

A BEGINNER IN THE BUSH

By H. E. NEWTON

IN 1900 I had made a casual acquaintance with two men from New Zealand, and in October, 1901, I found myself at Ross on the west coast of the South Island in charge of a parish 250 miles long and about 20 or 30 miles wide as the crow flies. I have given a short description of the difficulties of travel in an article in the *ALPINE JOURNAL*,¹ and a fuller and better account is to be found in A. P. Harper's *Pioneer Work in the New Zealand Alps*. I need only repeat that the west side of the Alps is dense semi-tropical forest with a big glacier-fed river every 10 or 15 miles, in those days all unbridged. On my way over to the coast I had been fortunate in meeting A. P. Harper.

I had been five seasons in the Swiss Alps, but a curate's stipend had only run to one or two climbs per season with guides. However, with a friend I had done a good deal of crossing the easier glacier passes and climbing such peaks as we thought we could manage with a mutual agreement, not always kept, that if it became difficult we would turn back. I was fortunate enough to meet Walter Larden in 1900, when his companion had gone home, and to be taken in hand by him. I just knew enough to be able to profit from his teaching and his example. As I look back, I realise even more what I realised then quite clearly, that I had nothing like the experience I ought to have had. But it was my only chance of climbing. It so happened that the earlier climbers, for one reason or another, were unable to get to the Alps. I was five days' journey, mostly by coach, from the Hermitage on the east side where I could get a guide, and on any stage of that trip I was liable to be held up for a couple of days by a river in flood. I had better say at once that now, with all the rivers bridged, a tunnel through the Alps and a motor service, to say nothing of an aeroplane, it is a very different matter.

I had brought an ice-axe, some rope, a Jaeger sleeping bag, and an aluminium cooker with me, but in those days equipment was very heavy, demanding porters or mules to carry it. Aluminium was only just coming into use, films were a novelty and certainly not up to plates. It is amazing how weight has been reduced. I have even carried a cast iron camp oven up to a base camp. Our main endeavour was to reduce as far as possible what was sufficient to enable us to sleep out after a base camp had been established. The weight of food and methylated spirit would depend on the number of days we expected to be out. I have been held up to scorn for stating what that weighed, as if it was all that a swag meant even on big climbs.

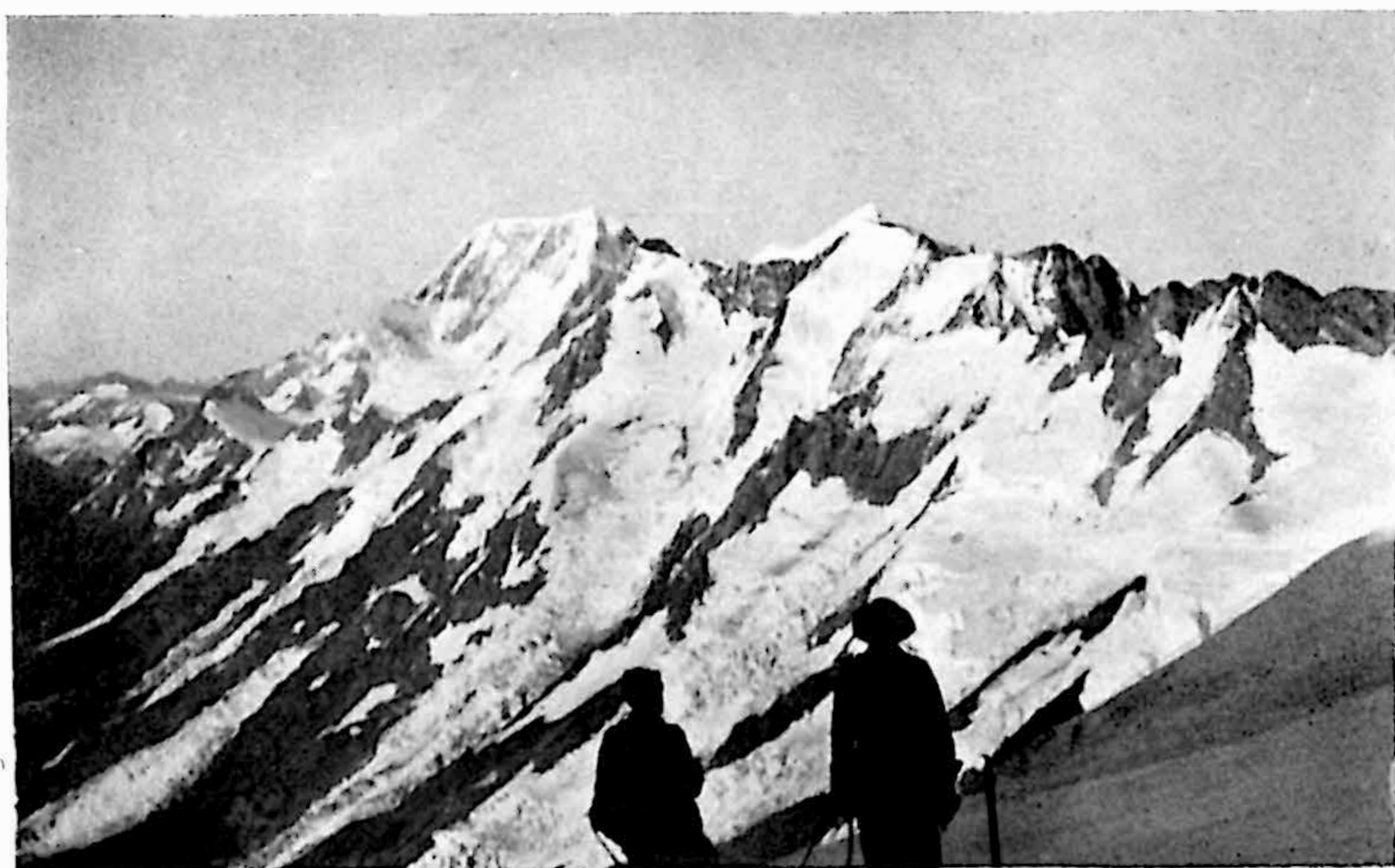
In January, 1902, Dr. Teichelmann and I started from Ross in a buggy after being held up for two days by rain and got as far as the

¹ *A.J.* 29. 1 sqq.



Photo, H. E. Newton]

SWIMMING HORSES ACROSS A LAGOON.



Photo, H. E. Newton]

MOUNT COOK AND EAST SIDE OF THE DIVIDE FROM GRAHAM'S SADDLE.

Wanganui river. The rain came on again and by the time we reached the river it was unfordable. I was a very 'new chum' and tried not to look surprised when the buggy was left by the road side with the harness on the axles to keep it out of the wet. Hende, the ferryman, in spite of the swirling current got us and our gear over, the horses swimming behind.² The mailman had caught us up and Hende had to make three journeys and after each crossing tow the empty boat the best part of 200 yards up stream to make up for the distance he had been carried down. At Hende's we had a real west coast welcome and a huge log fire round which we sat while our clothes dried on us. The next morning we could neither go back nor forward as the rain had come on again. The day after Hende told us that he thought we could cross the little Wanganui, so we got a spring cart to take our gear and rode the horses. At the Wateroa, the next big river, we had again to boat the swags and swim the horses. The next day another spring cart took our things to the Waiho. Again I discovered that I was living under new conditions. At a track that came in from a homestead, two girls were waiting; they had ridden up to meet us as they had heard that the doctor was on the road. They produced a set of forceps with which they usually pulled each other's teeth and which were rusty enough to have been on a salvage dump for a year. So I held the horses, they sat down in turn on a fallen tree and the doctor pulled the offending teeth and flicked them into the bush and told them to rinse their mouths well with salt and water, and we mounted our horses and rode off our respective ways. I went to a small township to hold service and rejoined the doctor at the Waiho next day. It poured all next day, and we sat in a little accommodation house built of slabs and tree ferns, with an iron roof on which the rain beat almost deafeningly. The next day we went up on to the glacier and got some photos though the peaks were all shrouded in clouds. I put my axe down when taking one photo and must have touched it with my foot, for it disappeared

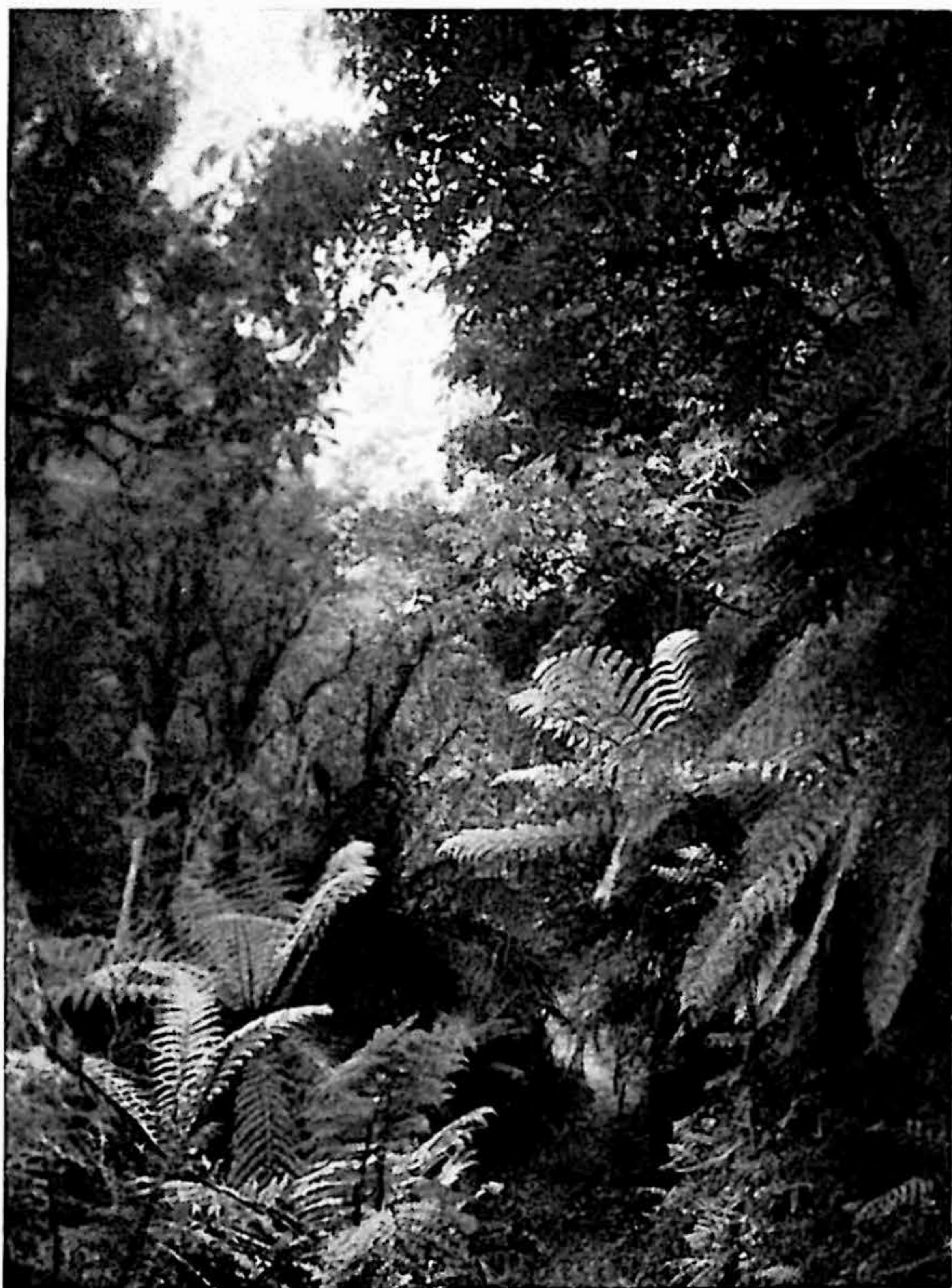
² In the photo of swimming horses the rump of one horse is just visible. A horse swims very much in the same position as when on land, except that the head is straight out. With a rider, some horses will swim with the forelegs and walk on the hind legs as long as possible: a dangerous trick when there is a current and a rough bottom. When he is swimming he is at such an angle that the rider's top waistcoat pocket is just out of water. In any case, the least pull on the reins will drag his nose under water, and a horse drowns very easily. The only safe thing to do is to leave the reins *very* slack and hold on to the mane. Horses bred where rivers have to be crossed are never hogged, nor is the tail docked. If the rider comes off he must never get in front of his own or another horse or the forelegs will thresh him under; the stirrup can be grasped—the safety catch will be well rusted home—and then the tail, when the horse is free to swim without a rider pressed against him by the current. If the bank on landing is steep, it looks as if he would kick your brains out, but I have never had my arm kicked. In a strong current, the tail must be held till the rider is sure that he will not be carried away. A martingale is necessary and even with short shanked spurs the rider will have to be careful. They are not to hang on by! I always took my feet out of the stirrups as soon as it looked like a swim.

The above refers to fast running rivers, where the rider must go far enough up stream to avoid being carried into any snags or fallen timber.

down an innocent little crevasse about a foot wide. We could not see it and the crevasse was too narrow to do anything. Five years later it was found on the top of the glacier about a quarter of a mile down. I brought it back to England and put a new shaft in it, and on a foggy day it was dropped on the rocks descending from the Oberaar hut to the Unteraar Glacier and I have never seen it again.

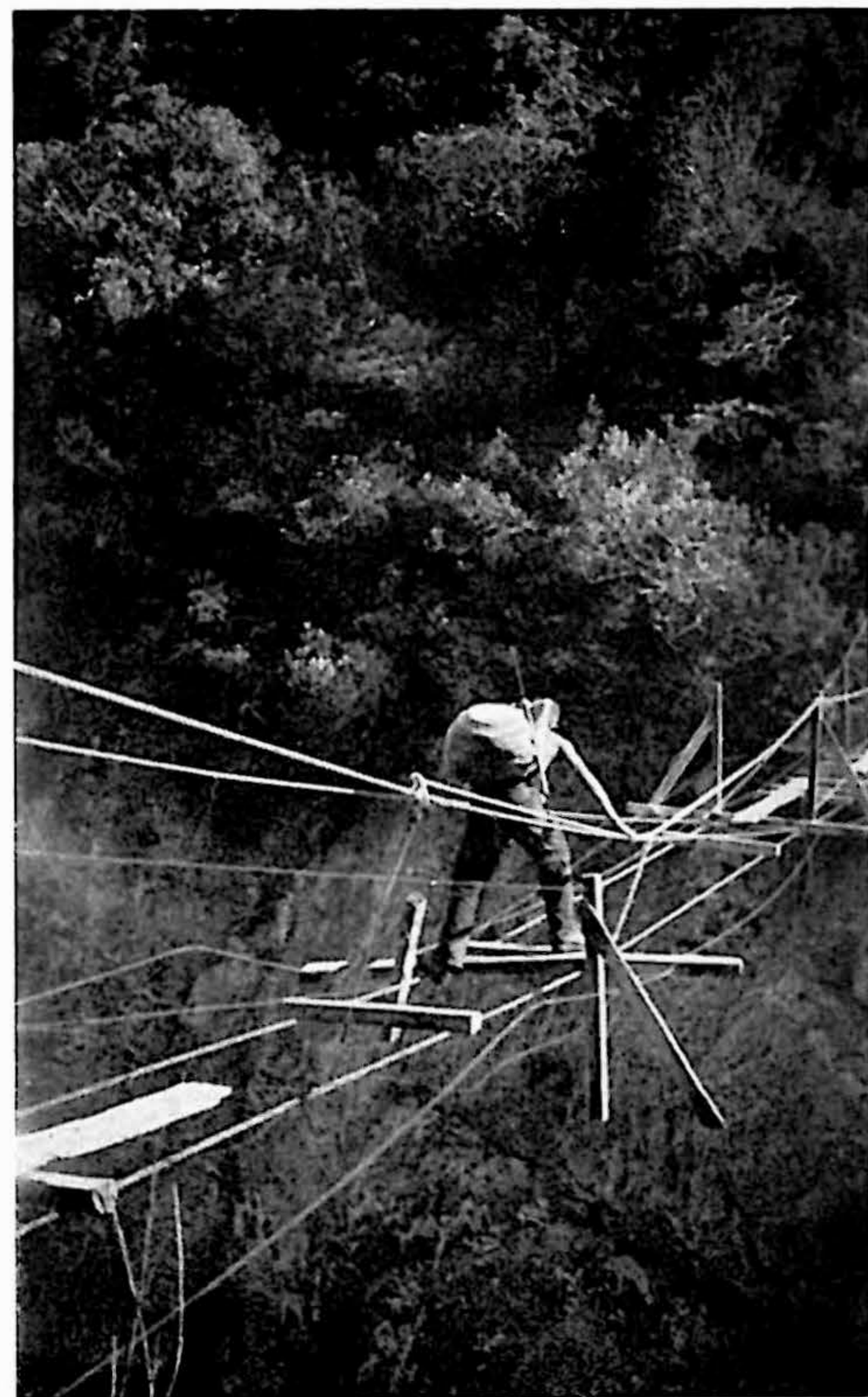
We had intended to go down to the Karangarua and cross by the Copland to the Hermitage, but it had taken us eight days to get to the Waiho and the rivers were still in fair flood, so we took three days' food and started up the ridge between the Franz Josef Glacier and the Callery river. Twice to my knowledge, once a year or so before, the Callery had dried up suddenly in the spring and the diggers had got into the river bed and scraped up good gold below the big stones where the nuggets had been carried by the current and left. They heard the roar of the returning water and only just got out in time. The Callery is an impassable gorge for some six miles, and undoubtedly some snow avalanche or glacier face had fallen and blocked the gorge high up. We had hoped to get Peter Graham, a young miner at the Waiho who had been with Teichelmann up the Callery two years before, but we thought he could not get away and had engaged the storekeeper. One great trouble in those days was that we could get no one with any experience of ice beyond the snout of the glacier. The material was excellent; they were all good bushmen, accustomed to running over tailing heaps of loose stones in thigh rubber boots to get to the nozzle in a hurry, which gave an excellent sense of balance, and felling timber enabled them to take to step-cutting like a duck to water.

The difficulty was to get to the upper snowfields. Harper had reported the icefall to be impossible except in winter. There was a wire bridge over the Callery, and a blaze line for prospectors. This we followed and then started straight up the bush to reach the ridge and followed it up till 5.30 P.M. It was my first experience of a heavy swag in the bush and I was completely done up. I had not learnt to pack a swag nor had I learnt how to get it, or myself, through branches or fallen timber, while the other two seemed to slip along, under or over, like eels. Later on I learnt a little of the art. I had been accustomed to approach my climb by a respectable mule track or a faint path over pastures, but this wriggling through timber, continually caught by undergrowth or branches, reduced me to a silent fury infinitely worse than I had ever known when I was trying to keep up with the man who had the lantern. I can only recall some of the more lurid things I said I would do myself if ever I caught myself in the bush again, even if it was to get to a glacier. As I did go 'bushwhacking' again they are best forgotten. We saw we could not get above the bush that night, so decided to camp there on just enough clear ground to lie down. We had, of course, plenty of wood, but no water. After the recent rain everything was wringing wet and we squeezed moss through an oatmeal bag into the billy. The scones, made of white flour, were brown with little bits of moss for currants and the tea was purple—we must have



Photo, H. E. Newton]

TRACK TO THE FRANZ JOSEF GLACIER.



Photo, H. E. Newton]

DILAPIDATED WIRE BRIDGE OVER THE CALLERY.

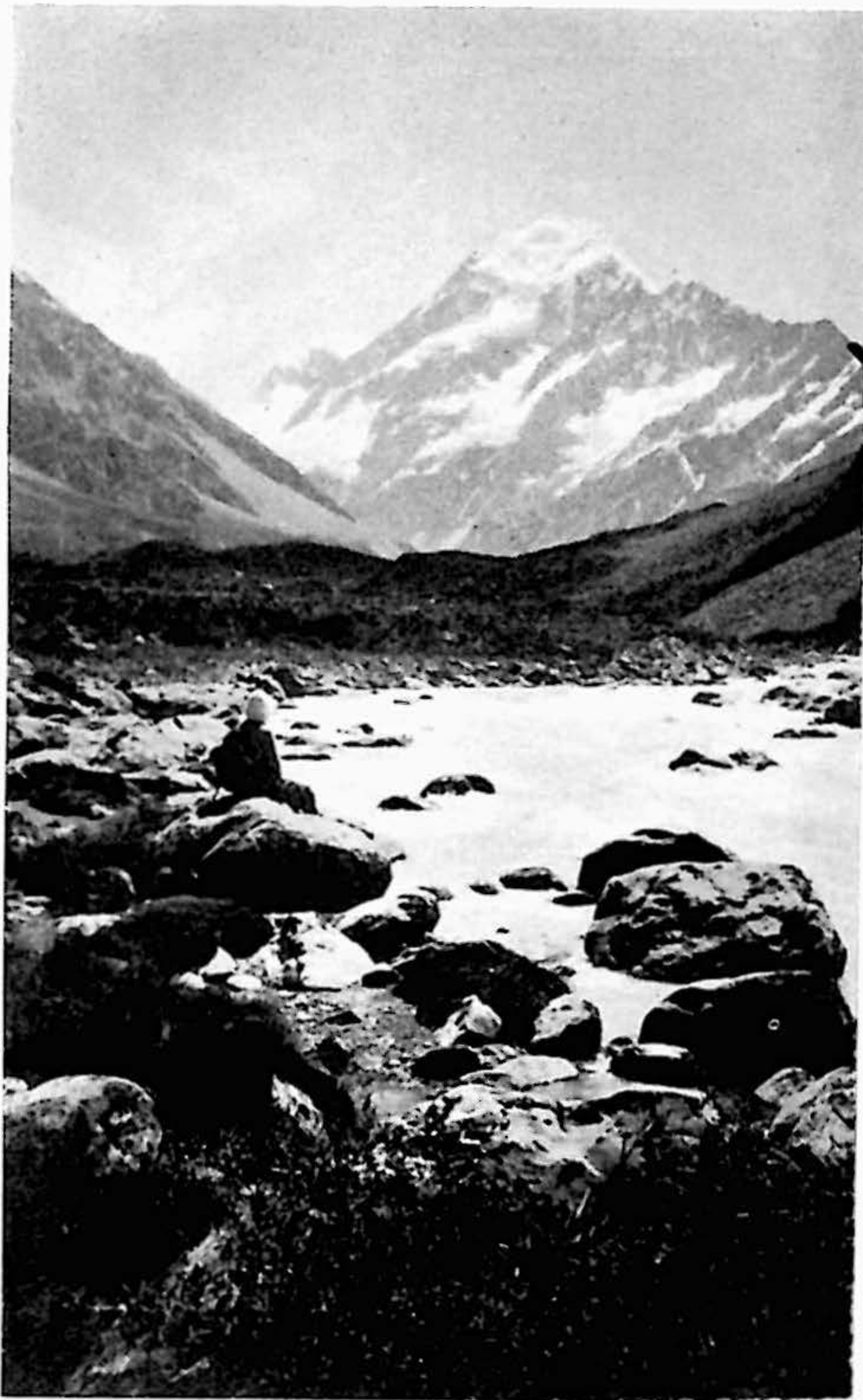
got hold of sphagnum moss. I do not remember which was the nastier. Teichelmann and I had made ourselves oiled sleeping bags, but as the man had none, we spread ours out and slept on them. We got off at 7 A.M. after some more of the mossy nourishment. Soon we got above the tree level and found a number of *Ranunculus Lyalli*, the leaves of which hold up to 3 oz. of water, but there had been little dew and they only held about an ounce. However, they did give us a little clean water. Suddenly on the Callery side we came across an overhanging rock and the two water holes which we had been told we should find there. We had a magnificent view of the peaks at the head of the Callery culminating in Mt. Elie de Beaumont. Opposite we saw the whole of the 1200-foot Unser Fritz Falls. The ridge ahead prevented us from seeing our route. It was quite clear that if we went on we should have a night out on the snowfield. The weather seemed settled and we decided to stop and bake scones for tomorrow. Teichelmann went on with the slasher to clear the track a bit and after tea we went on for about an hour carrying the billy full of water, as we had made up our minds to try and cross Graham's Saddle at the head of the Franz Josef and go to the Hermitage and return by the Copland. I had read the account of the first ascent from the other side and the account of Harper, Fitzgerald and Zurbriggen crossing it from the Victoria, but had made no notes of these accounts. All I did remember was that we should have considerable difficulty in getting down anywhere else. None of us knew anything of the snowfield ahead. We had a map of the district, half inch to the mile. We knew we could trust certain peaks that had been fixed by trigonometry and the next day we were to waste a lot of time in arguing about the position of the saddle. We had an ice-axe and a short alpenstock between the three of us. Teichelmann and I had crampons.

Next morning, after thawing our boots, we set off at 5.45 and soon got on to a small snowfield after a rather loose chimney. We made the mistake of keeping too high to get a good view of the country ahead and had to descend some steep snow which was still frozen. As we were short of axes and the man's boots had only very worn hobnails, we put on the rope, and in a few moments I heard a shout, 'I'm going.' He had been with Roberts to Kandahar and was a typical old Tommy. Directly he found his 'officer' knew a little about the job and held him, he was quite happy and capered about without a thought—and, because he had confidence, never slipped again. We had to cross three rock ridges dividing the heads of smaller glaciers flowing into the Franz Josef and on one we found a little water. Not expecting to be on the snow we had no flask with us. At last we got to the steep final rise. As it was late afternoon and there was a cornice except in one place, we had to cut steps through the recent soft snow straight up. I found that the slasher was the best tool I have ever used for cutting 'pigeon holes.' It was 5 P.M. when we got to the top. What with arguing about the route and the soft snow, we had been very slow. We set off at once, at first straight down and then, bearing to our left, got into

a snow gully and by rocks and snow got down to the flat ice of the Rudolf Glacier. By this time it was getting dark, and after a snack and a good drink of water, Teichelmann set off to try and get a glimpse of the position of the Malte Brun hut on the far side of the Tasman. We packed up the swags and set off after him. Soon it got too dark to see and we left the glacier for the moraine on our left, as we knew that somewhere there was a good overhanging boulder that had been used as a shelter. We took different lines in the hope that one of us would come across it. A lantern marked the track of the man close to the ice so that we might not send down stones on him, the other two were kept in touch by a continual rattle of loose stones. It was at this rock that R. S. Low was found in 1906 after crawling with a broken ankle from the bottom of the pass, taking two and a half days, and on one of them he had to lie up in his sleeping bag for snow. Seven days later he was found by the guides from the Hermitage. In the dark the best place we could find was some shingle covered ice on the Tasman Glacier. We managed to warm a little water over the spirit stove and put some whiskey and sugar in it and gnawed raw bacon. There was a cold wind and we were all pretty cold; the last thing I remember was the Doctor declaring that shivering was really nature's way of warming you. Scientifically, probably true; but practically it did not seem to work.

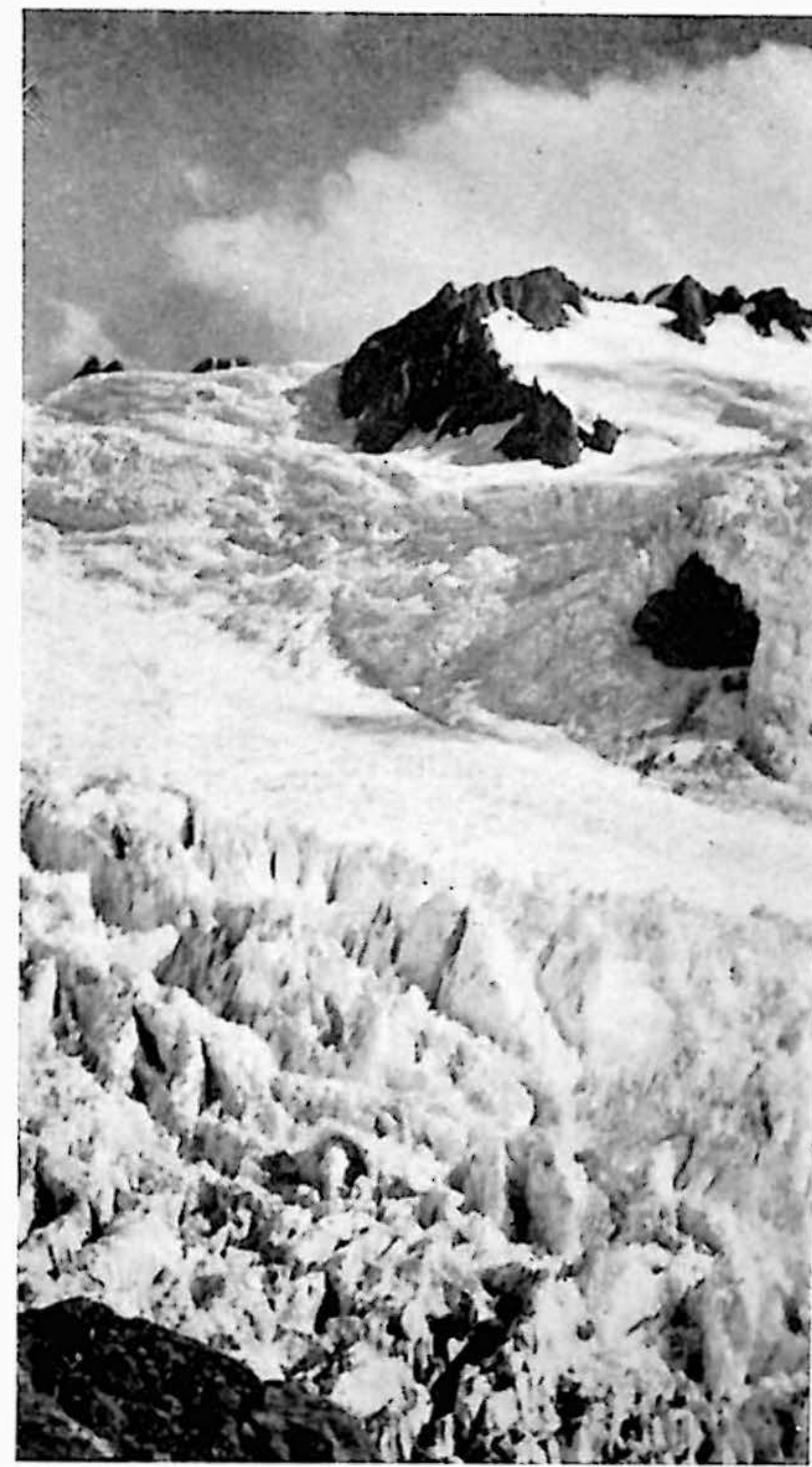
Rather reluctantly we set off at 5 A.M. next morning and as we thought it was not far we had a fig apiece, but it was midday before we reached the Ball hut. We found a comfortable hut and plenty of food of which we were in sore need. As we began our meal two men rode up: one was Clark the Hermitage guide and the other a Dr. Parker from Sydney. Clark had heard that we were coming over the Copland and had been over the saddle to see if we had lost our way, leaving a note and some food at an overhanging rock used as a shelter. He looked at us each in turn and then carefully looking at no one said, 'Are you Mr. Newton?' We certainly were three disgraceful looking ruffians, but I had to own up and explain that we could not get below the Waiho for the flooded rivers and had come over Graham's Saddle instead.

Next day we walked and rode down to the Hermitage. We were held up by bad weather for a couple of days, and spent the time discussing plans. We had promised Mr. Roberts, the chief surveyor of Westland, to get him some photos of the upper Strachan. A brilliant suggestion was put forward that instead of crossing the Copland Pass and going up the Strachan we should go up the Hooker and make the first crossing of Baker's Saddle and go down the Strachan into the Copland. We decided to take Clark with us as he could return to the Hermitage by the Copland, a glacier free pass. Clark's only doubt was the upper icefall of the Hooker as it was late in the season. We got off next morning at 5. I had borrowed an ice-axe at the Hermitage and felt better equipped. At 10.20 A.M. we were opposite the Copland Saddle and had lunch. Partly by the left lateral moraine and partly by



Photo, H. E. Newton]

MOUNT COOK FROM THE HOOKER RIVER.



Photo, H. E. Newton]

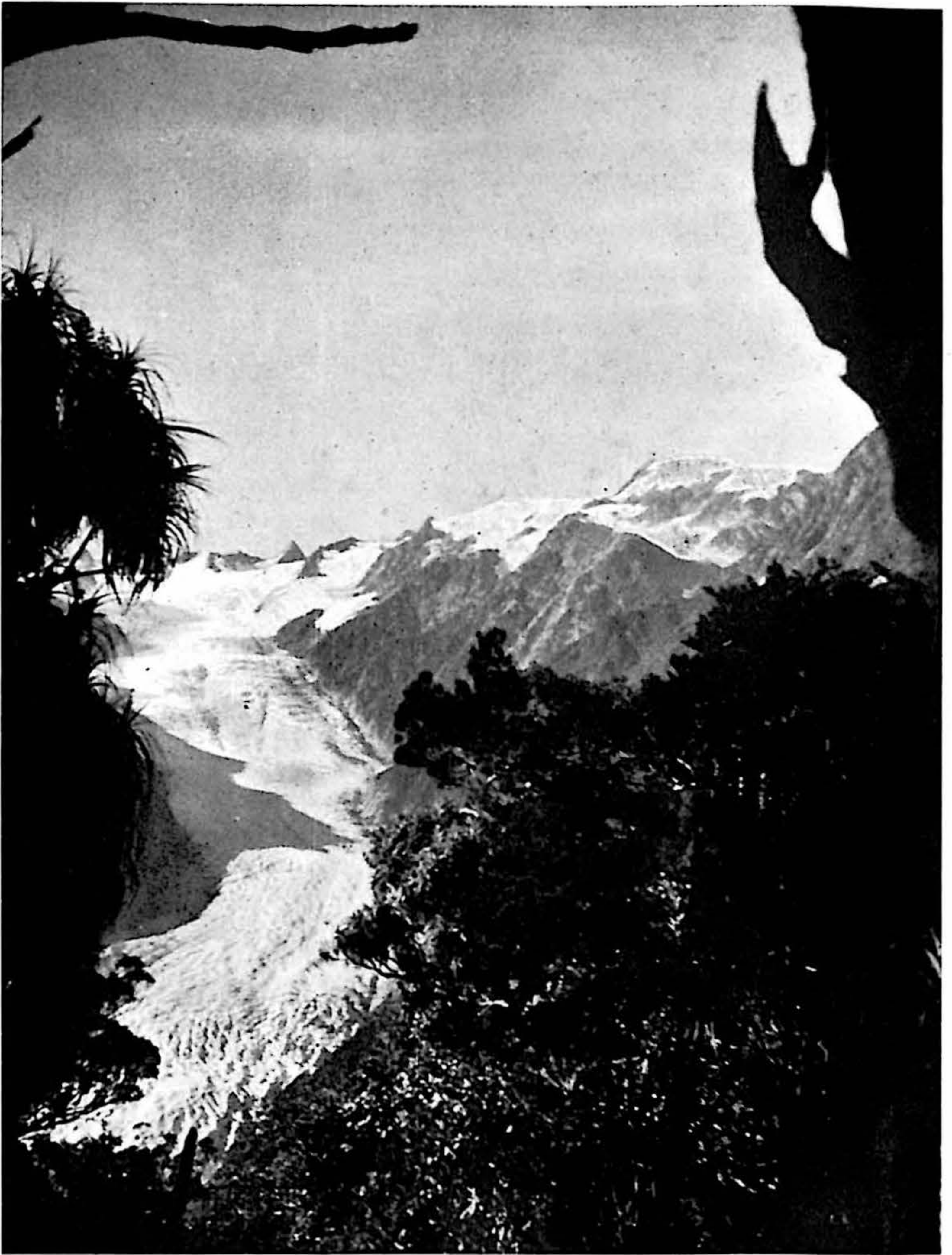
ACROSS THE FRANZ JOSEF GLACIER FROM
THE ALMER HUT.

the glacier we got to the icefall and at first went up the centre ; then, finding the crevasses bad we worked over to the right bank where there seemed to be a good deal of old snow. After a bit of difficulty we got above the crevasses. We had intended to camp on the Empress Rocks on the left bank, below Mt. Cook, where Fyfe, G. Graham and Clark had camped when they made the first ascent of Mt. Cook, but we saw a small flat place on a ridge on our left which seemed quite safe from stones. Clark and I went on to see what the rocks were and found them good.

When we got back the others had got the bivouac ready and after a meal we turned in. We had a good night, though rather disturbed by stones rattling down the gullies on either side. Next morning we started up the rocks, working to our right towards the saddle. As we got higher the rocks began to change and became looser. Then some steep snow and we were on the saddle. We had a magnificent view of the west face of Cook and of the head of the Hooker. From the saddle itself the drop to the upper ice of the Strachan is precipitous, so we bore to our left and had no difficulty in descending by snow and rocks to the lower glacier. We went down a little way and had a meal and then as Harper, who had been up to the Strachan from the Copland, reported that the Strachan was very bad going but that a small stream to our right of it was better going we made for that and got down to the Copland as it got dark. We found a sandy beach and plenty of driftwood and had a good fire and a good night.

Next morning with our faithful slasher we felled a tree to bridge the Copland and got to the other side. Here Clark left us to return to the Hermitage, and we started down the valley about 10 A.M. to follow the blaze line which was almost overgrown. As we had been told that Architect Creek was only three miles below Welcome Flat and Scott's house five miles on, we left all our food behind except a tin of meat and a little bread. The distances are correct, but the track through the bush was a good deal longer. We forded the Copland at Welcome Flat without any difficulty, getting across at 1 P.M. As we hoped to make Scott's house that night and it was coming on to rain, we did not visit the hot springs. We had some food and set off. The line had been washed away in several places and was bad to follow and we did not get to Architect Creek till 7 P.M. It was already beginning to rise and we were thigh deep. We got across and pitched the tent on the rope, the first time we had put it up, and laid the two oilskins on the floor. Soon it came on to rain hard and the water began to form pools of water on the oilskins. And the mosquitos ! I was not hardened to them then and suffered accordingly.

Next morning after a mouthful of bread, which was all that was left, we got off early with hopes of breakfast at Scott's. All we had was soaking wet. We left the tent standing, knowing that sooner or later Scott would be up the river to keep an eye on his cattle running in the bush, and would bring it down for us. We left Architect Creek a raging torrent and the river had risen ; this meant that we were unable to



Photo, H. E. Newton]

FRANZ JOSEF GLACIER FROM THE OUTLOOK.

use any of the beaches which usually are stretches of good going and had to keep to the bush. Just before the junction of the Copland with the Karangarua we saw a good blaze line rising to our right and followed it, thinking it might cut out one of the river bends. At last it came to a dead end. We retraced our steps after a bit, saw the river below us and went straight down to it. Probably Scott had been making a trial line to get his sheep on to the grass foothills above the bush. At 2.30 P.M. we got to the open river bed, there about a mile wide with the river running in various streams. I remembered reading in a book that Scott's house was on an island, and as he would have been sure to build on an island that was covered with bush for shelter and protection in flood, we had to make certain that we did not pass it, as none of us had been down so far before. At last we stopped, tired and hungry. We lighted a big fire of driftwood to attract attention, and the man left his swag with us and went on light to see if he could find any tracks of shod horses which would sooner or later lead him to the house. We saw some sheep on an island and thought that we might catch one and get something to eat. I was to catch it and the doctor promised to see to the post-mortem. We drove four or five into a corner and then just as we were getting close they jumped into the river and swam off, all except one lamb that disliked the look of the water. After another look it disliked our looks still more, and with a final bleat followed mother, just escaping my despairing dive at it. We walked back to the fire in stony silence. It was getting dark and we collected plenty of driftwood, determined at all events to be warm. We were just turning in when we saw a man riding up leading a couple of horses. It was Scott. Out of capacious pockets he produced two bottles of tea, some food and some tobacco. It was black cake 'Juno,' strong enough for anything, but seldom has tobacco been more welcome. The river had been cutting in on the island on which he had first built his house and he rebuilt it on some land he had cleared three miles up the road north of the river and behind a spur, to be safe from the danger of floods. After some tea we turned in dead tired. Next day Scott rode up with us to Cook's river to see us across and we rode on to William's accommodation house near the Fox Glacier. Next day we rode along a bridle track that had been opened the previous year and which is now the motor road. At the Waiho we picked up our horses and rode up to the Wanganui where across the river we found our buggy and harness waiting for us and then drove home.

I have tried to retell an old story from what I wrote about it at the time. We learnt a great deal that we were able to put to good use in later years. It is very much out of date with a motor road from Hokitika to the Fox if not to the Karangarua. There is Graham's comfortable hotel at the Waiho, with huts at Cape Defiance and the Almer Glacier up the Franz Josef, and another on the Tasman side at the foot of the De La Bêche spur. If they are small, at least they have bunks, blankets, cooking utensils and a stock of food. The Ball hut is now a

large hut with a resident caretaker and a motor road to the Hermitage and a bridge over the river. There is now a wire bridge over the Hooker, a hut at the foot of the Copland and the Gardiner hut on the Empress Rocks, a three-foot track down the Copland, a wire bridge at Welcome Flat and a hut, and the possibility of telephoning from the Hermitage to Scott to meet a party at Welcome Flat with horses. In 1935 I repeated this trip with Miss Richardson and Jack Cox and, as Baker's Saddle had not been crossed again, took that route back to the coast. The difference was extraordinary.

A POLISH ASCENT OF THE EAST FACE OF MOUNT STANLEY, RUWENZORI

By R. M. BERE

We are much indebted to Mr. R. M. Bere for the following narrative, details for which were supplied by MM. Golcz and Makowski, and wish to add our congratulations to those of the narrator.—EDITOR.

TO make an ascent of Mount Stanley, the highest peak of the Ruwenzori range, is no longer an event of particular comment, although it always implies planning a small expedition and either the rare chance of good weather or enough mountaineering skill to overcome the abnormally bad weather conditions prevalent on Ruwenzori. It is always a matter of considerable interest, however. A new route, particularly one of difficulty, made in poor weather conditions with improvised equipment is undoubtedly worthy of note, and this was accomplished by three Polish climbers, whom the fortunes of war chanced to send to Uganda for a short period. They are without the opportunity to write up their climb in their own country, and I am therefore privileged to record it on their behalf, having fortunately been able to assist with the planning of their expedition and the loan of equipment.

The three climbers were Jevry de Golcz, a well known member of the G.H.M., who has some outstanding climbs on the south face of Mont Blanc and in the Dauphiné to his credit, Michal Makowski and Jevry Skolomowski, skiers of experience and climbers trained in the High Tatra. The fortune of war which sent them to Uganda was the establishment in that country of settlements for Polish refugees. Golcz had a small, rather pathetic, lady's ice-axe that he had brought out from England on the off chance that it might be useful, and I was able to find a Robert Lawrie catalogue; these were handed to refugee blacksmiths that they might produce two home-made axes and three pairs of crampons from scrap metal. This they did in an entirely satisfactory manner. Suitable clothes and sleeping bags were borrowed, for Alpine equipment is unobtainable in East Africa. In spite of