

**Kanchenjanga:
The Story of the 1905 Expedition
by Aleister Crowley**

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Bandobast

How ridiculous appear those persons who claim that romance is dead, when one remembers that one has but to walk down to Northumberland Avenue and take one's passage on a pirate ship! How ridiculous, when a single week's march from the railway plunges one into the depth of a gloomy and forbidden land, into forests whose leeches make them all but impassable, and upon glaciers whose terrible solitudes have never yet been invaded by man! Yet this spice of adventure is not to be obtained without an infinity of trouble. Now that amateurs—mostly Austrians, more shame to England and the Club that has crushed every spark of mountain ability from the youth thereof!—hold all the strictly Alpine records, the glamour that superstition lent has all but faded from the great European chain, while the Canadian hills are unlikely ever to recover from the infamous nomenclature which has branded their innocent snow-fields with the names of so many nonentities by a scheme of mutual admiration which was formerly the monopoly of *belles-lettres*. Even in the Himalayas, the last resort of the lover of solitude and common decency, we have been saddled with such horrors as Mount Godwin-Austen, Mount Bullock-Workman, and the unspeakable like. Only the punning allusion with its Nirvanic suggestion renders Everest a pleasant enough substitute for the noble Chomo Kankar—but it is a mere

piece of luck that Colonel Everest was not called Colonel Snooks. Many, with a cynicism not unforgivable, would urge that it would be in full accordance with the spirit of the age that a beautiful mountain should own some hideous name—it is to avoid that spirit, though but for a while, that I am about to seek the solitudes of Kinchenjunga. As a concession, let me promise that should I succeed in reaching the summit, it will be my pride and pleasure to rechristen it Mount Brodder.

Arriving at Darjeeling after an uneventful voyage, I first gave vent to my feelings, as in my previous article, and then set about to see what preparations were necessary. Had I been Mr Pierpont Morgan I should presumably have approached the King-Emperor with a view to purchasing his Indian dominions; it would have been a waste of money, for the resources of the Empire are generously at the disposal of the reasonable traveller. Nothing can exceed the personal kindness and practical help which everybody concerned is only too ready to bestow. The Government will take every possible trouble that can be of any service; that is, to a responsible expedition with an intelligible object. It is no doubt true that a certain charming lady, who has acquired no small reputation in Mahomedan circles by beating her husband from time to time in front of his coolies, somewhat loudly complains that she finds Anglo-Indians uncivil and disinclined to help. If this is really so, it is most extraordinary. Don't you think so? For myself, I must not let slip the opportunity of saying how very highly I value the innumerable kindnesses I have received on all hands. From the very start my formidable task was smoothed on its broader lines, while in the details I received much help when an enthusiastic Italian gentleman, M. Rigo de Righi, the able young manager of the Drum-Druid Hotel, at which it is my much-prized privilege to stay, proposed to me to allow him to join us. As he speaks both Hindustani and Tibetan, and has had six

years' experience of the natives of these parts, my scruples were easily overcome.

Defamation of Character!

The next business requiring attention was to find a head man to contract for and manage coolies. M. de Righi knew an excellent fellow; but he was in prison! This, however, as you know, is no drawback to a man's character in this country. Crime is common enough, but so is conspiracy. It is consequently the merest toss-up whether a given prisoner is a sinner or a victim. Anyway, if he is a good man at his job, nobody cares. So when he came out I engaged Nanga Sirdar in spite of the following communication of a jealous rival:—

"To the General Sahib, Darjeeling.

"Sir,—I beg most humbly and respectfully to bring to your kind notice that your honor I am Nima Serdar conductor of Sikim feuld and interpeter tibetan language, and your honour has been submitted my Testimonial and your Trustworthy my certificate and allow me for act after a some weeks and therefore your honor beg to inform you I having heard Nungan Sirdar was servant of woodlands Hotal and he stole a Rickshaw of his Masters and sold at in Kurseong a Gentleman when the Manageress got traceing and he was santenced for One year, and alone said Nungan Sidar freen from the Jail to this morning and appear before you for the work, he is acused, how will be found gentlemans cook, and you will kindly enquiring to the Matter and consedered, and I shall ever, pray.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your most obedient servent,
NIMA SERDAR BHOTIA,
Darjeeling, 24 6-05."

Thanks for the information sent by Mr Dover from Gantok, in Sikham, I began to get a grasp of the bandobast—

that nightmare of the amateur lexicographer—that would be requisite. Darjeeling is practically the last post where supplies can be obtained; it is unsafe to reckon on anything beyond. Now, if a coolie carries 80 pounds and eats 2 pounds a day, how many coolies must one engage to carry 100 loads of 80 pounds each to a distance of 20 marches from the base of supplies? I leave my readers to work out the answer, but the net result of my own problem, which was very much more complicated, was that I decided to send on 8,000 pounds of rice, *dal*, *ghi*, salt, *satu* (made of barley, gram, and other foods, which they mix with hot water and chew; Mr Dover remarks that a man can only eat 1 1/2 pounds, eating all day), chiles, and other nutritious and succulent commodities for the coolies to Jongri, at the south foot of the Guicha La, one of the passes over the east branch of the south outlying spur of the Kinchenjunga massif, the spur that connects it with Pandim. In view of the persistent rains of Sikkim, this food had to be tinned and soldered up, and, in view of the presumable carelessness of the coolies, I decided to pack the tins in a rough wooden framework. Behold, then, a vast collection of old paraffin tins, crates, sacks of food, carpenters, plumbers, and other necessary adjuncts to the task of carrying civilization to the snows upon the verandah outside my room in the Drum-Druid Hotel.

Skating in Hades

Under the constant personal supervision of M. de Righi or myself the work went steadily on, till on July 24th and 25th 110 loads in all left for Jongri. Mr White, of the Political Department, was kind enough to supply the coolies for this purpose; and I have also specially to thank him for the trouble he took in sending for his photographs from Gantok and Calcutta, so that I might have an opportunity of examining them. In spite of my continual ill-health—people who would go to Darjeeling as a

health resort would go to Hades for the skating—the work went on steadily enough. Calculations, lengthy bargainings, careful weighings, more careful inspections, occupied days and nights—there is no "bridge" for the luckless man who is sent on ahead to make the bandobast. Whatever he forgets is finally forgotten. Neither wealth nor intellect will conjure up in the wilderness of glaciers a single ounce of sugar that has not been taken at the start and nursed carefully up to the moment it is needed. Lists, labellings, numberings, cross-checkings, weighings—where is Romance gone now? And I feel with a peculiar shame that nine-tenths of the population of London would do this job a great deal better than I can. Well done or badly done, however, it *is* done; and I have nothing to do but wait for my three old comrades, the shikaris Salama, Ramzana, and Subhana, who are coming over from Kashmir to stiffen the transport service, and the doctor, who with his two friends Raymond and Pache, should soon arrive from Switzerland. Being extensively ill, I take ten days in Calcutta to recruit; and no sooner does the beautiful warmth of the plains get into my Darjeeling sodden carcass, than I feel fit to do anything in the world. As the Duke of Wellington pointed out long ago, Calcutta is only "unhealthy" for the beef-and-pork, guzzling, whiskey-swilling folk who insist on treating it as if it were Sussex.

I wish the rest of the party would turn up. But they have been shipwrecked in the Gulf of Suez—which is undignified—and I suppose will turn up four days late with a ton or so of provisions which they are bringing out from Switzerland. So that I have let this article run on, perhaps unduly; but what fun it will be in three weeks' time when I can go in for a thousand poetical descriptions of the march to the foot of the mountains!

Part Two On the Kinchin Lay: The March

We left Talut after a welcome day of rest; the weather itself seemed to have got tired, or perhaps mountain-sick, and it merely drizzled as I went down to Chabanjong, on Mr White's coolies, amusing himself by watching an Italian flag which he had brought and hoisted. If I had known, I would have brought him a clockwork toy. The coolies had, however, left, and it was with a few words of gentle admonition that I persuaded our men to follow me up the steep path to the ridge. The coolie if he sees a place fit to sleep in, thinks it is a shame not to do so. However, my kind words, which I have every reason to believe will never die, prevailed. The ridge beyond Chabanjong is heavily forested, and I spent a good deal of time blazing the trees. In the words of a great American poet and gentleman,

*"His sinuous path, by blazes, wound
Among trunks grouped in myriads round."*

As Poe justly remarks: "'By blazes' is not intended for an oath."

The weather, all the fresher for its repose, came down heavier than ever, and it was a miserably soaked Crowley that squatted, in spite of the arthritis in his left knee, under a rock, and prayed for the tents. I don't know where this camp was, they called it Chuaktanko. The road is everywhere an unexpectedly excellent mountain track, right from Chabanjong to the end of this article.

Leading the Guide

On Monday, the 14th, we went miserably on, though it cleared for a short time at midday, and on the 15th we

reached what I believe to have been the Neglo Cave. I refrain from harrowing my readers by vivid descriptions of the beastly condition of body and mind in which one remained. The 16th was too wet to make a start; it came down in sheets; and there wasn't a dry blanket in the party, so the sheets had to do. We were somewhat cheered in the afternoon though, for what we at first supposed to be a drowned marmot turned out to be a Head Constable from Darjeeling with a letter from the Deputy Commissioner informing us that the Nepal authorities consented to our invasion, and would send a responsible guide to conduct us to Klunza and other places to which we did not want to go. However, we will guide him instead.

On the 17th the weather was again mountain-sick, the symptoms being those described by Sir Martin Conway, perhaps the finest stylist of his age, as "an extreme disinclination for any form of exertion." Anyhow, it did not rain till eight o'clock. I took advantage of this to climb a viewpoint in the neighbourhood, but it availed me little. I got down into the valley of Gamotanj at a quarter to five after nine hours' walking and three hours' sitting in the rain arguing with Mr White's coolies, over whose proceedings I will draw a veil. As to the scenery, it was exactly like average Welsh mountain scenery, in every detail but the flora and the fauna. The Valley of Gamotanja is, however, worth seeing; I recommend everybody to go there. Closely skirted on all sides, one gets the whole sweep of the richly forested vale up to the bare grey rocks, and behind one may catch a glimpse of the snows. If one could only see crooked one could see much more. Things are badly arranged after all, as Buddah pointed out, though the fact of his having been a voluptuary for twenty-two years and an ascetic for six may to some minds detract from the value of his opinion.

Travellers' Comfort!

From Gamotanjan the road mounts to a lovely scene. Of lakes in these journeys one soon becomes *blasé*, and passes with scarce a glance dozens of places, the most commonplace of which would make the fortune of any European resort, and thence goes steeply to the Chumbab by a steep yet excellent track. On the far Nepalese side one slogs along over the stony track for a long way, until a great block of quartz stuck up squarely in a valley with a very inadequate space of level grass around it bade us halt for the night. The doctor, who was rear-guard, did not arrive until long after dark; we set up lamps to light him to his happy home. Several of the coolies did not arrive at all, preferring to curl themselves up under rocks and sit out the night, but the next morning all turned up as brisk and lively as ever. I decided to go on with the doctor to Tseram, an outlying village—if three huts make a village in Nepal—to save the messenger of the Maharaja the trouble of ascending to the Kang La to meet us, and ourselves a similar misery. We consequently started at about half-past ten, and crossed a pass—perhaps the Semo La—which took us into the Tseram valley. We crossed the stream by a native bridge, at least I did; the doctor, sailing along an hour behind everybody, preferred to wade up to his waist. It is related by Sir Martin Conway, perhaps the finest mountaineer that the world has ever seen, that his balance is so perfect that he never crossed one of these native bridges without first attaching to himself by a stout rope two other men, preferably Alpine guides, one on each side of him, thus securing their safety on the dangerous passage. I can make no claim to rival this exploit, and walked over tamely, allowing my men to take their own chance. We camped just below Tseram in the wettest weather we had yet experienced, and, hearing that there was a Customs House at Tseram, I sent to bid the man to my presence, so as to get in

touch at once with Nepalese authority. But I was fated to do a "Mariana in the Moated Grange" stunt, and when, in the morning, I went off up the Yalung Valley, I found nobody but an aged and very goitrous couple, and higher still a solitary shepherd.

An Interval for Dreams

I left a man at Tesram to explain matters to the Maharaja's "guide" and went on up the valley, which now took on the truly mountainous character, by a delightful path. I was rewarded by a fine day; and the tremendous ridge of Kabru, with its splendid masses of ice, made a magnificent background to the glacier with its morains of quartz glistening silver-grey in the sunlight. Before eleven o'clock I reached what in Norway would be called a Saeter—an upland farm with nobody in it. The height, as nearly as I could judge, was from fourteen to fifteen thousand feet—until calculations are properly worked out, we do not care to specify more closely. I was immensely struck by the imagination shown by Mr Garwood in his charming effort to depict the physical features of this glacier, which neither he nor any other European had seen. Surely of him it was written: "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." I can hardly bless him though, for his trifling omission to mark as a summit the great rounded peak, second or third in length to Kinchinjanga, caused me at first considerable trouble. A boy at school who made a similar blunder would probably have remarked in his next day's "Essay on Pleasure" that of all pleasures sung by poets, those of sitting down were the most overrated.

Never mind, I may see the mountain itself tomorrow, and in the meantime here I am lying lazily on the grass in the sunshine—the march ended and the glacier to begin—feeling exactly like the famous spadger at the superb moment in his career when he sat on the grass, and gave the thunderstorm to understand that he felt

nothing but contempt for it. So I muse on Kubla Khan and the Ancient Mariner, most appropriate fragments from which come floating into my consciousness every other minute, until the night falls, and I slide into delicious dreams, while Venus, Jupiter, and the moon watch over me. In the morning I wake from dreaming that Government have employed me to survey the entire continent (probably suggested by my struggles with the map), and that, having successfully completed my task, I am about to be invested with three and perhaps four letters to my name, to the far gladder feelings that today I may walk into sight of my long-wished for goal.

Part Three
On the Kinchin Lay:
The Glacier

On Tuesday, August 22nd, the Doctor and I went up the right bank of the glacier to a small grassy spur jutting from one of the buttresses of Jannu,¹ where we established our Camp I. The last hour was over moraine as bad as only virgin Himalayan moraine can be. On the 24th we went on to Camp II, a mere ledge under an overhanging rock; the road was good, save for some short passages, where we were obliged to take to the moraine.

The 25th was a more eventful day, for, having carefully pointed out to the Doctor and Reymond, who had joined us at Camp II, the route to be followed, I thought I was safe in going ahead and finding a good spot for a camp. I did so, by a large square boulder, which I solemnly climbed, and proposed to call Pioneer Boulder, in delicate compliment to Sir Martin Conway's Pioneer Peak. The points of analogy are salient; nobody ever saw it before nor probably will ever see it again. There is, however, this point of difference, that I certainly saw it at the time, and there is no doubt whatever that it is thereto be seen. It is open to anyone who has been on

the Baltoro Glacier to doubt the existence of Pioneer Peak.

Well, at Pioneer Boulder I waited all day, while the Doctor led his coolies in a circular direction round the head of the valley, letting them camp at the foot of the ridge (Pioneer Ridge), so that I had to run down and join them, in a mood to ice-axe the lot. I said little, however, having to bewail the fact that the rearguard was already becoming slack in the matter of sending supplies up. The Doctor's excuse for stopping on his ridiculous glacier was the rumour that I had broken my leg on the moraine.

It may yet take generations to teach people that mountain accidents are always the results of incompetence. A man who breaks his leg on a moraine is only fit to walk up Ludgate Hill between steady guides. On the 26th we went slowly up to the Pioneer Boulder, Camp III.

On the 27th, I awoke at 3 a.m., and by stupendous efforts got off the men by six o'clock. The Doctor strongly opposed me, urging that the men should be allowed to warm themselves thoroughly before starting; in other words, to goat about 11 o'clock, when it is too hot, and the snow too soft, to make any progress worth speaking of. We went on to the glacier ice at once, and soon began to mount the actual slopes of this ridgelet of Kinchinjunga. The men were much afraid of falling, but a short exhibition of glissading on my part soon convinced them there was nothing to fear. Unfortunately, both the Doctor and Reymond were a little out of sorts, and contributed by their evident fear of the perfectly easy slope to the demoralization of the coolies. However, we at last reached Camp IV by a somewhat nasty slope of rock. The camp itself is perched on a little ledge, and is highly inconvenient. The next day we were obliged to rest, the Doctor being very ill. In the afternoon Pache arrived unexpectedly, and without orders. It was becoming increasingly evident that my

comrades were too ignorant to understand that any instructions I gave were for the good of all, and they consequently began the practice of finding ingenious excuses for disobedience. Immediate result: one of Pache's men went off somewhere on his own account, fell, and was killed.

On the 29th the Doctor recovered, went down to find the body, and sent up Pache's valise and some food. Pache had left his coolies half an hour from the camp, and they had, of course, run away. Nobody here will agree with me that strong measures should be taken to prevent the dastardly crime of desertion, nor back me up in any way.

With Pache and Reymond I went up the slopes to Camp V, on the next edge of the little ridge. Reymond works well, but is always annoyed that I will not go first. It is not laziness on my part, though I am as lazy as any man ever was, but the necessity of getting the coolies to go, which they will never do unless authority is behind.

On the 30th we rested and starved, and Pache shivered, no valise nor petroleum having arrived. I spent the morning screwing our shovels to the spikes provided for them, the first occasion on which I have been able to keep on making original spades without protest from dummy. Not a sign of any relief party. Oh, if only I could be in the rear guard! But, unfortunately, there is nobody who can choose the route but myself, and to give orders, instructions, or explanations is becoming sheer waste of breath or paper. Nothing short of the eloquence of Sir Boyle Roche plus the aptitudes of his bird would have set things straight. Camp V, where I write this, is some 20,000 feet high, as near as I can judge.

On the 31st the men whom I had sent down to try to get some food returned, having partially succeeded, and I immediately took some of them to make a way up the slopes of the ridge of the little Subyichany peak (which I may call for the moment Peak Y), under which I

am sitting. From this ridge I hope to force a passage to the ridge of Kinchinjunga, or to the column visible from Darjeeling. These slopes proved excessively bad after a while, the snow lying thin or hard blue ice at an angle of 50 degrees or more. Easy enough for me with my claws; difficult or impossible for the men. The leader in fact who was unroped, fell but, supporting him, I caught and held him safely. But the shock of the fall shook his nerves, and he began to untie himself from the rope. A sharp tap brought him to his senses, and probably saved his life; the only occasion on which I have had to strike a man. I insisted on continuing the ascent for the sake of moral; but, finding things grew worse, went back before nightfall. The men, however, all went down during the night, with wonderful stories of how they had all been swept away by an avalanche, and how the "Bara Sahib" had beaten them with axes and long sticks, and was going to shoot them, and how—But is there any limit to the Tibetan imagination?

On the 1st September I renewed the assault with the four men left me, and after a good deal of trouble, Reymond, Pache, and Salama got up the worst of the ice slopes. Again disregarding the instructions I had given, they went on with the rope out of sight and call, so that I was left sitting four hours on the slope, unable to get my three loaded men either up or down. The Doctor and De Righi arrived at Camp V, the latter full of petty personal pique, and not in the least ashamed of his failure to supply our camp with food; on the contrary, resolved to desert us, though, in the generosity of his heart, he actually offered to leave us our servants! I descended to Camp V, having with great difficulty induced the Doctor to send up a rope and a man to help down my poor coolies.

On the safe arrival of all at camp—it was later in the day, about 5 o'clock—I especially warned De Righi and Pache, neither of whom knew anything about mountains, of the folly of attempting to descend to Camp III

at that time with the Doctor, who, I assured them, at the best to be benighted on the mountain. But the Doctor was in great form, and insisted on taking down every man, except Salama and my personal servant, Bahadar Singh, thus leaving me perfectly helpless. My last words to him were that I should descend in the morning *en route* for Darjeeling, and to Pache that I hoped I should see again, but did not expect to. Ignorant or careless of the commonest precautions for securing the safety of the men, they started off, and I turned into my tent with the gloomiest anticipations—justified in half an hour by frantic cries for help and a shout from below that all save the Doctor and De Righi had fallen and were dead.

Raymond hastily set out to render what help he could, though it was perfectly out of the question to render effective aid. Had the Doctor possessed the common humanity or common sense to leave me a proper complement of men at Camp V instead of doing his utmost to destroy my influence, I should have been in a position to send help. As it was, I could do nothing more than send out Raymond on the forlorn hope. Not that I was over-anxious in the circumstances to render help. A mountain "accident" of the sort is one of the things for which I have no sympathy whatever.

It was night, and the finest and loveliest sunset I had ever seen in these parts; the tiny pale crescent of Astit glimmering over the mighty twin peak of Jannu,² the clouds lying over the low highlands of Nepal, while the mighty masses of ice and rock behind me, lit by the last reflection of the day, stood up reproachfully, like lovers, detached as if they knew that I could do no more.

Tomorrow I hope to go down and find out how things stand; but in no case shall I consent to continue a journey in which the most necessary orders are construed as brutal tyrannies, and in which the lives of the men as dear to me as my own are wantonly sacrificed to stupidity, obstinacy, and ignorance.

Part Four
On the Kinchin Lay:
Mountains or Metaphysics?
(part one)

At earliest dawn, therefore, and not before, I arose and girded myself and set my tent in order, and got on my claws and hefted up mine axe, and ran at great random down the slopes, like Galahad going for the Grail. (I hope I am justified in asserting a casual connection between the purity of my heart and the decuplation of my strength.) Hardly five minutes from Camp V, I came on the place of the accident; and like the late John Keats, except that they were boots, I stood in my shoes and I wondered, I wondered, I stood in my shoes and I wondered. It was a baby avalanche on a baby slope. Exceptionally timid ski-runner as I am, I had proposed the previous morning to go down on ski. Reymond had glissaded down to the rescue; a fact which speaks volumes, that even Reymond had not discovered a cornice (Reymond, I should explain, "sees cornices" everywhere, just as some other people "see snakes.") I would gladly have started a similar avalanche and sailed down on it—head first if required—for the sheer fun of the thing, as I have done many times in the Alps and elsewhere.

There needed no ghost to come from the grave to tell me what had happened. Six men closely roped will set sliding a mass of snow where a solitary man would pass safely. Six men roped sliding down in a whirl of snow—each man hampers his neighbour, neutralises his efforts to keep on top, drags him deeper, and perhaps jerks the very breath out of his body.

There are undoubtedly uses for ropes—a lot of people would be better hanged—and there are, of course, situations in mountaineering when a rope, properly used—*properly used*—*PROPERLY USED*—conduces to safety.

But most people put on a rope just as an African savage hangs a spent cartridge-case to his waist to ward off fever or the attack of ghosts, and think that, as long as they have got it on, they are immune to all the shocks of Fate. Despite the tragedy—and a true Greek tragedy it is, seeing how the ultimate catastrophe was involved in, and deducible, even at the first to a truly wise eye, from the characters of the Doctor and Righi—one experienced, the theory of mountain craft ever next one's heart, a certain sombre joy, such as Cassandra must have felt when she beheld tall Hium lapped with flame, and heard the crash of the ruining palaces, and the death-cry of their thousand heroes. The Doctor's last words to me had been "I don't care *that* for you!" Don't Care was made to care; Don't Care was nearly killed in an avalanche.

Considering the text of the agreement, signed by all of us—"Aleister Crowley shall be sole and supreme judge of all matters respecting mountain craft, and the others will obey his instructions," on which sole condition I had travelled 8,000 miles and contributed much good gold—this open defiance was a very flagrant contravention. Even Reymond (that morning) had been very difficult to start; but the counter to his "Tu commences a m'em-bêter," "Et vous a me tutoyer," had aroused his better self.

Hearing noises on the rocks below Camp IV, I did not descend the avalanche track, where the sight of two bamboos some five feet below the path puzzled me, since I still supposed the "accident" to have occurred on the steep the ice below Camp IV, but approached that camp, calling aloud "Who is there?" No answer; the noises died away. Soon they began again; I could have sworn I heard voices. Again I called, and again dead silence fell. Almost I began to think myself the prey of an hallucination. Passing Camp IV, I went down the snow, and on arriving at steep ice, saw that the snow which should have covered it had fallen away for some

twenty feet of width, and only fragments of the regulated track still stuck to the ice. Here, I thought, was the scene of the catastrophe, and I began to suspect that there had been two "accidents" instead of one. Moving slowly across the bad patch, I felt that curious certitude that there was somebody behind—one which most people will recognise—a sensation, presumably a relic of some ancient savage aptitude.

Turning, I saw the pallid line of coolies, fifteen or sixteen of them, whom the Doctor had chased from me and the comfortable coolie tents of Camp V, and who had passed the night in a scared condition under the rocks. (It should be well observed that these men, unroped, had passed in safety the place where the combined weight of the roped men and the Doctor's head had caused the death of two-thirds of their number.)

They now stood silent and spectral, prepared to follow me. I warned them that they would probably be killed if they did; and told them to go round over the snow-slopes; but they answered never a word, and by dint of much step-cutting with an axe they had they got over a little before I arrived at Camp III.

At that delightful spot I found my comrades and Righi very sick and sorry for themselves; the Doctor with a back and a knee, but without traumatic injury to the brain; while, on the other hand, the cephalic enlargement from which he had been suffering had practically disappeared; Righi, somewhat sobered by his adventure to the almost complete suppression of the "Three Men in a Boat" atmosphere, with a sore rib, which nobody could persuade him was not rupture of the heart, a twisted knee, and a "partial moan," which ought to have been audible for miles.

The reason for our rear-guard troubles was soon apparent. Bahadur Singh and Salama, being in obvious difficulties with my sleeping valise and dispatch-box, which I had told them to bring, I wished to send off a couple of regular coolies to their aid, so that I could

start off home next morning. But Righi whined that no coolies could ever be got to go up, that he wouldn't take the "responsibility of trying to persuade" them, and so on, till, heartily sick, I turned to Nanga Sirdar, and told him that if he wanted a good testimonial from me I had got to have those things P. D. Q.—a Hindustani expression signifying "at the earliest possible moment."

Without a murmur the thing was done, and well done. Not two, but twelve men went, and brought down not only my things, but the rest of Camp V as well. Just so the Doctor had been trying to bribe men with presents of boots and claws to take up a third of a load. The coolie, it may be explained, is always "trying it on" to see what his master is made of. For instance, one of them came complaining that for food he had "only *sattu*." "That's all right," I replied; "after next march you'll get only snow."

Even at Falut they had come to say they could go no farther, because there was no water. No water! when one could wring gallons out of one's clothes. But I told them quite solemnly that I had heard about that, and brought champagne for them. It was only their fun. But if you are fool enough to take these complaints seriously, they naturally play it up to the limit. Consequently, a man who spends his time in stupidly moaning over their wickedness, or being stupidly angry at their little jokes, cursing, grovelling, and whining, all without reason, complains constantly of them and never gets good work out of them. They had got a soft thing and they knew it. The relation of the traveller to his coolies should be that of a father to his children. Not the foolish fondness of the American father, who tries to make up in endearment what he lacks in certainty, but the grave authority and wise kindness of the high-caste Hindu father, or the best type of British father, who teaches his sons to love, honour, and obey him. The first great rule is never to lose your temper; the second, always to keep your temper; the third, if you are really obliged to beat a

man, let it be within an inch of his life! Otherwise, he will jeer at the light arm of the sahib. But of course I should have sent Righi back at once when I heard of his ridiculous antics with Mr. White's coolies. He took out his kukri and revolver and threatened them. They knew he would not dare to use either, laughed at him, and went off. But let us not leave out the supernatural interpretation of the facts.

It turns out that Righi, like most-class Italians, is intensely superstitious; he attributed his escape to a little image given him by a Lama, and confessed that he rarely took any steps without consulting it. Probably, therefore, the image was in conspiracy with the Demon of Kinchinjanga to starve me out!

It also appears that he was afraid that people in Darjeeling would "say we had treated him as a servant" and so was discontent with being appointed to the second most important duty in the expedition, that of Transport Officer. As if we were not all servants! As if the proudest title yet arrogated to himself by men were not "Servant of the Servants of God!" It is the mongrel dregs of dollar-ridden America, perhaps the only country in the world where not even the shadow of liberty may fall, that say "hired man" for "servant."

Part Five
On the Kinchin Lay:
Mountains or Metaphysics?
(concluded)

I should have kept silent as to Righi's misdemeanours, but as he "gave me warning" just before the catastrophe, I do not feel bound to regard him as a comrade. His no-reason for desertion was the publication of my first article! As, weeks before, he had copied this article for me in his own handwriting, his surprise and indignation at its contents are no better than a lie: and the use of the pretext implies premeditated treachery, or an un-

usual slowness in making up his mind. A slump is feared in the Darjeeling market for foreign noblemen.

Utterly sick at heart, I made all my preparations for retirement to those dear domestic joys that make the heart of every true born Briton go plunk-plunk-plunkety-plunk. For me

All the rains and ruins are over,
And all the seasons of snows and sins,
he days dividing lover and love——

But will my peace be sweet as that now known to these dead men? Not if I know my wife!

Now that one begins to get proportions of things the tragic side glimmers up in the Aristophanic gloom. To us it is ever to regret Pache infinitely, the courtly gentleman, the soldierly spirit, the good comrade, let me add for my part, the only one of the party who understood his duty and did it. While he was rear-guard, there was little or no trouble about supplies; and nothing is to be more deplored than the unfortunate misreading of his instructions, due to a damped letter and my vile handwriting, which brought him up to Camp IV and began the series of disasters.

It has just been suggested to me (an unnamable insect is crawling outside my tent) that some hypersensitive member of the Alpine Club, or other person pledged to attack climbing without guides may feel hurt by the strictures which I have thought necessary to pass upon some of their methods, and turn to criticize mine. I hope so, that I may renew my confidence in that adage of my nonage "Even a worm will turn." My position will be to take no notice of any criticisms on climbing made by anyone who is not at least good enough to repeat some of the climbs I have originated. I therefore hereby challenge any man who has climbed only with guides to repeat my ascent of the outer pinnacle of the Devil's Chimney on Beachy Head from the sea, *i.e.*, without

touching the top of the cliff at any point during the ascent.

I choose this climb because of its proximity to London, and lest anyone should complain of the expense, I will pay for his first-class single railway fare to Eastbourne for his dinner, bed, and breakfast at the best hotel, and for a scavenger and a bucket at the foot of the cliff.

Thus I forestall the triple-distilled venom, the piffle about the filly of climbing without guides, when the satraps of Savile Row are doubtless collecting "in their teeth, and in their throats, and what is worse, within their nasty mouths." Lower down the street are nine tailors busily trying to make a man, but at the top six hundred things do their best (one must suppose) and the result is pretty poor.

To return to pleasanter subjects (my boy has squashed the unnamable insect), I have written my report of the "accident" to the Deputy Commissioner, and am ready to return to the rains and leeches of outrageous Sikkim.

I have made the necessary suggestions as to searching for the bodies, building a great commemorative cairn, and so on—suggestions only, for no longer will I give one single order when up on the glacier, crying to heaven, are the murdered monuments of disobedience.

I have uttered no word of reproach to the Doctor, nor he any word of explanation to me. The former, since he is genuinely sorry for his error (as if that were any good) or at least for the pain in his back; the latter, probably in fear of the retort "*Vos explications sautent sur quatre cadavres*"—"Your explanations stumble over four dead men."

It must be clearly understood that the words of criticism I am compelled to print are directed solely by regard for the true theory of mountain craft, the which I will maintain with my life. No personal grievance should

induce me to pen one line against a good friend, nor should I condescend to notice an enemy, but the misrepresentations which those professional liars who have exhausted all the meanness of trickery in the endeavour to prevent the names of the people who climb without guides being known, so that their own foul names may a little longer enjoy a fictitious reputation which the British public are certain to circulate, compel me thus to speak out fearlessly and frankly the true causes of the disaster.

So I muse, as I wander down the sweet-smelling meadows, watered by delicious streams, and clad in exquisite flowers, which fringe the lower part of the Yalung Glacier. It is, indeed,

"A land of clear colours and stories,
A region of shadowless hours,
Where earth has a garment of glories,
And a murmur of musical flowers."

And so from musing I slide into meditation. True it is that materialism has conquered, but only by exceeding its connotation to something very like what Berkeley meant by spirit. True that man is only a machine, or even less, a thing all cause and no purpose; the admission only requires that the idealist should take a larger unit. True, above all, that all this beauty and tragedy have no existence, but in my own mind, and it comes upon me, as upon Mansur el Hallaj long ago. "Ana 'l Haqq, we laysa fi jubbat il Allah." (I am the truth, and within my coat is nothing but God), or upon the Osirian in ages beyond history: "I am Osiris! I am Osiris! I am the Lord of life triumphant over death! There is no part of me that is not of the gods!" Let this be my epitaph upon my good friend Alexis Pache; and not that other consciousness which comes intruding, as I walk alone over the vast abyss of wanton stones, that there is no consciousness, no purpose, nothing but a giant stress of things . . . (Excuse my imitating the love-letters of the Brownings, and Mr H. G. Wells, in trying to express the

complete works of Spinoza, Puddhaghosha, and myself, by a series of dots).

But in the final analysis it matters little; one thing I beg, let no Dualist cock crow upon the dung-heaps of Darjeeling!

So far as I know, I am not a Sufi or a Taoist, but I must go to China and Persia, and find out for sure.

In the meanwhile, back to Darjeeling, which I am sorry to say has been only partially burnt down in my absence. It will be my tenaciously-gripped privilege, by the wonderful courtesy of its brilliant young manager "Count Alcesti C. Rigo de Righi," my late comrade—the only fault I have to find with him is that he seems to think that he has the same sort of control over his guests that the governor of a prison has over his—for the absurdly inadequate remuneration of nine and fourpence a day to stay at Drum Druid Hotel, and feast, as I am sure Lucullus never feasted, upon the really ingenious substitutes for human food, which, figuring in the menu under French names, recall with a sweet anticipation too deep for tears the delights of Paillard's and of Leon's. (I gather from official criticism of my first article, in which a sentence, somewhat similar, though not so fine, appeared, that it should be held to apply only to the occasions when I dine out, because the food at Drum Druid is *actually* human food and *not* an ingenious substitute. How the mind broadens by travelling!)

But though I may grip tenaciously, I shall not grip for long. The little devil that with his accursed whisper "Go on! Go on!" makes me think at times that I must be the Wandering Jew is already at my ear, and I have no whither in particular to go. Like Lord Curzon, I am out of a job.

NOTES:

1. Probably not Jannu throughout. Rare glimpses and a faulty map make certainty impossible for the moment.
2. More probably this great peak is unnamed, Jannu lying further to the S.W.