

MOUNT EVEREST EXPEDITION.

May 26. 1922

My Dearest Ruth, A mail arrived before breakfast & I had the delight of reading your letters from Pen & Pass as the first act of the day. X But I suppose you will want me to begin about myself. The frost bites are nothing to worry about; of four fingers touched on the right hand only the third gives trouble; even that one has no harm below the top joint & though I imagine it will be sore for a long time I think there is no danger of losing any part of it. Poor Morshead is in a very different case - we can't know yet what the damage will be. I suppose it was stupid or careless of us to be caught like this. It is easy enough to keep one's hands warm with chamois gloves so long as one is doing nothing in particular with them - but you may imagine what happened; as soon as it came to cutting I took the lead over from Morshead & went all out to get the job done as quickly as possible for fear the cookies would be done in / the cold & refuse to come on - & then of course I thought no more about my fingers. Morshead I think was insufficiently clothed altogether; but he didn't know his fingers were caught until we came in the following night!

It was a big strain altogether. Personally I wrecked myself with that cutting & when we were pitching tents had hardly the strength to lift a stone; and the trouble is that one doesn't recover; the night at 25000 was miserable & I didn't expect

to go on. Somervell was really our reserve man all through & was particularly useful in cooking at the high camp. Norton went first on the final day chiefly because I judged he would go his best in that place; he was very nearly done at the end & was climbing very slowly; but we could all have gone further; we turned to allow time for the descent & we allowed none too much. On a fine morning we should have started 2 hrs. earlier & reached the NE shoulder.

Coming down I led all the way except where we had to cut steps - Norton & I shared the cutting - as I judged I should be quicker than the others. I felt pretty strong on the descent; the slip was nearly a bad business. I hadn't realised then how shaky Morshead was & had cut rather poor steps; but there was good holding for the pick. Norton & Somervell must have been caught napping. I hadn't the rope belayed round my ice as I was on the point of cutting a step, but hearing something wrong behind drove in my pick & belayed & was ready in plenty of time when the strain came. Morshead must have made a very fine effort coming down the steps of the snow slope as he appeared to tread quite safely; but the moment we were on easier ground he collapsed. I didn't much like the ^{idea} business of being out after dark above 23000 ft & it was a very trying & anxious time. We were well out of that!

A lot of hard work next morning cutting steps down from Chang La & we weren't down to Camp 3 until after noon. We walked down to the Base next day - evidently a very tired party; except Somervell we have remained tired ever since. All the rest very pleased with our performance - as a first

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attack I feel satisfied with it too: but the trouble is that three of us appear to be out of it now, Norton's ear & my finger are much the same case; Longstaff won't hear of our going up again until they are healed; I suppose he may be right - at least there would be considerable risk for those members; but it is annoying; I should have liked to make one more try - from a camp at 26000 ft, & nothing but this finger would prevent my going up again in a few days' time.

Perhaps my prevailing thought about the whole adventure is that we were a perfectly happy party - not a word of angry, but what was friendly & helpful among the 5 of us (Strutt included) at Camp 3. Altogether, anxiety apart, I have tremendously enjoyed it.

I expect there are many dozen questions which your mind has been asking & which are still unanswered. I wish I could guess them. I'm still feeling stupid. It was a great effort making the narrative for the press & I expect it was very bad.

I very much wonder what people at home will think of us; no doubt there will be a hoop in the press about beating the record X

This has been a great mail with 3 letters from you

and also letters from all my family. Evidently you greatly enjoyed your time in N. Wales & I don't doubt everyone else enjoyed your being there - I had a very nice letter from David about P. P. I hope too that you are the better for the holiday - you must have been run down after your illness; but I expect you went back to the Holt perfectly fit. I think I know nowhere that one comes away from feeling so strong.

And when & where are we to have a holiday together? It is almost certain now that I shall be leaving this place actually on your birthday & so should be in Darjeeling about July 7 at latest, & if I lose no time home early in August. Probably I shall lose a little time say a week going through India & shall probably also take another week coming round by sea to London, so don't expect me before the middle of August. All I bargain for after that is one spell of walking with you before October - Lord, how many good places remain for us to visit! One of the next has got to be Teesdale, but that must be in late spring. But a Yorkshire sale, golden in September; or Derbyshire, or the prettiest of that west country again - you don't know how Tibet makes one's mouth water for such things.

Thinking of the Holt, it is natural I should think of August as the worst time to be there; but of course I shall love to be there when I return - we might also spend a few days at

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Westbrooke, or any other country, house where you know of a pleasant party!

Later. I have been very busy dictating to Morris while he types the narrative of our climb. Also incidentally I have made some more exact calculations of dates. It seems you might get news of our climb very near the date of your birthday; this letter shall reach you on July 4, & on the same day I should arrive in Darjeeling. I don't know that I shall come back by P&O; but the other alternatives are not very easy to manage. I should like to see something more of the world on the way back - more than one sees in the hurried transit of the P&O mail. But in any case I will wire you my intentions in short - such as Orient, orviato - which would mean that I was taking an Orient Line steamer called Orviato & as I named no port intended to disembark at London. If I go to Venice which is only 3 days longer from Bombay than is Marseilles ~~from~~ by P&O I shall probably spend a couple of nights there before taking the Simpla express home & in that case I will wire a day or two beforehand when I expect to reach London. I might go (Havre if I were travelling overland & see the Bullocks on the way. I heard from him the other day full of questions about

the expedition. They have both been ill. Write her a line
sometime if you feel disposed - she would be glad to hear
from ~~her~~ you.

I'm writing a brief note to mother by this mail but I shall
tell her to expect a circular letter too. I've had quite a
cheerful letter from Alice; I hope she is really better.

My dearest one, I have been full of thoughts of your meeting
me in the Alps on the way home - but I feel so sure you
wouldn't come, on grounds of expense that I make no
suggestions. It is perhaps worth saying however that if you
like to make a plan it will be easy for me to fall in - I don't
know whether Geoffrey Young has secured the Tyndall club; if we
could go there that would make a great difference & it is
approached from Brieg (your side of the Simplon Tunnel) which
would be on my way home from Venice. The plan would cost
your fare & our two living expenses - my fare would be paid
as this is a cheaper way home than P&O. Or you might
go out with the Wills, but I hear Frances is going to S. Africa.
Anyway in case you think it possible write me the name of the
place to come to & I will write back the time I can get there.

X It is a happy little party down here at the base camp, though all
are rather tired of cold winds. We are waiting for news of Finch
& G. Bruce who is with him. I think they will certainly break
our record - they have had very good weather - but I don't expect
them to have reached the top at the first attempt. All depend
upon whether they succeed in bumping cylinders ahead of them.

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I shan't feel in the least jealous of any success they may have. The whole venture of getting up with oxygen is so different from ours that the two hardly enter into competition. I only chafe because this finger keeps me here. Longstaff has no idea how bad it is - he's not a practical medical man. I'm not at all sure it may not get better much quicker than he expects. But the undeniable fact is that it is extremely sensitive to cold and I suppose if I went up again at once I should certainly get a real bad frostbite - so I suppose I must be patient.

I've just had a long talk with Norton - He is responsible for collecting flowers this year & was expecting to do the job with Longstaff; but L has to go back in a hurry & N now wants my help, in telling him what we found last year. I could easily do this without much loss of time - so as to be perhaps a week later at Dazeyehing; & I must say the idea attracts me - of seeing the early flowers between here at Rhesa & near Khorak too - so very probably I shall go back that way. Even so I should get back not much after the middle of Aug. X

Dear love, my chief feeling about all this venture is that you will probably be pleased with what we have done & that you will be happy because people say nice things about it. You must take the news as my birthday present, since I can send no other.

Great love to you always. Your loving, George