

## The Mt. Logan Adventure

ALLEN CARPE

THE ascent of Mt. Logan in 1925 was perhaps the most arduous feat of mountaineering ever undertaken in North America. In saying this I am not unmindful of the series of efforts, spread over six years, that carried Belmore Browne and Dr. Herschel Parker so close to the top of Mt. McKinley in 1912, or of the final conquest of that mighty peak by the Karstens-Stuck party the following year. All honor to these indomitable men; but I believe that they, and mountaineers generally, will agree that Logan made still greater demands upon its conquerors, even though its summit is slightly lower than McKinley's.

Mt. Logan is the highest mountain in the Dominion of Canada and the second highest in North America. It is in Yukon Territory, not far from the Alaskan border, fairly in the midst of the St. Elias Range. It is the biggest of the great Alaskan peaks, and that means that it is the biggest mountain in the world. For although there are loftier summits, reckoned from sea-level, in Tibet and the high Andes, the mountains that line the Alaskan coast are certainly unequalled in height above their average base level, in the massiveness of their sculpturing and in the enormous extent of the glaciers that cover them. The St. Elias Range alone is roughly as big as all Switzerland, and contains at least half a dozen peaks higher than Mont Blanc. Logan itself rises sheer to a snowy plateau three miles high and fifteen miles long, and on top of this stands a summit system which is really a respectable mountain range in its own right, with peaks thousands of feet high, perpetually clothed in solid ice, all at elevations of from 17,000 to nearly 20,000 feet above the sea. And

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NOTE.—This paper is probably the last writing of Allen Carpe. It was prepared as a contribution to a popular magazine and was taken by him to Alaska for final revision. He had already published two articles on Mount Logan in the *Bulletin* of the Geographical Society of Philadelphia for October, 1925, and in the *Alpine Journal*, London, for May, 1926, Vol. xxxviii, pp. 72-89. The latter reported scientific observations, for which phase of the expedition's work he was chiefly responsible. The present paper, with its engaging and intimate style, complements effectively his other writings and paints a vivid picture of the trials and hardships of this great expedition upon which he officially represented The American Alpine Club. A few footnotes have been added.—*Ed.*

the whole mass is defended on all sides by the greatest glaciated terrain in the known world, outside of the polar regions. Taking all in all, for sheer inaccessibility I doubt if there is another mountain like it on earth.

The idea of climbing Mt. Logan was born in the minds of several men in the Alpine Club of Canada. It took definite form during 1923 and 1924 under the direction of Colonel W. W. Foster, then president of that organization. Captain A. H. MacCarthy and Mr. H. F. Lambart were chosen as leaders: the former famous for his ascent of Mt. Robson, monarch of the Canadian Rockies, the latter a member of the Canadian Geodetic Survey, of long experience in the North and one of the men who mapped the Logan chain. I was asked to join the party as the representative of the American Alpine Club.

Before going farther let me give deserved credit to those men whose work of exploration and mapping made possible the attempt to climb Mt. Logan. Before a mountain can be climbed we must know how to get to it. That is especially true in Alaska, and it was especially true of Mt. Logan. Ever since men knew of its existence they did not know how to approach it or from which side it might be vulnerable. Explorers saw it from Mt. St. Elias, but there was no crossing the formidable barrier of ice fields to reach it. Then came the survey to delimit the International Boundary between Alaska and the Yukon, and although Logan lay outside its official limits, these men recognized its importance and mapped it as far as they could include it in their observations. Thus we first knew with certainty of its great height, and at the same time learned something of how to attack it. It is a great satisfaction that Mr. Lambart, who was one of those sur eyors, was also able to take a prominent part in organizing the expedition that climbed the mountain.

Our party assembled in the little Alaskan town of McCarthy early in May of 1925. There were eight men, drawn from different walks of life, some meeting for the first time their companions of the trail, all brought together by a common love of mountain adventure. There I met Andrew Taylor, gentle and wise in the ways of the North, with whom the passing years have cemented a strong friendship. He and MacCarthy had been out since February, laying depots of supplies on the lower glaciers, in towards the base of Logan. The rest of us were fresh off

the boat from Seattle: Lambart, big-hearted and generous to a fault; Foster, MacCarthy's partner on many Canadian climbs; Read, Hall, Morgan and I. And there was Laing, field worker for the Victoria Museum, who had been sent by the Canadian government to study the birds and mammals of the Chitina valley and whose uncanny ability to make friends with the wild things of the woods deserves a story in itself. We had come up together from Cordova by the Copper River & Northwestern R. R.

On May 12th everything was in readiness. Horses are scarce in the Copper River country, being expensive to keep through the long winters. The ten that we could get were all needed for pack animals, so the men had to walk. And a 'long walk it' was to be, a hundred miles up the great valley of the Chitina River before we should even reach the ice-fields which guard the approaches to our goal, and nearly another hundred over these to the top. Never shall I forget that first day's hike through abysmal mud of a peculiarly gluey consistency to the bridge across the Nizina and up Young Creek.

For six days we marched along the Chitina, following the horses as best we could, hardening our muscles for the work that lay ahead. Wooded hills enclosed our route, their bare crests populated with white mountain sheep. On the seventh day the horses carried our packs to the edge of the Chitina glacier and immediately started back toward McCarthy. Their work was done and there was no feed for them up here. Our problem was to negotiate on foot the eighty miles of glaciers and 17,000 feet of altitude that still separated us from the summit of Mt. Logan.

We got under some pretty heavy packs that next morning. My load of seventy-five pounds, including most of the expedition's motion picture equipment, seemed quite enough to me, but Lambart staggered off under a veritable mountain of no less than 103 pounds. We marched for more than twenty miles over the roughest kind of morainic débris before we even set foot on the clear ice of the glacier. Painfully we crawled with our loads up one interminable hill and down another. All about us the rocks were piled hundreds of feet high in featureless and unstable confusion. From the high points we would get our bearings and then we would build cairns to mark the route as we wound our way through the labyrinth of gullies and sink-holes between the ridges. Three nights we camped along the "shore," in scrubby

growths of timber below Chitina Mountain. Then on the 22nd we took to the ice. We had spent our last night on land for six weeks.

The glacier was getting smoother now. Lanes of snow and clear white ice began to open up between the stony ridges of the moraine. Surface streams rushed beneath culverts of winter snow and plunged into the sombre depths of pot-holes and crevasses. Only ten miles more and we should come to the cache left for us by the winter freighting party: two seven-foot Yukon sleighs, snowshoes, Primus stoves, gasoline and a little food.

From here our lives were governed by the work with the sledges. This meant, first of all, going on night shift in order to travel while the snow remained crisp and hard. We were up at midnight, sometimes before, and could usually count on a firm surface until eight or nine in the morning. Later the snow became soft. We tried to sleep during the day but this was difficult because the sun beat down on our tents until they were like ovens, and even the rays that filtered through the canvas were enough to produce a painful sunburn. Sometimes we would spread our sleeping robes over the tents as a partial protection against the glare. Then in the evening the frost would come quickly.

Some of our heaviest work was on that first march with the sledges. We had a rope on each one and we pulled in tandem by means of shoulder loops. (I have tried the Antarctic belt harness but I do not think it superior to the Alaskan way.) The first man of each team would set the pace in short, quick steps, the others following in unison. The last man, in addition to hauling his share of the load, had to steer by means of the "gee-pole" fastened to the front of the right runner. This was Andy Taylor's job in my team, and usually MacCarthy's on the other. Snowshoes were essential. The loads, augmented by the contents of the cache, came close to 400 pounds per team and suffered from a bulkiness that made them top-heavy: often one of us had to work along the side of the sled to keep it from upsetting.

It was late afternoon before we reached our objective at the mouth of the Ogilvie glacier, which comes down from the base of Logan. The snow was melting under a merciless sun and the sleighs sank in or toppled over continually. Surface streams, flowing in ten-foot grooves of naked ice, barred the way. The

last few miles, crossing rough moraine ridges and in deep snow, were almost beyond our strength. Again and again we would throw our weight into the ropes and strain and wrestle with the loads to get them over some obstacles.

Almost unnoticed during this exhausting day, the great bluish-white mass of Mt. Logan had swung into view, still thirty miles distant when we first saw it. But we made famous progress. At the mouth of the Ogilvie glacier we had come within twelve miles of its basal slopes. We spent a day here,<sup>1</sup> and another night, and on the 25th in a snow storm we moved six miles up the Ogilvie to the last cache left for us by the winter party at an altitude of about 6,000 feet.<sup>2</sup>

Here we set ourselves at once to the task of relaying the major part of the cache six miles farther to the head cirque of the Ogilvie glacier, whence a steep cascade of wonderfully fractured ice led up against the flank of Logan. This ice-fall was the key to the ascent; the possibility of surmounting it had governed the whole choice of our approach. For it was the only visible breach—at least the only obvious one—in the formidable cliff-walls of the mountain, which must be more than fifty miles in circumference. Here at its western extremity the gigantic *massif* thrusts forth a circlet of 12,000-foot satellites around the basin of the Ogilvie, and by working up between them and the main body of the mountain we hoped to gain a foothold on the latter. This much we knew. We had studied it out in many long evenings from Lambart's survey, and MacCarthy and Taylor had reconnoitered the way and had found it feasible.

But beyond what we could see, there was much that remained uncertain. The route lay for a space on the unmapped seaward face of the mountain which no one had ever examined and we might easily be checkmated by some unexpected barrier. The summit peaks rose at the easterly end of the mass, separated from us by the whole bulk of the mountain. Certainly we faced a most difficult high-level journey to reach them.

At any rate we were at last at the real base of Logan: the approach was ended and the ascent began. By May 31st, more than 4,000 pounds of supplies had been brought into the base

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<sup>1</sup> "Turn."

<sup>2</sup> "Advance Base Cache."

camp<sup>3</sup> by sleigh, and we had carried a few loads on our backs to the crest of a rocky promontory<sup>4</sup> at one side of the ice-fall. MacCarthy, Foster and I explored a route beyond the top of the ice-fall and at 10,000 feet we entered a high glacial valley that ran back between Logan and the splendid Matterhorn-like spire of King Peak. But whether this valley would give us access to the upper reaches of Logan we could not see.

I think it was during these days that the awful loneliness of these great ranges was first borne in upon me with something of the force of a personal experience. Until we turned the corner into the Ogilvie glacier, we could look back down the valley and sense the presence of the lower hills and of living things. Now as we worked in toward the savage cliffs of Logan we entered a new world of appalling grandeur, and our little band seemed insignificant and very much alone. We had no support behind us, no organization of supply, no linkage at all with the outer world. We were on our own.

We talked sometimes of the Mt. Everest Expeditions with their hundreds of porters and pack animals going back and forth, maintaining supplies and communications, with their native settlements so close to the mountain, their march of seven miles up the East Rongbuk glacier. How different things are in the North. On Logan, the nearest settlement 150 miles away, a journey of eighty miles over glaciers, an ascent of 17,000 feet from the ice level to the summit. Save for the physiological effects of extreme altitudes, ours was probably the bigger job.

The ice-fall itself at the head of the Ogilvie glacier was hardly passable for any man, certainly not with loads. But fortunately we were able to turn the lower part of it by means of a steep sheet of snow behind a rocky ridge. Above this, the fissures were more regular and we could climb between them along broad terraces and corridors of ice. The ascent was now far too steep for the sleighs. The angle was about that of a pitched roof. With a 700-foot rope we hauled up one of the sleighs, empty, and carried it along for use higher up. The other one we left. Eleven times, I think, we repeated the climb to 10,000 feet, until we had consolidated our position above the ice-fall with nearly a ton of equipment and supplies.

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<sup>3</sup> "Cascades," elevation 7,800 ft.

<sup>4</sup> Quartz Ridge, 8,800 ft.

We could look out to the south now, where St. Elias loomed in lonely dignity across thirty miles of the Seward and Columbus ice-fields. I think that St. Elias must surely be one of the most beautiful mountains in the world. From the sea, soaring like an icy fang 18,000 feet into the sky, it is a breath-taking sight, like a vision from another world. Here, from the other side, it was more massive and serene—"a lion couchant," Lambart described it—but always with a lifting and ethereal quality that made it seem for all its size a thing more of the sky than of the earth.

There was a slight drift of snow in the air as we pitched camp<sup>5</sup> but we had gotten to an altitude where the snow remained dry and was really much less of an annoyance than in the thawing temperatures of the lower levels. But when that night the mercury fell for the first time close to zero we realized that Logan was going to be a cold mountain. It was. A night temperature higher than zero was rare during the next three weeks, and for the ten days spent above 15,000 feet, temperatures of from twenty to thirty-three degrees below zero were registered each night, with seldom more than a few degrees above zero at any time during the twenty-four hours.

A smoother glacier stretched ahead of us now for nine miles to a saddle between King Peak and the side of Logan. We went out first with packs on our backs and, in a blinding storm of sleet and wind, fought our way to nearly 13,000 feet before we had to put down our loads. Later we used the sleigh in the lower part of the valley, but about half way up a steep rise intervened and we had to abandon it. On foot we worked our loads up to almost 14,000 feet, just in the lee of the King Peak saddle. There we dug out level places for the tents and tramped the snow down until it held our weight without snowshoes.<sup>6</sup>

This was one of our most enjoyable camps. Although nearly ten thousand feet above the snow-line, it was a thoroughly comfortable place, and yet there was all about us and in everything we did that indescribable keenness and exhilaration that comes from the heights. It seemed to me that my senses were quickened and every moment twice lived. Perhaps this strange awareness of the beauty and joy of living is an effect of the altitude; as we climbed higher, it was heightened to a nervous tension that

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<sup>5</sup> Observation Camp.

<sup>6</sup> King Col Camp, 13,875 ft.

was intoxicating. But I think that it came mostly from the very real strain and excitement of the adventure, for the cold and the wind and the thinness of the air did not let us forget that we were embarking now into a region where men cannot live for long, and that a very few days must decide the outcome.

As to physical comforts, we had three roomy tents, light but strong, and with inflated rubber air mattresses and warm sleeping robes between us and the snow we could defy almost any weather. One night I remember lying there with the fabric of the tent cracking and groaning in the gale until we could not make ourselves heard above the din. Finally the wind pressure drove the steel tent pole right down through the floor and collapsed the walls about our ears. But we propped it up again and slept soundly, the weight of our bodies in the tent preventing the wind from carrying it away during the night.

We cooked now on gasoline stoves, and on these too we melted all our water from the dry snow—this we had done ever since the middle camp on the Ogilvie glacier. It was an annoyance and consumed much time and precious fuel, but water in fluid form is not found on the mountain. Also many things were becoming difficult to cook because of the altitude, which lowers the temperature at which water boils. Rice, beans, even oatmeal, took twice the usual time. More and more we relied on biscuits, desiccated potatoes and eggs (both excellent and requiring little cooking), canned chicken and the like.

The outlook was very grand, but it was not reassuring. It was not an easy matter to get on to Mt. Logan from the glacial trench that we had ascended. Behind us—the tents faced down the valley—the saddle was not a pass; it led only to stupendous precipices dropping away to the Seward glacier, and above these like the frosting on a cake were ice cliffs hundreds of feet high. There was no way there. On our right the slopes of Logan bulged, dome-shaped, out of the valley, a mass of immense crevasses and pinnacles and tumbled blocks of ice. Under the evening sun the glassy facets of these bergs would catch the light and reflect it with a steady gleam, as the windows of distant buildings sometimes do at sunset. The first few thousand feet were the steepest and the most broken. If we could get through them, there seemed to be clearer ground above.

Consequently, while the rest of us continued to bring up supplies from below, MacCarthy set out with Foster and Read to explore the way. He was not a man to hold back when there was work to do: we did not know until later that he had had a painful night and was suffering from incipient snow-blindness. Up through amazing and intricate ice formations they climbed, staking out the way with willow cuttings brought for that purpose. More than once on the expedition we were yet to owe our lives to these slender markers that stretched, six hundred of them, from the base camp almost to the top. The climbers got to 16,000 feet, and when we came up that evening<sup>7</sup> with our 70-pound packs we were greeted with the welcome news that a route had been found through the worst of the difficulties.

But that night a storm broke, and snow fell almost continually for four days. The tents, which stood seven feet high at the peak, were nearly two-thirds covered, and the camp presented an Arctic appearance. The advance party had climbed easily on a firm crust, but now when the weather cleared at last there was deep, soft snow everywhere and we had hard going during all the rest of the climb. Sometimes we waded almost to the waist and could find no bottom in the stuff under foot. There was snow in everything, in our bedding, in our clothing, even inside the cameras. We couldn't get away from it. At least it was dry—gritty like sand and easily brushed away. That was one compensation for the intense cold. But once when I thoughtlessly breathed on a lens to blow off the white powder, the glass was covered with a film of ice that rendered it useless for hours.

The clouds sank below us and left us in the upper air, thin, cold and unbelievably clear. Billowing mists filled the valleys and extended far out to sea. The temperature dropped quickly to ten below zero. A thick drift churned about the ridges and trailed like a streamer of cloud from the top of King Peak. There was wind high up. With 60-pound packs we climbed all day but made only 1,600 feet of elevation in twelve hours. Once it took Foster an hour to break a trail through scarcely a hundred yards of steep, drifted snow. And by evening the storm was upon us again. On a little ice plateau amid concealed fissures we camped through another day and night of snow and wind, unable to move.

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<sup>7</sup> To King Col Camp.

We were not relaying now. We carried the camp right with us, and slept four in a bag to save weight. It might have been a dash for the summit if conditions had been right, but the weather and the deep snow doomed the attempt from the start. The irreducible weights of tents, bedding, etc., left room for only a few days' food in our packs. We could not afford to rest.

The 16th of June came. Very early in the morning the clouds broke away and revealed the frosted blade of King Peak opposite us above a fleecy sea of clouds at the 13,000-foot level. It was as if the whole world was wrapped in cotton batting and only these highest summits pierced the sky. Anyone who has looked down on clouds from a high place, or from an airplane, will know how beautiful it was. The clouds wove back and forth, disclosing first one part, then another, of the view. A spindrift of fine snow ran along the ground. Fascinated, I set up the camera in sub-zero temperatures and took reel after reel of the most glorious film I have ever made—glorious in subject despite painfully limited equipment.

Then we pushed on, fighting all day for altitude against the terribly deep, powdery snow and the increasing shortage of oxygen. Already there was barely half the normal amount of air for us to breathe. Clouds caught us in a tangle of great crevasses, one fully a mile long and hundreds of feet deep. It was awesome to look down into its shadowy blue depths as we crossed a snow bridge with the mists all around us. We took turns breaking trail. When my turn came I would count the steps—25 perhaps until I stopped for breath, 100 before I stepped aside, exhausted and heart pounding against my ribs, to make way for the next man. Thus we kept up a steady advance. At the end of twelve hours we had to camp, for if we waited longer it would be too cold. We had reached 16,800 feet.<sup>8</sup> That night the mercury went to thirty-two degrees below zero.

We were near the end both of our strength and of our supplies. One more day we could stay, then our food would be gone. We spent that day in a last assault, a remote hope perhaps of going on to the top if we could, an attempt at least to find out the way if we could not. In both we were defeated. Climbing more easily with light packs—for there was no use moving the

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<sup>8</sup> Windy Camp.

camp higher now—we attained at last the crest of that range of peaks which I have said form the top of Logan.

We reached a height of 18,500 feet, and climbed even a few hundred feet more on a shoulder of the highest peak visible. But we were still merely at the margin of the great summit plateau, with the loftiest points five or six miles distant. And we could see nothing, for clouds and wind and flurries of snow raced across the summit ice-cap and flung us back when we left the shelter of the down-slope. We retreated, and next day Lambart, Morgan, Taylor, Hall and I went down to King Col camp for more food, while MacCarthy, Read and Foster climbed up again to seek a view toward the summits.

This brings us to events which some of us have since felt were crucial: had we retreated when the storm struck us, we might not, they think, have been able to rally our forces and return to the attack. I am not so sure of that; I do not believe we would have accepted defeat so easily. But you may judge for yourself. Here is what happened.

We had made a hard descent, owing to the track being again entirely snowed up, and we had passed a comfortable night at King Col camp in the comparative warmth of five below zero. The following morning was fine and almost sultry. I remember that I stripped to the waist under my canvas parka, and even then the parka was more for protection against sunburn than for warmth. The men came down part way from the upper camp and helped us with our loads. We roped up by fours and were strolling up what we called the "Avenue of Blocks"—fantastic cubes of ice a hundred feet high interlayered with volcanic ash from prehistoric eruptions—when all at once with the suddenness characteristic of high altitudes a furious storm attacked us and seemed almost literally to hurl us back in our tracks.

There was no time to put on warmer clothing. There was no shelter anywhere. Flying ice particles stung our faces. Our feet were numb, yet heart and lungs failed us when we tried to warm ourselves by climbing faster. The wind carried a heavy drift and sometimes we could see but a few feet ahead. Many of the willows must have been carried away or bent flat to the ground. With Taylor, Lambart, Hall and Morgan, I was some little distance ahead of the others. Morgan feared for his feet, and both he and Lambart, having thrown themselves too generously

into the work lower down, felt the altitude severely. MacCarthy, Foster and Read, who had just come down from above and hence were best qualified to know the way back, were all on the other rope: had we anticipated the storm no doubt the party would have been divided differently. I for one had no idea of our direction. It seemed to us that there was nothing to do but retreat and await a better day. But as we veered back, MacCarthy's rope came up. He would hear nothing of retreat. Taking the lead, he pointed the way and we followed. Pounding our feet to keep them from freezing we pushed doggedly into the teeth of the storm. I have no idea how long the fight lasted. But I do know that it was 9.00 P.M. when we reached the camp.<sup>9</sup> And even then the tents had been laid flat for safety and we had with freezing fingers and in temperatures far below zero—it went to minus 21° F. that night—to clear them of the drifted snow and set them up before we could get shelter. When we finally got inside and took stock of our situation Morgan was in no condition to go on and it was decided that Hall should accompany him down. On the 21st at the ends of a 150-foot rope they traced back that line of willows to the foot of the mountain, but not before Hall had joined us with the packs for one more day.

Thus did MacCarthy, late Captain, U. S. N., bring his men to the high camp with loads enough for the climb to the top, and with three-fourths of the party able and eager to go on. It does honor to the man and to the service that bred in him that stubborn persistence in the face of difficulties.

But you must not think of this as really a very high camp or very close to the goal. To us, it was yet to seem a haven of refuge where, if we could but reach it, our troubles would be almost over. For the real test lay beyond the farthest point we had yet reached, out on that terrible summit ice-cap, where we must cross the backbone of the mountain and push a camp within climbing distance of Logan's ultimate peak.

Once more, then, we mounted to the ridge at 18,500 feet and deposited loads of food in clouds and snow. Once more we huddled in the tents<sup>10</sup> to the tune of a storm that threatened to rob us of another precious day. Then late on the 21st it cleared. Was it too late? There was no time to lose. The cold of the

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<sup>9</sup> Windy Camp.

<sup>10</sup> At Windy Camp.

evening was coming on apace. At 6.30 P.M. we broke camp and by ten that night we were repitching the tents in a wind-blown hummock of snow actually beyond the bleak granite outcrop of the ridge, higher than men had ever camped<sup>11</sup> on this continent before. I was surprised at the ease with which we carried packs to this altitude, proof of our acclimatization to the shortage of oxygen. But the sun was setting, the mercury dropping like a plummet. We raced with it to rig the tents at ten below zero. When the time came to inflate the mattresses we lacked the strength to do it. We simply lay down and slept on the snow.

Fifteen thousand feet below we could see the glacier up which we sledged. And beyond it were Lucania, and Bear, and many other summits that we could not identify. It was a scene no human eyes had ever beheld; yet, because everything was lower than we were, the prospect seemed singularly flat and it was difficult to realize the vastness of the depths and distances.

In the morning we took packs of sixty pounds and went out on to the summit plateau. We were entering the last phase of the ascent. At our backs now was that bleak granite ridge, swept clean by incessant storms, barring the retreat. There was excitement in the air; but little did we imagine the dramatic events that were in store for us before we should recross that awful rampart.

It stormed again as we lay in the tents that night,<sup>12</sup> and well into the morning of the next day. Towards ten, grasping at the first chance of clearing, we were on the move. Foster led off, holding a steady grade around ridges and valleys of snow. There was no special difficulty, nothing really to stop us save the weakness caused by this tenuous air. That made us miserably slow. We worked towards a pinnacle that we hoped might be the top; but when we reached it we saw before us another peak, a mile distant with a deep valley between, and instinctively we knew that it was higher. I got out the level and sighted carefully. There was no doubt of it.

We were 19,800 feet high and it was 4.30 in the afternoon. Could we go on and climb that other peak? I doubt if the question ever entered our minds—certainly it did not mine. Probably I was the weakest of the lot, but we had gone through too much

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<sup>11</sup> "18.5 Camp."

<sup>12</sup> At Plateau Camp, 17,800 ft.

to give in now, although it was clear that we could not get back to camp that night if we went on. Our supply of willows was gone: even that did not deter us. We descended to the saddle between the two peaks and looked out across the Seward glacier to Mt. St. Elias. Down in that thirty-mile cauldron between the ranges mists were brewing and rising toward us. Eight precious hours of sunshine had been ours. Now as we started up the steeper grade of the final peak, snow and drifting clouds again enveloped us.

But we were used to that. We had seen the way. Steadily we mounted, albeit each step was an exertion. Iron spikes were strapped to our feet and now and again MacCarthy notched steps in the glassy crust with his ice-axe. When we emerged at last on a shoulder a few hundred feet below the top, a narrow edge of ice soared into the thin fog above us, as slender and exposed as any Alpine summit. It was a noble culmination for the great mountain. The top was in our reach at last, and at eight in the evening of June 23rd our quest was ended.

What did we see, how did we feel, what were our thoughts in that precarious half-hour of victory? The first question is the easiest: we saw fog about us, and rare glimpses of a world far below of which we seemed not at all a part, and for a time we saw in the fog gigantic shadow images of ourselves—the so-called Spectre of the Brocken. Such apparitions frightened early climbers in the Alps and seemed to them a portent of evil. As to the rest, I fear we were too spent to make the answer very exciting. Almost automatically we went through the appointed routine: hand-clasps and congratulations, a round of motion pictures,<sup>13</sup> the empty gesture of a record of names and date thrust into the snow. Then we turned and began the descent in the gathering storm.

On many a mountain, perhaps, the tale might end here: the return would be at best an anticlimax. Not so on Logan. The hardest part of the battle was yet to be fought. Our tracks guided us down the peak, then they failed us. Ahead loomed vaguely that other summit, behind which were the willows and

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<sup>13</sup> Carpe was the only one to carry a motion-picture camera to the summit. This is the highest ground elevation at which such work was ever attempted in this country, being exceeded elsewhere only during the Mt. Everest expeditions.—*Ed.*

the trail to safety. We were too weak to retrace our steps over its top. We tried to circle the base of the peak and intercept the marked trail on the other side, but we made almost no progress. The light was failing, snow was falling thickly. It was dreadfully cold. Towards midnight, on a steep side slope, still above 19,000 feet, we stopped. We had little notion where we were; indeed we could see but a little distance.

With our hands and with the snowshoes we scooped out shallow holes in the snow and lay down for the night. The thermometer stood at twelve below zero, then it was lost in the snow. As we lay there, we were covered with a white blanket that was perhaps some protection against the cold. For my part, at least, I suffered little from the temperature. But not all of us were so fortunate. Next morning the situation had become critical. Lambart's feet were freezing. We must move, although the weather was not improved.

At least the daylight was in our favor now. The great danger was that we might cross the trail without seeing the willows and thus go hopelessly astray. Perhaps we had already done so, during the night. We peered anxiously into the white void that surrounded us. At last came a shout of relief; for there, vanishing and reappearing as the eye focussed on it, was the thin black line of a willow twig that pointed the way to safety. To all of us it was surely the most beautiful sight in the world.

The weather was so dense that often we lost sight of one marker before we picked up the next one. Somehow we became separated in the storm. Lambart, Taylor and Read, to be sure, got back to the tents that evening. The rest of us lost the trail, wandered about in the fog, then found it again. We could not know that in that interval we had described a circle and were now headed back across that terrible ice-cap toward the summit.

Blindly we followed the willows for a time before the strangeness of the slopes began to appall us. Then we searched the ground in desperation for some sign; but wind and snow were blotting out even our own tracks almost as quickly as we made them; there was nothing to tell the direction. It was a fearful decision that we faced, for in very truth our lives depended on it, and we spent perhaps an hour before we could bring ourselves to make the choice. Finally we faced about and retraced our way.

Evening came again, and we moved on intermittently through a second night, during which our comrades at camp read temperatures of twenty-five below zero. Even yet we could not be sure that we were on the right track. Once more we lost the willows and marched for a long time as best we could without them. At dawn the clouds parted and we saw the first rays of sun on snowy peaks. Everything looked strange. A feeling of panic struck me for a moment; then all at once the mists shifted and disclosed the tents,<sup>14</sup> only a few hundred yards away. After nearly forty-two hours without shelter, we cut off our frozen clothing and crawled exhausted into our sleeping bags.

Towards noon on June 26th, Hall and Morgan, on the glacier far below, saw a tiny cloud form about the west end of Logan's summit and, spreading quickly, cover the whole upper part of the mountain. We, that morning, had abandoned the tents and were just starting the thousand-foot climb back up to that ridge at the edge of the ice plateau when the storm hit us. It was a gale that made everything we had felt before pale in comparison. The ground was laid bare to the icy crust below: with numbed fingers we had to exchange snowshoes for crampons to keep a footing. Crouched low, we tried to stand against the wind that flung us helplessly out of our tracks.

There was a drift running such as we had sometimes seen about these high ridges from below, so dense at times that we could not see one another or even the ground at our feet. Foster was snow-blind, Lambart scarcely able to carry on; my right hand seemed like a board. Unless we could reach the crossing of the rock ridge before the clouds closed in, our position would be desperate. MacCarthy, Foster and I forged past the others, but the storm beat us off to the right, too far below the narrow defile where we must cross the ridge. From behind, Read saw the error. Leaving Taylor with Lambart, he climbed up and beckoned us to follow. Thus the four of us finally reached the crossing, and Foster and I sank down exhausted against the rocks. But MacCarthy and Read went back out into the storm. Relieving Lambart of part of his pack, they helped him forward and brought him safely into what little shelter the gap afforded.

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<sup>14</sup> Of Plateau Camp.

We must have been fantastic figures indeed. Great icicles hung from our beards and noses, our eyes were frozen shut. The mat of ice that covered MacCarthy's face was crimson with blood. Lambart, true to his calling, tried to read his barometer. But he was almost blind. Something in the unselfishness of that attempt penetrated the stupor into which I had fallen, and I stumbled up to help him read the instrument. It seemed like a great distance, requiring an immense effort of will, yet a snapshot miraculously taken by Read shows it to have been scarcely six feet. I, too, could hardly make out the figures. I think we finally decided to call it 20,600 feet, quite a probable reading, for the great cold and the storm decrease the density of the air and increase the apparent altitude.

There was less weight in the wind when we got across the ridge, and soon we dipped down into an almost stagnant layer of clouds and softly falling snow. There was no vestige of our former trail, only an occasional willow protruding a few inches from the new-fallen snow. Sometimes we could detect the harder surface of the old track under foot, and by shuffling along carefully we would follow it by this sense of touch. Or again, Read would go ahead as far as visibility permitted and search out the willows. We passed the site of our 16,800-foot camp: there was no shelter there. Midnight came, and in the very early hours of the new day the clouds at last settled below us, and in a limpid pale green sky St. Elias was serene and incredibly near. Indeed there was no sense of distance at all: you might have put out a hand and touched it. It is an unforgettable memory that marks our escape from that dramatic ordeal.

We still had far to go, but I need not dwell on these lesser tribulations of the long journey home. There is no need to tell of Lambart walking for days, uncomplaining, though the ends of his toes were sloughing off and the bone coming through. Or of the food caches rifled by bears; or of how we felled trees and built rafts to descend the Chitina River, how one of the rafts capsized in the rapids and almost brought tragedy to us at the last. But one thing is so vivid in my mind that it seems a fitting note on which to close this tale of Alaskan contrasts. For when we at length got off the glacier, spring had come in the valley, and there was the scent of wild-flowers in the air. Lupine and roses and forget-me-nots and violets blossomed in

the sparse soil, humming birds flitted about the camp. Perhaps you would have to spend two months on the ice and snow as we did to know the poignant joy with which we greeted these simple things. We had courted Alaska in her iciest mood, and now at the very edge of the greatest alpine glaciers in the world she rewarded us with this glorious flowering of the northern summer.

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NOTE.—For the benefit of readers on this side of the Atlantic who may not have noticed them, we print the following comments on the Mount Logan Expedition.

In the discussion which took place after the reading of Mr. Lambert's paper before the Royal Geographical Society on April 12th, 1926, Dr. Tom G. Longstaff remarked: "I doubt if greater difficulties have been overcome on any mountain." Col. E. F. Norton said: "In conclusion I should like to add my tribute of admiration of this really remarkable achievement. One hates superlatives, but I think that when you come to consider the conditions, you will realize that the conquest of a mountain of the magnitude of Mount Logan in those latitudes, and at the very first attempt, must stand alone—a unique performance in the annals of mountain exploration." *Geographical Journal*, July, 1926, Vol. LXVIII, pp. 24-25.

The *Alpine Journal* (Vol. XXXVII, 1925, p. 338) in referring to the expedition, printed the following: "Greater hardships have probably never been experienced in any mountaineering expedition."—*Ed.*