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THE KANGCHENJUNGA EXPEDITION.

To the Editor of the "Indian Daily News."

Sir,—On our return to Darjeeling on the evening of the 20th instant we all, that is Doctor Jacob Guillardmont, [sic] Mr. Reymond and myself were simply struck dumb at reading both the letter to the *Pioneer* of the 20th instant, and the interview with Mr. Crowley in the *Darjeeling Chronicle*, our quondam leader a mass of what we will term misstatements. I will give the true version of what really occurred. Mr. Pache's arrival at last camp without orders, I remember quite well, an official order from Mr. Crowley coming to Mr. Pache at the Yalung camp asking him to come on. I told Mr. Pache then that apparently I was going to be the servant of the expedition and was being left behind, but he could tell Mr. Crowley from me, I would not remain, and would push on the next day. As far as I can remember the purport of his note, in French, to Mr. Pache was "we are here at camp IV where you can join us."

Mr. Crowley also forgets to tell us that when he and the Doctor left the main party it was on a reconnoitring [sic] tour for a few days. The coolie who first met his death left camp without orders, but I must here mention what the other men told me that he said he was going to carry up the load of his father who was with me. As to what decided me to leave the expedition was not at all what he tries to make out, but some lines in a letter he wrote to the Doctor trying to put all blame on me as in charge of the rear guard and failing to send up provisions, plus the firm conviction that although Mr. Crowley might be a daring alpinist, he lacked the first accomplishments of a leader as I told him at Camp V (you may be a good climber but a bad General). I may here add that the reason the Doctor came up with me was to depose him, by a general durbar, as leader of this expedition, so much for his belittling remark that it was entirely personal pique. Now, as a matter of fact, there were plenty provisions at Camp III when I arrived with my coolies, but the Doctor had no men willing to carry them up, even with the promise of eight annas for each man that would

go, as they were entirely demoralized by the death of the first man. I also noticed several loads abandoned on the snow slope, one a tin of *sattu* one a unit of food for Europeans enough for 5 men for 3 days, Mr. Pache's valise and a Kashmeres kilt, containing tins of petroleum, etc. Now as this road was, in Mr. Crowley's estimation, so perfectly easy, why did not he instead of remaining at Camp V and starving, come down with his authority, and persuade his coolies to bring them up? As to the statement made by Mr. Crowley in the *Pioneer* about *starving* for a day, he could not have looked at the food units, in which there were a good deal of tinned provisions, also on my arrival at Camp V I found some raw mutton, a shoulder and ribs, I think, besides several tins of self-cookers and calorit; Mr. Reymond informs me he never had to starve, in fact, on the morning of the first he remembers making his breakfast before starting off a self cooker, ox-tongue and chocolate, he especially mentions having made an extra good meal on account of a hard day's work in front of him. So much for the starving incident. Regarding the want of petroleum, this ran short on the morning of the 30th, but they were able to make tea by using spirit of wine in the small mountain-cooking lamp, 2 tins of petroleum arrived from the Doctor at 5 P.M. that day, so they were never without a fire for cooking, besides as Mr. Reymond remarks this would have been a small trial for Alpinists! !

Mr. Crowley in his letter to the *Pioneer* also remarks that he saved the life of a coolie by a sharp tap, I suppose with an alpenstock or ice-axe; he further states "that it is the only occasion on which I have had to strike a man" he ignores or intentionally forgets. . . . [We are unable to publish statements which, even if true, are, legally speaking, defamatory.—Ed.]

To come to the accident and its probable causes, I shall confine myself to the opinions expressed by the Doctor and Mr. Reymond as alpinists of experience. The road was badly chosen. They on the day that this was done strongly objected to it, firstly because it led over a steep slope abutting a precipice and to the quantity of soft snow which would easily avalanche if many passed along it, this is proved without a doubt since as many as three avalanches took place on the route, two falling by themselves and one caused by the four men slipping which latter carried us away. As to his wish to emphasize the trivial size of the avalanche he did not take the trouble at the time of the accident to come and try if it was at

all possible to render any assistance, he admits he knew that four men were under the snow, and this being a *very small avalanche* we surely would have got them out with his assistance if he had only come, but why trouble they got there against my advice let them stop, truly a noble position for a leader to adopt with companions in eminent danger.

The slope according to Mr. Crowley was so easy, only 20 degrees, but he did not try to "glissade" down it, preferring his own easy route, meets the coolies who on account of one of the self fallen avalanches by the side of the rocky precipice, did not dare to go down the night before and passed a cold night huddled on the rocks, leaves them to their fate to come down as best they could, he, of course had claws and easily managed it. In the opinion of both the Doctor and Mr. Reymond the avalanche fell about one hundred and fifty metres, and could not have been such a small one, seeing it took four hours to dig out our last man, poor Mr. Pache was found head-downwards in about ten feet of snow. So much for the "small" avalanche. We now come to his serious charge against the Doctor and myself, in his own words to the *Chronicle* representative. *The Doctor and Righi managed to get away by severing the rope*; such an action is considered a crime by Alpinists, unless full details are given and proper reasons stated. As soon as we stopped and managed to get to our feet, I loosened the knot and slipped out of the rope—the Doctor remained tied till we reached Camp III, and tried to dig with our bare hands to get, if possible, to our companions; it was not till we, fully an hour and-a half after the fall, convinced of the futility of trying to find our friends alive after so long, decided to make our way back to Camp III. Then after much hesitation, the rope was cut to enable us to form another corded party. The necessity of having a rope is proved by my slipping on a dangerous slope of ice three times and being retained by Mr. Reymond. I am glad to see by the *Chronicle* of the 23rd instant Mr. Crowley retracts his former statement and says it was wrong, *vide* his letter. So much for his attempt to injure the Doctor's honour as an Alpinist. The desertion of our leader took place much to our satisfaction on the 3rd instant. He said he did not believe in such sentimentalities as stopping to try and pay the last honours to the victims. I will ignore his charges as to stupidity, folly, and that I in the goodness of my heart, would leave him only his servants as this is not true. He wanted me to order coolies to go up and bring down, not so much the property of the expedition, as his own in particular. This I refused to order, but

called for volunteers, as I did not want to have on my conscience the death of men whom I may have ordered to go up. I simply said "You are the Burra Sahib and you speak enough Hindustani to do the ordering yourself." He then sent for Nangar the Sardar and asked him if he was sardar or the coolies' servant. Nangar replied he was the sardar, then Mr. Crowley said: "Take men and go up to Camp V and bring down our property." Nangar replied: "I will go if you give me boots and claws." These being supplied he left with 10 or 12 men, and I am glad to say managed to get safely up and down. I may add that at no time was I appointed as Commander of the rear-guard. I was simply left behind without orders of any kind, in fact, I had to send a man to ask for orders and actually left Camp I, for Camp III, without any orders reaching me. Mr. Reymond was not sent by Mr. Crowley, as he states in his article to the *Pioneer* of the 20th instant, but he came down to the rescue of his own accord. Mr. Crowley further says that we left him without men, every coolie with him, owing I suppose to fear of the mountain, had bolted the night before, so that he only had with him Thenduck, senior, who begged of us to be taken down. This was the only man we deprived Mr. Crowley of; as on Mr. Pache deciding to come down with us (he was not persuaded by the Doctor) his servant, Bahadur Lama, came down with him, making thus our party up to six men. We, of course, could not refuse them, so to the charge that we left him without effective help, our answer is, we only took one man, who was sick and bruised. He further states that had the Doctor possessed the common humanity and common-sense to leave him men he could have sent an effective rescue party. This Doctor Guillarmod was unable to do. . . . besides, for the sake of economy, none of them were properly booted. As far as I know when we started he was in a tent, and did not see us off, so I do not understand how he can say we were all in a bunch. We had a 50 metres rope and occupied its full length; the first man at one end and the last at the other, we had no rope trailing behind us. Another passage in his now famous letter to the *Pioneer*, with reference to the admitted coolie striking, says: "The leader in fact fell who was *unroped*, but supporting him I caught. . . and held him safely he began to *untie* himself from the *rope!*" If this man was unroped how did he manage to untie himself from the rope, can anyone explain this; or is it a hit against Sir Martin Conway or the Alpine Club hidden in a conundrum? To give you a final example of the character of the individual we had to deal with, I will add a few extracts from

letters written by him to the Doctor long before the Expedition started, these in face of my agreement with him and after paying him the equivalent of £100, as I could not afford that sum in cash, I paid him Rs. 350 in cash, and after much haggling he took from me a fine Tibetan banner, a large piece of carved lapis lazuli and a necklace of green jade as an equivalent for the rest. These I will write in the original French and endeavour to translate them to the best of my ability. I may add the Doctor has given them to me to make what use I care of them, some refer to me: "Mon cher J-G., Tout va bien ici. J'espere avoir avec nous le Directeur de l'hotel, jeune Italien, et prince deguisé, qui parle tres bien le tibetain et a l'habitude et de marchander et de voyager avec les indigènes . . . Les frais sont formidables sur la ligne de montagne. . . Je vous remercie vivement pour vos soins sur "snowdrops"; ne montrez point aux douaniers ou vous aurez 10 ans de prison . . . Il vient d'avoir un accès de fièvre rhumatique—est-ce le mot ? qui laisse toujours le coeur affaibili. Mais en tout il sera très utile pour faire marcher les coolies et pour marchander leur prix, meme s'il ne fait pas les exploits héroïques d'un Pfannel, . . ." in the second letter: "Le directeur s'est décidé à nous accompagner; il va nous sauver beaucoup d'argent, en connaissant le vrai prix de toute chose qu'il faut acheter ici, et en pouvant parler avec les coolies et marchander bien leur prix; il se nomme Rigo de Righi . . . , Il laut bien comprende que Righi nous sera très utile, et il est assez bon camarade mais il n'est pas tout à fait "gentlemen" et peut se iâcher on se plaindre inutilement. It taut donc, je crois, le tenir un peu au bras long. Mais tout ira bien sans doute. Après son travail, l'emplacement de vos gros bagages à main au camp, on pourrait le renvoyer, s'il se montre difficile, et sans cérémonie. Mais j'espère bien qu'il sera tres agrè'able pour nous tous. Seulement je m'empresse de vous dire le pire, afin qu'il n'y ait point "d'illusion perdue" . . . This is a translation of the above passages: "My Dear J G., All goes well here. I hope to have with us the manager of this hotel, a young Italian and disguised Prince, who speaks well Tibetan and is in the habit to do business and to travel with the natives . . . The freights are formidable on the mountain line. . . I thank you warmly for your care about "snowdrops" (*probably "Snowdrops from A Curate's Gardens not to be found at Mudies*) do not show them to the customs officers or you will get 10 years' imprisonment. (The manager) he has just had a go of rheumatic fever—is that the word? which always leaves the heart weak. But in any

cases he will be very useful to make the coolies march and for lowering their prices, even if he can't make the heroic exploits of a Pfannel. The manager has decided to accompany us; he will save us much silver (money) as he knows the right price of all things which we must buy here and cut their rate very low, he is named Rigo de Righi. You must well understand that Righi will be very useful to us, and he is good enough companion, but he is not all a "gentleman," he can get angry, and complain uselessly [Query:—"He can loose his temper or not as he pleases," —Ed.] We must then, I think, keep him at arm's length. But all will go well without doubt. After his work, the placing of our heavy baggage at the main camp, we can send him back, if he becomes difficult, and without ceremony. But I hope he will be very agreeable for us all, only I am trying to tell you the worst to the end that there shall be no "lost illusions." These letters were written one from Drum Druid Hotel and the other probably from Calcutta from the Hotel de Paris, but I am not certain. This is the sort of man who was leader of the 1905 Kangchenjunga Expedition. Need I say more why we decided to ask him to give up his position? I leave your readers to form their own opinion.

Not content with all the charges he brought against me during the expedition, he further charges me with, because I upheld Nangar in his just demand of the two pice per man commission as sardar, which was promised him by Mr. Crowley before leaving if he got the coolies to come for Rs. 20 per month and himself came for Rs. 30, having a share of this commission also that on everything that was brought on the road I speculated a commission, and that I was well-known in Darjeeling for doing so, I told him it was a . . . and a . . . who said so, to this he answered that an officer friend of his had told him so, this I told him an English officer, I could not believe, could be capable of making such a charge and wish to hide his name, this when I demanded it was refused. This comes from what, I suppose, would be considered a "gentleman" having been educated at the Cambridge University, and who, I believe, styles himself My Lord Boleskine; in his opinion I am not quite a gentleman, if so, and gentlemen are of his stamp, I am glad I am not one.

This rather long explanation is written in answer to his letter to the *Pioneer* of the 20th instant, his interview with the *Darjeeling Chronicle* of the 16th instant, and as I think I have refuted his charges against the Doctor and myself and do not wish to enter into any controversy with him, I shall decline to

further discuss the subject with him.

My two Swiss companions sign this letter to prove I have their assent as regards where I have mentioned their names.—
Yours, etc.

A. C. RIGO DE RIGHI.

Le sous-signé reconnaît l'exactitude des faits allégués ci-dessus et qui me concernent personnellement.

DR. T. JACOB GUILLARMOD.

Je certifie l'exactitude des passages de cette lettre où mon nom se trouve cité.

CH. REYMOND.