TIBETAN ADVENTURE

Travels through Afghanistan
India and Tibet

by

HERBERT TICHY

with a preface by

SVEN HEDIN

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Translated from the German
by Ian F. D. Morrow
and L. M. Sieveking
Thirty years have gone by since that day in July 1907 when I first pitched my tent on the banks of the sacred Lake Manasarowar, which the Tibetans call Tso-mavang. The weeks I spent beside this lake, and in the eight monasteries set upon its shores like diamonds in a turquoise bracelet, are one of the happiest and most unforgetable periods of my life. I did not stay on the banks of the lake the whole time. I also rowed and sailed over the lake in all directions in a canvas boat I had brought with me. My object was to take soundings of the depth of the lake, and to prepare an accurate map of it. I thus had the opportunity of observing the lake at all hours of the day and night, in brilliant sunshine, in the romantic and mysterious moonlight, in blustering showers of hail and in raging winds. And all the time the crystal-clear sacred waters, whose depth no man had hitherto discovered, were looking up at me and my companions from Ladakh. On my return journey to India in the summer of 1908 I saw once more, for the last time, this wonderful lake, which, together with the Sea of Galilee, is the holiest in the world.

I once stayed for twelve hours in clear, calm weather on the roof of Gosul-gompa monastery, on the western bank. The view from this high observation point cannot
be described in words. South of the lake rises the mighty massif of Gurla Mandhata, covered in eternal snow and ice, while to the north, in the huge mountain chain of the Trans-Himalayas, lies the marvellous peak of Kailas, Kang Rimpoche, which is as sacred to the Tibetans as T‘ai Shan to the Chinese or Fujiyama to the Japanese.

Between these two mountains with their dazzling white snowfields lies the turquoise mirror of the lake, sky-blue at noon, at evening tinged with a rosy hue by the setting sun. There are numberless indescribably beautiful landscapes in the Himalayas, the Trans-Himalayas, and the other mountainous regions of Asia, but the view from Gosul-gompa over the lake and the surrounding mountains surpasses anything I ever saw there.

Another unique and wonderful experience is the circuit of the Sacred Mountain, Kailas, along the pilgrim’s path with its four monasteries, its deep valleys, and the beautiful Dolma-La Pass.

It was a great joy to me to have recent first-hand news of this marvellous region, which has only been visited by Europeans on a few isolated occasions during the last thirty years. Herbert Tichy is a young Austrian geologist who has travelled in the southern part of western Asia. In the course of his journeyings he crossed the Himalayas to the Sacred Lake and to the Sacred Mountain, Kailas. On his return he wrote to me and told me what a deep impression my beloved Tibet had made upon him. He also sent me a collection of quite remarkable photographs. I felt as if I were meeting again old friends whom I had not seen for many years. This collection of photographs is extraordinarily valuable, and forms a very
Preface
delightful addition to the photographs, sketches, and water-colours which I made myself thirty years ago.

Herbert Tichy was not in a position to take any scientific instruments with him, but his observations are of great interest. He certainly puts the height of the Dolma-La too high when he gives the figure as 19,500 feet. In 1907 and 1908 Manasarowar was completely cut off from the neighbouring lake in the west, Rakas Tal. But I heard through letters from native friends in Leh and Gartok that in the August and September of 1909 and 1910 there was some water in the bed joining the two lakes. Apparently the bed has now dried up again.

It is a matter of great rejoicing to me that every one who is interested in the more remote regions of the world should be able to receive in this book of Herbert Tichy’s fresh and direct impressions not only of Lake Manasarowar, Gurla Mandhata, and Kailas, but also of many other regions of the great continent of Asia. I send the young author my very best wishes for his happiness and his future.

Sven Hedin

Stockholm
20 May 1937
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Note: The author has taken all his photographs with a Leica camera.
MAPS

A Map showing the Author's Itinerary through Afghanistan, India, Tibet, and Burma
at the end of the book

A Map showing the Route followed by the Author on his journey through the Kumaon-Himalaya and south-western Tibet at the end of the book
THE AUTHOR TO THE READER

I do not know if you will like this book. It is not a learned book. I cannot tell you that the Pagoda of Rangoon was built by such and such an architect in 1673. I can only show you the picture of the pagoda and tell you how fabulously beautiful it is, and that to look at it is to pray.

Neither can I tell you that in Tibet in Camp III at 7 a.m. the force of the wind was $x$ miles an hour while the temperature was $y$ degrees below zero. I can only tell you that it was bitterly cold and a violent wind was blowing.

I do not think that such scientific details would necessarily claim your attention, but they would probably intimidate you, and because of your respect for my knowledge you would be inclined to forgive much and to judge less critically.

I was twenty-three years old when I made the journey here described. Both to myself and to other people I put forward the pretext that my journey had purely scientific and journalistic ends in view, but as I discovered the strange and wonderful world of Asia all other considerations sank into the background beside my overmastering desire to know more of the people of Asia, of their longings and their joys.
The Author to the Reader

Disguised as an Indian pilgrim I travelled with native friends through the Himalayas to Tibet, to the holiest mountain of the world. I have drunk with head-hunters and have philosophized with Indian students. Burmese girls have smiled invitingly at me, Afghan nomads have cursed me for an unbeliever. I was the guest of starving Indian workmen and of fabulously rich maharajahs.

I was, as I have said, twenty-three years old when I went to Asia. Perhaps I shall not be able to describe it as could older persons with more experience of life. But if I lack that experience of life, I also lack the scepticism and the often unconscious superiority of the average European. And perhaps it is just because of this that I found the way to the secret, incomprehensible heart of Asia, which is closed to most Europeans. I forsook the beaten tracks that have been made for Europeans, and thus I came to know the genuine, everyday Asia.

You will read in this book how my journey was carried out, without much system, governed only by the desire to see below the surface.

The book has an object, however. It is to tell you of the naked mountains of Afghanistan, of the wonderland of India, and of the smiling Burmese. It is to tell you of the dazzling peaks of the Himalayas, of lonely nights spent in tents when thoughts are great and lofty as the mountains that surround one. It is to tell you of devout Hindus who travel hungry and cold over icy passes into Tibet in order that they may look for a moment upon the mountain throne of the gods.

It is to awake in you a longing for far-off things, for
The Author to the Reader

hours of solitary reflection, and for the beauty that there is in the world.

It is to induce you to take a leap out of everyday existence into those regions where life is on a magnificent scale, where there are dangers, where the struggle is not for goals that can be defined by figures and captions.
Chapter One

THROUGH INDIAN RAINS

The Indian Ocean lay before me, grey and monotonous. Its waters stretched away into the far distance and became a part of the grey night sky. Away in the east a blood-red streak across the water became larger and brighter. Suddenly the rising sun emerging from beneath the water lit up the sky, the sea, and the great white liner on which I stood with its glittering rays. I stood in the bow. Far ahead—felt rather than actually seen—lay a strip of land at which we should arrive in a few hours’ time—India.

Many months have passed since I bade farewell to that coast. Months of forlorn struggle against the yearning that ceaselessly impels me towards the wonderland of Asia.

A long and hard path led me from the narrow walls of a university lecture-room to Asia. Two years previously I had travelled with a friend by motor-cycle from Europe to India. Our journey took six months and brought us in contact with many interesting parts of Asia.
A brief dream of freedom and adventure came to its end with my return. Once more I sat in a lecture-room in the University of Vienna. It was summer. The air in the room was exhausted and hot. From where I sat I could see a small expanse of sky over which white clouds chased each other. It is extremely tedious to sit still for an hour and afterwards to talk with girl students about chemical formulas during the ten minutes’ interval. It is certainly not any easier when the girls wear sandals and woollen stockings, spectacles and pigtails. These seem to be the only girls who want to study natural history.

I used to sit for hours in the library of the Geographical Institute and read books of travel.

I looked at pictures of mountains in Afghanistan and of jungles in India. This particular day, however, I got one of Sven Hedin’s books on Tibet. I opened it by chance at the picture of a bare rocky countryside out of which the summit of a snow-clad mountain rose up like a glittering pyramid of silver. At once I knew that I would look upon it one day with my own eyes. It suddenly seemed to me senseless merely to dream of distant marvels. I wanted to see and to experience them for myself.

I started my preparations immediately and without allowing any considerations of modesty to stand in my way. I had some very imposing-looking writing-paper printed for me, headed: ‘The Austrian Central Asian Expedition’. On this paper I was so successful in impressing the importance of my undertaking upon manufacturers of preserves, tents, and other necessary articles that they offered their products to me free of charge. I want
Through Indian Rains

to take this opportunity of thanking them all for their kindness and generosity.

The financial problem was less easy to solve. There were days when the 'Expedition' sat at its writing-desk with brows furrowed by thought and read with an anxious heart that while the editor of the XY Post had learnt with great interest of its plans he nevertheless did not agree that it was of vital importance for his paper that Herr Tichy should be appointed its 'Special Correspondent' with the 'Expedition'.

That was not a happy time. I often wished I was ten years older. My plans could then have been carried out with much less difficulty. Nothing seemed to be more of a hindrance to me than my youth.

'What! You are only a student and not even twenty-three! You've got lots of time ahead of you. You can afford to wait,' a publisher said to me. And he sent a bearded scientist rather than myself to Africa.

At long last it really did happen. I was entitled to call myself a 'Special Correspondent in Asia', received from my editor an advance for expenses, and behaved as if it was an everyday affair and had not caused me the slightest difficulty.

An Austrian motor-cycle manufacturer placed a machine at my disposal. I began once more to look upon managing directors and editors with friendly eyes.

Professor Dr. Suess, who was my professor at the University of Vienna, kindly allowed me to take the Himalayas as the subject for my thesis for my doctorate in geology.

When I told him of my plans my father laughed with
Through Indian Rains

that care-filled and melancholy laughter that I had so often before aroused in him.

Afterwards innumerable preparations for my journey had to be made. There were the pangs inseparable from all partings. But now I am standing on deck and watching the coast of India draw steadily closer and closer to me. The long-awaited road of Romance lies open before me. Who can tell whither it will lead me? To the ice-covered highland plateau of Tibet or the bare mountains of Afghanistan? No matter. I am not concerned about where I am going. If the path of adventure leads nowhere it will nevertheless be an adventure in itself.

Every writer who has any conceit of himself and writes a book about his travels in Asia begins with a lengthy description of Bombay. Indeed many writers fill their first pages with descriptions of Port Said and the Red Sea. I am not going even to make an attempt to draw a picture of Bombay for my readers. The huge railway station that looks like a palace and the towers of silence on which the Parsees lay their dead to be devoured by vultures have been described hundreds of times. If you, my reader, have read many travel books, you know those places better than I do. I would rather introduce you here to the friends who are to accompany me along the roads of Asia during the next few months.

Three of us have met in Bombay in order to wander for months as vagabonds over the roads of India. One of us is a young Hindu student at the Indian University at Lahore, Chatter Kapur, whose Indian passivity has become mingled with the love of adventure because he has an Englishman among his ancestors. His pious Hindu
Through Indian Rains

relatives do not altogether approve of our journey. ‘Chatter will only be harmed by constant association with this fair-haired Christian,’ they say anxiously to their women friends, who cannot find any argument to allay their fears.

The ‘fair-haired Christian’ is myself. The third member of the party is our motor-cycle. It has been specially fitted up for this journey. The petrol tank has been enlarged to hold about four and a half gallons in order that I may be able to cover five hundred miles without refuelling. The manufacturers who placed the machine at my disposal only agreed to make this—in their opinion foolish—alteration because they believed that I was a trained mechanic. Inasmuch as I had already journeyed overland to India with the machine there was some justification for their assumption. I did not, however, go alone. I went in company with a charming friend who was almost fanatically devoted to motor-cycling and motor-cycles, and who was so anxious that our journey should be successful that he took care to keep me away from the engine or from attempting any repairs. While his eyes were firmly fixed on the appalling road surface and his whole attention was devoted to steering the machine through brooks and between stones and pot-holes, I sat happily if Shakily on the pillion seat telling him that now an antelope had just appeared on the left and again that on the right the mountains were very lovely. He had no eyes for these sights except during our halts. But these halts were necessarily brief since we had to cover over eight thousand miles within a given time. The result of this delightful journey was that I had
Through Indian Rains

not the slightest knowledge of a motor-cycle or its mechanism at the time when the machine was handed over to me. I nevertheless had to use it because no other mode of conveyance would have enabled me to travel as cheaply and as independently.

Before I left home I devoted two afternoons to studying the workings of the machine. I took down and remounted the cylinder in the right place with the help of two trained mechanics. A wet Sunday was spent in removing and replacing the rear wheel. I was very pleased with myself. The job did not present any difficulties. It is nevertheless true that I did perhaps take rather a long time over it. I have since heard that others have done in twenty minutes what it took me a whole day to do.

Anyway, I certainly looked forward with inward anxiety to motor-cycling in India even if I assumed an outward air of cold indifference. Nor was my anxiety lessened by Kapur’s confidence, seeing that he knew nothing of my capabilities as a mechanic. I think, therefore, that the fact that we both regained our homes unharmed says more for the qualities of the machine than for the ability of its rider.

The official of the Western India Automobile Association looked with critical eyes at the small Puch motor-cycle. ‘Of course you can try to get to Delhi. But I must say that just at this moment, when the monsoon has reached its height, I would advise you not to make the attempt. The road is said to be flooded two feet deep in places and also to be impassable where the storm has blown down trees across it. Nevertheless, as I have
already said, you can try it.’ That did not sound very encouraging. However, we had resolved to make a trial trip as far as Poona, which lies some 156 miles inland from Bombay, in order to visit the universities and schools for which it is famous. The temperature there was also said to be such that one could at any rate pass most of the night without perspiring.

The road to Poona ran for a time alongside the sea. The palms on both sides of the road were bent like twigs by the monsoon. At short intervals the wind drove the spray in showers across the smooth asphalt surface of the road. The occupants of closed cars passed unharmed through these frequent waterfalls. It was more difficult for us. I did indeed try to cross the danger zones at full speed. But no sooner did we think that we were safe than our fate overtook us at the last moment. A hundred gallons of salt water swept over the machine and ourselves. We left Bombay soaked to the skin.

It was utterly useless to try and fight against the wet, and we soon abandoned the attempt. Nor was it the fault of our first-rate waterproofs. What happened was something like this: we rode happily along a dry and dusty road beneath a sky over which a few small clouds were sailing. How lucky we are—we would say to one another—to have such lovely weather. But while we were still congratulating ourselves a cloudburst would descend upon us with terrifying suddenness. Before we had even time to seize our waterproofs we were soaked. The moment the rain ended we thought we would be clever and not be taken by surprise again. Hence we rode on in our waterproofs, with the result that after a
Through Indian Rains

few minutes we were as wet from perspiration as we had previously been from rain. Henceforth we knew that we always had the choice of how we would be wet, but that in no circumstances could we remain dry.

Our motor-cycle climbed steeply and with difficulty up the poor road that led to the eighteen-hundred-foot high plateau on which Poona lies. It became cooler, the rain fell less frequently, and we began to feel more human again. Strange people passed us on the road. Fakirs smeared with ashes and almost entirely naked cast suspicious glances at us. They are nevertheless harmless in comparison with Indian cows. Cows, as is well known, are looked upon as sacred in India, and as such are fed and petted by everyone. I am convinced that the cows themselves firmly believe in their own sanctity and feel themselves superior to mankind. I have never seen in Europe cows which looked at a motorist so impertinently and challengingly after he had sounded his horn for several minutes in the hope that they might perhaps be induced to move even one step towards the side of the road. I always took my revenge upon them by giving them a hard kick as I passed them, an experience that they had certainly never had before in the whole course of their revered existence. The cowherds were rendered speechless by my conduct and probably believed firmly that in my next reincarnation I should lead a miserable existence as a brutally ill-used cow.

In Poona there is a school for widows. Indian male and female teachers are kept busy in a large collection of buildings instructing their pupils in domestic economy and teaching them reading, writing, and arithmetic.
Through Indian Rains

Even to-day nearly 90 per cent of the Indian population are illiterate. It is a typical school for domestic economy such as is to be found all over the world in these days. But it has one peculiarity: the majority of the pupils—young girls and women—are widows.

In order to understand the necessity for such a school for widows it is essential to adopt Indian notions of life and to regard a widow with Indian eyes.

The lot of Indian widows is well known in Europe. It is less than a hundred years since it was the custom for a wife whose husband had died to cast herself—more or less willingly—into the flames of his funeral pyre. A custom that is so incomprehensible and horrible in our eyes originated in a process of thought that is still followed even to-day by the majority of educated Indians. Every individual ego experiences a countless number of rebirths or reincarnations. Each rebirth is in the nature of a punishment or a reward for conduct in the previous existence. It therefore seems perfectly logical to the Indian mind that a woman who is punished by the premature death of her husband must have been guilty of some heinous offence in her previous existence and that therefore it is only a kindness to afford her an opportunity of paying for her earlier sin by a voluntary death in order to attain a higher plane of existence in her next life.

This attitude is so deeply rooted in the conservative Indian mind that the majority of widows even to-day are compelled to lead miserable lives. The English have indeed rigorously forbidden self-immolation on funeral pyres. Nevertheless, many widows probably still long
Through Indian Rains

for the restoration of this ghastly custom. For an equality of rights for widows has not taken its place. Instead they are treated by their friends and relatives as if they were criminals, as indeed according to their ideas they were in their previous life. They are not permitted to wear pretty clothes or to go into society. They vegetate miserably in secluded rooms.

I remember an incident that happened whilst I was in Bombay. An Indian family invited me to tea. It was a thoroughly modern family, as was shown by the fact that the daughters were also at tea and talked freely with me. It is not the custom in India that one is invariably introduced to everybody in the room. Hence I was not astonished when I was not introduced to a very pretty young woman who made tea in a distant part of the room. A lively and interesting conversation with these educated Indians was soon in progress, and afterwards they played some gramophone records for me.

The young woman who had not been introduced to me sat silently in a corner of the room and listened to the music. She had never spoken a single word. I kept glancing at her in curiosity, and at the same moment the eyes of my host fell upon her. He sprang up angrily and addressed some words in Hindustani to her that I could not understand. The young woman rose hastily and timidly and disappeared through a door. I looked questioningly at my host, who realized that he owed me an explanation. ‘She is my brother’s widow,’ he said in a contemptuous tone. ‘She can’t accustom herself to the idea of being a widow and that she has no right to be among us when we have guests.’ My host had spent
three years at Oxford and he certainly treated his brother’s widow a hundred times better than would have been the case among the rigidly pious middle classes. In India to-day thousands of widows are vegetating senselessly and aimlessly. Many of them are still little more than children, having been married about the age of fourteen. Life itself and the future seem to them grey and devoid of hope. Nor is there any way of escape from their condemnation to a derogatory and dishonourable mode of life that is so deeply rooted in public opinion.

An attempt has recently been made on the part of Indians themselves to alleviate the piteous lot of the widows. At first in Poona and afterwards in other towns so-called ‘Seva Sadan’ societies were organized for the purpose of making the widows once more into useful and valuable members of society. ‘Seva Sadan’ means ‘Work for the Home’. It is in fact mainly instruction in housewifely tasks. There are about two hundred women in the school in Poona, fed, clothed, and taught either free of charge or in return for a small fee according to their financial circumstances (Plates 1 to 5). Many of them leave the school again after a few months in order to earn their living as nurses, kindergarten teachers, and factory hands. Others who are less capable of facing life for themselves pass their days in ‘Seva Sadan’ working for the school itself and thus contributing their share to its upkeep.

Apart from its importance for the widows themselves the ‘Seva Sadan’ school is one of the few places in India where caste distinctions have almost entirely disappeared.
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The widow of a rich Brahman sits side by side with the widow of a poor pariah. The two are inculcated with a new spirit and will become the forerunners of a new social order in India. Twelve hundred pupils have already left the schools of the ‘Seya Sadan’. That is only a drop in the ocean. Nevertheless, it marks a step forwards. One has only to look upon the cheerful faces of the widow-pupils in order to be able to regard the future of Indian women with some degree of optimism.

We started out on a Saturday to return to Bombay. This turned out to be a reckless want of prudence on our part, because the weather gods were in a vindictive mood. After an almost rainless week a cloud-burst began on Saturday and lasted until Sunday evening, and therefore spoilt the entire week-end for the unhappy inhabitants of Bombay. European languages lack a word that would adequately describe this rain. ‘Rain’ is useless. ‘Cloud-burst’ is no better. Perhaps ‘flood’ is more apt. We were compelled through having started too late to travel some sixty or seventy miles by night. The rain fell so heavily that our headlight only penetrated the darkness for a few yards ahead. Water surrounded us on every side. The road had turned into the bed of a rushing river. I am not usually frightened. But I was at times weighed down by the feeling that we might be drowned. If we drew a deep breath, our mouths were filled with the water that ran down one in torrents from head to feet. Water, nothing but water, wherever one looked. Fortunately the water was lukewarm and I gradually grew accustomed to driving through a river that at times had a depth of nearly two feet, instead of along a road.
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I also accustomed myself to breathing in place of pure air a mixture of air and water in equal proportions, and instead of breathing normally to imitate a swimmer by opening my mouth at the moment when I would swallow the least amount of water.

After resting for two days in Bombay we were at last ready to start on our northward journey of 1,560 miles. On the last evening I wandered alone through the city. All over the streets were huge pools of blood that would have caused a stranger to think that rioting was a daily happening. Actually Indians themselves make these patches of blood by cleverly spitting out between the passers-by the juice of the betel-nut that they chew with passionate eagerness. It is not really quite the proper behaviour for a European to walk about alone, and I found myself the object of many startled glances from the passing natives. These glances became so frequent and marked in one particular street that I became curious as to the reason. I finally discovered that I was in Foras Road, the prostitutes quarter in Bombay, where the small shops on either side of the street contain instead of goods for sale beds and more or less (mostly less) attractive girls. A few of the shops only are shut off from the gaze of the passing pedestrians by thin curtains. Business seemed to be dull.

All of us even before we have visited it know India in its romantic guise with its palms, magnificent palaces, and elephants. That is one aspect of India—a land glittering with luxury and pomp as we have dreamt of it and as it actually does appear occasionally, and as it were by way of exception.
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There is another aspect, another India, hungry, diseased, hopeless. That seems to me to be the real India. But we Europeans do not want to look upon it. In order to find it one must go into the poverty-stricken villages or into the suburbs of the great cities where the industrial proletariat lives.

The Indian police were horrified because I spent a large part of my time in Bombay in the company of workmen, a practice that is usually only followed by social reformers or Communist agents. Since the police were unable to associate me with either of these types they probably came at last to the conclusion that I was a fool. Anyway, I was allowed to wander about undisturbed in the poor districts. Huge textile factories—the mills are to be found in Worli, Colaba, Sewri, and Parel—great brick buildings with tall chimneys, would harmonize with a dull European background but look unreal, menacing, among the palms.

Two to three thousand workpeople find employment in many of these mills. Male workers receive about a rupee (1s. 6d.) a day. The women workers are only paid half as much. In the majority of cases an entire family has to live on the wages of a single worker—and Indian families are generally large (Plate 6). Besides, it costs more to live in a big city than in the country. The cities nevertheless exercise a strong attractive influence over the poor countryfolk and the numbers of the industrial proletariat are being continually swollen by peasants who have abandoned the fields for the factory. A few alone find steady employment. The majority support themselves by means of odd jobs and subsist on whatever
edible scraps they can pick up. Their sole wealth consists in the cloth wound round their thin loins. In the poorer districts there are streets that are almost impassable at night on account of the recumbent bodies of the poorest of the poor lying packed together like sardines in a tin. Those who are better off own beds made of wooden pegs and a string mattress, which they put up in any vacant place in the street (Plate 12).

Despite the fact that the poor classes in India have few needs and that there is no winter in which they can freeze to death, the impoverishment of the industrial masses has become a problem that engages the attention of Indian municipalities. Mill-owners, whose pockets are annually filled with large profits, are not to be expected to show much understanding for or sympathy with their workpeople. Nine out of every ten of these factories are owned by rich Hindus. It is, moreover, interesting that these native mill-owners pay their own fellow countrymen lower wages than the European or foreign factory-owners.

The ‘Bombay Municipal Corporation’ took the first decisive step towards an improvement in the situation of the Indian workpeople in that city. Huge five- and six-story apartment houses were built on open spaces near the factories in which working-class families can obtain cheap and decent homes (Plates 9 to 10). Naturally, life in these houses is still confined, primitive, and unhygienic, but at least there is running water and washrooms, and, above all, between the blocks large open grassy spaces and broad roads. The narrow, filthy alleys found in the bazaars, breeding-grounds of every kind of disease, have
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vanished (Plate II). It will nevertheless take a long time before decent conditions of life have been created for the enormous industrial proletariat that the Europeanization of India has brought into existence. The conditions that marked the beginnings of the industrialization of Europe are to be found again in India to-day. An hour spent in the mills in Worli or Sewri conduces to a better knowledge of India than two months spent in a maharajah’s palace.

At last we said farewell to Bombay and started on our journey to the north, where Afghanistan was to be our first objective.

The German writer Bernhard Kellermann has called the ‘Grand Trunk Road’ the road that runs through India from north to south, the ‘Road of the Gods’ (Plate 14), because only the gods and those beloved of the gods are permitted to travel along it. At the time when I travelled over it I did not feel as if I were numbered among the company of those whom the gods love.

Once again I rode through a stream instead of along a broad highway. If the rain ceased for an instant we found ourselves shrouded in thick mist that completely shut in the view on all sides. It was only six o’clock in the evening when I had to light up. It was about noon in Europe. How lovely it would be, I thought, to be at home. One would be absolutely dry. One could make plans for the afternoon. Perhaps it would be possible to arrange to go out into the country with a pretty girl. Heavens! what couldn’t one do! At the very moment when I was about to sigh deeply, to send a silent prayer heavenwards, and to utter curses upon this silly love for
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the East, a patch of blue suddenly made its appearance in the grey overhanging sky. In a few seconds all the clouds disappeared. A fairyland at once revealed itself where there had formerly been a grey monotony of mist. Peasants stood up to their knees in water in the rice fields keeping up a monotonous chant as they worked. Even the mud that covered the road seemed less dangerous in the sunlight. All longings for Europe were forgotten.

The fords are the greatest problem to be solved by any one who motors through India during the monsoon (Plate 15). I had once before done the journey from Lahore to Bombay on a motor-cycle. In winter it was an easy journey over roads that were not too good in places. But now each yard meant a struggle. Innumerable small streams meandering across the road had to be negotiated—‘small’ possibly in the dry season, but now broad and swift flowing.

We came to the first ford. The road was only covered to a depth of six inches, and being surfaced with cement did not arouse feelings of anxiety. I drove slowly into the water on low gear. The next second we had fallen. The surface was so smooth and slippery that it was only with the greatest difficulty that we managed to right the machine and push it clear of the water. The next time we met with a ford we got off and pushed. In places the water rose above the cylinder, and thus rendered it impossible to leave the engine running during the crossing. The remarkable thing was that these thorough drenchings did not harm the engine in the least and it started again each time without the slightest difficulty.
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I had already lost any feeling that caution was necessary in crossing the fords when disaster overtook us. The stream that lay before us was over two hundred feet wide and it was only with great difficulty that we managed to wade through it, because the water rose half-way up to our knees and we kept continually slipping on the smooth asphalt surface. It was quite impossible to push the machine across; there was no sign of a boat or of anybody to help us; and the situation looked hopeless. On a journey like this travellers must, however, forget the word 'impossible' and, if the worst came to the worst, we could always take the machine to pieces and carry it over bit by bit. But before we embarked on such a wearisome task we decided to confront the situation with oriental passivity and to sleep for some hours in the hope that meanwhile the water would fall in depth. It was early morning; the sun slowly rose higher in the heavens, and every now and then a shower fell. We lay in our tent and waited. And after four hours the water had fallen nearly ten inches and, with some difficulty, we were able to push the machine through the dun-coloured stream. Unfortunately it was impossible to take a photograph of this crossing because we needed both our hands to propel the machine.

Our standard of living was at times distinctly lower middle class. As a rule we ate fruit for lunch that we had bought in a small village. My record in bananas stands at twenty-eight for a single meal—not, as might be thought, for a whole day. Kapur greeted my performance with a knowing laugh and was content with a much smaller number. As a consequence of the continuous rain we
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could not sleep in our tent, and for the first few days we sampled practically every kind of sleeping accommodation known to India. Our first night in Nasik was spent with European friends. The second in a dak bungalow. These bungalows are rest-houses that are available for the use of travellers at a charge of about a shilling. The accommodation is exceedingly primitive and it is always necessary to have one's own bedding. If desired, the keeper of the rest-house will cook a meal composed of Indian and European dishes. On one occasion we ordered an egg-dish. I looked on with horror while the cook cut up a huge quantity of garlic and onions and refused to listen to my entreaties that he should not mix them with the eggs. Nevertheless, when the dish finally appeared on the table, it was so good that I have never again criticized Indian cooking and have ever since eaten the most horrible looking messes quite calmly.

Evenings in these dak bungalows are quiet and peaceful. As a rule one is in sole possession of the place and feels as if one were the owner of it. And if one happens on strangers spending the night there, they are generally travelled men with whom it is a pleasure to chat. In a dak bungalow near Bombay—a distance of a couple of hundred miles is still reckoned 'near' in India—we met an English colonel and a missionary. After a frugal meal, we sat on the veranda listening to the chirruping of the crickets, which sounded so like home, but which was every now and then interrupted by a distant roar that was most unlike home.

'Tiger,' said the old colonel. 'I really don't believe in yogis and miracles and so forth. Here in India things run
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along natural lines just as they do in our own old continent, though possibly with rather more of a flourish. But', and his voice grew thoughtful, 'I did have one experience which I have never been able to explain satisfactorily. I had pitched my tent somewhere in the middle of a jungle that was full of game. On the very first day there I noticed that the servants seemed apprehensive. At first I could not get them to speak, but at last they told me that a yogi lived in the neighbourhood who had taken the animals in that forest under his protection. And they were afraid lest he should do some mischief to me or them. On the following morning we induced a native to guide us to the spot where the yogi was said to live. We did indeed find a hut with a fireplace built of stones in which a few wood embers were still glowing. But there was nothing particularly strange about that. As you know, hermits of this description are to be found all over India.

'Next morning I sent my two servants to the nearest village to replenish our dwindling store of provisions. I myself proceeded in the opposite direction towards my shooting platform. I had for several days been on the tracks of a large tiger. This time I was lucky. The beast showed himself and ate part of the previous day's kill. It was an absolutely dead shot. I took careful aim and fired. But the only sound was the click of the hammer—the cartridge had missed fire. I was using a double-barrelled gun, so I quickly fired the second barrel, but with the same result. The tiger had heard the sounds and put up his head uneasily, but finally returned to his meal. Noiselessly I put in fresh cartridges and pulled the trigger
for the third time—another misfire. The beast, now thoroughly alarmed, vanished into the long jungle grass with a single bound.

'For years I had been using the same brand of cartridges and had up till then never had a misfire. I went back to camp in a furious temper and had several hours to put in before the servants returned from the village. When they did get back they told me excitedly that the villagers had told them that I had made three attempts to fire on a beast in the jungle but that the yogi had protected it. And that the yogi would continue to protect his animals. . . .

'To this day it is a mystery to me and will always be one how the people in that village fifteen miles away could know at the same moment that I fired shots that they were unsuccessful. I spent another week in the neighbourhood but never saw either the yogi or another tiger.'

The old colonel stopped and looked meditatively at his empty glass. Not until the boy had replenished it did his face lighten, and he looked challengingly at the missionary, who was staring silently out into the darkness.

'I run a school in Kashmir,' began the grey-haired missionary, 'and we work on the principle that our pupils are not to be crammed full of knowledge but are to spend most of their time on games and other physical exercises. Our pupils, mostly the sons of well-to-do families, for a long time refused to row on their own rivers, because that is an occupation allotted to the lower castes. After a great deal of trouble we did at last induce them to do it, but to this day they put cloths over their heads when they row through the town, because they
are afraid of being recognized by their friends or relations. Later, when our school had acquired a very good reputation we organized school sports, which were attended by a number of the leading persons of the town. A football match was to be the culminating point of the festivities, and I must say the performance of the two teams was on a very high level. During the half-time interval I noticed that our team was discussing something very excitedly. When the whistle went, they did not go back on to the field.

'No one knew what had happened. I hurried to the pavilion where the players had changed. I found the place in an uproar. As soon as they saw me, the players ran to meet me with every appearance of agitation and anger. They had just discovered that they had been playing with a ball made of oxhide, a ball made of the skin of the sacred cow. Never again would they kick the ball. Persuasion failed utterly, nor could we find a ball made of pigskin. The match had to be abandoned. The English spectators went home, shaking their heads, but the Indians of course were in complete agreement with the attitude of the boys. They too regarded it as impious to make footballs out of cowhide.'

For some considerable time a dull roll of drums had been heard through the night. The Indian servant of the bungalow had asked us whether he might go to a religious service that evening. He had stayed away nearly two hours. Now he came back, slowly and with dragging steps. Upon his shoulders hung a garland of blazing tropical flowers, the caste-mark on his forehead was freshly painted. His eyes gleamed with a fanatical fire.
1. The School for Widows. The *Sari* is not taken off even for gymnastics or games.

2. The household tasks in the school are done by individual pupils who take turns at the work.
3. The Refectory. According to Indian tradition the women crouch on the floor and eat with their fingers.
5. A century ago Indian widows were burnt alive. To-day they lead free lives on modern lines in these schools.
A street in the bazaar. Crowded and dirty, the bazaars are breeding-grounds for disease and epidemics.
12. A street scene, early morning. Poverty as well as the heat forces many Indians to set up their beds on the street.

13. The Hindus do not drink directly out of a vessel but let the water fall into the palms of their hands and suck it up.
14. On the Road of the Gods. To-day as for centuries past the country roads of India are filled with slow-moving, creaking ox-wagons.

15. In the absence of bridges the crossing of rivers in the rainy season is a difficult problem.
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But as soon as he saw us, he was instantly transformed into the submissive servant.

'Damn it, bring another bottle of whisky!' shouted the colonel from his basket-chair.

'Yes, Sahib,' replied the man impassively.

His face had once more grown impenetrable and mask-like. It resembled the country all around us, which attracts and entices and yet is so utterly foreign to us.

On another occasion we were the guests of the Maharajah of Devas. I might tell much of the magnificence and luxury of the court of an Indian maharajah, since I had already spent some time in one—in Indore. But at Devas there was no luxury, it was much pleasanter and more romantic. Late one afternoon we were riding along a worse than wretched road when it began to rain as if a second flood were in prospect. We looked round for some roof to shelter us, and at some little distance from the main road saw a fortress-like building. Dripping and dirty we dismounted from our bicycle, and were received by a friendly Indian, who introduced himself as His Highness’s secretary and gladly put the guest chamber of the castle at our disposal. His Highness had just gone off on holiday to the Kashmir hills, and except for a few servants we were the sole inhabitants of the castle. The place lay in the midst of wide meadows like an old brooding medieval castle. Tame bears and antelopes played in the courtyard, the passing hours were announced on a gong by a wonderfully clad servant. To the embarrassment of the secretary it turned out that evening that His Highness had taken the knives and forks to Kashmir with him, so we were obliged to some extent
to use our own fingers. None the less—or perhaps for
that very reason—how delightful was that evening in the
enchanted castle of Devas!

My unfriendly attitude to cattle must have become
known to them because I was nearly overtaken by the
vengeance of the cows at Devas. On the following
morning I rode down into the bazaar to fill up the tank,
and as the road was awkward a servant accompanied me
on the pillion. We had completed our difficult business
and I was riding slowly in low gear along the extremely
rough bazaar paths which were crowded with people
when I heard a cry of dismay behind me, and the brown
arms of my companion were wound in terror about my
neck. I looked round in surprise and saw a cow rushing
at us with its head lowered, breathing fire and fury. The
horns of most of the Indian cattle are quite absurdly bent
downwards, so that they could never be really dangerous
to any one. But this cow happened to have particularly
straight, upturned horns, which were already within
three feet of my Indian's back. I stepped on the gas, and
drove at a dangerous pace through deep ditches, fakirs,
small children, and mountains of bananas. It was impos-
sible to change into second gear, because I was obliged
to brake unceasingly, to take wide or narrow curves,
and even at this low speed the machine was capering like
a donkey through the deep gulleys. The cow certainly
had the advantage of us. Firstly it knew the ground
better than I did, and secondly I had the further handicap
of acting as its pacemaker and forerunner. Nevertheless,
the race ended in a dead-heat—a result of which I am
more than a little proud—and with my three-feet start,
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I reached the safety of the high road just ahead of the sacred cow. The Indian, who had been roaring unceasingly at the top of his voice, threw a contemptuous glance at the cow, which was now well in the rear, and released my neck, which was the more welcome since his hands were dripping with the sweat of terror, and not very clean.

On the following evening we were obliged by a cloud-burst to pitch our camp for the night earlier than we had intended at a small place called Kolaras. This spot is so small and insignificant that it will not be found on any map of India. It contains no such thing as a bungalow or inn, so we were thrown upon the hospitality of the inhabitants. In the teeming rain we sought a host. A more or less tidily clad Indian awakened our confidence. Chatter began the conversation and the Indian immediately asked what our caste was. When he heard that I was a Christian he at once ran from my dangerous presence. At the second attempt we were more wily, and I gave myself out to be a Brahmin from Kashmir. Many of the inhabitants of Kashmir are fair and Kashmiri is not spoken or understood in central India. Everything seemed to be going well, when all at once an Indian approached and began to speak to me in an unknown language. In vain I looked for help to Chatter, but alas! the man, who was unfortunately speaking Kashmiri, had already discovered that I was a European. Once more our hope had failed us. Finally we pitched our tents in the little school-house, and were carefully avoided by the bigoted Hindu population, who looked at me as if I were some fabulous monster.
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We reached Agra by way of Nasik, Indore, Gwalior. Here we spent one morning admiring the Taj Mahal. Then we proceeded, covering on an average a hundred and eighty-five miles a day, no mean performance when the bad condition of the roads is taken into account. We might of course have allowed ourselves rather more time, but I was tired of the everlasting rain, and besides I was abominably sick for mountains, fresh air, and snow. Besides, I had not spoken a word of German for weeks—my conversations with Chatter were conducted in English—except with cows and their herds; but these colloquies were very one-sided and were confined to a few vigorous expletives. And up in the Himalayas the German forester family, Johanssen, lived in their delightful bungalow, where I had spent an unforgettable week two years ago. The farther north we got the greater became my longing for the mountains and for ‘Mother Johanssen’, who possesses an unrivalled capacity for putting soothing dressings on tired feet.

At Delhi we took a day of rest. I was wandering through the beautiful park in the city when I heard in the distance the curious sound that is produced by every great concourse of human beings. No doubt some political or religious demonstration was in progress. India, quiet, passive India, had grown very unquiet. One day the Mohammedans would organize a demonstration, and another time the Hindus would do it; and if the two hostile factions met, then they would attack one another with lathis—long, heavy poles. By the time the police succeeded in restoring order there were usually several dying men in the dust of the road. It is little use
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forbidding all demonstrations and decreeing that every citizen shall be at home by eight o’clock in the evening. Somewhere, in some dark side alley, dead men will be found none the less on the following morning. At Lahore the Sikhs have a large temple. At this time work was in progress for restoring the temple, and a small structure inside the courtyard was to be pulled down. All at once the Mohammedans remembered that this little house, which had for two hundred years stood peacefully inside the Sikh temple, had once been a mosque. The mullahs called their people to arms in defence of their religion, and street-fighting began.

I walked through the Delhi parks towards the spot from which the sounds of a great mass of people came as a single menacing murmur. I followed the sound, and found more and more Hindus going in the same direction as myself. The crowds became thicker and thicker, all pressing towards a particular point. I allowed myself to drift with the stream and at length found myself in a large open space filled with an immense mass of people. On the next day I read in the papers that there were something like twenty thousand of them.

Before me rose a platform—ah, I thought, so it is really some religious or political demonstration. I did not feel altogether happy as the sole European in this sea of excited Indians.

And suddenly a small girl, barely six years old, stood on the platform and began to speak in a soft voice. She was telling stories of her previous life. Twenty thousand Hindus, all believers in the reincarnation of the soul, were listening breathlessly to the words of the inspired child.
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Her past life had been spent in Benares, a city that she had never seen in her present existence. She described exactly the streets and the house in which she lived with her husband. She named her husband’s calling, and related episodes in their joint life.

After her a university professor spoke. He had been in Benares and had verified the child’s words on the spot. There could be no doubt that she was capable of giving full details of the life of that woman who had died some months before the girl’s birth. Such a miracle was not easy to grasp, he continued. His voice grew harsh and derisive. For Europeans it was quite impossible.

Then his voice rang out clear and prophetic: ‘But for us there can be no doubt that it is a proof of the great miracle of the transmigration of the soul, that we are in possession of the true knowledge.’

Twenty thousand Indians stood around me. Fat merchants and lean, worn workmen, students and peasants. And their faces, which normally would be so various, seemed in a sense to have grown alike. Perhaps it was due to the deep glow of faith that suddenly lighted up their dark eyes.

And their eyes which ordinarily encounter those of a European with distrust or deference, seemed not to see me. They looked through me as though I were air.

On the last day we went through Ambala and covered nearly two hundred and fifty miles in the pouring rain. Slowly the machine climbed the mist-laden hills up to a height of some six thousand feet.

Dirty, scratched, and wet to the skin, we reached the house ‘Vaikunth’ (which means ‘The Earthly Paradise’)

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on the eve of Mother Johanssen's birthday. Cake and punch had been prepared, and a few hours later we were feeling very merry on the heavy Himalayan wine. The gramophone sang Viennese songs for us, and we almost felt as if we were in one of the little Viennese inns, except that it is wiser not to take evening strolls in India, because sometimes panthers come right up to the house and look interestingly in at the windows.

We had taken six long days to fight our way through rain and slush from Bombay to Solon. The time had seemed never-ending. But here with the Johanssen family we soon forgot all our troubles. Our wounds were tended, we ate German food again, spoke the German language, and in short were as happy as we could possibly be. And one day—though feeling as if we had just arrived—we saw that according to the calendar we had already been idling here for a week.

As a rule I am not troubled by an undue sense of duty, but I had not, when all was said and done, come to India to lead the life of an idler. Once more I was obliged to say farewell; this time to people who had given a wanderer a second home in a strange land.

We descended by a zigzag path with countless turns, then we were back again in the plains, and the hills vanished in mist. We proceeded along a splendid asphalt road, from Ludhiana to Amritsar and Lahore. The heat now became simply appalling. No longer was the wind cooling when one was moving rapidly; it burned like glowing coal on the skin. Perspiration ran in streams from the top of one’s head to the tips of one’s toes. I was obliged to use iced water for developing films; the
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temperature of the water from the tap was 95°. Nevertheless, even this seemed cool compared with the temperature of the air, which was well over 104°.

On the way to Lahore we had an experience which gives a very good illustration of the Indians' caste spirit. We had not had anything to drink for a long time, and were glad to see a temple by the roadside with some priests sitting at the entrance. Chatter asked them for water. They lifted the lid of a well and offered us foul water. At the sight of Chatter's indignant face they inquired what our religion was. Once more I was declared to be a Brahman from Kashmir. Immediately the priests were as it were transformed, and brought us cool clear water.

It was handed to me in a tin jug, and once again I made a mistake which showed the people that I was not a Brahman of the true faith. For I simply set the jug to my lips and was preparing to drink. This, however, is never done by an Indian. He first pours the water into the hollow of his hand and drinks it from there (Plate 13). They did not indeed take the water from us, but at the same time the glances which they cast upon me were so devoid of friendliness that we took our departure with the greatest possible speed.

Truly, it is not easy to be a Hindu!

After a few days' halt at Lyallpur, the birthplace of my companion, the preparations for the trip to Afghanistan were complete. We went due north, two hundred and twenty miles, to the well-known Indian frontier city of Peshawar, along a good asphalt road. Just beyond Lahore we were stopped by the police on the open road. I was
preparing to step on the accelerator and make a dash for it, for my conscience as a driver is no longer quite clear in India, when I saw the pleasantly smiling face of the police official, and drew up: ‘Driving licence, please!’

He cast a cursory glance over it, and then we were dragged out and almost forcibly plumped into arm-chairs which were standing on the grass beside the road. The police chiefs had encamped themselves here. Cigarettes, tea, and fruit were handed round, and we discussed European politics.

As we continued on our way the plain was here and there broken by hillocks, the hillocks turned to hills, and at last we found ourselves in a real mountain landscape again. At Attock we crossed the Indus, which has already attained a considerable width here, by a bridge which can at any time be completely isolated by the British. An enormous fort shows that we have reached the North-West Frontier—a district which contains India’s main military forces, for only by this route can Russians, Afghans, or other Central Asian Powers carry out an attack on India.

Next to the now ruined Quetta, Peshawar is the most important English military base in India. Some three thousand English soldiers and large bodies of native troops are stationed here. Between Peshawar and the thirty-mile distant Afghan border lies what is known as the Khyber territory.

The inhabitants of this fierce mountainous country, predatory nomad tribes, force the English to keep permanently on a war footing. There is a fort in Peshawar which is capable of holding all the Europeans; the town
Through Indian Rains

is protected by barbed-wire entanglements, through which, in case of need, an electric current of several thousand volts may be run. Soldiers serving here receive higher pay and longer leave than those in other parts of India. To have served on the North-West Frontier is the best recommendation that an English soldier can have.

At Peshawar we were the guests of an English captain whose acquaintance I had made on the outward voyage. We spent the evening at the Club with him.

‘Pass’. . . ‘Two hearts’. . . ‘Pass’—the voices of the bridge-players came in an undertone through the mild summer night. Dazzling white shirt-fronts gleamed above the grass in front of the English Clubhouse. White-clad servants flitted among them ready to fulfil the sahibs’ wishes before they were uttered. It was an amazingly peaceful sight, this vision of the most up-to-date social life on the frontier between Afghanistan and India.

Captain S. was losing continuously. ‘Do you expect to be lucky at cards too?’ his friends teased him. Captain S. was going on leave in a fortnight’s time in order to be married in London. Laughing, he put a biggish note on the table, and was preparing to say good-night. Suddenly the roar of a motor-engine was heard in the distance. A car pulled up in front of the Club. An orderly appeared and handed letters bearing the inscription ‘Secret: Immediate’ to several of the men present.

Captain S. was one of those to receive a letter. He took it reluctantly, muttering curses which were not at all in keeping with his surroundings. The contents of the letter were short and laconic: ‘Within twenty minutes
of the receipt of this order you will present yourself at Y Barracks in field uniform.'

It was an everyday occurrence—men hardly troubled to shake hands. 'Good luck! Cheerio!' And then the remaining players cut again and once more came the voices through the wonderful night: 'Pass'... 'Two No Trumps'.

A few hours later those who had been summoned were already in the notorious Khyber territory. Some Afridi tribe had ambushed a motor transport. The robbers must be pursued and punished. Between the Indian military town of Peshawar and the Afghan border lies a thirty-mile-wide mountain zone, a no-man's-land inhabited by independent mountain tribes. These tribes recognize no authority except that of their own tribal chiefs; they live by robbery and cattle-breeding, and the dearest wish of the boys from their earliest years is to possess up-to-date rifles. They and their rifles seem to be part of one another—an Afridi without his rifle is unthinkable. The British Government every year pays a certain sum to the most turbulent of the tribes to keep them quiet. Even a sum amounting to fifteen shillings a head of a tribe seems a saving as compared with the cost of a punitive expedition.

I left Peshawar on the following day. I did not see my host again. Chance brought an Anglo-Indian newspaper into my hand a few days later at Kabul. I found the following paragraph: 'The Khyber territory has been comparatively peaceful recently, except for a small punitive expedition sent against an insurgent tribe in the north. We regret to announce the loss of three officers.'
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Among the names that followed was that of Captain S.

It was comparatively peaceful. The safety of the British Empire would certainly not be shattered by unrest in a border tribe. But a girl in England would receive a black-edged letter instead of her lover. . . .
Chapter Two

MANDANA BASHI!

To be allowed to cover the last thirty miles before the frontier it is necessary to obtain a special permit from the British Political Agent in Peshawar. My passport was in order and the Afghan visa which I had obtained in Berlin entitled me to enter Afghanistan. My Indian companion, however, attempted to get his visa here, unfortunately without success. We were told that it would take at least a week, since it was necessary to write to Kabul, and that even then it was not certain what the answer would be. In Asia this is practically tantamount to a plain refusal.

I found myself called upon to take a difficult decision. Should I renounce the idea of going to Afghanistan altogether, or should I proceed alone? I did not speak the language, the roads were said to be bad. Nor, in case of accidents, should I be capable of dealing unaided with a heavily laden machine. It was beyond the strength of any one man. Then I remembered all the warnings which had been showered upon me when I first mooted my plan of going to Afghanistan. A friend of my father’s,
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who not only knew the East very well, but was also a reserved and sensitive man, said it would be very much simpler to commit suicide in Vienna and have done with it. Even in India numbers of people had warned me of the ‘Land of Sudden Death’. The mild and somewhat effeminate Indians are very much afraid of the rough, sturdy Afghans. ‘They are the best of friends and the worst of enemies,’ they described them to me.

To anticipate—if they are properly treated—the Afghans notwithstanding their rifles and fortresses are no more dangerous than many of my friends in Europe and can be marvellous friends.

It may be that I am destroying one of the reader’s pet theories. Very likely he will be most unwilling to abandon his idea of an Afghan nomad with a knife between his teeth and a revolver in each hand.

As a matter of fact, it is a very difficult thing to return from a journey without destroying some illusions. You are inundated with questions, which is not at all surprising. The only curious thing is that, despite the number of questions asked, the same questions are repeated over and over again. The more simple and romantic people want to know if you saw a tiger in India, while the more realistic ask at once if you had an Indian sweetheart. Then there are the cheery people who espy their victim sitting in a completely full tram and call out over ten people’s heads: ‘Hello, what was it like in India?’ The unhappy man feels he is the centre of interest of the whole tram and just answers crossly: ‘Very hot!’

It is also a very unwise plan to tell your questioner anything about the beauties and charms of such a journey.
As it has not occurred to him to make the journey himself, there cannot be much to be said for it. Therefore it only either bores him or makes him angry if you try to convince him of the opposite. You can make yourself very popular with people like this if you shake your head sadly and reply that it was quite pleasant but really not worth all the trouble. No sooner does he hear that than your questioner becomes quite cheerful and friendly. Yes, that’s just what he’d thought at the time, but there, youth and high spirits must have their way. He then claps you genially on the back and strides away, holding his head high in the consciousness of having seen life straight and seen it whole.

But to return. There I was in Peshawar trying to decide whether to undertake the journey alone. All the warnings I had been given went through my head again. But when I looked towards the east I saw the bare mountains of the frontier. Even if dangers awaited me there the mountains would surely give me some wonderful adventures too!

I made a rapid decision—I would go. Kapur went on by train to Kashmir.

I speeded up so as to reach the Khyber Pass before it was too late. One must enter the danger zone before three o’clock in the afternoon, and leave it again before half-past four. In the twilight the numerous forts can do nothing to protect the traveller from the nomads’ bullets. At two I reached Fort Jamrud. My passport was examined and it emerged that I still needed the signature of some British official in Peshawar. I scorched back the ten miles to Peshawar, got the necessary signature with-
out much delay, and reached the Khyber district at four minutes to three.

The lorries that are the chief method of transport on the frontier were all far ahead of me. A wonderful asphalted road led steeply upward. A special road for caravans has been blasted through the rocks, and this too was partly asphalted. There is also a railway, which stops a few yards short of the frontier. The British have thus three routes by which in a few hours they can bring up thousands of soldiers to the frontier. The roads were absolutely deserted; far and wide neither man nor beast was to be seen. Every hundred yards there were forts standing on hillocks, connected with one another by telephone, surrounded by high barbed-wire fences. They made a sinister impression. They seemed to be temporarily deserted.

Slowly the motor-cycle carried me up higher and higher. Suddenly the engine began working irregularly and finally came to a standstill. This was no place for a breakdown. Every evening nomads came down from the hills on to the road, and then woe betide the European who might fall into their hands! But it was nothing serious, merely one of the tanks had run out of petrol, so I could set out again with little delay. I reached the frontier without further mishap.

The Indian frontier official looked at the motor-cycle in amazement and asked: 'By which lorry did you come?'

'I came on my motor-cycle,' I answered.

'But that's forbidden,' he rejoined sternly. And he showed me his instructions, in which it was clearly
16. Many heavily armed forts guard the road leading to the Khyber Pass.

17. As a consequence of the warlike nature of the inhabitants, houses are built like forts in the frontier districts of Afghanistan.
18. Afghan musicians at the Festival of Independence
The wild nature of the Afghans reveals itself in their temperamental dances.
20. ‘Tent-pegging’, a much-loved Afghan sport

21. Kabul students playing ‘hand-ball’
22. Learning to read in the German school in Kabul

23. Turbans, caps, hats—even the youngest Afghan regards it as unseemly to go bareheaded
26. On the top of the Hindu Kush—9,600 feet above sea level
27. The Buddha Rock at Bamian
stated that motor-cyclists were strictly forbidden to cross the Khyber Pass. It was a good thing that no one had called my attention to it in Peshawar. I was the first person for a very long time to do that particular journey on a motor-cycle—thanks to the carelessness of the officials in Peshawar!

The frontier formalities were soon settled, and the official steadily refused to make any endorsement on my licence. He insisted, however, that I should get my motor-cycle carried on a lorry over the intervening twenty yards to the frontier post. It cost me half an hour of my gentlest persuasiveness before the guardian of the Indian frontier gave his permission for me to push the motor-cycle those few yards.

Afghanistan . . . how often, in Europe, I have longed to enter that country. A country where even the children carry loaded rifles, and where the sacred law of the blood feud still holds sway!

Now that country lay before me—separated from me, it is true, by a piece of barbed wire stretched across the road and held in his hand by a worthy old man. He told me to go first to the passport official, who discharged his duties beneath some shady trees. After a friendly ‘Salam alaikum’ he stamped my passport and informed me that I could go on. I showed him my licence, but he took no interest in it whatever, nor in my motor-cycle or luggage. In two minutes, contrary to my fears, I had passed through the customs.

The old man lowered the barbed wire and I was in Afghanistan. The asphalt road gave place to a poor track, and there I was in the real, unspoilt, magical Asia. Often,
since my return from my first journey in Asia, I had dreamt of the lonely roads of Persia and longed to be back there again. Now I saw before me the same type of country, only wilder, grander, and more desolate. But the same smell of the sparse herbs that grow in the desert soil, the same bare mountains.

Persia was my grand passion, but she was not an entirely happy one. It is a difficult thing for Europeans to understand the harmony of this country. We are too hurried to be able to grasp the vastness of that landscape. True, they say that unhappy love is the most beautiful, but all the same I intended to try to grasp and understand Afghanistan. Perhaps I should find it easier to do so, as I was making the journey alone.

I had not decided where I would pass my first night in Afghanistan. To pitch my tent alone just where I was and then to spend the rest of the night waiting to see whether robbers would come, did not seem to me the ideal solution. Moreover, I had nothing to eat with me. I was very glad to reach the little village of Dakka, a few miles farther on. Here my passport was examined again, this time by military officials. After they had convinced themselves that I was neither a British nor a Communist agent, they invited me in friendly fashion to sleep there. There was nobody who could speak English or German, and my knowledge of the Afghan language was limited to about eight words, with ‘Salam alaikum’ counting as two. Nevertheless I got on splendidly with the head of the police post. I showed him some of my pictures of home as some slight recompense for his kindness.
In the meantime darkness had come on. Some soldiers dragged chairs and a table to the bank of the River Kabul. Melons, rice, and mutton were served, and, to my regret, also knives and forks, for I would have liked to eat with my fingers again. Instead I made violent sounds of appreciation to show my hosts that I was enjoying the meal.

After this opulent feast our sign-conversation became rather more intimate. My stock went down considerably when I was compelled to confess that I was not married. My interlocutor, on the other hand, gave me to understand that he had two wives, both cheili chub, very beautiful, one with long, the other with short, hair, and both for the time being in Kabul. Finally he told me that he had two children, both small babies. I even succeeded in finding out that it was not a case of a child for each wife, but twins. No mean achievement for a conversation conducted entirely by signs!

Followed a sleepless night. No one need think that journeys like this consist entirely of pleasant experiences. Take, for example, that night. At nine o'clock, well fed, happy, and at peace with the world, I lay down on my air-mattress and tried to go to sleep. It was still so stiflingly hot that I had no covering on at all except a bathing suit, and that only to satisfy the proprieties. I was pleased with myself and with life in general. Then I heard the ping of a mosquito at my ear. I managed to kill two or three, but still they came, until finally there was nothing for it but to cover myself up. I drew a sheet up over myself, leaving only my mouth uncovered, so as to be able to breathe.
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At the end of two minutes, sheet, mattress, and I were soaked in perspiration. There was simply no question of sleep. I could feel how my lips, attacked by innumerable gnat-bites, were becoming slowly but surely more and more negroid in type. Thus the night passed, and I spent it scratching myself, covering myself up, and uncovering myself again. How wonderful it was when the first glimmer of dawn lit up the sky and the mosquitoes, apparently satisfied and exhausted after a night of strenuous activity, made an end of their work. Then one really could sleep for half an hour. After that the sun appeared on the horizon and it became unbearably hot.

At nine o'clock next morning I pushed on towards Jelalabad. The road was very rough, and I had to use bottom gear most of the time. The country is deserted, and I saw hardly any houses, but everywhere the simple stone graves of the Mohammedans. Stakes with flags attached to them were stuck into the ground to show that some especially holy pilgrim had found his last resting-place here.

After some time the first houses appeared beside the road, or rather, the first fortresses. For the houses in this region are built like grim fortresses. The entrance is some yards above the ground, and can only be reached by a ladder, which can then be drawn up into the house. The fortresses have no windows, but enough loopholes to provide shelter for at least twenty rifles (Plate 17). I was just going to travel on past these houses when I saw three men kneeling on the roof with rifles in their hands, which they were aiming at me in a somewhat dis-
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turbing manner. If I went on they might shoot me in the back. The road was too bad to allow of rushing past them at top speed. So I simply dismounted. I took out a handkerchief which had been quite white in India, and waved to these amateur highwaymen. Upon this one of them lowered his rifle, but the others stayed as they were. Should I go on? It is an extremely unpleasant feeling to know that there are rifles pointing at one's back. It is much better to be able to see them. So I went up to the fortress and sat down in the shadow of the house. I heard a great clattering going on inside the house; then one of the three Afghans appeared and looked at me questioningly. 'Ab, Pani, water, water,' I said rather tentatively. They brought me a panikin of lukewarm water. How good it tasted! By this time they had all three collected round me. They had put their rifles on one side, and we were already beginning to be good friends. An unbelievably dirty old water-pipe passed from mouth to mouth, and they could not understand in the least how it was that a kafir (foreigner), and a heathen, who was travelling through their country on a two-wheeled machine, could not manage to smoke a water-pipe without choking violently. After that we baked bread for us all, and I went over the fort, which was even protected with iron plating. One of the Afghans allowed me to take a photograph of himself and his picturesque rifle. Then we bowed low to each other and said: 'Peace be with you!' Good luck to you, Afghans, with your guns and your fortresses! How much less dangerous you are, with your childlike hearts, than the politicians and armament merchants of the West, with all their fine speeches!
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When I got my visa in Peshawar for the Khyber Pass they had told me that a German from Dresden was travelling with his wife to Afghanistan to take up some post there. I now saw a car ahead of me with a European couple sitting in it, and decided that they must probably be these Germans. I waved to the man, and when we shook hands under the shade of a tree I greeted him with: ‘Grüss aus Dresden.’ He looked at me as if I had been a magician. It was a strange enough coincidence to meet another German here; but to meet a German who greeted one with the name of one’s home town...! We chatted for some minutes, and then his Indian chauffeur drove on and left a huge cloud of dust behind him. We had arranged to meet in the evening at Nimla, where the Government has built a rest-house for travellers. This rest-house is situated in a wonderful park, with shady walks bordered by tall cypresses, and affords splendid opportunities for repose after the heat and toil of the day.

The next morning I set off a few minutes after six. It was still not quite light, and almost cold. The highest mountain-tops were beginning to glow, and the fiery ball of the sun rose gradually above the horizon. The so-called road was appalling. The route was worse than that through trackless Baluchistan which I had travelled two years before. There one simply travelled through a wilderness without any pretence at a track, whereas here a broad road stretched before one, but it was worse than any wilderness, for it was so covered with stones and rubble that it was like the bed of a stream. If I accelerated to get up a steep hill, the back wheel would leap from
one stone to another. During this leap, which was sometimes quite a considerable one, the engine revolved madly, and I had to put the brakes on hard. To put it briefly—the distance from Nimla to Kabul is about eighty miles; I left Nimla at six in the morning and arrived at Kabul at four in the afternoon, having rested in all for perhaps one hour. That makes an average speed of less than ten miles an hour. And it was, into the bargain, the wildest, most breakneck journey I have ever made in my life. If I had ridden more carefully it would have taken me two days.

‘Mandana bashi—don’t overdo it!’ the peasants cried out to me as I rode past. Ah, thought I, no need to worry about me, if only the motor-cycle holds out! The dream of asphalted roads was a thing long past, and now the motor-cycle had to struggle forward yard by yard and to carry me over the 9,750-foot pass. But we were comrades by now, we had come to be dependent on each other. If one of us were to let the other down now, he would be lost himself. So I steered my Puch carefully round the narrow bends, promising him that I would clean him and oil him in token of my gratitude when we should reach Kabul.

Dirty, exhausted, and worn out I at last arrived in the capital of Afghanistan. A green oasis lies in a broad plain, out of which the buildings of Kabul rise up.

It is always a curious sensation to go into a strange town for the first time, especially an Eastern town where the accommodation for travellers is limited. I knew that there were some Germans in Kabul, and also an hotel. So I went off to look for both. Motor-cycles, especially
as dirty as mine, are not everyday sights in Kabul. I
spent half an hour going up and down narrow bazaar
alleys, vainly trying to put my eight words of Afghan
into an understandable form. I finally attempted to
penetrate with my motor-cycle into the King’s castle.
This was only explained to me later; at the time I
thought those high walls must conceal the hotel.

In the end I found the hotel. The prices of rooms were
fairly high. I pretended to be very blasé, only took a
glance at the rooms, drank a glass of some blood-red
syrup which smelt of hair-oil, and asked to be taken to
the German school. The school was just coming out and
I met one of the German teachers outside the building.
He was much too young and kind for a teacher. At the
end of a few minutes I had been offered a room in the
German school-house.

I find that there is something very repulsive about
guide-books, with their instructive information about
the size, population, and exports of a country. That such
a book should be written by a young man of twenty-
three seems to make it even more repulsive. But I cannot
help myself. Afghanistan is so little known to Europeans
that I must make some attempt to describe it.

Afghanistan lies between two huge countries, India
and Russia. It is consequently easy to give oneself a false
idea of its size. Its area is about 260,000 square miles, or
about one and a half times the size of Germany. Three-
quaters of the country is made up of desert and moun-
tains, and only a quarter of it is suitable for habitation
and cultivation.

The natural scenery of Afghanistan contains much that
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is beautiful, but these beauties suffer by comparison with the more magnificent scenery of the neighbouring countries. Who thinks of the Hindu Kush when looking at a 25,000-foot peak in the Himalayas? Who marvels at the vastness of the Afghan deserts when he has seen the Kavir, the great salt desert of Persia?

Few tourists visit Afghanistan. Although there is an hotel in Kabul, and rest-houses are to be found in some of the larger villages, one is nevertheless almost entirely dependent on the hospitality of the inhabitants and on one's own tent.

The political history of the country has naturally been strongly influenced by its position between two great Powers, Russia and Great Britain in India, and is full of amazing and blood-curdling events. During the Great War, when King Habibullah was on the throne, the Afghan people would have been quite willing to enter the 'holy war' on the side of Turkey. However, although both German and Austrian military missions were sent to Kabul, England succeeded in persuading the King to remain neutral. The people were not in sympathy with this attitude, and it was this atmosphere of dissatisfaction which resulted in the plot whereby the King was assassinated in 1919.

After a short struggle for the throne Habibullah's son Amanullah succeeded in making himself King. Amanullah is probably the most interesting and the most contradictory figure in the whole history of Afghanistan. His reign was characterized by the movement for freeing the country from foreign influence. A few months after he mounted the throne his army under Nadir Shah
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defeated the British, who did not wish to recognize Afghanistan's freedom to conduct her own foreign policy. This young ruler also showed great ability in preserving the independence of his country from its two powerful neighbours. After the conclusion of peace he applied himself with passionate energy to the reforms which he wished to carry through in his own country. A new impetus was given to irrigation and to agriculture, geologists came from Europe to search for valuable minerals, and laws, administration, and education were all reformed. After a long journey in Europe the King returned to Kabul filled with modern ideas. In Afghanistan at that time there was a very thin upper stratum of educated people. The majority of the people were uneducated and wholly under the influence of the fanatical priesthood, the mullahs. The King, who was in all other respects a great politician and the creator of many really remarkable innovations, did not seem to realize that his reforms were incomprehensible to the people and were viewed with hatred by them, and that they were making him more enemies than a king can afford. Had any one ever heard of an Afghan Mohammedan woman showing herself unveiled before unbelievers? Yet the Queen had travelled for months unveiled through Europe with her husband. The King was no longer a true believer—he had even tried to attack the privileges of the Mohammedan priests. But his power was not equal to the struggle with the priestly caste.

Perhaps he was thinking of the example of Mustafa Kemal, and wanted to carry out reforms with the same speed as in Turkey. It is interesting in this connection
to compare the course of events in Persia, Turkey, and Afghanistan.

All three are Asiatic, Mohammedan countries, each with a great ruler at its head—Shah Pahlevi, Kemal Pasha, and Amanullah. All three rulers want the same things for their States—independence and freedom. All three are consciously and nationally Asiatics, but they know the value of European culture and civilization. They want their countries to have the advantages of this culture as soon as possible, even, if need be, against the will of the people, who do not know Europe and cannot understand the benefits of its civilization.

In Turkey, the farthest west of the three countries, Kemal succeeded in carrying out his reforms in rapid succession. The power of the mullahs was broken, the veil was forbidden, and European clothing was made compulsory. There was certainly a good deal of opposition, but it was overcome. One mind conceived and built up a new country on its own scale, and out of a nation of degenerate intriguers created a new, young generation who are fighting resolutely for their future.

In Persia, the middle one of these three countries, the process is going on more gradually. The power of the priests is too great to allow of their being simply pushed on one side. By slow degrees the people are becoming more enlightened, roads are being constructed, and European doctors and engineers are being introduced into the country. Step by step reforms are being carried out, so gradually that the people hardly notice them sufficiently to find them irksome. On the other hand, when they do notice them, the Shah has a loyal and well-
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equipped army to oppose to their recalcitrance. The final result is the same as in Turkey: a strong, new Iran—no longer Persia, for that sounds too European—has arisen.

In Afghanistan, however, the farthest east of these three countries, the King does not understand that he must go to work more slowly than his western neighbours. He cannot adapt himself to the pace of his country, yet is not strong enough to insist by force on his demands being carried through.

Discontent grew steadily, until finally in 1928 a revolution broke out. Baccha-i-Saqqa, 'the Water-Carrier's Son', seized the throne. The new ruler was completely uneducated, but a brave soldier, and he succeeded in maintaining a reign of terror over Afghanistan for some months. Every attempt to withstand him was suppressed with the most inhuman cruelty.

The Afghan Ambassador in France, Mohammed Nadir, who had beaten the English in the Anglo-Afghan war at the beginning of Amanullah's reign, returned home quickly. He organized the tribes of southern Afghanistan to resist 'the Water-Carrier's Son', and after a long-drawn-out struggle he finally took Kabul and Baccha-i-Saqqa was executed.

Nadir Shah became King. Reforms were carried out, but carefully and by slow degrees, as befitted the mentality of the people. On 8 November 1933 the King met his end in the middle of his work of construction. He was shot by an enemy during a public ceremony.

The present ruler of Afghanistan, Zahir Shah, is the son of the murdered King. He was born in 1914. He pursues the same policy as his father, and both he and
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his advisers, the ministers and brothers of the late King, have shown great ability in preserving the independence of Afghanistan. The economic and political representatives of the European and Asiatic Powers in Kabul do not lead easy lives. If one of them wishes to obtain any special advantage for his own country he has to reckon not only with the Afghans themselves, but also with the representatives of all the other countries, who in their turn vie jealously with each other in seeing that no one of the Great Powers shall gain too much influence in Afghanistan.

I had the opportunity of seeing the King during the Independence Celebrations, which take place each year in August in memory of the victory over the British in 1919. For days beforehand Kabul was in a state of anticipatory excitement. The festival, or Jeschm, as the Afghans call it, lasts a week. The schools and the one and only bank are closed during this time.

Near the War Office a platform had been erected, from which the King made the opening speech of the festival. Only Government officials and invited guests were allowed near the platform. The people could only listen to the speech through loudspeakers, which were situated at various points in the town. It was an impressive spectacle: the steel-blue sky, the bare mountains all round, and on the platform the King, surrounded by an imposing circle of guests in frock-coats. The King’s speech was short. Much, he said, had been accomplished in recent years for the well-being of the country, but much still remained to be done, and all their strength would be needed if the goal were to be reached.
The troops paraded in a big, open space in the town, the 'Jeschn Ground'. Sirdar Shah Mahmud Khan Ghazi, Minister for War and brother of the murdered King, led the troops past the new King, his nephew.

Thirty thousand men marched past. They came from the opposite ends of Afghanistan, but they were all exactly alike, and all equally modern in their equipment and drill. German steel helmets seemed somehow strange above those wild Asiatic faces, and the tanks and machine-guns appeared less out of place, though they indeed are sufficiently familiar to Europeans.

‘In Afghanistan every man is a soldier, when it is a question of fighting,’ answered the Minister for War in reply to my question about the strength of the country’s army. And it is true that notwithstanding the great differences in the tribes that inhabit the country they are all true Afghans if danger threatens. There is probably no other nation in Asia that cherishes its freedom so deeply as the Afghans, as their history has often proved.

The festival lasted seven days. During that time it was possible in Kabul itself to obtain a better idea of the widely differing races that inhabit Afghanistan than one would have gained by travelling up and down the country. People came to Kabul from the farthest corners of the land. The population of Afghanistan is supposed to be about eight millions.

Each day different entertainments took place on the festival ground. Dancers had come from the south (Plate 18), wild figures with long black hair, dressed in gorgeous colours. When they threw their heads back in the rapid movements of their dances their hair flew

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out in the wind (Plate 19). The Afghan riders showed their marvellous skill. A small wooden peg was stuck in the ground. The riders rushed towards the peg at the gallop, their tilted spears in their hands. A quick, almost imperceptible movement downwards with the spear, and the peg had been plucked from the ground and was dangling on the spear-point. It was only very seldom that a rider missed his mark (Plate 20).

Then the pupils from the higher-grade schools gave a sports display. Looking very fine in their long white trousers, they embarked with great gusto on a ‘hand-ball’ match, and showed considerable skill at it (Plate 21).

I soon got to know nearly all the Germans in Kabul, and one day I met a young man from Munich, who was a teacher there. Hitherto we had only seen each other at a distance, and this was the first time we had spoken to each other. We talked about the festival and about the weather, both of us speaking Hochdeutsch. Then I asked him how he liked Afghanistan. He cast a despairing glance at the bare, rocky mountains that rise up all round Kabul, and answered: ‘Ja, sakkra, die grean Berg' gengan ma halt o’.

I too forgot for a moment the dignity suitable to Our Special Correspondent in Asia, and said simply: ‘Ja mei, s'is a Kreuz.’

We were standing in the dusty road with Afghans passing up and down before us, but suddenly we felt almost at home.

I owe a great debt of gratitude to those teachers in the German school-house at Kabul. I spent a most pleasant time there, in excellent quarters. They left me
Mandana Bashi!

completely to myself, and I could do exactly as I pleased. I even disturbed them at their teaching while I took photographs of them at their work. The school itself is an interesting place. The pupils not only pay nothing for the tuition they receive, but they even get their exercise books and school books free and are given one meal a day. If they come from very poor families they are even paid for their school attendance, as the family has to do without the scholar's work. The school belongs to the Afghan State and all teachers are State employees (Plates 22, 23).

I published an account of the work of the German teachers in Central Asia which was a source of considerable pride to them, but which also occasioned them a certain amount of inconvenience, for one result of the account was that they kept on getting letters from Europe which they had to answer. I hope that this book will not have similar results, and so I am not going to say too much about them. But I cannot refrain from mentioning that two of the things I remember best about Kabul are Frau Schneider's gherkin salad and Frau Glassen's sago pudding. Let that be a valuable hint to any travellers who may come after me!

Every foreigner who visits Kabul, however superficial and lacking in conscience he may be, will sooner or later become afflicted by certain pangs of conscience. He meets friends, he is introduced to strangers, and in every conversation inevitably the question crops up whether he has visited Bamian yet. He discovers at length that Bamian is a place, and also a mountain, famous by reason of an exceptionally large statue of Buddha.
One grows more and more self-conscious about replying to this question in the negative, until soon one resembles a delinquent who, when the judge asks if his record hitherto has been blameless, has to reply: ‘No, I’ve done ten years.’

These questions begin to be asked in a slightly shocked tone of voice by the time one has been in Kabul a week, and their moral impression is finally such that even a person who does not set great store by monuments and antiquities somehow finds himself setting out on the way to Bamian. Thus it came about that I too one day found myself on the road leading to that wonderful place.
Chapter Three

IN THE HINDU KUSH AND THE HIMALAYAS

From laziness and a dislike of elaborate preparations I generally travel by tracks that do not lead through absolutely uninhabited regions. I never take provisions with me, but tell myself by way of excuse that it is much more interesting to eat the food of the country. This time, however, before starting on my journey I bought quantities of fruit, for I was told that it was impossible to get any in the country. Slowly I bumped over Kabul's vile streets towards the open countryside. Almost at once I had to cross a pass and then go northwards for thirty-five miles to the little caravan halt of Charikar. The road was dusty and bad, better certainly than what I had hitherto experienced in Afghanistan, but consequently much more dangerous. True it allowed of my sometimes rushing along at eighteen miles an hour without being in constant danger of being thrown off. But deep irrigation channels had been cut into the road at intervals, which might mean the end of a motor-cycle at any moment. One had to be on the look-out the whole time, for the intensive rays of the sun blazing perpendicularly down
In the Hindu Kush and the Himalayas had the effect of making one half blind despite two pairs of sun-glasses.

Bridges, too, would suddenly turn out to have unsuspected holes in them, and I would suddenly see yawning beside my wheel a hole big enough for a cow to fall into.

At Charikar the road turned westwards to the Ghorband valley. The scenery became incredibly beautiful. The river ran quite close to the rocky cliffs. A mountain stream rushed and roared through a narrow gorge and made me feel as if I was at home. I stopped again and again to drink in all this beauty.

The valley was only inhabited near the stream. Two hundred yards from it the vegetation came to an end, bare cliffs rose up into the sky, and far away sharp peaks were covered in white snow.

Twilight came on and it grew cooler and I began to think about choosing my quarters for the night. I pitched my tent in a luscious meadow, and was just eating my evening meal of apples and Ovomaltine, when some peasants appeared making excited gestures. After I had calmed them down somewhat by giving them some apples, conversation began. ‘Indscha chub nist—no good here,’ was the burden of their discourse, and they pointed the while at my tent. ‘Indscha cheili chub äst—very good here,’ I replied kindly but firmly, also pointing at the tent. The two opinions were evidently diametrically opposed and agreement seemed impossible, for I was just as pig-headed as my Afghans. Finally the Afghans appeared to realize that it was necessary to go carefully with a poor fool who could say nothing but ‘cheili chub’ over and over again. They now explained to me by signs
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and with the expenditure of considerable dramatic talent what would happen to me. I should sleep there—according to their portrayal of the scene, I should even snore fearfully—and men would come down from the mountains with guns and huge knives, and they would see the tent, and, to judge by their violent pantomime, I should be stoned, knifed, and shot at the very least. So now we knew where we were!

I did begin to feel a few qualms in the course of this narrative, however, and it occurred to me that some marauding tribe might really be about. So I picked up my tent and motor-cycle and migrated to the nearest peasant's hut. My supper was augmented by bread, roasted maize, and milk, and I was soon asleep in the loft on a wonderful bed of hay. Bitter cold woke me in the morning, for I was already over 7,000 feet up. I said good-bye to the Afghans who had been so pathetically concerned for my safety, took one of them along with me for a few miles in token of my gratitude, and then found myself alone again. The road climbed steadily upwards until the valley came to an end and the ascent to the 10,400-foot Shibar Pass began. The road divided here, and on my asking the way to Bamian I was directed to the right. The way at once rose very steeply, and its surface resembled a bed of rubble. With the best will in the world it was more than the motor-cycle could manage. That ascent would have been bad enough on a good road, but what with the sand and the stony surface it was simply impossible. I then noticed that the road seemed never to have been used. There were no car-tracks. So I went back to the crossroads and took the
other fork. This road climbed the mountainside in steep breath-taking curves, and it too was appalling. Finally I reached the level of the pass and had crossed the Hindu Kush—perhaps the first motor-cyclist to do so. One needs to be very careful with these 'first-in-the-field' designations. As far as I know, no motor-cycle had ever reached Bamian before, but my information may be inexact. I can only safely say that I never succeeded in hearing of any previous motor-cycle journey in Afghanistan.

The fact that I had crossed the Hindu Kush on a motor-cycle, and also various other things, such as, for example, the fact that I had nearly succeeded in climbing a 25,000-foot mountain, were reckoned almost as positive achievements later on, when I came home. It was very odd in any case, that homecoming.

When I arrived in Vienna with my dirty motor-cycle portentous gentlemen surrounded me, thrust two laurel-wreaths over my grubby windjacket, and invited me to celebrate my return by partaking of some refreshment in the dining-room of the Touring Club. As I drank their wine and ate their very good sandwiches I discovered to my amazement from various speakers that I was a pioneer—the newspapers, who were kindly disposed towards me, made it 'pioneer and explorer' the next day—and had shown great courage and brought off a considerable feat.

I was rather surprised at the time, and to-day I am even more so. People, especially people who never travel themselves, have a singular sense of values about travel—and an extraordinarily favourable one. Thus it is an
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incontrovertible fact that travel broadens, or heightens, one's general education. The reader who succeeds in perusing this book carefully page by page will soon be convinced that, at any rate in my case, this idea is completely groundless. That is, of course, my own fault. There are people who would amass more knowledge and learning on a journey from Vienna to Graz than I did during a whole year in Asia. Visiting museums is not a bad test of one's zeal for knowledge. I visited the museums in Lahore and in Baghdad, and was enthusiastic about both of them. To be strictly accurate I should also mention that in Lahore a very pretty and charming young Hindu woman was going up the steps to the entrance of the museum in front of me and gracefully turned round to look at me for a second. I had originally intended to go and have a whisky with an English friend, but the museum won. And in Baghdad the museum, thanks to the most perfect cooling arrangements, is the only place during the summer where one can bear to spend some time without finding it a positive torture to have to be in that city of a thousand and one nights at all at that particular time of year.

Old gentlemen, even the oldest and most ill tempered of them, are never annoyed when they hear that a young man is embarking on a journey. For one thing, it will both finish his education and improve his manners. My friends and acquaintances will not agree with the old gentlemen on this point. For example, it is customary among the Afghans after a satisfying meal to belch in a correspondingly satisfying manner. Among certain peoples of the Himalayas young girls look upon it as
In the Hindu Kush and the Himalayas

perfectly understood and decorous if on the first day of making their acquaintance one asks if one may spend the night with them. At the age of twenty-three one has often only partially absorbed into oneself the sometimes very complicated and unnatural social rules pertaining in Europe, and it may come about that after a year in Asia one gets rather mixed up and ends by shocking people. In fact, even one's manners are not always noticeably improved as a result of one's travels.

It may perhaps be disappointing for the reader to know that the writer of this book is by no means a charming young man. But he will make the best of it; for he believes that any way the young man is a hero who has been in far-off, savage countries like Afghanistan—the very name makes one's flesh creep slightly—and who has encountered unbelievable perils manfully and with an all-conquering dignity. Here too I must unfortunately destroy a very general illusion. More courage is needed to attend some social function in Europe about which one already knows that it will consist of people who have nothing to say and to whom one wants to say nothing, than is needed to travel in Afghanistan or Tibet. It is perfectly true that one may find oneself sitting in a tea-house in Afghanistan with people whom one would prefer not to have about one. But there one can stand up when one has drunk one's tea and go out, not omitting to indicate by suitable belchings or spittings that one disapproves of one's surroundings. In European company such behaviour would probably excite surprise.

There is, of course, another brand of heroic traveller,
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and that is the coward. One must admire him. I read a book about Afghanistan by one such. Various places where I spent a night had also served him years before as sleeping quarters. His description of those nights makes thrilling reading. Uncanny stillness broods all round him, fear assails him from all sides, creeping footsteps make him tremble.

I remember those nights too. How unbelievably peaceful the silence was about me! Jackals sometimes came near to the camp, but at the slightest movement they ran away again. I often thought of that young man and his fears. What an achievement was his! He not only managed to be afraid, he even went on his way the next morning! He was almost a hero in spite, no rather because, of his fears.

But this is a book of adventure in distant lands, and I feel it my duty to tell about something exciting and, if possible, blood-curdling. I had the good fortune to come a cropper in the course of which I somehow managed to get my foot tangled up with the hot exhaust pipe so successfully that the flesh was burnt almost to the bone. I originally intended to describe this mishap very accurately and in great detail, but in the meantime I happened to read a description of a championship fight. As the reader perhaps patronizes boxing matches himself, I will not attempt to impress him with a mere burn.

In fact, at closer observation very little seems to remain from the dangers and dramas of a journey. What does remain is overpowering, however: the knowledge and perception of the vastness of the world, the consciousness of space.
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It was cold up on the pass, and in spite of the heat of the sun's rays the icy wind made me shiver.

On the other side of the pass a moderately good road led down into the valley again. There I met two small donkeys coming towards me with their driver. The lad waved excitedly when he saw me. I stopped and he hurried to one of his animals. From a saddlebag he took a little wrinkled apple which he offered me with a beaming smile. I countered with some nuts. Without making any vain attempts at conversation, we sat peaceably in the shadow of the donkeys. We smiled at each other in friendly fashion, and really we understood each other, we were brothers, both of us travelling, the one slowly, the other quickly, both of us alone and yet not lonely.

We took no long farewells of each other. Our ways crossed here for a moment, and we made the most of that moment. And I shall meet his like again wherever I go in Asia—the simple soul whom no religion and no law forbids to help a stranger, but who is kindly and glad to be of use. For the sake of that humble donkey-driver alone I would take the lonely mountains and deserts of Afghanistan to my heart for ever.

The way went on downhill past Kirghiz and Turkoman tents. For the first time for miles I saw another car, a lorry which had broken down. Its three drivers were engaged in mending the damage, which seemed to be irreparable. I took one of them on with me to the next place where there were signs of habitation and where he could buy food. The way went down through a steep gorge; the road was good, and I let my motor-cycle go a little. Suddenly my companion gripped my arm hard

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and made violent signs towards the brake. I thought perhaps he had doubts about my driving skill or had eaten too much unripe fruit. Anyway, I put the brake on hard, and not a second too soon, for beyond a blind bend enormous rocky boulders rose up suddenly in the middle of the road, so that one could only drive round them. If I had come round the corner at a normal speed it would probably have meant the end of the motor-cycle. Sometimes, however, one is saved by a guardian angel, even if he looks as wild as my pillion-rider did (Plate 24). I soon left him behind, and went on alone through absolutely deserted and lonely country. On my right there rose up a mountain of red conglomerate rock, and from this mountain there jutted out unbelievably picturesque formations of the same rock, which reminded one of the walls of a castle. I consulted my map. It actually was Zahor, the ancient castle built here hundreds of years ago by Genghiz Khan. From here he ruled Afghanistan, which was a rich land in those days. Even to-day, in the bright sunlight, those old walls had a threatening and sinister appearance in the midst of that dead countryside.

I reached the pleasant valley of Bamian, with its green fields and poplar trees and, dominating the whole, the famous hill of Buddha. This hill rises out of the plain with perpendicular walls, 650 feet high, and its rocky faces are covered with reliefs of Buddha, some of them reaching a height of more than 160 feet (Plate 27). The sides of this hill were adorned with reliefs in the third century, which shows how widely the influence of Buddhism, emanating from India, had extended at that time. When the Mohammedans later drove out Bud-
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dhism they destroyed the faces of the statues and razed the statues themselves. According to their religion it is forbidden to portray a human being in the likeness of God.

I soon returned by the same road to Kabul. Beside the road tumbled the clear waters of the River Ghorband; the sun blazed down, and I bathed in the river. I still had a few apples with me, and in the shallow water I caught some crab-like objects which I cooked over a fire. Life was good.

In the meantime, on the road which went by a few yards above my bathing-place a caravan had halted, and donkeys, camels, and drivers all looked down in amazement at this strange being who lay naked and sunburnt on the sand eating crabs and apples. 'Mandana bashi,' I called out to them. They needn't tire themselves out with staring at me in that stupid way. But they only understood my greeting, and waved to me in friendly fashion before disappearing slowly on their way.

At Charikar there was fresh fruit to be bought, magnificent grapes, peaches, and apricots, as many as you could eat for fivepence. Also tea and bread, a marvellous meal (Plate 25). Then the road, more populated now, took me back to Kabul again, where the first thing I did was to find a barber to make me look human. I had quite forgotten to shave throughout the entire journey.

I stayed and rested a day in Kabul, and then I had to take leave of the many friends who had made my stay there such a pleasant one. His Royal Highness the Minister for War, who invited me to tea, said smiling, 'Let us hope your accounts of our country will be useful. We
are not so dangerous as people seem to think in Europe!' I do not know how I can give my impressions of Afghanistan better than by saying that I have a great longing to see that country again. Not only the country, but the people too, for they are perhaps the most lovable that I have met in all my journeyings.

On the evening before my departure my Indian and Afghan friends gave a dinner in my honour which lasted till next morning. It was wonderfully cooked, plenty of rice, and even more mutton fat. I could hardly move when it came to tottering homewards. The next morning I paid a hasty visit to the new house of the German from Dresden whom I had met on the way to Kabul. He had prepared a lunch for me which would have kept a family of three for a whole day, for he said, he ‘knew the fatigues of a journey like that’. And when I had got everything packed up and ready a kindly neighbour’s wife appeared in my room bringing a plate of magnificent fruit, for which she hoped I could ‘still find a corner’. I certainly did find a corner for it, though not on the motor-cycle but in myself.

So at last I set out once more on those fearful roads, suffering after my orgy of gluttony. I had the most appalling pains in my stomach, and also into the bargain an attack of malaria or sand-fly fever. I was shaken alternately by cold and feverish shivering fits, and I longed for nothing so much as to throw myself down in a ditch by the road and sleep and sleep. Once this wish was partially fulfilled. The only regrettable part was that the ditch just there was nearly fifteen feet deep and I hurt my hand in falling. However, instead of lying there and
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sleeping, I had laboriously to climb the fifteen feet up again and pick up my motor-cycle, for slowly but surely the precious petrol was running out. ‘Picking up’ my motor-cycle is a short and colourless expression for what was actually a pretty stiff job, but with some puffing and panting I managed to get the machine upright again.

The speedometer showed 7,743 kilometres. I decided that I would not stop again till it reached 7,760, and set off bravely. Time passed, and it seemed hours since I had taken this decision when I glanced at the speedometer, thinking perhaps it might have reached 7,760 already. But I could not believe my eyes: it showed 7,748, and I had done only five kilometres! Evening was coming on. I just threw myself down anywhere on the hard clayey ground and, covering myself with tent and blankets, tried to sleep. But this time too, as on my journey to Bamian, figures suddenly rose up out of the darkness and insistently tried to persuade me to spend the night in their village. This time it was all one to me whether robbers came or not, all I wanted was rest and sleep. I shouted an angry if fluent ‘Buru gymschu’ (‘Go to hell!’) at the villagers, and after a while they really took offence and went away. Just as I was falling asleep I suddenly saw another bearded face bending over me. Before I, feverish and nervy European that I was, had time to be rude again, the old man whispered, ‘Schir, Sahib, schir — milk,’ and held a bowl of milk to my parched lips. That was perhaps the best minute of the day! Half asleep once more, I saw the old man spread his rug beside me and lie down to sleep holding his rifle like a child in his arms. My feverish and confused dreams were suddenly
broken by a shot, but my protector's soothing voice soon made me oblivious of everything again. The next morning I saw a dead jackal lying a few paces from my resting-place, and the old Afghan was busily occupied in skinning the booty. He took very little notice of my thanks, but just picked up skin, rug, and gun and disappeared behind the next hillock.

There followed several more hours of painful travelling over appalling roads. Sometimes the villagers gave me water in big clay bowls. You bend your head right down over the water and see your thirsty self mirrored in it, then you drink and drink until the last drop has gone.

By the afternoon of the second day I was really in a pitiable state. I had to keep on halting to rest, but far and wide there was often no shade to be seen, and no protection whatever against the heat of the sun. At one of the fort-like cottages they gave me a rug, a water-pipe, and some bread to make my rest as pleasant as possible.

Some white houses showed above the horizon—Dakka, the goal of that day's journey, only a few minutes from the frontier. The commandant embraced me warmly in greeting. He said proudly, 'I speak a little English!' It really was only a little, which he had learnt from a book in the three weeks since I had met him. Tea and quantities of quinine! I began to feel somewhat better. I took a protracted bath in the Kabul, and, frozen to the marrow, crept into my sleeping-sack.

I was not yet asleep when a voice roused me, 'Malato, Signore?' 'Poco,' I answered, rather cross at being dis-
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turbed. But my questioner felt my pulse, gave me some medicine, and finally introduced himself as an attaché from the Italian Legation. When I told him that I was very feverish he produced a bottle whose black contents he modestly described as coffee. There certainly was some coffee in it, but only about five per cent. The rest was a mixture of rum, gin, and whisky. A second similar bottle followed, and then a third. His store seemed inexhaustible. My condition began to show marked improvement, and for the first time in two days I felt cheerful again. It was late when I parted from Signor Spaghetti, as I called him for the sake of simplicity.

The next morning he let me take a photograph of himself on my motor-bike. Who knows what charming young Italian girl he may have made shudder later on with his accounts of his perilous journeys on a motor-bike in Afghanistan.

The frontier formalities were again settled with surprising ease and a wonderful asphalted road stretched before me. But how ungrateful human beings are, or at any rate I am! At the end of the first few miles I was quite used to it again and was already beginning to get annoyed whenever the asphalt showed the slightest unevenness. This after over a thousand kilometres in Afghanistan! A few miles from Peshawar I got a puncture, which I had to repair in the blazing sun. Still on glorious asphalt roads, I reached Rawalpindi that evening. A shave, a hair-cut, and I felt almost human again. In the main street I saw a restaurant called ‘Kuhns Restaurant’, which sounded somehow German. It turned out that the proprietor was a Swiss, and we spent a
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pleasant evening chatting together as I ate European food once more for the first time for weeks. The next morning I went on by way of Murree and Baramula to Srinagar, the Venice of India. The motor-cycle was running very badly, although I had given it a thorough overhauling a thousand kilometres earlier. I did the rest of that day’s journey with very mixed feelings. It was not till the next morning, when I overhauled it once more, that I discovered the reason. Although I had used a guaranteed brand of oil, the inside of the cylinder was covered with a coating several millimetres thick. The exhaust was almost entirely choked up. It is sometimes a real problem to get good oil in Asia.

At Srinagar I met Kapur once more and we took up our quarters in a house-boat. The boat was anchored in a wonderful lake a little way out from the town itself. There were a bedroom, a dining-room, and a lounge, as well as servants to look after the Sahib’s bodily well-being. The food was European and excellent—and all this for three shillings a day. It really is possible sometimes to live cheaply in India. I was particularly fortunate with my neighbours on the house-boat. In the boat on one side of us there was an old general who invited me at least ten times a day to have a drink with him, an invitation which I always promptly accepted. On the other side lived a young couple whom I never saw, but for whom I felt an almost greater affection than for the general, for always when I felt a longing for music the sound of some charming gramophone record was to be heard from the honeymoon boat.

When a stranger comes to Srinagar his arrival is some-
29. Boats serve as the means of transport on the canals of Srinagar

30. Indian women on holiday. A picnic in the mountain meadows of Kashmir
31. Embroidery, a dog, and flirtation are the summer amusements of wealthy Indian women.
32. A mountain lake in Kashmir
33. While their mothers still wear native costumes the children are dressed in European clothes.
34. Women of Kashmir bringing their household chattels down from the highland pastures into the valleys

35. The ‘hookah’ (water-cooled pipe) is smoked by women as well as men in Kashmir
36. An encampment of Kashmir shepherds
37. Native tents in the mountain valleys of Kashmir. The nomads spend the summers here and only return to the plains in the late autumn.

38. A sensation in Kashmir—our canoe.
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thing like this: he drives carefree and at peace with the world through the usual depressing suburbs, for he has seen many an Indian town before and knows that his best plan is first to find the main street and there to look round for an hotel. But while he is driving complacently along the badly paved streets he suddenly notices that people are running towards his car. He vainly tries to find a reason for this. He can see no fire-engine in sight, and he is not conscious of having run over any one. The few running figures have in the meantime become a swarm of rushing, screaming human beings who are unsuccessfully trying to reach his car. Finally the traveller, alarmed and confused, brings his car to a standstill. The next minute he is submerged beneath a sea of dirty white turbans and gesticulating hands. While he is seeking in vain for a solution to the riddle, warding off the shrillest importunates at the same time, he distinguishes one word which recurs over and over again amid the babble of the throng, 'House-boat, Sahib, house-boat, Sahib.' And then he remembers having read somewhere that in Srinagar one stays not in hotels but in boats which are anchored in the innumerable canals and lakes. Four or five nicely furnished rooms, a veranda, servants, cook, a kitchen-boat, all these are to be rented from one of these screaming, wildly gesticulating figures.

A few hours later the long-suffering traveller is sitting in the house-boat which has now become his house-boat. The boat lies at anchor outside the town, in Lake Dall or in the Nasinbagh. The dirty, dusty motorist has had a bath and is now sitting on the roof of his boat enjoying the glorious evening. On the other side of the lake the
fort of Srinagar rises up against the clear sky, framed in the background by the white snow-peaks of the Pir Panjal. The surface of the lake is quite smooth. An occasional native boat paddles by. At the stern of the boat sits the boatman in his gaily coloured costume; sometimes there is a woman in the boat too. The boatman dips his paddle with placid regularity into the water, now left, now right. In a corner of the lake, which is surrounded by rotten, decaying trees, the surface of the water is covered with a carpet of green leaves from which wonderful red lotus flowers raise their heads. Slowly the twilight merges into the darkness of night, and in the distance the sound of music is borne across the lake, perhaps from one of the house-boats. One could sit and dream for hours like this, so unbelievably still and peaceful is the lake.

Beside the Sahib’s house-boat there floats a smaller boat which houses the servants and the kitchen. Surrounded by all this beauty and romance, it is a trifle shame-making that, whenever the wind brings the smell of the kitchen-boat over, one tries to guess what one is going to have for dinner.

The next morning the lake seems even more beautiful. Distant snow mountains are mirrored in the surface of the lake beside the divine lotus. One swims a little in the warm water. Later on one has to seek protection in the cool lounge from the blazing rays of the sun. In the meantime the lake has become populated, and there is an end of peace and solitude for some hours (Plate 29). First of all a boat appears whose occupant introduces himself as a barber who is determined to show his skill.
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Being only a beginner, one tries to get rid of him gently but firmly, with the result that one spends the next hour trying to get him out of the boat, and finally lets oneself be shaved after all. On the very first day one gets to know that flower-sellers, souvenir-vendors, barbers, cobblers, masseurs, and such can only be kept at a distance by the most violent Anglo-Indian curses.

The days go by incredibly quickly, and one just hides the calendar in the depths of one’s pocket-book and enjoys the summer in Kashmir.

But beside this Srinagar, a fairy-tale place of mountains and lakes and luxury, where the English spend their summer, there is also a second Srinagar, the ‘City’.

Kashmir has always had a great attraction for poets. The Persian poets of the Middle Ages praise the beauty of the country. Srinagar must be described in gorgeous language. There is a little of Venice about it, for here too there are canals instead of streets; a little of Canton, for here too the people are born in their boats and die there; a little of Geneva, for here too is a town surrounded by magnificent mountains. Take all these together and throw them down among the 24,000-foot peaks of the Himalayas—that is Srinagar. Only you have forgotten to add that you must also put in the misery, the poverty, and the dirt of the poorest towns in the world, for here too the people go hungry, and beg, and shiver.

Seven bridges cross the Jelum in the town. Europeans generally see only the ‘First Bridge’, from which one has a good view on to the river. From the second bridge the evidences of so much want and poverty are to be seen that one forgets to admire the picturesque old wooden
buildings and temples. By the time one reaches the seventh bridge it is simply hell. Miserable wooden huts edge the grey-brown water, which serves thousands of people both as a dump for their rubbish and as drinking supply. Here is the breeding-ground of cholera and typhoid epidemics which carry off thousands. Emaciated figures, clad even in winter in nothing but a ragged blanket, stretch out their thin hands to the stranger and gaze at him with starting eyes while they demand bak-sheesh.

Tubercular children crawl about in the dust of the street looking greedily for scraps, of which plenty are to be found among the rubbish on the banks of the river. In the winter, when the snow lies a foot deep in the streets and the water is frozen in the conduits, misery reaches its highest point. The people crouch apathetically brooding in their ice-cold huts. They fill little earthenware jugs with burning charcoal and place them under the blankets that serve them as clothes. They sit thus all night long, constantly renewing the charcoal in an attempt to keep themselves warm.

It is difficult to understand why in this country, which has been so richly endowed by nature, and in which during the summer months any number of visitors spend their money, such terrible poverty can exist. Next door to the poor quarter the gorgeous buildings and palaces of the rich are to be found. Kashmir has its own taxes, its own customs dues, in fact it is an independent State. Vast sums of money flow each year into the State treasury. Out of a paradise given them by nature men have made a hell in which thousands starve and die of cold,
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so that a chosen few may live in luxury, may own the best polo ponies in the world, and bring home wonderful cups from England and America. The gold and silver cups may be very fine and may rejoice the heart of every sportsman, but the inhabitants of the ‘City’ starve because of them.

I had some geological work to do in Srinagar and its surroundings. Once, however, I escaped for some time both from work and from the ‘Venice of India’.

An Indian friend had heard that I had come to Kashmir, and he wrote to me from a far-off place in the mountains. He said that I must be sure to visit him at his home in Pahalgam, a little village in the Himalayas, where he lived with his family. During the period when the heat makes life in the plains impossible he spent his time up there in tents. Life was very primitive up there, but I should enjoy it. If I wanted to climb, as I did at home, there were 16,000-foot mountains just outside the tents (Plate 28). If I wanted to pick edelweiss he could show me meadows that were full of it.

A few days later I found myself in the week-end colony in the Himalayas where the ‘upper ten thousand’ Indians spend the summer. My friend had really not exaggerated. Rustling pinewoods and glorious mountain streams almost made me believe I must be in a valley of my own distant country (Plate 32). The visitors’ tents lay on a little hill in the middle of the valley; they rose up against the green of the woods like the white crests of waves against a green sea.

We were given a great welcome at my friend’s camp. I did not notice anything particularly primitive about
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his life up there. He lived with his family, consisting of his wife and two children, and his servants in a little village of tents. There was a living-tent, and two servants’ tents—there was no end to his explanations. I felt at home there immediately and led the enviable life of a person with nothing to do. Indian ladies move about more freely up here than in the towns, where their mode of life is still governed to some extent by strong traditions (Plates 30, 31, 33).

The nights were cool, sometimes even cold, a great boon after the heat of Afghanistan. In the morning when the servant brought my morning tea to my bedside the distant snow peaks were taking on a rosy hue, and later they shone out in glorious white.

The days went by much too quickly, in pleasant conversation with Indian friends and the enjoyment of the magnificent country. In the evening we sat together in the glow of a romantic camp-fire and listened to Schubert’s Unfinished Symphony, which, through the medium of the gramophone, has conquered the Himalayas too.

But the nights were becoming longer and colder, and at last we had to break camp. I looked on sadly while the coolies carried tables, chairs, desk, and gramophone down to the stopping-place of the omnibus.

Once again I gazed at the distant snow mountains and heard the wind rustling the pines. Kashmiri peasants were getting the hay into their lofts and the nomads were driving their herds down from the mountain pastures into the valley below (Plates 34 to 37), but the meadows were still covered with flowers as in high summer.
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After this interlude I put in a long period of geological work. To the great edification of all the peasants and fishermen living along the banks of the Jelum, Kapur and I would sometimes go down the river in our Faltboot, or collapsible canoe, which went by the awe-inspiring name of L.F.B. Giant. The peasants had never seen a Faltboot—we were the first to bring such a fabulous craft from Europe—and wherever we landed the boat was immediately surrounded (Plate 38). To be quite exact, we did not really become the great sensation of the river until we overturned in a whirlpool and only succeeded with difficulty in rescuing the boat and all our belongings.

In the meantime autumn had come. The covering of new snow on the mountains moved lower down each day and I was glad when my studies at the university came to an end and I could travel south once more. This time my route led over the Banihal Pass, more than 9,200 feet high, and the highest pass in India. The road goes through the Kashmir valley to Islamahad, then the ascent to the pass begins. It was afternoon by this time, and I wanted to cross the pass so as to camp in the next valley. I thought it would be too cold on the pass. But man proposes. . . .

In the middle of the steepest ascent, which my Puch was taking wonderfully well, I got a puncture, and in my back tyre too. Swallowing my rage as best I could, I turned to and mended it, but when I was ready to pump the tyre up I noticed that some Kashmiri had stolen my pump. There was nothing to be done but to wait for one of the very infrequent cars. In the mean-
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time the clouds were coming down lower and lower and covered the mountains in mist. In pouring rain I crouched beside my motor-cycle in a ditch by the roadside and waited. It was not an enticing prospect to pitch my tent here in the rain with the temperature almost at zero. Moreover I had no provisions with me.

However, just as my spirits were reaching zero too, a car appeared. The damage was soon repaired, and I went on my way again in slightly better weather. It was growing dark and I was still a long way from the top of the pass. I looked vainly round for a possible camping-place. The road had been built into the steep side of the mountain, and there was no flat ground to be seen anywhere. Finally I noticed a little hut with smoke issuing from it. Road-menders had encamped there. As it was quite dark by now, I decided to stay with them. I set up my tent where the road made a wide bend. There was no danger from passing cars, for traffic is forbidden during the night.

I sat huddled together with ten Indian workmen as their guest of honour in the little hut. They brought me Kashmiri tea, first of all salted, but afterwards when I asked for it, with sugar. Nuts and bread completed the meal. It was cold outside, but the wind had blown the clouds away, and there was a brilliant full moon. As I did not want to leave my motor-cycle and luggage alone for the night, I crept into the tent and spurned the further hospitality of the Indians, though not before I had borrowed two blankets from them. There was no hope of sleep in my little tent. The wind whipped the canvas with a sound like revolver shots. But I did not even want
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to sleep. The moonlit scene was much too lovely. Wrapped up in blankets in my sleeping-sack, I just stuck my head out of the tent and gazed and gazed. . . . The snow giants of the Himalayas lay so near that it seemed as if I could touch them, the 18,000-foot Haramukh, in whose deep snow I had waded for a whole day, only to have to turn back a few hundred yards from the top, the gloriously sharp outline of Kolahoi, the Matterhorn of India.

Only when the skin on my face began to grow stiff with cold did I creep completely into the tent and close it fast.

The next morning there was not a cloud in the sky, and my hosts were all assembled in full strength to see the free peepshow of a European stowing tent, sleeping-sack, and everything else on to a two-wheeled motor. There followed an incident which surprised me greatly. When I attempted to pay them for my food and shelter they firmly refused to take the money, and were even offended. It had been a pleasure to them, they said, they had welcomed me as a friend not as a Sahib! I was ashamed, and put my money away again. Then I shook ten horny hands and went on my way upwards.

There is a tunnel at the highest point of the pass, and once again I turned towards the north, to the Himalayas, for now I must bid them farewell. Who knew for how long!

On emerging from the tunnel at its southern end a completely transformed landscape awaited me. The green woods and the snow mountains had disappeared, and bare, burnt-up hills surrounded the road. The jour-
ney to Jammu, 180 miles distant, was very strenuous, for
the road was never straight or level for a hundred yards
at a time. I kept on having to change gear and take great
care at the narrow bends. And what a difference in
temperature! The day before I had frozen in three shirts,
a pullover, a ski-ing jersey, and a coat, and now I was
riding in shorts and a shirt with a hot wind blowing
about my ears.

Once again I had to pay three rupees in customs duty.
In this respect Kashmir is far ahead of all the neighbour-
ing States. Almost everything that is brought into Kash-
mir is taxed—everything except polo ponies, for polo is
the maharajah’s favourite sport.

I wanted to reach the plain of Jammu before evening,
but, as had happened yesterday, I got a puncture just as
twilight was coming on. However, I managed to find a
place to pitch my tent near the road. I got bread and
milk from a lonely peasant’s hut. The peasant, an old
man with a gloomy countenance, was very suspicious,
and looked hard at my money before he would bring
me anything out of the house. But then his religious
conscience pricked him, and he asked me gruffly, ‘Are
you a Moslem?’

I was prepared for questions of this kind, and answered
in my best Urdu, ‘Moslem? What do you mean, Mos-
lem? I am a direct descendant of the Prophet, from
Istanbul!’ This fact made a great impression on him, and
he soon brought a spike of roasted maize to get himself
into the good graces of the Prophet’s descendant.

It was a wonderful night, cloudless and warm. I did
not pitch my tent, but used it instead to lie on.
able stars showed in all their splendour in the sky as I fell asleep.

There was not a star left when I awoke, but instead flashes of lightning lit up the dark rain-clouds. I was still under the impression that this spectacle must be a dream when a drop of tropical rain fell upon me. The bicycle was, thank Heaven, covered up. Quickly I packed up my tent and sleeping-sack and sought shelter under a perpendicular rock. But there was no protection against this deluge. It was only eleven o’clock. Until seven the next morning I crouched shivering and soaked to the skin on muddy ground which was rapidly turning into a swamp. But I was becoming acclimatized in Asia by now, mentally as well as physically, and I sat there and waited with the same stolid indifference that an Asiatic would have shown in similar circumstances. What else was there to do? The next hut was nearly a mile farther on, and I could not leave the motor-cycle by itself.

A yogi in the Himalayas advised me to alleviate unpleasant situations by concentrating my thoughts on God and on the All-powerful. Unfortunately I am no yogi, so I could only go over in my mind all sorts of pleasant experiences I had had both in Asia and in Europe. In this way the night passed quite quickly, but when towards dawn a cold wind sprang up even the most cherished recollections could not prevent me from feeling wretched and cold and longing for the day.

At last it grew light. The sun soon chased the dark clouds away, but it was two hours before my sleeping-sack and clothes were dry enough for me to be able to pack up.
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I stayed some time in Jammu pursuing my studies. Then my motor-cycle once more carried me back to the Indian plains, asphalt roads, petrol pumps, and civilization.
Chapter Four

DAY BY DAY FROM INDIA TO BURMA

It was late in the autumn when I returned to India from Kashmir. The next few months until Easter of the following year I spent partly in pursuing my geological studies at various universities in the north-west of India, partly as a ski-ing instructor in the Himalayas, and partly in making a journey through Burma and Assam.

This journey was made in very humdrum fashion, for I travelled by steamer and train, leaving my motor-cycle in a garage at Lahore.

It would be wearisome were I to tell the story of this journey in chronological order, for often weeks went by in which nothing worthy of note occurred. I shall limit myself to the narration of a few events and experiences that seem to me worth mentioning, and I shall describe them just as I put them down in my diary or in letters to friends.

I travelled by train from Lahore to Calcutta via Benares, and from Calcutta I went by steamer to Rangoon. From Rangoon I took the train once more to Mandalay, where I made a detour to Lake Inle. I went
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on one of the flat-bottomed steamers up the river Chindwin into Upper Burma as far as the village of Sittaung. From there I travelled on foot by a narrow jungle path through the Naga Hills to Manipur, and from thence I reached Kohima by car. At Manipur Road I touched the Indian railways again and returned thus to northern India.

Lyallpur, Punjab, end of November

Punjab, 'five waters', that is the name of the great plain in north-west India. The five great rivers that come down from the Himalayas and water the land have given it that name. European and Indian engineers are making use of the latest technical discoveries in order to convert the country, which is almost like a desert in parts, into ploughland. Every drop of water is utilized. Canals, locks, and lifting-pumps have succeeded in creating hundreds and thousands of acres of cultivable land. New towns have arisen in this region, of which one is Lyallpur, only a few decades old. I am staying here with Indian friends. I think I know something about India now, and I began telling my friends about all my impressions and experiences.

They just laughed and said, 'What you have seen was not India. Big towns, maharajahs' courts, ancient buildings and monuments, those are not the real India. India is the Indian peasant. Eighty per cent of the population of our country live in small villages; they work in the fields, they cannot read or write, they are patient, they starve and are silent—they are Indians.' (Plate 39)

After that I visited some of the small villages, and
there I encountered a way of living that goes on, in spite of all technical and political progress, just as it did a thousand years ago. It seems a fresher, healthier life than the life of the towns. Here, for one thing, there is no trace of the purdah system which is so incomprehensible to us. While in the towns many Indian women, not only Mohammedans but also Hindu women, live in purdah, that is to say, are imprisoned in their houses and may only leave them veiled, the Indian woman in the country leads a free life. A peasant family has to work hard, and is also very near to nature, and these two causes have prevented the purdah system from gaining a hold there. The family life of the peasants seems in general to be happy (Plate 43).

‘As it was a thousand years ago’—these words best describe the life and labour of the Indian peasant. An immense passivity, which may well have been produced by the climate and by the oppression which the peasants have hitherto endured from the big landowners, stands in the way of any innovation. The peasant’s yoke of bullocks moves along paths that are unspeakably dusty during the summer (Plate 44), and well-nigh impassable during the rainy periods. The dung of the sacred cow serves as both fuel and medicine (Plate 45). Butter, cloth, earthenware jugs are all kept side by side in the huts in the most primitive fashion (Plate 46).

The greatest and, it would appear, almost the only amusement of the peasants is the evening wrestling-match (Plates 40, 41). Dressed only in shorts, the opponents try to force each other down till both shoulders touch the ground. Matches go on the whole evening,
and spectators throng about the wrestling ground and applaud the victor, who executes a dance of triumph (Plate 42).

India is the Indian peasant. As yet he still plays no part in shaping the political history of his country. But when he awakes from his passivity the rulers of the future will have to reckon with him.

*Benares, early January*

Benares, the holy city of the Hindus on the back of ‘Mother Ganges’, is known to every one from the many tales told of it. Devout believers crouch beside the ghats and gaze in abstraction into the holy water (Plate 49). Fanatics, charlatans, pilgrims (Plates 47, 48) crowd together to make a confused and wonderful picture. But it has been described so often that I am not going to make any attempt to give a pen-picture of Benares. It would in any case be an imperfect attempt, for eyes shining with the light of faith and fanatical devotion cannot be completely reproduced in words. Instead I will repeat a conversation that I had with an Indian in Benares—though the place is indifferent, for this conversation might have taken place anywhere in India.

My companion had not been particularly well brought up; he belonged to the Indian middle class. Still, he had spent some years at school, and spoke and wrote English very well. He was twenty years old, and a clerk in an Indian bank at Benares.

It was evening, and we were sitting opposite each other on a veranda. Both the close moonlight night and
'His life is work and toil'—an old Indian peasant
40. The decisive grip in a wrestling match between Indian peasants
41. Wrestling is the national sport of the Indian peasantry

42. The victor executes a dance of triumph whilst his defeated opponent painfully raises himself from the ground
43. Evening rest outside an Indian peasant home

44. Ox-wagon on a dusty village road
45. Dried cow-dung serves for fuel purposes

46. Milk is churned into butter in a madhani
47. After bringing their offerings pilgrims show their reverence for a holy man by touching the soles of his feet with their foreheads.

49. Waiting for Death. Many aged Indians on feeling the approach of death make their way to Benares
50. Benares. The ghats
the fact that my friend was going to be married soon may have contributed to make our conversation turn to women.

My friend had heard a great deal about European women from Europeans and from Indians who had visited Europe. He was very ready with his views on the subject. ‘Your women in Europe are not women any longer. You can see them in the parks in the evenings letting strangers kiss them. Nearly all your women have had one or more affairs before they marry, and by affairs you understand what an Indian woman would never dream of doing. And if she did, it would only be when she was married.’

‘It is not as bad as all that,’ I interrupted. ‘It is just that we have customs and ideas which are quite different from yours. For instance, I find your custom of child marriage horrible, for . . .’

‘What is there horrible about it?’ asked the Indian indignantly. ‘Take my case. In two weeks I shall be married. I have never seen my wife. My father has chosen her for me, and my father certainly understands more about women than I do. I have never spoken to women except for my mother and some of my female relations. I might perhaps have chosen a woman because of the beautiful whiteness of her skin, but my father thinks of her character too.’

‘Yes, but how do you know that you will love this woman?’

‘Love her?’ This drove my Indian into a corner for the moment, but suddenly he found a way out. ‘Our marriages are much happier than yours. Search as you will,
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you will hardly ever hear of divorces in India, whereas in your country . . .

‘Divorces originating with the woman are almost impossible with you,’ I countered, glad to have a good argument on my side once more. ‘You will shut your wife up so closely that except for her brother and her father she will probably never even see a man, let alone be able to talk to him. She would need to be extraordinarily clever to succeed in breaking her marriage vows in such circumstances.’

At this my companion became suddenly magnanimous. ‘I shan’t shut my wife up. I shall allow her complete freedom,’ he announced proudly.

‘Splendid,’ said I. ‘As we live in the same house and on the same floor, I shall be able sometimes to invite your wife to tea while you are at the bank. I wonder what you’ll do when you come back and find us together.’

At this his voice became stern and threatening and it was obviously no longer a joking matter. ‘I should kill you both,’ he said simply.

As this remark was made with profound conviction the conversation ended on a note of slight discomfort. A conversation that, moreover, has the advantage of having really taken place.

Mandalay, February

From the front page of the leaflet urging travellers to visit Burma a young Burmese smiles an extraordinarily frank and placid smile that gives expression to the easy-going character of his race. If one goes on looking at the
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leaflet it seems as if only an advertising trick on the part of the travel bureau could have conjured up such a smile.

But when one lands at Rangoon and enters the country for the first time, one observes with amazement that this smile really belongs here. The bazaar-vendors smile, the girls smile, even the rickshaw-coolie demanding baksheesh smiles.

This universal smile had a dazzling effect, and one thinks of the discontented faces that one meets every morning in the trams and buses at home. For a long time I envied these people their smile, but yesterday I saw Mg Tun Pe smile, and that smile I shall never forget; the thought of it will always fill me with horror.

He went by quite close to me, and his face with its smooth yellow Burmese skin was peaceful and he smiled at me in friendly fashion. Even as he climbed the ladder and turned towards me again his face was the happy, innocent face of a child, that did not change in the least degree when the soldiers placed a noose about his neck and pushed him off the ladder. His smile never changed, but it seemed suddenly to have turned into a hideous grimace.

I have forgotten to say that I was in the prison yard in Mandalay, a town of Middle Burma, where each week on an average three executions are carried out.

This is the story of Mg Tun Pe, whose smile was qualified to act as an advertisement for paradise on a travel leaflet. Mg Tun Pe was a fisherman. He was still too young to possess a boat of his own, but for years he had fished with Payataga in his boat up and down the great river. He lived in Payataga’s hut and was treated
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by him like a son. Nothing was changed in this friendly relationship when Payataga brought a young wife home. Her name was Madyu. Sometimes it might be that Mg Tun Pe’s lingering gaze rested upon the young woman, who was still not much more than a girl. But no one took any notice of it.

One day the two men went fishing together as usual on the lonely river. Payataga stood in the bow of the boat with a sharp spear in his hand while Mg paddled. A big fish was lying placidly in the shallow water, and cautiously Payataga gave a sign to Mg to turn the boat towards it. He waited impatiently for Mg to turn the boat, but the boat remained motionless and only rocked slightly. Payataga turned round in surprise, and was just in time to see Mg’s distorted face before him. Then Mg’s knife entered his breast.

The heavy body fell into the water, and the boat turned quickly and disappeared.

Madyu was not surprised when Mg came home alone and reported that Payataga had gone off with friends on a long expedition. Probably Mg smiled happily, for Madyu was not unresponsive to the good-looking young man’s ardent gaze.

What happened in the little palm hut on the bank of the great river is unknown. All that is known is that in the greyness of the next day’s dawn fishermen found Payataga suffering from a severe wound and brought him back to his hut.

And the fishermen say that as they brought the unconscious man’s body through the door, Mg sprang forward like a wild animal out of the other room in the hut.
and with one stroke cut the defenceless Payataga’s throat. Then he let them hold him without struggling until the police arrived.

Mg told his story quietly before the English judge in Mandalay. Only when he was asked why he had acted as he did he smiled the famous smile of Burma which was on his lips when he died.

Madyu lives in her lonely hut on the bank of the great river whose waters come down from the glaciers of Tibet. I have never seen her, but I know that she has a beautiful, kindly face, and she smiles.

Nampan, on the Smiling Lakes, February

On the map of Burma it is called quite simply and objectively Lake Inle. It enjoys a certain fame in the land, which is due to the fact that the boats upon its surface are propelled not with the arms but with the legs. The Inthas, who live on the banks of the lake, stand on one leg on the side of the boat and wind the other leg round their oar. They bend their bodies forward with a powerful swing, and the foot and oar describe a wide half-circle (Plate 51). How this method of rowing, which is known nowhere else in the world, can have originated is something that no one has hitherto been able to explain.

That it is a rapid method of driving the boat forwards the Inthas have often proved. Once they were invited to Rangoon during some great festival to meet a trained eight of the Rangoon Rowing Club. Nobody doubted that the Rangoon crew would win; the Inthas had only been invited to lend some local colour to the festival.
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But the Inthas refused to let themselves be intimidated. Their flat-bottomed boat shot like an arrow over the water and beat the Rangoon eight by several lengths.

These leg-oarsmen have made the lake so famous that even the crowds of tourists conducted through Burma by Messrs. Thomas Cook & Sons spend a day here.

The Smiling Lake took me prisoner. It began with Ountshi. It was the first day of my stay on the lake. I had paddled far out into the open water in a native boat, and the wind was driving little waves before it in which the palm-trees were mirrored in a picturesque and curiously contorted way. The sky was cloudless, and I lay dreaming in the boat asking for nothing more. I may perhaps even have slept a little.

Finally a low laugh woke me. The boat had been driven on to the bank, and a little girl had climbed into it. She sat there smiling in front of me, with some white flowers nodding in her raven-black hair. She stretched out her hands to me and smiled. That was the beginning of my friendship with Ountshi. Our language is hard, and the gentle lilt that lies in the two syllables ‘Ountshi’ is not easy to reproduce in English. I should add that we only became really great friends when I fell into the water in attempting to catch butterflies for Ountshi.

It was perhaps thanks to this adventure that Ountshi took me to her parents’ house. For three days the house was the social centre of the fishing village of Manpan. Every evening I had to do conjuring tricks with a rupee, until at last it fell out of my sleeve and the fraud was exposed. We lived in a wonderful little house. It stood out in the lake on great piles, and the neighbours bal-
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anced themselves on shaky bridges of bamboo when they came over to us in the evenings to join in our foolish games. All the houses of Manpan, and also those of the surrounding villages, are built on piles, and the streets are canals (Plate 52). But the most curious sights are the floating fields. These are tiny islands, usually only a few yards across, quite detached from the bottom of the lake and floating on the water. Above a thick layer of roots and bog there lies a thin layer of soil. In this layer of soil the peasants have planted vegetables and sometimes even flowers (Plate 54). These fields have the advantage of never being flooded, for they rise and fall with the level of the lake. Also there is no need to water the plants.

I am tremendously popular with all the fisherfolk, for already I have fallen into the water three times when trying to row with the leg as they do. Our conversation is rather limited, but I can manage to say in Burmese ‘bemale’, which means ‘where is?’ Also ‘mengo nga tschiti’—‘I love you’. But here by the Smiling Lake there is no need to speak much, for you can express as much by a smile as by long sentences.

Farther out in the lake stand little houses. The women and children often paddle out in their boats and put a little rice, water, and fruit in these houses and pray there (Plate 53). For these little houses are the dwelling-places of the ‘nats’, the spirits that disturb the life of the Inthas. And it is a good thing to keep on the right side of the spirits. Every young girl has some great wish which will surely be fulfilled if only the nats are not opposed to it.
Every morning I take Ountshi to school. She has acquired importance through her friendship with me. The stern schoolmaster sometimes lets her off to come and row on the lake with me. Ountshi naturally makes the most of these opportunities, for she would much rather be out on the lake with me than in school. But when at school she is an important official and sounds a gong to mark the beginning and end of each lesson (Plate 55). The children from neighbouring families share a boat on their way to school (Plate 56).

Time does not matter on the Smiling Lake, and the days go by peacefully and free from care.

I will try to describe the evenings. When the sun has gone down behind the distant palm forest, the mountains and the water of the lake take on a deep-blue tinge. We go out in our boat, threading our way through the canals into the open water. The girls sing gay little songs and their eyes are big and lustrous.

I had almost forgotten to say that Ountshi has an older sister. She is called Shwenyam, which means ‘flowering golden shrub’.

The golden tower of the village pagoda (Plate 61), for which generations of pious ancestors have sacrificed their savings, reflects the last rays of the sun.

Fastened to the tower of the pagoda are hundreds of little bells and bits of metal, and when the wind blows gently over the lake a hundred-voiced singing and tinkling goes on above us.

Gradually night comes on and the dark silhouettes of the palms cease to show up against the blackness of the sky. Nothing is to be seen, neither water nor bank—the
night is pitch-dark. Only the tinkling of a thousand bells sounds over the lake.

On rising in the morning my host's family assembles round their image of Buddha, and even little Ountshi folds her hands shyly before the god. Then we go out spearing fish. We young men go off proudly in our boats, leaving the dull housework to the women. There are plenty of fish here in the lake, but we must work hard if we want to win the admiring glances of the girls when we arrive back in the evening.

Then we cook the fish over an open fire, and there is also rice, which for some unknown reason is red. Afterwards we smoke enormous cigars which the girls have rolled for us during the day. Yesterday the idyllic peace of our lake was disturbed by the sound of a motor-boat, and American tourists arrived to watch the leg-oarsmen. Batun and Kyawakya, two of my friends, rushed out in their boats to show off their skill. They are slim, strong lads, and both adepts at swinging their legs gracefully round the oars. The motor-boat came circling dangerously near to our house, and Ountshi hurriedly put a turban on my head to prevent the strangers taking me away with them. But American tourists never have any time to spare, and the danger was soon past.

My friends got a rupee in reward of their prowess, to which I also added something, and to-morrow we are off to Yanghwe, where it is market day.

I shall buy chopped-up coconut and sugar for Ountshi, and a gaily coloured scarf for Shwenyam. And then I shall come back quickly to my Smiling Lake.
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Thalai Monastery, on Lake Inle, February

I have met a Canadian journalist called Ted, and he and I and a little Burmese boy who acts as interpreter are wandering through some of the villages on the Smiling Lake.

Here at Thalai we are staying in a Buddhist monastery. Life would be very delightful if only there were something else to eat in Thalia besides red rice and salted tea. We long for vegetables or meat, but nothing of the kind can be produced.

One day our interpreter-boy appeared with a broad grin of delight and offered us a bottle of brandy. We knew that under the sacred roof of the monastery we ought not to drink this sinful liquor, but the prospect of making the unsavoury-tasting rice a little more palatable by means of a dash of brandy was too tempting. We had only begun our meal in the monastery cell when the abbot appeared to ask how we were getting on. We just had time to hide the bottle under the table. But the smell of the brandy did not escape the abbot's abstemious nose. He looked round suspiciously, and suddenly before we could attempt to rescue our prize, the bottle flew out of the window. The honour of the monastery was saved, but our brandy was gone.

In case any of my readers should begin to think that Ted and I are hardened drunkards and desecrators of holy places I should mention that alcohol is a good medicine for malaria.

Obviously we did not feel very kindly towards the holy man, for it was impossible to find a second bottle of brandy. The following day the abbot asked us what
profession we followed in Europe. I preserved an ashamed silence, but Ted told him he was a fortune-teller in private life and could read the future from a person's hand. The abbot at once held out his hand, and Ted, who knows as much about fortune-telling as a cow knows about logarithms, started off brilliantly. He deduced from the rather grubby hand in front of him a remarkable intelligence which would enable the abbot to take a place of considerable importance in the great world outside. The abbot nodded a rather bored agreement, as it might be Rockefeller on being told that he was rich.

The abbot then wanted to know about love. He asked where the girl was now living with whom he had been in love before he came into the monastery, and whether she still thought of him and loved him.

Ted was just about to make a sweeping gesture of the hand ranging from north to south and then north again, in order to indicate quite clearly where the young lady was. But the abbot stopped him at the very beginning, saying that was quite right, she lived in the north, in a place called Gelha. Did she love him still?

Ted thought of the brandy bottle, looked slightly vengeful, and spun a long yarn about weeping deserted beauty, eternal fidelity, love, and stupid monks who did not know how to seize happiness when it lay within their grasp.

The abbot turned pale. Three years before he had entered the monastery because he thought this girl did not love him. Ought he to leave the monastery now, if she was waiting for him?
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Ted nodded his head with the energy and assurance given only to a man to whom the future is an open book.

That is practically the end of the story of the Abbot of Thalai. The next day we went on our way.

Some time after I got a letter from the young Burmese who had accompanied us as interpreter. After telling us various items of news about his family, he went to the heart of the matter and wrote, 'I should be very glad to see you and Mr. Ted again, but please don't come here. Do you remember the monk at Thalai? He left the monastery, and actually found the girl about whom Mr. Ted told him all that wonderful story. Only she was already married and had three children. She thought the whole thing was a great joke. The monk was simply furious with you. He lives now as a fisher on the lakeside, and he has vowed to break Mr. Ted's head for him if he comes here again.'

But Mr. Ted lives in Toronto and rejoices in an intact head, even if it hasn't much hair on it!

Heho, Central Burma, February

I have forgotten what Mg Tun Pe looked like when he was executed in the prison yard at Mandalay.

This is a land of happiness! The Burmese are gay and happy-go-lucky, and love dancing and entertainments. The people of Heho, and of many other places in Burma, go smiling to their daily work, if they go to it at all. They only wait for the approach of evening, when the musical instruments begin to jangle and announce the beginning of Pwe.

Pwe—in that word lies the enchantment of the cara-
van, the spell of the wandering troop of players. Pwe begins in the early hours of evening and lasts until dawn, and it is a mixture of dancing, acting, and music. It is the dramatic art of an incredibly gifted nation of actors. The women take the leading parts. Many dancers are star, manageress, and proprietress all in one (Plates 62, 64).

The travelling company takes engagements in just the same way as was customary in Europe two hundred years ago. Wealthy landowners, local municipalities, or even princes engage their services. They pay, and provide the people with a free entertainment. For Pwe creates the right humour for a big trade, and the promoter of the entertainment has a share in the profits.

Ted and I have made ourselves quite at home in the house of the Sawbaw, the Prince of Heho. All day long we lie about lazily on mats and talk at intervals to a real Burmese princess, who speaks fluent English.

In the evening motor-buses bring the spectators from distant villages. The audience enjoys itself hugely, and stays until dawn watching the stage, on which a continuous entertainment of dancing, acting, and buffoonery goes on. Often when the audience laugh loudly we wish we could understand the joke—probably not at all a seemly one.

Burma, land of happiness! Everything is settled and accepted here with a smile—life, love, even death.

We went to see the burial of a monk. His body had been preserved in honey for more than a year, and now his disciples came to take farewell of him. A sixty-foot high erection, looking like the tower of a pagoda, is built
up on a wagon (Plate 68). Within this erection the coffin is placed. The funeral wagon is then drawn by young men, who are divided into two parties, one of which tries to drag the monk’s body back to the monastery, thus giving symbolic expression to the monastery’s grief. Finally the place of cremation is reached. The artificial pagoda, which is made of paper and bamboo, is drenched in petrol and it and the coffin go up in flames (Plate 70). No one shows any grief. The people are smiling and cheerful as they come away from the spectacle. No, even death is not sad here.

On The River Chindwin, end of February

The little paddle-steamer that threads its way carefully northwards through the shallow course of the Chindwin has certainly a varied existence behind her. A century ago she may have plied up and down the Thames. Sixty years ago she helped the British in the conquest of Burma. During the Great War she saw service in Mesopotamia on the Euphrates and the Tigris. Now she goes every week to Homalin, not so very far from the Tibetan frontier.

Europeans are rare visitors here, and the native postmaster, who is on a journey of inspection, embarks each day on lengthy conversations with me. One evening, when we had just left a little fishing-village where we took on some new deck-passengers, he came into my cabin in great excitement and brought me up on deck.

‘Do you see that man there?’ said he, pointing to an apparently perfectly ordinary native. ‘He is from To-
And then he proceeded to tell me in an embarrassed whisper about Tomati. It was a little place so far north that it could only be reached in flat-bottomed boats. He was once to have gone there as postmaster, but 'no good Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, or Mohammedan could live there', for the Tomati are in league with the spirits of the river and the forests. They could bewitch one, and one was quite helpless against them.

From his somewhat confused account I managed to gather that the Tomati must possess some sort of hypnotic powers; but I laughed sceptically at his stories, and merely said, 'No, no, Babu, those are just fairy-tales!' At this his pride was hurt, and a few minutes later he brought the terrified inhabitant of Tomati to my cabin. 'He will show you what he can do, Sahib,' he whispered proudly.

The native looked around my cabin, and suddenly seized a glass and filled it with water. 'You must drink the water and put the glass back on the table,' the postmaster translated from the native dialect.

I drained the glass of water, but as I took it from my lips I noticed a pricking sort of pain and the glass seemed to stick to my lips. In vain I pulled, but the pain only grew worse, and the glass remained immovable. I had never before met a hypnotist, and have no idea whether I am a good medium or not, but I suddenly felt that an almost tangible power radiated from the native's staring black eyes.

Suddenly it was all over. The Tomati smiled in confusion and I was able to put the glass down again and to move it in any way I wished. Despite much persuasion
Day by Day from India to Burma

the magician would not be prevailed upon to show his skill again.

My desire to visit this curious village had unfortunately to remain unfulfilled, for the water was so low as to make the approach to it impossible. But a week later, when I was crossing the relatively little known Naga Mountains to India, a sceptical Englishman in Manipur told me of yet another proof of the extraordinary powers of the inhabitants of Tomati. I asked him to tell me what his experience had been, and he told me the following story.

'I have only been in Tomati once myself, but it seems to be a fact that the whole population possesses very strong hypnotic powers. It is wellnigh impossible to get a Burmese or an Indian from any other village to go and live there. Nothing will induce them to go and live there for a week, even if you paid them to do it.

'I myself had a very similar experience to yours there. My host in whose hut I was drinking tea hypnotized me so that I could not rise from the rush mat on which I was sitting. It is really a very curious feeling to find oneself helplessly at the mercy of these people.

'But the most amazing and incredible experience I have ever had are the tiger-men. During the many years that I lived in the practically unknown border country between Assam and Burma I was always hearing about these tiger-men. I had never come across them myself, but I had managed to find out a certain amount about them.

'The soul of these tiger-men, who in outward appearance are in no way different from ordinary men, is said
An Intha leg-rower
The principal 'street' in the fishing-village of Manpan

The dwellings of the *Nats*, or evil spirits. The Burmese pray to them and bring them offerings of food and drink.
54. The floating islands on Lake Inle
Little Ountshi sounds the school-gong
56. Children of neighbouring families row together to school

57. One eats with one’s fingers in Burma
59. In shallow water the Indus go from house to

58. Young Burmese women returning home from a

shopping expedition.
60. The houses are surrounded by water and can only be reached with boats
61. The Golden Pagoda of Manpan
Day by Day from India to Burma

at times to dwell in a tiger, who is so to speak the second manifestation of this soul. Tiger and man then die at the same hour. Although I had come across a good many things that were far beyond the bounds of probability, I was still extremely sceptical about these stories until two years ago when a curious thing happened to me. I found myself in a little place near Tomati where I had gone to settle some disputes. The natives there showed me a tiger-man whose soul, so they said, had “gone into his tiger” for the time being. He seemed like a drunken man, lay in his hut, took no food, and only gave confused replies when questioned. In fact, he appeared to be, as they said, “without his soul”. On the third day his condition changed quite suddenly, and he appeared in my tent perfectly active and full of life but in great mental distress. My interpreter translated his explanations. He, or rather the tiger in which he had lived for the last three days, had attacked a man a few miles north of where we were, and he besought us to go there quickly in case it might still be possible to bring aid to his victim. Weeping, he protested over and over again, “I did not want to do it, but the tiger was so strong.”

‘Something made me follow the man. After a short march we came upon the terribly mauled body of a Burmese. And near by was the trail of a tiger.

The Englishman fell into thoughtful silence. He was a cool, level-headed individual, and had been a great Rugby player at Oxford. He did not easily let himself believe in miracles.

And yet. . . ‘You see,’ he resumed, ‘I know for cer-
tain that this man had never left the place, though I suppose one might perhaps explain that by clairvoyance. But there is also no explanation for the end of this story. Two months ago English friends of mine came here on a visit, and they managed to shoot a very fine tiger. And at precisely the same moment when they killed the tiger, without any external cause whatever, the tiger-man died in Tomati. I know the exact minute, my agent swears to it and he is a most accurate person.'

We both remained silent for a moment, then the Englishman said with a laugh, 'Don't tell that story in Europe, or you'll be called a liar.'

I shall chance that, however.

_Tamu, between India and Burma, February_

One cannot say that the little village of Tamu, on the border between Burma and Assam, has any particular charms. I have been here for some days, and have lived on corned beef and bananas, for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. That exhausts the bazaar's resources. I should have moved on long ago if I could have found any coolies to carry my baggage over the mountains to Assam. But the men of Tamu show no inclination whatever to go with me. They prefer sitting with their slender, shapely women before their huts and talking and laughing as only the Burmese can. When the moon rises, then the little village comes to life. Everywhere there are whisperings and gigglings, and now and then two figures glide by along the village street pressed so close together that they might almost be one.

How was I to get coolies? I was beginning to lose
patience when one day some wild figures appeared in the village, marvellously well-developed men armed with spears, bows, and rifles. They lit a huge camp-fire outside the village, and roasted a pig whole over it. The postmaster, the only person in Tamu who could speak a little English, came to my hut and informed me that these were Nagas, head-hunters from the hills, on their way back to their own village, and that they would take me and the baggage with them if I wished. The postmaster added that he himself would not go with them if he were I, for, when all was said and done, they were head-hunters who even to-day experienced a childish pleasure in adorning their huts with fresh heads, and they weren’t even devout Buddhists either. In fact, he would advise me not to go.

But I wanted to move on, and I soon came to an arrangement with the leader of the Nagas. For a few rupees they agreed to carry my baggage as far as their village. It was dark when we set out. One behind the other we made our way along the narrow jungle path. Palms, bushes, and the narrow path were all swallowed up in darkness, and I could only see the white feather which the man in front wore in his hair waving indistinctly ahead of us.

We came to a river, and could hear its gentle plash and gurgle. I saw the white feather ahead of me waving above the stream as we waded slowly into the lukewarm water that was like a pool of ink all round us. The water rose higher, till it covered my shorts and then my shirt. I was up to my shoulders in the sluggishly moving stream. Ahead, where some of the men were carrying
my cases, I heard laughter, and the splash of some heavy object falling into the water. The unfortunate plates for my camera! In a shallow place in the middle of the river we stopped to pray. Spirits dwell in the river, and in the forest too, and one must propitiate them by sacrifices and prayers. The primitive song of the Nagas sounded through the stillness. In the east the sky began to redden. Mountains and trees took on definite shapes. From my suitcase, which was now resting securely once more upon the broad shoulders of the Naga, the water dripped slowly.

Kohima, in the Naga Hills, February

The chain of hills that lies between India and Burma is a practically unexplored region, and is one of the most interesting and least-known parts of Asia. Except where the British have made military roads through the jungle it is practically impossible to make one’s way. The country is poor, so poor that it is not worth the British authorities’ while to open it up. They are perfectly satisfied if the mountain tribes live in peace and do not let their rifles off too frequently. The Nagas and the Chin (Plates 71 to 74) are the two largest groups of tribes. They are Mongols, more closely related to the Tibetans than to the Indians.

Here you may find villages not a rifle-shot apart where the dialect spoken is so different that the inhabitants cannot understand each other. This difference of speech can easily give rise to quarrels, and that is perhaps the reason why these mountain tribes are so seldom friendly with each other. A relic of this ancient village warfare is to be
found in the custom, which still persists, of bringing the enemy's head home as a trophy.

I was warned about the Nagas, as indeed it is perfectly right and proper that one should be warned about head-hunters. I was fortunate enough to be their guest during a festival which took place in the little village of Khazhama. Two villages which had been at enmity with each other for some time drank to the renewal of brotherly relations. And drink they did—vast quantities of So, their fermented rice-wine (Plates 76, 80).

My recollections of this festival are rather vague and confused. To be quite truthful, I must admit that I was completely drunk throughout the whole affair. The photographs reproduced here seem to have been taken in a state of photographic unconsciousness.

In addition to the So-drinking we also found time for various sports and contests. I was a good fifth at the local equivalent of throwing the cricket-ball, but in the jump I was badly beaten owing to lack of balance (Plate 79).

The gala costumes of the Nagas were of gorgeous colours (Plates 77, 78, 83). They are handed down from father to son. Huge balls of cotton hanging from the ears, fantastic head-dresses, blankets of dazzling colours, and bracelets made of thick bones were the most remarkable features of this festival attire.

They were extraordinarily kind and hospitable. One of the Nagas had stayed for some time in an English mission school and spoke some English. He explained to me that it was contrary to the Naga standard of good manners to refuse when offered So. As the Nagas had their spears and rifles with them, I attached considerable
importance to the observance of their etiquette. And they kept on offering me more So.

I gave my gorgeous hosts a few rupees as a token of my gratitude. The chief of the tribe who were acting as hosts made a short and witty speech of thanks. ‘Yesterday’, he said, ‘we did not know you, now you are here as our honoured guest. Yesterday we had no rupees, now they have come to us with you. You are both very welcome.’

The situation only became really critical when the chief gave me clearly to understand that he would have no objection whatever to my marrying his daughter. True the daughter was a very charming girl, but I did not feel equal to the honour of being a Naga chief’s son-in-law. So the festival ended on a note of slight discord, which, however, was at once dissipated when I informed the chief that I had not one single enemy’s head to my credit. That seemed to convince him that after all I wasn’t quite the right son-in-law for him.

The next day the visiting tribe set out along the asphalt military road, built by the British, on the return journey to their own village. It was a strange spectacle to see those head-hunters in their gorgeous costumes marching along that very modern road (Plates 84, 85).

I took a tremendous fancy to these head-hunters. They seemed to me splendid people. They neither lie nor steal—their only failing is their passion for collecting heads. But we all have our weaknesses.

In March I reached India once more, and spent the succeeding weeks, which were devoted to preparations for my Tibetan journey, with the Johanssens.
Far away from Europe, separated from it by thousands of miles of desolate wastes and lonely steppes, the highest mountains of the world rise up towards the heavens. For millions of years they have been standing there, untouched, unapproachable, remote, and menacing. The people who live at the foot of these mountains are humble and God-fearing. Unlike us, they have no desire to pit their strength against that of the mountains; for on the mountains dwell the gods who ordain the lives and destinies of all Asiatics.

Different gods dwell upon different mountains. Millions of pious Hindus turn their eyes daily towards the north, where above the mist of the scorching Indian plains they catch an occasional glimpse of shimmering whiteness, a vision of the holy mountains.

For more than ten years English mountaineers have sought to conquer Mount Everest. A whole nation shares their hopes and fears.

Spectacled Japanese who spend their working hours building submarines or sitting behind a desk adding
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columns of figures manage once in their lives to climb the sacred mountain of Japan, Fujiyama.

These mountains are nevertheless insignificant in comparison with a Tibetan peak. Three hundred million Hindus and all the countless Buddhists of Central Asia know only one great desire—to see the mountain of Kailas with their own eyes. They bathe in the sacred lake of Manasarowar, which lies close beneath the mountain, and the power of the gods absolves them from all their sins. Kang Rimpoche, or Precious Snow, is the name the Tibetans give to this 22,000-foot mountain (Plate 116). Whoever has made the circuit of the mountain can return to his wretched hut in the firm assurance that he will one day attain to Nirvana.

It is no easy way, the way to the mountain of the gods, the way of forgiveness. Through marshy jungles and over passes 16,000 feet high, fraught with danger and swept by icy blasts even in summer, the pilgrims struggle to their goal. Many never reach it, but succumb through sheer exhaustion to the storms that rage pitilessly about Tibet. But some reach the pass that separates India from Tibet, whence they can look upon the mountain.

Then their eyes shine with a wonderful, fanatical light—a light that amazed me, that suddenly made me feel, after weeks of travelling together with my Indian companions, that here was an experience I could not share with them—in that minute I was alone. I would have given much to be able to feel the great happiness that flooded them at that moment, a happiness that seemed at once holy and almost animal, and that
meant for them the fulfilment of their whole lives. The pilgrims’ way to the Sacred Mountain stands open to all Indians. For Europeans the mountain of the gods is a forbidden place. I had an Indian friend who was willing to take the risk of accompanying me to Tibet and I therefore decided to undertake the journey dressed as an Indian. This meant of course that throughout the whole journey I not only wore native clothes but also lived exclusively on native food. It would be madness for a European who had only been in India for a short time to try to live on nothing but native food. It is the universal practice in India to season dishes with chillies. The initiate who first eats a dish seasoned with chillies feels exactly as if a jagged razor blade had been drawn across his tongue, which had then been scorched with a mixture of paprika, pepper, and spirits. It cost me many tears and frequent indigestion before I was able to eat as the Indians do. But I managed it in the end.

I wanted to make the journey to Tibet in company with pilgrims. I wanted to share their troubles, their exhaustion, and their joys. But the European in me could not be entirely suppressed. I wanted not only to see the Sacred Mountain, but also to try to climb Gurla Mandhata, 25,361 feet high and farther to the south. With this attempt in view we took with us some tinned foods, ovomaltine, and soup. Otherwise we proposed to live exactly like the natives.

The starting-point of our journey was Almora, a little Indian village on the lower slopes of the Himalayas whose only importance lies in its height. During the summer English and wealthy Indians come up here to escape from
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the heat of the Indian plains. Three of us met at Almora at Easter. The most famous of us was Kitar (Plate 88). I will introduce him first. He came from Darjeeling, high up in the Himalayas. If you asked him where his home was he would answer proudly: ‘I live up there where everlasting snow lies.’ And if you asked him which he loved most, his mountains or his wife, he would reflect for some time and finally he would say: ‘Master, the mountains are stronger.’ Kitar had been on eighteen Himalayan expeditions. He had twice accompanied English parties in attempts on Everest, and had reached a height of more than 26,000 feet. He had been with Bauer on the Kinchinjunga expedition. He had become almost world-famous as Merkl’s coolie at Nanga Parbat. He could hardly be persuaded to leave his dying master. He did eventually find his way back to life out of that bottomless pit of snow, and was subsequently decorated by the Chancellor of the German Reich for his heroic conduct.

This had all happened a long time ago, and he was eager to tackle new mountains once more. If a pause for rest lasted too long for him, he would recall his past experiences with Bauer and Merkl, and would say: ‘Gehma, gehma, Sahib!’

He had a very clear idea of what he conceived to be his duties, and was unwilling to allow of any discussion of them. For example, he was firmly convinced that the best and surest way of ascertaining the temperature of freshly made tea was to dip one’s finger as far as possible into it. At first this used to worry me, but as time went on tea wouldn’t taste right to me unless it had been
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stirred up by Kitar’s grubby fingers. It is impossible to imagine Kitar without his rosary and his kukri, the Nepalese national sword. He used the sword for everything. He cut down trees, spread butter, and even cleaned his teeth with it. At nights long after we had retired to our tent he would stay huddled outside in the icy night letting one bead after another of his rosary pass through his fingers, praying to the mighty gods.

That is what Kitar is like, or rather was. For a few weeks after our journey he went on the Anglo-American Nanda Devi Expedition, and high up in the mountains he had loved so well he died. It is not too much to say that I have lost a friend. We came from completely different worlds, I from the cold, dispassionate world of Europe, he from the wonderful, many-sided world of his Hindu faith, but we had one thing in common. We both loved life best when it was dangerous and on a big scale.

And now Kitar is no more. From the bottom of my heart I hope that the gods to whom he prayed each night so dutifully will not reckon it as a crime against him that he travelled with me, an unbeliever, to the Sacred Mountain. I, who knew Kitar, am convinced that his plucky little soul, the soul of a fighter, has already risen up into Nirvana—a Nirvana, if it is at all as he imagined it, of gloriously shining snow mountains. This may seem exaggerated obituary for an Indian coolie. But on our journey through the mountains of the Himalaya there was neither master nor coolie. Either we were friends, and good friends, or else we remained strangers to each
other and had nothing to say to each other—and Kitar was a friend.

The second of our little band was Kapur (Plate 87). To-day he is a respectable lawyer in an Indian provincial town, but only a few months ago he was still a student, ready for any adventures. He was a great comrade.

When I met Kitar in Almora he came up to me with a friendly grin, shook me firmly by the hand, and asked in his Anglo-Indian lingo: ‘Expedition Kider hei?’ Which means roughly: ‘What’s become of the expedition?’ His last journey had been with the German Nanga Parbat Expedition, which took some five hundred coolies with it.

It had been my original intention that our Tibetan party should consist of only three people, but when Kitar asked me so confidently about the expedition I felt rather embarrassed, and told him that I was looking for people to join, but that in any case he would be the head coolie. That same evening when I was sitting in my wretched little hotel bedroom in Almora going over the last preparations for the journey with Kapur, a little Hindu lad of about sixteen came into the room and with many bows begged to be allowed to come on the journey into the Himalayas. We told him that he was nothing like strong enough to climb those great mountains with us, but he smiled proudly and, pointing to his thin little legs, said: ‘If the way leads to the Sacred Mountain, then I don’t go with my legs but with my heart.’ He won our hearts straight away with this answer, and we decided to take him as cook and coolie. According to European ideas it may perhaps seem fairly
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luxurious to embark on a journey with two servants. Judged by Indian standards, however, an expedition consisting of two coolies is merely laughable. When I returned from Tibet I met the well-known Dutch explorer Dr. Visser. He told me about his last expedition into Central Asia and how he had a gigantic company of coolies with him. How many had I taken with me? ‘Two,’ I answered. He seemed somewhat surprised, and said: ‘What, only two hundred?’ He simply would not believe that I had really only taken two coolies with me. He probably looks on me to-day as a first-class liar.

Three weeks’ march on foot lay before us, straight through the Himalayas to the highest passes that lead to Tibet. Although it was still early in the year—it was the end of April—the inhabitants of the highest Himalayan valleys were already on the return journey from the Indian plains to their own villages. We could therefore rely on being able to get food on our march through the Himalayas. We only needed to lay in a few supplies in Almora. The Almora bazaar is highly coloured and dirty, as in every Indian town. The sugar I bought there was only recognizable as such after the stallkeeper had dispersed the thousand flies that had settled on it. Salt we could only get in huge blocks of a kilogram, and we had to rub it ourselves between two stones. But at the end of two days all our preparations were completed and on the 22nd of April we left the place unostentatiously. The little sixteen-year-old Hindu coolie, whose name was Randshid, had on his own initiative taken on a second coolie to carry his load through the streets of the town. For he did not want to appear as a coolie
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before his friends and his family, but told them that he was going on this journey as a friend and adviser. We did nothing to destroy his small deception.

We could see little of the surrounding mountains. A sandstorm was driving the dust from the plain up to a height of over 6,000 feet. The mountains were only visible as if through a dark glass, and the sun seemed to be a palely glowing ball. Our way first led us through the rice-fields that are typical of the southern Himalayas. Rice, as is well known, needs much water, and when the fields are flooded you see them mounting up one beyond the other shining in the sun until it looks as if innumerable little lakes had been piled up on top of each other. During the first days we went down into a deep valley. It grew hotter and hotter. Our food consisted exclusively of Roti and Dal. Roti is a kind of Indian bread or cake. Black corn is stirred into dough, which in its turn is kneaded into flat cakes, which are baked either on hot ashes or on hot stones. Dal is an Indian vegetable which can best be compared with our lentils. For a long time our commissariat supplied exclusively these two articles of food.

When we came to divide up the baggage in Almora we found that our equipment was too heavy for four people to carry. We therefore hurriedly engaged two more coolies. At the end of five days' journeying we sent these two coolies back, and I, the European, began gradually to transform myself into an Indian. My fair hair was dyed black, and I embarked on the unpleasant business of not combing it any more. Kapur had brought his brother's turban with him, and I spent some hours
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learning how to give it the correct twists. Kitar viewed
this transformation rather suspiciously. We first of all
intended to tell him that I was an Indian who had spent
many years in Europe and had thus forgotten how to
speak Hindustani, my native tongue, fluently. I had now
returned to my native land, and my first undertaking
was to be this pilgrimage to the Sacred Mountain so
that I might free myself from the sins of Europe. When
Kitar saw this transformation, however, he laughed so
heartily that we decided not to make any further attempt
to convince him of the truth of this legend. He knew
that I was on a forbidden route, but he was always so
diplomatic and unforthcoming that he merely strength-
ened the impression of my Indian-ness with all the chance
wayfarers that we met. In the next village we engaged
two fresh coolies, who only knew me as an Indian.

We found ourselves on the main pilgrim route to
Tibet. Strange figures met us. A troop of emaciated
Indians caught us up during a halt. Their leader, thin
and starved but with a fanatical expression and the face
of an ascetic, told us that they had already been on their
way for three years. They were journeying from Ceylon
to the Sacred Mountain. In a few weeks now they would
reach their great goal. But it was still too early in the
year for them. The passes into Tibet were covered with
snow, and wretchedly equipped as they were, barefoot
and almost naked, they would have to wait until the hot
summer suns melted the snow and the cold was less
intense.

Another time we met a solitary yogi (Plate 93). Yogis
are Indian pilgrims who have cut themselves off com-
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pletely from the world and lead a life of inner reflection and meditation. We pitched our tent near to this holy man at three o' clock one afternoon. He stood beside a little stream and gazed fixedly without moving at the running water, for it was holy, and was flowing down to the great Mother Ganges, to whom all Indians pray. He never moved once during the whole afternoon. He took no notice whatever of us and our comings and goings. Only when the sun had gone down did he come to our tent and accept a bowl of rice from us. He too, he said, was on his way to the Mountain of Kailas. But he was not yet sufficiently purified within to be able to see the fulfilment of this great wish of his life. He had already spent some weeks standing here in meditation, sleeping only for a few hours during the night, in order to prepare himself for his great goal. We asked him when he would resume his journey, but his answer was vague—perhaps in a week, perhaps in a year. He would not say when he would have reached the stage of perfection which would permit him to go farther on his way.

The most curious holy man we came across we found in a cave. I had gone on ahead with Kapur, for we had heard a vague muttering sound coming from the entrance to a small cave. We went in, and there we saw an old Indian crouched upon some blankets. He had a prayer book in his hand and took practically no notice of us. We prostrated ourselves before him, after the manner of devout pilgrims. Then Kapur began to talk to him in Hindustani. The holy man asked him from what country we came! My friend answered that I was an
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Indian but had spent a long time in Germany and could therefore speak German better than my own native language. The old man looked penetratively at me for a moment, then said in fluent German: ‘You come from Berlin?’ I hadn’t heard a word of German for weeks, and was so much taken by surprise that I answered, also in German: ‘No, from Vienna.’ ‘Oh, you’re almost an Austrian, then!’ We spent some hours with this holy man. It was no wonder that he could speak German well; he also spoke English, French, and most Indian dialects. He had spent a considerable part of his youth in Europe. Wealthy parents had sent him to study at the universities of Paris, London, and Berlin. He had returned to India to take over his father’s business. But twelve years before, so he said, he had learnt the true meaning of life, had given away his immense fortune to the poor, and since then had wandered through India as a mendicant monk. I asked him what was the aim of such a life. He replied that he was searching for the way towards the light; for this reason he had come up to the Himalayas. Perhaps he would spend weeks, or even months and years, in the solitude of these mighty mountains. For the way to the light was hard, and he did not know when he would attain his goal. But when he had reached it, he would take one or two disciples so that they too might share the great happiness of complete freedom from human needs. The most impressive thing about this really very impressive man was the great peace and calm which shone from him. When we said good-bye Kapur knelt before him and I did the same. As the old man placed his kindly hands upon my head and blessed me a bound-
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less peace seemed to shine out over me, a peace to which he had attained through many weary hours of solitude and self-denial.

We had now been on our way for two weeks. The scenery, which had been tropical in the lower valleys of the Himalayas, now resembled alpine valleys in Europe (Plate 86). In the morning after a night of wind and rain, the surrounding mountain-tops were white with fresh snow. We followed the valley of the River Kali, which forms the frontier between India and Nepal. Towards the south we had sometimes a wonderful view looking down on to the lower hills and the plains, which seemed to be bathed in a curious, pale light. One day we came upon a strange thing. On the opposite mountain-side, which was already in Nepal, we saw a gigantic snake, some hundred yards long, winding down into the valley. It came nearer, bringing in its path a grinding and crashing of stones, and only then did we recognize it as a long red cloth which was being carried by twenty men down into the valley. As they followed the winding of the path they looked exactly like an enormous snake wriggling down the hillside. At the end of the procession came two men carrying a simple coffin. What we were looking at was a Nepalese funeral. When the procession reached the river the men put the coffin down. There in the shallow water the mourners built a foundation of stones, piled up wood thereon, and burnt the corpse on it. The wind carried the ashes straight into the river, and thus the faithful were assured that the ashes of their dead comrade would finally reach the holy Ganges.

The evenings were the best time. When we had set
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up our tents and finished with cooking we would sit for a long time before the tents in the darkness of that wonderful spacious Eastern night and let our thoughts wander as they would, and even Kitar used to grow reflective sometimes. He thought often of his wife and child. 'Life is so strange, master,' he would say. 'Can you explain it to me? When I am at home with my wife and my child I long for the mountains so much that I am almost sick with longing. And now that I am in the mountains, I long to be at home again with my wife and my child!' All I said was: 'Yes, Kitar, life is strange.'

We had not shaved once the whole time, and both Kapur and I had already considerable beards. Kitar the Mongol and the little cook-boy, however, had no beards. Once they were discussing how this came about. Kitar the joker soon found an explanation. 'That is quite simple,' he said to the cook-boy, who was listening credulously with all his ears. 'The sons of fathers have a beard, the sons of mothers haven't. Randshid listened solemnly, and it was only the next day that he let Kitar know what he thought of him. Probably he had only just seen the joke.

We made our midday halt whenever possible in the neighbourhood of a little stream or pool and seized the opportunity of cleansing ourselves from the dust and sweat of the journey. Kitar could see no point in what we were doing. He stared at us uncomprehendingly and over and over again shook his head indignantly that any one could be so foolish as to put his whole body into cold water. As a matter of fact he avoided any close contact with water. He did not even think much of it
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as a drink, but far preferred the rice wine of the natives. Wherever we went, even in the tiniest hamlet, he would find some source from whence he could satisfy his longing for alcohol. When we left a small village called Dartjula he stayed behind us, and only caught us up an hour later. He swayed perceptibly from side to side, and when the wind blew his hat from his head it was only with considerable difficulty and after a chase of several minutes that he retrieved it. In fact, Kitar was dead drunk. He came to me and said: 'They are fools in Dartjula. I got two litres of wine from them and only gave them my air mattress in exchange.' The air mattress had been a present from one of the expeditions, and it was worth at least 200 litres of wine. Kitar had got two litres out of it, but was very proud of it and convinced of his own business acumen.

In the meantime I had become a complete Indian, and not a very grand one either (Plate 89). My hair was long and matted, my turban a dirty grey, and my shirt, which I of course wore, like all Indians, outside my trousers, was for the most part anything but white. Everywhere they took me for a native, and people tried to get into conversation with me. I, however, kept myself aloof, stared straight ahead and mumbled a few disconnected words, with the result that most of them soon lost interest in trying to talk to me. My knowledge of Hindustani was too limited to allow of my holding a continuous conversation with natives without their noticing that I was a foreigner. It was not easy, as the people were very ready to talk. Instead of a greeting they always called out to us from a long way off: 'Where do you come
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from? Where are you going? What are you?’ It was Kapur’s job to answer all these questions and to put the corresponding questions which etiquette demanded.

We had in the meantime again changed the extra coolies who carried the surplus baggage. But as we got higher up into the mountains it became increasingly difficult to hire fresh coolies. The villages were still almost deserted at that time of year, and the few natives who had already returned were busy setting their houses to rights again or sowing their fields. The higher valleys of the Himalayas in this particular neighbourhood, Kumaun, are inhabited by Bhutias. They spend only a short period of the year in their villages. They go down for the winter to the Indian plains or the lower valleys of the Himalayas, and there obtain corn and other foodstuffs, which they take up to Tibet in the summer and exchange for wool and borax. They only inhabit their mountain villages in the Himalayan uplands for a short time in the spring and in the autumn, on their way to and from Tibet. Before the journey to the north, which they undertake in the summer, they sow the fields about their villages and leave them in the care of their wives while they themselves are in Tibet. In the autumn, when they return from Tibet, they get the harvest in and set off with their families for the south. When we were going north all the narrow mountain paths were crowded with Bhutias on their way to the north with their wives, children, sheep, and all their household goods. Some people maintain that the Bhutias are a mixture of Indians and Tibetans, others say that they are pure Tibetans who have moved their habitation to
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the south beyond the confines of the Himalayas. It was an old Bhutia who gave me the best answer to this question. He said 'There is no difference at all between us and the Tibetans except that we wash sometimes and the Tibetans never.'

At every hamlet a small flat piece of ground is to be found where the women sit and weave elaborate materials with their primitive apparatus. They sit there in the open from early morning till twilight, working and talking.

It is customary here, as among many other Asiatic peoples, that the wife should be given as many articles of adornment as possible by her husband. Even little girls wear quantities of silver necklaces and jewellery round their necks (Plate 90). I have seen women who carried on their persons silver weighing at least six pounds (Plate 91). It says much for the peaceable disposition of these people that women adorned like this can wander miles away into the lonely mountains to get in hay from some distant place without it ever entering their heads that they might be robbed. Some of the women are really beautiful. The relations between men and women are of an almost European freedom by comparison with near-by India, where women to-day still occupy a position definitely in the background. Once we were telling a thirteen-year-old boy about the marvels of European mechanistic discoveries. We described to him aeroplanes, railways, and cars, all things that he had never seen. He listened with great attention, then smiled and said: 'That must all be very wonderful, but a woman is best of all!'

After more than a fortnight's march we approached
Garbyang, nearly 10,000 feet high. We were soaked to the skin, and the piercing wind made us shiver with cold. The precipitous mountains all around were hidden in mist. Only occasionally one of the high peaks became visible for a short time. Shortly before we reached the village another violent storm of rain overtook us. We were soaked all over again, but had to go on for nearly two hours longer before we found a patch beneath an overhanging rock which offered some shelter against the cold. There was some dry wood there, so we were able to make a fire to warm ourselves. Our wet clothes steamed, and we were feeling relatively happy when we saw through the darkness and the rain two figures coming into the light of our camp fire. They were two young girls. They seemed to be in a very cheerful frame of mind in spite of the weather, and asked us: ‘Where are you off to in this glorious weather?’ Kapur said we were making for Garbyang, whereupon the girls gave him smilingly to understand that they would be very glad to see us in Garbyang. Kapur smiled back in a flattered sort of way and sacrificed his last cigarette on the strength of these new acquaintances. The weather had at last improved and as twilight came on we were able to continue our march.

Garbyang is one of the largest and most important places in the Himalayas (Plate 97). There is even a rest-house there for respectable travellers. As we were only poor pilgrims we naturally avoided this house and took up our quarters in the ‘Darasalam’, by which is meant an inn which affords free shelter to poor pilgrims. The Darasalam of Garbyang looks like a badly kept stable.
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As it was raining outside, the clay floor of the only room had become a morass, and upon this we had to sleep, as the only stones were used for the fireplace. The room was so low that we had to crawl about on our knees. There was no window, and no chimney to let the smoke out. As the continuous rain compelled us to cook inside the Darasalam itself, we lived in a perpetual cloud of smoke and our eyes were soon smarting and running with tears as a result.

We were still three days' march distant from Lipu-Lek Pass, 17,000 feet high, on the frontier between India and Tibet. Unfortunately even here, so near to the pass, we found it quite impossible to get accurate information as to whether the pass was already open or whether the snow was still so deep as to make it impossible for anyone to get through.

The men of Garbyang had only just got back to their village from the plain, and had their hands full with sowing their crops and getting their houses in order again. The majority of the inhabitants had not yet arrived, a state of affairs which suited us excellently, as the high officials of the village, such as the mayor and the postmaster, were still absent; and they were the people from whom we ran the greatest danger of being discovered. Although we lived as simply and modestly as possible we nevertheless became the social centre of Garbyang. Our wretched hut was continually surrounded by young men who wanted to talk to us. With Kapur it was quite simple; he spoke Hindustani fluently. But my knowledge of the language was very slender. So in order to avert suspicion Kapur explained to all visitors that it really
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was not worth their while trying to get into conversa-
tion with me as I was an idiot. I could not even manage
to speak my own language, and he had brought me with
him on this pilgrimage because my parents begged him
to do so.

The natives looked at me with interest for a minute
after listening to these explanations; and were distress-
singly quickly convinced of their truth. Among our
constant visitors there was an old man who called him-
self ‘the old Buddha’ (Plate 98). Every day he spent
several hours before our hut and told us the village news.
He claimed to have known the Englishman Landor, who
in 1897 had travelled in disguise by the same route into
Tibet. Landor succeeded in penetrating to the source of
the Brahmaputra. There he was recognized by the
Tibetans, taken prisoner, and tortured. Only after tre-
mendous difficulties did he succeed in making his way
back to India.

The old Buddha also told us that Landor had stayed
some time with his parents—the old man’s—after his
return from Tibet. With considerable delight and in
great detail he described the wounds and scars which
the Englishman had brought back with him from Tibet.
Then he shook his head solemnly and said: ‘It is a very
dangerous journey to Tibet. In your place I would not
go there.’ We asked him why we should not go to
Tibet. We were Indian pilgrims and nobody could pre-
vent us from visiting the holy mountain of Kailas.
Thereupon the old man merely shook his head again
and stuck to it that it was a dangerous journey. In spite
of my black beard and turban he had certainly recog-
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nized me for a European. But he was tactful enough to keep his knowledge to himself, and contented himself with telling us in detail about the pains and penalties that awaited the unwanted traveller to Tibet.

More cheerful company than that of this old man was provided by the two girls, Thun Singh by name, whom we had met by our fire in the rain. Kapur came back one day from shopping in great glee and told how he had not only bought flour and potatoes very cheaply from the two girls, but had also received an invitation for us to go and see them that evening. It was good to exchange the smoky, muddy Darasalam for a more habitable dwelling for a few hours. Though as far as I was concerned there was not much enjoyment about that evening. I was not, like Kapur, in a position to talk easily with the girls, so that he was already at an advantage on that score. Also it had by then got round in the village that I was a complete idiot, so the two girls were not to be blamed for directing all their attention to Kapur.

We spent most of this period of waiting at Garbyang in cooking. We knew that in Tibet we should have to do without all sorts of food, so we tried to make our present life as good as possible from the culinary point of view. In Garbyang we could get potatoes, flour, and several kinds of vegetables. For dessert there was misri, candied sugar, or, if we wanted to be particularly recherché, we mixed ghi, or melted butter, with gur, a sugary kind of malt. Here, too, we ate for the first time tsamba, the national dish of Tibet. Tsamba consists of flour made from dried corn, which is ground and then
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mixed either with water or tea till it forms a dough (Plate 103). While we were in Tibet we lived almost entirely on tsamba and we liked it very much. When we first tried it in Garbyang we certainly found it rather difficult going. It was not easy to get the dry mixture down.

The weather continued to be appalling. Every day at midday it began to rain hard, and up in the mountains it snowed. The mornings were wonderful. The mighty peaks of the Himalayas, clad in a white mantle of fresh snow, shone in unbelievable beauty above the dark pine woods.

We learnt of a curious custom of the Bhutias by which young girls may get to know marriageable young men. In Garbyang there was a so-called ‘Rambang house’ where the girls and young men could meet. The girls busied themselves with spinning, and beside each girl sat a youth who tried to entertain her as best he could. Thus the afternoons are spent at the Rambang house in spinning and singing. If a couple wants to marry, the man must pay the bride’s father a sum of about a hundred rupees. This money is called ‘milk money’, for it is intended to refund the parents for what they have spent on bringing up their daughter.

One evening before we reached Garbyang, while we were pitching our tents, we had made the acquaintance of a very intelligent Bhutia called Nar Singh. He asked where we were going, and when he heard that we intended going on to Tibet he at once offered to accompany us as guide and interpreter. We needed such an interpreter, for neither Kapur nor Kitar could speak
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Tibetan sufficiently well. Nar Singh’s home was at Gunj, a little village a few hours away from Garbyang, where he had a house of his own. We had arranged to meet him there. But we had travelled a good deal more quickly than he with his flocks, and we expected to have to wait a long time for him to catch us up. However, after only four days, he came in one morning, grinning cheerfully. We sent him on to Gunj, where we intended to make the final preparations with him for the crossing into Tibet.
Chapter Six

GURLA MANDHATA

Without much trouble we managed to find two coolies to carry our heaviest baggage to Gunj. We decided that it was really too dangerous to make a long stay in Garbyang, lying as it did on the main route to Tibet. If we were going to have to wait some days longer for better weather we had better wait in Gunj. We did not want to excite further attention in Garbyang, preferring to avoid all questions; so we left the village soon after dawn. I shall never forget that morning. It had rained for three days, and high up it had snowed. Then the day broke cloudless. Our way led through thick pine forests, while the mountains along the route to the Lipu-Lek Pass shone in their fresh white covering of snow. From Nepal, the impenetrable country of the Himalayas, Mount Api, 24,154 feet high rose up towards the heavens. We ourselves were only about ten thousand feet up, and this magnificent peak towered twelve thousand feet above us into the sky. We had to tilt our heads far back to see the summit, so near was it and so high above where we stood.
Gurla Mandhata

We reached Gunj at midday. Nar Singh came out to meet us, brandishing a bottle of rice wine promisingly in his hand, and gave us a toast of welcome. He gave us potatoes and flour, led us to a good place on his land where we could pitch our tents, and in fact did everything he could to make our lives happier. The only drawback was that he would not hear of departure until he had finished sowing his crops. The weather grew worse again in the afternoon, so we were in no hurry either to exchange inhabited regions for the solitary, snow-bound passes of the Himalayas.

For the next few days it rained almost continuously, the temperature hardly rose above zero, and in the tents it was cold, damp, and thoroughly uncomfortable. I lay in my warm sleeping-sack and read Rilke's wonderful *Letters to a Young Poet*, which a discerning friend had sent out to me in India, as being, to use her words, 'the only thing I can think of that can compete with the tremendous impressions that must be all around you'. It was good to follow the thoughts of a solitary, great mind here in the solitude and immensity of the Himalayas. I spent long hours in meditation at Gunj. During those days my thoughts often went homewards. It was Whitsuntide, a reflective Whit-Sunday filled with rain, damp, and the happiness of solitude. On that Whit-Sunday I wrote this letter in my diary:

'Letter to you.
'Perhaps you are thinking of me at this minute. Do you know, it's just a year since we first met each other. We went out into the smiling spring, and you sat on the
fresh young grass, your dear lips were laughing and saying all sorts of nice things, and spring and Life were all about us.

'Perhaps to-day you are thinking of me; perhaps again you are sitting with folded hands in some green meadow looking out into the distance. You always had a sort of longing for what was far off, and now you envy me because my longing has been fulfilled, because of my solitary nights in my Himalayan tent. Yes, you would even like to get away from your social round and be with me here.

'Well do not spend too much time on dreams like that, little one. Solitary nights in tents aren't always such fun. It has been raining, grey and monotonous, for three days now. The tent, not a very grand one, lets the water through splendidly. I lie in a damp sleeping-sack and think of you.

'No, it's a good thing you aren't here. I haven't shaved for weeks, and I've hardly washed for days. The tent smells of damp clothes, and you would not find me much fun to talk to. Here you learn to be silent for a long time, and to think, but you forget how to talk nicely.

'Perhaps in the meantime you have exchanged the meadow in which I've imagined you alone and lost in thought, for some party where there are crowds of people and where your dear smile rewards every one who talks to you. Deep down within you you feel vaguely dissatisfied and lonely, but there is hardly time for you to think much about it. You come home late at night, tired out, and your days are filled with a lovely
lady’s duties and pleasures, and there’s no point in your thinking too much either—it’s rather painful for one thing.

‘And now the rain has stopped after all, and the uniform, oppressive greyness that has surrounded me for days has dispersed, the bare plateaux of the Himalaya become visible, and the snow mountains where the gods of the East dwell. A pale setting sun drenches everything in a mysterious, ghostly light.

‘If you could see all this, perhaps your dear lips, with their happy chatter and their smiles that promise so much, would be closed in awestruck reverence and you would fold your hands as if in prayers.

‘But all the same, it is a good thing you aren’t here. You would find the way back into your world too difficult—into your world that is so lightly made up of conventions and superficialities and is so full of change.

‘So I shall not send you this letter; it would sound sad and serious to you. When I get back into the hot plains I’ll send you a nice cheerful coloured picture postcard.

‘And if the gods of the Sacred Mountains are good to me, in only a few months we shall be sitting in another meadow—an autumn one—with the woods all about us in their most gorgeous colours. We shall talk and laugh, and I shall hold your little hands and kiss your dear mouth. And we shall hardly notice how deeply solitary and alone we are at this moment.’

The weather had improved at last, and we prepared to set out for Tibet. Nar Singh sold us sufficient quantities of tsamba and flour, and we provided ourselves with
62. Burmese dancers—the chief attraction at the nightly Pwe

63. The Shwe-Dagon Pagoda in Rangoon
64. Graceful movement—Burmese dancers in their beautiful butterfly dresses
65. An offering of flowers for the god

66. Praying in a pagoda
68. The funeral of a Burmese monk. The coffin is being carried to the funeral pyre.

67. Every Burmese youth spends some time in a monastery as a mendicant monk.
69. The coffin is lifted on to the pyre

70. In a few minutes the decorated pyre is a heap of ashes
71. The culminating movement in the war dance of the Chin. The defeated dancer seeks to ward off his invisible conqueror as he falls to the ground.

72. A Chin offering hospitality to a stranger—rice, eggs, and schnapps.
73. Chin performing their war-dance

74. A cross-bow in the hands of a Chin warrior is a deadly weapon
75. A girl from Manipur in festal dress
food for more than ten days, for we heard that it was difficult to get enough to eat in Tibet. Two Tibetan nomads who were employed by Nar Singh to help in ploughing and tilling were to accompany us as coolies over the Lipu-Lek Pass. When Kitar allotted their respective loads to them they produced a spring balance with a strong little spring, reckoned up the weight of their loads, and immediately raised loud cries of protest. They could never get over the pass into Tibet with such heavy loads on their backs. Nar Singh, however, merely laughed at their excitement, and after a lengthy palaver we finally succeeded in dividing the loads up among us in such a way that every one was content, or, perhaps more accurately, so that every one was at least equally discontented.

We had now left inhabited regions behind us, for the two villages of Kalapani and Syonchun, which were marked on my map, proved to be quite deserted. Low stone walls which served as protection against the wind that blows almost unceasingly showed that they were used as resting-places for travellers. The scenery became wilder and more rugged and we gradually left the last pines behind us and found ourselves above the forest level. I went on ahead of the others and lay down on a little spur of rock in the midst of lovely pasture land. It was wonderful to lie there quite still—though even then I was not completely happy. I envied the eagles overhead.

Through the tall grasses that swayed gently in the breeze I saw the white glaciers shining. I was quite alone, and it was so still that the silence could be heard like a
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harmonious murmur. And as I lay thus waiting, suddenly out of the empty heavens there appeared a dark speck. It soared high up above me and passed on, taking no notice of me only to return again after some minutes. The speck grew larger and larger, until finally I saw the wing of an eagle glinting in the sunlight. If one lies motionless in the sun and allows the bird to think that one might possibly be food for him, he will come down lower and lower. The wind blows through his wings, until at last one takes fright and seizes one’s axe, for his claws have come too near. Thus one destroys his hopes of food, and he goes off to look for other prey. This is the place to see the sovereign among birds, here in his own country among the sovereign mountains. They make one unhappy, these eagles, for one can only crawl and struggle toilsomely up those mountains about which they circle at will. One longs to know as perhaps they know what those great white spaces are.

About midday on the second day we reached Syonchun, the last place where it was possible to halt before crossing the pass. It was a lonely valley high up in the mountains. To the north-east we looked up at the pass itself, and to the west and east the mighty Himalayas ranged themselves. Huge banks of thunder-clouds threatened. All day long an icy wind blew. Round about midday, when the sun was at its highest, it was quite pleasantly warm in the shelter of the little stone walls which had been erected here for the benefit of travellers. We had brought wood and yak dung with us from lower down and managed to keep up a poor fire with them. The way from this place up to the pass led over steep snowfields.
The sun, which here, at a latitude corresponding roughly to that of Cairo, blazes down steadily all day, had melted the snow so that it was quite soft. We tried to go on climbing with our loads, but at every step we sank deeply into the soft wet snow. We were compelled to wait until the snow was sufficiently hard by the coldness of the night to bear both us and our loads.

It was already bitterly cold by the early afternoon. Our fuel was practically exhausted and we crouched shivering, pressed close against each other, under the shelter of the wall. We were just going to set up our tent so as to get some protection against the worst of the cold when two Tibetans suddenly appeared. They had heard down below in the valley that we were going to cross the pass, and they wanted to join on to our party so as to share the dangers of the crossing with us. They were going to Taklakot, where a Tibetan local official lived, so we had to be very careful not to attract their notice in any way. For this reason we did not dare to use our tent. We had to wait about, shivering in the icy cold, until two in the morning; not till then was the snow frozen hard enough. We divided the loads up between us and began the ascent. It was a dark, cloudy night, and only occasionally the moonlight shone out over the snowy surface. We climbed slowly. For the first time on this journey we passed the 16,000 feet level. Both we and the coolies found our heavy loads difficult to carry. Often we threw ourselves down on the hard frozen snow to get a few minutes’ rest. Just as the grey light of dawn was appearing we reached the level of the pass. Prayer-flags and chôtens showed that we had reached
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a point of some importance. There were chôtens and cairns, with bits of material on them, sheeps' horns, and stones of a particular colour (Plates 99, 104). These chôtens are memorials to famous holy men. Every traveller who passes by lays some stones upon them, and it is of particular merit if the stones are as nearly white as possible. We all tore bits of stuff off our clothes and fastened them to the stones. According to Tibetan ideas, every flutter of these little flags means a prayer, and the more flags you fasten to the various chôtens you pass on a journey, the more merit you make for yourself in eternity.

The sun fought its way slowly through thick mist. In the north we saw the tremendous peak of Gurla Mandhata. Our Tibetan companions were constantly prostrating themselves in prayer. It was a great moment for them when they crossed the pass into their own country. We descended slowly over steep snowfields to the north. We were now in Tibet. The scenery had completely changed. The hard, sharp outlines of mountains and the familiar pine woods which are characteristic of the south side of the Himalayas had disappeared. The landscape here in Tibet seemed dead and lacking in vegetation. After we had reached the snow-line the way led over enormous slopes of scree out of which the mountains rose up to dizzy heights, naked, without any sign of plant life. Not till two in the afternoon did we make our first long halt near a little watercourse. We had been twelve hours on the way and were all dead tired. But we could not prolong this halt too greatly, although we longed to do so, for we wanted to reach Taklakot the same even-
ing. As we had already heard from various people, there was a Tibetan official there who had been sent there by the Government in Lhasa. Every pilgrim and every traveller who comes from India into Tibet by this route must announce himself to this official, or chöten Sahib, as the Tibetans call him, and get from him permission to continue his journey. We had already evolved various schemes as to how we might elude this danger. Our interpreter had originally advised that we should pitch camp for the night shortly before Taklakot and should then slip quietly past the sleeping town under cover of darkness and proceed on our way into forbidden Tibet. This scheme had become unfeasible, however, since we had the two Tibetans from Taklakot with us. If we tried to avoid Taklakot now, that would be sure to rouse suspicion in them, and they would certainly talk about it in their own village. It would then have been only a question of days before the Tibetan authorities caught us. Incredible though it is, every rumour gets round in no time in these thinly populated districts and it is almost impossible for a traveller who is not dressed exactly like a Tibetan to go on his way unnoticed. There was thus no choice. We had to go to Taklakot. We arranged the length of our halt so that we should get to Taklakot in the twilight of evening. As we approached the place I hung back behind the others and when the two Tibetans turned round to look for me I swayed suspiciously from side to side and groaned heart-rendingly. When we came to a stream I dipped my turban into the cold water and wound it round my fevered brow. The Tibetans thereupon declared that I must have
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got the dreaded mountain-sickness, which was not at all surprising, seeing that I was an Indian and not used to such heights. They told us that even they, when they returned to their home after a long period spent among the much lower hills in India, would often be overcome by this malady. As soon as we reached Taklakot my friends got me into the Darasalam, where I writhed moaning on the clay floor. Some dirty, sympathetic Tibetan faces bent over me. But I huddled myself up so that they could not see much of my face. While they were discussing what was the best thing to be done for the poor sick man, the interpreter and my companions made their way to the official. He lived in a little palace which lay outside the village and slightly above it on a bare hillside. My companions came back and reported that he had been very kind and gracious. He had asked whether the way over the pass was still very difficult because of the great quantity of snow and had expressed pleasure at being able to welcome Indian pilgrims so early in the year. He gave them permission to continue their journey, and, best of all, he did not want to see the sick pilgrim. The way to the Sacred Mountain lay open to me.

While the interpreter and Kapur were talking animatedly to various Tibetans I had to stay inside in the darkest and smokiest corner of the Darasalam so as to avoid any possibility of being discovered. Here on the borders it was difficult for me to travel as an Indian for all the Tibetans who lived here had seen Indians before and spoke Hindustani. They would consequently have found out very easily that I was not an Indian. Later on,
when we had penetrated farther into the interior of the country, it was easier for me to pass as an Indian. In the farther northern districts Tibetan is the only general language. Indians come so seldom into these lonely parts that I had no need to fear that my appearance and my inadequate knowledge of Hindustani would prove dangerous for me.

The two Tibetan coolies who had brought a part of our baggage over the pass stayed behind in Taklakot. Unless we were prepared to divide up the really very heavy loads among ourselves, we must look out for other means of porterage. Kapur soon came to terms with a horse-dealer, who said that he was prepared to accompany us with two horses on our journey. He asked three rupees as a daily wage for himself and the horses. The next day we left the village soon after sunrise. It was still so cold that only very few inhabitants had left their houses, and so we were able to continue our journey without any misadventures. I do not think we had any of us thought that it would prove so easy to overcome this obstacle on the way to the Sacred Mountain. We went on northwards over gently sloping plateaux and low hills. As far as the eye could reach we could not see a single tree, nor even the green of some poor pastureland. The bare plateaux spread out before us, in the background the wonderful glaciers of the Himalayas, with heavy monsoon clouds moving slowly above them. Over all lay a sky of a quite incredible azure blue. We had reached the land of the gods (Plates 101, 105).

Many months before I had seen a picture of Gurla Mandhata in a book of Sven Hedin's. It was then that the
idea of attacking this Himalayan giant first came to me. With its 25,361 feet it counts as one of the highest peaks ever climbed. I did not dare to talk to my best friends about this plan. The way from the University of Vienna into the wilderness of the Tibetan mountains seemed too far and too improbable altogether. But now the months had gone by, difficult months often, and filled with impotent longing. The great desire that had filled my life so ardently and for so long was to come true.

We pitched our tents in a deep valley near the village of Rungong. To the east we could see the snowy peaks of Gurla Mandhata. They shone rosy and enticing in the glow of the evening sun. I went up on to a hill nearby to get my bearings. Thirty years before an Englishman, Dr. Longstaff, had attempted this mountain. In company with two Swiss guides he made his way up to about 1,000 feet short of the summit, and then exhaustion forced him back. This performance bordered on the miraculous. He published an exact account of his route and some photographs, by which I could work out the way. The summit seemed very near and the path up to it easy. Our camp at Rungong was only 14,500 feet up, so we were still separated from the summit by more than 9,000 feet. In fact, the peak only seemed so low because it stood at a great distance horizontally from where I was. I turned back to the camp happy and confident; to-morrow we would start on our way and in a few days we should have conquered the mountain.

At this point I must explain my scheme a little and talk about mountain climbing in general in the Himalayas, especially in order to pacify the experienced moun-
tain climbers among my readers, who must already be wrinkling their brows. It must seem slightly comic when a coolie from Nepal—with, admittedly, considerable experience of the Himalayas—and a young man from Europe, with absolutely none, set out to climb a 25,000-foot peak. But this attempt was to be the result of months of thought. My equipment was scanty, but it was carefully thought out, and it ought to be adequate. There were only two of us, so we had to carry between us sleeping-sacks, tents, provisions, cooking apparatus, climbing-irons, and all the many other necessary things. But even if our rucksacks were heavy, we were used to a hard life, and we would manage them all right. There were two things in particular which prevented our attempt from seeming quite mad from the very beginning. Firstly Gurla Mandhata is, by Alpine standards, an easy mountain; and secondly here, in the dryness of Tibet, the snow-line comes at 18,500 feet and even higher, so we had only 5,500 feet to go over snow.

It is not easy to find mountaineering equipment in India. One cannot just buy rucksacks and such things; they have to be sent out from Europe, or if one has not much money, as was the case with me, one must make them oneself. I tried to do this, but in spite of three efforts I did not seem able to produce a proper rucksack. The result when filled was like a gigantic sausage, which was far from well adapted to being carried on the back. In the end a German friend in Delhi lent me a proper rucksack. Ice-axes are also hard come by in India.

It is not only climbing preparations that are so different in the Himalayas; the climbing itself is quite unlike
climbing in the Alps. In the Alps technical ability, alertness, and clear thinking are necessary prerequisites for success. But those requirements are nothing like enough in the Himalayas; one needs money, and a good deal of it. One must take provisions for several weeks. And one must make the slopes of the mountain habitable with tents to shelter the coolies who follow. Coolies are necessary, and they in their turn need food, so that more coolies are necessary. Thus the size of an expedition increases like a snowball and often reaches as many as five hundred coolies.

According to present experience, there are two different methods used in climbing in the Himalayas. Camps were used in the Nanga Parbat, Kantsch, and Mount Everest expeditions. The expedition is planned on a broad basis, with eight or ten Europeans and perhaps thirty coolies to make the actual assault. They push their camps up gradually higher and higher and equip these with provisions and fuel, and the members of the expedition become accustomed by degrees to the height, until finally in good conditions a small party makes a rush from the highest camp to the top. The advantages of this method are obvious. It is possible to await a suitable moment for making the final assault on the summit, and as the number of Europeans is large the men who happen to be fittest at that moment can be sent out to make the assault.

The disadvantages are equally obvious: this method is enormously expensive. Also an expedition of this kind cannot move quickly, and it has often happened that as a result of the monsoon breaking early all the
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weary preparations have been buried in deep snow.

The second method is what English climbers call the rush method. It implies the transfer of Alpine technique to the Himalayas, and with a minimum of porters and equipment one tries to ‘rush’ the mountain in the shortest possible time. There is neither time nor food sufficient to allow of careful acclimatization; one must either reach the top in a few days, or return to the valley. The best known representative of this form of technique is Dr. Longstaff, who by this method climbed the Trisul and only just failed to reach the top of Gurla Mandhata. The man who pushes this method to its furthest lengths is the Everest climber Eric Shipton. Certainly this method has a future. It is true that on the highest mountains of the world the ‘rush’ method is not practicable, but a combination of the two methods would probably produce the ideal solution. Smythe, who climbed Mount Kamet (25,413 feet), recognized perhaps better than any other climber the difference between climbing in the Himalayas and in the European mountains. The Alps might perhaps forgive a mistake in the preparation or carrying out of an expedition, the Himalayas never.

As all these thoughts went through my mind, and as I looked up again and again to the longed-for peak, I asked myself what force it was that had driven me so far and that was now driving me still farther. I knew that perhaps neither Kitar nor I would come back from the mountain. Kitar had a wife and child in Darjeeling, I had a father at home, but all the same we were both filled with a desire to fight this battle, however near to the edge of existence it might bring us.
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I sat under the lee of a great block of stone and looked up yet again at the summit, which was growing darker now. How curious life is, I thought. Here I am fighting for the fulfilment of a profound desire. I want to climb a geographically completely unimportant mountain and to do so I am ready to risk my life. But I am not the only climber in the Himalayas. To the east of me the English are making another attack on the summit of the world; in the west, in the Karakoram, a French expedition is assaulting the 'hidden peak'. We sacrifice our money and risk our lives to reach goals that will bring humanity not one jot more happiness or knowledge. Ought we then to condemn such undertakings? Never; we who can go out into the wide spaces ought to thank God that we are ready to fight for things that can bring no visible gain either to us or to other people, but that nevertheless bring us happiness. A greater man than I has put into words what I can only feel dimly. Henry Hoch, speaking of the meaning of this struggle for a mountain, and about youth that goes out to seek it, says: 'Nations have become great and strong because their youth found delight in danger and adventure; and nations have had to retreat from the stage of history because their youth lost that delight.'

I turned back to the camp. The evening ahead was to be a great occasion, at least for Kitar and me. For weeks we had carried with us some tins of food. They had been destined for the assault on the mountain. But now it turned out that our rucksacks were too heavy, and we could not carry all the tins with us. But neither did we want to take them farther into Tibet with us,
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for they would only increase the danger of our being found out. So we decided here and now to have a meal to celebrate. Kapur and little Randshid had neither the equipment nor the experience to permit of their attacking Gurla Mandhata, and would stay behind in camp the next day. It seemed to me quite obvious that only Kitar and I, who had, after all, great exertions ahead of us, should eat sausages and pineapple. But Kitar was not subtle enough to appreciate the superior speculative mental processes of a practical European. 'There are four of us and we are all going to eat,' said he simply when I handed him half the tin. I was ashamed of myself. As a matter of fact, it was quite a good thing that we did divide everything into four portions, not only from reasons of higher altruism, but also on purely base and selfish grounds. Our stomachs, which throughout weeks had grown accustomed to Indian food, proved unequal to the simultaneous onslaught of sausages and pineapple chunks, and our sleep was disturbed.

The next morning dawned cloudless over the mountains; it was May 16th. We were in no hurry. The sun shone down warm upon us. I spread rancid butter over my climbing-shoes and my face. Ranshid cooked a tremendous quantity of roti for our farewell meal, and there were still some potatoes left. We took our time filling our rucksacks; even now they were still bulkier and heavier than I had feared. Kitar's weighed over eighty pounds, mine just over fifty pounds. We weighed them on a spring balance such as you often find in these parts; they are indispensable in districts where barter is the chief method of trade. Our sacks were so heavy that we
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could not put them on standing, but had to sit down on the ground to it, and then help each other on to our feet again. We were anxious not to exhaust ourselves too much on the first day, so we gave Randshid some of the baggage to carry. He was to accompany us as far as the first camp. Our ice-axes, which we had kept hidden up till now in the depths of our tent-sack, came into use at last. We advanced slowly towards the slopes of the mountain. Kapur came with us some way, then stayed behind. We crossed enormous steep banks of scree and came gradually nearer to the mountain; probably the foot of man had never ventured on those slopes before. Every step we took sent down avalanches of stones into the depths below, and we had to take great care not to follow them ourselves (Plate 106). By midday we had crossed this unpleasant patch and were mounting over firmer scree slopes. Slowly we reached a greater height; the view became more magnificent with every step we took. To the south lay the mighty range of the Himalayas, peak beside peak, Kamet, Api, Nampa, and all the others spread out insuperable in front of us. A widely travelled Englishman had told me that the view of the Himalayas from the north was something that made life worth living and caused one to utter prayers of thanksgiving. And in fact the majesty of these mountains was like a deep and beautiful prayer that even now in Europe still echoes after me and draws me back.

We had to send Randshid back about five o’clock in the afternoon. There was hardly room for two in one tent, so he had to reach our main base before darkness came on. He threw himself before us on the ground
when he took leave of us, a thing he had never done before. Perhaps he thought we were mad, or perhaps exceptionally fortunate, for we should come nearer to the gods. He disappeared quickly over the steep banks of scree. With our heavier rucksacks we went on a few hundred yards higher, then set up camp, the first on Gurla Mandhata.

We had not yet reached the snow-line. We built a stone wall about the tent to protect us against the wind. The night in the tiny tent was pleasantly warm. I suffered oddly enough from fantastic dreams which were perhaps due to the altitude, but which, however, did not recur in the higher camps. This fact is also mentioned by Smythe, the climber of Kamet.

In the morning we spent a long time making tea. The oil stove, which I had had no opportunity of trying out previously at such altitudes, worked irregularly. Sometimes it seemed about to explode and at other times it would only burn with a tiny flame. Anyway, it took us nearly two hours to prepare a saucerful of lukewarm water which it was impossible to call tea.

Then we proceeded on our upward way, and soon reached the snow-line. The snow was blown by the wind, and we did not sink in very deep. The monsoon clouds, which had already shown threateningly over the Himalayas in the early morning, came nearer and shrouded us in thick mist. A storm got up, and the air was filled with electricity. Our ice-axes and the metal parts of our rucksacks gave off sparks. We were forced to pitch our tent at midday, and we found we could bury it deep in the snow (Plate 107). Now for the first
time we found the smallness of the tent a drawback; it was so low that we had to creep into it like snakes, one of us head first, the other legs first, so as to make the most use possible of the very limited space. We also had to take our shoes off outside the tent. This was a nuisance because of the snow, although as a matter of fact it did not matter if a little snow got into the tent, for as the temperature was below zero it never melted. During the night our breath condensed into frost on the inside of the ice-cold canvas of the tent and every gust of wind precipitated a miniature fall of snow on to us. We were frosted all over with white by the morning.

Nevertheless we were quite warm during all the nights we spent on Gurla Mandhata. We held an air mattress between us which protected us against the bitterest cold of the ground. We each had two eiderdown sleeping-sacks with waterproof covers. In addition to this I had on—counting from outside inwards—a wind-jacket, two pullovers, one shirt, one pullover, two shirts, two vests. Kitar wore much the same. I still do not understand to-day how we managed to find room for ourselves and our rucksacks in that minute tent.

After a stormy night the third morning dawned almost cloudless (Plate 108). Only in the south some little clouds were hovering, which grew rapidly larger. The hilly plateau from which we had climbed up three days before lay invisible under a thick layer of mist above which a few high peaks rose like islands. Mount Railes dominated that sea of mist, towering over them all. On the previous day clouds had hidden the view, but now for the first time we saw the Sacred Mountain.
The Naga drink rice-wine out of buffalo-horns
77. A young Naga

78. A young Naga in festal dress
79. Sports at a feast in a Naga village

80. Rice-wine plays an important part in Naga life
81. The dance of the Naga—a rhythmic hopping
82. The height of enjoyment
83. Ceremonial dress of the Naga, only worn on great occasions
84. The guests returning to their village after a feast
85. Military motor-roads and festally clad head-hunters—untouched Asia and modern development
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It did not look overwhelming, indeed it almost seemed as if its summit were below us, but all the same I doubt if it is possible to obtain a more beautiful view of this mountain than from Gurla Mandhata. A shining white sea of mist lay below us, always moving, piling up and then dissolving again, and above it an azure-blue sky, and poised between the two the white pyramid of the great mountain.

It had snowed hard during the night, and it was rather difficult going on the ridge. We had to use climbing-irons, and sank almost to our knees in the deep snow. But we were very cheerful. We were climbing higher, even if only very gradually. Kitar said proudly: Ök Sahib, ök coolie, ök peak’! by which he meant: ‘One Sahib, one coolie, one peak!’ He was obviously happy; he strained like a buffalo against the weight of his terribly clumsy, heavy rucksack, the veins stood out on his forehead, and his dark face had a bluish tinge; but he plodded imperturbably upwards with me.

I myself was still pretty fit physically on the third day, but during the next two days my state became rapidly worse. We really had as much as we could manage, with our heavy rucksacks, the wading in the deep snow, and the bad weather.

It was midday once more, and once more wisps of mist were all about us, and once more we could scarcely protect ourselves against the force of the storm, but finally had to pitch our tent. The ridge had become narrow and steep, and the tent was perched near the abyss. I felt no hunger at all, only a limitless thirst. But with our inadequate oil stove we could hardly manage
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to thaw the icy snow sufficiently to be able to suck moisture from it. Kitar opened a tin of bully beef, but the mere smell of meat nearly made me sick. When I forgot to inhale deeply I experienced some difficulty with my breathing and had to begin again to take in air deeply and regularly; Kitar too was breathing with difficulty.

The next morning granted us a clear distant view for a few minutes, and we saw the ridge leading up to the summit (Plate 109). The summit itself we could not see. Packing up the tent cost valuable time, and lacing our hard-frozen shoes took even longer. It was only with considerable trouble that I could bend in my thick clothing sufficiently to be able to reach my shoes. I managed to get the shoelace through one eye, and then I had to lie on my back like a drowning man and breathe in the thin air.

It was no easy, pleasant battle that we were fighting here, but a fierce, cruel contest. It had been fine for days; why must it snow just on that particular day and make the way up more difficult for us? Nevertheless we could still climb. Thus the fourth day passed. We left some of our provisions behind so as to have a depot for the return journey, and also in order to lighten our packs.

The aneroid showed 23,175 feet when we again had to set up the tent at midday. Another 2,180 feet to the top—how were we going to manage it? It was only with difficulty that we had got ourselves thus far. Giddiness had assailed us, and we had had to stick our ice-axes deep into the snow in order to find a support when our strength threatened to desert us. Now we were lying

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again in the little tent. We had to pitch it sideways on a slope which was not perfectly safe from avalanches, for on the ridge the wind would have blown us away. Here we were protected against the storm, but we had the avalanches to fear. We ate nothing, and at first we made no attempt to light our stove, but just sucked snow so as to feel some moisture in our mouths. We lay closely pressed against each other in the little tent, Kitar the Asiatic and I the European. We were both alone with our thoughts, and probably he too felt as I did, vaguely but urgently, how near was death, and how lovely was life. The storm beat against the canvas of our tent, so that I often feared that it might not be able to withstand its force. Vainly I tried to order my thoughts along definite lines, to think of people who had been or who still were dear to me. But I could not compel my thoughts. I felt that Kitar was near me and was glad not to be alone in that night.

We did not talk that night—what was there to say? Only once, when the storm threatened to overturn the tent, Kitar said: ‘The gods.’ He said it quite placidly, without fear and without hope, as one speaks of something inevitable.

But that night too came to an end. We even slept a little—perhaps really we slept most of the night, and it was only my crazy dreams that seemed to me so long and fearful.

The fifth day dawned. The storm of the night before had died down. Clouds hung over the ridge, mist was in the air and snowflakes were falling slowly. We packed up the tent and looked at each other questioningly for
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a minute, then we both nodded to each other—we were going on. We wound the rope about us once more and fastened on our climbing-irons. As soon as we got up on to the ridge the storm had us in its grip. I needed to draw six breaths for each step or sometimes even twelve. I remember these numbers, because I muttered to myself in time with my panting breaths: ‘Up—you—go—you—great—fool.’ But in spite of this encouragement I did not get far. We must have made a sorry spectacle as we dragged ourselves toilsomely and staggeringly upwards. It was easy for me to spend myself to the uttermost, for I was struggling for something for which I had long wanted to struggle. But Kitar? What an amazing performance his was! Did he trust me so deeply, or did he just follow me blindly, indifferent to wherever the way might lead him? Once a terrific blast seized on his huge rucksack and he lurched down the steep snow slope. I dug in my axe, and so managed to hold him up. His breath came in laborious pants as he stood beside me again, and his face was ashen after his superhuman efforts, for he had been very near death. He stood there on a storm-batter ridge thousands of feet above the valleys where living people dwell. He had penetrated with an unbeliever into the land of his gods. He looked at me and composed his features into a cheerful grin to set my fears at rest. Yes, you had a stout heart, Kitar!

The mist lifted for a minute. We saw the summit before us, quite close to us—but also quite inaccessible. The ridge ran into the summit at a point which we, in our present conditions, could never surmount. There were steep ledges of rock covered with fresh snow. To
the north we could see another ridge which seemed to lead to the summit without difficulty. We could not reach it from where we were, for a steep wall of ice separated us from the glacier that lay between our ridge and the farther one. But I could see a possible new route for a second attempt, and therefore it was less difficult to take the decision to turn back.

We turned back. The distance that we had covered in four hard days on the journey up took us only one day on the return journey. We had reached a height of 23,500 feet. The tracks of our climb were already blown away and we hardly recognized the places where the tent had been pitched. Late in the afternoon we reached the snow-line, which was now several hundred feet lower than when we came up. I was quite at the end of my strength. I threw myself down anywhere between two sheltering rocks and told Kitar to go on to the camp and send some one out to meet me. Kitar set off into the valley without a word. He had not said much up there when death came near to him, and he did not say much now when life was given back to him.

I lay quite still. Everything was empty within me. I had not even the strength to be sorry or to sleep. Then I too staggered down the endless scree slopes.

Our comrades in the main base had in the meantime waited, three, four, nearly five days for us. They just sat and gazed at the mountain. Then suddenly a figure appeared out of the mist surrounding the mountain, a figure descending slowly. They fixed their eyes on the place where this figure had emerged from the mist, but no second figure showed itself. Then they decided that
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one of us must have been left behind on the mountain. And Randshid, the little cook-boy, who had never been particularly kindly treated either by Kitar or by me, burst into tears. He still had red eyes when I came into the camp.

Before I reached the tents the interpreter came out to meet me with a flask of hot tea. It was just twilight when I came into the camp. I told Kapur about the new ridge that we had seen, and that after some days of rest we would try to follow up that route on to the summit. But a piece of bad news was awaiting me. Kapur told me that the villagers from Rungong had seen us going on to the mountain with ice-axes. Their suspicions had at once been awakened, and now they were convinced that we were going to seek for gold and silver up there. They were going to send messengers to the official at Taklakot, or else to take us prisoners forthwith. It was only with the greatest trouble that we eventually succeeded in convincing them of our innocence and in making them believe that we had really only climbed the mountain to be nearer to the gods.

But it was out of the question to make a second attempt, and the results would certainly have boded ill for us had we tried to do so. I tottered into the tent, feeling no hunger whatever. Everything suddenly seemed to me empty and meaningless.

The next morning, however, hunger drove me out of the tent before any one else. It was not yet daylight, and the surrounding hills still lay in the darkness of night, out of which Gurla Mandhata in its white covering of snow raised itself on high like a flaming torch of
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victory. And in that moment all the anger stored up within me vanished. One day somebody else will come who will know how to fight better and more successfully than I and he will reach the summit. But the best I can wish him is that he may feel as happy and free as I after my defeat.

The dream of Gurla Mandhata, which had filled my life for so long, was over. We became respectable pilgrims again and went on our way northwards.
It was only when we continued our journey into Tibet that we got to know this strange land and its inhabitants better. Until now we had avoided every meeting and had travelled as far as possible among the unfrequented mountains. But it is worth while to get to know this country and its people. And what a curious people they are!

The area of Tibet is some eight hundred thousand square miles; its population is about two millions. There are few regions of the earth which are so thinly populated. The Tibetans are of Mongol origin and probably came in first from the north-east, and later from Assam and Burma. Herodotus makes mention of Tibet. He relates that to the north of India there is a country where enormous black ants dig for gold. If they see a stranger they catch him and kill him. This legend may have a grain of truth in it. For in western Tibet to-day there are large gold mines and the workers in them are clothed in heavy black garments because of the intense cold. It may be that they did so even as long ago as Herodotus' time,
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and that the savage Tibetan dogs, which are also black attacked travellers even in those days.

Buddhism, which spread from Nepal and India, came to Tibet in the fifth century A.D. It was not, however, until two hundred years later that it began to play an important part in the life of the country. King Song-tsen Gam-po, who had two Buddhist wives, did much to further the growth of this religion, and he also introduced into Tibet the written characters which are used to this day.

The present religion of Tibet is a mixture of the original Buddhism and nature worship, and is called Lamaism. A similar mixture of Buddhism and a belief in spirits is also found in Burma—but what a difference there is between the religions of these two countries! There is here, indeed, a wonderful example of how the development of a religion depends on the geography of a country and on the character of the population, which in its turn is also partly formed by geographical factors. In Burma, a country of pleasant jungle and peaceful rivers, a cheerful religion has grown up. The faithful approach the pagodas decked with flowers and bring their offerings smilingly—they are even not afraid to flirt a little. I have met no religion which expresses itself as peaceably and happily as Burmese Buddhism.

Lamaism expresses itself very differently; but the character of the Tibetan countryside is also very different from that of Burma. In Burma, inevitably, one might almost say, beautiful pagodas have been erected and the people bring their smiling offerings of flowers. In Tibet, inevitably too, strange mountain monasteries have grown up, and fanatical hermits immure themselves in caves in
order that they may come nearer to Nirvana. In a country like Tibet, where loneliness and infinity are overwhelming, one cannot pray smiling. There is perhaps no other scenery in the world in the face of which one feels so small and worthless as among the icy mountains and limitless plains of Tibet. During the whole time that we were in Tibet I hardly exchanged ten words a day with Kapur. We were both shaken to the depths of our being by the aspect of this land, or, rather, by the emotions which that aspect aroused within us.

The people who live in Tibet are always conscious of how infinitesimal they are. Gods, demons, and spirits surround them. If we noticed a mark on a stone, the Tibetans would tell us that a god had placed his hand or his foot upon it.

Around Mount Kailas there is a grey, horizontal band of rock. But here in Tibet it is not a band of rock, it is the impression of the rope with which the Devil once attempted to tear up the throne of Shiva.

Every event has its supernatural meaning, born out of the spirit of this country. And that spirit is as much part of Tibet as its mountains and its blue lakes.

The Tibetans, without ever having heard of Darwin, explain their origin in this way. The ape Chenrezi, the personification of Mercy, met a female demon who gave herself to him. There were six children of this union, who were fed on sacred corn, so that their hairiness disappeared and their tails grew shorter. A Tibetan is said to-day to resemble his original father or mother according as to whether good or bad characteristics predominate in him.
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The political situation in Tibet is somewhat obscure. The eastern part of the country is under Chinese influence; the southern part, with the capital of Lhasa, is chiefly under the influence of the British, and in the north the Russians make themselves felt. The real ruler of Tibet, both temporal and spiritual, is the Dalai Lama. The title Dalai Lama is of Mongol origin. The Tibetans speak of him more frequently as Kyam Gön Rimpoche (the 'Precious Protector'). He is a 'Bodhisatva', a man who has already attained the right to Nirvana, but who to save his fellow men, has renounced it and has consented to be reincarnated many times. He is the representative of Buddha upon earth and lives in the palace of the Potala at Lhasa. After his death his soul is reborn in a little child. This child must have been born at a particular time under particular auspices, and he must recognize belongings of the dead Dalai Lama, for example his clothes, when they are shown to him.

These are a few typical facts about Tibet. But the great and lasting impression that Tibet has made on all Europeans who have had the good fortune to get to know that country lies in the vast and tremendous scale of its scenery. It is impossible with words, and almost impossible even with pictures, to bring Tibet close to other people. One would have to relate all the vibrations of thought and mood that one had experienced in the presence of that scenery. But those impressions are fleeting; they rise up, they fill one's whole being, and they die down again—it is impossible to capture them. Perhaps the longing for Tibet that remains with every one
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who has ever been there is only a longing for those thoughts and feelings that Tibet inspired.

We had, then, become proper pilgrims again, and set off towards the north, towards the Sacred Mountain. The region through which we were now travelling was supposed to be infested by robbers. None of us carried firearms, and Kitar's sword was our only means of protection. Nan Singh, our interpreter, seemed to be rather perturbed by this state of affairs, and could not express his indignation strongly enough that we had been so foolish as to come to Tibet unarmed. He had been convinced that we had at least revolvers with us, otherwise he would never have accompanied us, or at any rate he would have brought his own rifle with him. Finally he hit upon the idea of wrapping up our ice-axes in cloth in such a way that they might be taken for rifles. We then always carried them like rifles on our backs and were frequently asked why we protected our rifles so carefully against cold and damp. Nan Singh answered that we were the fortunate possessors of most exceptional rifles of our own particular make, rifles with which it was possible to shoot fifty times without having to reload. It was only natural that we should take great care of them.

Gurla Mandhata, which on the morning of our departure from Rungong stood out clear and cloudless, was already hidden by midday in thick mist. We saw its peak as we travelled onwards for ten more days, but it was never free from clouds for more than a few hours.

We pitched our tents that night in a lonely spot called Gurla, and on the next morning we reached a point from
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which we at last obtained a view of the holy lake, Manasarowar, Rakas Tal (or the Devil Lake), and the Sacred Mountain, Kailas. Kitar and I had already seen Kailas from Gurla Mandhata, but for our companions it was their first opportunity of looking on these holy places. Both the Tibetans and the Indians prostrated themselves in prayer. They were obviously much moved and even Kitar, who was otherwise rather blasé, went very pale and let his rosary slip quickly through his fingers.

Again we fastened bits of stuff to the chöten. Nan Singh gave us some small katas, or ceremonial scarves, from this chöten. Such scarves are often given to honoured guests as a token of welcome, and later on we were often presented with them in the monasteries we visited, especially if we had ourselves given suitable offerings.

In the evening we reached Thokar, on the south bank of Lake Manasarowar. Here we took a day’s rest, which was spent not only in rest but also in the performance of religious duties. It was expected of us that we should visit the monastery there and present a small offering of money. Half this offering goes to the monks, the other half to the poor of the village.

Even Hedin, who knows Asia better than any man, has described the Lake of Manasarowar with Mount Kailas beyond it as one of the most beautifully harmonized pieces of scenery in the world. And truly the view before us was a wonderful one (Plate 110). The lower hills and mountains surrounding the lake are bare and range through every shade of colour, from purest white to deepest purple. The colour of the lake is always
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changing. Sometimes it seems dark and threatening and waves lap the shore. At other times it lies there still and placid, seeming in its incredible blue to mirror the breadth and depth of the heavens.

There are no islands in Lake Manasarowar, but in Rakas Tal there is an island near its south bank. The Tibetans here have no boats, so the island can only be reached during the winter when the lake is frozen. An Indian hermit lived for years upon this island. Once a year the Tibetans came over the ice to bring him provisions, which had to last him for the rest of the year. Once the ice broke and the party carrying the provisions was drowned. No second attempt to reach the island was made that year. When they came the following winter they found no trace of the hermit. Naturally the people believed that a miracle had taken place, but probably the lonely, starving man had met his end in the waters of the lake.

We had to perform some religious ablutions at Thokar, which was not particularly pleasant, as the temperature was near freezing point and the water of the lake was consequently cold. But the monks from the monastery would have taken it amiss and would certainly not have understood how pilgrims could fail to profit by the opportunity of freeing themselves of all their sins in one bathe, even if it were an ice-cold one. So with chattering teeth we went into the water and fulfilled the religious ceremonies, my companion with great devotion and I with a great desire for their speedy end. But we had to go under water several times, murmur the names of the gods, cast rice and tsamba into the water, dive down
again, and so on. Finally the ceremonial bath came to an end and my companions were delighted that I had taken part in it. Perhaps it lessened their pricks of conscience if I behaved like a real pilgrim.

The monastery of Thokar is one of the most important holy places which pilgrims on their way to Kailas must not fail to visit. Its Tibetan name is Gompa, ‘solitary dwelling’. It lies on the bank of the lake. If the monks look out from the roof of the monastery or through their windows to the north they see as if from the prow of a ship a wide blue expanse of water before them, whipped by the never-ceasing wind into white crests of foam. The days pass peaceably here. Bands of pilgrims come and go, bringing their gifts and also some news of the outer world. They tell how the Dalai Lama’s successor has been found, and they know that far away over the sea the mighty ruler who holds sway over India and half the world is dead.

But news does not greatly affect the lives of the monks. They go their way, performing their religious devotions or sitting in front of the monastery on the bank of the lake and looking up to the Sacred Mountain. Theirs seems to be a life of rest, peace, adjustment. How should it be otherwise, here among the holiest places of the world? But we do not know what goes on in the minds of these monks, what doubts assail them, what longings dwell within them.

A band of pilgrims arrived from eastern Tibet. They did not take up their quarters as we had done in the Darasalam, for they were pilgrims journeying with their flocks and set up their tents somewhere in the plain
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beyond. They were wealthy people. While the women visited the monastery the men tied up their yaks and distributed butter and tsamba in great quantities to the poor of the village. I stood near by and watched them, for they made an interesting spectacle in their curious costumes. The men carried spears and swords, and looked like bold robber-knights from the Middle Ages, except that many of them wore modern snow-spectacles, which had probably been imported from Japan (Plate 111). I stood watching these pilgrims with interest. In my dirty turban and ragged fur jacket I must have looked very impoverished, for suddenly one of them turned to me and offered me a huge lump of butter. I bowed low and murmured words of thanks, as was fitting for a beggar who had received a gift.

Several other travellers and pilgrims arrived, and by evening the little inn was full to crowding point. We lay anyhow on the hard clay floor, while a flickering fire gave the faces of the Tibetans a red-brown tinge. They looked wild and sinister, throwing dice with our horse-dealer for the price of a piece of meat.

The next morning we were asked to see an old woman. She had a bad foot, and perhaps we, being Indians, would know what to do for it. When the foot was uncovered it was apparent that the flesh was decayed almost to the ankle-bone. We tried to give her some disinfectants, but they insisted on offering us payment for them. When we refused to accept money, a dried fish was pressed into our hands which was supposed to be an infallible remedy for every ill. If we had given away our medicine without getting anything in return,
86. The valley of the River Kali on the border of Nepal

87. My companion Kapur
88. Kitar—cooler and friend

89. The author as an Indian pilgrim
90. A little Bhutia girl watches the strangers with mingled curiosity and suspicion

91. Bhutia woman. Her ornaments reveal the wealth of the family and are almost entirely made of solid silver
92. A pass in the Himalayas. In accordance with a century-old superstition no traveller passes by without

93. An Indian holy man (Sadhu) engaged in contemplation on the bank of a tributary of the Ganges.
94. The sisters Thun Singh smoking a ‘hookah’

95. Our guide and interpreter Nan Singh
96. A Bhutia family during a halt. The Bhutias live as nomads for a greater part of the year.

97. View from Garbyang
98. The ‘old Buddha’ does not think a pilgrimage to Tibet is a wise proceeding and scratches his head thoughtfully.
99. Sacred piles of stones—chöten—in the Himalayas. In the background the snow mountains of Nepal

100. The last halt before crossing the frontier of Tibet
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it could not have had a good effect, according to the opinion generally held in those parts.

But we were pilgrims and wanderers, and could not stay long in any place, even a place as beautiful and peaceful as Thokar. Along the banks of Lake Manasarowar we set out towards the north.

Gosul Gompa lay built into the steep banks of the lake, but it looked so uninviting that we went on past it and pitched our tents farther on beside the lake. While we were cooking one of the stones on which the pots were standing cracked from the heat. Kitar explained to us that this was a good sign and that we would now certainly accomplish our pilgrimage without mishap.

Kitar was very talkative that evening, telling tales of Merkl Sahib and Bauer Sahib, to both of whom he was devoted. I asked him why he had not joined the Mount Everest expedition again this year. He only smiled and said that the priests had held out no hopes of success this time; the English would certainly not reach the top; their assault would be checked by deep fresh snow. A month later in Almora, on our return to India, we found his prophecy confirmed, and Kitar was not at all surprised. The priests had foretold it, and so it must happen. Moreover, Mount Everest would only be climbed by a man who had never touched any woman.

Nan Singh, our interpreter, was unlucky enough to overturn his pot of tea. We wanted to give him some of our tea, but he refused with alarm. True the tea had been prepared by our Hindu cook, but it had also been prepared for me, a European and a Christian. And although we had by now become almost friends, he did
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not want to endanger the safety of his soul by eating or drinking from the same vessel as a Christian. Kitar and Randshid were merely amused at this misfortune of Nan Singh’s, and watched him with a pitying smile while he laboriously tried to warm some fresh water over our scanty fire. Bushes or trees are very seldom found here, so yak dung is used almost exclusively as fuel. It is found in sufficient quantities near all good camping-places, left by the herds of previous travellers. Every Tibetan traveller carries with him a pair of bellows, known as chatung, with the help of which he blows the yak dung fire into flame. But generally the chatung is superfluous, it is only seldom that one comes across a camping place that is protected from the wind. Tibet is the land of gales and storms.

As evening drew near and we knew that we should be pitching our tents in about an hour we would scatter to each side over the plain and continue our march in a broad line with wide intervals between us. Each of us collected yak dung or dried bushes. We met again at the camping-place and piled up all our fuel into a great heap. There was often still some left the next day after we had cooked breakfast. I would then sometimes suggest making a big fire to get ourselves really warm for once, for the temperature during the night always fell below zero, but the Tibetans were always shocked at this idea.

‘You mustn’t waste dung. You have just had a good meal and drunk some hot tea, but after you others will come who have been travelling all day, and they will be hungry and tired. So let’s leave the dung for them!’

The evenings will always be unforgettable. The wind
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seemed to die down a little when the sun touched the horizon. Soughing gently it would pass over the jagged stones and through the thin grass. Graceful kiangs, wild horses which had followed us all day, stood still a few yards away from us, ready to take to flight at any minute, but always turning back again to gaze at us curiously. The sun went down, and it grew colder. My companions huddled themselves in their furs and drew closer to the fire. We drank saucer after saucer of butter-tea. Generally we spoke very little. Kitar would tell of his experiences in the mountains, or Nan Singh would talk about the gods who rule Tibet. I just sat there silent and thankful that I might have some small share in this strange world.

Barkha, our next objective, is not easy to find. You cross a little range of hills and find yourself suddenly standing outside the huts that make the village. Another district official from Lhasa was living here, but this time we were much more daring. We knew he spoke no Hindustani, so we paid him a visit. We gave him a present of rolls of bandages and a mirror. He was friendly to us, gave us tea in his unusually clean room, and presented us with some tsamiba that he had brought with him from the holy city of Lhasa. Our longing for Lhasa was not increased by it.

Barkha is only a day's journey distant from Dortschen, where we were to begin the actual pilgrimage round Kailas. At Dortschen we bought a sheep in hopes of varying our menu somewhat. It cost two shillings. In order to prevent the loss of precious blood the Tibetans kill sheep by suffocation. They tie the sheep's legs together, and also its mouth, and then block up its nostrils with
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their fingers, and in an incredibly short time the sheep is dead. Kitar washed the entrails and filled them with a mixture of tsamba and blood, thus making a Tibetan sausage.

From Dortschen we had a good view of Gurla Mandhata. It stood there majestic and strong. Perhaps years will go by before any human being again disturbs its peace. I was glad to look on its icy slopes and to think that I had been allowed at least to spend some days there fighting to reach its proud summit.

In Dortschen the pilgrimage round Kailas begins. A path twenty-five miles long encircles the sacred mountain. It goes through narrow, stony valleys and over steep and rocky slopes, reaching at Dolma Pass a height of more than 19,500 feet. Even in the height of summer snow and ice lie there. For pilgrims who perform the circuit of the mountain, prostrating themselves the whole way, this pass is the culmination of their hardships, but it is also the supreme moment in their lives. Never again will they be so near to the throne of the gods.

There are four monasteries at the foot of the mountain. The biggest, Diripu, is near the pass, and can thus give the pilgrims shelter before they embark on their laborious ascent.

Some Tibetans came towards us on the stony path. They had prayer-wheels in their hands, which they never stopped turning. When they saw us from afar off they cried out, ‘Oh, how lucky you are, how lucky you are!’ Our interpreter, who was a very polite and diplomatic person, called back, ‘Yes, we are very lucky.’ It was only later that we discovered why we were so lucky. Gorpon
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Sahib, the Prince of Western Tibet, was staying in the monastery of Diripu! We should therefore to-morrow have the great good fortune of being able to continue the pilgrimage round Mount Kailas in his company, or, to be more exact, at a respectful distance behind him. Every year in spring, as soon as the snow on the passes has melted somewhat, the governor appointed by Lhasa to western Tibet carries out the perkerma, or pilgrimage round Mount Kailas.

Kitar and Kapur looked at me. Their glance did not suggest that they thought we were so particularly lucky. I also felt my heart sink. Gorpon Sahib would certainly have seen a good many Europeans before. He must have spent hours and days with English officials in the course of negotiating a trade agreement with India. He would know that Europeans have blue eyes, and he would also know that they were always making attempts to get into the forbidden country. Very probably he would also know that there are ways of dyeing fair hair black.

It was impossible either to turn back or to avoid the monastery. Such unpilgrimlike behaviour would at once have aroused suspicion. Therefore we must at all costs go to the monastery.

Before the monastery came in sight Kitar and I exchanged loads. I took his enormous rucksack, wound a dirty strip of linen about my forehead, and, bent almost double under my load, staggered panting into the courtyard. The priests sent us at once to the Darasalam. The others soon made themselves at home, and Kitar began to hold forth about his achievements, attracting as much attention as possible to himself. I in the meantime started
collecting yak dung, Kapur urging me on with loud cries of 'Tscheldi, bewkuf! Hurry up, you fool!' The Tibetan lamas got Kitar to translate 'bewkuf', and also took great pleasure in calling me a fool.

This was very satisfactory, for no one would be likely to suspect a European under the guise of a foolish coolie. I next began to prepare a fire. Soon the whole Darasalam was nothing but a cloud of smoke, and the tea tasted pleasantly of yak dung, smoke, and other things. It also tasted just a little of tea. An elderly pilgrim had been watching me pityingly for some time. The others had talked largely of their prowess, lying lazily on their backs the while, whereas I had been working hard. Now the others were putting huge lumps of butter into their tea, while I got none. As a matter of fact even the smell of that rancid butter made me feel sick, though later on I got used to the drink, and ended by liking it. Like every real benefactor, the old man wanted to do good by stealth. When I put my teacup on one side for a minute to look after the fire, he seized the opportunity to throw a big lump of brown butter into the cup. Apparently he was afraid that somebody might take this prize away from me, for he made violent signs to me to drink the tea up quickly. In the end I did so, after having thanked him with a rather bitter-sweet smile of gratitude.

We made ourselves as comfortable as we could in the Darasalam, putting blankets and the folded-up tent on the damp clay floor, which made the place really quite habitable. There was no sign of Gorpon Sahib. He sat with the head lamas of the monastery in one of the grander rooms, where we poor pilgrims were not al-
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allowed to go except by permission or special invitation.

It was late in the afternoon, and white wisps of cloud driven by the gale chased over us and ever and again hid the sacred mountain from our sight. Evening came on slowly over the mountains. The lower hills and the monastery were soon enveloped in a uniform grey, above which only the great mountain still shone out.

I squatted in front of the monastery, turned my prayer-wheel, and muttered a monotonous 'Ram, ram'. This simple Indian prayer formula convinced the passing monks that I was a pious, if stupid, fellow. This was just what I wanted, for in Tibet the first of these characteristics is respected much more deeply than the second is scorned. Also my praying saved me from having to enter into conversation, and I was able to gaze at the wonderful panorama before me undisturbed.

Everything would have passed off successfully if only some of the monks had not just then come out of the monastery. They looked at the mountain. The setting sun tinged it with red. It stood there, solitary and immense, immeasurably distant. Truly, if the gods have a dwelling-place, then it must be here. Kang Rimpoche, the Precious Snow, drew the monks under its spell. They folded their hands together and bowed low before the mountain.

The spectacle presented by these priestly figures bowed in prayer, expressing as it did an absolute and complete surrender before the throne of the gods, was so impressive and so unique that I simply could not help myself—I quickly took my camera out. Up till then I had taken most of my photographs in Tibet with my camera
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hidden. There was room enough under my big fur jacket to conceal it. But here it was more difficult. If I was to get both monks and mountain into the picture, I must lie on the ground. From every side I tried to take that photograph. For once in a way I completely forgot to be reasonable and take common-sense precautions (Plate 115).

No sooner were we all sitting once more by the fire and preparing the evening tea than a monk appeared and spoke a few words to our interpreter. Nan Singh turned as pale as his brown countenance and the dirt encrusted upon it would let him.

He translated the lama’s command from Tibetan into Hindustani. ‘Gorpon Sahib wants to see you, he knows that you have taken a photograph.’ He stammered with fright. The situation was really dangerous. We hid the camera in a crack in the wall, which we filled up with rubbish. We then went in to meet our fate.

Gorpon Sahib received us in an open, well-lit room. He was sitting on a chair, and did not, of course, stand up as we came in. He was tall, very fat, and extremely clean and neat. His dress was such as befitted his high position. But the finest thing about him was his dignified bearing and keen features. He was plainly used to being obeyed.

We prostrated ourselves before him on the ground, as befitted poor pilgrims. He let us lie in this humble posture for a little while. We murmured respectful words of greeting in Indian and Tibetan, ‘O Kamsung, Rimpoche! Namaste Sahib!’

Finally he told us to be done with greetings. We
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crouched before him on the ground, and he looked at us searchingly. He could only speak Tibetan, so our guide from Gunj had to translate. He crouched like a heap of misery beside us. His face had become quite green and he seemed almost unconscious with fright. When we had engaged him for the journey we had told him that he might incur severe punishment if the Tibetans were to discover that I was a European. Then he had only laughed scornfully and said, 'Nan Singh is not afraid. Whoever travels through Tibet with Nan Singh travels in safety.'

Now, however, he seemed to have discovered pretty thoroughly what it was to be afraid. Only in stammering words could he translate Gorpon Sahib's behests. The great man merely took a swift glance at Kapur; he looked so typically Indian that he really could not be suspected. Then he turned to me. 'Take your spectacles off!' was his first order.

His gaze seemed to bore into my blue eyes. I felt cold shudders running down my back, but I looked at him as candidly and straightforwardly as I could.

'Take your turban off,' was the next command. Gladly I took my cloth, which could no longer be called white, from my head. Dirty, matted, but above all raven-black hair appeared. It seemed to counterbalance the bad impression of the blue eyes.

'What were you doing in front of the monastery—taking photographs?' translated the terrified Nan Singh. I discovered an unexpected eloquence. What should I be doing with photography? I, a poor pilgrim? I could not imagine what put such an idea into the heads of the
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monks. Ah yes, of course, they must have seen me looking through my glass. And I handed over my telescope to him.

An English sahib whom I had served faithfully for many years had, I explained, given me this glass. And while Nan Singh, already looking much more cheerful, translated this yarn, the great man seized the telescope and directed it towards the summit of Mount Kailas. His countenance became suddenly serious and reverential, for he saw the throne of the gods quite close to him.

He looked lovingly at the telescope, so that I could hardly do otherwise than offer to make him a present of it. With that peace was virtually restored. Nan Singh sat dignified and upright on the ground once more and looked at me as proudly as if the situation had only been saved through his courage and ingenuity. ‘But why do you come so early in the year?’ Gorpon Sahib wanted to know next. ‘Pilgrims from India do not come till August, when the passes are free from snow. Why have you come so early?’

At this stage Kapur allowed his oriental fancy full play and became an Indian teller of fairy-tales. ‘Great Sahib, we are but poor fellows from Kashmir. A year ago we made the acquaintance of our neighbour’s daughters. They are so beautiful. . . .’ And with many gesticulations and in great detail he described their charms. ‘But our parents are so religious that they would not let us marry until we had made this pilgrimage, the great journey of our lives. You can well imagine, Sahib, that we set off at once. It mattered nothing to us whether there was still snow on the passes or not. All we care about is to get
back again quickly, for they are so beautiful. . . .’ He rolled his eyes longingly, and I tried to smack my lips in anticipation, but did not succeed very well, as my mouth was quite dry with fear and excitement.

This human weakness of ours was quite comprehensible to the great man. He would have liked to hear more about the beauty of our brides to be, but we showed ourselves to be men of honour, and were reluctant to give away their further charms. The friendship between us was sealed.

I now told Gorpon Sahib that in our country in Kashmir Europeans were becoming more and more impudent in their attempts to climb our holy mountains. Two years ago, however, the gods had taken their revenge, and four Europeans had met their death on Nanga Parbat. Was it not possible, I asked him, that one day Europeans would come here too and would attempt to climb the throne of the gods?

He smiled indulgently at my foolish question. ‘No man can ever climb Mount Kailas unless it be one who has never sinned. But in that case he would not have to climb over the steep walls of ice. He would change himself into a bird and fly to the summit.’

‘You suspected us of being Europeans. Why is it that you do not wish to have Europeans in your country?’

The Prince answered, smiling, ‘I have seen many Europeans, and many Indians who are ruled by Europeans. But they all seemed to be very unhappy. We have our gods, and we are happy. The Europeans would only come and take that away from us. They would certainly bring us nothing. So we would rather stay by ourselves.’
Before he said good-bye to us he said another wise thing.

‘In your country, in Kashmir, you may be a person of importance, a tax-collector perhaps, or a landowner. But here you are nothing. Even I, the ruler of this country, am nothing here. Here the only rulers are the gods!’

He rose, and bowed his head in prayer, turning towards the mountain. The sun had gone down. The mountain was cold, threatening, infinitely remote and unreal. There was no play-acting about it when I too bowed in prayer before the greatness of this scene. I believe I was not lying when I told the Prince of Western Tibet that I was a pilgrim, devout and filled with a passionate longing to absorb into myself the picture of this mountain. Probably my feelings were not very different from those of real pilgrims.

When our story had been pronounced harmless, the prince and the other monks turned once more towards Kailas and began turning their prayer-wheels again; I too knelt in prayer and gazed up to the throne of the gods.

Perhaps now you are thinking, ‘What a dreamer the man is! He tells us about gods of the mountains and mountains of the gods, and he really seems to believe in it!’ No—to-day as I write these lines, now that I am back again in sober Europe, I do not believe in it. But then, when I had spent months journeying with devout Asiatics through a country whose vastness and solitude are simply beyond imagination, then I was ready to cast my European superiority and scepticism overboard and to believe that there are things that are far above and beyond what we are able to grasp.
At any rate we went back to our room undiscovered, indeed almost as friends of Gorpon Sahib. A fact which caused even the optimistic Kitar to stare at us for some time open-mouthed and slightly abashed.

The next morning we did not awake till after the prince had left the monastery. He had set out before dawn in order to effect the crossing of the Dolma Pass, which was still under snow, in the cold of early morning while the snow was still frozen hard. We took our time, cooked ourselves a generous breakfast, and did not embark on the second part of the pilgrimage till shortly after sunrise. We had first of all to descend into the valley from the monastery. Then the way lay at first along level ground between huge boulders, mounting steeply later to the summit of the pass. There were many other pilgrims beside ourselves. We distinguished by their clothes people from Kashmir, pilgrims from Nepal (Plate 112), and from eastern Tibet. None of them took any notice of us. Every one here was busy with his own thoughts. These pilgrims had been journeying for weeks, sometimes for months, to reach their great goal, and now, in the fulfilment of their desires, they concentrated all their thoughts and wishes on the one point, on the silver glittering summit that is the throne of the gods. The pilgrimage round Mount Kailas can only be performed in one direction, clockwise, so that the mountain is always on the traveller’s right hand. As all the pilgrims are going in the same direction, one seldom meets any one, except when one stops to rest or overtakes somebody else who has stopped. Once three Tibetans came towards us. They apparently lived near the mountain,
and were not making the pilgrimage, but merely going on their everyday way. The pilgrims, who were caught up into a kind of religious ecstasy, cast black looks at the humble peasants. They could not understand how any one here in the neighbourhood of the sacred mountain could take even a step that did not comply with what religion prescribed.

It was a cold, cloudy morning when we reached the top of the Dolma Pass. From far off we saw on a snowfield three figures which only moved forwards very slowly. As we drew nearer we realized that we saw before us pilgrims who were making the circuit of the mountain by the method of prostration (Plates 113, 114). Over the steep slopes of snow and rubble they tortured themselves, crawling slowly upwards. For a minute they would stand upright with hands raised in prayer, then throw themselves down flat on the ground and stretch their hands out forwards as far as they could. They remained a moment in that lowly position, pressing their faces against the snow or the stony way. After which they stood up and began all over again from the point which they had then reached with their hands. Thus they cover the whole way with their bodies. In ordinary conditions it is easily possible to complete the pilgrim’s way round Mount Kailas, which is twenty-five miles long, in two days. The faithful who cover the way by prostration, however, need more than a month for their work of penitence. It is true that our reward is not to be compared with theirs. They come nearer to Nirvana than we are ever likely to succeed in doing in this life. I stayed near these pilgrims for a long time. It was a
moving thing to see with what surrender and fanaticism they carried out these exercises. Although a cold wind was blowing and it was some degrees below zero, the pilgrims had removed their fur jackets from one shoulder. With their bodies half naked and with one arm quite uncovered they threw themselves down again and again on to the stones and the steely ice. Only their hands they kept covered in gloves made of hide or skin, which protected them from wounds. When the pilgrims paused to rest, they did not speak to one another, nor take any notice of me, but turned their faces at once to the mountain. During their halt they never stopped turning their prayer-wheels (Plate 119). These are small boxes of metal which are fastened to a handle and are turned by a slight movement of the hand. Inside these boxes are Tibetan prayers, which are inscribed on very thin paper. Each turn of the box brings the pilgrim the same reward as if he had uttered the prayer written in it.

I took some photographs of these fanatical pilgrims. But when our interpreter, who had gone on ahead, saw me taking my camera out of its case, he remembered our fright of the previous day, and cried out to me in great agitation to put the camera away at once. But the picture was too tempting. I took one photograph after another, and when the interpreter saw that I was not to be made to stop by persuasive methods, he ran down the steep slope up which he had just laboriously climbed and compelled me by force to go on. He threatened me that the pilgrims would certainly talk about my curious behaviour and about the strange apparatus in my hand, and the suspicions from which we had only escaped with con-
considerable difficulty the previous day would flare up again. Actually the danger was not so great, for in their ecstasy of devotion the pilgrims had paid no attention at all to me and my doings.

Just below the pass there is a little lake. If the pilgrimage round Kailas is to be particularly meritorious, the pilgrim must bathe in the waters of this lake. Kitar and the interpreter wanted to follow this behest to the letter. However, the lake was frozen so hard that it was impossible to reach the precious water. They were therefore compelled with heavy hearts to renounce their project, while Kapur and I breathed sighs of relief, for we still had a very clear recollection of our bathe in Lake Manasarowar. From the pass the way descended steeply. We came out of the dead, desolate landscape of rubble and into glorious green meadowland. Here we came upon Gorpon Sahib again. He was eating his lunch on the grass. His companions were sitting in a big circle round a fire above which hung the tea-cauldron. Gorpon Sahib sat slightly apart, with his back to the others. This short distance of a few yards expressed the difference which separated him—the great lord—from the humble nomads. He had a big roll of baggage behind him to lean against. He sat there very upright, with his face turned towards the mountain. When he saw me he waved to me in friendly fashion to come over and rest beside him. I had gone on ahead alone, Kapur and Kitar were still a long way behind, and the interpreter came last of all. In the meantime the prince had given me butter-tea and tsamba. He had been greatly amused to see that the tsamba-dough which I kneaded was not so
101. A halt on the northern side of the Himalayas. A horse-dealer and our interpreter

102. The curious country near the monastery of Rungong
103. A Tibetan preparing his tsamba-rice

104. Nan Singh praying before a chöten
105. In the ‘Country of the Gods’, on a highland plateau in Tibet. In the background the Himalayas
106. Across steep and stony slopes we made our way towards the foot of Gurla Mandhata

107. Camp II after the night’s snowfall
108. Camp III on Gurla Mandhata

109. On the ridge leading to the summit of Gurla Mandhata
110. The loveliest view in the world. Lake Manasarowar and Mount Kailas
112. A Nepalese pilgrim on his way to Tibet

111. A Tibetan nomad
113. Tibetan pilgrims prostrating round the Holy Mountain. This penance takes a month or more to do.

114. The penitents wear fur gloves to protect their hands from frost-bite and wounds.
easy to mould as his, but stuck to my fingers and compelled me to work very hard. He and his companions made several efforts to talk to me. But as they spoke no Hindustani and I spoke no Tibetan, the attempt was soon abandoned. When the interpreter arrived, however, the prince inundated me with kindly questions. Nan Singh translated them at a great pace and I understood barely half of what he said. At first I tried to reply in Hindustani, so that Nan Singh could then pass my answers on. But as my Hindustani was very weak, I began to be afraid that the prince’s suspicions would be aroused anew by the halting character of my conversation with Nan Singh. I therefore made signs to Nan Singh, and when he asked me a further lengthy question of which I understood nothing at all, I replied in German. I rapidly recited the first poem that came into my head. Nan Singh looked at me in amazement for a second, then smiled comprehendingly, as if I had given him the most pertinent answer. When I had finished my poem, Nan Singh invented an answer which he gave for me. Thus it may have come about that to the prince’s question whether I valued the Buddhist or the Hindu religion more highly, I answered ‘Ich weiss nicht was soll es bedeuten. . . .’ Nan Singh then probably translated that I valued and respected both religions equally.

After a short halt the prince set out on his way once more. We bowed low before him and called out Tibetan and Indian blessings after him, that he might live long and meet a happy death. He waved to us courteously and walked quickly away leaning on his stick. He was
by far the most impressive Tibetan I had seen, and I should much have liked to take a photograph of him, but that was unfortunately impossible.

That same evening we reached Dortschen again and had completed the pilgrimage round Mount Kailas.
Chapter Eight

ROBBERS, NOMADS, AND PASSES

Our next goal was the Kingri-Bingri Pass, over which we intended to go back into India. Our guide declared that he knew the pass as well as his own pocket. He had often been to India by this route. He would lead us there without any difficulty. We must provide ourselves with provisions for several days, as we did not know whether the nomads and their herds had yet reached the regions through which we must pass.

Once more we set out across the lonely uplands. Day succeeded day without any startling occurrence. During this time I attempted to strike a bargain with our horse-dealer. For a long time the beautiful boots worn by Tibetans had been an object of envy to me. They are made of felt, and consist of a thick sole and a high, gorgeously coloured upper part which reaches to the knee. Every Tibetan makes these boots himself, and they cannot be bought in shops. Ever since I came to Tibet I had tried in vain to get hold of one of these pairs of felt boots. But up till now nobody had been prepared to sell his boots. It now appeared that the horse-dealer possessed
a spare pair of boots in addition to those which he always wore. We soon came to an agreement, and for a few rupees I became the possessor of these treasures. They were a magnificent pair of boots. They had only one disadvantage, and that was that they had already been worn. On the evening of the day on which we had concluded our deal I put the boots in my tent full of the joy and pride of possession. This joy lasted only a few minutes, at the end of which there was such an appalling smell in the tent that we threw the boots out as quickly as possible and ourselves rushed out to draw a few deep breaths of fresh air. During the succeeding days we tried various methods of ridding the boots of the smell which clung to them—a smell of which no one can have any idea who has not met and smelt Tibetans for himself. During the day we left them out in the open air. During the night we dipped them in streams and lakes, and the next morning we dried them again. But when we finally took leave of the horse-dealer near the Kingri-Bingri Pass, to his and my deep regret I had to give the boots back to him. In spite of all our efforts we had not succeeded in perceptibly reducing their smell in the smallest degree.

For two days we journeyed in company with a very determined Tibetan peasant woman. Our way led past her tent, and when she saw us coming she asked us where we were making for. We told her, whereupon she announced that she would travel with us for two or three days as she was going in the same direction. We could be of help to her in driving her flocks and assisting with the loading of the baggage. We must have looked
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rather amazed at this, so she promised us some milk and cheese as a reward for our trouble. This woman was travelling without any male escort whatever, with three children and a herd of twenty yaks. Two of the children, some five and seven years old, trotted the whole way on foot (Plate 117). We covered about fifteen miles a day on an average. The children not only walked all this distance, but also they were perpetually running after vagrant animals from the herd and bringing them back again. On the first day after this encounter we had been journeying for some hours when we called a halt at midday. It was only then that we perceived that there was a third child, sitting on one of the yaks. It was barely two years old. It was firmly tied with cords on to the baggage so that it could not fall off. It moved from side to side as the animal trotted along, but slept peacefully the whole time. During the midday halt it was given a little bowl of tsamba and milk, after which it placidly allowed itself to be fastened on to the yak again.

Near the monastery of Kunglung (Plate 120) we met three robbers (Plate 118). They were armed with old-fashioned muzzle-loaders, and despite their youth they were deeply convinced of the solemnity and responsibility of their calling. They told us without any false modesty that they were robbers. That seems to be as much a profession in Tibet as a bank manager or a journalist would be in Europe. We conversed very amicably with them for some time. But when they began asking us in considerable detail exactly what route we were proposing to follow, we began to feel slightly uncomfortable, for we carried no firearms whatever
with us. However, Nan Singh suddenly showed unexpected ingenuity and spun the robbers a most convincing yarn. We were, he said, envoys of the Maharajah of Kashmir, a great and famous man whose power is well known throughout the whole of India and also in Tibet. This great ruler wanted to make a pilgrimage to Mount Kailas in the following year, and he had sent us on ahead to find out if the way was very difficult. If we were to be robbed or killed the maharajah would take a terrible revenge and would send an army to Tibet which would destroy all the villages and punish the inhabitants. The three robbers listened to this yarn with growing interest, and when Nan Singh had finished speaking they disappeared quickly in the opposite direction to that in which we were travelling.

One day we saw Mount Kailas for the last time. We moved on over seemingly endless uplands and on the horizon the white pyramid-summit of the Sacred Mountain became smaller and smaller. As a sailing ship travels out to sea and disappears beyond the swell until only a little triangle of white sail is still visible, so the great mountain which had been our goal for so many weeks vanished on the horizon (Plate 127). We were all very quiet that day. We knew that Kailas in its beauty and loneliness would call to us and draw us anew. But would we be able to answer that call a second time?

I was keeping a diary during this Tibetan journey, and that day happened to be June 1st. The date seemed to me to be somehow familiar, and in the end I remembered that it was my birthday. I was quite sure that Fate had some birthday surprise in store for me. And it had. For
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weeks we had eaten nothing but tsamba and butter-tea, and occasionally as a great luxury a bit of meat. We were all longing for vegetables. On that very day Kitar suddenly uttered a cry of joy, bent down, and held before our eyes in triumph a few blades of grass. That was my birthday surprise. For if you chew grass for long enough you get a taste of garlic and onions in your mouth. For the moment we asked for nothing better.

The return journey from Kailas to the Himalayas led us through a region that is very little known, and a detailed sketch of our route might have been very valuable. I must however confess to my shame that here too I failed to go to work in a scientific manner. But we were, after all, not scientific people, but just pilgrims, and poor pilgrims at that. We spent on that whole Tibetan ‘expedition’ a sum which would hardly have sufficed for a fortnight’s holiday tour in Europe. After I left the aneroid behind somewhere near Diripu Monastery my entire scientific equipment consisted of a compass.

We originally intended to travel westwards to the Monastery of Tirthapuri, but actually we turned south before we reached it. We passed through hamlets or collections of tents at Dulchu, Gompa, Kunglung, and Gömpachin, and at the end of five days’ march we had reached the Himalayas again. From a low pass we saw the chain of the snow mountains lying before us. I asked the interpreter where the Kingri-Bingri Pass was. With great conviction and certainty he pointed to a slight dip in the ice-covered mountain wall and said, ‘There is the pass!’ A few minutes later, with just the same degree of
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conviction, he indicated another point some forty miles farther west and declared that that was the pass. He had been there so often that he could not mistake the route. In fact, it became apparent that our good Nan Singh had never seen the pass in his life and had not the remotest idea where it was. Our situation was far from pleasant. Our provisions were running short and so early in the year we had very little hope of coming upon nomads from whom we might obtain food and who would, moreover, be able to tell us the way to the pass. For two days we plodded on in a state of doubt and depression, still making for the south and the Himalayas. The region was completely unpopulated, and we were beginning to reconcile ourselves to the prospect of going back to the Lipu-Lek Pass, which would have involved a detour lasting nearly a fortnight.

We had just come through a steep valley out on to an open plateau when in the distance we saw some black dots, and our hopes were fulfilled. They were nomads. We pitched our tents beside them. The interpreter and the horse-dealer were now to go back to Taklakot. Nothing would induce them to go with us over the Kingri-Bingri Pass into India, for they would never dare to come back alone over the same pass into Tibet, and the way to Taklakot through the southern Himalayas would have taken them several days. We therefore told the interpreter that he should have the wages we had agreed upon, if he would arrange for one of the nomads to lead us to the pass. In fear and trembling for his well-earned pay, Nan Singh developed quite unusual powers of persuasion. All the same it took him two days to get
three young Tibetans to the point of saying that they would show us the pass, which was still three days’ march distant. Nan Singh was in a somewhat difficult position, for the nomads did not seem to know the value of money. Even when we offered them quite large sums in payment for their services as guides, they objected that money had no particular attraction for them, for weeks, perhaps months would go by before they would come to a large place where there was a market in which they would be able to exchange the money for food-stuffs or other useful things. For two days Nan Singh fought for us with an enthusiasm and devotion which probably arose chiefly from fear for his own pay, till at last the Tibetans declared themselves willing to lead us to the pass in return for a fairly heavy baksheesh.

There was now nothing to stand in the way of our departure for India. The Tibetans were ready to set out with us the next morning. Nan Singh had kept his promise and procured us guides to the Kingri-Bingri Pass. So we easily forgot all the misfortunes that had happened while he had been with us. I no longer remembered that only chance had led him to the Kingri-Bingri Pass, which he had said he knew so well, and that we had spent some hungry and unpleasant days because of his ignorance. He in his turn forgot that I had called him a damned fool with no more intelligence than a goat, a grievance which he had nursed for some days. But now as we took farewell of each other all these little things slipped from our memories.

The wind howled through the broad valley and heavy black clouds chased each other over the sky and hid the
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mountains. We had fastened a blanket between two poles as a shelter against the icy wind, and we crouched around a good fire, for here on the steppe we could get dry plants that blazed and gave out plenty of heat. We drank bowl after bowl of butter-tea, looked at each other, and drank again. Nan Singh and the ‘Gora Wallah’, the horse-dealer, had been given their wages and a good tip into the bargain. They could really have started already on their return journey, but they seemed to find it difficult to take leave of us.

Out of the depths of my rucksack I produced two dirty shirts, a present which delighted them both. Then at long last they got up and began loading the horses. I went a little way with them, back over the endless steppe through which we had come. They wanted to get back to Taklakot by the shortest route. We came to a slight rise and I stopped. We bowed low to each other and put out our tongues, as the Tibetan form of greeting demands. Then they went on, without once turning round, towards the east. I looked after them for a long time until they and their horses only showed up as little black dots against the horizon. I would have liked to run after them to see their dirty, good-humoured faces once more and to shake them by the hand. But they would have had little understanding for such sentimentalities.

Even now, as I write these lines and think of them, they may be sitting in a smoky tent with the icy winter wind blowing all around them, and perhaps they too are thinking a little of the strange pilgrim with whom they passed several weeks of their lives.

That evening the camp seemed lonely and strange, we
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were very quiet, and even Kitar was not in the mood for his usual jokes.

The next day was wet and cloudy. The three Tibetans appeared, looked at our baggage, appraised the weight of each piece, and finally declared that they would not carry it. We might be able to manage it, if we were accustomed to that kind of thing, but they were much too rich and respectable to carry such loads. After much argument they ended by stowing the baggage into curious double sacks. These sacks were filled at each end while the middle part was left empty and was placed on the back of a sheep or a goat, with the two ends containing the baggage hanging down on either side of the animal. In the frontier regions through which I travelled between Tibet and Kumaon the goat is the chief beast of burden. Although each animal can only carry about twenty pounds, such large herds are used that this does not matter. Nearly all the flour imported from India to Tibet is carried over the passes of the Himalayas by goats.

We traversed stony, hilly country, all the time drawing nearer to the snow mountains. There was no sign of a path, and without guides who knew the district we should never have found the way. As we got deeper into the mountainous region, however, several tracks began to converge, until finally we had a real road before us which the pack-animals had trodden out in the course of years. Yaks have the habit of moving side by side, not one behind the other as horses usually do. So these trodden-out trade tracks look like many little parallel paths running along beside each other. There are sometimes as many as twenty or more.
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As we had made a late start on the first day we only succeeded in covering a few miles. We pitched our tents by a beautiful clear stream. There were some nomads’ tents near by, and Kitar went up to them to get some butter and milk. Our guides now announced that it would take us seven days to get across the pass, or rather the three passes. We knew perfectly well from various descriptions of the journey that it was possible to cover the ground in one long day’s march. But the three Tibetans insisted that we should need seven days for it. They declared that the passes were still covered with snow, and therefore they would take us by another route, which would be longer but safer.

We had agreed with our guides that they should receive a certain sum in payment for each day. Hence they obviously had no particular reason to look for a short route. As we could not come to any agreement with them, we told them they could turn back at once and we would find our way to India by ourselves and carry our own baggage too.

The situation was still undecided when the chill of approaching nightfall drove us into our tents. For safety’s sake we stowed our belongings in the tents to prevent anything being stolen. As a consequence of the friction that had arisen between us our longing for Nan Singh and the horse-dealer vanished and we felt extremely energetic and pugnacious.

The next morning our guides had thought the matter over and declared themselves prepared to bring us as far as the second pass. They would turn back there, as they did not want to go on into India, and also because
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there would be no pasturage for their sheep higher up.

By midday we had reached a point where a place called Chitichun was marked on the map. We found no trace of habitation whatever, except that in the remote distance we saw smoke rising from a black tent. At Chitichun the actual ascent to the pass begins. As we could still find plenty of yak dung and the sheep still had good pasture, we decided to pitch our tents here. The sun blazed down upon us, and we lay in front of our tents while the Tibetans gazed at us with a stare of concentrated curiosity. They had never seen Indians before, and everything about us seemed strange and novel to them. I gave them my ice-axe, for which I no longer had any use, and thereby reduced them to transports of delight. They were considerably disappointed, however, when I refused to allow them to touch the gold crown of one of my teeth which had excited their approbation.

It was our last day in Tibet, and I wandered off a little way by myself. Only a few hundred yards, out of sight of the camp, and I was alone—utterly and completely alone. The solitary mountains, the wretched, dried-up plants, the icy glacier streams—suddenly I loved them all. Tibet has a definitely hard character, if that expression can be used of the picture which a countryside presents. And as it is difficult to be indifferent to some one of very definite personality, so too with Tibet one must either hate it or love it. There is no middle way.

Before I started on my journey to Tibet an Englishman who had himself spent many years of his life in that country gave me some advice. When he had heard my plans he shook his head warningly and said, 'That’s a
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damned dangerous journey that you're proposing!' In reply to my questioning glance he went on, 'Yes, damned dangerous—for if you once get to Tibet, you won't find it so easy to come home again. Look at me. I first went to Tibet when I was twenty-eight. To-day I'm fifty, and I keep on going back there, and I shall go there again. There is no way of evading that country!

Undoubtedly I was looking forward to green meadows, trees, the singing of grasshoppers, to being in India again. But even then, I knew that I should feel an uncontrollable longing for the icy, deserted solitude of Tibet.

The march over the passes was to be one of the longest and most difficult that we had yet experienced. We had pitched our tents again, while the three Tibetans slept on the bare ground, covered only by their fur jackets. Shortly after midnight they were awake and bade us make ready to set forth. It was far from pleasant to creep out of our warm sleeping-sacks in the cold in the middle of the night, and with chattering teeth we set to work to load the baggage on to the goats. The moon was covered by clouds, and the night was so dark that it was impossible to see the way. We crossed steep banks of scree, and farther on came to hard-frozen slopes covered with last year's snow. The goats ran with unbelievable swiftness and certainty over the most difficult places, and laden as we were we only managed to follow them with difficulty. Oddly enough, however, the three Tibetans, who were carrying nothing at all, were no quicker. Tibetans are generally poor climbers, especially when one takes into consideration the fact that they live
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nearly all the time at a height of 16,000 feet. They found breathing as difficult as we did.

It was not yet daylight when we reached the 19,500-foot high Kingri-Bingri Pass. It was bitterly cold, and an icy wind came towards us from the glaciers. The mountain call of the Tibetans sounded, 'Ssso . . . Ssso . . . ' through the stillness.

We were the first to cross the pass that year. It is only during the two or three months of high summer that merchants from the south come up by this difficult route.

The way led down again over steep banks of rubble. It was not yet daylight, and we had to feel our way rather than see it. At one point we had to traverse a steep slope of frozen snow. The Tibetans in their felt boots moved with the greatest care, making use of our ice-axe to help themselves and cutting steps in the frozen snow. The goats ran gracefully across the slope without the slightest difficulty.

We journeyed on over moraines towards the top of the second pass, Janti La. The Tibetans told us that there had been exceptionally little snow this winter and that any other year we should have had to do the whole march through deep snow. A few hundred yards below the level of the pass we made our first long halt. We had been climbing for six hours. We came to a little stream which was frozen right through to its bed, so intense was the cold. We had brought some yak dung up with us, and lit a small fire over which we made tea and warmed our stiff fingers.

At last the sun tinged the highest snow-peak with a rosy hue. The dark shadows soon vanished, and finally
the warm rays penetrated even to where we were. We began to feel better (Plate 129).

After a short halt we went on, and by nine o’clock we were standing at the top of Janti La (Plate 128). Here our guides turned back. We could not miss the way now, for we could see the gap ahead where we must cross the next pass. The baggage, which till now had been carried by eight goats, was divided up among the four of us. Our rucksacks were appallingly heavy, and we staggered and groaned under the weight. The Tibetans looked after us pityingly. Then they gave a loud cry, ‘Sssso . . . Sssso . . .’ and disappeared down the other side of the pass. They wanted to get back to the valley again as quickly as possible.

With our heavy rucksacks, on a difficult track, at a height of 17,000 or 18,000 feet, we only progressed very slowly. Little Randshid had a particularly bad time of it, but we could do nothing to reduce his load, for we were all carrying as much as we could possibly manage ourselves.

The ascent to the 18,800-foot Unta Dhura Pass demanded every scrap of strength we possessed. The way led over a small glacier. I wanted to go one way, Kitar the other. We argued for some time, each of us sticking to his own opinion, and finally we each went our own way. Without a word Kapur and Randshid followed Kitar. In this they were very wise, for I soon found myself faced with a steep wall of ice which I could not tackle without climbing-irons. However, I saw the others mounting rapidly by Kitar’s route, so I put my pride in my pocket and followed them. When I caught
In prayer before the throne of the gods
116. Kailas—the throne of the gods
117. Tibetan children suffer all the hardships of a nomadic life from their earliest infancy

118. Three of the robbers who are frequently met with in Tibet
119. Tibetan pilgrim and his prayer-wheel. The drum contains strips of paper covered with prayers.
The village of Kunglung

The roads are kept in repair near the monastery
122. Nowhere else is childish laughter so warm and so reminiscent of home as in the loneliness of Tibet.

123. A youthful shepherd. Dreamily and filled with longing, he listens to tales of distant lands and unseen marvels.
124. A nomad face—hard, independent and courageous—closely resembles that of a North American Indian.

125. A pilgrim to the holy places of Tibet tells of a specially difficult pilgrimage during which he got his left hand frost-bitten.
126. For a long time we could still gaze on the Holy Mountain

127. We wandered south across a broad highland plateau and the majestic peak slowly sank beneath the horizon
them up Kitar was tactful enough not to make comparisons between Europeans and Asiatics in respect of intelligence and mountaineering craft.

At the top of the pass we threw our loads down and ourselves squatted panting on the ground to rest. To the south the valley lay open before us. It was to lead us back to my companions' country. Indescribable in their grandeur the ice giants stood before us. Nanda Kot, Nanda Devi, and the others. My companions soon started off again, for they wanted to get down to the valley.

I looked to the north once more. An icy blast nearly hurled me to the ground, and I had to brace myself firmly against it. The land of storms and tempests was sending me its farewell greeting. Threatening mountains, naked uplands and deep valleys lay behind me. I gazed and gazed, and took my farewell of them. The wind seized hold of me more and more forcibly. For weeks it had been our companion, and had sung us to sleep, and now it seemed to want to hold me fast and drive me back to Tibet. Even to-day, here in Europe, when a gust of wind seizes upon me, I feel a longing for that land of winds rising up within me.

India welcomed us with rain. We were very tired, and were soon soaked to the skin. The track led down and down. It could hardly be called a track. Across steep slopes and over scree we climbed downwards beside the foaming river. The sky and the whole countryside were grey and cold. At last, when it was already twilight, we saw a little stone hut ahead of us. There was barely room for the four of us inside it, but we huddled so close together that we even managed to light a little fire in
one corner. We had no food left, but butter-tea tasted marvellous to us. Still in our wet clothes, we sank into a deep and dreamless sleep. The next morning it was still raining a little. We went down beside the river into the valley. We had as yet met no living soul since we entered India.

Once I stayed behind to take some photographs. When I caught my companions up again they were sitting by the track with woebegone countenances. The way led down to the river, but where the bridge should have been there was nothing to be seen. The river was some thirty feet across and very swift; it seemed impossible to wade through it. Kitar, the hero of the Himalayas, made a grimace as if somebody had knocked over his bowl of particularly succulent butter-tea. He began to make a speech. On the way to Mount Everest they had often had to wade through rivers, but not through torrents. No one could wade through that river; we should have to go back to Tibet and over the Lipu-Lek Pass into India. That was his advice, and it was worth something, seeing that he had been on eighteen expeditions in the Himalayas.

There was no other alternative—either we had to go on through the river or back to Tibet. We decided on the river. On the far bank we could see two tree-trunks which were intended to form the bridge. During the winter, however, the inhabitants of the near-by villages pulled these trunks back on to their own side of the river in order to prevent Tibetan marauders from reaching the Indian villages. The bridge is only restored in summer. I took off everything but my pants, took a coil
of rope in my hand, and, supported by my companions, somehow reached the opposite bank. Kapur followed in the same way. Then we fastened the rope to the tree-trunks, threw it back to the two on the other side, and after a good deal of labour managed to construct a bridge over which the heavy baggage could be got across. With the last drops of oil that we possessed we lit a huge fire to warm us after our spartan bathe, for the temperature was still below freezing point. On the opposite bank it was almost impossible to find the track. We had to cross steep slopes which dropped down almost perpendicularly to the river. With every step we loosened small avalanches of stones, and we had to take great care not to follow them ourselves.

Soon after we had crossed the river we met a young Englishman who had come thus far up into the mountains in hopes of shooting a snow leopard. He was the first European we had seen for weeks, and we were eager to hear news of the great world from him.

He told us that the Negus had left Addis Ababa, and that the town had been pillaged for some days before the Italians marched into it. We learnt that bombing aeroplanes had destroyed villages in Manchuria and that several people had been killed in a military revolt in Japan. In fact, we felt we were back in civilization again.

That same day we reached Milam, the first village on the Indian side of the Himalayas. It was a great occasion. Kitar was sent into the village to buy large quantities of potatoes, flour, and sugar, for we were going to give ourselves a real feast. We waited for him outside the village in the school, where we had taken up our quar-
We waited in vain. Finally I went off to look for him. I soon found him, sitting on a bench in front of a house. Before him lay the provision sacks, already filled, so he had evidently done the shopping. Nearer to him, however, lay two bottles. One was quite full, the other very nearly empty. Kitar was in high good humour and smelt some yards away of alcohol. When he saw me coming he got up and tried to stand upright, in which he was only partially successful. He greeted me happily with ‘Sherab ider both adscha hei!’ Which means roughly ‘There’s first rate wine here!’

My first intention was to give Kitar a pretty stiff talking-to; but then I thought to myself, ‘What was the use of being angry with him at the very end of the journey?’ In the meantime he came up to me with another bottle of wine, which we sampled together. As we were also hungry, we mixed the wine with tsamba-flour in shallow bowls until it made a porridge which tasted excellent and had the most appalling consequences. Life seemed much gayer and more cheerful. Kitar sang songs from his Nepalese homeland and I tried to accompany him. Then arm in arm we staggered back to our temporary home, where Kapur and Randshid greeted us with angry and reproachful looks.

The chief dish of the evening was to have been potatoes and onions in butter. But we never got as far as that. The potatoes were barely half cooked when we flung ourselves upon them and devoured them. They tasted perfectly marvellous. We then ate the onions raw.

That evening we were also invited to the Englishman’s tent. He had shot some game, and there was a
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proper dinner. For the first time for weeks we used forks again, and I had to pull myself up to prevent myself from eating with my fingers. The next morning we loaded our heavy baggage on to three yaks and set off down the valley. We had still ten days to go before we should reach Almora, the end of our journey. Here the narrow paths were congested with nomads from the highest camps who were making their way back to their homes after spending the winter in a warmer region. There was an extraordinary difference in appearance between the inhabitants of this valley and those of Kali valley whom we had encountered on our way to Tibet. The latter, especially the women of the Kali valley, were very pretty, and quite ready to be friendly. Here, however, we only saw plain women, who turned away as we approached and refused to show us their faces—which we found no matter for regret.

The monsoon rains had set in. The air was damp, and mist hung about everywhere. We only saw the mountain-tops very occasionally. We were already moving from the high Alpine vegetation of the Himalayas proper to the tropical vegetation of their more southerly slopes. We traversed stretches of very poor Alpine pasture with a few firs dotted about on it. Then suddenly a green wall rose up and surrounded us with its darkness. Luxuriant foliage was all about us, brightly coloured flowers shone up at us, and the grasshoppers sang at the tops of their voices. I could never have believed it possible that the transition from one type of vegetation to another could have taken place within the space of a few yards.

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The days and night had become hot, and we slept almost naked in our tents. We entrusted our two-months' old beards and our unshorn heads to a native barber, who did his work well but demanded double wages for it.

We drew nearer and nearer to civilization. We found newspapers, post-offices, rest-houses.

And then one day at Kathgodam we reached the railway. Kitar and Randshid were given their wages. On a noisy railway platform we pressed each other's hands in farewell. Kapur was going on with me to the Punjab. When I counted over my ready money I discovered that I had just enough for the third-class fare to Simla, where I should find the motor-cycle and also a cheque from home.

As the train moved slowly out of the station I leaned far out of the window. Outside I could still see for the last time the line of the Himalayas. They were no longer those proud ice giants among which I had journeyed all those weeks (we had covered more than six hundred miles on foot), but wretched hills scorched by the sun. But they were the last farewell from those mighty mountains.

And suddenly I knew that it could not be a final farewell. One day I shall go back.

And everything will be just the same as it was. The wind will howl over the mountain-tops and my thoughts will go far and free.

Only, to-day, as I write this, I know that Kitar will not be there with me.
Chapter Nine

THROUGH THE WONDERS OF AFGHANISTAN

I sat on the oily floor of a garage in Lahore and vainly attempted to push new rings over the pistons of my motor-cycle. Not such an easy undertaking when the temperature stands at 104 degrees in the shade. Sweat poured in streams from my face and over my whole body. I sat in a small but ever-increasing pool of it.

Could it really be true that only a few weeks ago I was on a 25,000-foot mountain in the Himalayas, and that my hands were almost frostbitten? I closed my eyes for a minute and let myself dream of snow and coolness—and the third piston ring broke. Dreams are better indulged in when one is not handling piston rings.

At last my good Puch stood before the door, ready to set off to our far-distant native land. After more than a year in India I now had to say good-bye. I spent my last evening with Indian friends in Lahore. It grew late, and once again I listened to the chirping of the grasshoppers and absorbed the wonderful peace of the Indian night.

I had originally intended to make the return journey
to Europe, taking my Indian friend Kapur on the back of the motor-cycle. Unfortunately once again he was unable to get a permit allowing him to travel through Afghanistan. So I had to do the journey alone.

I had planned to leave my friends’ bungalow at six o’clock the next morning, but when I awoke at that hour monsoon rains were beating down from the heavens with incredible fury. The motor-cycle was standing out in the garden. Not only had it had a good wash, the water had also got into the magneto. When at last the rain stopped it took me more than an hour to get the engine to start up. It seemed as if India would not let me go.

More handshakes, and Lahore and my friends lay behind me. One never realizes so clearly and so inexorably as when one is on a journey how quickly life moves on. For a year I had lived among these Indians. They had been good friends to me, and it seemed to me as if I had only just met them. I have no idea whether I shall ever see them again. Probably not, for our paths have separated now, and are not likely to converge again. I trod sorrowfully but firmly on the accelerator as I found myself upon the splendid asphalt road leading to the north-west. This part of the journey was a perpetual farewell. All the things that had irritated me during my stay in India, fakirs, sacred cattle, rickshaws that stuck to the middle of the road, now seemed to me familiar objects which it was hard to leave.

In Rawalpindi I paid a visit to a Swiss confectioner, where I talked German for an hour and consumed quantities of cakes.
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Then I went on again. Hills rose up out of the plain and disappeared. The engine sang its monotonous tune and the word 'home' echoed within me in response. It grew dark, and I tried to switch on my headlight, but it stuck and refused to work. It began to rain slightly, and I had to travel at a snail's pace, searching vainly the while for a halting-place that would be dry. At last the outline of a village appeared ahead. I stopped, and two young Indians appeared who invited me to stay with them when they heard my unhappy plight.

They made up a bed for me on the veranda of their house. A coolie came and massaged me from head to foot. I lay lazily in bed, nibbling biscuits and feeling utterly content.

It rained during the night, and I felt wonderfully sheltered on my covered veranda.

The next morning I tried to give my host some money for his trouble, but he indignantly refused to take anything. He said I could do him a favour, however. His father, who had been the local mayor, had died some days before. His son wanted to succeed him, and begged me to write him a chit about it.

'Chits' play a great part in India; they are what we would call testimonials. Every coolie or cook you engage can show you a handful of them. Often there is something in these chits which is to the proud possessor's disadvantage, for example the fact that he steals or is unreliable. This does not worry him in the least, however, for generally he cannot read English. It is enough for him if the testimonial is written on a large and decorative piece of paper. Old chits grow to look exactly like
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paper in which bread-and-butter has been packed in the height of summer.

Such a chit I was now called upon to write, in order to increase young Achmed's chances of becoming mayor. I gave proof of my gratitude for his hospitality by setting out on an enormous sheet of paper which Achmed appeared to have ready to him for this purpose the facts that Achmed had been my friend for years, that I had long followed his physical and spiritual development with interest and admiration, and that I could not express myself sufficiently strongly in praise of his intelligence, the amiability of his character, and his predilection for all things British. It was a piece of great good fortune for Hassan Abdul (that was the name of the village) to possess a young man of such capacities, and he was eminently fitted to fill the post of mayor.

At the request of the careful Achmed, who was anxious that the chit should cover as many contingencies as possible, I added furthermore that the aforementioned qualities would also render him exceptionally fitted to be a fireman. I executed the writing of this testimonial with great dignity and solemnity and felt exactly like Roosevelt making some unimportant young man Governor of Massachusetts by a mere stroke of the pen.

Then I set out on my way again.

It is pleasant to visit towns in a foreign country for a second time. One feels like an old inhabitant. One knows exactly where the passport office is in Peshawar, and is glad to learn that no special visa is needed for the Khyber Pass.

Once again my motor-cycle climbed upwards by
through the wonders of afghanistan

those steep curves. i was no longer a stranger here. lorry-drivers who recognized me and the motor-cycle from my previous journey gave me loud cries of greeting.

i reached the frontier. at the police station in dakka i was regaled on the same lukewarm but delectable lemonade. then i was on afghan roads once more.

i bumped cheerfully over stones and pot-holes. everything seemed grand and wonderful. a few more weeks of care-free motor-cycling through asia, and suddenly i should be at home. it is a bad plan to be too cheerful when you are travelling through afghanistan on a motor-cycle. at a sudden bend the motor-cycle skidded on a stone, and there we were in the road. i was not much hurt, but the tube leading from the petrol tank to the carburettor was broken. naturally that was the one spare part i had not got with me, although i had several pounds of screws, brake and coupling fittings, spare pistons, and so on, as i discovered to my deep disgust.

i made a vain attempt to bandage the broken tube with a mixture of bread and sticking plaster, but the petrol continued to run out. fortunately a lorry came by, and i soon bargained with the driver to take me and the motor-cycle to kabul, where a mechanic would be able to repair the damage.

at kabul i was affectionately welcomed by my german friends. the german minister, herr ziemke, invited me to stay with him, and i was almost sorry that my motor-cycle was so quickly repaired.

i now had two possible routes by which i could get
to Persia. The southern route by Ghasni and Kandahar had already been frequently traversed by European motorists, though as far as I knew no motor-cyclist had been that way. The northern route, by Masar-i-Scherif, Maimana, and Herat was still very little frequented, and I could not discover that any European motorist had travelled by it.

I was therefore not long in doubt, but soon decided to attempt the northerly route. True, even in Kabul I was unable to get any information about the condition of the roads, but from the bits of information which I picked up I managed to get some idea of the difficulties. At any rate, I knew that at definite intervals I should be able to get petrol, oil, and water—that was the main point.

It seemed impossible, in view of the munificent hospitality of the Germans in Kabul coupled with my weakness for fruit and gherkin salad, to get away from Kabul without having grossly overeaten. I set off to the north by the same road which had taken me to Bamian nearly a year before. I hoped that evening to reach the peasants' cottage where I had spent the night on that occasion. When I reached it late in the evening, however, I found the heavy wooden gates barred. The peasants seemed to have gone off somewhere. I was sorry, for I had greatly looked forward to seeing them again.

I stopped instead at a wretched hovel and spent the night there with an old Afghan. We roasted two pieces of mutton over an open fire and drank sour and slightly dirty milk. The previous night I had been the guest of the German Minister and his wife. Servants in white had
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waited at table, and we had drunk wine, whisky, and brandy. I had tried to make conversation and not let my Asiatic manners run away with me. And now here I was squatting cross-legged on the ground beside an Afghan while the mutton-fat ran over our chins. Belching and smacking one's lips and other things which would have put me beyond the pale yesterday were in the best taste here.

It was a moonlight night, and cold. We were, after all, over six thousand feet high. The next morning I waited until the warm rays of the sun had reached my sleeping-place before creeping out of my sack. In the cold morning air the motor-cycle took the steep ascent to the Shibar Pass without any difficulty, and I found myself standing there once more and looking at the dark slopes of the Hindu Kush all round me.

I passed the fork leading to Bamian, and from now onwards I was on a completely unknown road. The way led downstream through a narrow valley. Every hundred yards the view changed, and the mountains became steeper and more unapproachable. At the summit of the mountains there is usually a wall of perpendicular rock which gives them the appearance of huge castles. They stand there in that immense solitude like distant castles of the Grail, and their outlines seen through the hot, shimmering air appear vague and unreal. I often travelled twenty miles without meeting a single soul. In the little tea-houses and rest-houses donkey-drivers and nomads sat silently about the samovar sipping their tea. They never seemed to speak loudly or make any sudden movement. There was something unreal, some sort of
dream quality both about this magnificent landscape and about the inhabitants of the valley.

I had no provisions with me. In the tea-house I got dry flat cakes, called *nan*, and the inevitable tea, *tschai*. *Tschai* plays a great part in Afghan daily life. You drink it constantly, morning, evening, noon, and night. You drink it when an icy snowstorm is blowing about your camp, and when you are almost melting away in the heat.

In many parts of Afghanistan tea is drunk in a very curious way. A Chinese bowl is half filled with sugar, and hot tea is poured on to it. You drink this tea, which is naturally very sweet, and a thick sugary mass is left behind in the bowl. On to this sugary mass more tea is poured, which again you drink. This process is repeated until the last remains of the sugar have disappeared and you are thankful not to have to drink any more bitter tea.

I must often have drunk as many as fifty bowls of tea on days when I encountered several tea-houses. The water generally carries typhoid germs, so tea is the only liquid that one can drink with safety.

The road was not bad, but the emptiness and solitude were most oppressive. Once I had to cross a river. The bed of the river was very deep, and the stony road went steeply down to the water on either side. I could not get up enough speed to take the opposite slope and stuck at the steepest point. This was no joke with a heavily laden motor-cycle. I tried to start up again opening the throttle and accelerating as much as I could in the hope of getting the machine to move gradually upwards. Sud-
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denly straight ahead of me the electric horn of a motor sounded. I had not seen a single car the whole day, and, moreover, most of the cars that one meets in Afghanistan have no horn, so that I must have given a start of surprise—with the result that the next minute my engine died again. However, two Afghans jumped out of the car and helped me to push the motor-cycle up to the top of the hill.

The driver of the car looked at me laughingly and said in fluent German: 'Not a good road for motor-cycles!' I was rather taken aback, and asked him in return: 'Are you German?'

'No, unfortunately not. I have only been a student in Germany,' was his reply. I stood on the running board of his car for a few minutes while he explained to me the route that lay ahead of me. Here it was still quite good, but he considered it quite out of the question that I would be able to get over the passes that were yet to come.

The Afghan was unfortunately in a hurry to get to Kabul. He left behind a great cloud of dust and a slight feeling of homesickness.

At a sharp bend beside the steep river-bank I came upon a crowd of Afghans. They were squatting apathetically on the ground and staring straight ahead of them.

In the shadow of the rocky wall at the side of the road two motionless forms lay stretched out, with their faces covered with a cloth. They were both dead. The wall separating the road from the river had been knocked down, and the wheels of a lorry were sticking out of the
gurgling water. The accident had happened a few hours before.

The driver of the lorry was alive and unhurt. He came cheerfully up to greet me, and showed me the wreck of the lorry in the river. Then he tapped his chest proudly and said: 'I am the driver!'

The drivers of Afghanistan are a class apart. They have superseded the camel-drivers of the big caravan-serais, and are the lords of the Afghan roads. They are care-free, cheery, and reckless as children. In Persia the drivers have already become workers, or so it seemed to me, and are ready to do a definite job and no more. But the fresh wind of adventure still blows about the Afghan driver. He goes everywhere, hears all the news, and is surrounded by the glamour of distant places like some hero of romance. He can even speak a few words of English. He has seen strange places and people. He is the mail personified. Every one gives him messages to be delivered by word of mouth. He is charged with the announcement of the birth of a child in the next village, or the purchase of a cooking-pot in the nearest town, and, as is always the case with people who cannot write, his memory is prodigious. It may be six months before he comes that way again, but he has not forgotten the cooking-pot—or if he has, then it is the will of Allah.

The whole of his devotion is given to his car. He must be a good mechanic, otherwise he is at a loss when the slightest thing goes wrong. But he also takes great trouble to make his car look nice, for the car is after all just a tiny house on wheels, and he is house-proud. So
128. View southwards from Janti La

129. Sunrise just below Janti La
130. On a road in Afghanistan. Dust, heat, ruined buildings, and an oncoming sandstorm.
131. The pictures with which the lorry-drivers decorate their lorries reflect their simple and childish character

132. Central Garage in Kabul. Lorries depart from here to the most distant corners of the country
133. The author journeying through Afghanistan. A linen mask protects the face from dust and hot air.
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the wooden sides are carved and painted, and on them the proud owner sticks cut-out flowers or ornaments or pictures of pretty girls, or even an island of the dead after Bocklin, or a dying swan (Plate 131). In the caravanserai the children stand round the car staring less at the car than at the pictures from another world.

I spent the night beside a little pool. I had covered 125 miles that day, a considerable achievement on Afghan roads. The night was appalling. A warm, almost hot wind caused the dust to rise in thick clouds, and I was soaked through with perspiration. Sometimes I had a dip in the pool to cool myself. But the thousands of mosquitoes forced me to seek the protection of my sleeping-sack again. How endlessly long and lonely those nights were!

The next morning before the sun was up I had already stowed tent, sleeping-sack, and air-mattress on to the motor-cycle, and a few minutes later I reached the foot of the Karwan Pass. This pass is the great test of the Afghan drivers, who are not easily frightened at anything. Cars often stick on it, or crash over the steep cliffs on either side. The track was not too stony, however, so I managed to reach the top of the pass without great difficulty. There were tea-houses there, and a wonderful view over hilly uplands.

The Robat Pass was a much more difficult proposition. The roads in Afghanistan are generally caravan tracks which have been widened later to take motor traffic. These tracks seem to take a quite extraordinary pleasure in surmounting obstacles. When a hill appears the track crosses it at precisely that point where the gradient is
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steepest. Curves and bends seem to be considered quite unnecessary.

The ascent to the Robat Pass was so steep that I had to run along beside the motor-cycle, which was in bottom gear with open throttle, and give what help I could by pushing. As the road consisted chiefly of stones and holes, the back wheel of the motor-cycle was jumping about all over the place. After a few yards in spite of all my efforts I could not keep hold of the machine, and it fell heavily to the ground.

I somehow got it upright once more, and the whole performance began all over again. That is how the passes of Afghanistan are ‘conquered’ for the first time by a motor-cycle.

The worst part of all was the descent from the top of the pass into the valley below. The road here was nearly a foot thick in dust. Underneath the dust, and consequently invisible to me, although they made themselves very definitely felt when it was too late, were ruts of an alarming depth, and also more stones and rubble. At the same time the track was so steep that I had to use both foot-brake and hand-brake the whole time so as to keep the speed down to under two miles an hour. That was the most I could trust myself and the motor-cycle to do. When the wheels jumped over a particularly large hole my foot naturally slipped off the brake, and we accelerated violently. I clapped on the hand-brake whereupon the wheels once more showed an inclination towards a death leap. It is still an unexplained miracle to me to-day that we ever reached the plain.

I spent the night in a hut beside the road. It was made
of branches, and had formerly belonged, so I learnt next morning, to a dervish. He had gone off on his wanderings some days before and had left the hut empty.

The next day I again travelled through mountainous country, but the landscape had lost its unique and gigantic character.

The approach to the plain of Turkistan near Tash-Kurghan was very curious. One traverses a steep valley, surrounded by threatening mountains, and suddenly through the canyon the plain can be seen. It lies below one, like a sea, endless, without visible limits. The transition from the wild mountains to this boundless level is so sudden as to seem hardly credible.

I rode into the bazaar in Tash-Kurghan. Probably none of the natives frequenting the bazaar had ever seen a motor-cycle before, but they remained placidly sitting on their clay seats. What was there to get excited about? There were motors with four wheels, and presumably it was the will of Allah that there should also be motors with two. They sat quiet and dignified beneath the shade of the bazaar roof. I sat down beside them, bought two melons, cut them up, and distributed the pieces among my neighbours. We all munched noisily and reflectively. We had as yet spoken no word to each other.

Only men were to be seen. The women in the towns are confined to the house, and one only occasionally sees a veiled figure slipping hurriedly across the street.

I sat for an hour with the Afghans in the cool of the bazaar. I got on very well with them, for I was able to enjoy a dignified silence as well as they.

As I was leaving the town I was stopped by the police.
My name and those of my male relatives to the furthest degree were put down on paper. I tried hard to be charming and polite, and when one of the policemen exhibited great interest in the red-hot exhaust pipe and put out a hand to touch it, I stopped him just in time.

I went on westwards through the desert. For a long time I could still see on my left the mountains through which I had just come. At midday I reached Masar-i-Scherif, the largest town in northern Afghanistan. A German friend had given me some good advice for Masar.

‘Look up the Russian Consul,’ he had said. ‘He will put you up magnificently, in quite European fashion. What’s more, you won’t get wine or spirits anywhere in Afghanistan, for the orthodox Mohammedans will neither drink nor sell it. But the Russian Consul will give you raki. And raki, you know, is the best medicine for typhoid.’

As I approached Masar I frequently called these words to mind. In a little pool near the town I even shaved off my four-day-old beard in preparation for what was to come. I pictured my arrival at the Russian Consulate. A servant would help me from my motor-cycle and would immediately offer me a glass of raki to restore me. The Consul would come out to meet me, and would welcome me with true Russian hospitality. He was, after all, the only European in Masar. In the evening we would dine beneath rustling poplars, the Consul’s wife—the Consul would of course be elderly and unimposing—would gaze soulfully at me with her black eyes and . . .
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By this time I had actually reached the Consulate. A servant appeared in the courtyard and asked me rudely what I wanted. I said I wanted to speak to the Consul.

The Consul then appeared himself. He looked rather like his own servant, and I began to wonder why I had shaved. In my queer jargon of Afghan and Persian I did my best to qualify for the raki. The Consul gave me to understand with more force than politeness that there were several tea-houses in Masar where I could be put up.

I thanked him for the information and did my best not to ‘lose face’, wherein I was successful. I only lost it when I found myself in a tea-house drinking the inevitable tea and eating dry bread.

The desert was vast and lonely. There was a track across it leading straight as a die westwards. Mile after mile sped by, each mile bringing me nearer home.

That night I reached one of the huge caravanserais of Turkistan. The elderly innkeeper greeted me pleasantly. He had only two other young men as guests besides myself. I asked if I could wash. ‘Why, of course!’ he replied, smacking his thigh in delight and amazement at such a curious desire.

He led me to a little pond before the house. I waded stark naked into the muddy water and scrubbed myself with soap as hard as I could. During the washing ceremony the old man watched me benevolently and nodded approval.

A little later on he began to make tea for us, and placidly fetched the water for it from this same pond. We drank innumerable cups of this curious tea, which only tasted very slightly of soap.
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A third guest arrived. He had brought a lute with him, and while I lay lazily in the courtyard on my blankets he began softly to play the monotonous melodies of his country. The notes sounded unbelievably sad as they echoed through the silence of the desert.

The blue-black darkness of night crept over the plain. One star after another shone out in unimaginable size and splendour. I lay peacefully on my back, asking for nothing, conscious only of the vast spaces all about me.

The next day I stuck in the bottomless sand beyond Shibargahn. The car-tracks led across the desert. I could get the motor-cycle to go in bottom gear, but now I was caught in a slight hollow in the ground. I could neither go on nor back. The sand was so deep that I could dismount without fear of the motor-cycle falling. In vain I tried to push it farther. It was quite impossible. The loose sand made all my efforts useless. I climbed on to the nearest sand-dune. As far as the eye could reach there was nothing but sand. . . .

My situation was by no means hopeless. True, I had, careless as usual, forgotten to bring any water with me, but the last village through which I had come, barely two hours before, was only eighteen miles away, and I could easily get there on foot in the cool of the night. But I did not want to forsake the motor-cycle. Perhaps a lorry would come by.

The hours slipped slowly by. It was still as death all round me, and appallingly hot. My thoughts concentrated more and more on one single idea: water.

It was late in the afternoon when I heard the sound
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of a motor, and a few minutes later a lorry stopped beside me. The driver jumped down, and without a word handed me a leather bottle. I shall never forget that moment. How inexpressibly good that lukewarm water tasted! I can still see that bottle before me, with its mouthpiece cut out of wood, and painted red.

The man heaved the motor-cycle into the lorry, and we turned round and went back to Shibargahn.

The next morning I came back with another lorry through the fearsome sandy region to Anchoi. The country became more and more dried up, and the fields smaller and poorer. The towns and villages are surrounded by tumbledown buildings. One sees how life has withdrawn itself and struggled to protect itself against the desert. The people and the country are sad and silent. One rarely hears laughter. The children’s eyes are big and dark, as if they knew about all the misery of the world.

My next objective was Maimana. It lay somewhere down in the south.

I tried unsuccessfully to find out how far off it was. The information I received varied between thirty and two hundred miles. Lorries generally took between one and two days to get there.

The Afghans are a polite and kindly people. It distresses them not to be able to reply to a stranger’s questions. They therefore invariably made some sort of reply, just so as not to hurt the stranger’s feelings. For example, I ask them: ‘Which is the way to Maimana?’

They reflect rapidly—evidently he wants to go to Maimana, and on this two-wheeled motor too. He will
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like to know that the road is excellent and not at all sandy.

It is just the same with distances. There is never a town that is not bisjar nastik, 'quite near'. Everything within the bounds of Afghanistan is 'quite near'. You may reach it in ten minutes, or it may take you a fortnight.

The matter becomes critical when you refuse to be satisfied with bisjar nastik, and ask the peasant or the leader of the caravan to give you more exact information.

The answer is then certain to be that the place in question is three, or thirty-three, or even three hundred and thirty-three miles away. Statistics of distances which are not composed of three's seem to be unpopular.

The value of these conversations about road conditions and distances is therefore purely social. All the same, I always breathe again and think: 'The worst is over now,' when someone assures me that the way is excellent and my objective bisjar nastik.

There are pessimists, however, even among the Afghans. When I had left Kabul behind me and asked about Herat, which must have been over six hundred miles away, I was constantly assured throughout the succeeding fortnight that it was bisjar nastik. At last one day I found myself near the town, with only a little hill between myself and it. Just for fun I asked a passing horseman how far it was. He wrinkled his brow thoughtfully, shook his head as if in doubt, and finally announced with tremendous conviction: 'Bisjar dur est—it's a long way off still!'
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There followed another two days of struggle against the deep, loose sand, and once again I finally had to take refuge in a lorry.

It was a somewhat mixed pleasure travelling on one of these lorries. There was usually no room inside, so I found myself a corner on the roof among sacks, boxes, and Afghans. The lorry rocked violently from side to side, and very soon my companions would be leaning over the railing and relieving their stomachs. The periods between these diversions they occupied in conversation.

It is amusing to listen to a conversation which you cannot understand. For example, two Afghans would be conversing about me. I could only hear words that were incomprehensible to me, but I could tell exactly what they meant. I was quite sure that one of them was saying: ‘What a plucky young man! How courageously he is travelling through our country!’ It is of course equally possible that he may have said: ‘What a poor, dirty-looking fellow. It wouldn’t be worth while to rob him.’ But, as I said, not understanding the language I could not interpret as I would.

In Maimana I met a German engineer who had been working here for more than a year. He told me about the hardships of his profession. For months on end he never saw a European; he could get no books, and had only his work and solitude. I asked him what sort of books he particularly wanted. Without a moment’s reflection he replied: ‘Oh, it would be enough if I had one book of Rilke’s with me.’

Now Rilke’s Briefe an einen jungen Dichter was the only book that I had taken with me to Afghanistan. I
believe I have never given a more welcome gift in my life than when I presented the lonely German with that book.

I had now reached the last, but also the most difficult stage of my journey through Afghanistan, the stage to Herat. From there on a good road led into Persia.

It was once again quite impossible to learn anything of the condition of the road. All I could discover was that a lorry only covered this distance every ten or fourteen days. If my motor-cycle broke down I should therefore be dependent almost entirely upon myself.

The Afghans whom I encountered called my motor-cycle either 'the two-wheeled motor' or 'the stinking devil', according as to how they felt disposed towards it. Most of them, I must admit, used the second expression. Riders on horseback took a particular dislike to me. Horses always shied at the machine, and if the rider was not very firm in the saddle he invariably landed in what, in a normal road, would have been the ditch. In Afghanistan there were usually sharp stones instead of a ditch, which did not improve the unfortunate horseman's temper. As these riders generally carried a rifle and were likely to be good shots, I always had an unpleasant feeling when I passed one of them on the road and heard a fall behind me. But either they were peace-loving people, or else they were too busy picking themselves up after their fall; in any case, none of them ever let off a shot after me. But even to-day when I meet a quiet-looking horse on a European road, I instinctively moderate my speed and pass it at a respectful distance.

On the evening of the second day after leaving
Maimana I came to an ascent which in spite of all my efforts I could not climb. Countless donkeys in the course of years had trodden out what amounted almost to a stairway in the steep rocky track, and I vainly tried time after time to push the machine upwards. Alone I simply could not manage it. Far and wide there was no human being to be seen. At last a solitary wayfarer came along. I promised him baksheesh if we could manage together to push the motor-cycle up the steep ascent. Night came on, and we had to give up the attempt; even the two of us had not been able to manage it. The Afghan gave me to understand that he would come back soon with three more helpers.

I waited behind a huge rock. Below me was a wild valley through which rushed the river Murghab. The sound of its turbulent roar filled the narrow cleft. A warm wind blew clouds of dust before it, increasing steadily in force. I could neither pitch my tent nor make use of my sleeping-sack, for the wind would have torn it to shreds while I tried to unpack it.

I lay down on the ground in my shorts, shirt and shoes, wrapped in my driving coat, and tried to swallow as little sand as possible. At last I fell asleep.

Suddenly I was awakened by a burning pain in the naked part of my thigh. As I sprang up I felt something gliding across my foot. I had no matches and no light whatever, and could see nothing at all, but I felt my thigh swelling, and the pain was becoming almost insupportable. Probably a scorpion or a snake had found a warm place near my body and had been frightened by a sudden movement. Neither a snake's bite
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nor a scorpion's sting are invariably fatal, but they sometimes prove so. It was inky black and I could see absolutely nothing. I tried to cut the wound open with my knife, but my foot was so swollen that I could not find the sting.

I limped down to the river and put my foot in the cool water. Then I waited. Perhaps I should die within the next few hours. This thought seemed to me not so much cruel as laughable. It was maddening to have to wait helplessly, not knowing whether one was going to live or die. So much of life is a struggle, and now when it came to the greatest decision of all I could do nothing but sit and wait.

The pain died down somewhat and I crept back again. As the light of dawn began to appear over the mountaintops I slept again.

Voices woke me the next morning. I opened my eyes and saw a face bending over me. I was just reaching out for a large stone which I had laid beside me to serve as a weapon when the man laughed down at me and said: 'Don't kill me, be peaceful!'

He introduced himself as a rich Afghan merchant who knew England and Germany. He was passing in his car and had seen me lying there like a dead man. He wanted to know what he could do to help me.

He looked at my leg, which had already resumed normal proportions. It was the bite of a not very dangerous scorpion, so there was no need to worry about it. With his two companions he helped me to push my motor-cycle over the top of the hill and I was alone again.
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Solitude and silence. For hours I rode along through narrow valleys and over passes and uplands. I met some nomads, and sat for an hour or two in their tent enjoying the coolness and shade.

 Everywhere I was offered water, great wide bowls of dirty liquid. I drank anything and everything by now, whether it was grey or brown. Only once I did draw back when I saw a worm as long as my finger wriggling in the coffee-coloured gravy-like liquid. The nomad noticed my hesitation and with incontrovertible logic and many gestures explained: ‘The worm is so small and yet it lives on this water. You are so big and strong why should you be afraid of it?’ I drank the water.

I encountered curious obstructions. In a narrow ravine lay a vast mass of heaped-up thistles, which blocked my way. The wind had torn up the dry, thistle-like steppe-plants and blown them over the plain. If two of these plants, whose name I unfortunately cannot remember, touch each other, they stick together. Thus this dry bunch of thistles grows like a snowball until it forms an impenetrable mass sometimes as much as ten feet across. This mass sticks in any hollow space such as a ravine and blocks the way completely. The road can only be opened up by burning or cutting one’s way through.

It is a strange spectacle to see these masses of thistles, looking like pre-historic beasts, advancing across the plain, which lies empty and lifeless but for them. They move forward now slowly, now in wild leaps, as the wind whips up behind them.

At last, on the third day after leaving Maimana, I reached Herat by the incredibly lovely Kashka Pass.
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Herat is supposed to be one of the most interesting and beautiful towns of Afghanistan. I should be telling lies if I ventured any opinion about it. I saw nothing of Herat except the house of Herr Brotz. He lives there with his wife, and they are the only Europeans in the town. I went to call upon him and he at once invited me to be his guest. It was marvellous to lie on a divan in a cool house, and to know that Afghanistan and all its difficult passes lay behind me.

And so I had seen nothing of Herat when I went on two days later.

Just before I reached the Persian frontier the accident which I have already mentioned took place, when I skidded and the hot exhaust-pipe, touching my ankle as I fell, burnt it nearly to the bone. Sick and miserable I reached the American hospital in Meshed, where I soon recovered.

Here are a few figures about my motor-cycle journey across Afghanistan. In fourteen days of travelling I covered 1,120 miles. I crossed six passes, with heights varying between 6,500 feet and 11,000 feet.
Once again the kaleidoscope of space: people, country-sides, towns, Tehran, Baghdad, rush by.

Everything is fine, but it is no longer the great experience itself, it is only the quiet aftermath.

Until one day I stood upon Mount Lebanon and looked down to the sea, and farther to the west, where lay my country. A steamer with a long cloud of smoke lay motionless upon the water.

I sat down to rest upon the hard clayey ground. I thought of the year that lay behind me, and took farewell of it. I remembered the words: 'Wherever we go, whatever we seek, we find our own country.' I had read those words long ago, and had not understood them. Now suddenly I realized their truth. And I knew that all the tracks and roads I had travelled across in Asia, sometimes without any particular reason or objective, had all only served to bring me nearer to one great goal—my country.

It is a common experience, not only when we return home after a long journey, but also in most departments
of life, that anticipation surpasses fulfilment. In anticipation, the great moment is still to come, and we can picture it to ourselves with all sorts of variations. Even when the fulfilment surpasses our rosiest dreams, there is something of sadness mingled with it. Fulfilment is an actual fact; it is the present, which with the next moment will have become the past.

Perhaps I shall never again be so near to my country as in that moment. Never again shall I be so intensely, vitally conscious of what my country means to me. That moment was worth a year of vagabondage.

I let myself dream of my return home. Very cool and collected, I would show my passport at the frontier, and when questioned I should just say casually: 'Yes I was out of Europe for some time.'

Then I would travel on through scented autumn meadows. Green fields and trees—it is impossible to conceive how one longs for them when one has had nothing but sand and rock for months!

I would wander about in one of these fields, and lie down upon the ground. I would press my face deep into the grass as against the body of the woman one loves, and I would try to listen to the rhythm of life.

I sat on Mount Lebanon and dreamt of home. Elegant French and Levantine women came up in huge luxury cars to look at the view. Sometimes the wind brought a whiff of their perfume in my direction.

I looked to the east and said farewell. In Burma my friends the head-hunters were sitting before their huts with the tropical jungle all round them. Up there in a little tent in Tibet crouched shivering men who journeyed
Epilogue

with me for some weeks of my life. Over the Smiling Lake the leg-oarsmen were propelling their flat boats.

It is good to know and feel something of the vastness of the world.

A camel caravan came over the pass. Driver and animals passed me like proud, distant silhouettes, and disappeared again. The sound of their bells lingered long in the air, growing gradually fainter and fainter until finally it died away. But that sound will echo within me, and will swell and fill my whole life with longing, till at last I shall follow the call again.

But in that moment I felt no sadness at my farewell. I turned the motor-cycle towards the sea, and it glided noiselessly down the road towards the next great experience—home.
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MAP SHOWING ROUTE FOLLOWED BY THE AUTHOR ON HIS JOURNEY THROUGH THE KUMAOON-HIMALAYA AND SOUTH WESTERN TIBET