

Camp I.  
May 27, 1924

My dearest Ruth, This is going to be the scrappiest letter - a time limit for the mail has suddenly been put on & this morning when I might have been writing to you I was busy doing a communique at Norton's request, & find it an impossible task to write that sort of thing up here. Anyway such as it is you will have read it, so that is some satisfaction.

Dear Girl this has been a bad time altogether - I look back on tremendous efforts & exhaustion & dismal looking out of a tent door onto a world of snow & vanishing hopes - & yet & yet & yet there have been a good many things to set on the other side. The party has played up wonderfully. The first visit to the North Col was a triumph for the old gang. Norton & I did the job & the cutting of course was all my part - so far as one can enjoy climbing above Camp III I enjoyed the conquest of the ice wall & crack the crux of the route, & making the steps too in the steep final 200 ft. Odell did very useful work leading the way on from the camp to the Col; I was practically lost to the world & couldn't have lead that half hour though I still had enough mind to direct him. We made a very bad business of the descent. It suddenly occurred to

P.S. - the part where I found if my part are put into please you & not myself for other yes - Girl

me that we ought to see what the old way down was like,  
Norton & I were ahead, unroped, & Odell behind in charge of  
a porter who had carried up a light load. We got into ground  
where a practical man can just get along without crampons  
(which we hadn't with us), chipping occasional steps in very  
hard snow or ice. I was all right ahead but Norton had a  
hasty slip & then the porter, whose knot didn't hold so that  
he went down some way & was badly shaken. Meanwhile  
I, below, finding the best way down had walked into an  
obvious crevasse; by some miscalculation I had thought I  
had prodded the snow with which it was choked & where I  
hoped we could walk instead of ~~for~~ cutting steps at the  
side of it — all the result of mere exhaustion no doubt —  
But the snow gave way & in I went with the snow  
tumbling all round me, down luckily only about 10 feet  
when before I fetched up half-blind & breathless to find  
myself most precariously supported only by my iceaxe some-  
how caught across the crevasse & still held in my right  
hand — & below was ~~still~~ a very unpleasant black hole.  
I had some rash moments before I got comfortably wedged &  
began to yell for help up through the round hole I had  
come through where the blue sky showed — this because  
I was afraid any operations to extricate myself would  
bring down a lot more snow & perhaps precipitate me into  
the bargain. However I soon grew tired of shouting — they

hadn't seen me from above - o bringing the snow down a little at a time I made a hole out toward <sup>(the crevasse runs down a slope)</sup> the side after some climbing, & so extricated myself — but was then on the wrong side of the crevasse, so that eventually I had to cut across a nasty slope of very hard ice & further down some mixed unpleasant snow before I was out of the wood. The others were down a better line 10 minutes before me - that cutting against time at the end after such a day just about brought me to my limit.

So much for that day.

My one personal trouble has been a cough - It started a day or two before leaving the B.C. but I thought nothing of it. In the high camp it has been the devil. Even after the day's exercise I have described I couldn't sleep but was distressed with bursts of coughing fit to tear one's guts - o so headache & misery altogether; besides which of course it has a very bad effect on one's going on the mountain. Somervell also has a cough which started a little later than mine o he has not been at his physical best.

The following day when the first loads were got to Camp IV in a snow storm Somervell & Irvine must have made a very fine effort heaving loads up the chimney. Hazard had his hunk to be left alone in charge of the posters <sup>at IV</sup> - only for one night according to our intentions, but the snow

next day prevented Geoff & Odell from starting - &  
the following day he <sup>elects</sup> to bring the party down - quite  
rightly considering the weather; but can you imagine,  
he positively ordered ~~to~~ one man, who had been appointed  
camp cook for the men, to stay up on the chance of his  
being useful to the ~~at~~ party coming up - it is difficult to  
make out how exactly it happened, but evidently he didn't  
shepherd his party properly at all & in the end of staying up  
& one of these bits frostbitten. Had the snow been a bit  
worse that day we went up to bring them down things  
might have been very bad indeed. Poor old North was  
very hard hit altogether - hating the thought of such a bad  
muddle, & himself really not fit to start out next day, nor  
were any of us for that matter & it looked 10 to 1 against  
our getting up with all that snow about let alone get a  
party down. I led from the camp to a point some little dis-  
tance above the flat glacier - the snow wasn't so very bad as there  
had been no time for it to get sticky, still that part with some  
small delays took us 3 hours; then S. took us up to where  
Geoff & Odell had dumped their loads the day before & shortly  
afterwards North took on the lead; luckily we found the snow  
better as we proceeded, N. alone had crampons & was able  
to take us up to the big crevasse without sky cutting.

Here we had half an hour's halt and at 1:30 I went on again for the steep 200 ft or so to the point where the big crevasse joins the corridor. From here there were two doubtful stretches. N. led up the first while the two of us made good at the corner of the crevasse - he found the snow quite good. And S. led across the final slope (following Hazard's just discernible tracks in the wrong place, but of some use now because the snow had bound better there) - N. had an anxious time belaying, as it began to be cold too as the sun had left us. S. made a very good show getting the men off - but I won't repeat my report. Time was pretty short as it was 4:30 when they began to come back using S's rope as a handrail. Naturally the churning took some time. It was just dark when we got back to camp.

N. has been quite right to bring us down for rest. It is no good sending men up the mountain unfit. The ~~shape~~ physique of the whole party had gone down sadly. The only chance now is to get fit ~~ago~~ for a simpler glacier than. The only plum fit man is Geoffrey Duce. N. has made me responsible for choosing the parties of attack himself first choosing me into the first party if I like. But I'm

Great love to Jim  
Dear your loving  
have a whole lot to ourselves from

quite doubtful if I shall be fit enough. Irvine  
will probably leave 8 or 2 of N, S, & self with Geoff  
the other 2 to make up 4 for two parties of two  
each. But again I wonder whether the monsoon  
will give us a chance. I don't want to get caught  
but our three day scheme from the Phay Lu will  
give the monsoon a good chance. We shall be  
going up again the day after tomorrow - six days  
to the top from this camp!

Mails have come ~~coming~~ tumbling in these last days  
- three in rapid succession - your dated from Westbank  
with much about the car - I fear it has given you a lot  
of trouble; Clare's poem with which I'm greatly delighted;  
a good letter from David from Py P - will you please thank  
him at once as I shall hardly manage to do so by this  
mail. Mother writes in great spirits from Aix.  
It's a great joy to hear from you especially but also from  
anyone who will write a good letter.

The candle is burning out & I must stop.  
Darling I wish you the best I can - that your anxiety will  
be at an end before you get this - with the best news which  
will also be the quickest. It is 50 to 1 against us but we'll