

Gnatsong.

May 24 1921

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MOUNT EVEREST EXPEDITION.

My dearest Ruth, I fear my last letter was rather a feeble affair & gave you little idea really of our trekking. The fact is that I am in rather a difficulty between letters & my journal. I don't want to send home the letters as they want to work it up towards a book on my way home. Perhaps the best plan will be frankly to transcribe parts of it. At present I have only about  $\frac{1}{2}$  a dozen pages & I repeated to you much that they contain; but writing it up for you make it little more personal than the journal & I must try & tell you more in a personal way & keep this separate from what is general description.

You'll firstly be wanting to know how our mules are behaving - & that tale is very simply told. The hope of course was that the day's rest at Kanghi would have

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gives them a fresh start. But the 4000 ft.  
rise on the following day was again too much  
for them. Two collapsed on the way & it was  
feared at one time they would die. Ponies  
had been hired to take on the burdens  
which had been too much for the mules  
& we found that the 50 mules of the first  
party were only carrying 14 loads besides  
the 'line gear' of (tents etc) of the men  
attending them. We know that the 2<sup>nd</sup>  
party were little or no better off; so it  
was decided to send them back to Darjeeling  
& pick up Tibetan mules locally. One can  
usually meet these animals coming from  
Tibet heavily laden with wool, & there seems  
no difficulty in hiring them. They are  
much better accustomed to hill work &  
in the end will come less expensive than  
hill work Govt mules.

And now about myself; - I was frankly  
not very happy at leaving Darjeeling. I  
had found the time at Government House  
rather trying - in some way was not getting

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on with Howard Bury. I felt I should never be at ease with him - or liked in a sense I never shall be; he is not a pleasant person. He is well-informed & opinionated & doesn't at all like anyone else to know things he doesn't know. For the sake of peace I am being very careful not to broach certain subjects of conversation; these are realms which are barred to our entrance together. However we are getting along quite well now. He knows a great deal about flowers & is very keen about them, & is often pleasant & sometimes amusing at meals.

And I saw ~~not~~ still see Raeburn as a great difficulty. He has some very tiresome qualities. He is very critical & unappreciative of other people in some ways - for instance about all our kit. Wheeler & Bullock have both commented on that. He is evidently touchy about his position as leader of the Alpine party & wants to be treated with proper respect. And he is dreadfully dictatorial about matters of

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fact a often wrong. It was very evident at Darjeeling that he would not get on with Howard Bury, to say nothing of the rest of us. In these circumstances I rather view myself as a soothing syrup. Luckily I had a friendly little walk with Raeburn before we left Darjeeling - rather played up to his desire to give advice so we got on very nicely. He has some very nice qualities - he has a good deal of fatherliness & kindness: but his total lack of calm & of sense of humor at the same time is most unfortunate. I am rather sorry in a way that I am not with him now. I feel he's a weak man whom it might be my good fortune to help. However the two men are likely to keep apart a good deal - I dare say all my work out smooth in the end.

In any case I have ceased to be depressed. I am gloomy frolicsome. This is a good life. Not intellectually - very exciting one, because aesthetic experience so much outweighs all other. It is a time of absorption

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through the eyes; and one absorbs so much that not much mental energy is left for any thing else. From the outside I expect I seem sleepy & dull. The actual marching is a slow business. We generally get up fairly early, any time between 6.0 or 7.0. It takes some time to load up so that the mules have often started as late as 9.0, though the start tends to become earlier as we become better organized & there last two mornings we have got off by 8.0. There is no system of keeping together, or even of starting together for that matter. We just go drifting along. Very often I find myself with Willerton riding up a steep, pure path; looking round as a great deal & passing observations on what we see; stopping here & there either to rest the ponies or better to look round, or because we have caught up ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> party

6) of mile & there is no room to pass them.

Yesterday I stayed a little to get off my letter to you & started alone with my sis (groom), a little jockey from Darjeeling. We soon overtook a sick man crawling up the hill, so I set him on my pony & walked the first 2000 feet, & sweated abundantly. I was much worried because my thoughts were constantly confused / a feeling of self-conscious virtue. - The result I suppose of too rare practice of such kind acts.

It was a very lovely journey up the valley yesterday to Sedmichen - a real fine morning, the first we have had, beautiful wooded hillside - streams & plenty of flowers - many flowering shrubs & trees. I must write up flowers altogether in my journal as far as I am able, but it will be very difficult. Until today it has been much more a question of detail than of general effect. The hillside isn't flush with colour - except fresh greens. One is continually peering into the wood

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& seeing a bunch of orchids on a tree or strange dark arums (these are numberless) or one looks at the tree-top on a level with one's eyes & sees that lovely flowers are suspended under the leaves.

But to-day all's changed. It has been the day for flowers, so much beyond words to describe that it almost makes me weep to think I convey nothing to you or almost nothing of so much beauty. We have come up nearly 6000 ft. to-day and are now at 12000 ft & a bit more. Lower down the best was a wonderful little pink-flushed orchid blooming very freely on both trees & rocks, & I should think this & a little alpine strawberry continued for 2500 ft, the strawberry much higher too. After about 10000 ft. we saw the first rhododendron - great trees with smooth reddish bark up to

8 about 50 ft. high, but not flowering at that elevation. The show began about 1000 ft. higher & got continually more wonderful. The first rhododendron we saw in bloom had a cluster of small tubular flowers apricot-tinted the most delicate-look colour. Higher the most splendid were two different lemon-coloured ones, a deep & a light crimson, a brilliant scarlet, a white tinted & spotted with mauve, a very clean blue trumpet one, & those most lovely pinks of different qualities. The colours were brilliant beyond description & the light shone bright through them as we passed under the ~~roof~~ crest of a long ridge. And all the world was covered with rhododendrons, save for an occasional meadow, with <sup>a few</sup> ~~occasional~~ conifers to lend them grace & large boulders to break the scenery & give just the rugged touch required.

I must add a few words about several other flowers. First a white ranunculus, not unlike a white anemone grew freely with

469 have a bunch of fall in about by my side.



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an alpine habit - Hope that phrase may convey something; ~~whereas~~ secondly a little elongating primula yellowish blue, <sup>with yellow centre</sup> most exquisite, but rather rare; thirdly a deep, deep velvety purple primula, growing more freely than I have ever seen cowslips or with heads three times the size - alpine meadows short grassed or flooded, velvet purple floods of this primula. Heavenly meadows indescribably desirable! And the deep wonder of that ravishing flower! To crown all the pure white ranunculus bloomed among it.

I was to mention one or two more flowers but after this climax. Nothing else seems worth speaking of.

Lord, how I have wanted you to see all this with me!

Gratong is the fifthest little village I ever saw dimly situated in a cup formed by these low hill sides - no longer the tropical forests, but alpine slopes

occasionally beautified by large masses of  
photodendron. For the first time it is cold-  
& fresh. I delighted to meet the cool air  
& to feel once again as one feels in the Alps.  
Moreover as I walked up the last 3000 feet  
or so I felt very slight, the effects of the  
height - that pleased me too - it seemed the  
real thing.

This is the last village in Sikkim. To-mor-  
row we cross the Telep La (4500 ft)  
into Tibet - a long march as we go  
down to 9000 ft at the far side. Goodbye  
beautiful world of Sikkim & welcome  
- God knows what! We shall see.

This evening has not been given us further  
to explore these hills; a considerable  
thunderstorm is now visiting the dirty  
inhabitants (100 or so) of Gnatong: but I  
fear it will make them no cleaner though  
it makes me all the more grateful for God's  
mercies this morning.

Truly I have written enough, even to you dearest  
angel & haven't the wind left to breathe through  
another sheet. And now I here tell you about

to my journal  
for the children  
to you & my wife's com-  
to tell it to my journal  
Thoughts to you & my wife's com-  
I shall have no energy left  
A multitude of loving thoughts to you & my wife's com-  
the flowers