

2<sup>nd</sup> Advanced Camp

19

July 12 1921

MOUNT EVEREST EXPEDITION.

My dear Rupert, I've just had a letter from Ruth in which she tells me that you have kindly been helping her with regard to Irving. Thank you. It was in my mind to write to you anyway. I think of you as especially a civilised man with somehow the capacity of sympathising with the barbarous life & habits of a poor devil like my self. You are even capable to tell me why I embarked on an adventure such as this. Here in this outlandish spot we two - Bullocke is the other - sit in tent listening to the fine grains of snow beating against its sides, content, in so far as we are content simply with the fact that we are writing letters to our wives or friends & that a courier will bear them away on the first stage of their journey to-morrow morning.

I sometimes think of this expedition as a fraud from beginning to end invented by the wild enthusiasm of one man - my husband - puffed up by the world-be wisdom of certain pundits in the A.C. & unpaired upon the

Truthful ardour of your humble servant. Certainly the reality must be strangely different from their dream. The long imagined snowslopes of this northern face of Everest with their gentle curving angle turn out to be the most appalling precipice nearly 10,000 ft. high. It is a great rock peak plastered <sup>with</sup> snow banked of gigantic arêtes which enclose impossible faces. The prospect of ascent in my direction is almost nil & our present job is to rub our noses against the impossible in such a way as to persuade mankind that some noble heroism has failed once again. And the heroism at present consists in enduring the discomforts of a camp at 19,000 ft in company of a band of whose native tongue I can scarcely understand a syllable, in urging these good folk to rise before daylight & the same time urging myself in the most vain & vain hope that by the time we have got somewhere something may still remain unhidden by the clouds.

What is rhetoric but the exclamation of a man unable to describe his sensations?

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Believe about one quarter of this mood & supply the others which are beyond me to describe - from your sympathy. Undoubtedly my thoughts turn homewards not seldom with a glance at the span of time that still separates me from the moment when feet shall be turned in that loved direction. And the aspiration gets crushed by the daily effort of achievement. Can I say that after a fortnight? It is hard to linger since I pitched our tents below the long glacier which leads up into that fearsome crown.

And at the very moment I write this I plan to start at dawn with all the possible unmasterable energy to get right up under the western slopes of the mountain - we are in the spot for that purpose; and 250 ft. of rope is ready to slide down on the side of a great ice pinnacle on the far side of the glacier - so that we shall lose no time to-morrow as we lost it to-day; and the rucksack is packed with to-morrow's provisions;

the compass & glasses & aneroid are to hand  
waiting for the start; and --- and I must  
to bed soon with the alarm watch under my  
pillow; & not without bed-socks - it's  
a bed-sock altitude - a frowsty plan, but  
then it saves time in getting to sleep. The  
snow? It's a passing shower, we hope, we hope.  
The peaks will be clear & glorious in the  
morning. We shall continue to do  
a no small part of hoping

And you meanwhile? Not Vienna but  
Trieste; & where besides? Ruth told me  
more. And David with you! My love  
to him & good stomach for strange diets.  
Get sleep you both & leave not the square  
corners of comfortable rooms for sleeping.

Pothaps by the time you get this we  
'll be planning the great assault: write  
a prayer of good luck for us then.

Ever yours,

George Meloy