K2; THE THIRD AMERICAN KARAKORUM EXPEDITION, 1953

By H. R. A. STREATHER

(*The substance of an address given to the Alpine Club on February 2, 1954*)

TOWARDS the end of 1952 I was invited by Dr. Charles Houston to join an expedition he was organising to make an attempt on K2, the second highest mountain in the world. I had served for some time in the north of Pakistan and had a fair knowledge of the people there and of their language. My job was to be that of Transport Officer. I was to make the arrangements to get the expedition on to its Base Camp and was then to become a member of the climbing party. Naturally I accepted this invitation with the greatest of pleasure and welcomed the opportunity of returning ' north of the passes ' of Pakistan. The problem of obtaining the necessary leave from the Army was not so easy. However, this difficulty was overcome and I was granted special long leave to join the expedition.

Background

K2, sometimes called Mount Godwin-Austen, rises to 28,250 ft. in the remote country to the north of Baltistan on the undemarcated borders of the Chinese province of Sinkiang. It narrowly upholds its claim to be the second highest mountain in the world, for Kangchenjunga is barely a hundred feet lower.

K2 was first noted for its great height by Captain Montgomerie, in 1856, while he was working with the Survey of India. Since then it has been seen by many great travellers but few attempts have been made to climb it. The first of these was in 1902 when Eckenstein reached a height of 21,000 ft. on the north-east spur. The famous Italian explorer, H.R.H. Prince Luigi Amedeo of Savoy, Duke of the Abruzzi, led a large expedition to the Karakorum in 1909 and, besides much other fine work, made an attempt on K2. He decided to try by the south-east ridge and three of his guides, after a very difficult climb, reached a height of rather more than 20,000 ft., ' towards a reddish rock,' before deciding that it was useless to proceed further. Later they reached a height of 21,870 ft. on the western spur, above the saddle which later became known as the Savoia Pass. The Duke eventually decided that further efforts to climb K2 would be hopeless. After that, K2 was seen by Dr. Longstaff, the Bullock-Workmans, the Duke of Spoleto, Dyhrenfurth, H. de Ségogne and others but no further attempts to climb it were made until twenty-nine years later, when in 1938, Dr. Houston led an American expedition in a determined effort to find a route to the summit.

Enough cannot be said of the good work and perseverance of this expedition. After many weeks of reconnaissance and after making bids on several of the ridges, they made a last determined effort up the south-east ridge, named then the Abruzzi Ridge, after the Duke who had tried it twenty-nine years before.

They reached the ' reddish rock ' referred to by the Duke and this proved to be the key to the whole problem, A small and extremely steep chimney led to the top of this red rock. Bill House made a very fine lead and after a hard climb reached the top of the chimney. From then on they had worked slowly forward until Houston and Petzoldt had eventually reached a height of about 26,000 ft. before having to turn back. They had spent many weeks on the mountain and believed they had found a possible route to the summit.

The following year a further American expedition led by Wiessner tried the same route. Wiessner himself reached a height of a little over 26,000 ft. but the expedition ended in tragedy and one American and three Sherpas lost their lives. Little has been written of the gallant efforts of Pasang Kikuli, who with two other Sherpas attempted to rescue the abandoned American at Camp VII. None of them was seen again.

To Skardu

Towards the end of May we assembled in Rawalpindi and most of us met each other for the first time. I had come out by sea and had spent a few days travelling round Pakistan, seeing old friends ; the others had flown out from the States. We all stayed there with Colonel Ata Ullah, the Pakistani who proved to be such a great comfort to us later by his consistent support and encouragement from Base Camp.

Our party was a strong one. Charles Houston, the leader, was already well known for his wonderful achievements in 1938. He had also climbed in 1936 on Nanda Devi and might have been one of the summit pair had he not eaten a bad tin of food at the high camp. Bob Bates was also with him in 1938 and this year again did a fine job with our commissariat. He had climbed extensively during the last twenty-two years in Alaska and the Yukon. George Bell, a theoretical physicist and a tough six-footer, had distinguished himself on Yerupaja (21,679 ft.) and Salcantay (20,574 ft.), two peaks in Peru, which had not been previously climbed. Then there was Art Gilkey, a geologist from Iowa, a man with great drive and determination. Dee Molenaar and Bob Craig, both from Seattle, were ski and climbing instructors at the Army Mountain School. Craig had climbed Mount McKinley. Pete Schoening, also from Seattle, was a great expert in the art of belaying and this proved very fortunate for us all later. With these seven American members of the party were Colonel Ata Ullah and myself. The Colonel was nearly fifty but this did not prevent him climbing with us to our Camp III, and visiting Windy Gap at a little over 20,000 ft., at the head of the K2 Glacier. Only three of us had climbed in the Himalayas before. Houston and Bates on K2 in 1938 and

Houston, before that, on Nanda Devi in 1936. I had climbed Tirich Mir, with the Norwegians in 1950.

This was the party which assembled in Rawalpindi and prepared to set off from there on the long journey to Skardu and then the march to Base Camp.

We were able to fly the first stage of our journey and land on the rather frightening airfield at Skardu. This was a most impressive flight. We passed close under the walls of Nanga Parbat and one of us even claimed that he was able to see the tracks of the German expedition which was later successful in climbing that mountain. On up the narrow gorge we passed Rakaposhi and Haramush, with a brief glimpse of K2 away to the north and then we landed at last at Skardu to breathe that cool sweet air which seems only to exist in the great mountain ranges. It was hard to believe that we had reached Skardu in but a few hours when, in the days before the partition in India, this same journey had entailed a long trek of many days from Srinagar over the Zoji La or across the Deosai Plains.

We were given a hearty reception in Skardu and the main street of the bazaar was brightly decorated and crowded as we passed through. The banners displayed by the school children and the conversation of leading citizens made us fully aware of the strong feeling in this area over the bitter Kashmir problem. Skardu had been the scene of much fighting in 1947 and had changed hands several times.

We were most hospitably entertained by the Political Agent and the Officers of the Northern Scouts, who did everything possible to help us prepare for the next stage of our journey.

Coolies were employed, some of our loads were repacked, and food was purchased for the porters who would be remaining with us to work on the mountain. The Mir of Hunza had kindly selected a few good men and he had sent these down to join us at Skardu. One of them had climbed with me on Tirich Mir in 1950. This was the first time that Hunza porters had been employed to a large extent on a major expedition and they were to prove themselves in every way worthy.

Approach March

On June 5 all was ready, and having crossed the Indus in ' Alexander's Barge ' we set out on our two-week trek to Base Camp.

For the first few stages we marched up the fertile Shighar valley and then, a little above the village of Bahar, we were forced to cross to the north bank of the Braldu River.

The coolies, recruited from the villages around Skardu and the lower Shighar villages, said that the track on the south bank was no longer safe for laden men. Nothing would persuade them to change their minds and we were forced to accept a delay of nearly two days while we laboriously ferried all our kit across the river on a very inadequate goat-skin raft.

In Skardu I had drawn up a very careful contract for the supply and payment of coolies with a man recommended to me by the Political

Agent. It was during the delay in crossing the river that I realised what a rogue this contractor was. He was giving the coolies but a fraction of their pay and pocketing the rest himself. Each day coolies would become more and more difficult to find and as we arrived in a village all the fit men would disappear, for fear of being pressed into labour with us. As soon as I realised what was going on, I sacked the contractor and from that day on all went well. In fact, at most of the villages where we stopped for the night, men would crowd round us and fight for the loads when the time came to set out on the next stage of our journey the following morning.

After crossing two of the infamous rope bridges, both in very bad repair, we eventually reached Askole, the last village in the Braldu valley. We were given a great reception here, where the older men wanted to know if we knew the ' Duke Sahib ' and the slightly less old if we knew ' Shipton Sahib ' ! We had fun here making tape recordings of the villagers singing and then playing their own songs back to them over our radio.

The following morning the whole village wanted to accompany us, but whether this was because of the novel entertainment we provided or because of the good money they hoped we would pay, we couldn't say.

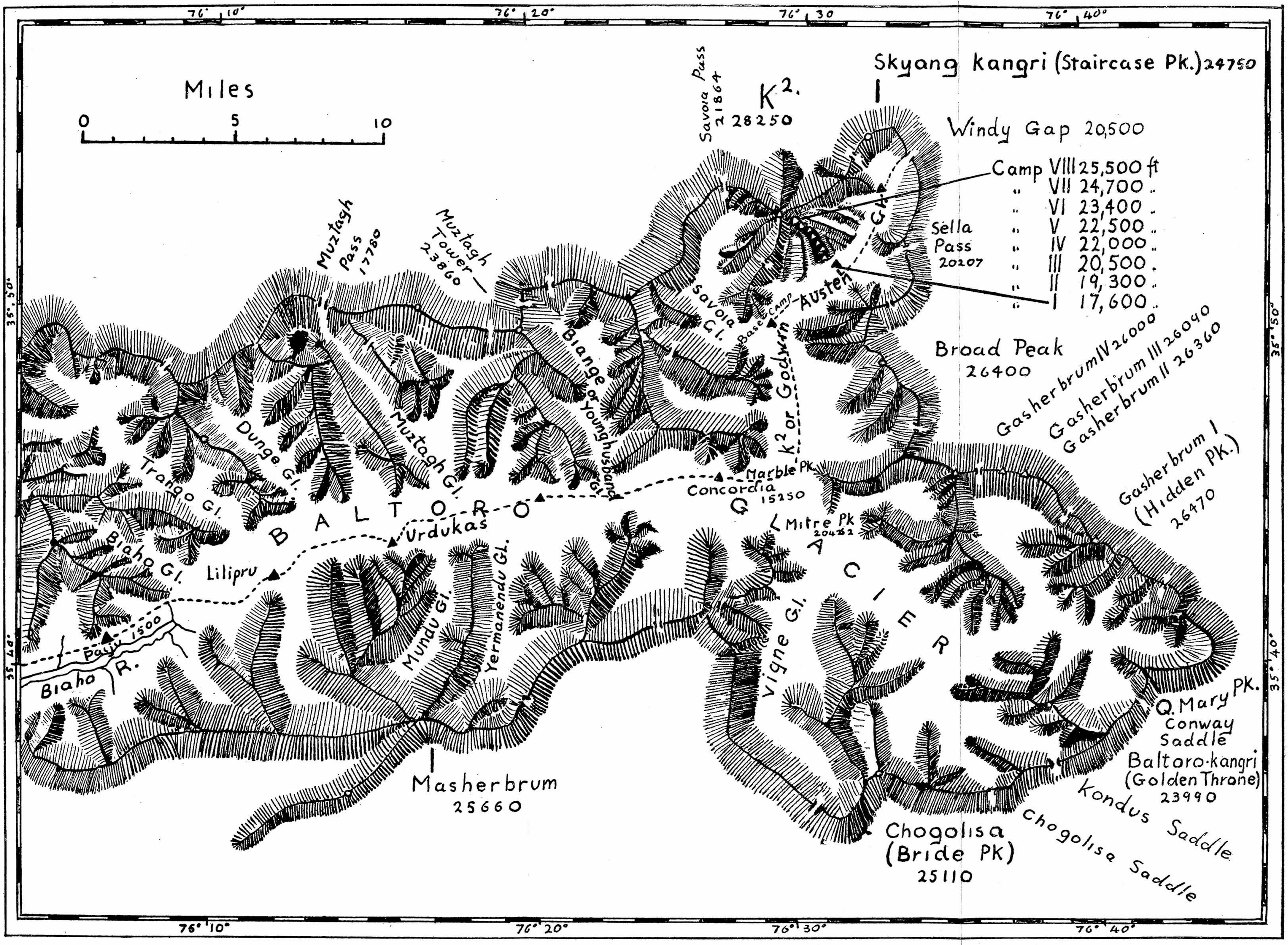
As we moved on up the Baltoro glacier the novelty was wearing a little thin and twice impressive ' sit down ' strikes were staged. The cry would be 'the Duke Sahib stopped here so we are going to,' even if we had only been marching a few hours. Spoleto I suppose—hardly Abruzzi ! However, the strike leaders were prepared to listen to sense and we moved on without any increase in the settled pay.

When we reached Concordia, the junction of the many glaciers at the head of the Baltoro, I said to one of the older coolies that we had to turn left, up the K2 glacier. ' Oh ! ' he said, ' so you are not going to Base Camp, you are going to Lambar Pahar.' I found that Base Camp or rather the local pronunciation of it, was the name they had given to the area of the camp of the vast French expedition in 1936, which had employed some six hundred and fifty coolies. Simply ' long hill ' was their name for K2.

We reached our Base Camp on June 19, at about 16,500 ft., at the foot of the south ridge of K2. From here we sent back our coolies, only the six Hunza porters and ourselves remained. Fifty of our most loyal coolies were given instructions to come back and collect us on August 10. All these men had come from the village of Satpora near Skardu. This village had already made a name for itself by providing willing and loyal coolies for previous expeditions and they certainly earned our gratitude and respect this summer.

The Abruzzi Ridge

Our first morning in Base Camp dawned bright and clear and as we unpacked and sorted our loads we had a wonderful view of the icy precipices and rocky ridges of K2 hanging over us to the north. We could follow the line of the Abruzzi Ridge, running steeply, horribly



THE BALTORO GLACIER AND K2

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steeply, up to the snow shoulder at about 26,000 ft. This shoulder seemed to be the first and only ' let up ' on the steep ridge before it verged into the summit cone.

We started at once, working a tortuous route up the glacier, through the ice fall, to our Camp I at the very foot of the Abruzzi Ridge. After further hard days of relaying loads, the first two camps were eventually established on the ridge—Camp II at 19,300 ft. and Camp III at 20,500 ft.

Camp II was our last site of any size and was the last place where there was room for the Hunzas to live as well as the climbers. They carried loads with us to III but from then on all the carrying had to be done by ourselves. They never lived above Camp II. The risk of stonefalls on the steep ridge was too great to allow for one ' ferry service ' to work above the other, so we all had to climb together or wait in the sheltered camp sites until the ridge was clear. For these reasons we were convinced that we would not be justified in taking the Hunzas above Camp III.

Camp III consisted of two tents, perched perilously on ledges we had cut from the ridge. It was here that we experienced our first storm which was but a foretaste of what was to come.

We continued relaying our loads forward and on July 16 established Camp IV at the foot of ' House's chimney,' the ' reddish rock ' which the Duke of the Abruzzi's guides had hoped to reach many years before. Camp V at 22,500 ft., was only some 500 ft. above Camp IV, but at that altitude it was a hard task to struggle up the chimney. We pulled our loads up on a pulley frame, which we had brought and erected for this purpose.

Once above the chimney we felt that we really were getting somewhere at last. The climb to Camp VI, 23,400 ft., was again a short one and this camp was fully established, with all of us there, by the end of July.

We had found other traces of the previous expedition during the climb but it was at Camp VI that we first found any evidence on the last hours of Pasang Kikuli and the Sherpas who climbed alone from Base Camp, in 1939, in an attempt to rescue Wolfe from Camp VII. We found the remains of two tents and inside them, neatly rolled ready for a move, were the sleeping bags and a few personal belongings of those gallant heroes. It was clear that they had prepared everything for their descent before going to VII, for a second time, to try to bring Wolfe down.

During the days that we had been establishing Camp VI, the weather had been deteriorating but we continued to climb and build our ' pyramid ' during the bright spells. All previous records indicated that the Monsoon had little effect in the Karakorum and we did not believe that this was more than a local spell of bad weather. We did not expect more than a few stormy days before the promised clear, bright days would come.

The slab rock, covered with a thin layer of snow and ice, made the

climb above VI treacherous but we carried loads to the point where Camp VII had been established in 1938 and where we hoped to make our own camp. However, the formation of the séracs at the foot of the snow shoulder had changed so much that no level site could be found for a camp. A narrow ledge was cut out in the snow slope, just wide enough for our smallest tent and two men stayed up here to seek further for a suitable camp site. The rest of us dumped our loads and climbed down again to VI. Camp VII thus became merely a cache. Gilkey and Schoening, who remained at VII, searched for the whole of the following day and eventually informed us at Camp VI, by walkie-talkie radio, that they had found a perfect camp site but that it was several hundred feet above the old Camp VII site. We later estimated the height of this camp, Camp VIII, to be 25,500 ft. This meant that we had a long climb, with loads, from Camp VI at 23,400 ft. to Camp VIII at 25,500 ft.

On August 1 we had sufficient loads at Camp VIII to justify four of the party moving up. Two were already there. The weather was still not good but surely the break would come soon !

Bates and I remained that day in support at VI, for the climb to VIII would be a long one and if the weather remained bad, they might be forced, by the cold, to fall back on us. Late in the afternoon we heard that all had reached VIII safely and had established a strong camp there.

The following day dawned clear and sunny and we hoped that this would be the chance we had been waiting for. Bates and I struck Camp VI and, leaving tents and food for our return safely stored on one of the ledges, set out on the long climb to Camp VIII. The same day those already at VIII came down to the cache at VII to collect further supplies. Soon after we had started the weather once again deteriorated and before long we were climbing in appalling conditions. At about midday, we heard the others shouting to us from the cache, when we were tackling the treacherous ice-covered slabs of ' the black pyramid ' as we called this pitch. From the glacier below it had looked most formidable and exposed. We reached the cache after the others had returned to VIII ; fortunately they had carefully marked the route up the snow with willow wands. The weather was now atrocious but we had come too far to think of turning back. Night was falling fast when we eventually sighted Camp VIII through the driving snow. With relief we crowded into one of the mountain tents and welcomed the hot drink which was ready for us. We had been climbing for over 10 hours.

Camp VIII—The Storm

We were all of us at Camp VIII now, and with food and fuel to last us for at least ten days. We had behind us a well stocked line of camps and down at Base, in touch with us by wireless, were the Colonel and our six Hunza porters. In spite of the efforts of the last few days we were all in extremely good condition and had acclimatised well. Our

K2 FROM CONCORDIA.

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gear was in good shape and morale was high. Most of the difficult climbing was over and we were less than 3,000 ft. from the summit. All we needed now was a break in the weather, just three days might be enough, so that we could put the last part of our plan into action. Our basic plan was simple. On the first clear day we would all carry loads to Camp IX, which we hoped to establish at about 27,000 ft. The strongest two climbers would go ahead with light loads and reconnoitre the route. These two would remain at Camp IX, with supplies for several days, and would make a bid for the summit on the next clear day. If they failed, a second pair would try, and there would still be time and food for a third or even a fourth pair if necessary.

We had not planned to use oxygen, and we had none. The problem of carrying the extra loads up the steep ridge, without the help of a large number of porters, was too great and we did not consider oxygen essential to reach a height of 28,250 ft. We had already spent nearly a month above 20,500 ft., and far from deteriorating, we had been getting fitter from day to day. There were none of the usual signs of mountain sickness and we attributed this to the length of time we had been acclimatising with strenuous exercise, as we worked our way slowly forward from camp to camp. We had made six or more carries each, between most of the camps.

Such was the position when Bates and I reached Camp VIII on August 2.

That night the storm continued with unrelenting ferocity and the wind seemed to have some personal malice against us, as though it was determined to blow us from the mountain. It continued through the following day. We were confined to our bags and unable even to talk to each other without shouting at the top of our voices. The stoves would not stay alight in the flapping tents, so we were not able to get more than a cup or two of liquid to drink ; not nearly enough at that altitude.

On the morning of the 4th, we heard a pathetic cry from outside, ' Help, our tent has gone.' Houston crawled in to join Bates and me while Bell joined two of the others. We were now eight of us in three small mountain tents.

Every evening we spoke to the Colonel on our wireless and always he had received the same weather forecast from Radio Pakistan ; ' Snow and storm.'

So it continued until the morning of the 7th. I would be wrong to say that on that day we awoke to a bright morning, for there had been little sleep during the previous nights ; but the clouds were clearing and the sun was shining although the wind was still blowing strongly.

For the first time since our arrival at Camp VIII we were able to think of further movement. Bell and Molenaar had been slightly frost-bitten during the storm so they would go down. Bates and I would go down with them to VII and bring up more food and fuel. The other four would kick steps up the snow slope and start working the route towards IX. We would have to be more certain of the weather before

we could think of establishing IX, but we could start preparing the way.

The Descent

When we crawled from our tents, intent on continuing with this plan, Gilkey complained of pain in one of his legs. He tried to stand with his full weight on it but collapsed in a faint. Houston looked at it and soon diagnosed thrombo-phlebitis. If Art was to have any chance of recovery we must get him down at once, there was nothing else for it. All our plans of going higher were abandoned and we set about preparing to carry Art down. We bundled him in sleeping bags, wrapped him in the torn tent and set off dragging him through the snow. We soon realised that we were in grave danger of starting an avalanche and we were forced to return and re-establish Camp VIII. Craig and Schoening set out to find an alternative route and reported a steep rock and ice ridge some hundred yards to the south of the snow slope. By this time the weather had again reverted to storm and further movement became impossible that day.

The days passed but still the storm showed no signs of relenting. Each evening the forecast was bad. On the 10th of August we realised just how serious the situation had become. We were suffering particularly from de-hydration, for we had not been able to melt much snow and we were suffering too from the effect of having spent ten very worrying days, cowering from the storm. I'm sure that our deterioration was due more to these factors than simply to altitude. Art was in a bad state. We must get him down as soon as possible. Both his legs were now affected and clots of blood had moved to his lungs.

We wrapped him again in a sleeping bag and tent and set out, in the raging storm, to get him down by the new route. This was a desperate attempt but we had no alternative. First we dragged him a short way through the deep snow and then we lowered him down the steep ridge and ice slope below. After many hours of exhausting work, feeling extremely tired and cold, we had descended little more than 400 ft. Somehow we would all have to spend the night on the small ledge at Camp VII for there was no chance now of reaching Camp VI as we had hoped.

We had just lowered Art over a steep rock cliff, when one of the climbers slipped. We were climbing, for the most part, in pairs and in some miraculous way our ropes crossed and became entangled. Five of us were pulled off the steep ice slope. Pete Schoening, who was at the time holding the rope on which we were lowering Art, had the only strong belay and somehow he held us all. Bell had fallen more than 200 ft. and the rest of us a little less. Again, by some miracle, none of us was badly hurt although Houston was unconscious for a time and Bell had badly frozen hands, through having lost his gloves in the fall.

Those of us who were able, made our way to Camp VII and managed to erect a tent on the tiny platform there. We then helped the casual-

ties to the shelter of this tent. During the rescue, Art had been left securely anchored on the snow slope by two ice axes.

While we were getting the others into shelter we were able to shout back and forth at Art, only about 200 ft. away over a small rise ; but we could not hear what he was saying, above the noise of the wind. He was very heavily drugged so that he would not know too much of the awful discomfort of the descent.

The rescue operation took about half an hour and then the only three of us who could still move went back to try and do something for Art. We realised that we could not move him but we hoped to be able to cut a small ledge in the slope, feed him and help to make him comfortable for the night. When we got back he had gone. At first we could not believe our eyes but slowly we realised that a small avalanche had come down and taken him away. The surface of the slope was soft and broken. There was no trace of Art or of the axes which had anchored him.

Once over the shock of having lost Art, we realised that his passing was a miraculous deliverance from a situation which might well have meant disaster for all of us. If we had continued the attempt to carry him down over the increasingly difficult climbing below, it is most improbable that we could have avoided further and perhaps even more serious accidents.

That night at Camp VII is the longest I can ever remember and certainly the worst I ever wish to spend. Four of us were squatting in one small mountain tent, on an even smaller ledge, and the other three of us in a tiny bivouac tent, with just a pole at one end. Charlie was delirious and would not keep still for a second except when he collapsed unconscious. He had cracked some ribs and his chest was paining him terribly and making it even harder for him to gasp the rarified air. George Bell had frozen hands and feet and all of us had some degree of frostbite. Pete Schoening was exhausted from the effort of having held us all for some considerable time while we sorted ourselves out after the fall.

I had some tea and sugar in the pocket of my parka and Bob Craig had a stove with him. We spent the night making tea and passing it round for all to sip. We were able to make pathetically little but it helped. We huddled in our tents, trying to warm our bare feet against the belly of the man next to us, and wondering what the morning would bring. The wind had ceased and the night was calm. This was almost the only kind thought that the mountain spared us until we were well below Base Camp many days later.

Next morning we took stock and found seven very tired and battered climbers. We were determined to keep our heads and climb carefully down through the line of camps we had taken so long to build on the ridge. How Charlie and George climbed that day I shall never know. Charlie was still very dazed from his concussion and George's feet were in a bad state. But there were no slips and late that afternoon we reached Camp VI.

It was four days before we eventually reached Camp II. The descent had been slow and painful but now at least we were safe.

I shall never forget our arrival at Camp II. The Hunzas were there to meet us and, as they heard us climbing down through the darkness of the evening, they came clambering up to meet us. We were literally carried the last few feet into camp and there a wonderful treat was awaiting us. The evening was calm and down here it was even warm enough to sit outside. We lay back on our sleeping bags among the rocks, our boots off, and our weary legs being massaged, while milk and rice and tea and then more tea were brought to us. The Hunzas did not hide their joy at seeing us safe again and many sincere tears were shed that evening. When we had eaten and drunk all our unaccustomed stomachs would take, we settled down to talk quietly among ourselves for the first time for many days. There was an almost tangible feeling of relief in the air. I told the Hunzas about Art, and they offered a most touching prayer in his memory and asked me to translate their feelings to the others. Although no sentimentalist, I found it hard to prevent my voice from breaking as I translated their thoughtful wishes of condolence to the Americans. No people from our so-called civilised countries could express themselves with such complete and unaffected sincerity as those six men from the remote Central Asian State of Hunza.

Base Camp Again

Next morning, after breakfast in bed, there was mail to open and newspapers, a month or so old, to be read.

Bob Bates and I set off ahead of the others, for our last climb down to Base Camp, to warn the Colonel of our arrival. We had lost one of our walkie-talkies in the fall and the battery of the other was flat, so we could not talk to him that day. The coolies from Satpora had already arrived and had been waiting for us at Base Camp for the last week.

We received a wonderful reception from the Colonel, who at once took us into his care. He set off up the glacier with the Satpora coolies to carry down George Bell and to help the others.

That evening we were all together again and were able to talk of our experiences during the last days. We were slowly able to fit together the details of the fall and of our night at Camp VII. Until then none of us was really sure what had happened.

Next morning we held a short memorial service for Art. The Colonel had built a splendid cairn on the spur of rock which juts out between the Savoia and K2 glaciers. This was in a magnificent position and could be seen from many miles away by anyone approaching the mountains. On this we left an aluminium box in which we had placed a few mountain flowers, a statement about Art's death and his favourite poem. His ice axe also lies there. After a short reading from the Bible we limped back to camp to prepare for our departure next day.

We improvised a stretcher, out of a camp bed reinforced with tent poles, and on this we carried George for the hundred and fifty miles down to Skardu. Although three of his toes were black he never lost his good cheer and spent long hours during the day talking to his gang of stretcher bearers, who couldn't understand a word of what he was saying. On the difficult parts of the track he was carried pick-a-back by one of the coolies. There was only one of them who was strong enough to carry George and this man became devoted to him and would carry him seemingly for miles when the need arose.

The party split at Askole, half going over the Skoro La and half of us taking George down by the same route we had used on our approach march. The last part of the journey we completed in luxury, floating down the river in a zakh.

Back at Skardu again we received a wonderful welcome from the new Political Agent. The time had come for the party to break up. Our faithful Hunzas left us, to continue their journey back to Gilgit. I would like to mention them all by name, for I hope we shall hear more of them on future expeditions. They were Khairul Hayat, Chulam Mohd and Hidayat Khan, all from Altit; Mohd Ali from Hindi and Haji Beg from Aliabad. The last, Walayat Shah, had been a personal servant to Colonel Ata Ullah for many years but welcomed the opportunity of returning to the hills and proved a first-rate porter.

Much as we would have liked to linger in Skardu, we had to get home as soon as we could. It was important to get George to a hospital quickly and we had our jobs to return to. We were very sad as the plane took off from Skardu airfield for the flight which would take us out past Nanga Parbat and then down to the plains and home. We had our last glimpse of K2, a vast pyramid standing high above the surrounding peaks.

Some day soon it will be climbed We had failed in our attempt but we had had our full share of bad luck. Perhaps we should have tried earlier, perhaps oxygen is as necessary on K2 as it has proved to be on Everest. I think not. These questions will be answered before long.

We could only be thankful that most of us were now safe and that we were fit to try again perhaps some other year. After all, we had lived for more than a month above 20,500 ft. and ten days of that month we had been trapped at over 25,000 ft. by the worst of storms. We were lucky to be alive at all.

The tremendous experience through which we had passed had only strengthened the already strong bond of friendship between us. Had we not been such a closely knit team it is doubtful whether we could have survived.

(By arrangement with the Himalayan Club.)