

## MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

### 1. THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN

With reference to our Note on the 'Abominable Snowman' on p. 594 of Vol. 52 (2 & 3), December 1954, Col. R. W. Burton has drawn our attention to an article written by F. S. Smythe, the celebrated mountaineer, in *The Statesman* of Calcutta (21 Nov. 1937).

This article would appear to have been overlooked by or unknown to the many people who have in recent years made various conjectures regarding the identity of the creature responsible for the tracks left in snow at high altitudes in the Himalayas—otherwise the Abominable Snowman.

Mr. Smythe mentions coming upon perfect overnight tracks on fresh snow on a pass at about 16,500 ft. above the Bhyundar Valley in the Garhwal Himalayas. They ran for several hundred yards, turned off the ridge and descended a steep rock face. He took pains to make a complete record and close-up photographs. On the level the footmarks averaged 12-13 inches in length and 6 inches in breadth; uphill they averaged only 8 inches in length, though the breadth was the same. The stride was some  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 ft. on the level, but considerably less uphill, and the footmarks were turned outwards at about the same angle as a man's. There were the well-defined imprints of five toes  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inches long and  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches broad. All the toes, unlike the human foot, however, were arranged symmetrically. What appeared to be the impression of the heel had two curious toelike impressions on either side.

The photographs were scrutinised in London, together with Mr. Smythe's measurements and observations, by Prof. Julian Huxley, Mr. Martin C. Hinton, Keeper of Zoology at the British Museum (Natural History) and Mr. Pocock. They came to the conclusion that the tracks were those of a Himalayan Brown Bear, *Ursus arctos pruinosus*, which varies in colour from brown to silver grey, agreeing with legendary descriptions by Tibetans.

The fact that the tracks appeared to have been made by a biped is explained by the bear putting its rear foot into the rear end of the impression left by its front foot. Thus only the side toes would show as the curious indentations noted on either side of the 'heel'. This would also account for the large size of the spoor, which when melted out by the sun, would appear enormous.

Col. Burton suggests that this more or less convincing diagnosis of the tracks as belonging to the Himalayan Brown Bear may be considered as the 'something more definite' for which the Editors were waiting in the last line of their note!

114 APOLLO STREET,  
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March 11, 1955.

EDITORS



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