

## A JOURNEY INTO THE ABOR COUNTRY, 1909.

By Colonel D. M. LUMSDEN, C.B.,\* and the late Mr. NOEL WILLIAMSON.

[THE following brief and hitherto unpublished account of a visit to the Abor country, made by the late Mr. Noel Williamson and myself in company with the Rev. W. L. B. Jackman, of the American Mission, in January, 1909, may tend to throw some light on the reasons for Mr. Williamson again renewing his visit, and for the trust he placed in the people who have so treacherously murdered him and his fellow-traveller, Dr. Gregorson, with a numerous following.

The object of my visit was to unveil, if possible, the mystery still surrounding the falls of the Tsanpo; but Mr. Williamson's main object, as political officer, was to establish friendly relations with the Bor Abors, while the padre undoubtedly had his mission work at heart. Had Mr. Williamson on his second visit followed the route we then took, no doubt he would have been met once more at Kebang by Maddu gam of Reu and had some excuse made, as was done to us, for preventing him crossing the river. To avoid this, and placing faith in the invitation the Gam of Reu then gave him to return next year and all would be well, he crossed the Dihong lower down and marched for his village, encamping for the night within a few hours of the place. That evening a number of Abors came from the Reu village and offered him presents. This no doubt strengthened his belief that he would be welcomed on arrival, and on getting there next morning and being met by Maddu gam he unhesitatingly followed him to his doom, his trusted servants and followers sharing a similar fate. Poor Dr. Gregorson (whose aims were similar to my own, viz. the falls!), who had to camp further down the river to look after some sick coolies, while attempting to join him, was also killed by the same treacherous gang, as well as those with him.

Some may think that Mr. Williamson was rash in venturing again on the mission he did. But when it is considered how we were received on our previous journey and the invitation given us to return, he cannot be blamed in endeavouring to maintain the friendly relations which were seemingly then established. As a frontier officer, Mr. Williamson at Sadiya was the right man in the right place, and has justly earned the kindly tribute paid to his memory in the last number of your *Journal*. When the time arrives, no doubt the Assam Government (who are the best judges) will take the needful steps to deal with the situation. But I may say, from the close of April to the end of October, Nature's barrier, in the shape of the swollen waters from the melting Himalayan snows, confines the Abors and other tribes along the frontier to their mountain-tops as they do us to the plains below.]

*January 25, Camp on the Dihang River.*—Left Sadiya this morning at

\* Colonel D. M. Lumsden's diary of his recent attempt to reach the Tsanpo falls.  
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7.30, the party consisting of Williamson, myself, and our surveyor, Pertab Singh (kindly lent by Colonel Longe), four Miri *kotokies* (interpreters), and 48 Naga coolies. Including servants, we totalled 111 souls. It is only a mile from the Political Officer's bungalow to the Brahmaputra, where we found eleven dug-out boats with all our belongings on board. We drifted down-stream, passing the mouth of the Debang at 12.30 and reaching our camp on the Dihang two hours later.

*January 26, Camp Sesiri Mukh.*—It is hard and slow work pushing up-stream, and although we got off in good time, did not reach camp until 4.30 p.m.

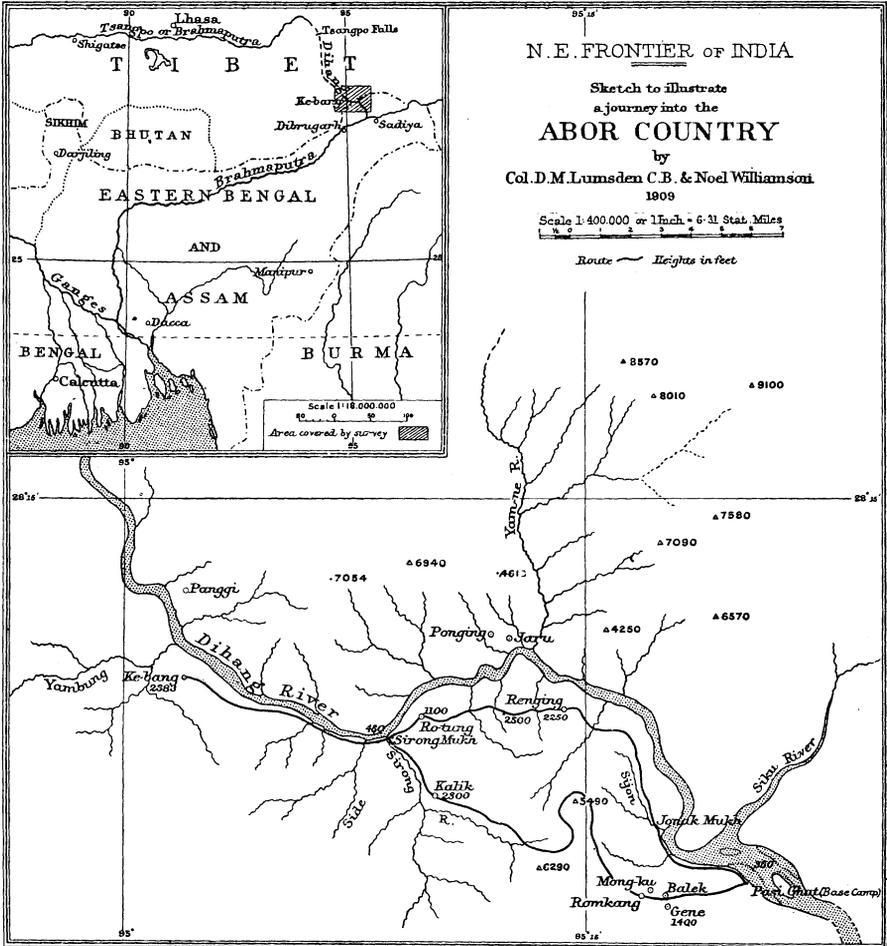
*January 27, Sibiya Mukh.*—Another day's pushing and pulling got our small fleet here by sundown.

*January 28, Pasi Ghat.*—Williamson and self in our small boats reached here (the end of our water transit) by noon. But the others did not put in an appearance until 5 p.m. The rapids were many, and heavily laden boats could make but slow progress. *En route* we passed the camp of the Rev. W. L. B. Jackman of the American Mission, but found him away visiting some of the Miri villages. Williamson had often spoken of asking him to accompany us, he having a perfect knowledge of the Abor dialect, and, with Williamson's permission, already visited two of their lower villages on the Debang river. I was delighted at the suggestion, as, apart from what I have stated, I knew he would be an excellent travelling companion. Unexpected delays kept us at Pasi Ghat, our base camp, until February 5. Meantime, the *pādre* had gleefully accepted Williamson's invitation to accompany us, and joined our camp on the evening of the 4th. Like ourselves, he had heard rumours of an inter-tribal war amongst the Abors; but such things being of common occurrence, we paid but little heed to the story. I would here mention that about a mile above our camp the Dihang emerges from the hills, and from the gorge there blows what seems a never-ceasing cold gale. Our marching gear was now cut down to the lowest possible scale, taking but one small tent for the three of us to sleep in.

*February 5, Camp Romkang.*—We got off at 8 a.m. The first 4 miles of our march was quite a level path through the forest and easy walking for our coolies. We then crossed a small stream and were in Abor Land. There is quite a group of villages about here, named as follows: Bokung, Mong-ku, Balek, Gene, Yagrung, Romkang, and we were soon met by several of their *gams* (headmen), who suggested our camping at the nearest village, Balek, saying Romkang was distant from water, etc. Williamson, however, by his *kotokies'* advice, pushed on, getting to where he wanted at 2 p.m. Height 1400 feet. We had soon a gathering of *gams* from every village. Williamson now asked them for guides to show us the way to Ke-bang. This, they said, was impossible. The war, which turned out to be no myth, would render the journey a dangerous one, and they would not be responsible for our safety, etc.

*February 6, Romkang.*—The morning broke dark and gloomy, and our

prospects of getting on seemed equally so. The *gams* were still unanimous in their efforts to dissuade us from advancing. The difficulties of transport and the dangers of the road were added to the war scare. *Apropos* of the latter, we were told that two moons ago the Punggees from the northern bank had raided on their southern neighbours, killing six tribesmen. Now the villages between here and Ke-bang were joining their forces to



retaliate. Still obdurate, close on to noon they made Williamson the present of a pig, which he wisely declined, to show his displeasure at their not agreeing to his request. This rather took them aback, and later in the evening Williamson approached them with the offer of Rs.100, when they began to think the matter over. After consultation, they said that if each village was given Rs.100 they would accede to his request.

This Williamson firmly declined to do, but said he would add another Rs.50 on to his previous offer. This they finally agreed to take. We now endeavoured to get them to assist our coolies in the matter of transport, but beyond getting four men, to whom we paid Rs.4 each for the journey to Ke-bang, we could do no more.

*February 7, Romkang.*—Got an early start 8 a.m. Our march was a stiff one, having to cross the range in front of us at a height of 5650 feet. As we ascended we had several fine views of the Dihang valley, one in particular of the gorge where the river flows into the plains. Our descent on the other side was bad going, steep and slippery, and our coolies being about done, we camped at the first small stream we came to. Height 4500 feet.

*February 8.*—Start at 8.30 a.m. and continued our downward course. Temperature at leaving registered 38°. On each side of our narrow and winding path the undergrowth had been recently cut to a width of 10 to 12 feet on to a small village named Kalik, containing, some thirty houses. Here we camped for the night. It is situated near the Sirong river. Height 2450 feet. Few of its inhabitants had ever seen a sahib, and the curiosity of men, women, and children knew no limit. Our little tent was continually surrounded, and it was with great difficulty we could keep them outside. They were all keen on Burma *cheroots*, of which, fortunately, I had brought a large supply and was able to gratify their taste.

*February 9.*—Got off at 8 a.m., and, following the same steep, slippery path, soon came in touch with the Sirong river. From here, however, our march was anything but pleasant, our guides at the finish taking us a couple of miles over slippery boulders, and glad we were when 2 p.m. found us once again on the banks of the Dihang. Two of our coolies had, I regret to say, very nasty falls over the latter portion of our route.

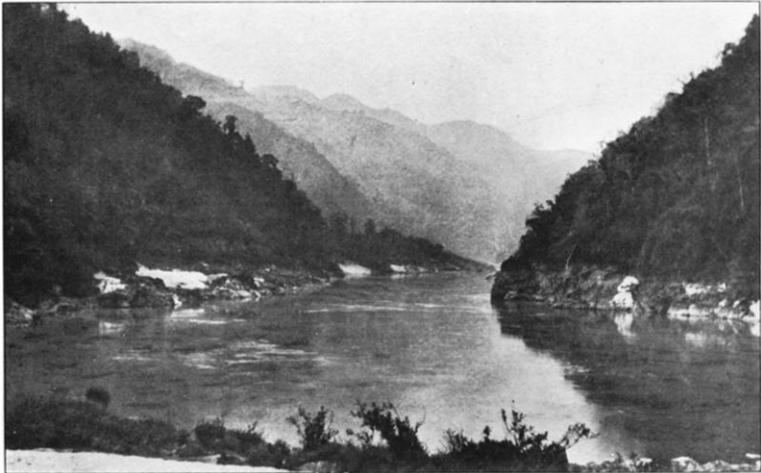
I would add that from the village we had just left, the so-called war-path had been cut throughout the journey. After four days' marching through the gloom of the forest, it was a relief to find one's self once more in sunshine. The outlook, too, was magnificent—Dee-side, or the banks of the Deveron, only on a much grander scale. From the sandy patch on which we stood, there was a gentle slope of some 80 yards to the river; then came a deep blue silent pool nearly 200 yards in breadth, while on its farther side the cliffs rose to a height of 50 or 60 feet. Below, it might be some 400 yards, we could both see and hear a rush of water. Later in the afternoon we walked down and found a swift and deep rapid, with a huge upstanding rock in its centre.

At sundown we had a visitor—the *gam* of Ke-bang. He was a tall, bent, aged specimen, and wore for a helmet a metal dish cover, while on his body hung a long sack-like garment of Tibetan texture. He was very polite, and offered to lead us to his village next morning. Then followed a request for rum. This we were able to indulge him in, and wished the old gentleman "good-night."

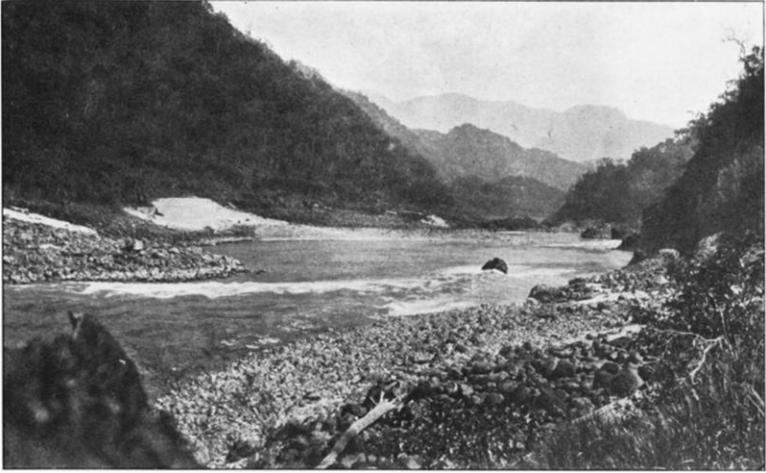
*February 10, Sirong Mukh.*—Up at 7 a.m. Packed and ready to go,



BASE CAMP AT PASI GHAUT, ON THE DIHONG RIVER.



THE DIHONG RIVER AT SERENG MUKH.



THE DIHONG RIVER BELOW SERENG MUKH.



THE GAM OF KEBANG WHO MET US AT SERENG MUKH AND ESCORTED US TO HIS VILLAGE.

but no *gam*. We waited for nearly an hour, but as he did not appear, Williamson went to his hut and found him slumbering peacefully. He soon woke up and took the lead. The morning was simply ideal, and I longed for a boat and my fishing-rod.

About a mile from camp we found our path blocked by a perpendicular rock quite 20 feet in height. There was no way round as far as we could see, only a steep cliff on one side and deep water the other. This we surmounted by felling a big tree, in which we cut notches, placed it against the rock and scrambled up, our coolies one by one following suit. But worse was to come. Scarcely another mile onward ere we had to feel our way along the edge of a steep precipice, holding on to tufts of grass and with barely a foothold. It was ugly going, as a single false step would have landed you in the pool below—a drop of 50 feet. I was indeed thankful when I saw all our coolies safely over. Only hillmen could have done it with loads on their backs. It took two hours to get the last of them over. Soon after we were again in the gloom of the forest climbing up toward Ke-bang. A steep and weary climb too, and I was far from sorry when 4.30 p.m. ended our day's march. Height 2383 feet.

From the river to the village the so-called war-path had been widened as before. Here the coming strife was again placed prominently before us. At dusk the *gam* of Reu crossed by bamboo raft (the only mode of water conveyance in these parts) and entered the village. He said he had been forewarned of our coming, and asked us to visit him. This was decidedly cheering, and pleased us immensely. He was, we were told, a man of much importance, namely, the minister of war. Both he and his attendant wore tall round hats made of *sambhur* skin and long coats also of Tibetan texture. He soon gathered an audience around him, and spoke for quite an hour. He had a short beard and moustache, held a spear in his left hand, gesticulating throughout with his right, and frequently pointing towards the enemies' country. Darkness ended his harangue to the villagers. Then came a select gathering of *gams*, but held out of ear-shot of our *padre* and Miri interpreters.

Early in the morning of the 11th we were again approached by the minister of war, but this time with quite another story. He now agreed with the eight *gams* who had accompanied us as guides from the villages before named, that for us to cross the river and proceed onwards in the present unsettled state of the country would be very dangerous; that he himself would be away on the war-path and unable to look after and assist us, ending by asking us to come back next year, when all would be well. "Yes," as the *padre* quaintly remarked, "next year if there is no war, sickness will probably be the excuse." However, in spite of all, we were still hopeful and continued to make various offers both in money and presents. We now trotted out the gramophone, placing it at some distance from our tent so as to give us some breathing space. "Harry Lauder" was soon in great request, his Laughing Song being continually encored. The great

difficulty was to keep the surging crowd from handling the instrument. Towards evening the *padre* and I took a stroll through the village, which they seemed very proud of and keen to show us, especially from the high range of houses which looked down on the river and the valley beyond. The view from here was magnificent.

*February 12.*—An early audience before we were out of our beds, the medicine chest being in great request. This the good *padre* took under his care and no small task either. We had brought a large stock of useful stuff with us, skin diseases and eye-sores being very prevalent, while many suffered from goitre. Quinine, too, was much sought after. Towards noon we learned from our *kotokies* that the war minister had gone back to Reu early in the morning, also that 200 of the braves had crossed the river on bamboo rafts at daybreak, and were off on the war-path. This showed us that a forward move from here as things stood was hopeless, so we reluctantly made up our minds to retrace our steps next morning.

During the afternoon the *padre* and I walked to the northern inlet to the village, and found the path strongly palisaded with bamboos. At the entrance gate we met several men from a village beyond. They wore no clothes beyond a small apron of grass hanging behind them. They had a long chat with the *padre*, telling him they were going to join the fighting force. Like all the others, they were much impressed at hearing a white man talk their language. On our return we found poor Williamson simply hidden by a crowd of men, women, and children clamouring for presents and shouting for the gramophone and more medicine. He and I moved the gramophone to some distance, took the crowd with us, and left the medicine-seekers to the *padre*. When darkness fell Williamson gave them a magic lantern show. This amused and interested many of them, but some were frightened, looked and bolted. Next morning, the 13th, we were on the downward track by 10 a.m. Before leaving we made a final distribution of presents, consisting mostly of needles and coloured thread. These were in great request, and the struggle to get them out of our hands was most amusing, the women being the worst scramblers. I omitted to mention that, when we entered the village, there was a dead young pig suspended over the gate—this to protect them against any sickness we might bring with us—an offering to the spirits of evil. On leaving, we were again treated to another phase of demon worship. The young men of the village followed us for nearly 2 miles, throwing tiny shreds of bamboo at and over us. This to ensure us taking the evil spirits with us.

Prior to leaving, our *kotokies* learned that the path we came by from Sirong Mukh on the 10th was not the right one, and we were now being taken by another. This took us by an easy march to our previous camping site, and avoided all the dangers of our upward journey. Here we spent the night of the 13th, as well as the day and night of the 14th. The spot was a lovely one, and we all wanted a peaceful day.



THE GAM OF REU AND HIS A.D.C. WITH OUR INTERPRETER.



ABOR WARRIORS ON THE WAR PATH.



THE GAM OF REU ADDRESSING THE VILLAGERS AT KEBANG.

*February 15.*—Started by a down-river path and then struck upwards through the forest, getting to a small village called Renging about 3 p.m. Here we camped and gave the villagers a treat on the gramophone.

*February 16.*—Left at 8.30 a.m., Williamson not feeling fit and suffering from a nasty cough which had been troubling him for some days. Our march was a very stiff one until noon, when we struck the Sijon river. This we followed for an hour until we made a close approach to the banks of the Dihong. As Williamson was feeling worse, we decided to camp in the shelter of the forest. Fortunately we did so, as he was now expectorating blood. We also sent off word to Pasi Ghat to send up as quickly as possible three of our smallest boats.

*February 17,* 9 a.m.—Williamson worse and matter looking serious. Luckily the boats arrived at 11 o'clock, and we were able to carry him down to where they were lying about a mile distant. It was a dangerous game to risk boating down the rapids to Pasi Ghat, but something had to be done. We were all nearly upset in the last rapid, but luckily just got through.

*February 18, Pasi Ghat.*—Rested here to-day, Williamson feeling little better.

*February 19.*—Got Williamson and his camp-bed safely into the boat and left at 8 a.m. for Dibugarh. Had to stay one night *en route*, pushing on as we did till dusk.

*February 20.*—I started at daybreak ahead of the *padre* and Williamson to secure the doctor and get him to meet Williamson on arrival. I reached Dibugarh at noon, and fortunately found Major Leventon in the station, the *padre* and Williamson arriving three hours later. They were met by Major Leventon, who had Williamson taken to his bungalow. The doctor said he was suffering from acute pneumonia, and his case a most serious one.

I waited in Dibugarh until the 28th, when the doctor pronounced him practically out of danger, although for some time to come, he said, he would require to take very great care of himself. He also added that, had we not returned when we did, Williamson must have succumbed in the jungle, so after all it was very fortunate we had to turn back at Ke-bang.

#### CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM OUR TOUR TO KE-BANG.

We were blocked at Ke-bang, but by passive resistance only. On this occasion they had a valid excuse for their conduct, namely, their war. Leading us too by the most difficult parts they could, throughout our journey, showed us they were none too keen to facilitate our movements. For instance (as we afterwards discovered), the old *gam* of Ke-bang, when he faced us with a rock and the precipice *en route* to his village, slipped quietly away by another path, the entrance to which he had hidden by cutting down branches of trees.

There are two ways by which the Dihong river might be explored :—

(a) Say the party consisted of two sahibs and a native surveyor, with twenty picked carriers and two or three light canvas boats. A company on this scale should stick by the river and follow its course the entire way, using the boats to cross from one side to the other as necessity arose.

As far as I have seen, in nearly every place where there is a precipitous bank on one side, the opposite is sloping and offers a reasonably good path. If in places the party could proceed along neither bank, it would be comparatively easy to cut a way through the forest, carry your belongings with you, and rejoin the river when opportunity permitted. Proceeding as above, the day's march could be made long or short as desired, there being always water and a good camping-ground at hand. The want of both of these necessities caused us considerable trouble on several occasions on our upward march. Villages too could be visited when desired, and food stuffs bought or bartered for. They could also be desirably avoided at times and save dealing out the usual quantity of presents which they are continually on the lookout for. With only twenty coolies as carriers, presents would have to be reserved for state occasions and when necessity demanded only.

Regarding presents, we find coloured thread and needles in great request, while with the elder generation a little rum was ever welcome. Medicines too were always in great demand. But for any little service rendered, such as carrying your gun, etc., they had no hesitation in asking for Rs.2 or Rs.3 *baksheesh*.

(b) By taking, say, 200 coolies and a force of native troops sufficient to guard them on their marches to and from your base of supplies, *i.e.* should the country happen to be in the state we found it. If at peace and they made no objection to the movement, a military force might be dispensed with. With such a force of carriers and sticking to the native paths and villages as we did, would necessitate taking most of the supplies for coolies as well as the rest of the party from the plains, as it would be practically impossible to procure the needful amount of rice in the country.

Beyond intense curiosity, common to both sexes (which got rather boresome at times), we found the Abor much easier to handle than we expected. But travelling with two such diplomats as Williamson and the *padre* made the path an easy one, and no doubt smoothed over many things which might otherwise have proved stumblingblocks and stopped our tour at the start. Williamson himself has a fair knowledge of the Abor tongue, while the *padre* speaks it like one of themselves.

We found the country almost void of bird or animal life. Scarcely did we see a butterfly, while pig, judging from the number of skulls hanging in the guest-houses and placed over the graves of the Abors who killed them, must be fairly numerous. Tame mithon abound in every village, but we came across no wild ones in the jungle.

In conclusion, if little has been achieved, a good deal has been done to pave the way for the next attempt.

### A JOURNEY FROM ANGORA TO EREGLI BY KAISARIE.\*

By R. CAMPBELL THOMPSON, M.A., F.S.A., F.R.G.S., F.R.A.I.

ON August 20, 1909, my friend Joseph Weissberger and I left Angora, with a caravan of five horses, to work eastwards towards Boghaz Keui, the ancient Hittite capital. Here my friend's leave gave out, and he left me, returning home by Amasia to Trebizonde, while I continued by Kaisarie to Eregli. As the archæological side of our journey is published in the *Proceedings* of the Society of Biblical Archæology (June, 1910, p, 181), I shall deal only with the more geographical points.

The map which accompanies this paper was made with a sextant, a large prismatic compass, and an improvised plane-table. There were, however, few opportunities for using the latter, and consequently the sextant was of the greatest help in checking the compass work. By working in long zigzags, or making the route directly north and south as much as possible, we were able to control in some measure the unavoidable errors of the prismatic compass.

The following latitudes were obtained with the sextant :—

	°	'	"
Elma Dagh top (not a good observation) ... ..	39	49	47
Top of hill near Ismail Dagh, west of Hajjilar on the left bank of the Kizil Irmak (see map) ... ..	39	46	38
Euyuk (300 yards north of mound and village) ... ..	40	14	44
Erkekli (tumulus about 1 mile north-west of village) ... ..	39	41	2
Ali Dagh (by Kaisarie : the most eastern cone of the three) ... ..	38	42	16
Everek (khan near west end of the town) ... ..	38	23	7
Eregli (khan) ... ..	37	30	34

The variation of the compass was obtained from an azimuth at Everek, where the magnetic bearing of a point  $54\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  E. was made to be  $57^{\circ} 27' 29''$  by the sextant.

Our first ten days were spent in mapping the course of the Chikurjak between Sulimanle and Kilishler, and after that, the Kizil Irmak between Yashan and Cheshme Keupri (Keupri Keui), as both of these rivers are represented by dotted lines on Kiepert's map. The road from Angora is only a track, crossing the great mass of the Elma Dagh to the north-east of the peak, and thence past Tekye Keui across the great basin on the far side, and through the Gók gorge, which is chiefly of black rock or serpentine. Here, in an undulating valley, broad towards the south-west, and narrowing to ravines at the north-eastern end, the Chikurjak runs to join the Kizil Irmak below Kilishler. Opposite Sulimanle it is called the Balaban Ozü,

\* Map, p. 700.