

MOUNT EVEREST EXPEDITION.

Aug. 9. 1921

My dearest Ruth, I much fear I shall have missed the mail, in which case you will be a fortnight this time without a letter. But then you will probably have read in the Times something of what has happened to us, so that my letters aren't quite a fresh story to you. This last week has really been extraordinarily exciting & interesting. We set out with the idea that we should follow a great valley north of Everest; & at the end of it I saw in my mind's eye the pass of our leisure between Everest & the 1st peak to the north: but we found ourselves after 3 days, heavily in the clouds in a different part of the world & cut off from our north by an impassable barrier. In one sense we have been disappointed & suffered a reverse. We expected after two days' march almost to be seeing our way up the mountain & to be sitting under its canopy the stages towards the top, instead of which the mystery has only deepened, we are retracing our steps & have another

valley - perhaps more than one to explore.
But if this is a misadventure we are far
from being depressed by it; it is all in the
day's work, part of our reconnaissance, & what
we have seen has been more wonderful than
anything we saw on the other side. Our first
day's march, which was complicated by the
buying of rations at a village on the way brought
us to a valley junction; local knowledge
informed us that the way to Chomolungma
(the correct version of the Tibetan name for
Everest) was to the left, but another 5 days'
march. We made little of the alleged distance
as the local desire is always to make the
march last as long as possible. But it was
disconcerting to observe that the valley to
the left had only a small clear water stream
- while we had expected to find follow the
big glacier stream to Everest. On the second
day we went up about 9000 ft, seeing
nothing more than 400 yds. away, to a high
col - a beautiful march with lovely flowers
& two pretty lakes, ~~to a~~ & down about
2 hrs. the other side to a ^{grass} shelf used as a
grazing ground for yaks, where we were
or what we could be coming to it was

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impossible to make out. From Khartu our direction should have been due west: but our general direction since we left the glacier stream had been considerably south of west & we were now about to cross a valley running north & south. What valley could this be? The mystery was partly solved when we learned from our local guide that there were two Chomolungmas. The other we guessed must be Mekahe which is 12 miles S.W. of Everest; we explained that we wanted to go to the one which was to the right. The following morning we started our march in the same misty atmosphere, with clouds coming up the valley & no more to be seen than before. We went down steeply to the valley bed, crossed the stream by a rickety bridge & went winding on through lovely meadows & much dwarf rhododendron till we came to the end of a glacier. We kept along the stone to the right & then up a steep hill side. It was now plain that another glacier came in from the right & that the left hand branch

ran up to tremendous cliffs. Was there not a big mountain up there? We were told it was the first Chomolungma. We knew now that if we were under Makalu & were following a valley from Makalu to Everest. The rain came on heavily about midday & when we came to a broad meadow above the glacier where yaks were grazing & Tibetan tents were pitched we were content to stop & eat the good butter. I felt rather baffled at this stage. We had no desire to run our heads against the east face of Everest. We wanted to be to the north of the east or north east ridge (we were rather uncertain as to its exact direction) where presumably, from what we had seen, there was another valley running east & west ~~which~~ ending in the col between Everest & the North Peak as we call it. But could we get round the bottom of the east ridge & into this valley from where we were? The local guide asserted that we could, but his assertion was not much to be believed. In our uncertainty there was no point in moving our camp higher.

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The next day, the fourth from Kharu
 broke more hopefully. The clouds were thin.
 B & I decided to use it for reconnaissance &
 while the coolies went down to collect fuel
 (juniper wood). It was not a clear day;
 but appearing through the veil of clouds at
 different times we saw the great east
 face of Everest, & the cirque of cliff going
 south to the great rocky South Peak & turning
 east towards Makalu; it is a much bigger
 face, this one than that to the north at the
 head of the Rhuenge glacier, though not
 quite so steep; & all the lower slopes are
 impossible from a climber's point of view, so
 to cut off ~~the~~ approach from the glaciated upper
 half. And the east ridge (really north east)
 comes down very beautifully, a long, long snow
 ridge, sharp & steep ^{sometimes}, & broken occasionally
 by rocks to about 20000 ft. & then turns
 north forming a series of comparatively
 low peaks - we saw something of these
 & we saw enough to know that no easy
 way would lead us to - well beyond - if

indeed there was a valley. At all events we wanted to know a great deal more.

On the following day, Aug. 6., we pushed up an advanced camp to about 18000 ft. The weather was no better & we saw no more; from about 9 o'clock it snowed fairly consistently. Still the clouds seemed thin & we were not without hope.

On Aug. 7, when I woke at 2:30 a.m. there was a cloudless starry sky. We walked for about $\frac{2}{4}$ hr. & candle light up a moraine. Even before the first glimmer of dawn the white mountains were somehow touched to life by a faint blue light - a light that changed as the day grew to a rich yellow on Everest & then a bright grey blue before it blazed all golden when the sun hit it, while Muktan even more beautiful gave us the reddest shades, the flush of pink & purple shades. But I'm altogether beaten for words. The whole range of peaks from Muktan to Everest far exceeds any mountain scenery that ever I saw before; the smallest of them is a most graceful

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Malterhorn. We waited at sunrise to take photos; & if they don't come out well I shall weep. And then we plugged on over the glacier well-covered with fresh snow, till we took off our snow shoes, & for the first time, the party (4 coolies) found themselves on steep rocks - not a very formidable precipice, but enough to give us all some pleasure. The rocks took up to a pass which was our first objective. Below us on the far side was a big glacier - but we couldn't get see certainly whether it led to the north or of our desire. After a hurried breakfast & some more photography we pushed on towards the 3rd peak from the east ridge of Everest, up a steep snow shoulder. The snow was good - we were not long in gaining this view point; here our first doubts were solved, we could see clearly that a ridge from the 2nd peak north of the east crest of Everest joined

Other peaks on the far side of the glacier we
looked into & thus cut it off from direct
communication with the north col. We
now wanted to see over to a high ridge to
the col itself, & the only way seemed to climb
our peak. The next section was exceedingly
steep - D. thought it would prove impossible
& it was stiff work; I had a longish bit of
cutting in good snow. The angle then eased
We then reached a flat plateau, put on
snow shoes & hurried across to the far
edge. The party then lay down & slept in
various postures while I took photographs
& examined the north peak through my
glass - it was clearly visible down to the
level of the col but no more than that
- so that though the view was in many
ways wonderful, the one thing we really
wanted to see was still hidden. Eventually
I asked for volunteers to come on to the top
& two cookies offered to come with me. It
was only a matter of 500 ft.; but the snow
was very deep & lying at a terribly steep angle.
One cookie refused to come on after a time;
the other struggled on with me. We were

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enveloped in cloud which blew up just after we started; and then suddenly we were on the summit - a beautiful little cone steep on all sides, entirely snow clad, in all respects a lovely summit; & as the wind blew soft in the snow I had glimpses of what I wanted to see - glimpses only but enough to ~~give~~ suggest a high snow crown under the north east face of Everest finding its outlet somehow to the north. And it is this outlet that we have now to find - the way in & the way up. We are going back to the valley junction, the glacier stream we left, with the idea that at the head of one of its branches we shall find the glacier we want. ^{Behind it} Beyond us after tomorrow's march will be a narrow gorge & beyond it (we presume it won't be a gorge for ever) a new country, an undiscovered country whose secrets must soon be disclosed.

Well that's the story in outline told you know the main theme & I shan't tell

you much more to-night. For the first time
I'm not perfectly well - some serious complaint
affecting the glands of the throat & most of the
muscles of the trunk attacked me the night
after our climb; it can be nothing to do with
the exertions of climbing as it attacked the
night before the last mountaineering of ~~1880~~
our men winter. I had some fever the next
night & was miserable next day, & still
far from fit to-day. But I feel like throwing
it off to-night.

Howard Bury followed us up two days
after we started & we found his camp joined
to ours when we came down yesterday.
There has been trouble about Coche's oxen
(too complicated to explain) & he was anxious
to make them content which I hope he has
now succeeded in doing. Wollaston &
Morshead are both in camp now at Khatka
Wheeler is not expected for another fortnight.
I hope Morshead will join us about
at once.

Would I could begin to tell you something
about the flowers in these parts.

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Coming over I found the most wonderful
 primula - a head of five flowers which
 I took to be a compound of five hanging
 heads - close set on a stalk about 6 ins
 high - a very, very beautiful flower - I
 was greatly disappointed to find her from
 Bury that though almost certainly a new
 flower it was found earlier by Willmore
 a long way from here. However we shall
 be able to get seed here. And then
 I gathered some seed pods on the way over
 rather like elongated poppy pods; I felt
 sure it was something interesting; on my
 coming back Bullock found the flower, a
 lovely purple echinopsis. And almost
 in the same spot I found a *gogenus iris*
 with the richest iridescent colour - rather
 larger than - Spanish iris - arranged to
 collect a match box full of ripe seed. Bury
 thinks it's a new one. But the gentleman

beat every thing. A small acanthis (no stalk)
bright blue striped black is very common - it's
probably - well known one though I never
see it in the Alps. And this afternoon I
found another of the same shape, but smaller
& more delicate & of the most ravishing
deep blue - how I should like to give my
name to it if only it should turn out to
be new. This is merely to hint
at the joy & beauty of flowers in these
parts!

I can't begin another page or I shall never get to bed.
This is the child's pen from me. By the time you get this I should be in Dorojevic's
my love. Mrs. G.

Dearest One, I continually think of you
with love & wish myself near you & long
to tell you all. I feel I can only communicate
this way one grain of all I have to say &
can share with you almost nothing. I
can't even share my photographs with you.
The Babu's prints of my best ones were
so bad as to be hardly worth sending. Busy
printed them after I left a gaslight paper
& sent them home to the R.G.S. Can't it
you find a way of seeing them there?