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



COL. NORTON AND MR. SOMERVELL WITH THREE « TIGERS »

27,300 feet, the parties to act independently but to afford mutual support if necessary. In the event of failure the programme was to be repeated with necessary modifications by the remaining available climbers.

Our revised plan was settled after two days' discussion at No. I. Camp. In this nearly all the party took part. It was decided unanimously to scrap oxygen and to attack the mountain by a series of attempts starting from the North Col on successive fine days, each attempt to consist of two climbers with the irreducible minimum of equipment and porters.

Our decision to abandon the oxygen and to climb in parties of two was dictated by the following considerations :

As regards the oxygen : Firstly, neither the number of porters on whom we could now count even to reach the North Col, nor the time before the monsoon, which we expected any day, was sufficient to enable the necessary number of oxygen cylinders to be got up, for so far we had got only a few cylinders to a dump half-way up the slopes to the North Col ; secondly, the verdict of Odell and Bruce—the only ones so far to test the oxygen apparatus—was very pessimistic as to its effects.

As regards the parties of two : Firstly, there being only seven available climbers, the use of parties of three would have cut down the possible number of attempts to two, and it would have been almost impossible to arrange for these to be adequately supported ; secondly, each attempt would have required an extra tent besides other equipment and stores ; thirdly, two men climb more quickly than three.

In this connexion it must be remembered that the whole of Mt. Everest above the North Col is an easy rock peak.

The sequence of parties decided on was : 1st, Mallory and Bruce ; 2nd, Somervell and myself. Odell and Irvine were to be in support at No. IV. Camp and Hazard at No. III. Camp. The last three were to constitute a reserve for a third attempt.

On June 1 Mallory and Bruce started on their attempt from the North Col, where Odell and Irvine were already established. Somervell and I slept that night at No. IV. Camp. On June 2, the weather being still fine, we two started at 6.30 A.M. with six porters, who carried loads of 20 lbs. or slightly less, for No. V. Camp, which Mallory and Bruce had presumably established the day before.

No. IV. Camp lay some 200 yards north of the actual Col, to reach which it was necessary to cross a confused jumble of ice and snow cut up by crevasses. Hence you emerge on to the Col and traverse it just below its crest on the farther (or western)

side. At this point we suddenly found ourselves in shadow and exposed to the full force of the west wind, which blighted us as the first frost of winter blights the dahlias.

The whole of this day's climb and the next was so uneventful that there is little to say about it. We followed the blunt angle which roughly divides the north face of the mountain into two parts. This is known as the North Ridge, and connects the North Col with the North-East Shoulder.

The route was familiar to us from our experience of two years before. The going is all slabby limestone rock at a fairly steep angle, varied by frozen scree with occasional patches of snow, and is entirely without difficulty or danger. When descending it is possible, by deviating a few yards, to glissade down on good hard snow for the last 2000 feet above the North Col.

After climbing for some time we were much disconcerted to see Mallory, Bruce, and their porters descending to meet us. Their explanation was simple but conclusive. Apparently the wind on the previous day had completely taken the heart out of their porters, and this morning not even Bruce's influence and command of the language could induce them to go any higher.

This breakdown of the first party enabled us to reduce our porters to four, one of whom climbed unladen, as a reserve man.

No. V. Camp, where we spent the first night, was pitched a little on the eastern side of the ridge, and so was somewhat sheltered from the west wind. Here, on the morning of June 3, I had some difficulty in inducing three of our four porters to continue the ascent. Their condition had not been improved by the fact that two of them had been injured by a fall of stones, probably dislodged from the crumbling platform built up for our tent; one of these men had a nasty gash across the knee-cap.

I owe it to the three men who came up to the scratch that you should hear their names. They were Norbu Yshay, Llakpa Chedi, and Semchumbi, the last having the cut knee. All honour to a gallant man. He was lame for two months after.

No. VI. Camp was pitched in a cleft in the rock on the actual ridge, and we estimated its height at some 26,800 feet. Its position was dictated principally by Semchumbi's knee and the necessity for getting the porters down to No. IV. Camp in good time.

I have little doubt that, on a future occasion, some improvement could be made on the heights of both Nos. V. and VI. Camps; this is one of the factors on which I base my confidence in ultimate success.

At both Nos. V. and VI. Camps we spent the evening in the hateful routine of high-altitude cooking.

It sounds simple. While one member of the party fetches snow from a neighbouring snow-bed his companion gets the cooker going and opens tins of food—such as pemmican, sardines, biscuits, jam, sweets, and tea. More trips to the snow-bed follow to enable thermos flasks to be filled for to-morrow's breakfast and climb, and for washing up.

I can give you no better idea of the conditions in which one works at these altitudes than by telling you that these apparently simple operations are most exhausting and call for some determination.

We spent very fair nights at both high camps; in fact, I slept really well at No. VI. Camp, which proves that we had learnt something of how to make the best of a high camp since the time, two years before, when four of us spent what I might describe as a most unfair night at 25,000 feet.

The first entry in my diary for June 4 is 'Somervell pretty seedy with throat.' I have already mentioned this throat trouble; it was much aggravated at these heights by the repeated intake of cold, dry air catching the back of his throat.

He was handicapped by this throughout these three days. Late this same evening he very nearly choked, and was only saved by coughing up the obstructing matter along with a lot of blood. That he achieved what he did in this condition was a remarkable performance.

We started at 6.40 A.M., having been much delayed by the necessity of boiling snow for breakfast, for our thermos flask had got rid of its cork in the night, and shed its contents inside my sleeping-bag.

I have not much to say about the climb, and this not by reason of any dulling of the intellect or memory—for this is, I believe, a myth—but because there is so little to tell.

The weather was ideal, with singularly little wind. Even so, clad in two suits of windproof clothing and two sweaters, I found it very cold. Sitting in the sun I shivered so much that I once thought I had fever on me, and took my pulse. I was surprised to find it only some twenty above normal.

But against men in our condition the lack of oxygen was obstacle enough even in such favourable weather. Our pace was lamentably slow; on anything like a steep slope I consistently failed to realise my ambition of achieving twenty consecutive steps without pausing on forearm on bent knee, to puff and blow. Somervell's throat further slowed him down. We had to sit down and rest frequently.

So long as all went smoothly one achieved some degree of mechanical plodding, but trip or slip and the effort at recovery set one panting furiously to make up for the deficit of oxygen caused by the extra exertion. Step-cutting in the rare patches of hard snow was exhaustive work.

After a short distance on limestone scree and a few small snow-beds, we got on to the 1000-foot deep band of yellow sandstone which runs nearly horizontally across the whole face of the mountain. We traversed it diagonally, and headed for the base of the final pyramid, keeping below and roughly parallel to the crest of the north-east ridge all the way.

The going on this sandstone band was absolutely easy and almost devoid of snow until we approached the big couloir which cuts off the final pyramid from the great eastern shoulder of the mountain.

Here, at noon, Somervell finally succumbed to his throat trouble, and I went on alone.

I soon got on to much steeper rock as I turned a corner to enter the couloir. The slabs now were very narrow and sloping, like tiles on a roof; they were frequently covered with snow, which here was powdery like coarse salt and concealed without supporting. The general angle was steep enough to make a slip probably fatal.

I went very slowly and had more than once to retrace my steps and find another route; my rate of progress was also affected by the fact that I was beginning to see double—a premonitory symptom of snow-blindness, I suppose—with the result that by 1 o'clock I was but a short distance on the western or summit side of the big couloir, and perhaps 80 feet higher than where I left Somervell.

Here, in the shelter, the powdery snow was thickest, and I was confronted with a steep climb of some 200 feet before I could again traverse to the right and so gain the north face of the final pyramid and an easier gradient.

It was obvious I could not reach the summit in time to return in safety, and it was very doubtful if I had the strength to go so far in any case. So I turned back and rejoined Somervell by 2 P.M.

The view from the highest point we reached was, to me, disappointing, as is often the view from an aeroplane, for one looked down on all the surrounding mountains and the beauty of their outline was lost. It was a remarkably clear day, and one could detect snow peaks dimly appearing over the northern horizon like little teeth. They must have been hundreds of miles away.

The descent was uneventful for me, but very painful for Somervell. Nightfall found us on the big snow-bed a little below No. V. Camp, and the electric torch came into use; perhaps an hour later I succeeded in making myself heard at No. IV. Camp, whence we soon saw a light coming to meet us, and a voice shouted that they were bringing an oxygen cylinder.

I shouted in reply again and again, 'We don't want the d—d oxygen; we want drink.' My own throat was not at its best, and I remember how feeble sounded my querulous wail, 'We want drink, we want drink,' losing itself in that vast waste of snow and ice glimmering under the stars.

Odell and Mallory met us well above the North Col, and by 9.30 had escorted us into No. IV. Camp, where Irvine was brewing drink for dear life.

As we lay in our sleeping-bags that night Mallory told me how he had organised a new attempt with oxygen. He and Bruce had been down to No. III. Camp to try to collect sufficient porters for an attempt on a minimum scale. This they had done by making use of some of the men who had already been to No. V. Camp with them, supplemented by three or four others whom the continuance of fine-weather conditions had brought up to the scratch.

Mallory had arranged for Irvine to accompany him, and was prepared to start the next day but one. It will be remembered that Geoffrey Bruce was *hors de combat.* I was entirely in favour of the plan, which now represented our last chance of success.

The following morning I was snow-blind, and took no further part in active operations. So I now leave Odell to tell the story of the final stage in which he played so notable a part.

## The Last Climb.

By N. E. ODELL.

Norton has described only too modestly his and Somervell's remarkable attempt on the summit and their return to the North Col on June 4, the same day that Mallory and Irvine had come up from Camp III. The latter had climbed the 2000 ft. from Camp. III. to IV. in the fast time of 2½ hours, evidently in an endeavour to prove to themselves the efficacy