

MASHERBRUM, 1957

By J. WALMSLEY

ON June 7 the Manchester Himalayan Expedition¹ left the small town of Skardu, Baltistan, with 25 ponies, 65 coolies and 6 high-altitude porters, and began the 112-mile trek to the mountain, Masherbrum (25,660 ft.). On June 11 at the village of Doghani we had to exchange our ponies for more coolies since the terrain ahead was no longer suitable for ponies. Because of late snowfalls the River Shyok had risen, covering the normal track. The route now lay over steep cliffs. We left Doghani with 125 coolies. The way continued up the Hushe Valley, then along the Masherbrum glacier and to the foot of the Sérac glacier on the mountain. On the last day's march the coolies went on strike three times but we managed to move them on. Despite this trouble the coolies behaved magnificently under difficult conditions.

It was now June 15 and we had pitched Base Camp at 13,000 ft. at the head of the Masherbrum glacier. The situation was within the precincts of the great southern walls of Masherbrum, commanding the scene with their fluted ice gulleys and steep rock ridges. Hundreds of tons of ice, snow and rock poured daily on to the glacier. From Base Camp we could see the lower parts of the proposed route, the tangled ice-falls of the Sérac glacier, and above the long, steep slopes of the Dome.

On June 16, Don, Dick and Mahkmal made a route up the left-hand side of the first ice-fall and on to the shelf above. They then explored the second ice-fall before returning. Meanwhile the rest of the expedition sorted out stores, dug storage space, made up high-altitude (h.a.) packs, etc.

The following day, Bob and Ted advanced the reconnaissance and made a route up the right-hand side of the second ice-fall and on to the plateau above. This way climbed steeply alongside ice-walls, amongst séracs and bent into the upper reaches of a large broken couloir, Scaly Alley, where for about 200 yards it threaded a passage amongst fallen ice lumps and stones from the cliffs above. With heavy loads, Don, Dick and six h.a. porters followed Bob and Ted along the established route through the two ice-falls, dumped their loads at a prospective

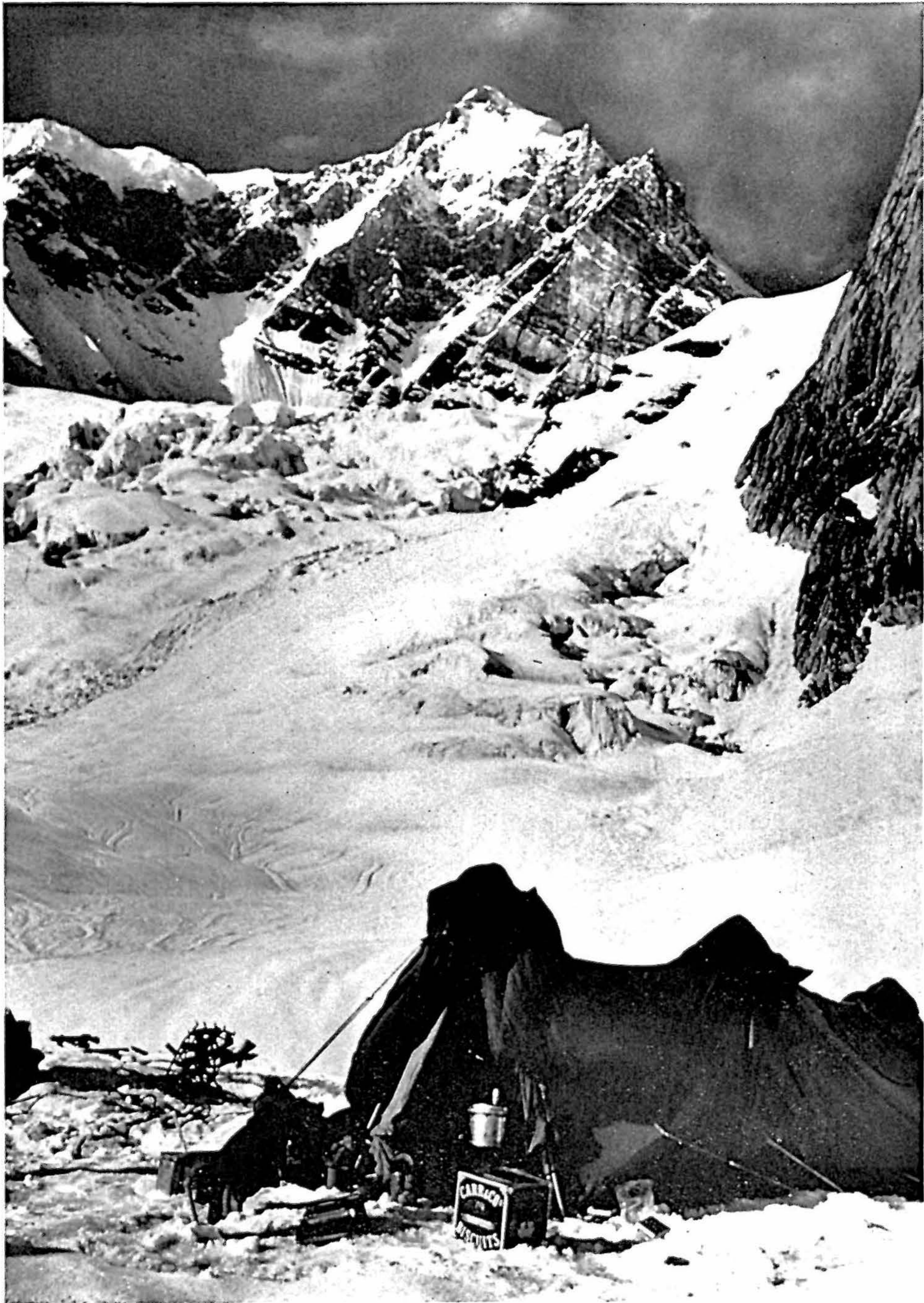
¹ The party consisted of: Joseph Walmsley (Leader), Robert O. Downes (Deputy Leader), Geoffrey Smith, Edward William Dance, Richard Dodgson Sykes, Donald Whillans, Capt. S. T. H. Rizvi (Liaison Officer), Ghulam Rasul (Sirdar), Hussein, Rahim Khan, Mahkmal, Abdul Rahim, Ismail.

Camp I site on the plateau, and returned to Base Camp. After a rest Bob and Ted continued with a reconnaissance of the third ice-fall. They crossed a stream of avalanche debris and ascended above half-way amongst the ice-cliffs before turning back. As if in the Alps, they glissaded back down the steep slopes and on to Base Camp over the lower two ice-falls. They felt muzzy and sick, and later at Base Camp decided it must be the result of heat exhaustion and not yet being acclimatized, combined with glissading at approximately 16,000 ft.

Meanwhile Geoff and I had chopped a route by the side of Scaly Alley. It was steep in parts and made a more direct way up the first ice-fall. But it was difficult and dangerous for load carrying or continuous use. It could be made safe and relatively easy with variations of track, ladders and fixed ropes, but by the time we had broken out on to the shelf below the second ice-fall we had gained nothing over the original route which came round comparatively easily from the left-hand side.

Twelve man loads, with our liaison officer Captain Rizvi in attendance for his first real experience of mountaineering, went up to Camp I site on June 18. It was another hot day and we were very grateful to reach camp and dump our loads. The snow was extremely soft. Thankfully we returned to the comforts of Base, leaving Geoff, Don and four h.a. porters in possession of Camp I. It was their task to advance the route up the third ice-fall on the following day. Back at Base we rested; the sun blazed down outside the Stormhaven tent. Suddenly, Bob, who was near the tent entrance, sprang up shouting 'Floods!' and dashed away. I was slow to grasp the situation and scantily clad with but a hastily donned duvet jacket and plimsolls followed the others to behold the approaching waters of a growing stream, which threatened to flood the camp! This was dangerous. I hurriedly joined the others through the deep soft snow and helped to dam the water and deepen the natural channel which led away from the camp. With two small shovels, plates and bowls we eventually mastered the situation. It had been a close shave; the expedition might have been wrecked. We had to find a higher camp site. So from then until dusk we worked like slaves moving about three tons weight of stores, to a higher stretch of snow.

On June 19 Don, Geoff and the four h.a. porters moved loads up the third ice-fall and established Camp II at 17,200 ft., whilst the rest of the expedition ferried loads up to Camp I. Camp II was situated at the head of the Sérac glacier on the lip of the Sérac basin, a small plateau hemmed in on three sides by cliffs. It was a potential danger spot, threatened by the ice-cliffs connecting the Dome with Sérac peak. Successive avalanches had gouged a broad chute down the flanks of Sérac peak to form a swollen fan of debris, hundreds of feet deep, over



Photo, J. Walmsley]

CAMP I WITH THE 3RD ICEFALL AND SERAC PEAK BEHIND.

the whole of the west end of the basin. It was here that the New Zealand expedition had lost a considerable amount of stores to an immense avalanche which had broken away from the ice-cliffs. We were often wary about the site in the early stages, and there were many avalanches but none big enough to reach our Camp II.

When I went up to Camp I with Ted and Captain Rizvi, the others, Bob, Dick, Geoff, Don and two h.a. porters were all at Camp II and possibly beyond. It was to be my very first night in a small tent, pitched on ice and snow at a high altitude. Rather foolishly I carried a 60 lb. load which made my shoulders raw. It was a hot exhausting day and all I could think about was the camp ahead and rest on an air mattress. As soon as possible after issuing camp rations and lighting the primus stoves for the porters I crawled into my tent. In a short time I felt the overpowering heat. With a temperature of 80-90° F. it was just like an oven inside the tent. I was tired, my nose was stuffy and cracked, my eyes sore and inflamed. Altogether, most uncomfortable. Then at last tea, precious sweet tea, followed Abdul's beaming face through the tent's sleeve entrance. By contrast, the night was bitterly cold. I sealed the tent hopefully but I was always conscious of cold feet, lack of air and a feeling of claustrophobia. Wearing all my clothes—we had no double sleeping bags—I was ever wanting to snuggle deeper into the sleeping bag and yet wanting to get out and feel free of restricted breathing and movement. Somehow, I got over the discomforts of high camp life but none of us was ever free from cold feet and few slept without sleeping tablets.

From Camp II, Don, Geoff and Ghulam Rasul, the sirdar of our h.a. porters, had made a route to within a few hundred feet of the top of the Dome. It had been exhausting work. They had left camp at about 4 a.m. in 40° of frost. At 7 a.m. the sun had swept away the shadows and covered the slopes with strong sunlight. They were soon covered in sweat. The steep snow became very soft and often they were climbing in it up to the thighs. Progress was a laborious panting business. When possible they would count twenty upward steps and then rest for five minutes. Off they would go again but after a few steps the snow suddenly collapses—one lurched, gained balance and stood gasping with bowed head. A struggle over the now broken ground with a long step and the snow crumbled down again! This was heartbreaking. They were only conscious of heavy breathing, leaden limbs and the glaring sun. And so they continued until they had just about had enough, then turned round and went down to Camp II. When I arrived at Camp II on June 21 Don, Geoff and Ghulam were taking a well-earned rest from their efforts of the previous day. They looked drawn and tired and were recovering from heat exhaustion and dehydration.



Sketch by R. O. Downes]

MASHERBRUM; SOUTH-EAST FACE AND SERAC GLACIER, SHOWING ROUTE.

Dick and Bob had decided to benefit from Geoff and Don's experience and had left Camp II in starlight at 1.30 a.m., in order to avoid the hot sun. Three hours later they had climbed to within 800 ft. of the top of the Dome. At this point they had to turn back because Dick was ill. At the camp he slept awhile to recover. He looked bad, especially with the dry flaking skin on his unshaven face. I proposed to stay overnight with Bob and Dick and help the advance party. I tried to fix a shade for Dick from the sun. It was terribly hot inside the tent. The Sérac basin was a veritable heat bowl. Dick by now showed marked signs of dysentery and fever. He decided very wisely that Base would be the best place to recover. However he didn't want to hamper the party and preferred to descend to Base alone. We persuaded him to change his mind; and I escorted him down to Camp I. He climbed well enough and we had got over the more awkward parts of the ice-fall when he suddenly disappeared up to his waist in a crevasse. One leg was totally imprisoned and the harder he struggled the more embedded it became. I tried to pull him free but even our combined efforts were not sufficient. Eventually I dug down by his leg with my hands and broke his boot free from the packed snow. Only then could we pull clear. When we arrived at Camp I we were met by Captain Rizvi, who volunteered to go down with Dick to Base.

After Dick and Rizvi had left for Base, I rested at Camp I. It was too hot inside the tent so I lay outside with a towel over my face against the glaring sun. Some clouds came overhead and very soon it turned chilly. Then it was time to set about the day's main meal—dehydrated meat and vegetables—I had had nothing to eat since breakfast. Later after struggling out of my sleeping bag to blow up the leaking air mattress for the second time, I had one of my best nights. I dreamt of home instead of facing the reality of discomfort and thinking of expedition affairs. Before I finally settled to sleep, Ted arrived in the dark with Ismail on a late evening ferry from Base.

The following morning Hussein was startled from his slumbers by the sound of the alarm clock. I re-assured him as to the source of noise. We had the 'standard' breakfast of tea, oatmeal cakes and chocolate, then set out on a load ferry with four h.a. porters to Camp II. The journey with the fresh soft snow was heavier than the previous day. On the steep parts every step required a short rest. I would sometimes change rhythm and style of movement to rest every other step. Camp II had seemed farther away than usual. Ghulam was about the camp and he gestured, 'Sahib cough' towards one of the tents. Bob had a racking cough and appeared quite ill. Due to his condition he had not been out with Geoff, Don and Ghulam on the day's lift to a prospective Camp III site—Don and Geoff looked very tired, and Don's lips were dry, blistered and cracked. Bob's cough sounded more

troublesome than an h.a. cough which most of us had in varying degrees. There was no choice—Bob must go down to Base. On the way down the third ice-fall we rested frequently—Bob had little control over his movements and his cough was most disturbing. At Camp I he could move no further. So, I left Bob with Ted and continued down to Base for more assistance and medical supplies.

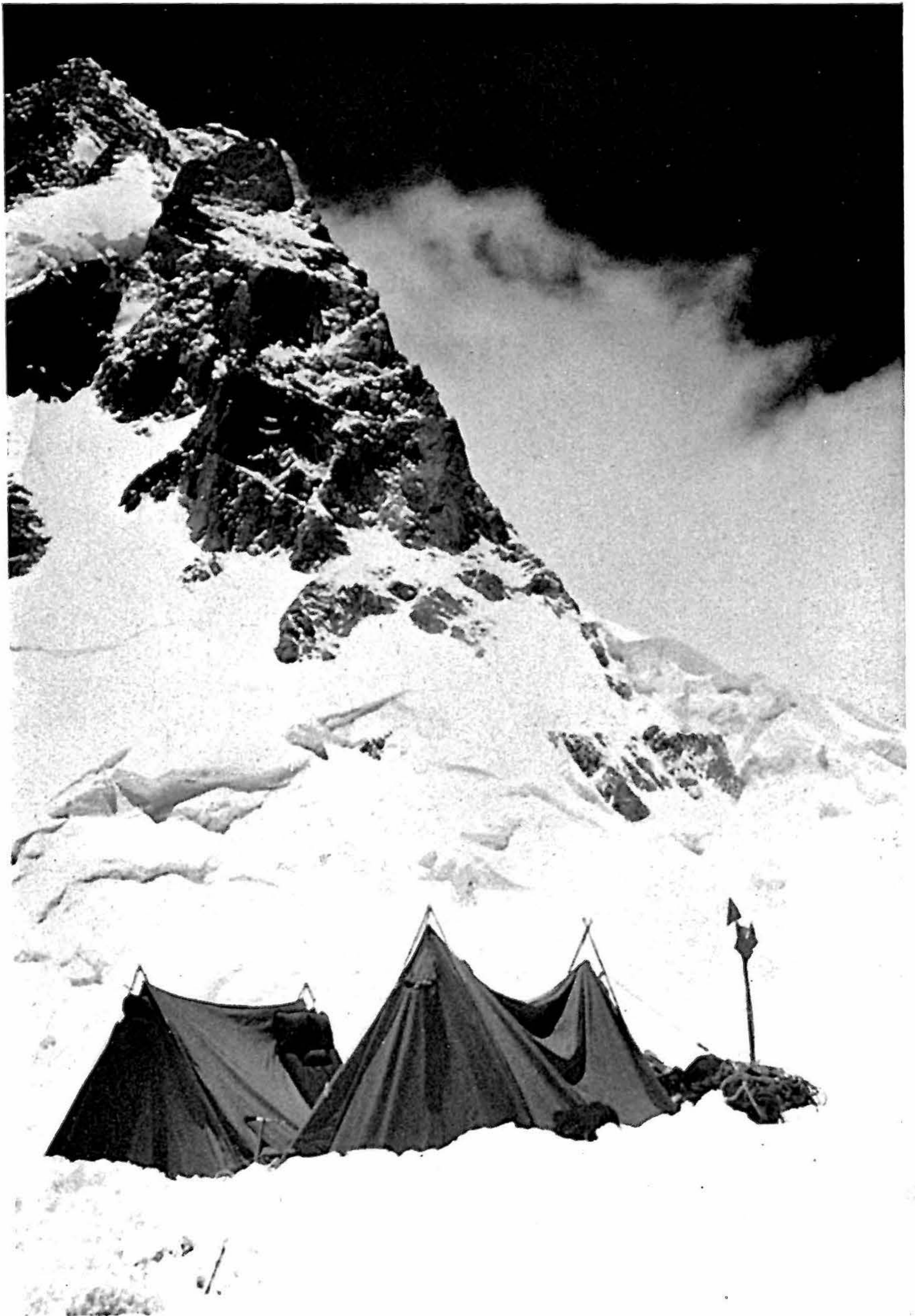
The way over the upper parts of Scaly Alley was hardly recognisable beneath the mass of avalanche debris, so we hurried down this section. And the shelf between the ice-falls had changed considerably under the influence of the sun. Many new crevasses, broken ice-cliffs and ice instead of snow slopes had appeared. At Base we found Dick, who was in better health, sorting out the medical supplies.

We rose at 4.30 a.m. the following day and after a brief breakfast left Base. It was snowing as we wended our way through the ice-falls but not enough to prevent movement. At Camp I, Bob had had a comfortable night but was uncertain of his strength. Dick made him more comfortable and gave him aureomycin and injections of penicillin. We made a rope stretcher and prepared for the journey down but the weather turned very bad and visibility sunk to zero. We eventually left at mid-day in a light snowfall with Bob well-fastened on the stretcher. It was awkward and difficult moving over the ice-falls. The bearers were often falling head over heels in the soft uncertain snow. Crampons were a menace in these circumstances. Bob was in really fine spirit regardless of his position. He gave encouragement to our efforts as we pulled with concerted effort up the slopes or as we manœuvred him over the open crevasses. It was a long heavy drag down to Base: and we were supported admirably by Abdul, Ismail and Mahkmal.

We spent all the next day at Base in anticipation of some sign of recovery on Bob's part. There was little or no improvement, so the following day, June 24, he was carried down to the jungle at 10,000 ft. by Hushe coolies in the company of Rizvi and Dick. If his condition did not improve he would be taken down to the dispensary at Khapalu.

In the meantime Geoff, Don and Ghulam without knowledge of the activity below had established Camp III on top of the Dome at 21,000 ft. on June 23. This was to be advanced base camp and from here the ascent would enter a second more definite stage. Now they would see beyond the enclosing walls of the Sérac glacier. There was the Hushe valley and beyond, nearly 40 miles away or more, the village of Khapalu. In this direction they would see the mountain Nun Kun, and countless other peaks receding into the blue of the horizon.

From June 23 to July 1 there was little activity beyond the Dome because of bad weather. But there was still ferrying of stores from Base Camp to Camps I, II and III. Above Camp III there was little



Photo, R. O. Downes]

CAMP III WITH THE SOUTH-EAST RIDGE AND THE TWIN SUMMITS ABOVE.

or no visibility and the slopes lacked the protection given by the lower walls of the mountain. Even with just low cloud and light snowfalls it was most uncomfortable to be away from camp in a completely white world without focusing point. One could be utterly lost except for the freshly made steps behind.

In spite of these conditions, some exploration took place towards a site for Camp IV. On July 2, the first fine day, Camp IV was staked out at 22,000 ft. on the mouth of the basin beneath the South-east face. The North summit, 25,660 ft., was within reach at last. There were the final difficulties. Beneath the twin summits was the whole of the South-east face, covered with ice-cliffs, séracs and crevasses—the lower slopes were littered with avalanche debris. From the North summit swept the exposed East ridge used by the British expedition in 1938. Not so far away in the lower slopes was the highest point reached by the New Zealand expedition in 1955. It was our intention to climb to the centre of the face and up to the couloir between the twin summits.

On July 3 Don, Geoff, Ted and Ghulam were operating between Camps II and IV. I returned to Camp II from a lift to Camp III and was delighted to see Dick coming to meet me with a mug of steaming soup. He was much better now and had come straight up from Base that day, which was a sure sign of fitness. He said that Bob was much better and that he had left him and Rizvi in the jungle where they had pitched camp. There were now Dick, five h.a. porters, and myself at Camp II.

At 3.0 a.m. the next day I nudged Dick awake and received a drowsy muttered response. His voice came from drugged depths due to taking two, instead of one, seconal sleeping tablets last night. About 15 minutes later I nudged him again and got the same response. Suddenly Dick struggled to life. He must leave camp as early as possible otherwise the whole working day would be spent in the sweltering heat and deep soft snow. He shouted to Ismail, who for obvious reasons turned a deaf ear. After striking interminably on a rapidly wearing match-box and wasting many matches Dick got the stove alight. He collected snow and ice to melt for a brew. More shouting for Ismail and this time an almost indistinct reply which could have been a snore or the wind. 'The blighter doesn't want to hear,' said Dick and stuck a cold lump of margarine followed by marmalade on a 'Life boat' biscuit. Slowly events progressed. Ismail duly appeared and later complained that the load was too heavy. There was a load check and selected items were discarded. Dick had trouble fixing his crampons in the cold, with hands like lumps of raw meat. Every strap fastening meant several concerted efforts with the pain of bitter cold and much warming of hands. At long last, about 5.0 a.m., Dick and Ismail set off with loads to Camp III.

Later, at 7.0 a.m., I went down to Base with the four porters. It was a glorious day. There were now clouds shielding the sun and helping the cliff shadows to keep the snow reasonably hard and crisp. We were only carrying personal gear. I felt light of heart and full of strength climbing down in such good snow conditions. The snow walls, séracs, crevasses and avalanche debris were quickly negotiated and soon we had reached Camp I. Here we had to re-erect the unoccupied tent which had collapsed due to melting snow. We went down to Base. The suggestion of using Scaly Alley came from Hussein. It was yet early for the snow and rock falls from the cliffs above the Alley so we welcomed the change of route. *En route* we found huge broken stones, large shattered snow and ice blocks, crevasses, bergschrunds, etc. It was a holocaust of snow, ice and rock. There were the difficulties of descending steeply, having to negotiate wide broken crevasses, cutting steps and having to jump or climb over ice and rock debris. Finally, before the Alley swept out onto the Masherbrum glacier, we stretched across on to the opposite narrow lip of a crevasse, trod lightly along its edge and then descended on to easier ground. It was a jolly good way when in reasonable condition.

Base Camp was deserted. The Stormhaven tent with sagging canvas looked forlorn; the snows had melted down about two feet leaving a shrinking pillar of ice as a base for the wilting tent.

While we sorted out supplies for the following day's lift, Hussein suddenly cried out, 'Bob, sahib!' and there approaching camp from the direction of Hushe were the familiar figures of Bob and Rizvi. The h.a. porters hugged and almost kissed Bob in their delight. He looked very fit and showed no signs of his previous illness. We decided that Bob and Rizvi would stay at Base for a few days and we would meet again at Camp III or IV.

Whilst I moved down to Base with the porters, Dick and Ismail had joined the others, who were busy stocking Camp IV. On July 5, Don and Geoff, with Ghulam and Ismail, moved up and occupied Camp IV. Ghulam and Ismail returned to Camp III and Don and Geoff, after a meal of biscuits and a brew of tea, pressed on and reconnoitred the way to a prospective Camp V. It was a hot day and the snow was very soft as they plodded their way through the avalanche debris on the lower slopes of the South-east face. The whole area and the slopes ahead were littered with avalanche debris. When they had surveyed a considerable area and were feeling the strain of the continued effort they returned to Camp IV, where they spent a restless night within sound of noisy avalanches and a strong wind.

The next day Don and Geoff carried food boxes, stoves, fuel and a tent to a possible camp site at the foot of a gangway running part way across the face from the East ridge. After a hard slog they reached the site

and found it unsuitable. They dumped their loads and left them to be picked up at a later date. Don then moved along the side of the East ridge to find a camp site and Geoff returned to Camp IV to prepare a meal.

The following day, July 7, Don and Geoff with personal gear, and Ted and Dick with heavy loads of food, stoves, fuel, tent and rope, set off at 7.0 a.m. to the site of Camp V, on the side of the East ridge. Don and Geoff arrived at the camp site about mid-day but had to await the stores until 4.0 p.m., when Ted and Dick appeared on the scene. They were very tired. It had been a long hot day with the snow in its usual soft condition. By now the sun had swung off this side of the mountain and they had to return to Camp IV in the rapidly freezing cold, leaving Don and Geoff at Camp V.

Don and Geoff set out to make a route to a site for Camp VI on July 8. They picked up the loads which were left two days previously at the end of the gangway and tried breaking trail. It was too much with the heavy loads and eventually they had to dump them and climb on, making trail to a possible site for Camp VI beneath a sérac. Having reached the possible site and finding it favourable they returned to Camp V. On the return a few lumps from an avalanche passed uncomfortably near to them. The next day they found that fresh snow had filled in the trail which had to be re-broken. The weather was now windy and full of mist and made the ascent uncomfortable. They found the loads and carried them off to the prospective site of Camp VI at 24,000 ft. The tent was pitched on a filled-in crevasse beneath the overhanging sérac. It was a tremendous overhang some 30 ft. wide at its broadest point and about 20 yards long. The situation was virtually a deep pocket in the mountain-side; and despite the sounds of shifting, creaking snow, which were disturbing at first, the camp was quite safe and well protected.

In the meantime Bob and Rizvi had joined me at Camp III. Bob had ascended alone from Camp II in the amazing time of $4\frac{1}{4}$ hours. This showed a high degree of fitness and was indeed a time which was never equalled or improved upon. Then we moved on to Camp IV and found Ted and Dick recovering from their ferry. There were now six of us at Camp IV, including Hussein, whom Bob and I wanted to take to the summit.

After two days of bad weather which penned Don and Geoff in at Camp VI, the first summit assault set out at dawn on July 11. It started as a reconnaissance and with the good conditions developed into an attack. Don was well ahead of Geoff and got into the couloir between the twin summits. He first found himself on steep slab rock covered by a layer of uncertain soft snow. Moving over to the right he was soon 'swimming' in chest-deep powder snow at a steep angle. By

using his right arm and leg on the rock wall of the couloir he managed to propel himself upwards. It was difficult and dangerous. Laboriously he made headway until he slipped down the steep slopes. Fortunately, he managed to brake himself finally with his ice-axe on the snow-covered slabs. By this time Geoff was nearby—together they might be able to climb the couloir despite its dangerous condition. But the hour was late, so they descended to the shelter of a sérac at 24,800 ft., where they bivouacked with thoughts of an early morning attack on the couloir in good snow conditions.

On a small shelf, beneath a low overhanging arch of ice, they sat crouched underneath a plastic bag with a primus stove alight between them. They had formed an insulation from the ice-floor with ropes and rucksacks. The sun went out of sight and with the deepening shade came the creeping icy cold. They dreamed of their sleeping bags and the tent at Camp VI, and of their companions in relative comfort below. They talked of another fine day tomorrow and a very early start in firmer snow. There appeared nothing between them and the summit. The small stove battled on, throwing out heat in this small pocket on the steep ice-slopes. They could feel heat towards the stove but elsewhere was freezing. Then the stove spluttered for several minutes and finally burnt out. There was no more paraffin. They wasted then nearly a whole box of safety matches trying to light a candle until there was no striking surface left on the match-box. So they struggled through the weary hours, with just the warmth of their clothing. They dozed with gloved hands nestled beneath armpits and occasional stamping and rubbing of feet. In the early morning before dawn they peered out from their shelter and thought of the summit. But the stars had vanished in the now heavy dark sky. There was a high wind with large heavy snowflakes falling outside. Several hours later there was no change in the weather, so reluctantly they packed their gear and returned down the slopes to Camp VI.

Whilst Don and Geoff moved back to Camp VI, Dick and Ted were climbing up in support of the summit attack. They had left camp at about 7.0 a.m. In the bad weather and soft deep snow their pace was a crawl. From below at Camp IV Bob and I through the monocular could watch their movements through the occasional breaks in the cloud. They were moving up very slowly amongst the ice-cliffs and over the avalanche debris. Bob had a very good idea of Camp VI location and felt certain that their direction was wrong. Later there were shouts from the cloud-covered face which persisted until about 6.0 p.m. Bob and I were anxious for their safety. Don and Geoff heard the shouts too and went to the entrance of Camp VI site and called. At last, emerging from the white world of falling snow, appeared Ted and Dick on the steep slopes below. They were very exhausted; and Ted was quite ill.

The weather worsened and the four climbers were penned in the two-man tent for the next three days. It was very uncomfortable in the overcramped quarters. There was no room to lie down, so they invariably sat crouched or lay curled up as best possible. By the end of the first day most things were quite damp from the moisture of breathing and cooking, and at night they iced up. By the third day, in addition to the growing discomfort, there was little or no variety of provisions—all the best foods had been eaten and they were left with such unpalatable items as dried egg, dried cabbage, 'Lifeboat' biscuits, etc. Ted was very sick indeed and would have to go down as soon as possible. At the first sign of a break in the weather, on July 16, they all left Camp VI without further thought for the summit. Ted had to be assisted down the slopes to Camp IV. And Don whilst glissading on the descent fell over an ice-wall and sprained his ankle. At Camp IV there was a shortage of accommodation so Dick and Geoff had to continue down to Camp III.

On July 17, Bob, Hussein and I, with Abdul and Ismail, went up to Camp V. Here, after dumping their loads, Abdul and Ismail, wished us good luck and returned to Camp IV. The following day we had to break trail from Camp V. The track marks had either been filled in by snow or swept away by avalanches. Along the gangway we crossed an ice-slope where a 'carpet' snow avalanche had broken away. Bob and I climbed across in crampons but Hussein wouldn't follow until we had cut steps and roped him up. The best ways were where avalanches had broken away, since on these places the slope was reasonably firm. But elsewhere it was almost impossible to make any upward progress, since each climbing step would collapse deep in the snow. The sun blazed down on our activity. We would often rest in the latter stages of the route for 15 to 20 minutes. Rather foolishly we had drunk little at Camp V before leaving at 6.0 a.m., so we suffered badly with dehydration and heat exhaustion. We were literally exhausted on arrival at Camp VI at 2.0 p.m.—the last 50 yards had taken us exactly 12 minutes!

We all recovered fairly quickly and the rest of the day was spent drinking, eating, taking photos and entering the day's log. Bob was in quite good spirits until late evening when he developed an aggravating cough. Rowntrees' pastilles and Tyrozet throat tablets relieved his throat slightly but the persistent phlegm and difficulty of breathing made me fear the worst. I gave him liquids and aureomycin, and later thought of increased air pressure and pumped air into his mouth with a Lilo air inflator. This gave him some relief and eventually at 2.0 a.m. he was able to sleep. He appeared comfortable and I thought the danger was passed. At 4.0 a.m. Bob awoke and said that he felt much better. There was no sign of coughing or spitting now. He proposed that we stayed in camp that day and put off our summit assault until

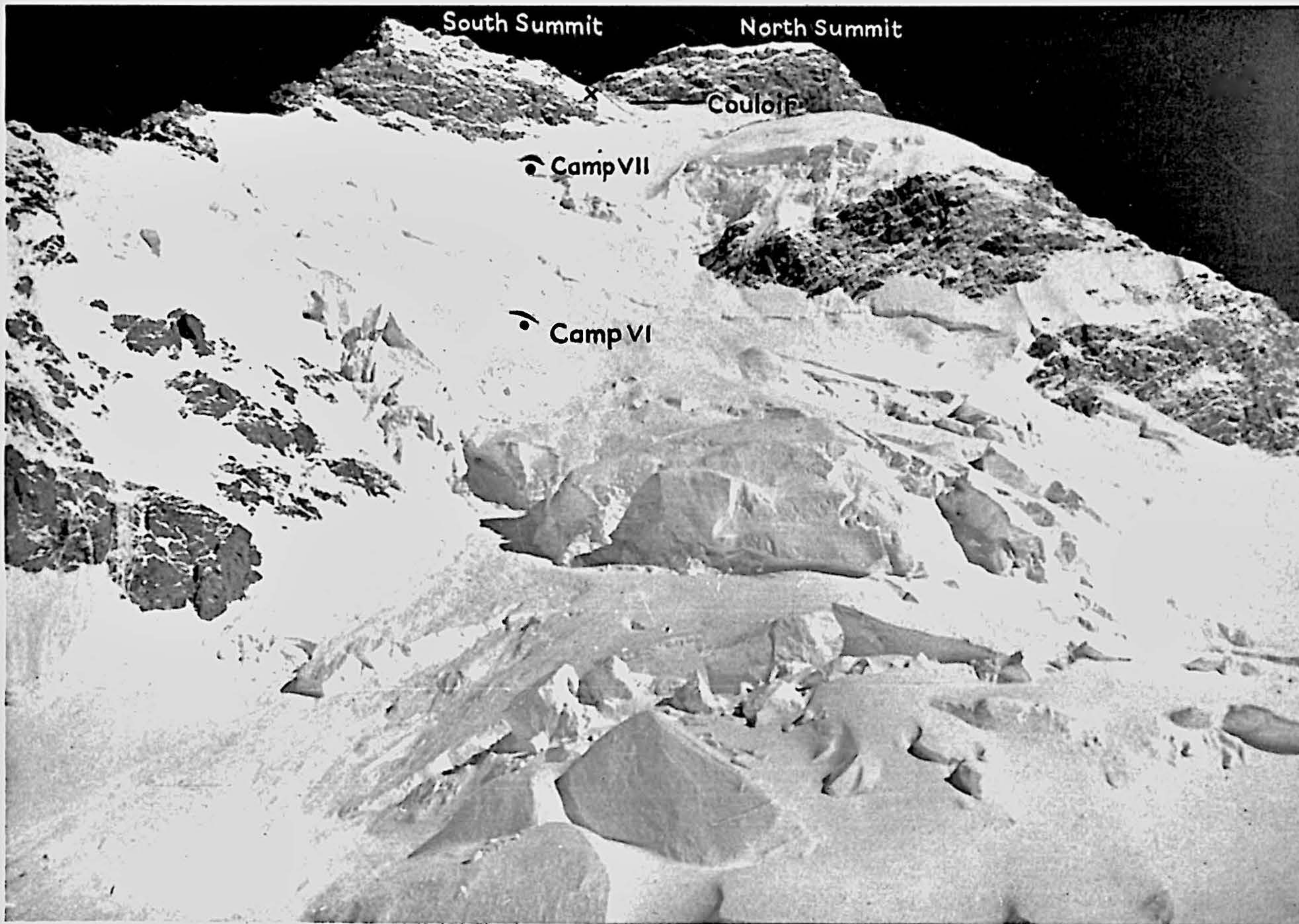
the following day. I set about making breakfast and whilst preparing a warm drink Bob became delirious. Soon his bad cough returned and he again had great difficulty with breathing. I held him up and gave him further treatment but his strength was slowly leaving him. His breathing was dying away; then he sagged in my arms. I could not believe that he was dead.

Because of storms Hussein and I were penned in at Camp VI that day and the next five days. For the first few hours after Bob's death Hussein appeared well, then he started coughing and moaning. He chanted and groaned and often asked to get away despite the bad weather. I explained repeatedly in simple English, simple Urdu and simple sign language that it would be suicide to leave the camp in such bad weather. But this left little or no impression. I was at first anxious since his cough sounded treacherous but later it improved and showed itself as a troublesome h.a. cough. That night and the following nights I gave Hussein sleeping tablets. Without them real sleep was impossible and Hussein needed rest. Each day he would repeatedly ask that we go down. Each time I would vary the version of why we should not move from the camp. He would not eat or drink anything but occasionally scraped up some spoonfuls of snow and ate this in preference to the soup and tea which I would offer to him.

At last on July 24 the weather cleared sufficiently for movement down to Camp V, where hurriedly we had to shelter from a howling gale which threatened the camp's existence. We had to brace ourselves along both sides of the tent against the piling snow outside. Several hours later there was a relatively fine spell and we rapidly moved down to Camp IV, where I broke the sad news to Geoff and Dick.

That evening was comparative luxury, though we were crowded in the two-man tent. The concave tent floor, of some 10 in. depth, caused by many days of living on snow, was no longer uncomfortable and inconvenient. And when Geoff knocked the melted snow over the floor and burnt his duvet jacket against the candle flame it brought me back very quickly into the routine of camp life with my friends again.

From Camp IV, on July 25, the four of us made our way down towards Base. Lower down, on the Sérac glacier, it was almost impossible to recognise any characteristic features of the route. Most of the snows had melted away leaving black serried shelves of breaking ice. It was especially difficult down Scaly Alley. As we descended the ice-grooves a huge stone block slid down the Alley towards us and caught Dick a glancing blow on the arm as he stepped to one side. On a most awkward section of Scaly Alley, where we had to descend a small ice- and rock-wall and stride down on to the opposite narrow lip of a bergschrund, we were caught in the gathering darkness. Hurriedly we retraced our steps for a short distance up the steep slopes, then branched



Photo, J. Walmsley]

SOUTH-EAST FACE SHOWING TWIN SUMMITS.

out on to the top of a large broken ice-pile. By starlight and torch lights we saw just enough room for the two-man tent which we had brought with us from Camp I. We slept well enough that night but early the following morning we very quickly packed the tent and gear and moved off down to Base. At Base Camp we broke the news of Bob's death to the rest of the expedition.

At Base Camp we made plans for bringing down Bob's body from Camp VI. It was also decided that, given time and good weather, we should thereafter make another attempt for the summit. Ted and Rizvi went down to the village of Muchilu for the remainder of our stores which had been left there for possible further exploration. Don and Dick stayed behind at Base with three porters in order to maintain camp. Ghulam, who had been sick for the last week or more, with Abdul and Ismail went down to the jungle with Geoff and me. We intended to cut trees for a sledge and stakes.

We had been living over six weeks on the mountain, so the warm green earth with overhanging trees and the small stream near by made our camp in the jungle a haven of rest. There were many visitors from the near-by village of Hushe. They would bring chickens, eggs and apricots for our meals since we had brought no provisions except tea, sugar and dried milk. Ghulam, was about camp watching the activity of felling and trimming the trees. He was still very ill and must go down to the dispensary at Khapalu and receive treatment. Before returning to Base with the completed sledge and stakes, Jabir, the expedition mail runner, appeared with mail from Khapalu. He was a very welcome sight, especially since there had been no mail for the last three weeks due to bad flying conditions between Skardu and Rawalpindi.

Back at Base Camp there were two days of heavy snowfalls which prevented any movement to the higher camps. Ted arrived on the scene completely wet through after a forced march with the supplies from Muchilu.

On August 2, Geoff, Don, Dick and I, with five h.a. porters, moved out of Base Camp. (Ted was not feeling very well so he had to stay behind.) We were heavily laden with stores to supplement living at the various camps. In addition we had the sledge, stakes and 1,000 ft. of spare rope. It was by then our seventh week on the mountain—seven weeks of activity with little or no respite, so we felt rather tired and our loads were very heavy.

The fine sunny days were both a blessing and a curse. They allowed movement but were very hot and exhausting. Each morning we promised ourselves a much earlier start to avoid the hot sun and soft snow, but the freezing cold before sun-up, as much as 20–30° C. below zero, apart from tired limbs and the body's natural reluctance, kept us in our sleeping bags until the very last minute.

The major and most difficult part of our task was to get Bob's body down the steep slopes and ice-cliffs between Camps VI and V. We selected Rahim Khan and Abdul Rahim as being the most suitable of our porters to help on this difficult section. At Camp III both tents were half buried in snow, so we had to spend several exhausting hours digging the snow away. Here, too, Abdul went sick with a high temperature so we had to leave him and replace him with Ismail for the special duty. Hussein wanted to back out at this stage on health grounds, but we managed to coerce him to lift a light load as far as Camp IV with Mahkmal. At Camp IV Hussein and Mahkmal dumped their loads and went back to Camp III, with instructions to return in two days' time. The following day Ismail groaned and moaned and showed signs of being sick with a high temperature. Also, Dick's arm, which had previously shown signs of infection was now badly swollen. Don slashed open Dick's arm to relieve the swelling. Poor Dick must have lost about a pint of bad blood in the operation.

In view of the circumstances we considered it best to leave Ismail at Camp IV and send Dick to Base for treatment. Dick, however, despite his disablement generously carried a load to Camp V before returning to Base. It was therefore a reluctant and unhappy Rahim who then accompanied the three sahibs. He was now without his fellow countrymen, he was climbing into the upper regions of mist, increased cold and superstition, to fetch down the body of a man who had died up there. At Camp V all we could see of the tent was the top four inches of the poles. The tent was completely buried in the snow. Fortunately we had another two-man tent with us so the four of us squeezed into this for the night. We spent all the next day digging out the buried tent. It was exhausting work at 23,000 ft.

It wasn't until August 9, seven days out from Base that we reached Camp VI. As we had expected, the camp was half buried in snow and had to be dug out. We spent several laborious hours digging before we were able to settle in and eat and drink and make preparations for the morrow.

The following day gave very poor visibility, but the route was sufficiently well known to allow a descent. We tied Bob's body with an air mattress to a rope stretcher (the sledge had been left near to Camp V); a stake was driven into the snow at the entrance of Camp VI. Then 300 feet of rope was led diagonally from the stake down the steep slope, another stake was driven into the snow at the loose rope end and the tension line made tight and secure. A rope leading from the front and a rope from the rear of the stretcher completed the arrangement. With the rope stretcher clipped on to the tension line with karabiner clips we swung slowly but surely in a diagonal line down the South-east face. Rahim by now had got over a good part of his mental and spiritual

sickness and was helping nobly with all the strength of his strong body. Each section of the descent had its trials and tribulations. In many places the stretcher had to be man-handled for distances up to 20 or 30 yards. The weather deteriorated into a snowstorm, and an avalanche poured across the way in front leaving soft, deep snow. Instead of traversing the steep ice-slopes of the gangway between the ice-cliffs we dropped straight down over the cliffs. Rahim wouldn't come this way, so whilst Geoff escorted him down to Camp V, Don and I were left amongst the ice-cliffs. There were many anxious moments when we doubted our safety as we moved first down the steep ice-chute, then on to a filled-in crevasse amongst séracs, round the séracs, down steeply . . . etc. The blinding snowstorm made the situation worse. But eventually we won through on to easier slopes, near Camp V, where we staked the stretcher for the night. The most difficult and dangerous part had been done. At this point Geoff would bring all available support from the camps. On the way down Geoff would break up all the camps in preparation for moving off the mountain whilst Don and I made the third and last attempt to reach the summit.

On August 12, Don and I moved up to Camp VI again, where we were penned in by bad weather for the next two days. Avalanches swept the face, making life uncomfortable, but the camp was safe enough despite the shifting, creaking sounds of snow about the camp site. One particular avalanche which swept over the camp was so great that it literally sucked our breath away and left us empty.

At 3.0 a.m. on August 15, beneath a clear starlit sky, we climbed the steep slopes beneath the South summit, with the intention of pitching the Tinker tent beneath the sérac used by Don and Geoff for their bivouac on the first assault. The snow was quite firm but when the sun appeared it became progressively so soft and unstable that it was physically impossible to go on. Not a single upward step would bear weight. We then dug a cave into the slope and sheltered from the hot sun and avalanches until sun fall. Then the slopes would freeze and allow further progress. The cave was in an unfortunate position. A powder snow avalanche swept overhead with uncomfortable regularity. The cave was not very big and the avalanche back-lash would enter the cave easily, partly burying us and putting out the primus stove on which we were trying to melt snow for a drink. At long last came the sun fall and we moved out thankfully and on up to the prospective Camp VII site at *c.* 24,800 ft.

The camp site was in a cloistered situation beneath an overhanging sérac. There was just enough room for the small Tinker tent. For the sake of light loads we had left our sleeping bags and air mattresses behind at Camp VI so we arranged what insulation we could from the tent floor with ropes and rucksacks. We dozed and fitfully slept

through the night. It was about 35° C. below zero, and every so often we would take off our h.a. boots and rub our feet.

By 12.30 a.m. we were glad to think of making ready to move out. We brewed tea and by 2.30 a.m. we had made ready and set out under a clear starlit sky. The snow was firm and our progress steady. Our hopes rose high for the summit. As we reached the summit rocks the sun had risen high and swung on to our tracks. The sun had had little or no time in which to affect the snow in the couloir but we found it in a rotten soft condition. We made several attempts to climb the couloir but always found ourselves scraping crampon points on smooth slab rocks with breaking snow underfoot. Any attempt up the couloir was obviously dangerous so we broke out on to a rock buttress on the left-hand side of the couloir. At first the rocks appeared comparatively easy until we were on them, then they reared up steeply leaving us hanging by finger tips with crampon points jammed sideways in narrow cracks.

We were now climbing rocks as difficult as many we find at home at sea level. It was altogether too strenuous and difficult. Some of the moves had been of more than severe standard. Most of the rock was covered with ice and snow. It took us 6 to 7 hours to climb 200 ft. on this rock buttress, so we took stock of our position. It was possible to continue but the way ahead showed smoother and apparently more difficult ground. To climb on would most certainly mean sleeping out near the summit. There was no support from below since everybody was going off the mountain as planned. Don had dropped his gloves and lost them down the slopes. I had frostbite in my fingers and toes. The summit was not worth the risk. So at *c.* 25,300 ft. we abseiled off the rocks on a single length of rope and returned to Camp VII. We were weary, glad to be rid of climbing such obstacles as rotten soft snow and severe rock at 25,000 ft. but sad to have the summit taken from us when it seemed within our grasp.

We returned to Base Camp on August 18. It was not an easy journey, nor had it been for the others with the sledge. We could see the tracks of their tramping, straining feet in many places, showing the tremendous effort of pulling the sledge. The lower parts of the Dome had changed completely into a mass of breaking ice. The Sérac glacier was even worse with its black shelves of breaking ice. The only way down was by Scaly Alley. The transport of the sledge in these conditions down to Base must have been a laborious, difficult task.

Apart from falling down the slopes near Camp VI and off an ice-wall in Scaly Alley, Don and I reached Base safely enough, giving the expedition a total period of just over nine weeks on the mountain.