

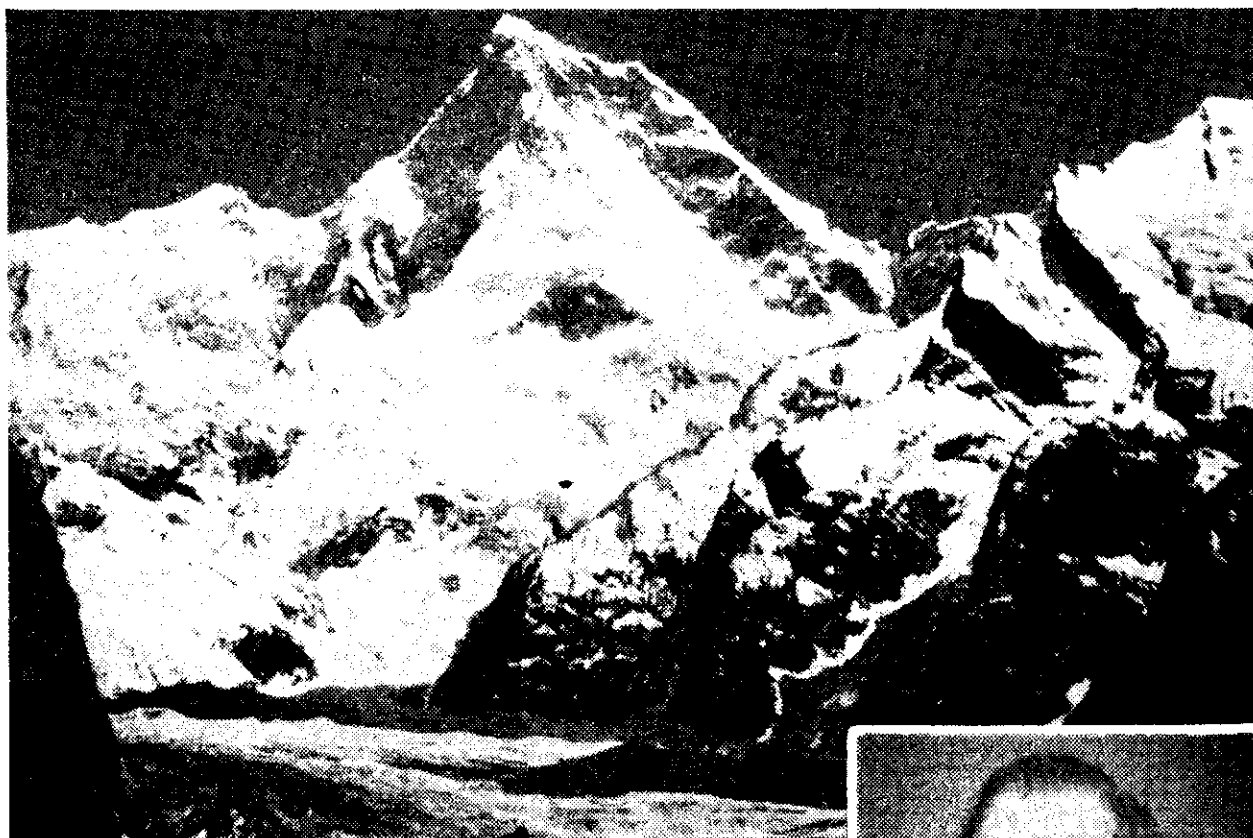
FROM THE ARAWATA TO THE KARAKORAM

by JOHN PASCOE

BETWEEN Pakistan and Central Asia there lies a high range named the Karakoram in 1820 by an English traveller. This Turki word means "black splintered stones," but its native name of Muztagh means the Mountains of Ice. The highest of the Karakoram peaks is Mount Godwin-Austen, better known as K2, the second highest in the world, and recently climbed by two members of an Italian expedition. Most spectacular on this range is the Muztagh Tower, the embodiment of inaccessibility and steepness. There are numerous major summits unclimbed and not even reconnoitred. The climate is rigorous, but although the monsoon affects it, the season when men can climb high is considerably longer than those brief periods of clear calm in Tibet or Nepal.

The Karakoram is a sternly attractive testing ground for mountaineers. One climber trained in New Zealand, Scott Russell, did valuable mapping and climbing in the Karakoram with Eric Shipton before the war, and described his experiences in his fine book *Mountain Prospect*. No expedition of New Zealanders as such has yet reached the Karakoram, but next year a group of at least eight members of the Canterbury Mountaineering Club will travel through Pakistan to attempt Masherbrum, whose highest peak reaches to 25,660 feet. It is expected that Stan Conway will be available to lead the party. In 1939 he had permission to attempt Kangchenjunga through Sikkim, but although he had picked his men and imported his high altitude equipment, nothing came of the expedition—the war intervened.

Conway was a gunner with 2 N.Z.E.F. and was awarded an M.M. in the Western Desert. In Italy he was severely wounded in one shoulder, but after being invalided back to New Zealand he



★ **MASHERBRUM, 25,660ft.,** a photograph of the north face of the peak, taken by the 1953 American expedition to K2. The Canterbury climbers will attack from the south by the Serac Glacier route (see page 7). **AT RIGHT: Lieutenant-Colonel J. B. Harrison, who climbed to within 600ft. of the summit in 1938** ★

gradually recovered his strength. In recent years he has led some of the major trans-alpine trips in New Zealand, including the first high level crossings from the Godley to Wataroa, from the Rakaia to Wataroa by the Lambert, Garden of Eden, and Barlow snowfields, and from Lake Wanaka to Jackson's Bay by a series of high passes between the Matukituki, Arawata, Olivine Ice

Plateau, Red Pyke, and Cascade valleys. Because of his wound he has specialised in reducing the weight of food and equipment, and has improved the designs of packs, tents and other gear. He will probably be supported by Bill Hannah and Ray Chapman, who have invariably accompanied him on recent trips, and Ed Cotter, who climbed Mukut Parbat in Garwhal with Erle Riddiford, Hillary and Lowe in 1951.

Cotter would be the only member of the party with sustained Himalayan experience and the proved ability to acclimatise. Alan Morgan is another sterling high climber who has done many peaks in the Hermitage district. The three youngest will be John Harrison, Bob Watson and Peter Bain, who have several good seasons behind them in the Southern Alps. Conway and Hannah are splendid colour photographers, and Watson has taken first-class black and white studies. The professions and occupations of the party are as mixed as one would expect from a New Zealand team, and include an accountant, three school teachers, two clerks, a commercial artist and a tradesman.

The Canterbury mountaineers will probably be strengthened in Pakistan by Lieutenant-Colonel Maurice Brown, from the United Nations Observers, and a Pakistani doctor. In February next they expect to march from Skardu to their base a hundred miles away with a hundred local Balti porters. By the middle of April they should be at Hushe near their base on the Masherbrum Glacier, where the route begins. For the high camps six Hunza porters will help with the heavy swagging up the mountain, but the climbers themselves will also expect to work hard to establish and maintain camps which will keep a



lifeline of shelter and supplies to the highest camp on the south-western face of the mountain, from which the assault men will make their final climb.

The problems in the icefall of the Serac Glacier will be met by men who have encountered similar ones in the Southern Alps. They have climbed with each other and reached a high standard of team work necessary for such an enterprise. They hope the climb will be achieved between the middle of May and June. After they have attempted Masherbrum, and irrespective of success, the Canterbury men will continue the mapping and exploration of the Khondokoro Glacier region begun by a British party in 1938.

On Masherbrum, as on other Himalayan peaks, any achievements will be made by virtue of the pioneer work of other parties. The greatest glacier in the region is forty-five miles long—the Siachen, which heads the Baltoro Glacier. The Baltoro, in turn, separates Masherbrum from K2, so there is some glorious mountain scenery awaiting Canterbury cameras. Masherbrum is on the southern axis of the great range. To the north of K2, rivers flow to the deserts



THREE of the Canterbury Mountaineering Club members who are planning an assault on Masherbrum next year. From left, Bill Hannah, Ray Chapman, Stan Conway