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The Kinchenjunga Expedition.

AT THE FOOT OF THE MOUNTAIN.

A special correspondent with this Expedition wrote to the Englishman on the 21st ultimo:—

THIRD GLACIER CAMP, 19,150 feet.—So far right to Kinchenjunga's big toe we have arrived without mishap. We are now just under the Talung Saddle, having crossed the Yalung glacier to its left side and we are on a rocky spur, which damaged one of the glaciers from Kinchenjunga. This glacier looks as if it might offer a point of attack to reach the western auête of our goal. Our advance party consisting of three Europeans and 20 coolies are about 1,000 feet above us, and have founded the 4th Camp which the aneroid registers at 20,000 feet. To reach this camp an almost continual ladder of steps cut by the ice axe had to be made and as it takes nearly three hours' steady climbing to reach this camp, you can imagine the work has entailed.

TROUBLE WITH COOLIES.

Now our troubles are beginning in earnest. Our coolies are almost in open rebellion owing to one of them having met his death by slipping and falling from the ice on to a rock precipice. This has cast a gloom over us all as so far no accident of any kind has happened party. The man had reached No. 4 Camp alright, but apparently did not relish having to sleep on the ice; so he started off back to No. 3 Camp against orders, and with three other men. His two companions descended the precipice and built a cairn over his remains which, they said, were in a terribly mangled condition. This has demoralised all the coolies with us, and we are in a bad fix being now only a few days from the summit but not a man will carry a load. To-night all the men, but two who were with the advance party, have returned, the others having deserted their loads at the 4th camp.

THE GODS Or THE ICY PEAKS.

Unluckily, as a route towards establishing a fifth camp higher up, was being cut (by this I mean steps for foot hold being made) an avalanche, not of great dimensions, fell on the party. All fell, one of the natives, just managing to grasp a rock, gave a chance to the others to anchor themselves with their ice axes. This I am writing down on what they explained [sic] as the cause of having deserted the camp. Whatever we may wish to do, if all our coolies refuse to go higher, we are stranded. Much money, trouble, and personal discomfort will be for nothing except the exploration of an unvisited glacier, which one or two men with an eighth of our equipment could easily have done. This is pretty hard, but the Tibetans or Sherfs are not made of the stuff of mountain climbers. He will stand hardship and carry a load for many miles on a rough road but when it comes to climbing his heart fails him and he loses his head. His superstition too about the gods that inhabit their high icy peaks is also against him. In his inmost heart he fears he is committing a sacrilege in helping mad sahibs to try and reach the seat of his gods. Only the high rate of wages and promises of baksheesh, besides daily rations can induce him to engage in such an expedition. He knows that when the road gets too bad for his liking he will refuse to go on and return to his former pasture. I do not think any law is available to punish him for deserting after having engaged for work which he well knew he would never accomplish. So things stand at present.

I hope to be able to write you better news in my next letter. If we can manage to persuade coolies that they need only get our food, tents, etc., to a fifth camp, from whence we may be able to make a final dash to the summit and return in one day, all our labour will not have been in vain.

THE ACCIDENT.

The following further particulars of this accident appear in the Darjeeling Visitor:—On Saturday afternoon news was received in Darjeeling of the fatal accident that befell the Kinchenjunga Expedition. On Friday, the 1st instant, while at an elevation of about 20,000 feet an ascent was made to find out something of the nature the height that lay some miles in front of their camp. It was a steep climb and the snow lay thick. The afternoon was bright and the party had great hopes of getting some good views. While returning to camp about 5-30 in the

afternoon, Messrs. Guillardmond, Pache, Righi and three natives were descending the snow having roped themselves to each other, but when near the end of the descent the whole party of six were swept down some 250 feet by an avalanche, which buried the whole party under the rushing snow. Dr. Guillardmond and Mr. Righi most miraculously managed to extricate themselves, but the rest of the four, Mr. Pache and the three natives could not be found. An hour's search was made but as darkness fell over the snows, the two survivors had to make their way to their camp some two miles away, The search was renewed the next morning, the fresh snow that had accumulated during the night made it impossible to discover the bodies. The survivors were badly bruised, but the rumour, in the station yesterday, that Mr. Righi had broken some ribs and had died, is not correct. This catastrophe has frightened the coolies to such an extent that they refuse to go further, and the two Europeans are obliged to return from the very foot of Kinchenjunga. Mr. Crowley was already on his way back. Mr. Righi and the two Swiss gentlemen alone pursuing their adventurous course. Mr. Crowley will be back in a week and will be joined by Mrs. Crowley, who is expected to arrive from Calcutta at the end of the month. We are glad that Messrs. Righi and Guillardmond are returning before further mishap befalls them and their coolies. The death of a European and three natives is most deplorable, and Government ought really to put a stop to people risking their lives in this way. During summer the snow is quite soft and the rains cause frequent avalanches which are all the more dangerous during a short break of fine weather when the sun can beat on the snow. Some years ago Mr. Freshfield found climbing most difficult although he went much later in the season.