

2. *A Trip to Thibet, Kylas, Source of the Sutluj, and the Mansurour and Rakhas Lakes.* •By Captain H. U. SMITH, Indian Army.

I and my companion, Mr. A. S. Harrison, M.A., left Nynee Tal the end of June, 1865; but as the first twenty or thirty marches were through well-known ground, I will take up my diary from the 31st of July and start from Shib and Chillum, two camping-grounds well known to all traders and the turning-point for all sportsmen. Being well aware that our only chance of getting past the boundary was by deceiving the natives as to the number of days' provisions we had with us (as the Tartars are cunning enough to count up the number of yaks each sportsman has with him, so as to calculate to a nicety how long his provisions will last), for they would have immediately suspected our intention of penetrating into the interior had we taken more than a few days' supply, we had previously forwarded by another pass, and under the care of a trustworthy trader, a very large supply of provisions and ammunition, and had given directions for them to be packed like native merchandize and taken to Kylas, where we hoped to join them.

On reaching Shib our difficulties began. The guard of Tartars, who are always attached to every European who enters Thibet, informed us that we had reached the utmost limit for Europeans, and that it was their duty to prevent our proceeding further. After a long argument and plenty of brandy we were permitted to march to Iydim, some 20 odd miles to the east. Arrived at Iydim, we halted some days for shooting and to decide upon our future movements, to blind or get rid of our Tartar guard, for, though not formidable in themselves, they would have soon raised the country had they guessed our intention of visiting the lakes and their holy of holies, Kylas. The only plan that appeared feasible was to leave most of our things in their charge and the few servants we could spare, and pretend to be off for a few days' shooting on the top of the surrounding hills. Two or three of the Tartars were extremely anxious to accompany us, not only to keep us in sight but for the sake of any game we might kill; however, we persuaded them to stay behind and guard our camp and servants from the attacks of Dacoits or Tartar robbers. As not even one of our servants had a notion of our intentions, we were able to get off and put 50 miles between us and them: we marched for dear life, halting only a few hours during the night, and arrived at Kylas late the next evening. I may here mention that Kylas is a little territory held by the priests, who are quite independent of the Chinese authorities, and have the power of life and death in their own dominions. We had

previously met the high priest and exchanged visits with him at Shib, where he had gone on a trading expedition: we had taken him into our confidence and asked his advice as to the best means of evading the Tartars and paying a visit to the lake. He told us that he had no power to help us out of his own district, but that if we could manage to reach him at Kylas, he would not only protect us but furnish guides and help us to the best of his ability. When close to Kylas we despatched a messenger to inform him of our approach, and asking him to appoint a place for us to encamp in. We waited with some anxiety for his reply, for we had only his word to go upon, and, had it been merely native politeness, all our plans would have been frustrated. The answer soon came that he was delighted to hear we had got through, that a camping-ground was being prepared for us, also provisions (the latter very scarce in those parts), and we found everything ready for us on our arrival.

Kylas, or rather the village of Darchin, where the high priest dwells, is situated at the foot of the hill, and is composed of one house (the priest's) and three or four huts, built on the right bank of a beautiful little stream which comes down from the mountain. We found a good number of outsiders in tents, who, together with the small population of Darchin, turned out to greet us and watch our every movement during the time we stayed there. Very few had ever seen an European, and our tents, beds, knives and forks, and the way our dinner was cooked, afforded them the greatest delight and wonder. The next morning we paid a visit of ceremony to the high priest, who received us in great state, and presented each of us with a warm Tartar chupkan or coat. We then left and returned to our tents, and he paid us a return visit. We were rather at a loss to know what to give him in return; but luckily Mr. Harrison had an air-gun with him, which we made over with several bottles of brandy. The brandy was soon drunk, but the air-gun will remain for many years the most sacred and mysterious relic in his possession.

The two visits of ceremony being happily over, we proceeded to business and asked him for one or two of his men who knew the country and could guide us to the best shooting-grounds. He ordered two men to accompany us, and we prepared for a start; but in the midst of our preparations who should come in but our Tartar guard, who threw themselves at the feet of the high priest and implored him to send us back with them. He, however, kept his promise to us and behaved nobly, pacifying the guard and inducing them to return without us: we then made our bow and started off in great glee for the Mansurwur Lake, which we found to be about 15 miles from Darchin, and encamped at the head of the lake under a

temple called Jekep. Early the next morning, the 13th of August, I put my rod together and tried a small fly and succeeded in catching twenty-six fish, running from 1 to 2 lbs.: they were without scales and rather bony. I saw some very large fish, but not having a boat I did not succeed in hooking one. This I much regret, as I fancied I saw "marseer" or a fish almost identical. We picked up some scales that must have belonged to a 60 or 80 lb. fish. The small fish that I caught were bold and eager at a fly, and fought well when hooked. From the lake we marched about 50 miles to the east and north: the first two marches were on the high road to Lhasa. We then turned to the north and kept under a large range of hills running north and south. After shooting snow-antelope and gazelle, we turned to the left and went up a valley of the Kylas range, where I was lucky enough to shoot a black wolf, the first ever shot in that part of the world. Although this may appear irrespective of what I am writing to you about, I think it as well to mention that this animal appeared to be totally unknown in the country, so much so that when I brought it in none of the natives could inform me what it was. On enquiry I find it is known in Siberia; but in this part of the world this is the first instance in which it has been met with. I have its skin and head.

We then returned to the Mansurwur Lake, and after a few days' fishing and shooting we paid a farewell visit to the high priest at Kylas, and travelled by easy marches towards Gortok. Our principal object being to track the course of the Sutluj and see if there were any outlet from the lake northward. We carefully skirted both the Mansurwur and Rakhas lakes, and found from the nature of the ground that it was quite impossible that any effluent from either lake could reach the Sutluj, nor was there any trace of an old bed or watercourse, as mentioned in Henry Strachey's paper to the Society regarding his journey in 1846; besides which it would be against the laws of gravity for water to reach the Sutluj from the Rakhas Lake, as it would have to travel a very uphill journey. The Sutluj turns almost at right angles on meeting a small range of hills, and at the nearest point must be fully 12 miles from the Rakhas Lake.

Both Mr. Harrison and myself took the greatest pains to examine the course of the river, and traced it step by step till it entered the Kylas range, where we could step across it without wetting the sole of our shoes, besides walking over every inch of the ground from the small range of hills to the Rakhas Tal; and we are both convinced that it is quite impossible there can be any connection between the two, neither is there the slightest trace of any stream or old

watercourse connecting the Mansurwur and Rakhas lakes : in fact, the Mansurwur Lake is surrounded by a small range of hills, and though fed by many streams from the Kylas range, there is no possibility of any escape (except from evaporation) on the north side of the lake. We took the best evidence procurable, and except in one instance, where the man said he thought that water from the lake might percolate underneath the hill and thus reach the Sutluj, our own ideas were strengthened and substantiated by the opinion of every one we met; in addition to which it was so palpable, that we need hardly have asked any questions.

The CHAIRMAN said that this paper was mainly interesting, in consequence of its differing on a point of physical geography from previous discoverers, and the statements of Colonel Strachey.

Dr. THOMSON said that his knowledge of Lake Mansurwur was derived merely from the records and observations of the two Stracheys, and as he had travelled with them, and knew that they were very trustworthy observers, he did not think they were likely to be wrong. They were men quite capable of recognising a river when they saw it. The flow of a river from a lake in a dry country would vary very much at different seasons, and he did not think that a traveller merely going on a fishing excursion should pass a very decided opinion in contradiction of the observations of travellers who had preceded him. He was sure that Richard and Henry Stracheys' observations would be found quite trustworthy, when carefully studied by other observers.

Captain SMITH said that in handing the paper to the Society, he had no wish whatever to criticise Captain Strachey's observations. He (Captain Smith) and his friend went to the district spoken of more for shooting than anything else. He was not himself a scientific man, but his companion was thoroughly competent to judge. By mere accident they encamped at the spot where the course of the Sutluj turned in its descent from the Kylas. They had Strachey's map with them, and they followed the course of the river up to the hills, where it came out, and, not satisfied with that, they returned the same way, to ascertain whether it was possible that there might be any drainage running out of the Rakhas Lake to the Sutluj, and they found that it would be simply impossible for any water from that lake to reach the Sutluj, for it would have to run up-hill. He submitted his observations to the Society with all due respect, and he hoped that some other traveller would go and clear the matter up.

Dr. THOMSON repeated that he did not think it at all likely that Major Strachey would be mistaken in his observations. He was well able to judge of the physical contour of a country. It was a very difficult thing to judge of the levels of a country without having the eye exercised in this class of observations. Rivers would find their way round corners in a way which ordinary travellers might not always detect, and the authors of the paper might be mistaken as to the impossibility of the water from the Rakhas Lake reaching the Sutluj.

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