

**THE ENGLISHMAN
CALCUTTA, WEST BENGAL, INDIA
12 October 1905
(pages 10-11)**

“The Kinchenjunga Expedition.”

The Return.

(From Our Special Correspondent.)

East of Kang La, Sikhim, Sept. 11.

As during the 2nd of September the Doctor, Reymond and myself were stiff from our bruises received the evening before, no one felt able to go up to the scene of the accident and we had per force to lay up. Mr. Crowley, our leader, joined us at about 9 o'clock and we learn that he intends leaving to-morrow "en route" for Darjeeling. He asked me if I was going too, to which I answered no, for reasons already stated. We watch from here the efforts made by Salama and Bahadur Singh to come down the track with the Burra Sahib's valise and his letter paper box. Raymond's valise is, of course, left above. They try to come down by the track, but cannot or do not like it, and try to come down by the snow slopes higher above the track, and nearer to where the avalanche fell but I think a gentle slope. This is where I believe the Doctor and Raymond wished the track to be made. They get down a certain distance, and then are seen to return higher up, and I think eventually come down by the old route, chancing a fall. They, however, reach camp quite safely. Nangar and his party, ordered by the Burra Sahib, go off to fetch the rest of the things down. We watch them getting over the bad slope near the rocks. They look like flies perched on a white wall. Slowly they go; it seems an age before every one is over and hidden by the rocks behind which Camp IV was. It is needless to say I am glad they are over safely. A little later we see them practically at Camp V. A great shout, truly a British cheer reaches us, which announces their safe arrival at Camp V, where they will sleep to-night and come down early next morning with all that has been left there.

3rd, September. The Doctor and myself pass a pretty bad night, his back being painful and my ribs and knee ditto, ditto. The party with Nangar start at about 6 o'clock, sliding some of the things down the slope from Camp V. These come down with

a rush, and pull up close to the side where the avalanche stopped. The rest is shouldered and brought down by them. The heliograph and cinematograph both have to be brought down ; the former now useless, the latter never used.

Practically all reaches camp by 11 o'clock, and then Mr. Crowley, 9 coolies, the 3 Kashmeeris and Bahadur Singh leave us and at 12 o'clock the Doctor, Reymond, and a party of coolies start off to find our lost comrades. They easily find the spot by the piece of severed cord, and after two hours' digging find the foot of Bahadur Lama and close by the leg of poor Mr. Pache. As it is now late 5 o'clock they cannot do more this evening, so they all start back for camp, and arrive just before darkness falls. The snow, they say, is deep above the two men, about 5 to 6 feet, and more underneath, so that the avalanche must have been a fairly large one.

The evening is again a fine one, not such a grand one, though, as the one of the 1st not a cloud anywhere, the air wonderfully clear, every peak stands boldly out like a silent sentinel against the sky lighted up by the now setting sun, whose yellow rays, reflected by the myriad facets of the eternal snows seem to strike on a mass of gold. Kinchinjunga towers above us defiant, satisfied with the heavy toll it has taken, truly a sight never to be forgotten. As night approaches the air becomes colder, and soon drives us to seek shelter inside of our sleeping bags, a mighty change from the noon day heat. The thermometer to-night falls to 5 degrees below zero centigrade.

September 4th. A gang of coolies started off this morning as soon as their frugal meal of sattu is disposed of to continue the work started yesterday. I see them off, still unable to attempt serious walking myself over glacier ice. They form a sad caravan, as three relations of the dead men go up with them, the two sons of poor old Thendock and the brother of Bahadur Lama. The fatalist sense is strongly developed in them. After the first heavy outburst of sorrow they understand the futility of battling against fate, and simply explain that their day has come, and nothing could have saved them no matter where they might be; who can gainsay them?

I watch them slowly climbing up the first ice wall, and then they are lost to sight till they reach the second, and eventually the spot where the bodies lie buried. We can plainly see with the aid of binoculars all phases of the work. By 12 o'clock all have been found. They prefer to re-bury their countrymen in conventional positions back in the ice, so, after a service by one

of the men who has been or is a Lama, they are placed in a small crevasse and covered up with snow.

The mortal remains of our comrade are carefully wrapped in a tarpaulin, and gently, by means of ropes, guided in its slide towards Camp III. We meanwhile fashion a rude coffin out of three square Kashmir Kiltas by cutting the ends and bending them down. After taking a last photograph, which will be sent to the relations, we remove the contents of his pockets and trinkets, his watch, signet ring, etc. Then, wrapped in a waterproof sleeping bag cover, we gently put him in the improvised coffin, which is tied up with the remains of the rope we used on the 1st Sept.

Nangar the Sirdar, without any orders, made a cross out of wood and this was placed on the coffin. We then lowered it in to a shallow grave alongside of an enormous block of granite, and in two days our coolies built a cairn six feet high. A rudely made cross fashioned out of a pair of "ski" surmounted this, perhaps the highest tomb in the world; by the help of a tiny chisel we were able to carve his name on a slab of granite: "Alexis A. Pache 1. IX. 1905". This simple work took nearly two days to do, mostly by Mr. Raymond. None of us felt good enough to repeat the Service for the dead, but I am sure a silent prayer was said in all our hearts.

So passes the eventful day. The cairn not being completed we decided to remain to-morrow. Stones are abundant, but most of them too large to be carried, so our coolies have to search around the hillside for suitable ones. This causes the delay in building the tomb. The appearance of our poor comrade proved to the Doctor that death must have been almost instantaneous, the face being florid, and wearing a peaceful look, although it was slightly bruised. The doctor said he had in every way the appearance of a drowned man.

5th. September. The cannonading of avalanches which has been going on all night still continues. On all sides large avalanches are falling. We get a magnificent view of one dropping off the Talang peak. It is an immense one, the largest we have seen we have seen since we have been here. Our attention is attracted to it at its beginning by a whip-like crack, and this enables us to watch its course. Ever growing in volume it looks as if a 110 tons gun has been fired loaded with black powder, the tiny column of fine snow at the start continually growing to larger dimensions developing as a cloud does in very windy weather. My impressions of it, as taken from my journal written

at the time imagine a mass of white clouds developing and enlarging as they come down, gathering quantity, volume and speed, till it reaches the glacier thousands of feet below and envelopes it in a white mist.

The day passes arranging all our loads for to-morrow's homeward march. Regretfully we have to turn our backs to this noble mountain, as after the events I have tried to give you an idea of, we think it right to give it up. On our asking the natives if they were willing to go on, much to our surprise they one and all answered "Yes", explaining that mighty Kanchen has five heads or peaks, and had claimed five men, it was now satisfied and we had only to try and we would succeed. Not seeing the logic of this, and as our native stores for the glacier were by now running low, we having kept on 78 men when we only intended to keep on 25, we had perforce to give up, as it would have meant our remaining at least for 20 days at Camp III before a direct march forward could be attempted on account of the heavy snow. Our work is complete by the afternoon. The cairn is finished, and we all ready for the march across the glacier to Camp 1 to-morrow. We get to bed early for a start betimes, as not only do we intend doing a double march to-morrow, but it will prove a hard one, in the lame condition we are all in.

6th. Sept. We are all up by 4-30, but do not get away till seven o'clock. Camp III no more. Its site is marked by the solitary tomb which will stand as a land mark for many years to come, and be a warning to future climbers who are sure to come in our wake. A last good bye and we are off for Darjiling with its civilisation and its comforts regretfully, and in a way gladly. We have had over a month of tent life with its disadvantages, and will be glad to get some bread to eat. Chappaties are but poor substitutes for it, and most indigestible. A little over a mile from Camp I come to the rocky face above what we named "False Camp IIII." I try to climb down alone, but finding my injured leg not to be depended on I wait for the doctor who helps me down. The walk over the rock-bestrewn glacier I shall never forget. My lame leg carries me well enough till I trip on a loose stone and fall and then. . . I won't weary you with a tale of woe. The climax comes when I reach what was Camp II, and sit down to eat some lunch. This I cannot do owing to extreme pain, and am obliged to keep on the move hoping to be able to reach Camp I. This I must absolutely do as all our coolies are ahead of us and camping anywhere else is out of the question.

Painfully, and the last few hundred yards supported by Mr. Reymond, we at last all reach the end of the day's march at 3-30, thankful that a most painful day is over.

7th. September. Dull and rainy day. As we are all more or less sore we decide to stop to-day, but send the coolies on ahead to carry all extra loads on, and come back for the rest to-morrow. Later in the day both the doctor and Mr. Reymond go out collecting Alpine flowers, which are here every where, and in a great many varieties. They come back loaded. I can do no photographs. We hope to have a clear day to-morrow morning, and get a last view of the five peaks of Kinchinjanga, also a panorama of this lovely spot.

Sept. 8.—Cloudy and rainy again this morning. No chance of any panorama, so climb up just above the camp, where I noticed last evening an enormous rock the exact face of a gigantic monkey. This I wish to record on a plate. On the opposite side of the Massif of Kabru I noticed another rocky peak, its flat top covered with snow, which greatly resembles the profile of the late Queen Victoria. I have taken several pictures of it with different exposures to make sure of having at least a good one. We hang about till nearly 9 o'clock in the hopes of the mist lifting, but at last have to leave and get across the last part of real ice we shall travel on as far as the Yalung is concerned. Three hours' steady walking see us at the Yalung camp, almost now deserted but for one or two coolies. We stop only just long enough to lunch, and then push on towards Tseram. On the road thence we meet a coolie with a chit from our departed leader saying that he has heard such awful accounts of the Jonzri route that he has decided to follow the Phaloot road. This determines us to follow the awful one. A little lower down we branch off the road to get to the final moraine; as the doctor wishes to make sure about whether this glacier is expanding or retreating. He finds it is the latter. I lose him in the thick mist, and thinking, getting no answer to my co-ee, he has gone further up to find the ice, I wait for nearly an hour in the wet mist. Wet and weary I leave him, and, much to my surprise, on arrival at Tseram, find him and Reymond in their tents, quaffing hot tea. We must have passed one another in the thick mist quite close by. We are now the centre of vision of quite a large crowd. The Nepali guide and his suite, consisting of two Kasi and a Havildar and their train of coolies become a nuisance, crowding in front of one's tent, when a change of soaking wet

clothes is a necessity. They are only got rid of by closing the tent flaps. I noticed hundreds of sheep coming in from Kambachen Valley, all on their way to Darjiling for the Puja holidays, so I am informed.

The rain does not stop pouring, but keeps on practically the whole night through. I get terrible dreams of all sorts of disasters, land-slips, avalanches and what not, caused by the bad indigestion I have been suffering from all along, and I suppose by the leaky state of my tent. My sleeping bag enclosed in the waterproof valise is surrounded by quite a small lake when I wake in the morning.

We are undoubtedly near Sikkim. Rain and clouds are the order of the day, very unsatisfactory from a photographer's view. Panoramas being out of the question we have to content ourselves with taking snap-shots of the lively scene around us. All the people here are eager to sell us the little ornaments they have but they are very poor. I did not see a single silver ornament among them except on the Nepaulese Subadar and the two Kasi, who had some gold rings. The rest apparently are satisfied with copper and brass. These are eagerly bought up or exchanged by my Swiss companion. I cannot resist buying another little [?????]. After a hard bargain I get it for Rs. 2-8. We dispose of our now useless native stores, but these are a drag on the market for want of buyers, and have at last to let Rs. 400 of rice, suttu, ghee and tea go for Rs. 80 for the lot. The old goitrous couple now come forward with a claim for compensation for some wood our coolies stole, without our knowledge, from the highest two huts. Ninety-six pice make them quite happy, and set their mass of wrinkles in motion. The satisfaction is mutual. They are glad to receive, we to get rid of the copper coins.

The guide asked for a little chit to say he did all we required, and is made happy by a present of a flexible watch bracelet for his "Missis," all of his party receiving some trinket or other as a remembrance of the Kinchinjunga Expedition.

When 12 o'clock comes so does the rain, but rain or no rain off we start, as if the road is so bad we must get over it as soon as possible. We intend camping under the Kang La to-night and over it to-morrow.

From Tseram we can get a good view of the final moraine. I turn once and say farewell with hope of seeing it again some other time. This time conquered perhaps next time victorious. "Chi lo sa."

As a large herd of sheep passed through this morning, our last remaining sheep took occasion to join them, and we only get them back by the intervention of the Subadar, who, by mistake chooses the fattest of the flock. Just below the little plateau on which Tseram nestles, we cross the tumultuous Yalung Chhu, and in twenty minutes are in the Kang and Semo La Valley. This time we do not cross the stream which rises from the Kangla and flows into the Jhung Chhu but keep to its right aide, and after a steady climb for two hours along a narrow rock strewn path through fine pasture land studded with a great variety of Alpine flowers, we eventually reached a suitable camping ground. The billy is soon set aboiling, and the steaming, but not ever hot cup of tea brings joy to tired beings. The weather now takes a wonderfully quick change for the better, and we have a magnificent evening. Not a cloud remains in the blue sky, which gradually deepens in colour. The brown rugged rocky peaks stand above us gilded by the rays of the setting sun. The moon rises early, and floods us with its bringing out the weird shapes where the shadows are deepest. But as the air gets chiller we soon seek refuge in our tents and quietness reigns in the camp, broken now and again by snatches of some Tibetan melody from under the rocks where our followers have taken shelter. We are now on our way home, and their hearts are lighter.

Sept. 10.—Dawn breaks most fine and clear. After a hurried breakfast I start off ahead to find the path and, if possible, to an unclouded view from the top of the pass which, I believe, is a good hour's walk. The slight vegetation is soon left behind rising out of even grass, and then to my sorrow, I am back on the moraine once more. I notice one or two "Steinmann" and wonder if these may be some made by Mr. Douglas Freshfield's party in 1899, as we are now following in their footsteps. The scenery becomes bleaker as I mount on and on, but still no pass in sight, I am eventually forced to halt and rest, having lost so often the hardly visible path, and made my march much longer by three detours. I get at last in sight of the top of the pass, a mass of ice. I have been walking hard since seven o'clock; it is now 11, and I have still a good hour to get to the top; seeing the uselessness of continuing I sit down to wait my companions, watching a covey of partridges scurrying up the rocks. Having no gun I have to content with watching. My friends soon join me and we push on. At exactly noon we are at the top of the Kang La (the ice pass) so named because cov-

ered all the year round by ice, this being really a glacier with two outlets to the East and West.

The Kang peak rises nearly 2,000 feet above the pass, which is given on the map as 16,340, the peak itself being over 18,000, a rugged mass of rock and ice. The view with the exception of the Kang peak though fine is too closed in by the bare rocky hills, no snowy mountains being visible, as we thought might be the case. We are lucky to get there in time and find the Kang peak unclouded, but soon after we are enveloped in a small snow storm, which makes us hurry over our lunch and by 4 o'clock we reach our night's camp from where this is written.