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THE DISASTER ON KANGCHENJUNGA.

In our last number we were only able briefly to record the disaster in which one of the three Swiss members of a party that started last summer to attempt Kangchenjunga lost his life, together with three coolies.¹ The party consisted of three Swiss, Dr. Jacot-Guillarmod, Mr. Reymond, and Lieutenant Pache. They put themselves under the leadership of an Englishman, writing over the signature Aleister Crowley, and described by the 'Daily Mail' as its 'Special Commissioner.' He had been one of the companions of Dr. Jacot-Guillarmod in a cosmopolitan company that visited the Karakoram in 1902. Crowley, to whom the commissariat arrangements had been entrusted, added to the party an Italian hotel-keeper from Darjiling, named De Righi. The expedition proceeded by the Singalila ridge and the Chumbab La to the Yalung valley, and having marched up the glacier at its head attacked the great curtain of icy slopes which falls from the base of the cliffs of the S.W. face of Kangchenjunga. They succeeded in establishing a camp at 6,200 m. (20,343 ft.), and some of them, according to Dr. Jacot-Guillarmod, climbed 1,000 ft. higher. Crowley's account of the disaster which, on September 1, put a stop to the expedition has been widely circulated in this country in the 'Daily Mail' and in India in the 'Pioneer.' It is strongly objected to by the remaining European members of the party, and in justice to them we think it right to reproduce in an abbreviated form a portion of the narrative published by Dr. Jacot-Guillarmod in the 'Gazette de Lausanne' (November 11, 1905). The party, at least all its European members, were assembled in the middle of the day, on September 1, at the highest camp. In the afternoon Dr. Guillarmod, Lieutenant Pache, and De Righi, with three natives, started to descend the glacier to a lower camp, leaving Crowley and Reymond at the higher. Crowley states that he warned them of the danger they were incurring in descending so late in the day with a large party. While *traversing* a snow-slope the two coolies who were in the middle slipped, dragging with them Pache and the third native, who were behind, and the Doctor and De Righi, who were in the front. The two last-named escaped with a severe shaking. Their four companions, Pache and the three natives, were buried in the

snow brought down by the fall. The cries of the survivors soon summoned Reymond, who found apparently no difficulty in descending alone from the upper camp. Crowley, however, by his own avowal, remained in the tent in bed, drinking tea, and on the same evening wrote a long letter, printed in the 'Pioneer' of September 11, from which the following sentences are culled: 'As it was I could do nothing more than send out Reymond on the forlorn hope. Not that I was over anxious in the circumstances to render help. A mountain "accident" of this sort is one of the things for which I have no sympathy whatever. Tomorrow I hope to go down and find out how things stand.' In another letter, written three days later and published on the 15th, he explains that it would have taken him ten minutes to dress, and that he had told Reymond to call him if more help was wanted, which he did not do. The first search for the bodies was in vain. They were not found until 3 days later (after Crowley had left the party), buried under 10 ft. of snow.

Into the internal dissensions of the travelers, discussed at lamentable length in the newspaper correspondence, we must decline to enter. In the conditions described, and with for a leader a man capable of writing the extraordinary letters printed in the 'Pioneer,' trouble in camp and disaster on the mountain were to be looked for. We will only add for the sake of foreign members and readers who have not seen these letters that the 'Special Commissioner' of the 'Daily Mail' has never had any connection with the Alpine Club. To these who have seen the letters in question this statement will be altogether superfluous.²

We gladly turn to the topographical results of the expedition, the chief of which is the exploration of the Yalung basin, which lies enclosed between the back of Kabru, the Talung saddle, Kangchenjunga, and the long ridge that connects it with Jannu. Dr. Guillardmod has brought back many photographs, some of which we shall no doubt see in due time. One, of the scene of the accident, has been published in the 'Sphere' (November 18). Meantime he has promised to correct the delineation of the Yalung glacier in Mr. Garwood's map, which Mr. Freshfield has put at his disposal for this purpose. In view of some recent and possible future criticisms Mr. Freshfield asks us to call attention to the statements made in his 'Round Kangchenjunga' with respect to this portion of the map. On p. 210 he points out that he has been reduced for the Yalung basin to 'interpret the probable import of the strange indications (of Rinsing's, the native explorer's, MS. map) by analogy from his treatment of the other glaciers we

explored in detail.' On p. 304 Mr. Garwood repeats this statement. On the map itself two marks of interrogation are placed on the Yalung glacier, and in the corner is this note: 'Where ? are placed on the map the topographical material at hand was inadequate.' The spur of Jannu and the buttress of Kangchenjunga mentioned in the correspondence are clearly indicated on the map and in the illustrations in Mr. Freshfield's volume, where the latter is numbered 4 (see plates opposite pp. 122, 158, and 234).

With regard to climbing Kangchenjunga some additional facts have been ascertained. From the highest basin of the Yalung glacier slopes, variously estimated at from 20° to 50°, lead up to the base of the cliffs of Kangchenjunga. These slopes are, it appears, not, in so far as they have been climbed, difficult, but very dangerous for any but properly shod and practiced mountaineers. They should not be attempted except by a party whose porters have, and have learnt to use, crampons. They would appear to abut on the base of the cliffs just to the W. of the highest peak of Kangchenjunga, where a broad, sloping shelf runs up close to a singular horseshoe crag.³ It is conceivable that a way to the top of Kangchenjunga may be forced in this direction. But in the panorama for which we have to thank Dr. Guillardod the middle slopes are too much foreshortened for it to be easy to judge as to their character, while the upper cliffs, so conspicuous in the views from above Jongri, almost disappear.

In another and more important respect we trust that this disastrous expedition may have results which will, to some extent, compensate for the temporary discredit it has brought upon mountaineering in India. All who are seriously interested in Himalayan exploration must join with us in the hope that the authorities at Calcutta may recognize the expediency of exercising in future the same caution they have, as a rule, exercised in the past before facilitating the entrance of travelers into the native States or territories on the northern frontiers of India.

The Indian Government gave, it will have been noticed, the expedition commanded by the 'Special Commissioner' of the 'Daily Mail' very unusual assistance. Mr. White and Mr. Dover, the local officers in Sikhim, procured coolies for it; permission was even applied for and obtained from the Nepalese authorities for it to enter their territory. The travelers, as was to be expected, had trouble with the coolies, and then blamed the Government in place of themselves and the nature of the coolies. Fortunately they did not penetrate far into Nepal, for we tremble to think what complications might have been produced by a

leader who has apparently not only succeeded to the post but also inherited the methods of Mr. Savage Landor.

1—One coolie had previously perished by a fall on treacherous snow.

2—The correspondence can be read in the back of 'Cuttings' kept in the Club rooms.

3—See illustration opposite p. 234 of 'Round Kangchenjunga,' and paper on How to Climb Kangchenjunga,' *Alpine Journal*, vol. xxii, No. 164.