IRVINE, MALLORY, NORTON, ODELL, MACDONALD,
SHEBBEARE, GEOFFREY BRUCE, SOMERVELL, BEETHAM.

(Absent) General Bruce, Hingston, Hazard, Noel.

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HIS MAJESTY THE KING

TO

SIR FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND

'The King is greatly distressed to hear the sad news of the death of Mr. Mallory and Mr. Irvine, who lost their lives in making a final attempt to reach the summit of Mount Everest.

'His Majesty asks whether you will be good enough to convey to the families of these two gallant explorers as well as to the Mount Everest Committee an expression of his sincere sympathy.

'They will ever be remembered as fine examples of mountaineers—ready to risk their lives for their companions and to face dangers on behalf of science and discovery.'

The Mount Everest Dispatches.

[We print below Colonel Norton's Dispatches, from the arrival of the Expedition in the Rongbuk Valley to its withdrawal after the loss of two of its members. They tell in vivid language a tale of devotion and of self-sacrificing team-work such as we knew our men would exhibit.]

Colonel Norton's Dispatches.

No. 6.

Base Camp, Rongbuk. *May* 13.
[Published *May* 31.]

WHEN I last wrote hence on April 29 things had gone so smoothly that we were wondering when the crash was coming. We had reached the Base Camp exactly according to plan and, amply provided as we were with local labour, the way seemed clear before us to a possible assault on the mountain somewhere about May 17. Portraits of the gods guarding Everest are painted on the walls of the Rongbuk Monastery. We studied them with interest and smiled.

The first task, after Camp II. had been established and stocked by local labour with all stores for the higher camps, was to transport the necessary proportion to Camp III. with our own specially enlisted porters. On May 3 Mallory, Noël, Odell, Hazard, and Irvine started for Camp III., accompanied by twenty of these porters. On the following day Havildar Umar, 6th Gurkhas, followed with twenty more porters. These two parties were to complete the establishment of Camp III., close under the glittering wall of the North Col, with all stores required for itself and the higher camps, and then to proceed with stocking Camp IV. on the North Col itself, as soon as the snow and ice staircase to that point had been reconnoitred and constructed by Odell and Hazard. A reserve of twelve porters, including some of the toughest veterans of two years ago, was maintained for the moment at the base, under Geoffrey Bruce. Somervell, Beetham, and I left the Base Camp on May 6. It was a very clear, cold morning, after a night when the temperature at the Base Camp fell to *minus* 10° F. We arrived without incident at Camp II. on the morrow, finding Noel there. The same evening it began to be clear that all was far from well. A party of porters based on Camp II.

had made two trips towards III., but encountered such low temperatures, combined with head winds, that Mallory decided to establish a dump for stores at a point on the glacier about a mile short of the camp.

But who are these weary, crippled men coming staggering and straggling through the séracs of the glacier into Camp II., between 4 and 6 P.M., from the direction of III., looking for all the world like the stragglers of the British Army I once saw blocking the roads south of Le Cateau on August 27, 1914? It appears that they are porters of the first party from Camp III. They have made one 'carry' to that camp two days ago, and are now clean driven out by exposure and exhaustion after spending forty-eight hours practically confined to the tents, with only bare necessities in the shape of food and clothing—in other words, a blanket apiece and the local barley meal to eat. The ample and varied supplies of food and spare blankets and most of the fuel are still dumped on the glacier a mile short of their camp. As at St. Quentin, Chauny, and Noyon in 1914, there is now no time to count the cost nor look far ahead. The stores dumped at II. for all the higher camps must be ruthlessly broken up and expended. The high-altitude tents are pitched, the priceless stores of Meta solidified spirit are broached, high-altitude sleeping-bags are issued. The capacity of Camp II. is doubled for the night and some degree of comfort is extended to the sufferers.

On the morrow Mallory arrived at breakfast from Camp III., and we held a council of war. Mallory's story was short and sweet. Temperatures as much as *minus* 22° F., 10° lower than anything met in 1922, coupled with terrible wind and the failure of the majority of stores from II. to reach Camp III., explain the rout of the first party. Mallory himself ordered the retreat, and had practically to man-handle many men out of the tents on to their feet, so completely had the hardships taken the heart out of them. Such weather conditions surely must be exceptional, and it was decided to rest and recuperate the first party at Camp II., and next day to send the second party from Camp II. without loads to the Glacier dump, thence to carry all essentials up to Camp III., where they were to remain, changing places with the first party. The situation was explained to the men, and the second party went off on their third trip in four days in good heart, under Somervell's escort.

Geoffrey Bruce now arrived at Camp II. with the Old Guard, affording neither the first nor the last instance in history

when the commander blessed his reserve. This day Odell and Hazard attempted to reconnoitre the route to North Col, but the conditions were such as precluded their reaching more than half-way, making a dump of rope pickets. The next day Mallory, Geoffrey Bruce, and I left for III. with a convoy, very much more cheerful than the first party, and a reserve carrying stores partly to the dump and partly through to Camp III. Hazard, who was sent to the base to relieve Shebbeare, met us *en route*. I have a sharp silhouette of him in mind as I write, making famous going down the glassy surface of the glacier in the teeth of the gale, with his beard and moustache iced, so that he looked like Father Christmas. Shebbeare's special qualifications as transport officer now called for his presence at Camp II., where it was hoped under more favourable conditions to dispense with an officer.

Now began a blizzard lasting continuously for forty-eight hours. Strictly speaking, it only snowed for perhaps twenty-four hours, but the conditions subsequently were identical, or worse. The wind increased after the snow ceased to fall, driving the fresh-fallen powdery snow before it in incessant gusts, producing much the same results as if snow were falling, combined with a lower temperature. All woke at Camp III. on the morning of the 10th to find the tents filled with inches of powdery snow. It was now apparent that it was inadvisable to maintain more sahibs than were necessary under such conditions at Camp III. The carriage of provisions and consideration of the condition of those climbers destined for an early attempt outweighed the acclimatisation question and decided Mallory and Irvine to return to Camp II., which they did after breakfast. Somervell and I escorted a party from Camp III. back to the dump, and returned well laden in the teeth of driving snow, while Geoffrey Bruce stimulated the reluctant camp into activity, and did what could be done under impossible conditions to evolve order out of chaos and comfort out of misery.

The night of the 10th–11th served the purpose, perhaps, of testing the wind resistance of our apparently flimsy high-altitude tents; for all other purposes it is best forgotten. The wind appeared to be shot high in the air over the North Col, Rapiu-La, and Lhakpa-La, the three passes surrounding us, and, from some point high in the zenith, descended on the camp like a terrier on a rat-pit, and shook our little tents like rats. The minimum temperature was *minus* 7°, and the tents were again filled with drifted snow. At 9 A.M. on

the 11th the temperature was still *minus* 1°, a gale was raging, and everything was deep in snow. The North Col route would in no circumstances be safe for some days. The much-enduring second party of porters were now reduced nearly to the condition which the first party had reached three days before.

There was nothing for it but retreat—retreat to the Base Camp for a few days' recuperation before making a fresh start. Messengers were dispatched to Camp II. with instructions to evacuate it in hopes that they would reach there in time to stop any upward convoy. Then Geoffrey Bruce did a fine bit of work, though it was very much in the ordinary day's work for him. Taking up a commanding position in the centre of the camp in the teeth of the gale, he proceeded to order the striking and packing of the camp, for it was impossible to risk standing or even collapsed tents in such weather. How he got the men to work, the tents struck and packed in bags and boxes, bedding, stores, and fuel all neatly dumped, only he can tell. Perhaps his stinging words cut more than the wind, but it is on record that he found time and opportunity to give exactly the right amount of sympathy to the really sick and to those who thought they were more sick than they were. Such loads as were to accompany our downward course were fairly and justly apportioned, and to his credit, be it said, a comparatively cheerful party thankfully turned their backs on what had an hour ago been Camp III., and which was now something resembling a neat pile of stones.

Half-way down that weird corridor, with blue ice pinnacles, resembling nothing so much as a transformation scene at Drury Lane, which forms the lower road from Camp II. to Camp III., we met the convoy for Camp III., our note having arrived too late to stop it. Never mind, they can go right through to the base next day. Our convoy goes through to Camp I., with Mallory, Noel, Irvine, and Beetham in charge, and Somervell and Odell as far as Camp II. Geoffrey Bruce and I spend the night at Camp II. to look after and escort on the morrow a man who had broken a small bone in his leg on the glacier. So by 2 P.M. on the 12th the whole expedition was again at the base. And what a different base from that which we thought so bleak a fortnight ago! Bleak it still is, with no sign of the stir of the Tibetan spring in scanty vegetation and grey moraine heaps, but a garden of roses after III.

The end of Round One finds us discomfited, but very far from defeated. A hitch, but by no means the crash we feared, has

come. We have one man with seriously frostbitten feet, one with a broken leg, and two severe cases of bronchitis, and, worst of all, Lancenaik Shamsherpun, of the 6th Gurkhas, suffering apparently from hæmorrhage of the brain and in a serious condition. We lose inevitably five or six days of the original programme. On the other hand, when we reoccupy Camp III. in three or four days, we shall have no need to look over our shoulders. Everything will be up and the proportion of stores to go up higher will be a fleabite compared with what has been done. Porters and sahibs are acclimatised and tested up to 21,000 ft. We know our good carriers. Already, twenty-four hours after arrival at the Base Camp, the porters have got over most of their minor ailments and fatigues, and are showing normal cheerful faces. We hope to get them and the expedition as a whole blessed two days hence by the Head Lama at Rongbuk Monastery, who was too sick to do this when we passed through Rongbuk.

The British members of the Expedition are in perfect health, despite their roughish experience. Give us but the weather encountered in 1922 and nothing will prevent the smooth continuance of the plan, with ample time to carry it out. The brightest spot on our arrival at the base was to find that Hingston had rejoined, after leaving General Bruce at Darjeeling, in the nick of time to relieve Somervell of some of the arduous duties of medical officer.

Since writing the above I have to record with the greatest regret the death of Shamsherpun, painlessly, and without recovering consciousness. The death of this splendid young man in the prime of youth is much felt by all the members of the Expedition, who, in tendering their sympathies with his relatives and the regiment, feel that they have lost a friend and a most loyal assistant.

No. 7.

Camp I. East Rongbuk Glacier. *May* 26.
[Published *June* 16.]

'No game was ever worth a rap for a rational man to play into which no accident, no mishap, could possibly find a way.' This sentiment must be our consolation as I start the seventh dispatch from the Everest Expedition, for since I last wrote we have done little but provide Everest with games worth raps enduring [? message mutilated]. The task of describing our doings in detail I am leaving to the ready pen of Mallory, confining myself to a brief epitome of the events which led to our

finding ourselves once more temporarily defeated and strung out in echelon between the Base Camp and Camp II. for two or three days' recuperation from the rigours of Camps III. and IV.

We advanced for the second time to the attack on May 17, the day originally planned for the first assault on the summit. As luck would have it, this was, perhaps, the most perfect day I have ever seen on the mountain, certainly the only day of the sort seen this year. We arrived on May 19 at Camp III., and on the 20th a party consisting of Mallory, Odell, and myself established a route to the site of Camp IV. and on to the North Col itself.

On the 21st twelve porters, escorted by Somervell, Hazard, and Irvine, established a camp on the old site. Incidentally, no sign could be found of the old camp established there in 1922. All was buried deep under the snows of two winters and two monsoons. Somervell and Irvine returned to Camp III., leaving Hazard in charge of the twelve porters, pitching camp in a snowstorm at 5 P.M.

On the 22nd a similar party under Odell and Geoffrey Bruce were to have repeated the trip, but as snow had started falling at 1 P.M. on the previous day and continued unintermittingly for twenty-six hours, the attempt was impossible. The night of May 22–23 produced the lowest temperature recorded by the Everest Expedition, viz. 56° of frost. Many of the party at Camp III., which now included five climbers, did not sleep. The eiderdown sleeping-bag is a wonderful invention, but it has its limitations. Emboldened by the low temperature, the brilliant morning, and other reassuring indications, and urged on by the consideration that priceless days were slipping past, a party of sixteen porters, under Bruce and Odell, left on the morrow for Camp IV. Half-way up the steep snow and ice slopes the party encountered such dangerous conditions underfoot, aggravated by the fact that it began to snow hard again, that the attempt had to be abandoned, and the party returned to Camp III., dumping their loads at the highest point reached by the porters.

From there they saw Hazard descending through the snowstorm above them, escorting what it was hoped would be his whole party. At about 5 P.M. the party arrived, Hazard having rightly judged that there was nothing for it but evacuation. He had shepherded the party safely down the unpleasant descent, but most unfortunately, while he was in the post of danger ahead, going first to test the treacherous new snow, the last four men lost their nerve and turned back to Camp IV.,

where they remained marooned, their food supply, it turned out, confined to a sack of barley meal, as, two days before, a complete load of mixed luxuries had been accidentally dropped over an ice cliff by the porter who had been carrying it.

Here was a pleasant situation. The snow continued to fall until midnight, increasing in volume, and, what was worse, in softness. In fact, the indications were multiplying that some form of monsoon current was undoubtedly upon us. Yet the four unfortunate marooned men had to be extricated, and that without another day's delay. One man had already been reported frostbitten, and it was impossible to say if he would be fit to descend even on the next day. The whole party in Camp III. were in none too fit condition. Five days of alternate heavy climbing and lying snowbound in 16-lb. tents and five nights with temperatures averaging 50° of frost had played havoc with the health of all, British and Himalayan, and to some extent also with the *moral* of the latter, many of whom were shaken.

The route to the North Col would obviously be unsafe for some days to come. Meanwhile our stores of food and fuel—the former replaceable from below, the latter irreplaceable—were being consumed at an alarming rate. There was nothing for it but once again to withdraw to the lower camps, where sleep and some degree of comfort could be obtained and where the usual yak dung could be burnt instead of artificial fuel. Accordingly a twofold operation was carried out on the 24th—the evacuation of Camp III. and the rescue of the marooned men from Camp IV. Of this Mallory will tell the story. That he was himself suffering from the prevalent high-altitude cough—which prevents sleep at nights and handicaps the climber—and yet was the mainspring of two fine climbs, he will probably not tell, but few would, or could, have done what he did.

Hence, to-day finds us echeloned up the East Rongbuk Glacier, ready to repeat our attempts on the mountain with but a day's delay when the weather permits. Once more the *via dolorosa*, threading the moraines of the glacier, has witnessed a melancholy little procession of sick, frostbitten, and snow-blind men painfully wending their way to the comparative comfort of the Base Camp, where there are adequate medical arrangements. At Camp I. we are occupied in recasting our plans. If the monsoon is really on us—and who ever anticipated the beginning of the monsoon as early as May 19?—our only hope is largely to modify our plan and snatch fleeting chance in some fine interval. If it is only the preliminary current, to be followed even now by

a real spell of the fine weather we have looked for in vain, we must be prepared to take advantage of it. But we have our warning. Prudence must recognise the third alternative, which, however, I prefer not to discuss. Here I let Mallory take up the story.

Mr. Mallory's Story.

'This pause in our protracted struggle does not seem the moment for telling a story; Norton probably thinks so, as he hands over this part of his task to me. Action is only suspended before the more intense action of the climax. The issue will shortly be decided. The third time we walk up East Rongbuk Glacier will be the last, for better or worse. We have counted our wounded and know, roughly, how much to strike off the strength of our little army as we plan the next act of battle.

'In making plans, however, though we turn from the story of the past to the brighter future, we have been brought to consider certain events of the past few days. The events all belong to one stage—between Camp III., 21,000 ft. up, and Camp IV., 23,000 ft. up, and still 6000 ft. short of the summit. In 1922 the way here consisted of a brief hour's easy going up the stones of the glacier, followed by a steeper ascent of about 1400 ft. on snow and ice slopes, and up and down these slopes the men went freely, without thought of the difficulties, until the party of seventeen were swept off them by an avalanche and seven porters were killed. That was on June 7, after the first big snowfall of the monsoon on June 3–5. Naturally now in 1924 we do not mean to be caught in the same way again, not if we can help it.

'It is when we think and think how we can make safe the way to Camp IV. up on the snowy shelf among the great ice-cliffs of Chang-La that we begin to appreciate the immense difficulties Everest holds in store. It must be remembered, in the first place, that our great ally, the Sherpa porter, is not a practised mountaineer. Give him good hard snow where nails can grip, slopes where he can just walk comfortably on good steps carved by the sahib's ice-axe clean and clear, unencumbered by fresh powdery snow; give him a rope for a handrail here and there at danger points; give him, above all, to believe that at the journey's end he will find good food and a warm bed, and he will go up and down steep tracks without a qualm, happy, confident, and safe.

'But the mountain does not always acquiesce in this cheerful view. The first weapon of defence is simply the cold. It seems cold beyond a certain point somewhere about — 10° F. at night.

The cold at these altitudes and under these conditions, whether in camp or on the mountain, tends to cause the expansive Sherpa's nature to contract. It is not surprising, when the hard conditions of their life are considered, that the porters, with few exceptions, lose their vitality most quickly in great cold. Nor can it be said that the British sahib is unaffected.

'The second weapon is the snow. The fewest inches of snow enormously increase the labour of carrying a load from Camp III. to Camp IV. All that was firm and sure becomes slippery and uncertain. The porter no longer distinguishes clearly the hole where his foot may be placed in the new snow, and is inclined to slide on the hard old snow or on the ice beneath as the powdery stuff blows up into his face. Instead of stepping in glad confidence, body erect, he begins hesitatingly to crawl, with his body hugging the slope. All sense of security is gone; the splendid fellow who bore his load so proudly has become a veritable child, a child for whom the British officer is at every turn responsible.

'The fortune of this Expedition in 1924 is sharply differentiated from our experiences in 1922 by the greater cold this year, and the greater snowfall to date. It is, of course, the snowfall which has chiefly affected the mountaineering difficulties between Camps III. and IV. The particular slope of the corridor where the avalanche occurred in 1922 is not dangerous every day, and was in perfectly good condition when Norton, Odell, and myself set forth to reach Chang-La on the 20th. Nevertheless, warnings of bad weather already received convinced us that we must establish at the outset a way independent of this slope in case of heavy snow.

'The rules of this game, so to speak, are that you may directly ascend a slope in comparative safety, but must never cross a slope, where the snow is likely to slip just by crossing it, and breaking the surface, since you are likely to start an avalanche. The corridor in 1922 was unsafe after the monsoon snow had fallen because the floor was on a slant, so that, though one might feel that one was going directly up a slope, one was really crossing one all the time. Now, as one looks up at the intermingled masses of white broken snow and bluish broken ice below the long snow-saddle called Chang-La, or North Col, it is almost unimaginable, if one does not take the corridor leading directly to the strategical point, that it will be possible to regain this line and reach this point without crossing one or other of the snow-slopes, all of which are dangerous to cross after sufficient snowfall.

'Away to the right, separated from the corridor by a series of ice-cliffs, we saw the long slopes used for the ascent by the first 1921 Expedition. The place has changed a good deal since, but the lower slopes remain substantially as they were, while higher an immense crevasse curves across the face and stretches to the upper end of the corridor. Would it be possible to use this crevasse if we came up to the right to take us back to the head of the corridor? Clearly on the lower lip, if we could work along, we should be protected from an avalanche from above. Any party making fresh tracks up to Chang-La from Camp III. will find they have a full day's work, though on the 20th we had favourable conditions and went slowly enough.

'At length the steep slope brought us to the crevasse and the one real difficulty of the route. On the lower lip, which we wanted to follow, impinged hereabouts a line of ice-cliffs. It was necessary to climb up the steep wall to the foot of the little chimney which here represented our crevasse. The snow in the bed of this chimney gave no foothold; steps could not be cut in its sides, so inconveniently narrow it was. Before we emerged and found ourselves on the big crevasse proper, with the lip fortunately accessible, we had climbed 200 ft. as steep and difficult as one could wish to find on any big mountain.

'The rest of the way gave no trouble, though taking the straight way in order to avoid traversing the final slope up to the old site of Camp IV. involved more step-cutting. We congratulated ourselves on having shared the labours of the day, so each could feel satisfied at his part and also at having eliminated the principal dangers on the way up. But it remained to be seen how the porters would manage the loads up that steep 200 ft.

'On the following day, the 21st, Somervell, Irvine, and Hazard set forth to escort the first lot of loads to Camp IV. It was snowing slightly when they started, and the day grew worse. Somervell found our tracks covered or could not find them at all. The ice chimney no doubt they rightly decided was too narrow for the majority of the loads. Somervell and Irvine established themselves at the top while Hazard directed operations from below, and all twelve loads were hauled up. Tremendous efforts must have been required of those two who hauled and the two or three porters who helped. Two hours and a half were thus spent. Having seen Hazard up to the foot of the final slope, Somervell and Irvine returned. According to plan the porters were to rest next day at Camp IV. before going on with Bruce and Odell to establish Camp V. This operation

has to be conducted with oxygen. Irvine was now wanted in camp to prepare the apparatus for the next day. In such thick weather Somervell judged that Irvine must have a companion on the descent.

'A further illustration of the mountaineering difficulties in reaching Camp IV. is the story of the party conducted by Bruce and Odell on the 23rd, a day later than they were due to go up. Fresh snow had greatly altered the easy walk up the stones of the glacier. Instead of a brief hour up to the foot of the slopes nearly three hours were required. On the slopes themselves snow was found to be in the most disagreeable state. Hazard's party were coming down the ice chimney as Bruce and Odell, having left the porters lower down, were approaching the crevasse. They did not reach the crevasse, deeming the snow dangerous. Hazard was apparently deaf to their shoutings, and for an hour or so the two parties were never in touch.

'The two stories we heard in Camp III. that evening, with the news that not all Hazard's party had descended, mingled as we lay in our tents with the sound of ever-increasing snowfall, produced the nearest thing to gloom I remember during the expedition. As night came on the snow had a moister and stickier quality. Was this really the monsoon then? Four men caught on Chang-La for the first snow of the monsoon. One of them reported frostbitten. It was this circumstance that compelled rescue the next day and no later. I woke in the early part of the night for a coughing fit. The tent was brighter, and Norton murmured: "The moon." Sure enough, looking behind me, I made out through the canvas a bright unclouded moon. The snow had stopped. It was not the monsoon this time.

'Was there ever such a party as set out straggling up the snow-covered stones next morning? Norton, Somervell, and myself, the three who have climbed together on Everest before, must have appeared like a party of thrashed curs. I suppose we were half sick with the cold and the altitude. Never can three men have looked less like accomplishing a hard task; never, I confess, has a task appeared to my mind so utterly far away and unlikely to be accomplished. We drove ourselves somehow or other over the fresh snow of the glacier basin and up, up, slowly and wearily, puffing and coughing. "If only it were not for that blessed cough," I thought, "even in snow up to my knees I could have gone on well enough."

'We started at 8 A.M.; at 1.30 P.M. we were at the foot of the steep place below the ice chimney. Every ledge and step

were filled with snow. But there remained the thin descending line of rope, fixed by Somervell's party to help the porters. That blessed rope! How pleased we were to grasp it with both hands and pull ourselves up the steep places! On two dangerous sections above the crevasse Norton and Somervell in turn went ahead on the long rope, while the remaining two secured them.

'While Somervell was leading up and across the final slope the four porters above were held in conversation. As there was no time to lose, we wanted to know whether all were ready to move. The question appeared to puzzle them. Eventually one asked, "Up or down?" Norton's reply seemed to surprise no less than delight them, so little had they realised the situation or appreciated the threat of more bad weather. It was 4.30 P.M., and we were already in cold shadow when Somervell reached the shelf, or, rather, reached within a few feet of it, for the rope on which we held him was just too short for the purpose. The quickest way, we had decided, was to make a handrail and send down the men one at a time to where Norton and I were posted; but now the proposed handrail did not reach far enough, and the men had to move two or three steps before they could reach it.

'Watching with some anxiety, Norton and I suddenly saw two of the four men sliding down the steep snow-slope. By some miracle they stopped some 15 ft. below. Somervell was entirely equal to the occasion. We heard him shout: "What's Khaskura for: Stay still?" Norton gave the right expression, and the two, clinging in their precarious situation, with fingers dug into the snow—neither had an ice-axe—were duly instructed not to stir for their lives. The others were passed along the rope. Somervell stuck his ice-axe into the snow and passed a rope round it, and in a few minutes we saw him apparently gather to his bosom the errant porters in a paternal manner worthy of Abraham. The two were passed along the rope.

'It had been our great good fortune to find that the frost-bitten member of the party of porters had suffered not in his feet but in his hands. We had not to use our one man-carrier brought up by Norton. He could go down on his own feet. He was a very sick man nevertheless. The ice chimney was no place for one hardly able to bear holding the fixed rope, and in our race with the oncoming darkness he necessarily suffered. But it was well for him, as for us, that the race was ours.

'As I headed the party trudging a little grimly across the glacier basin in the last light of day I dimly made out a party

approaching. It was Noel and Odell, with two or three porters bearing hot soup in thermos flasks. *Sic itur ad astra.* They will deserve their thrones in heaven. But not every party descending from Chang-La will find good tracks and an untroubled evening, still less will they meet hot soup. We know now what we have to do to make safe the way. We expect no mercy from Everest. Yet perhaps it will be as well he should not deign to take much notice of the little group of busy ones on the great north side, or, at all events, that he should not observe among the scattered remnants he has half put to flight the still existent will, perhaps power, to sting his very nose-tip.'

No. 8.

Camp III. East Rongbuk Glacier. *June* 8.
[Published *June* 26.]

I dictate the eighth dispatch from Camp III. I say dictate, as I am unable to write, as I am just recovering from an acute attack of snow-blindness, whereof more anon. Geoffrey Bruce, jack-of-all-trades, is my secretary. Both of us having had a go at high altitudes feel that this particular kind of work for the moment is what exactly suits us.

Above towers Everest, somewhat powdered with fresh snow, still and windless, and half shrouded in that type of damp, sticky cloud which surely this time presages the advent of the monsoon proper. Every eye in camp is turned on the final pyramid. Expectation is at its keenest, for somewhere there the final attempt, as it must inevitably be, is at this moment deciding the success or failure of the 1924 Expedition.

When last I wrote I explained that the original plan would require modification, partly owing to uncertainty, more definitely owing to the exhaustion, physical and moral, of the porters. I propose shortly to describe the psychology of these interesting men in more detail. At present it must suffice to say that Geoffrey Bruce and Shebbeare, who know them best, agreed that twelve to fifteen at the time of the return to the assault was the maximum to be depended upon to go beyond the normal 23,000 ft. It behoved us to cut our coat according to our cloth.

At a conference of climbers at Camp I. on May 27 it was decided that for the present the use of oxygen must be discarded; that a series of at least two attempts without oxygen, sleeping two nights on the mountain, above 23,000 ft., with the absolute minimum of organisation should be made; afterwards as the

fates might decide. Another precious day of fine weather was sacrificed on the 28th to the recuperation of the climbers ; no doubt the results repaid the risk. The day, further, was utilised by those ingenious and infallible mechanics, Odell and Irvine, in constructing a rope ladder from Alpine rope and tent-pegs, to enable the loaded porters to negotiate safely the ice chimney leading to Camp IV., of which you have already heard. Like all the work of the well-known firm of ' Odell and Irvine,' this proved a most complete success.

The weather now was apparently almost perfect for our purpose. The mountain day after day was standing clear-cut in azure ; day after day even the streamer cloud, the hall-mark of the master peak, was lacking from the master of all. The preliminary monsoon symptoms had entirely disappeared, yet we well knew that the monsoon might at any moment be on us in full force. The parties selected for the first two assaults were Mallory and Bruce, and Somervell and myself, with Odell and Irvine supporting on the North Col.

The party reached Camp III. on the 30th, accompanied by Noel and his kinema outfit. Hazard, destined to support from Camp III., arrived a day later. Beetham, unluckily suffering from an attack of acute sciatica, determined not to be out of the hunt, had broken off from the doctor's supervision at the Base Camp, and struggled manfully to Camp III. with his usual determination, prepared to cook, climb, or carry, indeed, to support the climbers in any way possible. It was my painful duty to return him to the Base Camp with an order to release Hingston, so that a doctor should be available to ascend to here and look after possible casualties. It must not be forgotten that the 1924 Expedition is two under strength.

With the above climbing parties at Camp III. were assembled that picked gang of porters who were considered still reliable to go high. They were fifteen in number, and distinguished by the name of ' Tigers.' At the stage set for the final attempts on the mountain the weather continued perfect. On June 1 Mallory and Bruce, accompanied by nine of the ' Tigers,' camped at the North Col [Chang-La], establishing *en route* a rope ladder. Odell and Irvine were to remain in support at Camp IV.

On June 2, still apparently under perfect weather conditions, the two climbers and eight porters started up the great north ridge to establish Camp V. But the weather on Everest is not always what it seems. Once past the jumble of crevasses and séracs separating Camp IV. from the true col, a bitter north-

west wind, one of the most formidable foes we have to face on Everest, smote the little party on the flank. This wind must be felt to be appreciated. Every member of the party was equipped with every device of windproof clothing experience could invent. Yet such is the keenness of the wind that it appeared to have the double quality of penetrating through and yet nearly blowing the laden porters out of their steps.

Progress up the north ridge of Everest does not lend itself to description. It is a fight against wind and altitude, generally on rock, sometimes on snow, at an average angle of 45 degrees. It will appeal to those who have ever tried mountain climbing above 23,000 ft. Camp V. was to be situated on the east or sheltered side of the ridge at about 25,300 ft. At about 25,000 ft. the endurance of the porters began to flag, and of eight only four made Camp V. under their own steam. The remainder deposited their loads, unable to go on. While Mallory set to work to organise the camp, Bruce and one Lobsang, meriting the distinction of being one of the leaders of the 'Tigers,' made two trips back from the level of the camp and brought up the missing loads on their own backs. Whites cannot carry loads at these altitudes with impunity, and it is scarcely to be wondered at that Bruce's heart was strained, happily only temporarily, in this fine performance.

Camp V. was now established—two fragile 10-lb. tentlets perched on an almost precipitous slope. The tents occupied by the non-oxygen party in 1922, collapsed and held in position by big stones, were clearly seen 200 ft. below. According to plan, five porters now returned to Camp IV., three picked ones being retained to sleep the night and carry a tinier camp some 2000 ft. higher on the morrow. Obviously everything depended upon the physical condition and *moral* of these three men. The most persuasive powers of Bruce could elicit little enthusiasm from them as to their next day's task. Apparently the wind had taken the heart out of them. With no rosy anticipations the party went to bed, with the sun still gilding the tops of the surrounding mountains, after the truly miserable but inevitable routine in high altitudes of cooking the dinner.

It was intended to make an early start next morning. This has been done, therefore is not impossible, but when Tibetan porters are concerned it certainly approaches the limits of the possible. Making a long story short, a series of visits to the men's tent while the climbers' breakfast was being prepared produced in the end nothing but the most unwelcome information that only one was fit to proceed. The other two professed

to be sick and totally unable to carry a load. Bruce talks their language fluently and has great influence over them, and there is not the slightest doubt that if anybody could have stimulated them to go on it was he. It was fairly evident that the three porters had shot their bolt, and that nothing more was to be got out of them. After a brief consultation it was decided to return to Camp IV. Half-way down the party under Somervell and myself, timed to follow the footsteps of the first party one day behind, was met. The doings of the second party will be separately chronicled by Somervell.

Mallory and Bruce, on arrival at the North Col, were met by Odell and Irvine, who were fulfilling, for the first time in the history of Everest climbing, the official *rôle* of supporters. Since 1922 we have recognised the necessity of this *rôle*, picturing the comfort to a returning party of weary climbers such support might afford. The most optimistic imaginations fell short of the reality, as produced by that ' well-known firm.' For over a week those two have lived on the North Col (23,000 ft.), and have cooked every meal—and only those who have done it can appreciate the recurring hatefulness of this operation. They have gone out day and night to escort and succour returning parties of porters and climbers over the intricate approaches to the camp, carrying lamps, drinks, and even oxygen to restore the exhausted. They have run the camp and tended the sick, and Odell, for one, has been down to Camp III. and returned to Camp IV., escorting parties or fetching provisions on three consecutive days. Whether we reach the top or not, no members of the climbing party can pull more weight in the team than these two by their unostentatious, unselfish, gruelling work.

The following is Somervell's story of our climb to 28,000 ft. :

Mr. Somervell's Story.

' The weather was looking more and more settled every day. On May 30, as Norton and I toiled up the glacier the third time this year to Camp III., we felt at last we were really going to be allowed a shot at the peak itself, and not merely baffled and foiled by a blizzard or hurricane at some comparatively low level. On June 1 we went up the steep ice-wall of the North Col with a few porters, and on arrival at the camp at the top of the pass heard that the other party had got off early, and were probably even then settling in at 25,000 ft.

' We slept well that night—beds of snow are much more comfortable than those of the stores at the camp below. Early on

the morrow we set out for the upper camp, six porters carrying extra food and bedding to replace what Mallory and Bruce would have taken up with them to a still higher bivouac. As we crossed over the snowy shoulder of the col to the windy western side the blast was most chilling. We drew our fur caps over our ears, tightened our belts, and went as fast as the altitude permitted, in order to keep warm. For though the sky was cloudless and the weather settled, Everest can provide on the finest day a wind chilling to the marrow. We had not been going long when Mallory and Bruce and their porters appeared above, coming down fast, an unexpected and unwelcome sight. They told us how they made a camp with two little tents, how the stoutest porter was sick, and the others unable or unwilling to go on. So there was nothing for it but to come back and hope for success of our attempt in the second of the series.

'Rather apprehensive as to the attitude of our own porters on the morrow, Norton and I plugged along up the easy scree on the shoulder leading for over 4000 ft. from the North Col up towards the north-eastern summit ridge of Everest. We found Mallory and Bruce's tents pitched on the steep but sheltered south-eastern side of the shoulder. Keeping four of our porters in the camp, where they spent a very fair night in a space 6 ft. by 5 ft., we then proceeded to settle down in the other tent of similar size. The floor had been well levelled by our predecessors, and, after making a good meal of pemmican and bully beef, coffee and biscuits, we spent a very fair night, during at least half of which we slept, finding no discomfort from the altitude or difficulty in breathing.

'Another glorious sunny day followed, and we were delighted to find three of the porters willing to proceed and carry loads, tent, bedding, and food to the next stage. One porter especially deserved credit, as he had cut his knee rather deeply on a stone the previous evening. The easy scree of yesterday became looser as we got higher, and energy as well as temper suffered in the weary plod from 25,000 ft. to 26,700 ft., where the scree gives place to sloping slabs covered with small stones, which render footing rather precarious.

'We all found the views most attractive, not only for their magnificence, but as excuses for frequent halts. Indeed, halts were necessary as we went along, as they enabled us to keep breathing sufficiently for our bodily needs. Finally, at the height of 26,700 ft., in a rocky little basin on the ridge we had to stop and pitch our tent. The situation was far from ideal,

but it seemed the best available in the vicinity, and on Everest you have got to take what you can get and be thankful. A lot of levelling had to be done, but the wind was kind, and, although by no means what we could have desired, the tent was at least habitable. The three faithful porters returned to Camp IV. quite fit, and armed with a note setting forth their prowess, and suggesting its reward with food at the lower camps, where no doubt they had the meal of their lives. In our tiny tent we cooked a good brew of coffee and a little soup, but the altitude was attacking our appetite and we could not fancy more than a morsel of solid food. Filling the thermos with coffee for the morrow, in order to avoid having to cook before an early start, we settled down for the night. Both of us were surprised that we got some sleep, at any rate, though not very much, but when morning arrived we were well rested and untroubled by breathing and other effects of great altitude.

'We got up full of hope as the dawn was breaking, but there was an early disappointment. Alas! the thermos had shed its cork during the night, and we had to waste nearly an hour melting snow in order to make more liquid. For both of us remembered how, in 1922, at a somewhat similar altitude, thirst, above everything, destroyed stamina and going-power, and we were determined to start our final climb with plenty of fluid inside us. At last we got going about 6.45 A.M., and trudged slowly up a broad rocky shoulder slanting across towards our right in the direction of the summit, for there the going seemed easiest; moreover, in that direction was a patch of sunlight. Our side of the ridge was in shadow and very cold, and we thought climbing in the sunshine correspondingly attractive. At length, panting, puffing, and sometimes slipping back on the scree and compelled to stop for a minute to regain our breath, we attained the sunlight, and soon began to get warm. We crossed the snowy patch, with Norton gallantly chipping steps in front, and reached the broad yellow bank of rock which is such a conspicuous feature in distant views of the mountain. This rock has weathered into horizontal ledges some 10 or more feet wide, and provides a safe and easy route towards the summit ridge; so up these ledges we went, pulling ourselves, with heavy breathing, from one to another, and walking along them occasionally for respite, but always keeping upwards and to the right, hoping by these means to avoid some of the loose-looking rock on the north-eastern ridge above.

'But the altitude was beginning to tell severely on us. About

27,500 ft. there was almost sudden change. A little lower down we could walk comfortably, taking three or four breaths for each step, but now seven, eight, or ten complete respirations were necessary for every single step forward. Even at this slow rate of progress we had to indulge in a rest for a minute or two every 20 or 30 yards. In fact, we were getting to the limit of endurance. At a level of somewhere about 28,000 ft., I told Norton I could only hinder him and his chances of reaching the summit if I tried to go any further, as an intensely sore throat added greatly to the misery of the fight. I suggested that he should climb the mountain, if he could, by himself, and settled down on a sunny ledge to watch him do it. But Norton himself was not far from the end of his tether. From my seat I watched him slowly rise, but how slowly, and after an hour I doubt whether he had risen 80 ft. above my level. He realised that a successful issue to the fight was impossible, and after a little returned. We agreed reluctantly that the game was up. On the way to the summit was a patch of loose rock where it was desirable that two fit men should be roped together, but two men more or less " done to the world " were unable to hope to reach the top within a good many hours, and it was now 2.30 in the afternoon.

' So with heavy hearts, beating over 180 to the minute, we returned and retraced our steps ; but slowly, for even downhill movement at this level is rather hard and breathless work, and both of us required frequent rests for regaining our breath and resummoning our energy. The view from the topmost point that we reached, and indeed all the way up, was quite beyond words for its extent and magnificence. Gyachang Kang and Cho-Oyo, among the highest mountains of the world, were over 1000 ft. beneath. Around them we saw a perfect sea of fine peaks, all giants among mountains, all as dwarfs below us. The splendid dome of Pumori, the finest of Everest's satellites, was but an incident in the vast array of peak upon peak. Over the plain of Tibet a distant range gleamed, 200 miles away. The view, indeed, was indescribable, and one simply seemed to be above everything in the world and to have a glimpse almost of a god's view of things.

' But we were far from being gods ourselves, tired and breathless as we were, the very epitome of human limitations. We revisited our high camp, and there packed our rucksacks and set off again downhill. We found the scree-covered slabs slow and annoying, and when we finally reached the snowy shoulder at 25,000 ft., where going becomes easier, the sun had set, and

MR. SOMERVELL'S PHOTOGRAPH OF SUMMIT OF EVEREST
WITH COL. NORTON STILL ADVANCING
Taken from 28,128 ft.

we still had 2000 ft. to negotiate in darkness. How well we remembered the same place in 1922, when we two, with Mallory, were exerting every effort to get down the invalid Morshead to the North Col alive! But this time I was the invalid, and my congested throat only allowed me to breathe at a certain and all too moderate a rate. I fear that my extremely slow progress must have annoyed Norton fearfully, though of course he said nothing about it. Flashes from our electric torch aroused the North Col to activity, and Mallory and Odell came up to meet us with lanterns while Irvine brewed tea and soup in camp against our return. How we welcomed their presence as supporters in camp and contrasted our experience in 1922, when four of us returned to an empty camp and went to bed with empty stomachs! This time we reached camp at 9.30 P.M. Within an hour we were fed, warmed, and fast asleep. Norton is still recovering from severe snow-blindness, unfortunately contracted on the climb. I can almost speak aloud again. We are both rather done in, too, in general condition, but are satisfied that we had the weather and a good opportunity for the fight with our adversary. There is nothing to complain of. We established camps, the porters played up well, we obtained sleep even at the highest, nearly 27,000 ft., we had a gorgeous day for the climb, almost windless and brilliantly fine, yet were unable to get to the summit. So we have no excuse—we have been beaten in fair fight; beaten by the height of the mountain, and by our own shortness of breath. But the fight was worth it, worth it every time, and we shall cherish the privilege of defeat by the world's greatest mountain.

'We now await news of Mallory and Irvine, who to-day are making another attempt, hoping that they may reinforce the feeble summit air by artificially provided oxygen, and by its means be enabled to conquer the chief difficulty of reaching the summit. May the Genie of the Steel Bottle aid them! All of us are hoping that he may, for nobody deserves the summit more than Mallory, the only one of our number who has been at it for three years.'

This ends Somervell's story.

The two attempts without oxygen failed to reach the summit. I hope to discuss later in your columns the vexed question whether success on these lines was possible or not. In any case, I was delighted to find on my arrival at Camp IV. on the night of June 4 that Mallory had rightly determined in my absence that there must be one more attempt, and that immediately

and, if possible, with oxygen. Bruce, the condition of whose heart definitely prevented him from taking part in another attempt, had already gone down to Camp III. to see if it were possible to supply sufficient porters to put on oxygen so as to make the attempt with an absolutely minimum load. The men were forthcoming. Mallory had already decided that the climbers to make this final assault should be himself and Irvine. Unremitting and indefatigable work which had been put in by the latter on the most defective of the oxygen apparatus fully justified his inclusion in the party. On the morning of June 6 these two, with eight porters, started for Camp V., intending to sleep the following night at Camp VI. and to make the assault on the summit to-day.

Their movements are shrouded in mist and mystery, but one brief note reached us yesterday from their perch near the top of the North Ridge by the hand of a returning porter. It is to the effect that Noel, with the kinema, should be on the look-out for them about the base of the final pyramid that starts 650 ft. from the top at 8 o'clock this morning. The returning porters report that the pair were going exceedingly strongly with oxygen yesterday ; from every point of view the situation is dramatic. One more small incident is worth noting.

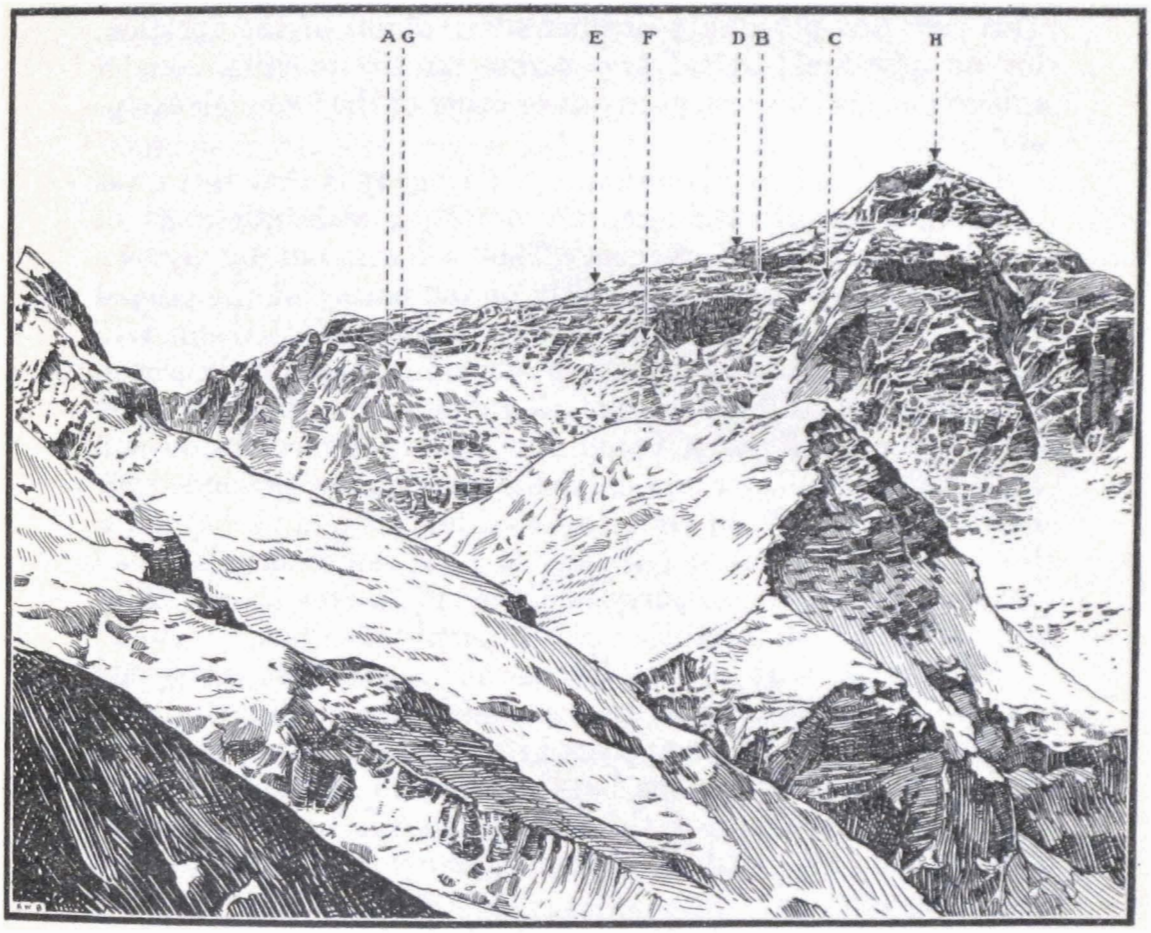
During the night of June 4–5 on the North Col I was smitten with acute snow-blindness, and for sixty hours was completely and absolutely blind. At 10 A.M. on June 6 Hingston and two porters arrived from Camp III. to relieve and, if possible, escort me down. I was anxious to descend, as my presence at Camp IV. could only be an embarrassment to Odell and Hazard, who had now taken the place of Irvine in the *rôle* of supporters. Hingston, being unable to perform the miracle of restoring my sight at the moment, performed, with the help of Hazard and the two porters, another miracle.

The route to North Col is admittedly an Alpine climb. They shepherded me down some 1500 ft. of sheer ice and snow, placing my every footstep, leading me by the hand, and supporting me with ropes, fixed and unfixed, with complete security Hazard turned back after roping me from the top of the chimney to the bottom, and Hingston saw me the rest of the way into Camp III.

Hingston is a famous goer on a hillside and has a limited experience of snow and ice conditions in the Pamirs, but he has never done any Alpine climbing, so I think it must be admitted that his performance was remarkable, and it was certainly one that I shall not forget in a hurry.

Base Camp. *June* 11.

With the deepest regret I add these few lines continuing the above dispatch. Mallory and Irvine perished on the mountain beyond all doubt. They were last seen by Odell from Camp VI. going strong for the top. I have not yet seen Odell, but estimate that this was about 11 in the morning of the 8th, and that



A. Camp VI., 26,700 feet.
B. The point reached by Somervell in 1924.
C. The point reached by Norton in 1924.
D. ' The Second Step,' where Mallory and Irvine were last seen.
E. ' The First Step.'
F. The point reached by Finch and Geoffrey Bruce in 1922.
G. The point reached by Mallory, Norton, and Somervell in 1922.
H. The summit, 29,002 feet.

the point reached at that time by the climbers was about 28,000 ft. Nothing has been seen or heard of them since. Odell returned to Camp IV. that night, and until about noon on the 9th the absence of news occasioned only anxiety, as the climbers might well have passed the night in Camps V. or VI.

At noon on the 9th Odell and two porters started from Camp IV. and spent the night at Camp V. About 1 P.M. on the 10th Odell reached Camp VI., whence he signalled that there was no sign of the missing men. Camps V. and VI. were under continuous observation by Hazard from Camp IV. throughout. These were provided with magnesium flares for distress signals, and there is no doubt that the climbers did not return to them. This puts any possibility of their survival out of the question, for no one could spend two nights on the mountain under existing conditions except in one or other of the two high camps and live.

The only likely explanation of the tragedy is that there was a mountaineering accident, unconnected with questions of weather or the use of oxygen. This is borne out by my own observations four days previously of the nature of the ground they were crossing when last seen. I remained at Camp III., directing operations by messenger, watching for a signal through the telescope, until 5.30 in the afternoon of the 10th, by which time I saw Odell reach Camp IV. safely. My condition and that of Captain Bruce, the only climber with me, precluded our reaching Camp IV. in time to be of any help, and, beyond a letter of instructions and the use of a system of signals, I had to give the supporting party in Camp IV. a free hand. They appear to have done all that was humanly possible.

I should add that I myself forbade any reconnaissance beyond Camp VI., as the weather was extremely threatening and conditions on the mountain appeared to be as bad as they could be, and I had to consider the lives of the two British and three Himalayan members of the Expedition who were still at or above Camp IV. I shall, of course, give you all details in my next dispatch.

No. 9.

Rongbuk Base Camp. *June* 14.
[Published *July* 5.]

The Expedition leaves the Base Camp to-morrow, bound for a short period of recuperation in the Rongshar Valley, under Gaurisankar, before starting on its homeward march. The fickle weather, which has played so many dirty tricks this year, continues to be brilliantly fine, and there are indications that the monsoon has ceased for the moment. But there is no question of a resumption of hostilities on the mountain. Every one of the surviving climbers has shot his bolt. I have before

me a medical report showing that each of us has a more or less dilated heart, besides various minor disabilities. The trouble will right itself at the lower altitudes to which we are bound, but would probably be permanent if further high climbing were attempted. This the medical officer [Major Hingston] definitely forbids.

There is yet another casualty to report. Man Bahadur, a Nepalese, the assistant bootmaker, who was very badly frost-bitten in the feet, as reported in my message of May 13, died of pneumonia at the Base Camp under Hingston on May 25. Perhaps it was merciful, as he would have lost both feet had he lived.

We leave here with heavy hearts. We failed to establish success, for who will ever know whether the lost climbers reached the summit before the accident which it may be assumed caused their death ? The last point at which they were seen was determined by the theodolite as 28,227 ft.—less than 800 ft. from the top. Together with the height reached by Dr. Somervell and myself, which, measured by the theodolite, was 28,128 ft., these constitute a world's ' record ' for climbing with and without oxygen respectively.

But the price is out of all proportion to the results. Much will be written by those at home of both Mallory and Irvine in regard to the various departments in which they distinguished themselves. I shall only say a few words on how we knew them here. Mallory was for three years the living soul of the offensive on Everest. I believe the thing was a personal matter with him, and was ultimately somewhat different from what it was to the rest of us. The story of his determined, and ultimately successful, reconnaissance in 1921 is now well known. In 1922 he formed one of the party which reached 27,000 ft. without oxygen and established what was then a world's height ' record.' This year he was earmarked for the first attempt with oxygen, but this was prevented by the weather. Then he took part in the first attempt without oxygen, but had to turn back at 25,000 ft. Only three days later he started on the last fatal attempt with oxygen, and this time who will say whether victory was at last his or not before he died ?

We always regarded him as an ideal mountaineer, light, limber, and active, gifted with tremendous pace up and down hill, and possessing all the balance and technical proficiency on rock, snow, and ice which only years of experience give. But the fire within made him really great, for it caused his spirit constantly to dominate his body to such an extent that, much

as I have climbed with him, I can hardly picture his ever succumbing to exhaustion. As a man he was a very real friend to us all, a cultured, gentle spirit curiously contrasting with the restless, fiery energy he displayed in action. His loss is irreparable no less to his friends of the successive Everest expeditions than to the very much larger circle of those who loved him in England.

Irvine was described in an earlier dispatch by General Bruce as our 'experiment,' for he was a mountaineer of limited experience and twelve years younger than the average age of the Expedition. But the experimental stage was short indeed, for it was a matter of hours rather than of days. The qualities which made him such a success when sledging in Spitsbergen brought him to the front; his first winter's ski-ing in Switzerland placed him, and the Oxford boat made all realise immediately that we had here no untried boy, but one of the most valuable members of the new Expedition, and, what is more, one who could take his place modestly, but with absolute equality, with men of so much senior age. Then in no time his cheery *camaraderie*, unfailing good nature, and untiring mechanical ingenuity and resource made him not only valuable, but invaluable.

I do not know how we are going to get on without him. Physically he was the strongest of us. He did surprising feats in carrying and hauling loads; his times up some stages of the East Rongbuk Glacier were unequalled.

In my last dispatch I spoke of his work on the North Col in the *rôle* of supporter—a true test of a man's mettle, but nothing new to him, for ever since Khamba Dzong he had been working unremittingly and unostentatiously every day and all day for the good of the expedition and of its individual members. We mourn in him the loss of a true friend to every one of us, and a most gallant gentleman.

I have asked Odell to amplify his previous brief account of the final attempt and tell the story, as he took part in it from the position in support at Camp IV. His performance in climbing once to 25,000 ft. and twice to 27,000 ft. in seven days constitutes, I consider, a remarkable feat to be accomplished on Everest or on any other of the great Himalayan peaks. Perhaps more remarkable still is the fact that he suffered less than most other climbers in doing so.

It remains for me to say a few words about the evacuation of the glacier camps. Throughout you have heard little of Shebbeare, yet he played a most important part in them. After

the first evacuation of Camp III. on May 11 it was decided that Shebbeare's knowledge of the language and of the psychology of the porters called for his presence on the lines of communication rather than at the Base Camp. Accordingly, he was established as king of Camp II. From that moment we at the higher camps never had to look over our shoulders or give a moment's anxious thought to our line of supply. Food for the sahibs and porters, fuel and stores of all sorts, arrived smoothly as required, and, more important still, we knew that the comfort and health of the porters on the lines of communication were well cared for.

When the time came on June 11 to evacuate all the camps from Camp III. downwards—the higher camps we decided to abandon all standing—Shebbeare took the matter in hand, and in three days, by good organisation and the use of every porter who could carry a load, he had cleared to the Base Camp every single article the value of which justified transport home across Tibet. So smoothly was the operation performed under his skilful leadership that there is nothing to write of it.

Our one free day here before we finally leave this old Base Camp of conflicting memories, so bleak and inhospitable after the sunny plains of Tibet, so homelike and cosy after the far bleaker glacier camps, is fully occupied. Every man that can be spared is at work arranging the loads for to-morrow's march, or employed on erecting a monument on one of the great conical moraine heaps which overlook the Base Camp to commemorate the names of those who lost their lives in the three Mount Everest expeditions.

Odell's story of the final attempt on Everest—and victory?—is as follows:

Mr. Odell's Story.

'Colonel Norton has requested me to relate the events connected with the last great climb of Mallory and Irvine, a climb a good many aspects of which I had the advantage of witnessing during a protracted period of eleven days, while acting in support at the North Col (23,000 ft.). The duty of being in support, from meaning readiness to support at need an exhausted member of the party on the mountain, largely transformed itself into cooking and preparing meals for whatever climbers made the North Col Camp a place of call. This function kept us fully occupied, particularly as all water had to be obtained by melting snow, snow that at this altitude was of an exceedingly dry and powdered variety.

'On June 6, following an early breakfast of fried sardines, joyfully acclaimed though but moderately partaken of, Mallory and Irvine left the North Col Camp for Camp V. (25,000 ft.), accompanied by five porters, with provisions and reserve oxygen cylinders. Yesterday, using oxygen, they had already ascended from Camp III., 2000 ft. below, in two and a half hours. They were highly pleased with their performance, which seemed to augur well for the final attempt on the mountain. The next day they ascended to Camp VI. (27,000 ft.), which had been established by Norton and Somervell on their "record" climb three days previously. The same day I ascended in support to Camp V., Hazard by this time having arrived at the North Col to replace me. Porters returning from Mallory that night were the bearers of a hopeful message in a note which said that they had only used a minimum of oxygen up to 27,000 ft., and that "the weather was perfect for the job." The latter I could well appreciate, for, looking out that evening from the little rock ledge on which the tent was pitched at Camp V., I saw that the weather indeed seemed most promising for the morrow.

'The situation of the camp was unique and the outlook commanding in the extreme. Westward there was a savagely wild jumble of peaks, culminating in Cho-Oyo (26,750 ft.), bathed in pinks and yellows of most exquisite tints. Right opposite were the gaunt cliffs of Everest's north peak, intercepting a portion of the wide northern horizon, of a brilliant opalescence which threw into prominence the outline of a mighty peak far away in Central Tibet: was it General Pereira's supposed rival to Everest? Eastward, floating in the thin air, the snowy top of Kangchenjunga appeared, and lastly, the beautifully varied outline of the Gyangkar range. Sunset and after at that altitude is a transcendent experience never to be forgotten.

'The early morning of June 8 was clear and not unduly cold at such an altitude. The two porters I had brought with me to Camp V. complained of sickness and headache, and altogether I was not unthankful for an excuse to send them down to Camp IV. at the North Col, for I especially wished to be free during the ascent for as wide a geological survey of the mountain-face between Camps V. and VI. as possible. Soon after I had started on my task banks of cloud began to form, which periodically immersed one in gloom, but the wind remained quite light for such an exposed ridge. Now and then there would be an accompaniment of sleet or light snow. I could see above me frequently during these squalls that there was

a glow of light, indicating clearness at a higher altitude, and hoped that Mallory and Irvine were above the mist.

'At 12.50, just after I had emerged from a state of jubilation at finding the first definite fossils on Everest, there was a sudden clearing of the atmosphere, and the entire summit ridge and final peak of Everest were unveiled. My eyes became fixed on one tiny black spot silhouetted on a small snow-crest beneath a rock-step in the ridge; the black spot moved. Another black spot became apparent and moved up the snow to join the other on the crest. The first then approached the great rock-step and shortly emerged at the top; the second did likewise. Then the whole fascinating vision vanished, enveloped in cloud once more.

'There was but one exp'anation. It was Mallory and his companion moving, as I could see even at that great distance, with considerable alacrity, realising doubtless that they had none too many hours of daylight to reach the summit from their present position and return to Camp VI. by nightfall. The place on the ridge referred to is the prominent rock-step at a very short distance from the base of the final pyramid, and it is remarkable that they were so late in reaching this place. According to Mallory's schedule, they should have reached it several hours earlier if they had started from the high camp as anticipated. That they had encountered bad conditions and snow-covered rocks and other obstacles was likely. However, in my opinion, from the position at which they were last seen, they should have reached the summit at 4 P.M. at latest, unless some unforeseen and particularly difficult obstacle presented itself on the final pyramid. This seems to be most unlikely, for we had scrutinised the last slopes with telescopes and binoculars and had seen that technically the climbing was easy. Perhaps the two most likely explanations of their failure to return were a fall or inability to reach camp before darkness set in. I rather incline to the latter view, and consider it very probable that they sheltered in some rock recess and fell asleep, and a painless death followed, due to the excessive cold at those altitudes.

'After the brief glimpse of the party above described I continued up to Camp VI., which was reached just as a rather severer blizzard started. The camp consisted of one small mountain tent perched on a ledge, backed by steep rocks by no means conspicuous or easy to find. I brought up with me provisions for the camp, and, after placing them in the tent and sheltering for a while, I decided to go out in the direction of the

peak along the mountain-side, in case the bad weather should have compelled the party to turn back. I whistled and yodelled through the driving sleet to give the returning party the right direction, but soon realised that in point of time it was a worthless task, for they would still be beyond hearing even if they were returning. Perhaps they were right above the blizzard in sunshine. Within two hours the storm had blown over and the whole north face was bathed in sunshine. I searched the upper crags for another glimpse of the party, but nothing could be seen.

'In accordance with earlier arrangements suggested by Mallory himself, I returned to the North Col, and with Hazard kept watch till late for signs of the returning party. As they had not returned next morning we assumed that perhaps they were still sleeping at Camp VI., having reached it at a late hour the night before, but we were unable with field-glasses to detect any movement around the distant tent. At noon I decided to ascend to Camp V., stay the night, and proceed to Camp VI. the next day to ascertain if they had returned and whether help was needed in consequence of some mishap. I arranged a code of signals with Hazard, by means of sleeping-bags placed conspicuously on the snow in case assistance, medical or otherwise, should be required. Two porters again came with me to Camp V., but again they had to return to Camp IV. because of indisposition.

'After a very cold night I pushed on to Camp VI., this time carrying with me an oxygen apparatus, and also provisions for the missing party. I reached the tent of Camp VI. in the afternoon, only to find everything as I had left it two days previously, and as Mallory and Irvine had left it on the morning of their climb. Leaving the tent, I climbed some distance, and worked out along the face in the direction of their route, searching for some clue. But what hope was there on such a vast mountain-face? Weeks of diligent search by a party fully equipped for such difficult and particularly trying work at that altitude might not produce any result or unravel the mystery.

'At length, as the day was drawing to a close, I reluctantly gave up the search and signalled down to Hazard at the North Col, over 4000 ft. below, that no trace could be found. Closing up the tent, and leaving it with the last relics of our lost companions, I made my way down the north ridge, having now and then to take shelter behind rocks from the violent and bitterly cold west wind in order to restore warmth and prevent frost-bite, and at dusk reached the North Col Camp, with its profound

comforts of hot soup. The next day we evacuated this camp and the others in succession down the East Rongbuk Glacier.

'Has Everest been climbed? Colonel Norton has referred to this question. It will ever be a mystery. Considering all the circumstances and the position they had reached on the mountain, I personally am of opinion that Mallory and Irvine must have reached the summit. At least they have established a mountain altitude "record."'

No. 10.

Kyetrak. *June* 19.
[Published *July* 15.]

I write this *en route* to the Rongshar Valley, for the expedition has shot its bolt and the Rongbuk Valley is for us already a thing of the past. The monsoon, which kept us on tenterhooks for so long, has definitely begun, and our jaded party are bound for ten days' recuperation under the shadow of Gaurisankar. I hope later to give an account of the wild and little-known country to which we are heading.

In all the accounts of our doings the factor of altitude, of course, has been mentioned, but almost exclusively in regard to its effect on the actual efforts of the climbers and so far as it affected their pace. I feel that no account of this Expedition can be appreciated without a somewhat fuller description of what is really meant by altitude. I sometimes think when I enlarge upon the hardships endured, in giving the actual temperatures of 10° to 24° below zero F., that a large proportion of readers are inclined to contrast the figures with well-known instances of low temperature in Canada, the Arctic, and the Antarctic. What of the winter journey so graphically described by the author of 'The Worst Journey in the World' [Mr. Cherry-Garrard's account of Scott's expedition to the South Pole], with daily *minima* of nearly 70° below zero? I do not suggest for a moment that any Everest expedition has been called on to endure anything approaching the hardships of this last unique performance.

The point is that the factor of altitude introduces a new element which very markedly accentuates what otherwise would be hardships of a not very serious nature. Between the Rongbuk Monastery and the place where for two years now the Base Camp of the Expedition has been pitched, the old terminal moraines of the Rongbuk Glacier have nearly blocked the valley with great piles and mounds of boulder and scree, and through these a narrow pass runs.

Here is the gate of altitude. Below are the sunny plains of Tibet, where there are birds and butterflies and flowers, and where a man may enjoy life. True, he may suffer the minor effects from shortage of oxygen in the air even outside the gate, but he can enjoy life. Above, altitude holds sway; in a word, man does not enjoy life. The height of the gateway is, perhaps, 16,000 ft., and in putting this as the boundary I am consulting my own feelings. Others may disagree on the exact point where life ceases to be enjoyable, but all will agree, I think, that it is within 1000 ft. and 2000 ft. of my figure. Within the gate life is not. To be exact, plant life struggles for another 2000 ft. if you like to search for it. I did meet a chough at 27,000 ft. He only came to look at me, thinking me mad. But, broadly speaking, everything is dead rock, snow, and ice, the three elements of which that upper world is composed.

Within the gate the temperature drops with a bump; you know it the moment you arrive, and you dress accordingly. The result is a windproof suit, fur ear-flapped cap, and extra sweater. Here I have never seen rain even in June (though rain was actually recorded in 1924 on two occasions for the first time), and for snow is substituted the powdery snow of the upper world. Above all, here the wind is incessant, a searching, penetrating, blustering wind, sweeping off the great snowfields above; but much has already been written of this wind, and I would only emphasise the fact that it is a special brand within the gate.

These are only side issues; the thing that really matters is the lack of oxygen, which not merely begins to make itself felt when you start for the wild uphill; it permeates and dominates every minute of your life, affects appetite and sleep, forbids the smoking of a pipe without the expenditure of innumerable matches, makes a labour of dressing and undressing and getting into one's sleeping-bag, the undoing of one's boots, the rising from a chair, saps the springs of all energy and enthusiasm, and affects the whole well-being as much as on a summer day you are affected if the sun goes in and a chill breeze gets up. All this refers to the Base Camp when one first arrives, for happily acclimatisation is a very real thing. On return to the Base Camp after four or five weeks spent at a higher point, one may well forget that he is still a prisoner within the gates of altitude.

I believe the effects of altitude increase fairly consistently with the actual height risen right to the top of Everest. Let

me now describe an extreme case, say between 27,000 ft. and 28,000 ft., and an intermediate one, say at Camp III., at 21,000 ft. A good night may be spent at 27,000 ft.—one at least has had such an experience—but it is unlikely often to be repeated ; so let us wake after a thoroughly bad night, just at daylight, in the bitter cold. The thermos flask, a two-pint one, intended to provide drink for breakfast without more snow melting, has shed its cork during the night. The unfortunate climber, cherishing it in his sleeping-bag, makes the discovery at 3 A.M., for the coffee has not remained warm.

It is necessary, therefore, to melt snow over the 'Meta' burner, a nightmare procedure that seems to have filled our every spare moment at all the high camps. It sounds simple enough. You crawl out of bed and then out of the tent, fully dressed, and pick up two aluminium pots, fill them with snow at a snowbed 20 yards away, return to the shelter of the sleeping-bag, during which time your tent mate has started the 'Meta' solidified spirit burning in the stove. Here altitude enters. The above simple proceeding I have repeated a good many times. It requires hardly anything, demanding mere will-power and determination. But by the time you reach the outside door of your tent you are completely exhausted. You sit and pant and rest for several minutes in the cold, then continue the journey and fill two pots with powdery snow, pressing it in with your thumb, which of necessity is inside one of the pots and in contact with the snow loses all feeling immediately.

The next moment the pot is bounding down the steep slope below the tent. It comes to rest by pure chance 50 ft. downhill. You retrieve it and refill it and hand both pots through the tent door. The next minute you fall exhausted on the bed. It seems touch and go for a minute or two whether by rapidly panting you will ever catch up the deficit of oxygen in the lungs the exertion has caused. Perhaps three-quarters of an hour later you have cooked and eaten—who will describe your hatred of the scant but loathsome meal ?—and filled the thermos for the day and donned your frozen boots. The energy expended already is enough to have carried you half-way up most Alpine peaks.

You start climbing. Curiously enough, this is not perhaps as bad as what preceded. The process is largely mechanical but incredibly slow. Above 27,000 ft. you may aim at doing twenty consecutive paces before you pause, arm on bent knee, to pant and rest. You will seldom get beyond thirteen. You

sit down for some minutes at least every 100 ft. The least slip or stumble, and recovery almost beats you in this miserable business. I cannot conscientiously record that dulling of the intellect often described as a feature of high climbing. I believe the intellect remains clear, and it is the will-power which is sapped. There is no doubt that all the best qualities, the energy and determination to conquer, will be at the lowest ebb. You must draw on the recollection of what you determined perhaps the day before yesterday that you would do.

Now and again the altitude produces its last weapon. The constantly and rapidly repeated intake of breath and catching at the back of the throat seems to have a curiously drying effect. Whatever the cause, the effect is a pronounced desiccation of the whole system. In the great cold the thirst seems not to make itself felt until late in the day, when it becomes intense. There is little doubt that this tremendous desiccation of the body is one of the primary causes of breakdown and failure at great heights. If, as so often happens, the climber starts with a common high-altitude cough and throat (half of the whole party suffered from it in 1924), this dryness is the one thing needed to put him out of action some time before the day is finished. All day there is depression of spirits; there is no spring, no exhilaration, no enthusiasm. One cannot even move fast enough to keep oneself warm. The whole thing is a desperately unpleasant duty until at about 2 P.M., with an unattainable summit obviously beyond its reach, the party turns back dejectedly to the distant haven of comparative refuge at Camp IV.

I have said that acclimatisation is a very real thing. The fact was definitely proved in 1924, but with it was proved the companion fact that at altitudes of 21,000 ft. and over what we gained in one direction by acclimatisation we more than lost in another, if conditions were severe beyond a certain point. Conditions of cold and discomfort, which at lower altitudes are completely without effect upon a healthy party, are at this altitude fatal to the efficiency of British and Himalayans alike. For example, between May 19 and 25 seven climbers and a dozen porters lived in Camp III. All did either one or two trips in unfavourable conditions to the North Col, 2000 ft. above, and nothing else but work in camp. The night temperatures were as low as were ever experienced here, and it snowed most days. The food tents and sleeping-kit were all of the usual high-altitude type. As a result, at the end of six days practically every member was temporarily useless

for high climbing, 50 per cent. had bad coughs and throats, and their voices were gone. Many had had little or no sleep for some nights, and all were obviously weak and almost ill, though the *moral* of the climbers continued to be good; but the heart had been taken out of the porters, and it was necessary to retreat to the lower camps to recuperate for some days. This would have been caused neither by altitude alone—for in favourable conditions most climbers improve up to 21,000 ft., or even 23,000 ft.—nor by the temperature conditions in which they lived, for, as I have said before, in the Antarctic and similar countries, men thrive and put on weight in such conditions.

The cause was a combination of altitude and comparative hardship. Just watch with me for one minute a party starting from Camp III., this time a routine trip to the North Col. Surely these men are just returning from a long and tiring day and not starting a short climb of 2000 ft. in the freshness of the morning. Their shoulders are hunched and they are simply crawling; there is no spring or swing in their gait: perhaps they are sick. Not so, they are suffering from altitude. Have I painted the picture in too dismal colours? Perhaps for myself, but I have just escaped from the gate.

No. 11.

Rongshar Valley. *June* 24.
[Published *July* 17.]

The following account of the Sherpa and Bhotia porters has been written by Captain Geoffrey Bruce:

'A gay and motley throng of hillmen assembled to greet us at Darjeeling on our march, all eager to take part in the expedition to Everest. The news had preceded us that we would require about seventy suitable men. Here there were two hundred and fifty at least, mostly Sherpas and Bhotias, but among them could be seen Limbus of East Nepal, Lepchas of the deep valleys of Sikkim, and wild-looking men of the northern provinces of Tibet. It is quite certain that money alone could not be the chief attraction to many of them, who to my knowledge could earn better wages by sticking to their jobs in and around Darjeeling than by following the fortunes of an expedition through Tibet to the mountains. There was no motive with most of them other than sheer love of adventure, which, coupled with their light-hearted, care-free manner, makes the hillmen of these parts such attractive people.

'To those of us responsible for their selection it was a difficult task picking out the best with nothing but appearance to go by. Appearance is proverbially deceptive, and to that rule the hillmen are no exception. We were mainly guided in the selection by the principle of taking men obviously of good breeding and of slight though well-proportioned build in preference to the bulkier and at first sight more impressive-looking giants. For the moral is more important than the physical when attempting to scale Everest. On the whole the selected amply justified themselves, and it was especially noticeable how the porters who went the highest up the mountain were all very much of a type, smallish, lithe, and trim, while all the bigger men seemed to fade away lower down.

'When we left Darjeeling the porter corps consisted of seventy men, of whom about half were Sherpas and half Bhotias. The Sherpas are natives of the southern slopes of the main Himalayan chain, and the Bhotias of the Tibetan plateaux to the north of the range. Both speak Tibetan as their mother tongue. Except one Gurkha, who acted as cook to the Gurkha non-commissioned officers, no other clans were represented in the corps, all others being eliminated in the process of selection. The five weeks' trek to the Rongbuk Base Camp was spent in getting the men well nourished and in the best possible physical condition before the work on the mountain began. As in 1922, they were given no loads to carry, and they always had the best food, clothing, and tent accommodation. The policy was amply repaid, for on our arrival at the Base Camp not one of them was sick.

'This period of camping and marching across Tibet had the further advantage of affording unique opportunities of observing the porters collectively and individually, especially with a view to earmarking those likely to go high later. As a people they have many virtues, being simple, hard-working, and cheerful. When once they get to know the sahibs they are loyal and affectionate. Among themselves they are generous, always ready to give a helping hand to one in need. But for all that they are not saints, and to ascribe to them qualities purely angelic would be a grave error. We observed no signs of angels' wings sprouting on any of them, not even on the back of Norbu Yshay or Lobsang, who so gallantly led the little parties to Camp VI. at 27,000 ft. Further, I am convinced that butter will melt in their mouths. I have occasionally known other delicacies not to be found in the scale of porters' rations also melt away in a mysterious fashion.

But, given the opportunity, the bottle is apt to prove a very serious source of trouble, though I must say in fairness to them that since we left Darjeeling cases of drunkenness were happily few and far between. On the return journey, however, it is futile to expect such a high standard of good behaviour, and the radiance of the kindly jar will undoubtedly prevail before Darjeeling is reached and the porters are finally paid off. But these are characteristics of which we were already aware from our experience of the Expeditions of 1921 and 1922. Then the porters were never really up against hardship for a prolonged period, and were never asked to go on making continuous efforts in face of extreme weather conditions and acute bodily discomfort. In neither of those years were the men subjected to the terrific searching tests that this Expedition has undergone.

'These tests, of a nature necessarily severe, enabled us unerringly to separate the sheep from the goats. The faces so doubtfully scanned at Darjeeling six weeks before now read like a book. Townee, who till now seemed to value himself above his comrades and give himself airs, fades into the background. The real natural leaders stand out and the others fall in their proper places. Until a trial such as was imposed on us by the mountain elements takes place, the true form and value of the Sherpa and Bhotia porter are most deceptive to gauge. At first the endurance in carrying capacity of all of them appears amazing; they go gaily along with a big load, showing little or no signs of tiring, long after we would have thought it impossible for them to continue.

'But it is not so astonishing, really, when one reflects that they had carried huge loads daily from childhood upwards, always in steep places and frequently at altitudes up to 19,000 ft. It has become natural to them to walk loaded. Thus until the real test is made all appear equally good. There is little or no indication how big is the margin of strength and determination left. This year's experience tended to prove that in nine cases out of ten they reach their limit without previous warning, and then become utterly *hors de combat* once the limit is reached. Whether on account of wind, cold, fatigue, or sickness, the man will not come again to any hard work at high altitudes in that season.

'Seeing men suddenly fail in this way is a bitterly disappointing and exasperating sight. There is only one factor capable of delaying and postponing to some extent this collapse, and that is the presence of a sahib who may by influence and

personality succeed in urging the man to further efforts before the crash comes. Once he has given in I do not believe anything can set him going again ; the limit has been reached for him and there is nothing beyond. The Sherpa and Bhotia porter at one moment ceases to be an object of admiration and sinks to that lowest level to which the Oriental is wont to sink when he is a sick man. With a few notable exceptions he literally does not possess that little extra reserve of will-power which the white man can produce in emergency and which makes all the difference between success and failure in a crisis. Fortunately exceptions exist, and this year has produced some supermen.

'The two advances up to 23,000 ft., which were each accompanied by blizzards and a temperature down as low as 56° of frost, and followed by disheartening withdrawals to the lower camps, failed to damp the spirits of a few of these men. To develop and encourage those who from the start had been a magnificent example to the others the experiment of employing some of them as non-coms. was made, and on the whole proved very successful. Two of these non-coms. showed themselves to be of quite outstanding character. I shall describe them and their performances briefly.

'First, Norbu Yshay, a Sherpa from Sola Khombu, an "old soldier" of 1922. Physically of medium height, sturdy, well knit, he possesses an iron constitution, and when he thinks the occasion sufficiently important (it must not be forgotten that he is quite the "old soldier") he shows signs of great determination also. Thus it was that he and his party of two porters erected Colonel Norton's and Dr. Somervell's camp at 27,000 ft. at Camp VI., although three other porters had failed only the day before. Nothing could have been easier than that the rot should spread to his party too. It is entirely to Norbu Yshay's credit that his gang went on resolutely and succeeded.

'Equally wonderful, if not more so, is the record of Lobsang, a pure-bred Tibetan. A man of varied experience, he had among other accomplishments been a Gurkha rifleman in the Afghan War of 1919, presumably under a *nom de guerre*. He also distinguished himself in 1922 by reaching Finch's and my camp, over 25,000 ft., with a full load. In 1924 he was in the party which on June 1 carried loads to Camp V., 25,300 ft., and with Mallory and me went down again to Camp IV. in charge of the returning porters. After a few days' rest in Camp II. he was ready for further efforts, and on June 6 with

a party of eight carried a load to Camp V., the camp of Mallory and Irvine. He and two others spent the night at Camp V., and the following day accompanied the two climbers to Camp VI., 27,000 ft., with the necessary loads.

'I must confess to one unfortunate selection among the non-coms., and he will be anonymous. He is a man one would pick out of a thousand, tall above the average, beautifully proportioned, and a wonderful mover. He had a fine face, too, which would lead one to expect great things of him. In 1922 he twice ascended to 25,500 ft. Although his work through the first three weeks of our occupation of the glacier was admirable and evoked praises on every hand, yet when the great day came he failed. Medical examination at Camp III. was unable to throw any light on the cause of his failure, which was one of *moral* rather than physique; in short, he was not "for it."

'Had Providence granted us perfect weather from the start I do not in the least doubt that the majority of the porters would have been capable of carrying their loads to Camps V. and VI. They would have achieved wonders. But after the two failures to establish Camp IV. on the North Col, 23,000 ft., I estimated that only twelve to fifteen porters would be ready to face the music again. This estimate proved extremely accurate. Beyond the fifteen "Tigers" I do not think any would have carried loads farther than the North Col this season. This was the chief reason for the modification of the original plan of making two non-oxygen attempts, beginning on June 1.

'The unforgettable terrors that the mountain holds for these ignorant people are not all physical. They are most superstitious. Some declare that on the North Col at night the fierce barking watch-dogs that guard the goddess of the mountain can be heard warning intruders to keep clear of her sacred dwelling. Still, in spite of these setbacks, the standard of what the porter is capable has been raised since 1922. In 1924 fifteen reached 25,300 ft. Of that number six put loads into camp at 27,000 ft.

'In this Expedition we were fortunate in having no fatal casualties among the carrying porters. Only two serious cases were treated in hospital, one of frost-bite of the hands and the other a broken leg, both getting on well. The broken leg case is not altogether without its humorous side. The patient, in the march across Tibet, had been the doctor's servant. Some time before the accident the doctor complained of having mislaid sundry underwear, but the garment could not be found.

The doctor happened to be at Camp III. when the stretcher arrived. As it drew near he noticed that the patient showed curious symptoms, leaning forward and apparently massaging violently his legs upwards from the ankles. The doctor was just in time to catch a glimpse of his high-altitude pants disappearing in a roll over his late servant's knee.

'In regard to the Sherpa and Bhotia porters and their employment in future expeditions, they will be forthcoming, and there can be little doubt that from among them six or seven will erect a camp under any conditions even higher than Camp VI., but to ensure this they must be systematically looked after and cared for from the start. No detail, however small, tending to increase their comfort and happiness must be overlooked. The results will repay trouble and forethought a hundredfold. The porters fully appreciate the situation. When the detachment taken by General Bruce back to Chumbi rejoined the expedition near Shekar Dzong they were asked how they fared in crossing Tibet. "We managed all right," they replied, "but we had no sahib to look after us."'

No. 12.

Tingri Dzong. *July* 5.
[Published *July* 25.]

Our little rest cure in the Rongshar Valley is over, and the expedition is again on the 'long road that is always new,' homeward bound to Darjeeling. The primary object of the trip—recuperation at a moderate altitude—has in this respect been a great success. It is not too much to say that the party, almost without exception, starts for home sound in wind and limb, and is certainly a very different party from the one that left Rongbuk a fortnight ago. Most of us have got weight to recover still. Big calf development is not, apparently, a characteristic of the Everest climber; many of us still look best with a pair of thick socks. But it is an ill wind that blows nobody good. Our little Bhotia ponies will be the gainers when we return to the plateau.

If the Rongshar Valley has come short of expectation in some other respects, I take the blame, for, moved by recollections of the Kama Valley two years ago, I painted a highly coloured picture of the delights that awaited us for the benefit of those who had not seen that lovely spot. I first predicted a descent from a barren pass to fields studded with the smaller and daintier alpine flowers in successive stages, azaleas, rhododendrons, and primulas (a dozen varieties), and stunted pine

trees outlined against the snows of Gaurisankar ; and, finally, the forest, primeval with cypress, silver fir, and hemlock, anything up to 150 ft. high, concealing strange subtropical flora and fauna, a camp-fire and balmy air, and unfamiliar delicacies, such as chickens and potatoes and green vegetables.

Well, some of this we found at Rongshar, but by no means all. The first sensation as we descended the barren Phuse-La was caused by a delicious whiff of such air as we had not met for months, soft and laden with the aromatic scent of shrubs and flowers. But the promise was scarcely fulfilled, as almost immediately we entered a deep, narrow, rocky gorge. The scenery was grand, great cliffs towering above a racing, raging torrent, but the vegetation lacked the luxuriance of the Kama Valley. There was scarcely room for forest, and the flowers were limited in their variety. Of Gaurisankar and its satellites no peep was obtained once the gorge was entered.

During three rather longish days' marching, as we wound down this endless gorge, the view was a constant repetition of the same features, the towering cliff on one side, a similar towering cliff on the other a little farther off, and a steep hillside blocking the next turn in the valley. Soon the predominant flowers became and remained a carpet of mauve irises underfoot, a bower of pink and cream roses over the path.

On the third day we reached our destination, Tropdo, a rockbound little village, deep under the base of Gaurisankar. To find a camping site was not an easy task, but, bursting through a riot of rose-bushes nearly blocking a tributary torrent, we discovered a small glade carpeted with irises, a great cliff overhanging with a regular smugglers' cave at the foot. This, our base camp, was in sufficient contrast with that base camp we had recently left. It was a blow to find that chickens might not be killed in the sacred precincts of Gaurisankar and that the potatoes were not ready to be dug.

Three days after our arrival we separated to explore the neighbourhood, Somervell and I upwards to try the view and sketch the elusive Gaurisankar, and the remaining five going down the gorge to the Nepal border. The latter party marched for two days, finding the gorge ever deeper and steeper. For two miles in one place a vertical cliff of 2000 ft. towered over a milky torrent fairly racing between its banks, much as the Arun River races—that is, one continuous rush, not a series of waterfalls and pools. In patches of big forest we met trees almost equalling those of the Kama Valley, but always restricted in extent by the surrounding cliffs. The vegetation

there is almost in every respect a replica of that of the Darjeeling hills.

The inhabitants of the one village were cheery and open-hearted folk, speaking Nepalese fluently, though of Tibetan origin, and presented a marked contrast with the more boorish peasantry of the plateau—a primitive people these, largely cut off from contact with the outer world, the womenfolk working in the scanty fields naked to the waist.

There were other aspects of this gorge expedition on which I prefer not to dwell at length. There were Gargantuan repasts of fowls and potatoes and succulent bamboo shoots, partaken in spacious Whymper tents, and no one suggested the bringing back of such delicacies for two hardy mountaineers now perched 5000 ft. above in the mist. What became of the last of the Expedition sugar ?

Meanwhile the said mountaineers, Somervell and I, had found a delightful camping site on a shelf 2000 ft. above the valley. Near here many flowers, missed in the gorge below, were found for the first time this year, all the azaleas, three of the more beautiful missing primulas, and many other old friends. From here we saw Gaurisankar, a dream mountain. Gaurisankar is a paltry 23,000 ft. odd, but it rises from its base between 8000 ft. and 10,000 ft. at an acute angle, and finishes in a cone of snow and ice, perfect in outline and proportions. Facing us was that long knife-edge of ice familiar to all readers of Colonel Howard Bury's book, 'Everest: The Reconnaissance, 1921'—in Wollaston's photograph taken from the same direction, but from 30 miles farther away.

There is only one way to see a really beautiful snow mountain, and that is as we saw Gaurisankar. Bit by bit, through a rent in a curtain of cloud, we got a glimpse, first of the summit floating high in mid-air, then great sheets of rock and ice and subsidiary buttresses, whetting the appetite for that brief two-minutes' view of the whole mountain, the base still wreathed in swirling clouds ; 15,000 ft. of it we saw, top and bottom, a sight to make one giddy.

When we all forgathered again at the base camp great rival claims were put forward, one school extolling the joys of the subtropical scenery and the table, the other the magnificence of this unique view and the pleasures of the simple life. Some gorgers—I should say, gorge explorers—were tempted to put in a night on the shelf. For Beetham and his camera the chance was not to be missed, but the fickle mountain remained shrouded in mist, and the party returned, half-convinced that

our vaunted view was a figment of the imagination and our sketches a deliberately concocted plot for the unwary.

So, on June 30, we left the Rongshar Valley and threaded our devious way towards the upper world again, sad to leave the soft, fragrant air, the greenery and the flowers, but consoling ourselves with the promise of sunshine and the charm of wide horizons.

No. 13.

Yatung. *July* 22.
[Published *August* 1.]

I feel that the series of letters I have written to you would be incomplete without some final discussion of the feasibility of climbing Everest in the light of the experience of 1924. First let me say a few words on two kindred questions: 'Should Everest have been attempted?' and 'Will Everest be re-attempted?'

We have little doubt that the sad loss of Mallory and Irvine, following the death of seven porters in 1922, will raise considerable controversy on the former question. I know there was a large body of opinion in England previous to the 1924 tragedy which stigmatised the whole undertaking as a wanton risk of valuable lives, and this point of view will doubtless be accentuated by what has occurred. The old question: 'What is the good of it?' will be reiterated with added point. This question has been dealt with at some length by Sir Francis Younghusband in his preface to 'The Assault on Mount Everest,' and I can add but little to his able and, to me, convincing reply. It is true that there can be no immediate material gain either to the members of the expedition or to the public at large from a successful attempt to climb the mountain; indeed, the former will generally be considerable losers from this point of view. Is not this, in the material age in which we live, an argument in favour of making the attempt—is it not a good thing to run some risks and to undergo some hardships for an ideal divorced from sordid considerations?

In the absence of the great purifier, war, there must be something in favour of an undertaking which, as Jorrocks would say, may be likened to 'the himage of war with only 25 per cent. of the danger' (25 per cent. Jorrocks, not mine). In the piping times of peace, how else than by such undertakings as Polar and Everest expeditions is the last flicker of the old spirit of adventure and enterprise which made the British Empire to be kept alive?

Will Everest be attempted again? This question I am not in a position to answer. A member of the Expedition is, happily, free from the difficulties of finance and organisation confronting the Everest Committee. But we are a persistent people. War proves that we have a certain genius for attaining through failure success, and the things which most stimulate and harden the determination of Englishmen are obstacles, failures, and casualties. I can speak for the members of the 1924 Expedition in saying that the loss of friends and the setbacks endured made us at least feel strongly that now, if never before, Everest must be climbed—perhaps not in the year 1925, perhaps not for some years. I know only some of the difficulties of the preliminary organisation, but sooner or later the torch lit by Mallory and Irvine must be carried on lighted to the summit.

Can Everest be climbed? Assuredly. It is possible that it has been climbed. If the 1924 Expedition has dashed the hopes and modified the opinions of some of the more optimistic of us (and I was among these), if it still leaves one very serious gap in our knowledge essential for ensuring success, it has filled all the remaining gaps. We started in 1924 with the fullest consciousness of these gaps. The Expedition has proved that porters can carry the requisite loads to nearly 27,000 ft. None of us now has any doubt that under favourable conditions a camp can be established at least 500 ft. higher, say 27,300 ft., just under the north-east shoulder of the mountain. It has proved that there is nothing to prevent climbers from sleeping well about 27,000 ft. and starting comparatively fit and well on the morrow. Our doubts on these two points were two of the most serious gaps in our experience when we started operations in 1924. On the march to Everest last spring it was constantly reiterated that if a non-oxygen party could camp at about 27,000 ft., and an oxygen party at 26,500 ft., if both could get sleep and start fairly fit on the morrow in fine weather, the trick was done both ways. We were optimistic.

It is by no means proved, but the evidence increases that the advent of the monsoon is normally preceded by a spell of comparatively fine, settled weather. Further evidence on this subject must be procured and would be valuable. It is abundantly proved that each year's experience increases the comfort obtainable at moderate altitudes by good equipment, and that, except in really bad weather, the height where reasonable comfort can be provided can be progressively raised. We had even schemes for comfort in that vile spot, Camp III.

And with comfort go health and efficiency. On acclimatisation we have now clear and definite ideas. Previously we were but groping a way to these ideas.

Finally, as General Bruce has more than once pointed out, the standard of achievement is automatically rising. In 1922 four of us set out to discover whether human beings could live without oxygen at 25,000 ft., and, if so, could they sleep? In 1924 Odell and Hazard took a walk at 25,000 ft. in an interval in their duties as supporters of Camp IV. (23,000 ft.), just to study geology and enjoy the view; four climbers slept at nearly 27,000 ft.; in ten days Odell went from 23,000 ft. three times down to 21,000 ft. and twice up to 27,000 ft.—a performance that we should hardly have considered possible in 1922.

So much to the good; but we had also learnt lessons of a different sort, and these must be laid to heart by any future party. One serious gap in our experience which we failed to fill is the possibilities of the oxygen apparatus. Below 23,000 ft. there seems little doubt that the apparatus as so far designed and modified does not pull its weight. In other words, the benefit derived from inhaling oxygen does not compensate for the drawback of its weight on the climbers' back. Above 23,000 ft. Odell is the only surviving climber who used it. He carried one cylinder only and used it up to about 27,000 ft. Even with this modified weight on his back his verdict is that he gained little, if anything, over his previous trip to the same height without oxygen. Mallory and Irvine were reported by the accompanying porters to be going strong on oxygen. On the other hand, the time and place where they were last seen on the morrow indicated that either a very late start was made, possibly due to their having to repair some defect of the apparatus, or they were going as slowly as the non-oxygen party four days previously. In spite of the then much more favourable impressions of Finch and Bruce in 1922, it would seem that the value of the oxygen apparatus is doubtful, unless its weight is materially reduced, for it must not be forgotten that its use entails a most severe strain on the organisation of the porters.

The possibility of really bad weather almost throughout May came as a very unpleasant surprise to us in 1924. The effect on the whole party was so serious, the conditions produced on the mountain above 21,000 ft. were so hopeless, that it would appear advisable in the future not to make a move above, say, 19,000 ft. until really favourable weather sets in, and this,

even though the remote possibility must be faced that the party might fail to get beyond or even reach the North Col in any given year.

The physical difficulties of the last thousand feet of the mountain were probably underrated before 1924—rather, it is more correct to say, the dangers—for the final pyramid and its approaches appear to consist of that unpleasant type of rock which is dangerous because it appears to offer no difficulties. The strata slope outwards and downwards at a somewhat sharp angle, and the rocks are by no means firm when their surface is covered with a powdering of light snow, which, while giving no support to the climber, conceals possible footholds and makes the going all dangerous. The general slope of this part of the mountain is such as to render a slip probably fatal. The lesson to be learnt from this is that the final assault should not be undertaken deliberately when fresh snow is lying on the rocks. This alone, to my mind, precludes the idea, mooted more than once, of an attempt in September after the monsoon. When the rocks are bare of snow there should be little danger for a party of experienced climbers.

The last unpleasant surprise we met in 1924 was that apparently there is a point somewhere between 27,500 ft. and 28,000 ft. at which the lack of oxygen in the air begins to render progress so slow that it remains uncertain whether without oxygen the party would have time to reach the summit safely. This is a very important point, but I do not consider the evidence of 1924 sufficient to establish it. For the party of two whose experience supplies the only data had already suffered too much from prolonged exertions and exposure to provide a real test. It is probable that a fitter and fresher party would not have slowed down to anything like the same extent. If, then, we strike the balance of the favourable and unfavourable lessons we have learnt in 1924, the result evidently favours the view that success will crown the effort to ascend the 800 ft. of the mountain which remain to be climbed. There is little doubt that by camping at 250 ft. higher on each of two successive nights above the North Col an improvement of some 500 ft. could be made on the height of Camp VI. Thus, on the last day, the party may be called on to do some 1800 ft. to the summit, against the average of 1400 ft. or 1500 ft. achieved by the two parties in 1924. Allow for a descent only to Camp V., postulate a party fresh and fit, and not exhausted by exposure or severe exertion, give us but as favourable weather as was encountered by the first party in 1924, few of

us doubt that the summit can be safely reached with or without the improved oxygen apparatus. Half the battle is won if the climbers and porters start off from the North Col in really good condition and good health.

This is easy to talk and write about, but is most difficult to accomplish. But the experience of two years has taught us much in regard to the conflicting claims of acclimatisation and conservation of energy, and something, if not a great deal, of how it is possible to improve the comfort of the glacier camps. The rest depends on the patience, patience, and again patience, that is the most difficult type of patience, which will wait, and await the fine weather essential to success, even though all indications point to an early arrival of the monsoon, and with it the end of another year's efforts with, perhaps, nothing accomplished. And so, whatever the verdict, whether Everest should or will be attempted again, we of the 1924 Expedition are confident that it can be climbed, despite the dictum of our good friend the Shekar Jongpen. Commiserating our misfortune he summed up by saying: 'Myself think God's mountain will never allow.'

Joint Meeting of the Alpine Club and of the R.G.S.

This meeting, to receive the reports from the Mt. Everest Expedition of 1924, was held on October 17 at the Albert Hall. It was attended by a large number of members of the two Societies.

The meeting was opened by the Earl of Ronaldshay, President R.G.S., and the following reports were then made:—

The Organisation and Start of the Expedition.

By Brigadier-General the Hon. C. G. BRUCE.

I FIND that I am down to follow the President of the Royal Geographical Society both in my capacity as President of the Alpine Club and as the original leader of this year's Expedition.

As President of the Alpine Club I consider myself free to offer my warmest congratulations and to express my admiration to Colonel Norton and to the members of the Expedition, for his (Colonel Norton's) wonderful leadership, and to all for the