

Kampa D'ong

1921

June 8. 21

MOUNT EVEREST EXPEDITION.

My dearest Ruth We are on the point of setting out; and as we have been at that point for the last hour without any notable advance it seems a favourable moment to sit in the sun & begin a letter. The two days' rest here have been somehow very full & partly sad. We bussed Kellas on the morning after his death in sight of the three great peaks he climbed Pabonzi, Kanchenjunga & Chomolungma; it was a very touching little ceremony. I shall never forget the expression - more wonder than anything else - of a Hindu special cook who sat on a great stone a yard away from the grave while Howard Bury said the passage for Crintheans.

Another disaster has now befallen us - Raeburn has been pronounced unfit

to proceed - chiefly also on account of diarrhoea
which he can't get rid of - & Wollaston has
taken him off to-day (according to the plan
which had been made for Kellas) to a place
in Sikkim called Lachen, accessible over
a pass called the Sepo La. There he is to
stay until he is strong again & then rejoin
us. Wollaston will come straight back &
ought to reach Tingri Dzong not long after
us - a fortnight hence he reckons. I
call this a disaster, or so it is in this sense,
that we are now left without anyone who
has experience of the Himalayas, unless we
except Morshead whose mountaineering
experience amounts to very little & who
won't in any case join us for climbing until
towards the end of July. On the other hand
Rachson is in many ways an unsatisfactory
person & won't in any case be fit for high
climbing I think - he's rather a worn-out
fractious old person, not at all suitable for
this job. We have no elaborate plan
at present. On the way to Tingri we shall

MOUNT EVEREST EXPEDITION.

make an opportunity of having - good look at the N.E. side of Everest & when we get there we shall presumably make excursions to one point & another to see the N.W. side before making any larger expedition such as would solve a big problem of topography. I'm still hopeful of attacking Everest this year with Bullock - Mosshead - but that goal seems a very long way off at present. Bullock is going to be very useful in showing the topography. Wheeler is a lame duck suffering half the time from indigestion, & he grows a good deal. Hesson is being admirable in running the men & is a very nice fellow, but he won't be a mountaineer.

Kempe Dzong has been a very pleasant change. It lies just at the entrance of a narrow valley. The Dzong (fort) itself built

on some high rocks on one side is very imposing
& beneath it is a sort of pen surrounded
by a low wall which was reserved for our
encampment - a convenient place but very
dusty whenever the wind blows. Luckily the
wind has blown comparatively little & so we
have been much warmer & more comfortable
altogether.

Our feeding problem
which is so very important is being slowly
solved so far as it ever will be solved with
bad cooks. Sheep are good & inexpensive. Bug
shot a gazelle & an ammon (a very large kind
of sheep) & Bullock shot a goose & caught
a dish of little fishes - these supplies have
helped; the trouble is that such vegetables
as we have are almost invariably half-cooked
(it is difficult to boil in ~~stiff~~ up here) & the
cooks almost invariably fail to make
edible bread or scones while the supply of
biscuits is short. We've had some eggs here
- hope to find them elsewhere at this
elevation (about 15000) - an agreeable
surprise.

We shall not be five
in the mess now & I shall miss Williston
very much: but Heron is a solid treasure,

MOUNT EVEREST EXPEDITION.

helps to keep an easy atmosphere. We had
 Marshfield with us for one day here & I hope
 he will be with us again in two days time
 before we cross the Arun; I like him very
 well & only wish his work allowed him to
 live with us; but he has to visit different
 points with his following of trained surgeons
 & these are not all on our line of march
 though he is intended to get to Tigris.

I am feeling extraordinarily fit & well
 - as I do in the Alps - & in spite of our
 trouble much moved by the prospect of a
 nearer approach to Everest. We have seen
 the mountain from here, quite well through
 glasses though it is 100 miles away. Bullock
 & I went up about 1000 ft before breakfast
 the first morning here; it was beautifully
 clear & we made out Makalu & the ridge
 joining it to Everest cut in one or two places
 by nearer mountains & then about 2000 ft
 of Everest itself. It is closed even at this

distance - a great bluntly pointed snow peak (not a hump as Mt. Blanc is from the Chamoni's side), ~~at~~ with a much steeper north face than people have made out. I saw traces of rock which make me expect more on the N.W. side. It is probable that this side, facing the Arun river up which the monsoon clouds come has the bigger snowfall.

Between us & the Arun is a range of mountains running due N - high snow peaks. We assume that the water from this plain runs through a gorge to the N of these mountains into the Arun & that we have to cross a pass of perhaps 18000 - 19000 ft to reach the Arun valley above the gorge. From this pass or near it we should get a wonderful view - I intend to get up where I can see near there; but it may be very difficult to find a good view point & I'm sorry we aren't going to the obvious pass further south from which to see the east side of the mountain.

MOUNT EVEREST EXPEDITION.

Later. This has been such a jolly day - not least because I have now a good mount, a fat white long tailed pony; formerly I had a horrible mule, a long-legged bad-tempered grey mule really a pack animal - I rode this least of flogged it more or less all the way from Tume (the 1st stage from Phari) to Kung Dzong, having given up my better pony to Raehson after his mad adventures.

Bullock & I went up a little hill rising out of the centre of the plain - must have spent $\frac{1}{2}$ hr on the top basking in the sun & surveying the country round; it was very beautiful in its Tibetan way; there is some water over here & a very dark green broad undulating strip made a great contrast on the plain to the bare gravelly sand or yellow dried grass. But the beauty is really one of form - gentle slopes rising

rising from the plain as tongues of hill land
projecting into it or as sides of surrounding
hills of which in some directions there
seemed to be an almost infinite number of
graduated ranges. And then in front of
us or to our left were great snow mountains
- not rising abruptly from the plain like
Chomolangi but by perceptible degrees which
somewhat break the shock to the eye so that
they were not even at midday in his noon.

I found a beautiful smelling wormwood
on top of our hill, a sprig of which is still
divinely fragrant in my button-hole. It is
not an entirely flowerless country - I suppose
we are back in early spring. One often sees
vices blooming leafless out of the gravel
& another flower not unlike a nasturtium
only pink; & to-day a little dwarf hudsonia
was just coming out very prettily; &
one sees little rock plants which are either
blooming or will bloom soon.