 53, an outlier of Makalu. All these peaks, and the head of the Kama Valley, are shown in the photograph taken by the late Dr. Kellas last winter ('A.J.' xxxiii. 295). At the head of the Kama Valley, no promising approach to the N.E. arête could be seen. Cliffs of steep black rock, over which hanging glaciers discharge avalanches all day long, guard the mountain. The party, therefore, returned to the Kharta Valley, and as a last resource turned their attention to the upper Kharta Valley. On September 22 six members of the expedition arrived at its head and camped at 22,500 ft. Next day three of the climbers camped 'on the glacier below the N. col,' and on the 24th they ascended to a col 23,000 ft. between Mt. Everest and the first peak to the N., but they were driven back by a furious north-westerly gale, lasting for four days, and by intense cold. They, however, found 'the arête quite possible.'

From all the photographs we have of this arête the last 6000 ft. do not appear to present any insuperable difficulties.

Next season the attempt to climb Mt. Everest can at once be taken up at this point of 23,000 ft. at the head of the East Rongbuk Glacier. Let us hope that an easy way will be found, not from the Kharta Valley, but direct from Tingri up the Rongbuk Glacier. As far back as September 3 Colonel Howard Bury, in a telegram, says: 'The approach up the eastern branch of the Rongbuk Glacier to the col to the N. of Everest appeared a practicable though very long proceeding; but before it was possible to make any serious attempt to penetrate this valley the weather broke.'

But it would be a longer proceeding if the only approach to the Kharta Valley was by the route followed this year by the expedition. The only alternative route to Kharta is down the valley of the Arun, and it is very probable that in the early summer the swollen rivers would make this impossible.

The last piece of mountaineering was by Colonel Howard Bury, Mr. Wollaston, and Captain Wheeler; they returned from the head of the Kharta Valley by the Kama Valley, and the former crossed a col between Mt. Everest and N 53 at 21,500 ft., whence the southern face of Mt. Everest was seen for the first time. It was very steep and unpromising.

Headquarters at Kharta were left on October 5, and all members of the party then started for Darjeeling.

The expedition to Mt. Everest this year has been a great success. Those who know the difficulties of mountaineering above 20,000 ft. will appreciate how hard the climbing party must have worked. For three months they had very little rest. They have completed a reconnaissance round three sides of Mt. Everest that leaves little to be desired. The photographs that have been secured, especially those of Colonel Howard Bury, are of the highest interest, not only from an artistic, but also from a topographical point of view; a large area round Mt. Everest will be mapped by means of the photographic survey.

We yet have to learn the nature of the collections of botanical and zoological specimens, but most certainly they will be full of flora and fauna new to science. The geology also of the highest mountains in the world must be of the highest interest. And last of all, and of outstanding importance, is the survey of over 10,000 square miles of entirely new country. No European had ever travelled through it, and the only map was made at the order of a Chinese emperor, Kang Hsi, over 200 years ago. There still remains an unknown country farther to the W., a great stretch of mountain land lying N. of Nepal

S. Peak.

Junction of arêtes.

N. Col.

N. Peak.



#### VIEW FROM WINDY GAP.

North Col of Mt. Everest with N. arête leading to junction with N.E. arête. The apparent summit is the junction of the two arêtes and is about 26,000 to 27,000 ft. The actual summit lies far behind the apparent summit. In the foreground is the E. Rongbuk Glacier.

and S. of the Sang Po or Brahmaputra. At present we have no maps of it, it is unexplored and unknown and covers a large area on the maps. Perhaps next year some part of it may be visited by the surveyors of the expedition.

With the knowledge and experience gained this year, the 1922 expedition should bring back results even greater than those already obtained. The 1921 expedition was, in the nature of things, merely a reconnaissance; and when all the difficulties and unforeseen mishaps that always occur in preliminary explorations are taken into account, one must congratulate Colonel Howard Bury and all the other members of the expedition on having been so extraordinarily successful. Another fact that may be mentioned is that this first-rate piece of exploration into an unknown country has cost considerably less than any other expedition of equal importance.

Next year there will be a larger and stronger climbing party. They should, if all be well, be at the base of Mt. Everest two months earlier than they were this year. There is no doubt that June and July are finer months round Mt. Everest than later, after the monsoon has broken. Given good weather, there seems to be no reason why they should find insuperable difficulties in climbing along the N. and N.E. arêtes of the great mountain. The photographs show no difficult rocks, and no extremely steep ice slopes. Of all the great peaks, K<sub>2</sub>, Nanga Parbat, Kangchenjunga, Makalu, Nanda Devi, etc., none have such easy access to their summits as Mt. Everest. Let us hope that next year the summit may be reached.

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## A TRAVERSE OF MONT BLANC.

By GEORGE FINCH.

IT is a curious fact that, to this day, the southern slopes of Mont Blanc rank amongst the least frequented districts of the Alps. Mr. James Eccles who, with Michel and Alphonse Payot, first climbed Mont Blanc from the S. over forty-four years ago, remarked in a paper read before the Alpine Club,<sup>1</sup> 'it is singular that, notwithstanding their close proximity to a good mountaineering centre, the glaciers of the southwestern end of Mont Blanc have been, compared with other parts of the chain, so neglected by Alpine climbers.' Of the

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<sup>1</sup> *A.J.* viii. 409.