Mechanically he was a genius : from a broken camp chair to the more complicated valves of the oxygen apparatus, nothing came amiss to him. His tent daily assumed the aspect of a fitter's shop ; here, until late at night, he would be found hard at work on the oxygen apparatus or doing some job for a friend who had long been tucked into his warm blankets.

He was always the willing horse.

Selected to take part in the first attempt with oxygen, he was, in our revised plans, relegated to a later attempt, giving place to others who were to try first without oxygen ; as a result he, with Odell, became a supporter on the North Col. He never even hinted at disappointment, but tackled with unselfish energy and his usual enthusiasm the part of cook, or scullion, or nurse to a cripple.

That Irvine was loved by all of us for his cheery unselfishness, his *camaraderie* and his manly qualities goes without saying. It is, perhaps, more significant that he was loved by the porters, not a word of whose language could he speak.

Together these two went up the mountain for the last time : higher than ever man has been before they were last seen—one giving a hand to the other, and then—they were seen no more.

Could either have wished for a better friend to hold his hand at the crossing into the unknown land beyond ?

The Journey through Tibet and the Establishment of the High Camps.

By Captain GEOFFREY BRUCE, 6th Gurkhas.

The route taken this year across Tibet was almost identical with that of 1922. The uplands between Phari and Khamba Dzong, particularly the Dongkar-La, were as usual bleak and cold, but with the experience of 1922 behind us we were able to travel in far greater comfort than before. The baggage train consisted again of over 350 animals—yaks, donkeys, and bullocks—changed at each dzong (capital of a district) along our route. This year we had very little difficulty over transport arrangements. Several of the Jongpens we already knew. One and all seemed pleased to see us and to do what they could to help us on our way.

From Khamba Dzong onwards there were no hardships or difficulties to speak of. Evenings, on arrival in camp, were

generally spent in oxygen drills, conferences about plans of climbing the mountain, and so on. Beetham was very unlucky in suffering from an attack of dysentery in the early part of the march, but he refused to give in, and by the time we reached the Base Camp he had almost got over it.

On April 23 the Expedition arrived at Shekar Dzong. Our old friend, the Jongpen, rode out to meet us, and it was at once obvious that he was ready to give us every assistance. Everest itself lies in his district, and it was a very great comfort to know that we had this capable and straightforward man to deal with. Our two days' stay there was busily spent in arranging with the Jongpen for grain, meat, and fuel to be regularly supplied to the Base Camp during the next two months. He also gave us much personal help in collecting coolies to be used on the glacier in addition to our own specially enlisted porters. These coolies will be mentioned again. Four days later (April 28) we camped at the Rongbuk Monastery, only five miles from the site of our Base Camp. Unfortunately, the Lama was ill and unable to see us or bless the porters as he did on our way through in 1922. We sent the interpreter to him with messages and presents—among the latter a yak-load of cement, which he had specially asked for in 1922 for repair work to his monastery.

The following day we came to the end of the four and a half weeks' trek from Darjeeling, having experienced no really unpleasant weather the whole time. But conditions at the Base Camp were quite different. We arrived with snow falling and a bitterly cold wind. We were soon into all the warm clothing we possessed, and then buckled to the task of establishing the camp and sorting out stores and equipment ready to push up the glacier on the morrow. It had been decided to reoccupy the old sites of Nos. I., II. and III. Camps, and to have them established for the first attempt on the summit to take place on May 17. The position and heights of the camps were roughly :

Base Camp, 16,500 feet.
No. I. Camp, at the junction of the Main Rongbuk and East Rongbuk Glaciers, 17,800 feet.
No. II. Camp, half-way up the East Rongbuk Glacier, 19,800 feet.
No. III. Camp, on the snowfield at the head of the East Rongbuk Glacier close under the North Peak, 21,000 feet.

Following this, Odell and Hazard were to reconnoitre and construct the route up the North Col. Odell and I were to establish Camp V. and return ; then two simultaneous attempts should start for the summit, made by Norton and Somervell (without oxygen) and by Mallory and Irvine (using oxygen). To this end the tentage, rations, and equipment intended for each camp were selected and put into separate dumps on arrival at the Base, and the four Gurkha N.C.O.'s were entrusted with the important task of establishing Camps I. and II. and, in addition, putting into Camp II. all the loads required for Camps III. and IV., and the high camps on the mountain itself. In order to meet this big demand on porterage and to save our own men we had, through the good offices of the Shekar Jongpen, started to collect local coolies at Shekar, and continued recruiting them between there and the Rongbuk Monastery. We now had at the Base Camp over 150 of them ready to begin work at once. Their terms were : pay at the rate of four tankas (about one shilling) a day and some rations. They were not to be employed on snow or ice, and requested to be quickly released when the work was done as they had the sowing of their fields to attend to. They undertook to look after themselves as regards tentage and extra blankets, but, as a matter of fact, they scorned the use of either.

On April 30, under better weather conditions, a convoy of 151 Tibetans under three Gurkha N.C.O.'s left the Base Camp for Camp I. Half the Tibetans were to remain in Camp I. and carry up to Camp II. on the next day, while the remainder were to leave their loads in Camp I. and return to the Base Camp for the night. On the following morning we were greeted with the news that of the 75 local coolies at the Base Camp 52 had deserted in the night. This was a very serious matter, and we feared that the Gurkha N.C.O.'s at Camp I. might be experiencing similar trouble. A transport strike at this juncture would effectively cripple our detailed programme, so Norton, Shebbeare, and I went up at once to Camp I. to see how they were faring. We were greatly relieved to find that there was no sign of discontent among the Tibetans, and that the N.C.O.'s had everything well in hand and running smoothly. While we were there the first convoy from Camp I. to Camp II. was just returning. It consisted of men and women. We sat them down in lines and gave them extra rations and a promise of a rise in pay if they completed the establishment of Camp II. by the following evening. They were delighted and showed no inclination to be off home. One of these coolies—quite an

elderly woman with grey hair—actually danced a *pas seul*, although she had just carried a 40-lb. load to Camp II. over rough and difficult ground. Another woman—a mother—had insisted on carrying her lusty baby all the way on the top of her already full load, and now came into camp fresh and smiling. What was more, she and all the others were prepared to sleep again in Camp I., with no tent accommodation or extra blankets, and repeat the performance next day.

No more desertions occurred, and by the evening of May 2 we received a message from the Gurkha N.C.O.'s at Camp II. saying that Camps I. and II. were fully stocked as ordered. In these three days over 180 loads were put into Camp II. That evening all the local coolies were given a large feed and paid off, after which they set off towards Rongbuk in high spirits.

In the meantime our own Porters Corps was organised for work higher up into two parties of twenty each and a reserve of twelve. Briefly, they were to be utilised as follows: No. 1 Party were to go through with some of the climbers to Camp III., establish it, and remain based there for getting the next camp on to the North Col. A day later No. 2 Party were to move into Camp II. for the purpose of working between II. and III. The reserve were to remain for the time being at the Base Camp. The Gurkha N.C.O.'s were to be in charge of the three camps to see to the feeding and welfare of every one in them, and to supervise the arrivals and departures of convoys.

The weather had now improved a little, but it was mainly cold and stormy, and the conditions on the mountain looked forbidding. Nevertheless we were able to go forward with the plan. On May 3 Mallory, Odell, Hazard, and Irvine left the Base Camp with No. 1 Party. No. 2 Party started on the 4th under one of the N.C.O.'s; and Norton, Somervell, and Beetham on the 6th. I followed with the reserve party on the 7th, while Shebbeare remained in charge at the Base.

Our good luck was not destined to last long. To begin with, poor Beetham, having recovered from his dysentery, now succumbed to a crippling attack of sciatica which finally prevented him getting on to the mountain at all. I reached Camp II. on May 8. There things were far from happy. Most of the No. 1 Party of porters had been unable to remain in Camp III., chiefly owing to the failure of No. 2 Party to carry their loads the whole distance from Camp II. to Camp III. Instead they had made a dump on the glacier below Camp III., and the men in Camp III. did not receive their extra blankets or rations and suffered terribly.

Mallory came down from Camp III. to see Norton, and explained that there had been a temperature of −22° F. the first night there and very low temperature the next night. The men were all complaining of hardships and looked crest-fallen and weary. The situation was a difficult one, and it was fully realised that the *moral* of the porters must at all costs be raised. The first step was to send for Shebbeare to come up to Camp II. and take charge. It was essential that there should be an officer at this camp who could speak the language and ensure the safe arrival of convoys into Camp III.

It is worthy of note that from the moment Shebbeare came up and established himself as king of No. II. nothing ever again went wrong on the lines of communication.

In the meantime Somervell with a few men of the No. 2 Party got off to relieve the food situation at Camp III. The rest of the day was spent by Norton and Mallory in revising the plan, while I endeavoured to put some heart into the men. On the whole the results were good, for on the following morning Norton, Mallory and I with a convoy of twenty-six porters left for Camp III.

The route over the glacier was somewhat changed from 1922, for instead of crossing the trough we followed along it for quite a distance. Here the scenery was wonderful, but one was in no mood to enjoy it. This part of the glacier is within the 'gates of altitude,' and in addition produces a special brand of lassitude which saps one's energy and enthusiasm for anything. Fantastic blue pinnacles surrounded us like a forest—some of them gigantic when we entered the trough, getting smaller as we emerged on to the glacier itself. The glacier surface consisted of absolutely smooth ice, varied by depressions and cracks of powdery snow. Snow began to fall shortly after we left Camp II. It continued to fall all day, getting heavier and heavier and finally assuming the proportions of a real blizzard, which was to last for forty-eight hours. The porters at Camp III. were wretched; the cold was getting at them badly. Many became so apathetic that they would not even attempt to cook food for themselves, although I pushed Primus stoves and oil inside their tents for them.

Wind and snow continued that night with unabating violence; the snow drifted into our tents to a depth of an inch or two, making everything miserably uncomfortable. Morning came and the snow stopped falling, but fallen snow was being hurled along the surface of the glacier by the wind, producing the same effect as a blizzard. Kami, our cook, rose manfully to the

occasion, and produced for breakfast, at about 10 A.M., an unrecognisable mess in a Primus stove, followed an hour later by extremely unpalatable tea, which had been brewed in the same greasy pot. Still, it was hot and comforting, and we shall always be grateful to the faithful Kami.

We then reviewed the situation, and it was decided that Mallory and Irvine should move down to Camp II. as a temporary measure and prepare for the possibility of evacuating altogether should the same weather continue. A message was also sent to stop Noel coming up with his kinema outfit, with which he subsequently obtained remarkable results. During the day Norton and Somervell did an excellent piece of work in braving the blizzard and getting down to the dump with seventeen porters and bringing up nineteen loads. As evening came on the wind blew still harder in tremendous gusts from every direction; the tents were again filled with snow, and the temperature fell to 39° below freezing-point.

Now there was no other course left but the evacuation of the whole line. The porters were in a bad way, the climbers were by no means improving, and in any case the North Col route would have been impracticable for several days. But to evacuate Camp III. was no easy matter, for the porters were all huddled up in their tents, having lost the will to move or even cook for themselves. After compelling them to cook and eat, we turned them out and struck camp, leaving tents, stores, and fuel piled in some kind of order.

Then we took to what Colonel Norton has described as 'Via Dolorosa,' first the wind-swept glacier down to Camp II., then the rough miles of the tumbled moraine; withdrawing every man to the Base Camp with a melancholy procession of snow-blind, sick, and frostbitten men being shepherded down by their comrades. But we knew that everything was ready for us to return up the glacier, and only a small amount of high-altitude stores remained to complete Camp III. for the first attempt.

How had we all stood Round 1? The British members were in good health and full of optimism. They had all acclimatised themselves up to 21,000 feet. Further, a strong reinforcement had arrived in the shape of Hingston. He had left General Bruce in Gangtok and hastened across Tibet to rejoin us. He was in the nick of time to relieve Somervell of the heavy duties of medical officer. In the Himalayan ranks we were not so fortunate. One man was severely frostbitten in both feet and subsequently died. One man had broken his leg; several had bad attacks of bronchitis, and, worst of all,



SLOPES BELOW THE N. COL

the Gurkha N.C.O. Shamsher was in a very serious condition with hæmorrhage on the brain. After twenty-four hours' unconsciousness he died while being carried on a stretcher into the Base Camp. He was a very great loss to the Expedition, and to his regiment, where he undoubtedly had before him a brilliant career.

The weather had by now improved, and after even one day's rest at the Base Camp the men were beginning to look their normal cheery selves again. They were all very keen to pay a visit to the Rongbuk Monastery, five miles down the glacier, and receive the blessing of the Holy Lama, who had now recovered. This was duly arranged to take place on May 15, and was an unqualified success. The Lama conducted an impressive service and sent them away happy and full of courage for further efforts. That evening in the Base Camp the interpreter Karma Paul—a rather vain youth and apt to be a little carried away by his own self-importance—announced that the porters were very pleased that the interpreter and the Colonel Sahib (note the order) had arranged such a good show for them. A feature of the Base Camp about this time was a herd of burhel (wild sheep) which came grazing the scanty tufts of grass right down to our tents.

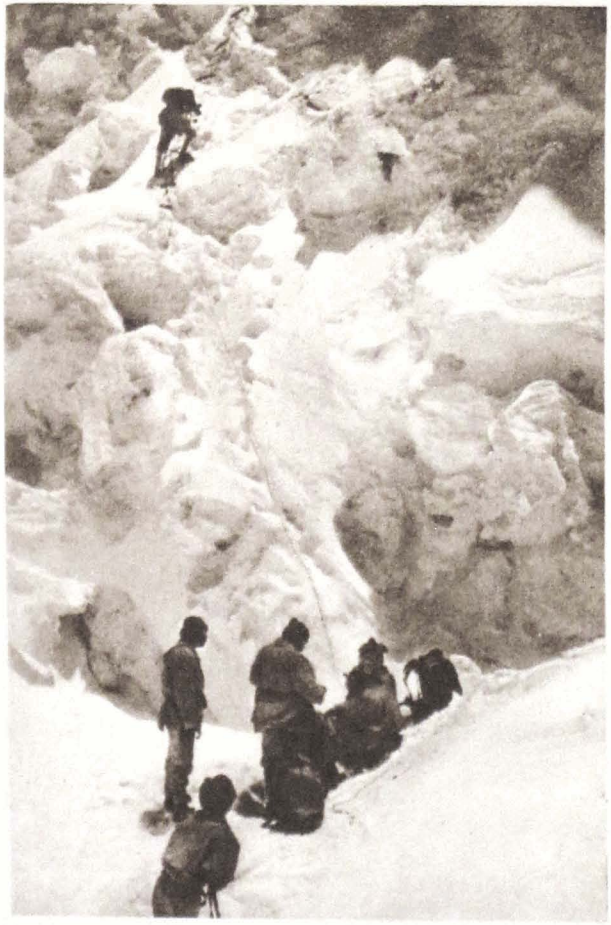
The Lama's blessings had apparently worked wonders with the weather and the men, so after sundry pieces of reorganisation the advance was resumed, and by May 19 Camp III. was reoccupied. Round 2 had now begun, and was remarkable for the spirit of team work displayed by everybody and the excellent comradeship which existed through all ranks of the Expedition.

On May 20 Norton, Mallory, Somervell, and Odell left Camp III. to reconnoitre the route up to the North Col—that dangerous wall of ice, like a trap set at the foot of the mountain. Just below the slopes it became evident that Somervell was far from fit, and he had reluctantly to return to camp. He told me afterwards that he had taken his temperature the night before and found it to be 104°. It was little short of marvellous how he managed to start at all in the morning. Mallory, too, was suffering from a bad cough, and only his great heart carried him on. However, they succeeded in working out a new route right up to the No. IV. Camp site, designed to be safe from avalanches and satisfactory except for an ice chimney 150 feet high. The old route looked very unsafe and certain to avalanche. They did a fine day's work and returned to Camp III. that evening.

On May 21 morning broke warm with a lot of cloud about. Light, dry snow kept falling at intervals. This day the North Col Camp was to be established. Somervell, Hazard, and Irvine got off at 8.30 A.M., with twelve porters, their plan being that Somervell and Irvine should return to Camp III. while Hazard remained in IV. till the next day, when Odell and I would arrive there, stay the night, and then proceed to establish Camp V. At 1 P.M. it began to snow in earnest—very soft, wet snow—and nothing could be seen of the North Col from Camp III. At 6.30 P.M. Somervell and Irvine returned, having left Hazard and his twelve men within easy reach of Camp IV. They told us that they had found the ice chimney too narrow for the majority of loads. Somervell and Irvine had established themselves at the top while Hazard directed operations from below, and all twelve loads were hauled up by rope. It was a tremendous effort, and over two hours were thus spent.

But Fortune had again ceased to smile on us. Snow fell all night and all the following day until 3 P.M. It was quite impossible to do anything but lie in our sleeping-sacks and hope for the best. That night (May 22) the temperature fell to 56° of frost—the coldest ever recorded in an Everest expedition. The morning of May 23 was, however, an improvement—a cloudless, brilliant day. The wind had dropped, but the air was keen and cold. Odell and I got off at 9.30 with seventeen porters bound for Camp IV. The mountain towered above us, sharp and clear in every detail. The party was going well and all were in good spirits. At one of the frequent short halts on the glacier the men were discussing the mountain and saying how easy it looked to climb. They asked me whether they would be allowed to go to the top or whether it would be climbed by Sahibs only. Again we were frustrated, for shortly after midday snow started to fall. Instead of a brief hour's walk to the foot of the Col three hours were required. The slopes of the Col were in a dangerous condition, and we deemed it unsafe to take laden porters on. Accordingly we made a dump at the farthest point reached and retreated to Camp III.

At about 5 P.M. Hazard arrived, but with only eight of his party. While he had gone ahead piloting his men along the steep traverse at the top of the Col, four of them had lost their nerve and remained there marooned. This was a terrible situation, especially as it transpired that a load of mixed porters' rations for Camp IV. had been accidentally dropped over an ice cliff and the marooned party had nothing but



APPROACH TO N. COL



APPROACH TO N. COL

barley meal to eat. Further, conditions all seemed to point to a real monsoon current. Norton therefore decided that while the rest of us were to evacuate Camp III. and get the men back to lower camps, he, Mallory and Somervell were to tackle the arduous and dangerous work of rescuing the four marooned men. Were men ever faced with such a task? They were themselves far below par, from previous exertions and hardship, Mallory's cough and Somervell's throat being really bad. Their chances of being avalanched were considerable. What if they failed to bring off the rescue? What would they do if they found some of the marooned frostbitten and unable to move? The Sherpa porter is very superstitious. These men might by now have gone off their heads with fright and hurled themselves down the ice-slopes. The porters told me some days later that during their night on the North Col they had distinctly heard the fierce barking of the watch-dogs, guarding the Goddess' abode.

The rescue party can have slept little, thinking over what lay before them and listening to the soft snow falling and lessening their chances of success. They started from Camp III. about 7.30 next morning, going so badly that their hopes of accomplishing the rescue were very low. Up the Col they led in turns, and so came to the last traverse. This was covered with fresh snow, which looked as if it might avalanche at any moment. Somervell was now leading. Norton and Mallory belayed the rope and prepared to hold if Somervell slipped. The four marooned porters were waiting on the other side. It was doubtful whether the rope was long enough. Somervell cut steps all the way across, constantly stopping to lean his head on his arm and cough. He reached the end of the rope and found he was five to ten yards short of the goal. The men must cross to him—with no rope! The first came over safely and proceeded towards Norton and Mallory. Just as the second was joining Somervell the last two men slipped and began to slide towards certain death, but they miraculously pulled up in a few yards. Somervell was now superb, and perfectly cool. He told the two men to remain still whilst he passed the second man back along the rope, joking the while, so that one of the two men sitting shivering on the edge of the ice cliff actually gave a short bark of laughter. They sat like statues. Somervell then drove his axe in up to the head, pulled the rope tight, passed it round his axe, and so made enough rope to reach the men with one arm at full stretch, holding the very end of the rope with the other. He dragged

them up in turn by the scruff of the neck and passed them along to safety. It was a first-rate performance.

It was now 4.30 P.M. One man was badly frostbitten in the hands (he subsequently recovered) and two others slightly in feet and fingers. The men behaved splendidly on the way down, but the rescuers had their work cut out to bring them in. In the chimney, Norton held the full weight of the badly frostbitten man no less than four times, and Mallory and Somervell were, as usual, towers of strength. They reached Camp III. at 8 P.M. It was a gruelling day, but a triumphant success.

Meanwhile the second evacuation had taken place, the climbers being distributed at Camps I. and II. So ended Round 2.

We came to the conclusion that after all they had gone through only fifteen of our porters would be fit for further efforts at any great heights. These were collected in Camp I. and formed into a *corps d'élite*, and called the 'Tigers.' On the efforts of this little band our success now very largely depended. It may possibly be thought from this that the Porters Corps as a whole was a failure. Let there be no misunderstanding on this point. True, the majority had shot their bolt, but they had performed some stupendous feats of carrying, often on several successive days, and under terrible conditions. And as for the 'Tigers,' we never really got to the bottom of what they could do right up to the end.

On May 27 a council of war was held in Camp I., and from this point the story will be continued by Colonel Norton, our leader and the inspirer of all our efforts.

The Climb with Mr. Somervell to 28,000 feet.

By Lieut.-Col. E. F. NORTON.

On our arrival at No. I. Camp after our second retreat, it was evident that we must recast our plans. For neither the very reduced number of dependable porters nor the time available before the threatened arrival of the monsoon justified any hopes of carrying out our full original programme.

Very briefly, the original plan was an attack on the summit by two parties of two on the same day—one with oxygen from a camp about 26,500 feet, one without from a camp about