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Mount Everest: The Reconnaissance: Discussion

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Is it humanly possible to reach the summit of Everest? We have not a single convincing argument to solve that problem. I felt somehow, when we reached the north col, that the task was not impossible; but that may only have been a delusion based on the appearance of the mountain from that point; it looks much smaller than it is. However, one factor, easily forgotten, is in favour of the assault. The higher one goes the less will be the effect of any given rise. To ascend the 3000 feet above 17,000 is notably less laborious than to ascend the next 3000 up to 23,000 feet; but the atmospheric pressure diminishes less rapidly as one goes up; consequently the difference in effort required between one stage and another should be less at each succeeding stage, and least of all between the last stage and the last but one. I believe it to be possible, at all events, for unladen mountaineers to reach 26,000 feet, and if they can go up so far without exhaustion, I fancy the last 3000 feet will not prove so very much more tiring as to exclude the possibility of their reaching the summit.

But in asserting this bare possibility, which, besides, leaves the coolies out of account, I am very far from a sanguine estimate as to the prospects of success. Before we parted, I put this question to Bullock: "What are the chances that a given party will get up in a given year?" After considered reflection, he replied: "Fifty to one against." That answer also expressed my own feelings. Perhaps at a greater distance from the mountain I am now more sanguine. If men could be found to besiege Everest year after year, I believe it would surrender at last. But the chances against any particular expedition are indeed very large. I assume that principles time-honoured in the Alpine Club will be honoured no less on Mount Everest than on other mountains. Climbers, of course, are always taking risks; but there are some which experience and *a priori* reason alike reject. A party of two arriving at the top, each so tired that he is beyond helping the other, might provide good copy for the press, but the performance would provoke the censure of reasonable opinion. If any one falls sick at the last camp, he must be taken down with an adequate escort and as soon as possible; and similarly on the final day. And coolies who become exhausted in carrying up their loads cannot be allowed to make their own way down; exhausted they are incompetent, and must be properly looked after. It is with such difficulties and such necessities that we have to reckon; and any reckoning, I believe, which fairly weighs the conditions and circumstances governing such an enterprise can only come to the conclusion that the chances in favour of success for any particular party are small indeed.

Before Colonel Howard-Bury's paper, Colonel Sir FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND, President R.G.S., after thanking His Royal Highness the Duke of York for honouring the Meeting with his presence, and reading telegrams of congratulation from the Alpine Club of Canada and the Société de Géographie of Paris, said: We are here to welcome back Colonel Howard-Bury and the members

of the Mount Everest Expedition, and to congratulate them upon having exactly achieved the object with which they were dispatched, namely, to discover the most practicable way to the summit of the mountain. They were not instructed to attempt to reach the summit, or to break any record. That task was to be reserved for next year's expedition. But they were expected to find out what was without any shadow of doubt the most feasible way to the top, so that next year's expedition might, without any hesitation, go full speed ahead along that route, and that object they have most definitely and unquestionably accomplished. So now we can set about our main effort on the sure foundations which Colonel Howard-Bury and Mr. Mallory have laid, in perfect confidence that we are on the right track.

"Seek ye first the very highest, and all these things shall be added unto you." We sought first the highest mountain in the world, and now we are seeking the very top of that highest mountain. And already a number of most delightful things have been added unto us. First, we have Colonel Howard-Bury's graphic telegrams and the magnificent photographs which he and Mr. Wollaston sent back, revealing to us mountain scenery of a grandeur not to be surpassed, and the enjoyment of which can now be shared by men in every country and for all time—enjoyment which will be greatly increased when we have the paintings of the artist whom we shall be sending with the expedition next year. Then came Mr. Wollaston's natural history collections, telling us of the height to which life ascends on these highest mountains, and including seeds—already planted at Kew and Edinburgh, and in the Royal Horticultural Society Gardens—of new or rare primulas, gentians, and rhododendrons and other plants which will add to the beauty of our gardens. After this came a map by Major Morshead, of the whole region ; and another by Major Wheeler, of the mountain itself and its immediate neighbourhood, is expected daily. An account of the geology of the region by Dr. Heron is on its way. Lastly has come the bill. We had expected it to be £5000. Actually it is only £4000—that is, excluding the expenses incurred by the Government of India on the survey.

These results were rendered possible in the first instance by the generosity of our Patron, His Majesty the King, and our Vice-Patron, H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, and other liberal donors on the funds of the expedition, especially the members of the Alpine Club, who, urged on by the persuasiveness of their President and the coerciveness of Captain Farrar, contributed more than £3000. But the chief credit for the satisfactory result is, of course, due to those who worked so arduously on the spot—to Colonel Howard-Bury, who with such skill and address conducted the expedition as a whole, overcame all initial difficulties, and brought the climbers up to the mountain ; to Messrs. Mallory and Bullock for their resolute persistence in ferreting out a way, when they were deprived of the guidance of that experienced Himalaya climber, Dr. Kellas, whose death we so deeply deplore, and of their mountain leader Mr. Raeburn ; to Mr. Wollaston for the thoroughness with which he carried out his scientific duties and looked after the health of the party ; to Major Morshead and Major Wheeler for their untiring energy in mapping so lofty a mountain region, and for the rapidity with which they have furnished us with maps ; and lastly to Dr. Heron, whose energy seems to have been remarkable even among such energetic men.

With this necessarily brief but most sincere acknowledgment of their services, I now invite the chief of the expedition to give us an account of his charge.

*Colonel Howard-Bury then read the paper printed above.*

Before Mr. Mallory's paper, Prof. J. NORMAN COLLIE, President of the Alpine Club, said : From a mountaineering point of view the Expedition to Mount Everest has been most successful ; an easy route has been discovered, free from any prolonged difficult climbing, by which it is hoped that next year the ascent of Mount Everest may be made. The ascent, however, could only be attempted in the very finest weather, and we are yet ignorant whether much climbing can be done as high as 28,000 to 29,000 feet. The Expedition was sent out this year primarily to make a complete reconnaissance of Mount Everest. This has been done thoroughly. On every side, except on the south, which is in Nepal, all the valleys leading to the great peak have been explored. The climbers, Messrs. Mallory and Bullock, with untiring energy, have been more than once to over 23,000 feet, visited many passes, and explored a large number of glaciers. A magnificent series of mountain photographs have been secured. Taking into consideration the difficulties of climbing at such altitudes, the mountaineers are to be congratulated warmly on their success.

*Mr. Mallory then read the paper printed above.*

The President expressed his great regret that the lateness of the hour made it impossible to call on Mr. A. F. R. Wollaston, the Surgeon and Naturalist of the expedition, for his account of the very interesting work on the flora and fauna of the region. All present would be anxious to hear him on another occasion.

Monsieur A. GATINE (Vice-Président du C.A.F.) : Mes premières paroles seront pour vous dire avec quelle gratitude le Comité de Direction du Club Alpin Français a reçu la cordiale invitation qui lui a été adressée pour cette réception magnifique des courageux explorateurs de l'Himalaya. Nous vous prions d'agréer les excuses et les regrets de notre Président, M. le Baron Gabet, que des nécessités impérieuses ont empêché d'être ici ce soir, comme c'était sa formelle intention. Nous sommes heureux, M. Henry Bregeault, Secrétaire-Général, M. Richard-Berenger, Membre du Comité de Direction, et moi, d'avoir en cette mémorable circonstance la bonne fortune d'être les porte-paroles du Club Alpin Français auprès des Membres de l'Alpine Club et de la Royal Geographical Society. Nous saluons dans ces deux Sociétés deux des Associations les plus anciennes et les plus actives du Monde, justement renommées pour leurs travaux et leurs publications. Elles ont su ne pas se reposer sur leurs lauriers, comme nous disons en France, et voici que, une fois de plus, nous les trouvons à la tête du mouvement et du progrès, à l'occasion de l'étude et de l'exploration du massif montagneux le plus haut du Globe. Nous ne saurions oublier que les Membres de l'Alpine Club ont toujours été parmi les plus actifs et les plus hardis des Alpinistes qui se sont attaqués aux cimes vierges de la Savoie et du Dauphiné. Les noms de beaucoup d'entre eux brillent au premier rang dans ce qu'on a appelé "la période héroïque de l'Alpinisme."

Cette période sera-t-elle couronnée, en quelque sorte, dès l'année prochaine par la conquête de la plus haute cime du Monde ? Nous le souhaitons de tout cœur. Nous désirons en tout cas apporter dès à présent les félicitations du Club Alpin Français aux organisateurs que la confiance des deux puissantes associations a chargés de la préparation méthodique d'une expédition aussi hardie que l'assaut du Mont-Everest, et nous exprimons notre admiration aux Savants, aux Alpinistes, aux Topographes dont les travaux et l'endurance ont déjà obtenu ce superbe résultat de découvrir, dès cette première campagne,

au cours d'une ascension bravement poussée jusqu'à plus de 2000 mètres au-dessus de l'altitude du Mont-Blanc, une voie d'accès, qui paraît praticable, vers le sommet du Géant des Montagnes. Nous déplorons que de pareilles expéditions ne puissent se faire sans de très grandes risques, et nous souhaitons aux explorateurs de 1922 de revenir tous en parfaite santé, après que les Alpinistes de l'expédition auront eu l'honneur d'atteindre le plus haut sommet qui dans le Monde reçoive le baiser du soleil.

Mes collègues et moi, nous vous félicitons infiniment de la fraternité cordiale des Alpinistes Britanniques et Français, semblable à celle des combattants de nos deux Nations, qui ont souffert et lutté côte à côte pendant la Grande Guerre, et dans un sentiment de gratitude pour l'amiable accueil fait aux représentants du Club Alpin Français, nous souhaitons tous les bonheurs, tous les succès à votre Altesse Royale, à Monsieur le Président de l'Alpine Club, à Monsieur le Président de la Royal Geographical Society.

The President, in conclusion, offered the congratulations and thanks of the Meeting to the speakers, Colonel Howard-Bury and Mr. Mallory, and to all the members of the expedition; and in the name of the R.G.S. and the Alpine Club thanked the French Alpine Club for their signal proof of friendship in sending a distinguished delegation from France to attend the Meeting.

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## A CHINESE EXPEDITION ACROSS THE PAMIRS AND HINDUKUSH, A.D. 747

Sir Aurel Stein, K.C.I.E.

**A**T the beginning of my second Central Asian journey (1906-08), and again at that of the third (1913-16), I had the good fortune to visit ground in the high snowy range of the Hindukush which, however inaccessible and remote it may seem from the scenes of the great historical dramas of Asia, was yet in the eighth century A.D. destined to witness events closely bound up with a struggle of momentous bearing for vast areas of the continent. I mean the glacier pass of the Darkot (15,400 feet above sea-level) and the high valleys to the north and south of it through which leads an ancient route connecting the Pamirs and the uppermost headwaters of the Oxus with the Dard territories on the Indus, and thus with the north-west marches of India.\*

The events referred to arose from the prolonged conflict with the Arabs in the west and the rising power of the Tibetans in the south

\* The accompanying sketch-map 1 is intended to illustrate the general features of the mountain territories between the western T'ien-shan and the Indus which were affected by the political developments and military operations discussed in this paper.

Sketch-map 2 reproduces essential topographical details of that portion of the ground between the uppermost Oxus and Gilgit river valleys which witnessed the chief exploits of the Chinese expedition of A.D. 747 into the Hindukush region. It has been prepared from Northern Transfrontier Sheet No. 2 S.W. of the Survey of India, scale 4 miles to 1 inch.

For convenient reference regarding the general topography of this mountain region may be recommended also sheet No. 42 of the 1:1,000,000 map of Asia published by the Survey of India (Calcutta, 1919).