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THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN—

Man, Myth, or Monster?

Two famous men now are climbing the Himalayas seeking the answer; here is an interview with one, zoologist Marlin Perkins, who may prove the Yeti exists by bringing it back alive

By **HOWARD EARLE**

A BAND OF renowned explorers and scientists is trudging up treacherous, wind-swept slopes of the remote Himalaya Mountains on a mission which may discover a living link to man's distant beginnings—or simply prove that grown men still believe in fairy tales.

Leading the British-American expedition is Sir Edmund Hillary, the craggy-featured mountaineer who electrified the world seven years ago by being the first man to climb Mount Everest. But the key figure is mild, soft-spoken Marlin Perkins, a scientist more at home running a zoo than in the wilds of the Indian-Tibetan border.

Their goal is to find the Abominable Snowman—a fantasy to some, a rare and priceless mammal to others—which for nearly a century has lured adventurers into the hardships and dangers of the Himalayas.

Before he left the United States, I interviewed Marlin Perkins, director of Chicago's famed Lincoln Park Zoo and star performer of TV's former "Zoo Parade." With frank

skepticism, I asked why two leading figures in exploration and zoology were determined to track down something nobody but fanciful natives had ever seen.

"Something in the Himalayas is leaving strange tracks in the snow," Perkins replied flatly. "The tracks have been photographed, and they differ from any other tracks. Zoologists can't identify them as belonging to any known living creature, so they certainly bear investigation."

The photographs which excite this scientist's curiosity were taken in 1951 by Sir Eric Shipton, a highly reputable British mountain climber, probably no more than a few hours after "something" made them 18,000 feet high, far beyond the last line of trees.

From the vivid photos, experts conclude that the Snowman's foot is about 10 inches long and five inches wide; its stride is 2½ feet, about that of a six-foot man.

Hillary and Perkins are attempting to locate fresh tracks. This will not be unusual; expeditions have been coming across these strange markings since 1887. A previous expedition in 1954 to find the Abominable Snowman saw tracks but never the creature.

Hillary and Perkins are equipped not only to record evidence of the Snowman's existence but, if possible, to bring it back alive. Twelve cameras will be set up along mountain routes and rigged so that the Snowman will trip their shutters on contact.

Two special guns also have been carried to the high Himalayas by native bearers. They fire hypodermic syringes capable of injecting knockout drops into the mystery beast. There will be regular firearms along, too.

"If we see the Snowman, we'll make every effort to capture it alive," Perkins says. "We don't intend to harm it—but we can't predict what will happen until we know what we are looking for, and how big the animal is."

"We are taking several viewing scopes as well as camera equipment. Once the Snowman is spotted, even at long range, we will know how to go about capturing it."

Despite the failure of other expeditions to find anything more than tracks, equipment of the group includes material for building superstrength cages for a captive Snowman.



Experts have wondered if the Yeti might be related to famed gorilla Bushman, late pride of Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo.