

THE SHORES OF BAFFIN BAY.

BY T. G. LONGSTAFF AND M. H. W. RITCHIE.

**J.** M. WORDIE'S expedition of 1934 to the Canadian Arctic met with unusually bad ice conditions in Melville Bay. Making Upernivik, the most northerly station of the Danish Greenland Administration, on June 13, we were compelled to return there on August 4, having hardly attained 75° N. To make the most of our remaining oil fuel and of the time available we then crossed Baffin Bay, again after difficulties with heavy pack, and sighted the E. coast of Baffinland near Cape Broughton during a northerly gale on August 11. Unable to get through the ice off Eric Point in 71° N. we remained on the N.E. coast of Baffinland until the end of August. Disappointing as these successive delays were in that we were prevented from reaching our original objective of Ellesmereland and the Parry Islands, they gave unexpected opportunities to three members of the Club, and to P. D. Baird of the Cambridge University Mountaineering Club, to do some climbing in North-West Greenland and North-East Baffinland, concerning neither of which districts can we find anything recorded in mountaineering literature.

*Sanderson's Hope. 3560 ft. Upernivik District.*  
*June 18, 1934. (T. G. L.)*

'Sanderson his Hope of a North-West Passage' was sighted and so named by John Davis on his third voyage in 1587. Its native name is Kaersorsuak. The lower part forms a bold high cliff on the seaward side of a large island a few miles S. of Upernivik. The upper part has the gentler slopes of an old land surface supporting a final pyramid visible at least 70 miles out to sea. The summit rises to 3560 ft. about 1½ miles from the shore and was recently cairned by Danish surveyors.

On June 18, at 10 A.M., J. M. Wordie, Sir John J. L. Hanham, H. P. Hanham, Lieut. W. E. Fletcher, R.N., C. T. Dalgety, P. D. Baird, M. H. W. Ritchie and I left Upernivik in a small motor-boat. Running S. we passed the incredible palisades of cliff protecting the N. side of our mountain, which immediately under the summit must attain a height of over 2000 ft. These cliffs extend round south-westward, the narrow ledges on their



nearly vertical sides providing a nesting place for thousands of guillemots. At the bird cliff we dropped Dalgety, Harry Hanham, and Fletcher in a small dinghy to spend the day collecting guillemot eggs for the larder. Taking the eggs was no mean climbing feat, as we had been told by the Danish officials that no European could climb these ledges: the Greenlanders themselves get their supply from another section of the cliffs where ropes have been fixed. The rest of us went on beyond the end of the bird cliffs and landed at the mouth of a valley somewhat to the S.W. of the peak at 11.50. Our way led up a steepish rocky slope clothed at first with crowberry and moss, and then by beds of deep winter snow through which John Hanham and Baird gallantly ploughed a track. These were succeeded by scree slopes, some steep and all very unstable. A great rounded snow shoulder led us to the foot of a pyramidal face of cyclopean structure from which projected an ascending series of garnet-studded granite tors with runnels of scree between. Ritchie, scorning delays, pushed ahead and reached the summit at 14.55, but the last of us (having lunched) did not arrive till nearly an hour later.

It was a perfect day, the first of the season: no wind, not a cloud anywhere. To the N. the prospect over the level sea-ice beyond Upernivik and the heavy polar pack out in Baffin Bay, both dotted with innumerable bergs of every conceivable shape and size, was worth to all of us vastly more than the toil of the ascent. We spent long photographing and sketching the lie of the ice and trying, by the eye of faith and hope, to work out a possible course northwards into Melville Bay. Landward was a chaos of unvisited rock walls and glacier-draped peaks that would take several seasons to explore. This mountain land is of very varied form. To the E. there are sheer lines of cliff bounding complicated fjord systems: to the S. horizontal lava beds emphasized by parallel snow bands; apparently isolated glaciers of beautiful proportions, snow domes, and the carapace relics of an ice-cap; together with truly Alpine peaks of every form. The ascent of Sanderson's Hope entails no climbing difficulties of any sort, but the view from the summit, both of the ice world out to sea and of the landward mountains, is the finest I have seen in Greenland, surpassing in beauty even the grand midnight panorama which my daughter and I had from Hjortetakken in 1931.

Leaving the summit at 17.14, one of us reached the boat at 18.28 in time to change into dry clothes before the cold run

back to Upernivik; for the sun had by this time softened the snow so that all but the lightest of the party sank over the knees at every step, and we were drenched within and without. Getting away at 19.30, we picked up the successful egg-hunters at 20.00 and got back to the ship at 21.15.

*The Devil's Thumb. c. 1800 ft. N.W. Greenland. July 22, 1934. (P. D. Baird and T. G. Longstaff.)*

After a series of rebuffs by the heavy pack guarding Melville Bay, Wordie gave orders to run to Devil's Thumb Island, where we anchored off the comparatively new Eskimo settlement of eight turf houses at 10.00. The Devil's Thumb is the most remarkable landmark on this coast, well known to the whaling fleets of last century: an astonishing wall-sided 'thumb' sticking up 600 ft. from the 1200 ft. backbone of the island, very narrow from N. to S. but an elongated flake from W. to E. Its reputation of inaccessibility had long incited Baird and myself with the desire to try it—and now was our chance. We got off in the motor-boat and landed at noon. We walked up the most beautiful flowery slopes we had met with on this voyage: dwarf rhododendron (*lapponicum*), white bell heather (*Cassiope*), and many other flowers, enlivened by a few Arctic fritillary butterflies and Greenland wheat-ears.

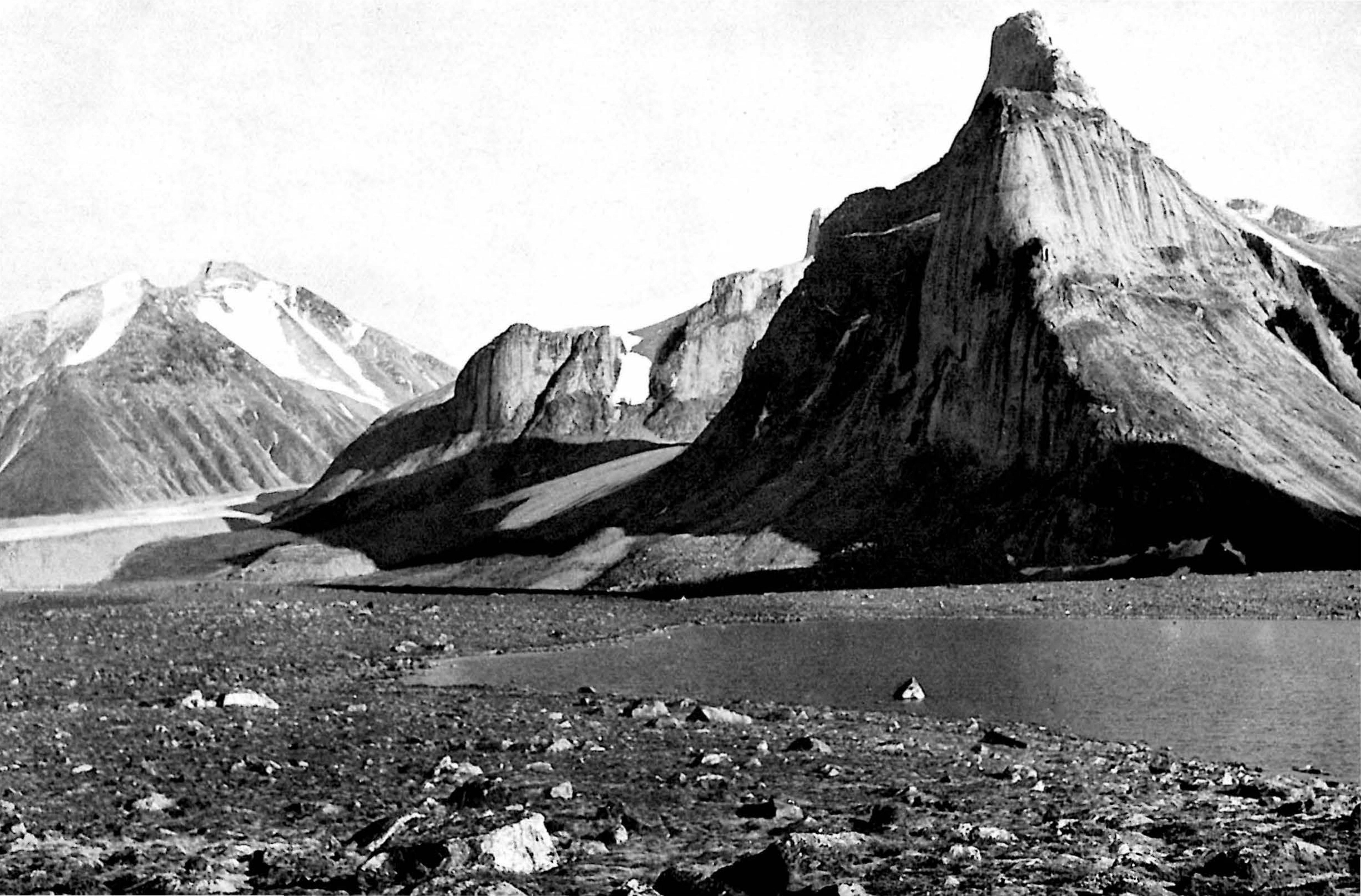
We coasted round the peak from S. by E. to the N. side, looking for a possible line of attack. Nowhere have I seen more uncompromising cliffs than the sheer 900 ft. S. face. The narrow eastern front also appeared vertical, and was overhung at the top by splintered and unstable-looking towers. Distant inspection by telescope had prepared us for a gully on the unseen northern face, but we found access to it hopelessly cut off from below by a smooth, greasy wall at least 200 ft. high that would repulse anyone but an ironmonger. Finally we scrambled up on to the hog's back from which the thumb rises (13.00) at about 1200 ft. above the sea, facing the W. end of the thumb, where the climb is shorter than from any of the other sides—some 600 ft. only. This looked quite impossible with most forbidding little overhangs, and we duly sympathized with each other over our disappointment. But climbers know that no rocks can be pronounced impossible until they are handled. So we lunched and went for it (13.45). An easy rounded boss took us to the foot of the cliff. Baird had the lead. The first step was not so bad, with decent footing above it but no handhold or belay for the rope. I then took the lead

as light weight (Baird is over 6 ft. and weighs 13 stone), and managed the second step all right. There we saw a possibility of reaching the S.W. edge of the southern cliffs by an upward slanting traverse. The peak at this end is almost a square-sided block. We lengthened the rope to 60 ft. clear, and Baird took the lead again. By neat climbing he accomplished the next 60 ft., and I joined him where there were two stances but no handholds. We now saw that we could do it, but this fourth step was still more delicate : we had to continue slanting upwards to our right, dodging small but troublesome overhangs. Another 60 ft. took Baird to our first secure stance, on the actual edge of the southern precipice ; from above this seemed to overhang, and a stone dropped an impressively long time before the sound of its striking returned to us. The trouble was that we could find no good holding between the first and fourth abrupt steps, so that if one of us had slipped the other must inevitably follow, and the climb might be classed as technically ' unjustifiable ' by the more orthodox. Pitons above the second and third steps would have made the climb ' safe.' I must add, however, that Baird assures me that this climb would not be considered ' severe ' according to modern British standards.

Once on the edge of the southern face progress, although still steep and very sensational, became gradually easier, and we reached the top at 15.15, after 1½ hrs. climb. It had been a glorious scramble and a most unexpected success : no other expedition done merely for the sake of the climb, as this was, ever gave the writer so much pleasure.

The weather was perfect and the view in every direction marvellous. The top was a flowery platform made for basking. Suddenly Baird noticed a small pile of weathered stones, very old and lichen covered, about 18 ins. high, which, on examination, we thought must be human. It was located at the S.E. corner of the summit platform and not on the highest point, nor was it well placed for visibility from the sea. Since we had managed the climb, others could obviously do so too ; but considering how impossible it had *looked* to two experienced mountaineers, and that no climbers had been here before, it seemed incredible that we were not the first comers. We really felt little personal disappointment, being quite overcome by admiration for the unknown seaman who, we assumed, had climbed it last century, this locality being a common *rendezvous* for the whaling fleets from about 1820 to 1860. We carefully took the pile of stones to pieces, but found no trace of a record. For





various reasons we cannot entertain the possibility that it was built by an Eskimo. At the settlement, whence the Thumb is invisible, so that our own cairn had not been seen, they quite refused to believe in our ascent, thinking that we were joking. Under the cairn was a layer of nearly an inch of fine soil resting on the living rock, another indication of age. We used these old stones and the few fresh sharply splintered ones we could collect from the top to construct a cairn about 3 ft. high on the highest point, in which we put a sardine tin with our names, recording ours as the second ascent. An hour and a quarter passed all too quickly, for the view was incredibly beautiful in every direction. The solidity of the sea—berg, pack, and floe—seemed to invite exploration on foot, though it looked quite hopeless for the northward passage of a ship: it was even more impressive than the rolling immensity of the inland ice which filled the entire eastern horizon. Most unwillingly we tore ourselves away and commenced the descent at 16.30.

During Baird's lead up I had stipulated for last place on the way down, descending accordingly in this order the first 200 ft. But watching Baird below me I saw that he was in great form and climbing better than I was, so when we came to the difficult part I felt I must give way to youth. Youth could not conceal his pleasure and age admits that he felt comfort from the moral support of the rope, though personally I found it rather easier going down than coming up. All went well, and we unroped at 17.26, within the hour. After a dip in a shallow sun-warmed pool of snow-water, we walked back over the rough gneissic hills in the bright sunlight of the Arctic 'evening,' reaching the ship at 20.00.

*Wandel Land. 3300 ft. N.W. Greenland. July 24, 1934.*  
(M. H. W. R.)

It was a brilliant, clear morning, the sunshine gleamed on the calm water of the fjord, the icebergs shone dazzling white, while the pink cliffs on Holm's Island glowed in friendly warmth. From the Devil's Thumb settlement a two and a half hours' run in the motor boat, in a S.E. direction up a narrow fjord, brought us to a broad basin choked with bergs calving from a long glacier tongue of the ice-cap. Ahead rose the square massif of the mountain called Wandel Land, crowned with a snowy crest and with a great pink cliff to the S. falling sheer to the dark blue and remarkably ice-free surface of a fjord winding

out of sight among dark hillsides. Half an hour later we had disembarked and were walking up the long and gently inclined western flank of the mountain. After a while we reached steeper slopes and climbed through broken cliffs to the base of a great dome of ice rising gently on all sides to the broad summit of the mountain. We attained the peak at 14.50 and judged it to be 3300 ft. above sea-level. On all sides we commanded a wonderful view. To the E. stretched the long level expanse of the ice-cap, wrinkled here and there with fields of blue-green crevasses. To the S. was a medley of snow-capped peaks and dark, hilly headlands around Inugsulik Bay, where the sea glittered in the sunshine sending long fjord arms in among the sombre hills. To the W. stretched the orderly rank of peaks on Holm's Island, fields of snow and ice set above steep cliffs falling into the sea on either side. On its western extremity rises Wilcox Head, a bold headland which members of the expedition had climbed on July 3 from the S. The traverse of these peaks on ski would make a fine expedition. Even at this late season the conditions were excellent on a hard foundation with a thin covering of large ice particles. To the N. we looked across the uncompromising glare of the ice pack in Melville Bay, while inshore lay a series of low dark islands barring a sea choked with bergs calved from a great, shattered glacier. The unbroken mass of the ice-cap dwindled away in perspective to the distant, rolling outline of Cape Seddon, dimly visible, over which peeped the snow-covered peaks of Cape Walker. The weather changed rapidly for the worse as we prepared to return by the way we had come, and a wet and chilly voyage upwind in the motorboat awaited us before we again boarded the *Heimen*. The climbing party consisted of J. M. Wordie, T. G. Longstaff, H. Hanham, P. D. Baird and M. H. W. Ritchie.

*Eglinton Tower. ? 4000 ft. Eglinton Fjord, N.E. Baffinland.*  
*August 21, 1934. Sir John Hanham and T. G. Longstaff.*  
(T. G. L.)

Eglinton Fjord in N.E. Baffinland extends some 10 miles farther than is shown on J. B. Walker's chart of 1877. Running at first N.W. and W. the upper part of the fjord finally bends sharply to the S. This angle is formed by a palisade of magnificent cliffs, roughly pyramidal in form, culminating in a rock-tower rising possibly to 4000 ft. above sea-level.

A small glacier, flowing from a higher group of peaks to the





S.E., winds round the E. face of the Tower and, descending steeply towards the southern shore of the fjord, seemed to offer access to the foot of the invisible S. face or ridge of the peak. The wind was blowing cold up the fjord from the sea when we landed at 10.00. In dense mist, or rather low-lying cloud, we reached the glacier through a slight breach in the right lateral moraine at 10.50. Keeping to the true right edge of the glacier to avoid excessive steepness on its left (our right) we continued in dense mist, using the angle of the ice for our direction, until we came to the steep section which previous inspection had shown must be crossed diagonally to the right to reach the foot of our peak.

Rather in despair at the persistence of the mist we halted from 11.20 to 11.30 in the shelter of a high boulder on the ice. Luckily we persevered, for while ascending this steep portion, which was just negotiable without step-cutting, we suddenly emerged above the clouds into bright sunlight and escaped from the cold searching wind blowing up the fjord at sea-level. The rest of our day was spent in bright sunshine with a faint southerly breeze until we descended again to near sea-level in the evening. It was a sudden change from a maritime to a continental type of weather.

Traversing upwards to the extreme (true) left edge of the glacier on our right, we went up an easy ice-slope, thinly covered with good snow and with only a few quite small crevasses, almost to the saddle immediately S. of the southern buttress of our peak (12.40-12.45). On the far side of the col steep cliffs plunged sheerly into the mist, which completely concealed the floor of a great valley opening into the extreme southern end of the western arm of the fjord. On the opposite side of this cloud-carpeted valley rose from the mists a similar and parallel vertical line of cliffs crowned with fantastic granite peaks, the smoothness of whose walls and buttresses is their most characteristic feature. Turning towards our peak we saw the route was easy to the top. Progress lay at first over a piled chaos of unstable blocks. Gradually the true S. ridge of living rock emerged, nowhere difficult, but requiring care owing to the instability of the frost-shattered blocks poised upon it. To our right, overhanging the glacier we had ascended, was a very sheer precipice. We encountered a snow bunting and an ermine in a chocolate-brown summer coat, presumably in search of a lemming: on the glacier we had already seen tracks of a fox. Although occasionally steep, the rocks offered no difficulty and we did not rope till we reached the summit ridge. From the fjord the

peak seems to end in a square-topped tower, but in reality the crest is some 80 yards long with a slight horse-shoe bend in it, so that the highest point (14.15) was invisible from our anchorage, but as cloud still filled the fjord below us we could not have seen the ship in any case. We piled together the few stones we could get hold of and went back to the flat-topped tower which we knew was visible from the ship to build a proper cairn which could be of use to our surveyors. We looked N. and westward across the 'south valley' to a complicated group of higher peaks amongst which we thought to identify the mountain on which Ritchie and Baird were that day engaged. The clouds in the 'south valley' appeared to stop about the height of land, beyond which could be seen a continuation of the same trench, but apparently draining to the westward, and, in the bottom of which, parts of three lakes were visible. Into the largest of these lakes two glaciers descended from the ice-capped rolling mountains filling the S.E. section of the view. This 'lake valley' appeared to lead to low, unglaciated tundra country which may continue towards the direction of Fox Basin on the W. coast of Baffinland. Farther E., near to us and closing the view, were steep rock peaks, higher than our 'Tower,' separated by shining and almost uncrevassed glaciers. Immediately below us to the N. exceedingly steep cliffs plunged into the cloud layer that still concealed the fjord. On the N. side of the fjord stood a range of rock peaks with steep faces, culminating in the Cock'scomb, as we named what seemed to be the highest peak in this region, certainly 5000 ft., and probably the best rock climb in the neighbourhood. East of the Cock'scomb, beyond the cloud-hidden mouth of the Eglinton Fjord, we looked out over the ice-flecked blue sea of Baffin Bay.

Most unwillingly we started down at 15.45, reaching the glacier at 16.35. We crossed the glacier above the steep portion to near its right bank and slithered down quickly under the cliffs bounding its eastern side, which evidently drop stones on to the ice below, so that we reached the moraine and got off the ice at 17.15.

It had been arranged that instead of being picked up where we had landed we should follow the coast till opposite the ship. Half an hour over a jumble of moss-grown boulders of a size up to that of a cottage brought us (17.45) to the next glacier on the E., which actually enters the fjord. Crossing its three moraines, which separate two strips of bare crevassed glacier, we reached the shore on the far side at 18.30. We got

aboard drenched with spray, just as the clouds were lifting, and were hardly believed when we reported that we had spent the day in calm sunshine. Our cairn was in full view from the anchorage.

*Pioneer Peak, 5050 ft., Baffin Land. (M. H. W. R.)*

At 03.30 on the morning of August 21, 1934, P. D. Baird and I stepped ashore from the motor boat and started to pick our way along the floor of a broad valley littered with boulders. Low over our heads hung a grey pall of cloud obscuring everything. After an hour and a half we gained the surface of a glacier and followed its well-defined lines of flow in a thick mist. Gradually the mists began to lift; ghostlike above us appeared a precipitous mountain ridge, fading away again as soon as seen, but reappearing as we climbed higher. On the smooth, hard surface we made good progress so that at 05.30, at a height of 1300 ft., we emerged above the mists. At 06.00 the sun rose above a range of blue-black hills behind us and soon it was touching with gold the stray wisps of mist hanging above the sea of cloud in the valley. At 06.50 we had turned an icefall, reached a height of 2580 ft., and called a halt for breakfast. For the first time our peak was in full view. It rose against a cloudless blue sky to a crest of snow set above a brown rock face, while a gently inclined snow ridge fell away to the N.W. The peak was about a mile away at the head of a glacier basin bounded on the N. by the rocky face of a massive mountain and on the S. by the fantastically jagged rock ridge. At 07.15 we roped up and set off across gentle névé slopes towards a depression to the N. of our peak, arriving there at 08.35, height 3950 ft. The ice slopes on the N. side of our peak now appeared far steeper than anticipated, while the snow ridge proving impracticable of access, we decided to tackle the angle where the ice slopes joined the rocks of the E. face. After an hour spent mapping we set off across the level surface of the depression. With crampons we started a steep traverse up the ice slope to our ridge. The going was excellent and the irons held well on the brittle ice in the shadow of the ridge. The ridge when finally reached merged into a steep bulge of ice which called for about 250 ft. of step cutting. Once over the bulge the angle fell off rapidly and soon we were walking towards the snowy summit, attained at 10.30. The day was very clear and we enjoyed a magnificent view across the mountains in the neighbourhood and over the level coast-

land to the sea, which, as usual, according to our experience, lay under a blanket of yellow fog. When we left the summit we descended towards the S.W. to a glacier upon which we turned the W. flank of our peak. We regained our depression of the morning, returning by the same line to the head of Eglinton Fjord.

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

1. M. H. Ritchie. Fjord scenery to the E., from summit of Sanderson's Hope.

2. M. H. Ritchie. Devil's Thumb from the W. Climber's route by ridge facing camera.

3. M. H. Ritchie. View N. from nameless peak near head of Eglinton Fjord (climbed by Longstaff and Hanhan).

4. M. H. Ritchie. Early morning view towards glen near head of Eglinton Fjord (taken from a peak of 5050 ft.).

5. M. H. Ritchie. Vertical slabs on peak in Eglinton Fjord, Baffin Land.

THE NANDA DEVI BASIN.<sup>1</sup>

By E. E. SHIPTON.

(Read before the Alpine Club, March 5, 1935.)

PERHAPS one of the principal objects I had in mind when I decided to go to the Himalaya last year was to prove to my own satisfaction at least: first, that the small self-contained party is in a position to obtain far better results from the mountaineering point of view than the big, unwieldy expedition which, for some obscure reason, since the war has been thought necessary for a Himalayan campaign; and, second, that the prevalent opinion regarding the cost of Himalayan expeditions is vastly exaggerated. Our party consisted of two Europeans, H. W. Tilman and myself; we were in the mountains for just under five months, and away from England for seven months; careful accounts were kept of expenses both in England and India; the *total* inclusive cost of the expedition worked out at £143 10s. each. Our plans were somewhat ambitious and involved the abandonment of our base for months at a time. For this we decided to allow ourselves the luxury of three of the 1933 Everest Sherpas. If one wished to climb from a centre and not cross any of the

<sup>1</sup> A map prepared by the R.G.S. is appearing in *G.J.* lxxxv, April, 1935. See also *A.J.* 23, 207; 24, 132.