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(pages 10-11)**

**The Kinchenjunga Expedition**

***(Special for The Englishman)***

Aug. 31. Third Glacier Camp 19,150 feet.

So far right to Kinchenjunga's big toe we have arrived without mishap. We are now just under the Talung Saddle, having crossed the Yalung glacier to its left side and we are on a rooky spur, which dams one of the glaciers from Kinchenjunga. This glacier looks as it might offer a point of attack to reach the western auête of our goal. Our advance party consisting of three Europeans and 20 coolies are about 1,000 feet above us, and have founded the 4th Camp which the aneroid registers at 20,000 feet. To reach this camp an almost continual ladder of steps cuts [sic] by the ice axe had to be made and as it takes nearly three hours' steady climbing to reach this camp, you can imagine the work it has enabled.

Now our troubles are beginning in earnest. Our coolies are almost in open rebellion owing to one of them having met his death by slipping and falling from the ice on to a rock precipice. This has cast a gloom over us all as so far no accident of any kind has happened to our party. The man had reached No. 4 Camp alright, but apparently did not relish having to sleep on the ice; so he started off back to No. 3 Camp against orders, and with three other men. His two companions descended the precipice and built a cairn over his remains which, they said, were in a terribly mangled condition. This has demoralized all the coolies with us, and we are in a bad fix being now only a few days from the summit but not a man will carry a load. To-night all the men, but two who were with the advance party have returned, the others having deserted their loads at the 4th camp.

Unluckily, as a route towards establishing a 5th camp higher up, was being cut (by this I mean steps for foothold being made) an avalanche, not of great dimensions, fell on the party. All fell, one of the natives just managing to grasp a rock, gave a chance to the others to anchor themselves with their ice axes.

This I am writing down on what they explained as the cause of having deserted the camp. Whatever we may wish to do, if all our coolies refuse to go higher, we are stranded. Much money, trouble, and personal discomfort will be for nothing except the exploration of an unvisited glacier, which one or two men with an eighth of our equipment could easily have done. This is pretty hard, but the Tibetans or Sherfs are not made of the stuff of mountain climbers. He will stand hardship and carry a load for many miles on a rough road but when it comes to pucca climbing his heart fails him and he loses his head. His superstition too about the gods that inhabit their high icy peaks is also against him. In his inmost heart he fears he is committing a sacrilege in helping mad sahibs to try and reach the seat of his gods. Only the high rate of wages and promises of baksheesh, besides daily rations can induce him to engage in such an expedition. He knows that when the road gets too bad for his liking he will refuse to go on and return to his former pasture. I do not think any law is available to punish him for deserting after having engaged for work which he well knew he would never accomplish. So things stand at present. I hope to be able to write you better news in my next letter if we can manage to persuade our coolies that they need only get our food, tents, etc., to a fifth camp, from whence we may be able to make a final dash to the summit and return in one day. All our labour will not have been in vain. As I am writing (6 p.m.) the guide that is being sent by the Nepal Dunbar has arrived in camp.

### **The Accident.**

Glacier Camp IV, Sept. 1.

I told you in my last of my meeting with the Doctor. It was about 9 o'clock in the morning. Shortly after, we decide to go up to the higher camp where our leader Crowley is. It is 10 o'clock when we actually start, taking with us twelve coolies to carry up some provisions. We found it difficult at first to get them to start but finally succeeded. The Doctor started ahead, but I soon caught him up. We are now marching on the real glacier. Each step has to be cut, and we are walking in about two feet of snow. We get upwards slowly, carefully studying each step with death beside us every moment.

We reach the ledge without any mishap. This ledge of rock is about the worst bit of stone I have ever trusted my life on, slanting downward with a 1,000 feet drop. It fortunately has a number of crevasses in which a finger hold may be had. We

scramble up like monkeys. After about 100 feet of this we are on the arrete here. We stop to gain breath. By 2 o'clock we reach camp which we find deserted, Crowley, Pache and Raymond having gone further up to try and find a site for camp VI. We hear their voices about 300 feet above us, but we cannot see them owing to the mist. We eventually see Crowley and four men seated, they dare not move as they have no rope. Pache and Raymond are far above them. They have reached the highest point attained by the expedition so far, as they must be about 21,500 to 22,000 feet. The Doctor, Crowley and I carry on a conversation by shouting. I inform Crowley of my decision to return to Darjiling as soon as I can manage to do so on account of certain personal matters which need not be mentioned here. I decide with the Doctor to start our descent by 3 o'clock.

Three o'clock comes and Crowley is shouting for a rope which none of our coolies will carry up. So the Doctor, not liking to leave them in a bad situation, decides to take it up himself. One of the men to whom he had made a present of a pair of boots and claws, goes with him. This causes a delay that proves fatal to us later. It takes an hour before they are all down. Meanwhile Pache and Raymond who are above, not finding a suitable place for a camp, are descending. Pache determines to come with us to camp III in the hope of finding his valise, a terrible determination which cost him his life, as well as the lives of three of our men, namely, Bahadur Lama, Thenduck, father of my servant of the same name, and coolie No. 29, Phubu, one of our best, and most willing men, and as near as possible the life of the Doctor and my own too.

Pache having determined to come with us, we had to wait for him, this kept us till 5 o'clock. I must say Crowley warned me of the danger of going down in such a large party, six on one rope, but as none of us had any bedding, it was out of the question to try and pass the night there, so taking his words more as a joke than in earnest (I believe, he told Pache he was not so sure of seeing him again) we started off all roped together. It was then exactly 5-10. I had taken Raymond's ice axe by mistake, so had to return it to him and had only a bamboo stick as help. As well as I can remember we were roped together in this fashion:—Guillamond, 1st as leader, I 2nd, Thenduck 3rd, Bahadur Lama 4th, Pache 5th, and Phubo last. The places of the last and 4th man may have been reversed. We got down to the path which was here very steep, but as four of us, viz., the Doctor, Pache, Phubu, and I, had claws on

to our boots the going was good, and we had a fastened rope to hang on to. About 20 minutes after leaving camp, the Doctor and I anchored ourselves. We were below the rest, and I had only the bamboo stick to stop myself with: suddenly the four men above us began to slide. We hoped they would be able to stop themselves, but the slope was too steep. They swept past us like lightning. The Doctor and I did the best we could to stop them but in vain, for as they rushed downwards they started an avalanche (the snow being in such a moist condition from the afternoon sun and easily moved) I was torn away from my anchor head downward, the Doctor vainly calling to me to hang on as we might be able to stop the others. I was pulled downward in what seemed a whirlwind of snow, I remember nothing during the fall. The Doctor followed and fell further down. I came to a few minutes after, hearing the Doctor calling and telling me to get up. I could not do so being pinned down on one side by the rope which was straight into the avalanche and on the other I was keeping the Doctor from falling further down the slope. Had he been killed by the fall I should have been helpless and most likely would have been frozen where I lay. The Doctor managed to get up, and, so taking his weight off me, I was able to rise.

Our first thought was for our unfortunate companions who lay under the snow. We had no ice axe or anything to remove the snow off our comrades. However, we set to work with our hands and tried to tug upwards. It was of no avail. We shouted meanwhile for help from those above. It was nobly responded to by Raymond who came down in double quick time, even glissading down the way the avalanche had come. When he got to the spot where we had jumped into a crevasse which the avalanche filled he took a mighty jump, but unluckily fell rather awkwardly hurting himself considerably. But this not stop him coming forward and eagerly digging away the snow in the hope of saving even one of our poor buried companions. We had now the ice axe, but the more we cut and shovelled the more snow there seemed to be. We worked for a good hour though we felt we should only recover corpses at such a depth. Still we worked on knowing they were many feet below the surface. All that men could do we did. Nor did we leave off in a hurry, for we were loth to leave them there. Night was falling, we had no snow shovels and so could do no effectual work. Much to our regret we had to leave them and try to find our way to the track.

We found we had slipped 300 ft. and so escaped the nasty

bit of rock and sloping bank mentioned before, though we were still above the ice bank that took so long to climb. It had now to be descended. How we got down I shall never be able to relate. Raymond on this slope saved my life three times. I am glad to say I was able to hold him once when he slipped. At the bottom of this shoot Thenduck, junior, was waiting for us with a lantern, he led the way bravely. It was now 7-30. Tired and sore, downcast at the loss of our comrades, slowly but surely yet with great difficulty we made our way over the glacier often stopping to cut steps out as we went along. Thenduck fell once about 30 ft., luckily unhurt, and the storm lantern uninjured. He was up and the lantern lighted and leading on when down I fell dragging Raymond with me, we were not much hurt. The remaining hundred yards of glacier seem the worst and longest to get across. Tired and exhausted too from want of food, having had only a couple biscuits at 9 a.m. we longed to reach camp. At last we arrived and after partaking of some food retired to rest.

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On Saturday afternoon writes the "Darjeeling Visitor" news was received in Darjeeling of the fatal accident that befell the Kinchenjunga Expedition. On Friday, the 1st instant while at an elevation of about 20,000 feet an ascent was made to find out something of the nature of the height that lay some miles in front of their camp. It was a steep climb and the snow lay thick. The afternoon was bright and the party had great hopes of getting some good views. While returning to camp about 5-30 in the afternoon, Messrs. Guillarmond, Pache, Righi and three natives were descending the snow having roped themselves to each other, but when near the end of the descent the whole party of six were swept down some 250 feet by an avalanche, which buried the whole party under the rushing snow. Dr. Guillarmond and Mr. Righi most miraculously managed to extricate themselves, but the rest of the four, Mr. Pache and the three natives could not be found. An hour's search was made but as darkness fell over the snows, the two survivors had to make their way to their camp some two miles away. The search was renewed the next morning, the fresh snow that had accumulated during the night made it impossible to discover the bodies. The survivors were badly bruised, but the rumour, in the station yesterday, that Mr. Righi had broken some ribs and had died, is not correct. This catastrophe has frightened the coolies

to such an extent that they refuse to go further, and the two Europeans are obliged to return from the very foot of Kinchenjunga. Mr. Crowley was already on his way back, Mr. Righi and the two Swiss gentlemen alone pursuing their adventurous course. Mr. Crowley will be back in a week and will be joined by Mrs. Crowley, who is expected to arrive from Calcutta at the end of the month. We are glad that Messers. Righi and Guillard are returning before further mishap befalls them and their coolies. The death of a European and three natives is most deplorable, and Government ought really to put a stop to people risking their lives in this way. During summer the snow is quite soft and the rains cause frequent avalanches, which are all the more dangerous during a short break of fine weather when the sun can beat on the snow. Some years ago Mr. Freshfield found climbing most difficult although he went much later in the season. Mr. Crowley would not even take a mountain guide with him, a man who would understand how to direct climbing parties and point out dangerous places.