

In Memoriam.

DR. ALEXANDER M. KELLAS.

WIDESPREAD regret has been occasioned by the death of Dr. Alexander M. Kellas, a member of the expedition which was proceeding to Mount Everest. This regret must be shared by all mountaineers, and not least by those of the Cairngorm Club, on account of the doctor's local connection, and of his intimacy with many of the members. His death occurred suddenly, from heart failure, at Kampa Dzong on 5th June. Kampa Dzong is 150 miles north of Darjeeling, and was the first "objective" of the two parties of the expedition, which started from Darjeeling on 18th and 19th May. Dr. Kellas was about fifty years of age.

"His death, upon what must have been to him a journey of such intense interest," (said a biographical sketch in the *Aberdeen Free Press*), "is deeply pathetic, but those who knew him will feel that he has passed away amongst the very surroundings which appealed beyond everything to his keen and ardent nature. He has succumbed, so far as the reports indicate, not to any mountaineering accident but to the results of earlier illness. He was a man of light build with extraordinary powers of endurance. On the hills of Scotland as a younger man, he could outwalk most climbers, and his ascents in the Himalayas showed that he had altogether exceptional physical powers, while possessing at the same time the adventurous spirit of the explorer and the trained mind of the skilled scientist."

Dr. Kellas was an Aberdeen man, a son of the late Mr. James F. Kellas, well-known to a past generation as the secretary of the local Marine Board. He was an elder brother of Mr. Henry Kellas, advocate, a member of the Club. Dr. Kellas was educated at the Aberdeen Grammar School, and subsequently continued his studies in Edinburgh, at the Heriot-Watt College and at the University. At London University he took the degrees of B.Sc. and D.Sc., and at Heidelberg that of Ph.D.,

with special distinction. For several years he had held the post of Lecturer in Chemistry at the Middlesex Hospital Medical School, London.

“As a younger man,” (to quote again from the *Free Press* notice,) “Dr. Kellas was ardently devoted to walking and climbing, and in the course of his scientific studies he became interested in the subject of the effect of altitude on blood pressure. This strengthened his interest in mountaineering as a recreation, and he went to the Alps to climb. The passion for the mountains grew upon him, and some years before the war he went out, during a long vacation, to the Himalayas, where he began what was destined to be a series of brilliant exploring and mountaineering expeditions. Many of the parties which have visited the Himalayas have been lavishly equipped, and have had abundant time at their command. Not so Dr. Kellas. On the five occasions when he visited India before the war he had to complete his lectures at Middlesex Hospital in the summer term, and had mostly to return in time for the winter session. He had only a few months in summer in which to travel to India and come back again, and yet in these brief spaces, and accompanied sometimes only by natives, he was able to penetrate to the remotest fastnesses of the Himalayas, and to ascend previously unscalable peaks.”

Among these “first ascents” may be mentioned Pawhunri (23,180 feet), Langpo Peak (22,800 feet), Chomiumo (22,450 feet), and Kanchenjhou (22,700 feet).

During the war, Dr. Kellas, who was a man of high scientific attainments, undertook special work in London. The consequent strain told upon his health, and in the winter of 1919-20 he was obliged to discontinue his lectures; and he came to Aberdeen to recuperate. In the spring of last year, however, he had recovered sufficiently to set out again for the Himalayas. His health rapidly improved, and he was able to carry out a large amount of fresh and very valuable exploring work. In particular, in company with Major Morshead, of the Indian Survey, he reached a height of 23,600 feet on Kamet, in Garhwal, one of the great peaks of the Himalayas (25,400 feet). He spent the winter at Darjeeling, conducting preparations for the expedition to Mount Everest, in which he had been specially asked to participate by the Joint Committee of the Royal Geographical Society and the Alpine Club. During the

winter he made various climbs in Sikkim, and early this year he climbed Narsing, nearly 20,000 feet high, and spent several nights above 20,000 feet on Kabru.

Dr. Kellas took an active part in training the Himalayan Porter Corps, which is employed in carrying the stores and equipment of the Mount Everest expedition. Particularly interested in the scientific side of climbing at high altitudes and the effects of the rarefied atmosphere on the human system, he conducted experiments in the use of oxygen cylinders as an aid to climbing at great heights. He had recently designed a new and lighter form of oxygen apparatus, and his intention was to test it in the expedition this summer. During last year he secured some wonderful telephotographic views of Mount Everest, showing great peaks to the north which hitherto had never been photographed. A number of his photographs, it will be remembered, were shown at last year's dinner of the Club.

A correspondent of the *Morning Post* who saw much of Dr. Kellas in what he thinks numbered four trips into Sikkim says he never rode a pony but "foot-slogged" every inch of the ground, even at the lowest altitudes. Tall, thin, and slenderly built as he was, it always appeared amazing that he could stand severe cold and rarefied air at 17,000 and 18,000 feet. The correspondent gives the palm among Dr. Kellas's achievements to the ascent of Pawhunri. In this region he believes that Dr. Kellas traversed passes exceeding 20,000 feet almost daily. He adds that Kampa Dzong, where Dr. Kellas died, is at least 15,000 feet up, and mountain sickness is more prevalent there and in north Sikkim than in eastern Sikkim.