THE CAMBRIDGE ARCTIC CANADA EXPEDITION, 1961. TO CUMBERLAND PENINSULA, BAFFIN ISLAND

By ROBERT E. LANGFORD

'MOUNT ASGARD and unexplored mountains to the east of the Pangnirtung Pass', prompted the caption to a fantastic photograph which appeared in *The Mountain World*, 1954. The picture had been taken from an aircraft circling these unique peaks during a reconnaissance for the Arctic Institute of North America's expedition to the Penny Ice-cap in 1953.

So remote from Cambridge, such inspiring mountains made Baffin Island all the more attractive to me whilst beset with exams, and I was soon deep in the library of the Scott Polar Research Institute, floundering in maps, reports and photographs of the Cumberland Peninsula. Having been contemplating an expedition for some time, and considering the possibilities of the North American continent, I realised that it would hardly be feasible to muster sufficient mountaineering talent to make Alaska a reasonable proposition. On the other hand, the fiord coast-line of Baffin Island, and in particular the modest peaks of the Cumberland Peninsula, seemed the sensible solution to my quest for an objective. The maximum height amongst this range had been shown to be less than 8,000 ft., but any hasty dismissal of the unassuming stature of the peaks, or accusation of rotten rock found frequently on Arctic mountains, would be short-lived. Huge glaciers flowed to the valley floor on each side of the Pangnirtung Pass, at a height of only 1,300 ft. about sea level; there were signs of mammoth glacial action everywhere . . . bastion towers whose smooth flanks bore witness to their solidarity . . . moraines 200 ft. or more in height, skirting the glaciers which thrust right out into the valley, distorting the shore-line of Summit Lake which lay on one side of the pass.

Luckily, only a limited amount of 'mountaineering research' had to be done, for the only significant surge of exploration had been made during the Arctic Institute Expedition, 1953, led by P. D. Baird (see *Arctic*, vol. vi). This had been mainly concerned with scientific work but the team included four Swiss mountaineers, one of whom, Jürg Marmet, later climbed Mount Everest. They had been able to seize the occasional opportunity to climb, whenever their scientific work allowed, and some of their conquests had been made with the use of ski,

in true Swiss tradition; but they had made the first ascent of Mount Asgard (6,598 ft.),[1] and taken some inspiring photographs. The only maps available were on a scale of one inch to eight miles, but the whole area has a good coverage of air photography, both vertical and high-angle oblique views; it is naturally possible to interpret far more from these photographs than from the maps.

When the idea of a climbing expedition in the Arctic was voiced, there was some hesitation amongst mountaineers in the C.U.M.C., who thought first of the Alps, and possibly raised their sights to the Andes. In June, 1960, I had read all available reports of relevant previous expeditions to the Cumberland Peninsula, and during the Michaelmas term of that year preparatory letters were exchanged. Towards the end of January, 1961, Terence Goodfellow and Tony Crofts mentioned that they were thinking of going climbing in Greenland, and I was fortunate to persuade them to come instead to Baffin Island. We were joined by Graeme Bonham-Carter and Bill Barlow; the sixth place, which I held out hopefully for a medical student, was taken by John Dale who was at St. Bartholomew's Hospital after coming down from Cambridge.

As an undergraduate expedition, we might contemplate certain scientific work, but so as not to confuse the issue, we felt it should be specifically limited to modest projects suggested by appropriate authorities. This would satisfy a feeling of the mountaineer's responsibility to do something which at least claims to be useful, especially when he visits an unknown area. We therefore adopted a scientific programme involving glaciological survey, physiology and geology.

Many wild-goose chases beset us during the period of preparation which we wished had been longer, but on June 26, the much awaited day came when we boarded a Boeing aircraft at London Airport. This plane was chartered from Air France by the Cambridge University Canada Club and brought us quickly to New York, where with equal speed we were able to spend our precious dollars in getting to the coach terminal, and thence to Montreal. While we awaited our equipment, Dick Morden, Chairman of the Montreal Section of the Alpine Club of Canada, kindly accommodated us. We were able to train for the peaks of Baffin Island by climbing on the local outcrops with members of the Montreal Club. Brian Rothery, who had taken part in a two-man climbing expedition to Cape Dyer (the part of Cumberland Peninsula nearest to Greenland), acted as our agent in Canada. Publicity was not long forthcoming: while I was flown to Toronto for a television interview, members of the team abseiled from the fifteenth to the twelfth storey of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation building, so that the commentator might say, 'A group of Cambridge

[1] See *The Mountain World*, 1954, p. 160.

mountaineers has just dropped in', despite the horrified faces of Montrealers on the pavements beneath. A hectic uncrating session outside the Arctic Institute and a drive out to Dorval in a thunderstorm, accompanied our undistinguished departure on July 6, for Cape Dyer.

We flew to Frobisher Bay above the endless tundra, where water and land stretch in hopeless confusion from the last stunted trees to the ice-strewn shores of Ungava Bay. Some Eskimos, the first we had seen, came aboard specially to unload our ton and a half of stores and equipment. As we flew on over Cumberland Sound the vista of peaks was quite bewildering, and the fiords were still full of ice. Soon a tiny airstrip, perched on the top of a cliff, appeared beneath us, and the plane was bumping along the dirt runway. Cape Dyer was a base for the DEW Line, a defence system (Distant Early Warning) operated jointly by Canada and the U.S.A. consisting of a chain of radar stations in the north. The men who worked there would be sacked for going outside the perimeter of the camp, so the fine surrounding peaks will remain a sanctuary for mountaineers. Near Cape Dyer stands Mount Raleigh, approaching 7,000 ft. above fiord level, and awaiting a first ascent, though it was named in the sixteenth century. There are many snow-covered peaks in this area, some very impressive.

Confined to Cape Dyer by the grounding of a DC-3 which serviced the DEW Line, and mindful of our scientific commitments, we scanned the cliffs for the tertiary age outcrop which Graeme Bonham-Carter had been asked to investigate. 'Did we expect to find gold?', asked the DEW Line chaps; their minds were too one-tracked to consider anything else, and most of them had dismissed us from the start as mad Englishmen. Those of us not busy with the geologist were able to climb some easy peaks to get fit; these trips, possibly first ascents, served also to demonstrate the difficulty of estimating distances in the clear atmosphere of the Arctic, where there is no familiar object by which the eye might judge the scale. A ridge which appeared a couple of miles distant, turned out to be about eight miles away, so we twice made good use of the perpetual daylight. The best peaks near Cape Dyer were on the other side of the fiord, which had been named Sunneshine Fiord, and more peaks, all unclimbed, might be reached from the head of the south-east arm of Padle Fiord.

Time was fast ebbing and we were much relieved when the aircraft engine was mended after a week so that we could fly ninety miles up the coast to Broughton Island. There is another DEW Line station here, but also a fairly large Eskimo community. Near the Eskimo schoolroom we pitched our tents for a few days, until the land-bound ice cleared in the fiord. But as a compensation for the delay, we were able to take part in a seal hunt on the ice by dog team. Completely unexpected was the experience of sitting astride the long wooden

sledge, hauled by a team of huskies across the frozen waste; nor shall we forget the feeling of suspense while Adamie, the Eskimo hunter, stalked towards a seal basking in the sun and then crouched behind his white screen; or while Aimo, his nephew, restrained the dogs from scaring the seal until the shot rang out. The Eskimos enlivened the next evening by inviting us to take part in a Bingo drive; this was followed by some primitive games, and several dances for which one of the Eskimo women played an accordion. Much as we would have liked to, we could not stay at Broughton Island for ever, for in the next seven weeks we had to cross the Pangnirtung Pass.

In two whaleboats, the Eskimos took us up the fiord, where the ice was now mostly broken up. The 'cadlunaks', as we were called, were more than a little nervous whenever one of the Eskimo boys in the boats casually raised a rifle to shoot at a passing duck. It was about seventy-two miles to the head of the fiord, where we set up camp beside two vast boulders. Despite the late hour we felt the urge to practise our climbing technique on the boulders, much to the amusement of the Eskimos, who started copying us, first the children joining in and then their fathers. Could these chaps be the pioneers of a Sherpa tradition in the Arctic?

Now the approach towards our mountains would begin in earnest. As the days passed we shouldered heavier loads, and acclimatised to the back-breaking job of carrying everything thirty miles, where a large expedition would have employed an aircraft or many native porters. Tramping over endless miles of boggy ground, crossing swollen glacier torrents and balancing across boulder fields, where even the largest rock was unstable, became daily events; if a man carrying a heavy load somersaulted, it was called a 'blonger'. It is difficult to imagine the annoyance brought by a score of mosquitoes buzzing around you, tormenting and biting you whilst carrying a heavy pack, settling in your soup before you start drinking, and finally dispelling any idea of sleep. Attracted by the sun which barely touched the horizon during those early weeks the mosquitoes probably had a record year. We became quite casual about these pests, as there were more serious things to think about; rivers, for instance, had to be crossed, and usually we first put across a fixed rope, for to overbalance in one of these icy torrents might otherwise have been fatal.

A shapely peak, Mount Fleming, dominated the Owl valley. As a brief release from our toils in the valley, I planned that a team of four, led by Terence Goodfellow, should attempt this mountain early in the expedition, and if possible climb another peak from the same high camp. Graeme and Bill set off late at night from a camp in the valley; we were working day and night shifts, for there really was not much difference, and Graeme held that many of the mosquitoes disappeared at

night, apart from the fact that fewer tents were needed at each camp in this way. Tony Crofts was the fourth member, otherwise usually to be seen waving an instrument to find humidity or wind speed, as part of the physiology programme. As the others set off, John Dale helped me ferry the last loads of stores across a wide river.

Terence Goodfellow describes the ascents of Mount Fleming and Mount Midgard:

'It was two days' march to the foot of Fleming, so we broke our journey at Ozymandias Camp. Rain and mist greeted us there next morning. We festered gloomily, attempting to raise our spirits by composing a Baffin Ballad which by Bill's decree was to be set to the tune of "Much binding in the Marsh".

'The following day, the sun shone. We should have been away earlier but, as usual, someone was slow in getting ready. The consequent wait afforded time to add another verse to our ballad:

"In Baffin Island in the North
They're always late in getting up for breakfast
In Baffin Island in the North
No one ever wants to show a leg first."

'The strain of our doggerel was too much, and we moved off in the sunlight of the morning, lest worse should follow. Rejoicing in our fitness, we covered the well-known ground fast until able to strike left out of the valley floor and up an open gorge towards the mountains. As we gained height, we could look down on the scene where we had sweated for the past weeks, and could see Bob and John toiling along the river bank on their way to Battle Camp. It was like being on holiday from school.

'Higher up the terrain became increasingly bare and elemental. The muskeg gave way to water and rock. Amongst a huge boulder field beneath Fleming we found a small patch of gravel and lichen. Here we pitched our tent. There was enough food to enable us to climb Fleming and one other mountain. The choice for a second was not difficult to make. Across the other side of the valley, amongst a complex of glaciers, was a snow hump surmounted by an obelisk. Our curiosity was aroused instantly. We called the mountain "Midgard" and resolved to climb it.

'Midgard was rectangular, like some lonely mountain cenotaph. Fleming on the other hand had classical proportions, with four ridges coinciding with the points of the compass. The obvious route lay up the South ridge, easily gained from a glacier dividing it from the West ridge. We encountered only minor difficulties—like being unexpectedly bogged down in soft snow while getting on to the ridge itself, which was

Photo, R. E. Langford]

'FRIGA', MT. ASGARD AND THE TURNER GLACIER, FROM ABOVE GLACIER LAKE.

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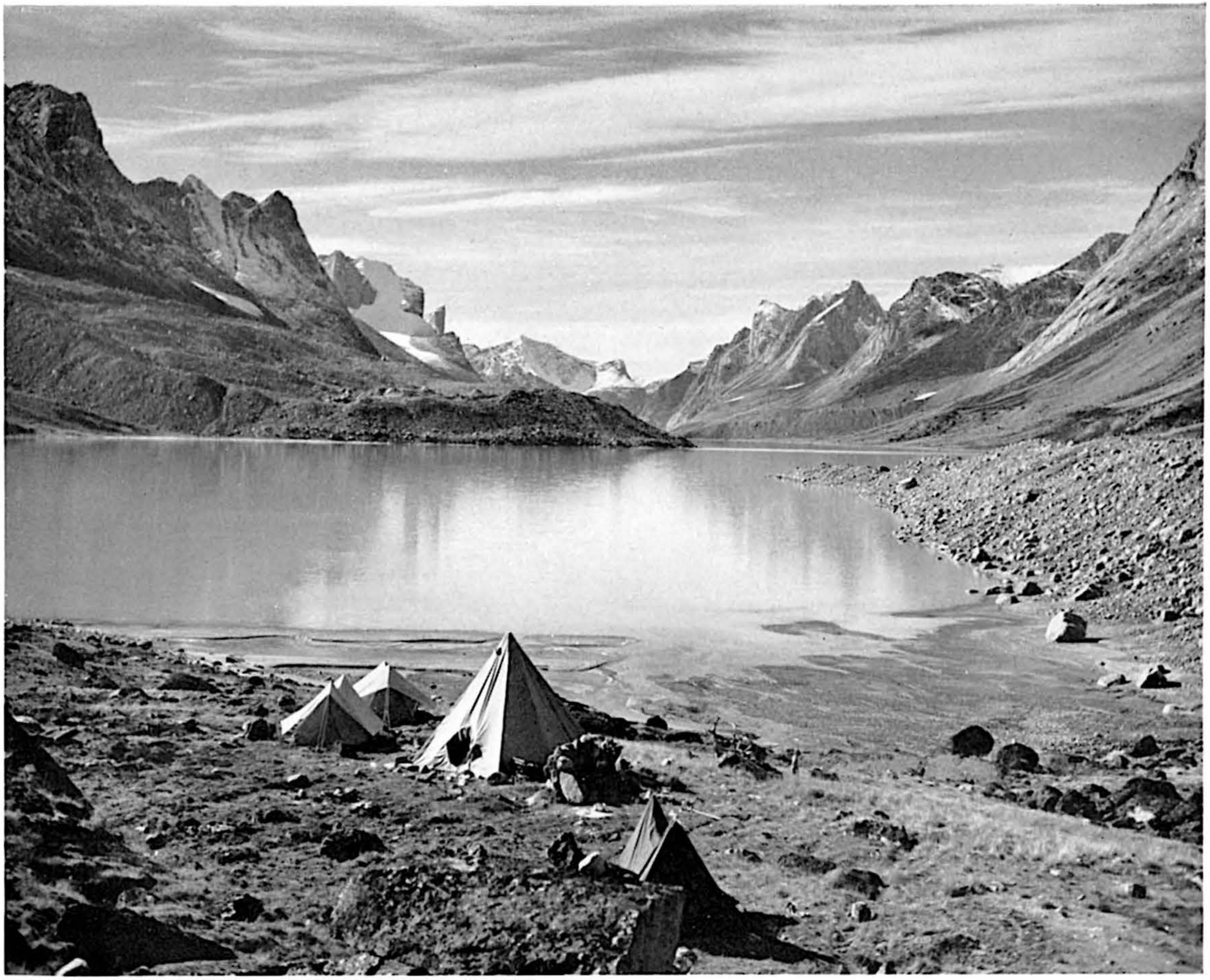


Photo, R. E. Langford]

CAMP ON THE PANGNIRTUNG PASS: VIEW OF MOUNT QUEEN ELIZABETH ACROSS SUMMIT LAKE.

the cause of the leader being un-mannerly swallowed up by a small bergschrund. Once gained, however, the ridge was easy, save for a steep section towards the top, which we broke into three pitches. The rock was sound and warm, a delight to climb on, and of no great technical difficulty. We must have spent at least an hour sunbathing below the summit, congratulating ourselves on our first unclimbed peak.

'Spurred on by success, we set off for Midgard next day in anticipation of harder things. It was a fair distance to the foot of the mountain, so we moved fast across the frozen glacier, gaining easy access to the top of the snow mound by a rock ridge. In front of us was the obelisk. To the west it fell away vertically to a glacier below; to the east it presented some 300 ft. of vertical and almost holdless rock. Our first reaction was one of dismay. But on thought we remembered that most of the mountains we had seen in this area relented on the southern side. With this in mind we traversed below the obelisk on the eastern side, seeking a route diagonally upwards. Our hunch proved correct. What had seemed at first to be impregnable was climbed with ease. From the summit we looked over the precipice to the glacier below, and for a long time enjoyed the delights of boulder-trundling, confident in the knowledge that there were no climbers within two thousand miles.'

John and I spent the next few days near the summit of the pass surveying a glacier which was thought to be advancing, since it had exposed no terminal moraine, and the snout was covered with boulders. More entertaining than the survey work was an ascent of Mount Battle, a splendid belvedere overlooking the pass. The climbing was on open slabs, and later by a ridge where some of the rock was loose but our efforts were rewarded at the summit which was surrounded by peaks of every shape, some so weird that they seemed to come from a dream, perhaps of the 'mountains of the moon'.

One of the days of surveying on the glacier was also a 'Physiology day', which meant that the surveyor was required to wear a wire vest for temperature measurements which were taken every five minutes. We returned to the load-carrying for another week by which time all the stores were at the survey camp. Close to Mount Battle on the east side of the pass, there was a high, snow-topped peak which we knew should be an ideal viewpoint for the rest of this unclimbed group. An easy approach led up the Rundle glacier, then we climbed to the ridge by a short snow-slope with a few small crevasses. The arête was quite long but easy angled, firstly over broken rock, then snow. A large cornice overhung one side but we kept well below this and across snow-covered rocks to reach the summit. We called the mountain 'Turl', and before descending by the same route, we took note of further peaks

we might attempt, realising that we could have made good use of the whole summer there without exhausting the unclimbed peaks.

From Turl we had noticed a more difficult mountain which could possibly be climbed by traversing a lower peak on a ridge the far side of Fox glacier; this would require a long day. The Rundle glacier was nearly a mile wide at the snout, and beyond the arête of Mount Turl towered the ice-fall of Fox glacier, one of its many tributaries. As we wound our way amongst the crevasses, with some difficulty, we noticed the tracks of an Arctic fox which had cunningly found its way through the maze, sometimes retreating from a doubtful snow-bridge. Beyond the complicated glacier, an outline of the shapely ridge ahead stared through the cloud. Some of the climbing on its rocky arête was quite difficult, bulging slabs overlapping each other on one side, steep rock plastered with ice on the other. We planted a piton in the summit block, realising that there would not be time to reach the higher peak beyond. Traversing the summit brought us on to an ice-slope covered with snow; this was more difficult than we expected and provided us with good reason to christen this peak 'Sici', an Eskimo word meaning 'Ice'.

In crossing the pass, we knew from an early stage we would need to cross from one side of the valley to the other. This was made all the more important by our arrangement to rendezvous with the RCMP Peterhead boat on the other side of the valley. Imagine our surprise when we stood on the summit of Mount Battle and saw that there had been a drastic change. Having planned to cross between Summit and Glacier Lakes, we now saw that the ice-cored moraine between them had collapsed. A stretch of swirling water now separated us from the far side of the valley. Perhaps even our chances of return to civilisation were becoming alarmingly low, for to continue on the same side of the valley might have doubled the distance, and with the vast moraines would have caused long delays. About 150 ft. across, the gap seemed just another river, though perhaps on a larger scale. Hoping to get across, Terence and Graeme took along a couple of ropes, and drew lots for the honour of being first to enter the channel. As Terence waded forward secured by a rope from the shore, the frigid water engulfed him. By the time he was about one-third of the way across, the water was up to his armpits; struggling for breath, circulation threatening to seize up, his shout was almost lost in the grips of chattering teeth. Graeme hauled quickly on the rope and a shattered Terence stood on the shore; amidst shivers, they agreed to think of something else.

Lured by the mountains on that side of the pass, and threatened with the possibility of wintering in Baffin Island, the problem of crossing the water had become an urgent topic of conversation. The unlikely but possible answer of building a raft came from Graeme, and as we expressed our doubts, he resolved to put it into action. Contriving any

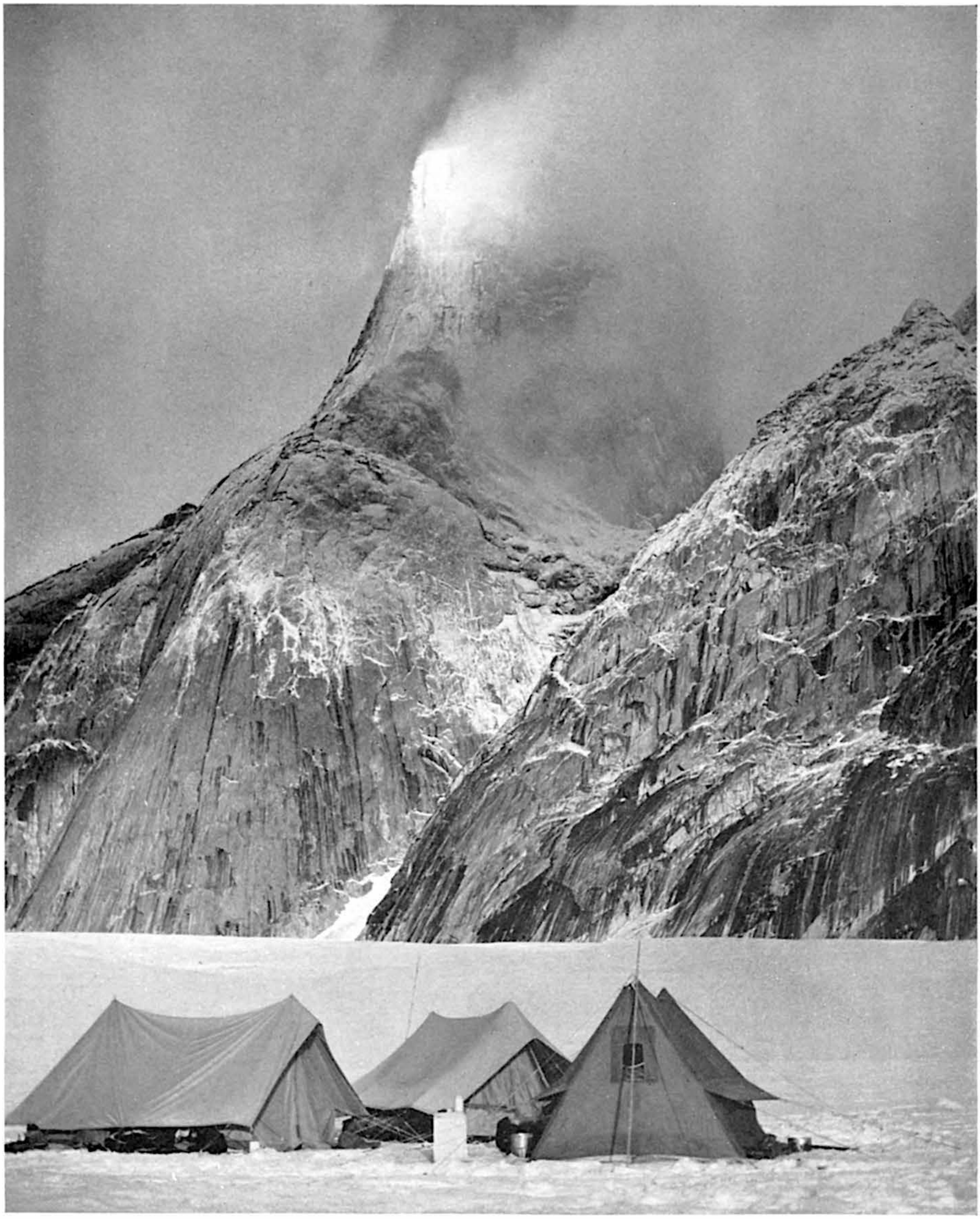
sort of craft from simple expedition equipment was not easy. We hit upon the idea of a twin-hulled raft which would have more stability than an improvised boat. At our camp near the head of Summit Lake, work was started on each of the hulls, which we made from packing cases strapped together and covered with bright yellow tarpaulin; around the cases we inserted foam rubber mattresses, hoping to prevent rocks from puncturing the tarpaulin, and finally the six-foot-long hulls were strapped with cord. A couple of planks had survived from the 1953 base camp, and these we lashed between the floats. When she was launched, 'Canary Cat', as we called her, had to undergo her 'sea' trials. First of these was to be punted across the gap in the best of Cambridge tradition, carrying an intrepid boatman and the vital life-line. Once the fixed line was anchored, little more had to be done and the crossing went without mishap. Our loads at this stage were a modest 80–90 lb., but even so the raft was able to take only one man and two loads, or two men and one load. The swirling waters lay behind us, we thought, and all would now go smoothly. About to congratulate ourselves, we noticed that we were standing on an island only half-way over the crossing. So the whole operation had to be repeated before the raft could finally be laid aside.

A trudge up the glacier would bring us to stand at the very foot of the 'throne of the gods', Mount Asgard. Twisting our way around crevasses, and now plodding a 'snow treadmill', for it was snowing heavily, we weighed up our chances of ever finding water on the glacier. Melting snow for cooking would be both tiresome and time-consuming so we were pleased to site camp where chopping with an ice-axe broke through the frozen surface of a melt-water stream. With our three tents close together, entrances surrounded the stoves so that a meal could be quickly served. It snowed throughout the night.

Waking about 5 a.m. next morning, I lost no time in looking out to check that a climb was possible. Outside, the weather was crisp and clear around the tents; clouds spread out in the valley below emphasised the height of the camp, while swirling mists hid the giants which soared above our tiny camp on the glacier.

More than three hours later, dwarfed by the fantastic spires and ice-falls between us and the clouds, the six of us plodded up the glacier. We called this glacier 'King's Parade' after the main street of Cambridge, because of the fabulous architecture on each side. The amazing peak of Mount Asgard stood sentinel above our camp; on the other side, seven sheer rock buttresses supported the two snow summits of 'Friga', Queen of the Gods. By studying air photographs, we had found a crafty way which might well lead us from the glacier to one of the twin summits, but the route was long and complicated. Frequent crevasses dispelled any monotony on the glacier, the creaking of the ice

Baffin Island
Broughton Island
Greenland
Cape Dyer
Cumberland Peninsula
Frobisher
Hudson Bay
Quebec
80° W
70° W
60° W
From Broughton Island
North Pangnirtung Fiord
67° N
PENNY ICECAP
Owl Valley
Ozymandias
June River
Highway Glacier
Turner Glacier
Glacier Lake
Mt. Fleming
Anawakaluk 6598
Mt Asgard
Kings Parade Glacier
Mt Friga c.6650
Mt Queen Elizabeth 7014
Summit Lake
Mt. Battle
Mt. Turl
Mt. Sici
Rundle Glacier
Mt. Midgard
Naksakjud River
Fork Beard Glacier
Windy Lake
River
66° 30' N
Weasel
65° W
Pangnirtung Fiord
To Pangnirtung
PANGNIRTUNG PASS, BAFFIN ISLAND
APPROXIMATE SCALE :
8 MILES TO 1 INCH
miles
5 0 5 10
Drawn by R E Langford
Cambridge Arctic Canada Expedition 1961
Kingnait Fiord



Photo, R. E. Langford]

MISTS ON MOUNT ASGARD, FROM 'SENATE' CAMP.

over cavities around us absorbing some nervous energy. Skirting what was probably a frozen lake, we approached a steeper slope where the ice was overhung with snow. Without crampons at this stage, we kicked steps in the snow until near the top of the slope where it became too hard. Personally loathing to strap on crampons before it is necessary, I moved on upwards but most of my weight was soon on the ice-axe, though in a few heaves I was above the steepest part and in easier snow; I should have been wearing crampons. A further hundred yards brought us to a place where the glacier narrowed and we made directly for the rocks at its flank, where we could relax over a second breakfast and survey the difficulties above.

A wide couloir leading steeply to the base of a gendarme on the shoulder connecting Friga to a lower peak, was the route we had picked out on the air photo. Now it loomed much larger and steeper than we expected; everybody expressed doubts and I should have done so myself, were it not my idea. We made towards the bergschrund which skirted the hem of the icefolds hanging from the rocky shoulder. The chasm was almost completely concealed with the snow from the slope above, and Terence approached it with caution. Belaying him from below, John stood waist deep in the snow debris which had accumulated on the lower lip of the bergschrund. Terence prodded his way across the snow-bridge; it was vaguely defined and enshrouded in a white mantle. Reaching firmer ground the other side, Terence started work on an ice bulge which overhung the abyss. Crampons biting into the ice, picking handholds on the traverse, we began to see the true angle of the slope above us.

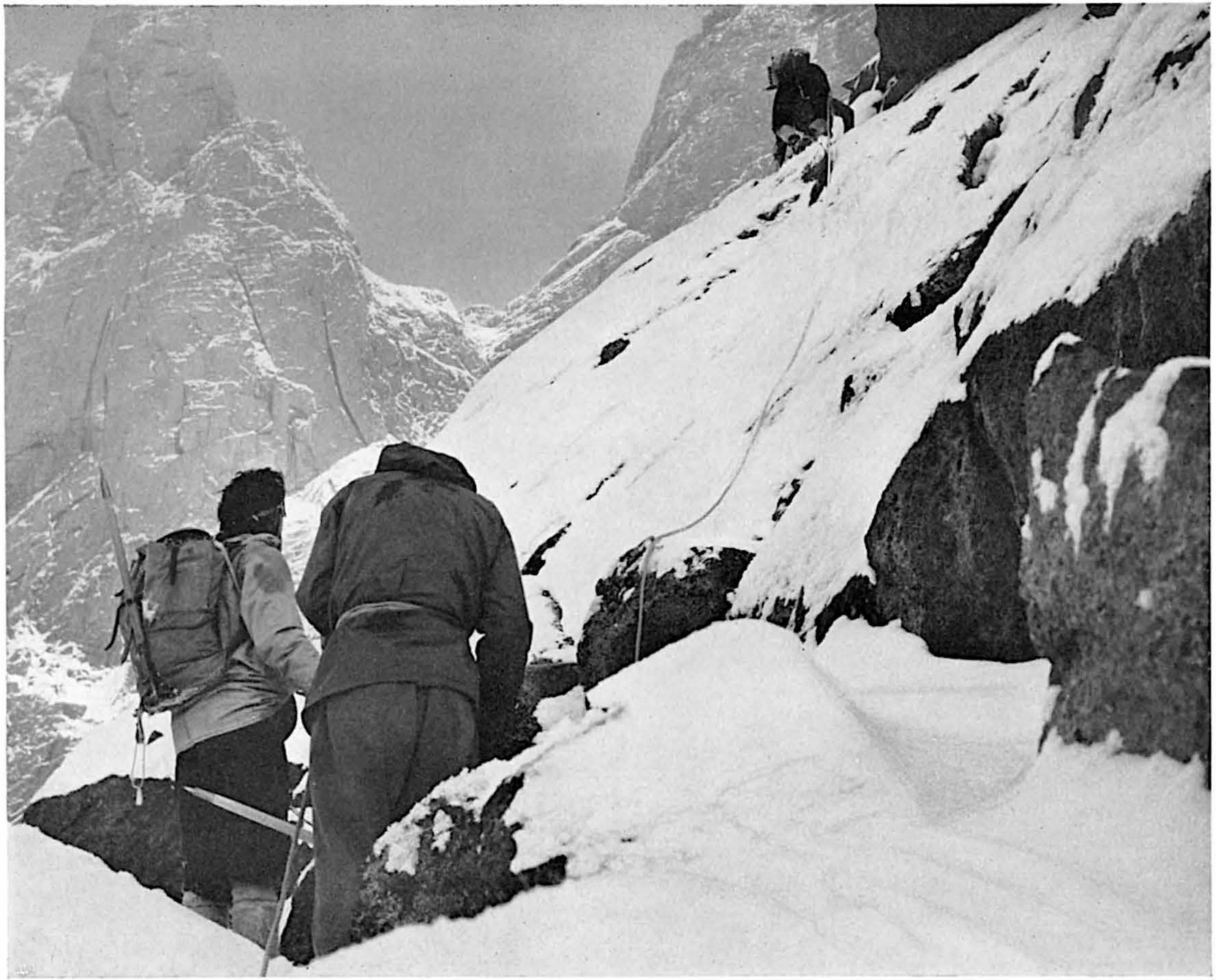
The couloir was not as sheer as we had thought, but presented the time-consuming problem of steep ice plastered with nearly a foot of new snow. Pitch by pitch the climbers advanced; stance by stance the roped pairs leap-frogged. We had to bang in about fifteen ice pitons at the stances in the first couloir. Each belay had to be cleared of the snow so that the peg was held completely by the ice; each place where a climber stood belaying his leader became a scoop in the couloir. Reaching the gendarme at the shoulder, I hammered in a rock piton at its foot; we now had the security of being firmly attached to the granite bastion. Stretching away to our left was the second couloir; it was narrower but not so steep. We could dispense with ice-pegs now, kicking our way up the snow. Small avalanches were being started off all around us by the heat of the sun whose rays were now slanting down on the slope. Dismissing these casually, for they were not big enough to form any real hazard, and sweating with the clothes in which we had started from the shadows of the glacier, we reached the ridge.

The platform we found was an ideal place to unstrap crampons, have a bite to eat, and look down to Summit Lake beneath us, a cloudy

grey-green colour from the glacier dirt. Continuing up the ridge, each roped pair by a slightly different route, we reached the snows above. Fantastic views opened out on each side; away to the west towered Mount Asgard and its twin peak, which has never been named let alone climbed. The only compensation for the trudge up the snow for the last few hundred feet was that the virgin peak of Friga would be ours. At the top of the slope, one of the twin summits lay beneath our feet. Had there been time, we would have liked to have traversed the arête to the second of the twin summits. Confronted by a triple cornice, the traverse seemed impossible. Feeling exalted by the thought that all the team had joined in the conquest of Friga, I wanted to investigate the phenomenon of the triple cornice, so with Tony belaying me from the firm snow summit, I edged my way through the tangle of wind-carved snow. So far so good, but a glance at the watch and a few paces along the knife edge, with a cornice on one side and a steep slope likely to avalanche on the other, were enough to convince me that we should have to be content with the southern summit, if we were to get back that evening. No time was lost in taking the last few photographs and re-tracing our steps to the couloir, where the avalanches had partly buried our tracks. Protected again by ice pitons, we crossed the couloir and managed not to fall into too many of the crevasses on the way down to our camp.

There was no movement at Senate Camp until late the next morning. It had been snowing all night, and a mantle covered the tents and everything which had been left outside. Tony chipped the ice covering the melt-water stream to get water for a brew-up, while Bill scratched in the snow around the guy lines for buried climbing equipment and cooking gear. Graeme put his weight into a novel method of cleaning the pots by swivelling them upside-down in the snow. Terence and I discussed our plans for the morrow.

From the start, one peak had dominated our thoughts, demanded our attention. Though snow was now falling daily, and our days were numbered, we would never have been satisfied without at least approaching Mount Asgard, throne of the Norse gods. In such atrocious conditions, it would be a long day. To provide a reserve, as well as speeding the party, Graeme and John stood down from this climb. Gallantly they got up at 1.45 a.m. and made us a splendid breakfast. We started by 4 a.m. with plenty of reserve in the rucksacks and crept steadily up the glacier. At the frozen lake we had passed two days before, our route turned sharply up towards the towers of Asgard and its twin unclimbed peak. The weather was fairly clear during the early hours, though ominous snow clouds hung around. In and out of the crevasses wandered our drunken track of evasion, craftily weaving a way through the hungry ice-fall. It was bewildering later to look down



Photo, R. E. Langford]

CLIMBING ON MT. ASGARD: GOODFELLOW LEADING, CROFTS AND BARLOW BELOW.

on this chaotic path; little did we realise that we would have to tread it again in the dark.

Asgard would be a very difficult peak; this was only too obvious to us as we gazed up at the *verglas*-coated slabs. The bergschrund was a mightier chasm than we had ever seen before. If one of us fell into it, he would have been hanging on our 120 ft. of rope long before he touched its walls or the debris which littered the inky gloom below. At one stage Terence stood non-plussed on the centre of what he had thought was a snow-bridge; all around him he prodded with his axe, feeling for firm ice beneath; he realised he was encompassed by nothingness and could only jump several feet back to the last secure footprint, while Tony held a strong belay, expecting a rumble and jerk at any moment. The slabs above were plastered with snow and ice, so we were likely to spend the whole day in crampons. The strata of the slabs urged us to the left, but we knew it would be a little quicker to gain the ridge on our right. The overlaps between each slab gave quite a lot of trouble, but Terence and I shared the difficulties by leading through, and sometimes throwing down a rope to haul on so that precious time might be saved.

Across and up a wide gully full of snow we went, not knowing what might be buried underneath. (This was the only part of the climb possibly made easier by poor conditions.) From the top of the open gully to the col between Asgard and its mighty twin, there were three or four hundred feet of sheer rock; this was broken only by a steep chimney which in places petered out, forming a 'sluice' for the ice which lay a foot or more deep on its sides. To enter it seemed quite a problem, for there was an overhang topped by an ice-covered boulder. We thought this would take a long time so Tony, as a more experienced rock gymnast, started a route on the wall well to the right of the chimney. The rock was vertical here too and, though it was dry, large blocks were desperately loose (very unusual for this massif) so the brief attempt was tiring and a strain on the nerves.

Collecting all the pitons available, I went to have another look at the overhanging entrance to the chimney. If I could just get up 10 ft., a couple of small holds led to the promise of easier ground above. With no qualms about using the ironmongery, and climbing on a doubled rope, I banged in the pegs at arm's reach. Those holds were small and one was loose so I attached a sling to the highest of several pegs, and, fighting my crampons into it, managed to change to a bridging position. Before strength finally ebbed, I clawed at the icy boulders above, finally pirouetting onto a small platform above with considerable relief.

'Go on if you like,' said Terence.

Not knowing how long the pitch might be, I belayed while the others swung up on the rope to join me. A good thing I had waited there, for

the next pitch which Terence led took the full length of the rope. It was quite fantastic how he managed the vertical chimney, sheathed in ice and unrelenting in difficulty. As Terence slowly progressed, I was thankful to have handed over the lead. A long time passed. Chips of ice falling on us, and the occasional piton or ice-axe flying over our heads to bury themselves in a snowy grave out of sight, were symbols of the extreme difficulty Terence was overcoming. Virtually exhausted of energy and pitons, he was out of sight for some time before we finally heard a shout announcing his arrival at the next stance. Desperately we followed this 'Jacob's Ladder', not scorning the use of the rope as we scrambled up the icy steps, stopping every now and again to beat some sort of feeling into our fingers.

Reaching the col we saw that the face was a maze of steep rock covered with ice, and we knew that to go on would be to accept a bivouac, and possibly two. Not wishing to commit ourselves to spending the night on such an inhospitable Arctic mountain, we turned back, knowing that in any case the descent would require all our reserves of skill and energy. The time was late as we prepared to abseil down the steep ice pitches. Across the snow we floundered, glancing at a watch now and then to weigh up our chances of reaching camp that night. Over the slabs as fast as we could safely move, swinging down on a doubled rope wherever possible. One of my crampons broke near the bottom of the slabs, so I had to be let down on the rope, rather than totter gingerly down the *verglas*-coated slabs as valuable time ebbed away. In less of a hurry we approached the bergschrund, and we were now all moving on the same rope. If one man fell into a crevasse, it would have been easier to hold him with four on the rope. Wending a way through the maze of crevasses, Terence was just able to see the tracks we had made in the ascent, and thankfully we regained the lower glacier. A distant yodel brought Graeme from the tent; he was pleased to see us and had almost given us up for the night.

Monday, August 21, was a rest day, on which one of the more energetic members purposely went down a crevasse for photographic purposes; alas, nature defended her inner sanctuary by freezing his shutter. One day remained for climbing, so the choice was made in favour of the unclimbed Anawakaluk at the head of the Turner glacier. The pointed summit of this peak, though lower than others surrounding it, gives the impression of having been shaped by the wind. The peak culminates a long, serrated ridge, approached from a tributary of the Turner glacier. This time John and I remained in camp, but it was not very late in the day when we heard the party returning. They had climbed to the ridge and traversed some of its length, but the bad snow conditions required extreme care. During the prolonged periods spent belaying, minor frostbite had struck their feet, and they were

MT. MIDGARD

RUNDLE GLACIER

MT. TURL

SICI

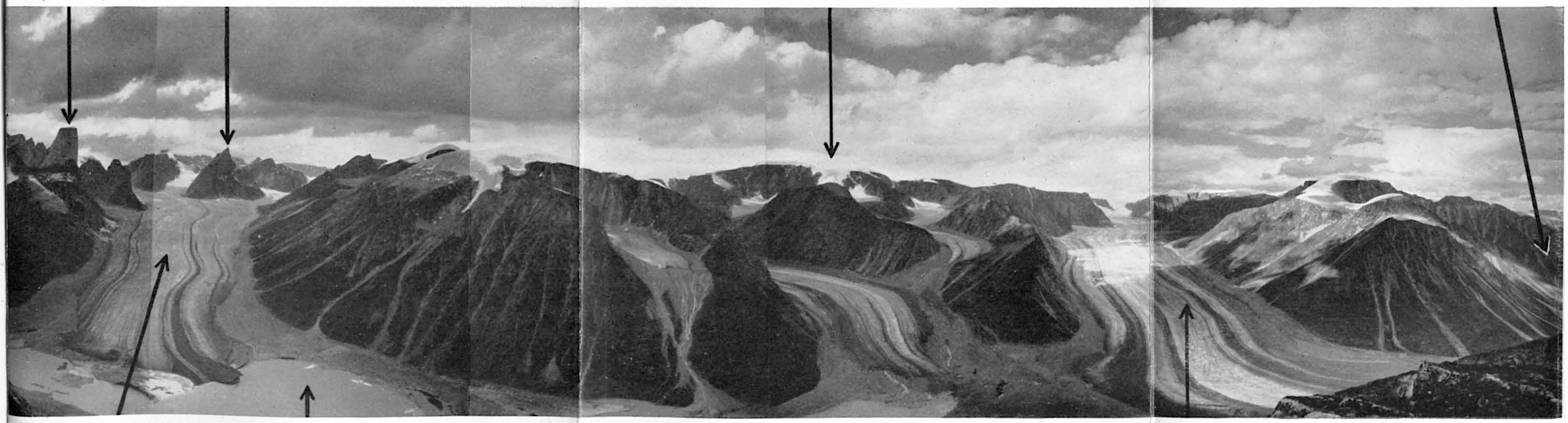
PANORAMA FROM MT. BATTLE : LOOKING EAST

MT. ASGARD
(6,598 ft.)

ANAWAKALUK

PENNY ICECAP

OWL VALLEY



TURNER GLACIER

GLACIER LAKE

HIGHWAY GLACIER

PANORAMA FROM MT. BATTLE : LOOKING WEST

[*To face p.* 110

forced to retreat. This peak remains a handsome prize, perhaps for the next climbers who tread the stately Turner glacier.

It was now snowing incessantly, and in any case no more climbing could be contemplated, but we finished off the survey work before leaving the pass. We had resolved to complete the move down the Weasel valley in one journey, with the result that our loads were initially 120–130 lb. each. The RCMP Peterhead boat took the expedition aboard near the head of the Pangnirtung Fiord on September 2; we reached the Eskimo settlement of Pangnirtung that evening. After a week, we sailed to Frobisher Bay aboard the icebreaker *C.D. Howe* and flew on September 15 to Montreal.

The approach to the mountains of the Cumberland Peninsula is both costly and time-consuming. We were very fortunate in obtaining considerable assistance from the Mount Everest Foundation and the support of several other individuals and institutions. Our short reconnaissance in which five virgin peaks were climbed, showed that the mountains in the area of the Pangnirtung Pass offer considerable scope to mountaineering expeditions for several years to come. Though they are modest in height, and difficult of access, they have quite dramatic shapes. To any mountaineer who is tiring of the Alpine crowds on the *voies normales*, or frustrated by waiting for conditions to improve on a *face nord*, these Arctic mountains will surely provide the answer.