

culties, and so pass down in a south-westerly direction to Lhasa. He believed there was a continuation of the Himalayas in a circuit of mountains enclosing the whole of Central Asia,—the Himalayas on the south, the Pamir on the west, the Altai on the north, and the Inshan and Yung Ling on the east.

Dr. CAMPBELL, referring to the fact that one of the Pundits had examined the pass of Muktinath leading into Nepal, and had found that the ascent to it from the north was very easy, with cultivation on both sides; and that the summit of it was not above 13,000 feet, said that this threw great light on an important event which occurred at the end of the last century, and which people could hardly understand. A Chinese army equipped at Peking had invaded Nepal, and penetrated to within 20 miles of Kathmandu. As all the passes we knew of into Tibet are at least 16,000 feet, and very difficult, we concluded that the feat was marvellous. With the knowledge of this very easy pass of the Pundit's we can more readily comprehend an invasion from the north, although this one is still a very surprising one. Dr. Campbell remarked that while we took so much pains to explore the passes of the Himalaya from the south, we should do our utmost to gain a knowledge of the approaches from the north along the whole extent of our frontier.

Sir H. RAWLINSON said, in the work to which he had alluded, the general mountain system of Central Asia was laid down very much in the way Mr. Saunders had described it. The author stated that there was but one great mountain system of Central Asia; it commenced on the north in the great chain of the Thian Shan, or "Celestial Mountains," which came from Mogulstan, and passed along to the north of Eastern Turkistan. The range then circled round to the west, passing between Kashgar and Khokan, and forming the Pamir. Further on it turned to the south-east and became the Himalayas,—the plateau of Tibet being regarded as a part of the chain; the mountains were also said to stretch to the eastward as far as China, but the termination in that direction was unknown. Rudok was regarded as the limit on the northern side of this chain, thereby showing that there could not be a further interior creat. With regard to the line of rivers, it should be remembered that from the Pamir eastward all the rivers of Central Asia ran to the east, the slope of the country being from west to east.

Mr. SAUNDERS said he believed the plains at the northern base of the Kuen-lun separated the Plateau of Tibet from another plateau equally remarkable and quite as distinctly defined. What the Himalayas were to the southern edge of the great mass of Central Asia, the Altai were to the northern edge, and what the Kuen-lun was to the inner slope of the great mass of Tibet, the Thian Shan was to the inner slope of the great mass of the Altai. He believed that the interval between the Thian Shan and the Altai was as much a plateau as that of Tibet, but no doubt very different in its character.

The PRESIDENT said the differences of opinion manifested in the discussion showed how little was really known by European geographers with regard to this region. Some time ago, Mr. Gladstone complimented the Society by saying, "Gentlemen, you have done so much that you are like Alexander, you have no more worlds to conquer;" but if he had been present that evening he would have learnt how vast was the region yet to be explored.

The following paper was then read:—

2. *Account of an Attempt by a Native Envoy to reach the Catholic Missionaries of Tibet.* By Captain J. GREGORY.

A native chief was sent on the mission here narrated, in con-

sequence of the receipt of the following letter from certain Catholic missionaries in Tibet :—

EXTRACT of a LETTER from Catholic Missionaries of French Nationality residing on the Chinese and Tibetan frontier, to Colonel R. C. Lawrence, c.B., Resident at Nepal, dated 18th March, 1869.

WE think that it is good to inform you of what we have been told several times of people of this country who went to trade as far as Ta-li-fu. They say that there are at Ta-li-fu some Europeans casting cannon for the benefit of the King of the Mahomedans. They give such particular descriptions of their features, habits, uniforms, &c., that we are inclined to believe that it is true.

We have been told also that last year a party of English travellers coming from Assam through the wild tribe of the Mishmis had reached the Tibetan district of Dzayul, but they had been turned back by the local authorities. Had these gentlemen been able to settle in that district of Dzayul, they would have found there a real confluence of roads, one going south of Tibet towards the west, to Lhasa; one going to the north, to the independent principality of Pomi; one in a north-east direction, reaching Tcha-mouto, or Tsiamdo; one reaching Kiang-ka and Batang, to the east; then another one going south to the Yunnan province and Ta-li-fu.

In order to show our gratitude to the English Government for their kindness to us, should some English gentlemen come to this part of the world we will help them heartily, as much as we can, and give them as much information as may be in our power. Last year we were very happy to do so for a nice young English gentleman, Mr. T. T. Cooper, who came to Batang. Being unable to proceed to Lhasa, this gentleman wanted to go to Ta-li-fu and Birma; but he was unfortunately stopped at the Chinese town of Weisi, in the Yunnan province. After being very ill-treated, he was turned back to Shanghai.

Since your Excellency has taken so much interest about us, you will be glad, we hope, to hear something of our doings in this country. From the time of the persecution which drove us out of Tibet Proper, in September, 1869, Messrs. Fage and Goutelle are living at Batang, five days' journey east from Kiang-ka, wherefrom they had been expelled. Messrs. M. Desgodins and F. Biet, who were expelled from Bonga, are now settled at Tsaka, on the banks of the Lan-tsan River (which is called Meikong at Saigon), in about 29° 19' lat. north. This station is but three days' journey south from Kiang-ka, and not more than three miles from the frontier of Tibet. On the banks of the same river, eight days' journey south of Tsaka, there is a new Christian station, the name of which is Tsekou. This station is not more than four or five days south-east from Bonga, the lonely property of our mission, which was plundered and burnt in 1869, and where we wish so much to go back. Bonga was situated on the banks of the Lou-tse-kiang (which is called in Birma Salween River), in about 28° north; Tsekou is a little more south, but on the banks of the Meikong River. Our venerable Bishop is living at Ta-tsién-lu, fourteen days east of Batang. Though all these countries are Tibetan by language and manners, they are under the direct government of the Se-chuen province.

We hope these geographical notes will be agreeable to you. Should your Excellency desire a more particular and complete account of the eastern part of Tibet, where we have lived for eight years, we will do it most willingly.

Capt. Gregory's Report is, in substance, as follows :—

“I have the honour to report, for the information of the Commissioner, the return of Chowsam Gohain, the Kampti chief, deputed

by my predecessor on a mission to Tibet, to endeavour to open communications with the French Missionaries, who, some time ago, applied to the Imperial Government, through the Resident at Nepal, for assistance.

“The Gohain failed to penetrate far enough into the country to meet the priests, having been stopped on the frontier by the officials of Tibet, but has returned, after a stay of a month at the Tibetan frontier outposts, with a letter from one of the Tibetan officials, and with much interesting and valuable information relative to the route and the people of that portion of Tibet which nearest approaches Assam.

“No opposition was offered to the progress of the Gohain’s party by the relatives of Kaesa, whose hostility it was feared would bar the Mishmee country to us. Chowsam met Kaesa’s sons on the upward journey, made them a small present, and promised to visit them on his way down. They informed him that two other Kampti border chiefs had been endeavouring to induce the Mishmees to oppose his progress by saying that he had come up to spy out the land to enable the English to ‘devour it in their usual manner.’

“Chowsam Gohain started on his mission on the 24th of March last from Chungkam, his village, on the Tenga Pani River, accompanied by five Kampti followers, and taking with him the articles of trade supplied to him by the late Deputy Commissioner, and on the evening of the 3rd day reached the Brahmaputra at Brahmo, a Mijoo Mishmee village, the inhabitants of which collect toll from the pilgrims to the Bramakund; the two intervening nights having been spent in the jungle on the banks of small streams. The Mijoo-Mishmees had heard of the Gohain’s contemplated expedition, but, far from offering any opposition to it, assisted him with advice and provisions.

“From Brahmo to Bowsong, on the Lat Thipani, the Gohain followed the general course of the Brahmaputra River, leaving the bank only to avoid bends. His path led him through Mijoo Mishmee villages and scattered solitary houses in which he was entertained, and he had only once to lie out in the jungle; this happened in crossing a high hill on which there still lingered patches of snow. Bowsong was reached on the 3rd of April, the Gohain having halted two days at Sengsong. All the villages east of Sengsong are dependent on Tibet, and trade only with the Tibetans, never coming down to Sudiya; but they are of the Mijoo Mishmee clan, and do not differ in any particular from those of the same sept who are dependent on us and trade with Sudiya. Bowsong is the village marked on Wilcox’s map, and the map com-

piled to accompany the memorandum of the Vicar Apostolic of Tibet,* as 'Jingsha.' The Mishmee villages are called after the head-man, and Bowsong, the son or grandson of 'Jingsha,' is now the head-man of this community.

"At Bowsong the Gohain made arrangements with Bowsong and Sengsong to accompany him, and pushed on to Teenai, the first Tibetan village. This was a journey of six marches, during which the Brahmaputra had to be crossed twice by cane bridges. The road for the whole distance led through Mijoo Mishmee villages in which the party was entertained. At Teenai the two Mishmee guides slept in the village, but the Kampti party was not admitted. The following day the Gohain marched to Rochma,† one of a group of villages from which the Tibetan frontier post of Erka is garrisoned. There the head-men of Rochma and Kangaun were so angry with the Mishmees, Bowsong and Sengsong, for having guided Chowsam Gohain, and intimidated and threatened them to such a degree that they insisted on the Gohain's returning immediately with them to their village, which he was very reluctantly compelled to do.

"During a whole month Chowsam endeavoured vainly, by bribe, presents, and persuasion, to induce the Mishmee head-men to make another attempt to obtain ingress to Tibet with him; but at last Bowsong, wearied by his importunity, one day took him aside and told him that his only chance of success was to return by himself, avoid the intermediate villages, and make his way straight to the frontier outpost, and boldly declare his real errand to the officer in command. The 'Jeengoo' in charge was alarmed and annoyed at the Gohain's re-appearance, and asked him how he dared to return after having been sent back once from Rochma, and ordered him to go back immediately. The Gohain, acting on the Mishmee's advice, showed his letters, and explained that he was commissioned to join and bring to Assam some European priests, the brothers of the ruler of Debrooghur, and that until he had accomplished his errand, he dared not return. The 'Jeengoo' denied the existence of any Europeans in Tibet, and reiterated his orders to the Gohain to return to his own country at once; this the Gohain firmly but quietly refused to do, and insisted on being allowed to proceed. At last the 'Jeengoo,' finding that nothing short of actual force would induce Chowsam to retire, and somewhat frightened by the earnest manner in which the latter impressed upon him the responsibility he incurred by refusing to allow him to pass, agreed to refer the

* See the 'Transactions Asiat. Soc. Bengal, 1861.'

† Called Roemah in the above map (from native information).

question to higher authority at Serongba, and to allow Chowsam to remain, pending the receipt of an answer, at Erka; and he at once despatched mounted messengers, reporting the foreigner's arrival, and asking for instructions. No answer to this communication was received for fourteen days, during which time the Kampti party was entertained by the 'Jeengoo' free of cost, and the Gohain occupied himself in obtaining any information he could relative to the position and circumstances of the French priests, the routes into the interior, and the condition of the country and people, and in compiling a vocabulary of Tibetan words. He communicated with the people in the Mishmee language, but he was very much assisted in his inquiries by a Kampti boy, the slave of the Rochma-ooji, who had bought him from the Mishmees. At noon of the fourteenth day a party of five horsemen rode into Rochma, passing the Chowkey in which the Gohain was living without taking any notice of him, and he was told that the leader was a 'Naboo Jungbal,' a man of rank, higher than the Jeengoo, who had been sent down to dispose of his affair. The next day the Gohain received a peremptory order to leave at once by the way he had come, and the supply of provisions to him was stopped entirely. The 'Naboo Jungbal' replied again vicariously that there were no Europeans in Tibet, and no road for foreigners, for the Tibetan Government knew that if it once permitted the English to enter the country, they would 'covet and finally devour it, as they had devoured so many other countries.' The Gohain, on his side, sent word that he knew positively that the French priests were in Tibet, and the avowal of his intention to abandon his mission only with his life. But eventually he made his way back to his village as quickly as he could, and after a short stay there came on through Sudiya to Debrooghur. Whilst in the Tibetan villages he learnt that a great trade-route from the western provinces of China to Lhasa crossed the Brahmaputra by means of an iron bridge, about seven days' journey above Rochma. The villagers told him that the traders from China did not go to Lhasa, but were met at a great central mart, at or near a place they named Serongba, by the Lhasa traders. The Gohain saw quantities of tea in bricks and balls, and described to me the manner in which it is prepared and consumed, and stated that it is very largely used by the border Tibetans.

"From the Gohain's account of the rate at which he travelled, I calculate that he did not go much faster than 7 or 8 miles per diem, and that the point which he reached cannot be more than 170 or 180 miles from Sudiya. It would be needless to dilate on the advantages to be derived from direct commercial intercourse with

Tibet, and no opening likely to lead to it should, I think, be neglected."

Colonel YULE said the first time he ever heard of these missionaries was about ten years ago, when he was in Calcutta connected with the Asiatic Society of Bengal. A letter was then received from Sir Bartle Frere, enclosing one from the Vicar Apostolic of Tibet, the head of these missions, to the French Bishop at Rangoon. Previous to that no one in Calcutta knew there were any Europeans or missionaries in that *terra incognita* lying between the Yang-tsze-kiang and Assam. The letter described the position of Bungay, and conveyed a good deal of miscellaneous information about the rivers coming down to the eastward of Assam. Great difficulty was found in connecting the ascertained Indian geography up to the Assam frontier with what was mentioned in the letter; but it happened that in 1854 two French priests attempted to make their way from Sudiya to their brethren at Bungay. They stopped within the Tibetan territory to learn something of the language, but were both murdered by a chief, who was himself afterwards caught by Captain Doulton and hanged. They were murdered at a village called Samay. That place, though it had not been visited by Europeans, was marked on Captain Wilcox's map, which he made in 1826 or 1827, at the end of the first Burmese war. Samay was known to the Bishop who wrote from Bungay. However improbable it might seem to symmetrical geographers, there were three or four great rivers rising in the plateau of Tibet and running down parallel to one another, and within a narrow belt of country not more than 80 or 100 miles in extent, separately to the sea, those rivers being the Irrawady, the Cambodia, the Salween, and the Yang-tsze. The letter mentioned two other rivers, one of which the Bishop identified as the Schwaley, which entered the Irrawady, and the other was the river on which stood the village of Samay, which was known to be the eastern branch of the Brahmaputra. This seemed to identify the Sanpo with the Brahmaputra, which probably came from the north instead of from the east, as modern maps represented.

Sir H. RAWLINSON said, last year Mr. Cooper, who was the only Englishman that had ever been on the Chinese-Tibetan frontier, wrote that he was doubtful, with all his information, whether the Sanpo really was the Brahmaputra, or was the head-stream of the Irrawady. He himself thought the Sanpo must positively be the Brahmaputra, but the river had never been followed from Lhasa to Sudiya.

Eleventh Meeting, April 25th, 1870.

SIR RODERICK I. MURCHISON, BART, K.C.B., PRESIDENT, in
the Chair.

ELECTIONS.—*Thomas M. Blackie, Esq.; Evelyn Baring, Esq., Lieut. R.A.; Colonel Shuckburgh Denniss; George B. Hudson, Esq.; Lord Lawrence, G.C.B., &c.; John Fenton Taylor, Esq.*

ACCESSIONS TO THE LIBRARY FROM 11TH TO 25TH APRIL.—'Map and Notes of the Lake Region of Eastern Africa:' showing the Sources of the Nile recently discovered by Dr. Livingstone. By Keith Johnston, Jun. 1870. Donor the author. 'Wild Life among the