

Camp III. May 15 1922

My dearest Ruth, I must take the chance of sending down a letter to-day, though I've no idea how its arrival at the base may fit with the mail & outgoing.

4 / 7.30 a.m. of a bright & almost windless morning & I am sitting in a box outside our tent awaiting breakfast. He has just come. It is still freezing in the shade (35° of frost last night) but the sun is trying to be warm. It may seem unreasonable to be up so early; but the trouble about this camp is that it loses the sun so early - soon after 3 o'clock & our habits are regulated accordingly; - we were out yesterday & came in for a stroll towards 5.0 pm; by that time there was 15° of frost in the tent & we proceeded to have our evening meal at once partly for the sake of our cook, & we've been lying in the tent ever since. Fortunately we both slept well. And I have The Spirit of Man, a volume of Shakespeare & a pack of cards, so there is no real difficulty about passing the time agreeably. This morning I found in my pocket Will's pamphlet from last mail & read it - all very sensible & good - I enjoyed it - & yet I'm not sure it is as interesting as it ought to be from him - perhaps he had not space enough.

But I've told you no history yet. On the 10th as you know we left the Base in a great bustle & slept at Camp I & on the two succeeding days came on quite easily here. The bulk of the cookies were to go straight back to No I (ie. on the 12th)

rest there for a day & then bring up more lead. Here again - so
that we expect them to day. Two coo-his & a cork remained with us
& our first object of course was to establish a route to the North
Col. This we did with no delay on the 15th. It was an interesting
day. The problem was to get up without cutting an immense
number of steps in hard ice. All the lower part of last year's
route was blue glittering ice & besides the fearful labour of
making a staircase there that way would not have been satis-
factory for coo-his - the majority of course are quite untrained
at present & it is important to avoid anything like a long
traverse over ice such as the way necessarily involves. We
chose a route to the left straight up to the point where
you may remember I talked of having to cross a very steep snow
slope & very fortunately were able to go on snow almost the
whole way. It seemed very hard work with a lot of chipping
& kicking of steps. One coo-hi came with us (the other was
sick) we took some ice pegs & 400 ft of rope & fixed two
lengths ^{each} of 200 ft in the worst places. And the coo-hi carried
a Mummy tent, which of course remains in situ. The first
tent to reach the North Col. It was about midday
when we reached the snow slopes below the edge, all quite
sufficiently hard. The wind was blowing up the snow occasionally,
though not so hard as last year & was cold enough. The great broken
cubes of ice above us were wonderfully impressive. After a little
halt Somervell & I proceeded to work along the shelf to our
left with the intention of reaching the lowest point of the col
& looking over the other side - just as Bulluck Wheeler & I did
last September -

and for the same reason we roped together. We were afraid of the wind. We had not gone far before we found our way blocked by a crevasse just too wide to jump. The main edge joining Everest to the North Peak was on the other side of this gap not more than 100 ft wide. However a way appeared to the left & we went on in the confidence that in such broken country we should be able to get through. But a few moments later we were up against an obstacle not to be climbed without a ladder & there was no alternative. Can you imagine how it felt when it dawned upon us that we had come all this way to find in the end a broken link? Of course it was unbelievable. And there was another possibility though a most unlikely one & more awkward than we cared to tackle. Anyway we must make certain now if we used every minute of daylight - a well the prospect of a longer job than we had bargained for we mounted on a few sweet biscuits & some mint cake on the shelf where we had left the cache. & Immediately above the ice cliff were clearly impassable. But there was evidence of some sort of a gap where a steep ice slope came down from the North Peak. We proceeded along the continuation of our shelf in that direction, turned the flanks of an ice gendarme & were able to work up not steep ice but soft snow to the ridge & look out over the westward vista. The whole broken mass of snow ^{ridge} between the North Peak & Everest was still to be traversed - you will remember that the true North Cl. from which the N. arête of Everest springs is at the south end of this ridge - the slopes on the west side are fearfully precipitous. Though we were now on the crest of a ridge we must evidently expect broken ground. In fact we had to leap two crevasses just not too wide in the

first 50 yds. But we soon found easy going & reached a minor snow summit. The view to the west was opening out at every step & here we sat down to look at it - the most amazing spectacle I have ever seen (I won't begin describing it - I hope there'll be some good photos before we're done). For a time we completely forgot our quest & then shortly after going on again we saw a clear way ahead - so that we can get to Everest 1/2 way of the North Col.

The distance of Chang La from this camp is not very great as you may see on the map - or even on a photo taken from Lhakpa La last year which shows these stones at the corner under the shoulder of Changtse; the only trouble in the labour of getting up to the pass, & that will seem small a second time with the steps all prepared. As it was we were back in camp about 5.30 p.m., each with a bad height-headache & too tired to eat a proper meal.

So there's the history of a day for you in some sort of fashion. Cooks come up today with Crawford. I hope with enough rations to allow a party of them (8 to 12) to stay here - in which we case we plan to take a 1st lot of loads up to Chang La tomorrow 16th, rest 17th, to Chang La with say 8 cooks & sleep there 18th, to the highest point we can get (vids, say 25000, with 3 or 4 loads on the 19th, cooks returning here, selves sleeping again at Chang La, & then on 20th or 21st up to our highest camp & on next day as high as you can. Before you get this letter you will ^{have} read a telegram from which you will know roughly how this plan works out. But isn't it a venture?

I must be busy now about camp getting ready for our friends' arrival. X
Great love to you always
George