

THROUGH UNEXPLORED ASIA

BY
WILLIAM JAMESON REID

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Illustrated by
L. J. BRIDGMAN



BOSTON
DANA ESTES & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

MS 707
R36

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Colonial Press :
Electrotyped and Printed by C. H. Simonds & Co.
Boston. U. S. A.

PREFACE.

THE present volume is an account of a journey of exploration through the hitherto unknown regions of Western China and Eastern Thibet, during the year 1894, in conjunction with the late George Burton. While all that part of Central Asia lying north of the Kuen-Lun mountain range, and also that territory on the Indo-Thibetan border, has been visited and thoroughly explored during the last half century by many travellers, the immense region to the east, extending for hundreds of miles along the western Chinese frontier, had successfully baffled the efforts of explorers and ethnologists to penetrate its jealously guarded domains.

At various times during the last century a number of Jesuit missionaries, notably l'Abbé Huc and Father Gabét, had penetrated a short distance into this country, but were obliged to turn back owing to native hostility and the well-nigh insurmountable physical obstacles to be overcome. While these spasmodic attempts have not been altogether unfruitful, their religious character and the haste with which they were accomplished have given them little or no positive value to geographers and ethnologists.

In entering upon my journey of exploration in this unknown land I was firmly convinced that nothing save a radical departure from methods hitherto attempted would enable me to succeed. My advance, therefore, into this land of mystery was made by penetrating through the wilds of Western China up the course of the Dji Chu and Kinsha Kiang, tributaries of the Yangtse Kiang, a proceeding viewed askance by geographers as offering but small chance of success.

Yet, in this manner, I was able to pass successfully through

PREFACE.

the country lying on the Chino-Thibetan border and to thoroughly explore the northeastern corner of Thibet,— thus completing the work left unfinished by the Russian explorer, Prejevalsky,— and for the first time to give to the world information concerning the geographical conformation of this hitherto unknown region and the characteristics and customs of the strange tribes and races inhabiting it.

Owing to the wide variance in orthography, and the lack of any settled authority, in the pronunciation and spelling of all proper names I have adopted the phonetic methods which have become necessary in uncivilised countries, and in no case have attempted to introduce the complexities and misleading spelling of Thibetan grammar. In all cases where there has been conflicting information I have been obliged to fall back on the only available resource, that of accepting the statements of the majority of the natives themselves.

In regard to the maps, they have been carefully drawn from daily sketch maps and observations while on the journey, and, although not as accurate as those gained by lengthy triangulation and survey, form the first plans in detail which have ever been made of this country. In many respects they differ widely from D'Anville's atlas and most of the earlier maps of Chinese and Jesuit geographers, the latter, as we learned during our explorations, being grossly inaccurate, and of no real or permanent value. While it is certain that a more painstaking and protracted survey will in turn record important changes in my own charts, it will be found that they are as accurate as the generality of first exploratory maps. In some instances I have been obliged to rely on native reports, of which there was no method of determining their accuracy, but in general I have limited the map plans of the country to territory actually travelled over or passed through at near range.

The lack of success attending the photographic apparatus of the expedition I greatly deplore, but the destruction of plates and loss of others during an exceptionally hazardous winter

PREFACE.

journey through the Koko Nor has made the reproduction of direct photographic half-tones impossible. The illustrations, however, possess all the merits of the strictest accuracy, having been drawn by Mr. L. J. Bridgman with the constant collaboration of the author from photographic subjects.

I wish to take this occasion to express my thanks and appreciation to Mr. Bridgman for the unvarying excellence of his drawings and to the Essex Institute of Salem, Massachusetts, for invaluable assistance. My thanks likewise are due to Count Dourgouki of the Russian legation in Peking, to Mr. E. H. Knight, and to Col. E. Vladyovski of the Russian Imperial Geographical Society, and also to Mr. Samuel R. Phillips, whose munificence and public spirit permitted the carrying through of this journey of exploration to a successful completion.

WILLIAM JAMESON REID.

JUNE, 1899.

NOTE BY THE AUTHOR.

THE expeditionary force having now completed only the first half of the long journey which it made through unexplored China, the author experiences sincere regret that the narrative must for the present be brought to a close on the shores of the Charing Nor. The original intention was to embody the narrative of the entire journey of exploration in one volume. The work had scarcely been begun, however, before it was seen, that, to do full justice to the immense territory explored, the facts involved — though much curtailed and in some cases totally omitted — would not permit the compression of the narrative into a single volume. Therefore it was thought best, by the Author and his Publishers, that the narrative of the first half of the exploratory journey should be published by itself; and that a second volume, dealing with the exploration of the wild and hitherto unexplored region lying among the headwaters of the Hoang Ho River, and with the completion of the journey to the eastern provinces of China, should be brought out later.

No further explanation of this arrangement would seem to be called for, since, aside from all other considerations, it is the only one allowing a full and complete record of important facts and observations, the curtailment or omission of which would go far to defeat the real object of the work, which is to treat fully and comprehensively of a region the value of which to the world at large is incalculable.

Boston, May, 1899.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

Departure from Shanghai — Weather Making Extraordinary — Natives of Kulzun — Treacherous Progress — Opium Manufacture — Iniquity of Opium Trade — A Buffalo Hunt — A Frightened Native — Lu-Chow — Tonsorial Afflictions — Condition of Women — A Deserted Village — A Native Calamity — A Szchuen Dandy — Chinese Gastronomy — Our Pungto Guide — A Hostile Reception — Peacemaking — Astrological Information	11
---	----

CHAPTER II.

Tang Wan Courtesy — Unquenchable Curiosity — Native Treachery — Rigorous Punishment — Magnificent Scenery — A Chinese "New Woman" — Au-Pien Religious Celebration — An Esculapian Paradise — Drawbacks of Civilisation — A Regal Departure — An Architectural Treat — A Szchuenese Funeral — Linguistic Difficulties — Defiant Natives — A Native Revivalist	52
--	----

CHAPTER III.

Chinese Military Affairs — Effects of a Hurricane — "White Man's" Magic — Into the Dark Unknown — A Fatal Rencontre — Obstructed Progress — Amicable Natives — A Judicial Ceremony — A Speculative Dream Shattered — Gastronomical Indulgence — An Illustrious Dignitary — Difficulties of Portage — Diplomatic Bartering — A Fantastic Celebration — Dhong-Lung Hospitality — A Hunting Misadventure	85
---	----

CHAPTER IV.

Among the Djé-gu — Native Vanity — Valuable Mineral Deposits — A Friend in Need — Legendary Beliefs — Ethnological Potpourri	
--	--

CONTENTS.

— Delights of Conversion — A Land of Peace and Plenty — Miserable Natives — A Primitive Village — Anxious Moments — A Gale on the Kinsha — A Religious Community — Cheo-Chu-Su — A Curious Ceremony — Penitent Crewmen — Miserable Natives . 121

CHAPTER V.

Conquering Native Hostility — In Chinese Switzerland — Concerning Things Cuisinary — A Strife-ridden Country — More Feasting — Religious Terpsichores — Suspicious Natives — Usu'h'nuen Hospitality — A Vaudeville Performance — Sifan Politicians — Accused of Sorcery — Native Afflictions — Menace to Scientific Research 159

CHAPTER VI.

Exciting Bartering — Strange Superstitions — Questionable Generosity — A Terrible Night — "Fight to the Last" — Saved! — A Friendly Village — A Future Eldorado — Crude Hunting Methods — Artificial Fertility — A Pastoral Country — An Equine Kingdom — A Weird Combat — Onward to Dubana — Amiable Natives — Exciting Yak Hunting 190

CHAPTER VII.

Inquisitorial Questionings — Arrival at Muen-chi-hei — Resting at Batang — Forward to the North — A Curious Burial Ceremony — Topography of the Kulien Slope — Avaricious Tanguts — Hostile Pursuit — Prodigal Kiangsis — An Opium-cursed Village — Successful Braggadocio — A Distinguished Reception — Arrival at Chutong — Unstable Dwellings — Curious Racial Customs — Novel Method of Divorce — A Frightful Combat — Boastful Natives 225

CHAPTER VIII.

Tarya Courtesies — A Physical Paradox — Native Legend Regarding Dji-Chu — A Mongol Munchausen — A Crucial Situation — Facing Defeat — Inveterate Smokers — Safe across the Land Portage — Curious Religious Beliefs — A Sterile Country — Our Shooting Astonishes the Natives — Chen-Ta Superstitions — Sacred Mountain of Tam-Tagh — Intimidating a Native Bully — An Aboriginal Forge — Some Native Delicacies — A Country of Brigands — A Misinterpreted Welcome 266

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER IX.

A Too Willing Guest — The Start for Tzuchan — A Dangerous Ford — A Welcome Respite — Horrible State of Women — Remarkable Beliefs — Increased Dangers to Progress — Dampening Reports — A Weird Scene — Horrible Religious Rites — Voluntary Sacrifice of a Girl — A Providential Escape — Orography of the Ping Plateau — Value of Loess — Characteristics of Tangutans — England's Attitude toward China — Russian Aggression in Central Asia 306

CHAPTER X.

A Tangut Mormon — Rascally Lamas — A Hardy Race — Ill-concealed Hostility — A Treacherous Channel — Unexpected Civilised Luxuries — Sacred Mountain of Djia-la — Rascally Natives — Bloodless Battle of Sok-Buchen — A Squall on the Dji Chu — Dju Kharmau Hospitalities — Physical Features of Lari Ula — Nomad Tangutans — A Curious Belief — An Exciting Night — Tangut Philosophers — Exciting Hunting — Thibetan Tigers 345

CHAPTER XI.

Country of the Djia-la — Pugnacious Argalis — Strange Natives of Hissik Karpo — An Ancient Civilisation — Obstructions to Progress — A Fight for Existence — Unavailing Overtures — A Night of Peril — Burying Our Dead — Topography of Numza Ula — Brigandish Natives 386

CHAPTER XII.

A Dubious Reception — Curious Females — Praying Water-wheels — Native Bridges — An Interesting Country — Burton Turns Physician — Incredulous Mountaineers — Halting Progress — Benefits of Civilised Control — A Quizzical Host — A Visit to a Monastery — Prevalence of Slavery — Friendly Natives — Characteristics of Bulaks — Debased Religious Beliefs — A Barbarous Ordeal — A Desolate Country — Salt Manufacture 408

CHAPTER XIII.

Dangerous Journeying — Curious Natives of Langur — Insect Pests — Across the By Chu Plateau — Religious Bigots — Tourgouth Characteristics — Aboriginal Internal Economy — Ceremonious

CONTENTS.

Salutations — An Important Functionary — A Disgusting Repast
— A Village of Inebriates — A Religious Centre — A Desolate
Country — Tourgouth Marriage Customs — A Gluttonous Brawl
— Lolo Natives — Strange Ceremonial Rites — Across Hua-ta
Plateau — A Lama Charlatan — Boastful Natives — Over the
Djangin Tang — Safe at Gajum 451

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE
MONGOL OF KOKO-NOR	<i>Frontispiece</i>
FISHING VILLAGE, UPPER YANGTSE-KIANG	17
LUKAN GORGE, UPPER YANGTSE-KIANG	31
SZCHUEN TRADING BOAT	41
YUEN	48
"AT THE YELLING HORDE WE CHARGED"	59
SZCHUEN SALT JUNK. MAST UNSHIPED FOR DOWNWARD VOY- AGE	71
VILLAGE OF FO-YEN-CHI	81
"THE WATER BEGAN TO BUBBLE AND FOAM IN AN ALARMING MANNER"	91
ORONGO ANTELOPE	111
FISHING TRAP OF DHONG-LUNG NATIVES	118
NATIVE ROPE BRIDGE	122
"TRADING WITH CHEO-CHU-SU FISHERMEN"	151
ROPE AND CARRIER BRIDGE, CHEO-CHU-SU	154
THIBETAN—REDSKIN TYPE	157
LONG-HAIRED YAK	170
DANCE OF MASKED LAMAS AT MU-GHRA	173
BIHAR GYALPO, THE PATRON OF MONASTERIES AND TEMPLES .	183
YAK DRIVER WITH PRAYING-WHEEL	187
"THEY CLUNG WITH DEATHLIKE TENACITY TO A PROTRUDING BOULDER"	197
HEAD-DRESS OF WOMAN AT KUGUN	206
MANJUSRI, IN THIBETAN JAMJANG, THE GOD OF WISDOM .	211
LAMA MASK AND ROSARIES	219
TAOIST PRIEST, BATANG DISTRICT	229

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE
STREET IN BATANG	231
CHOICHONG GYALPO, THE GOD OF ASTROLOGY, AND PROTECTOR OF MEN AGAINST EVIL SPIRITS	244
THIBETAN LAMA WITH THIGH-BONE TRUMPET	255
LAMAS AND MONASTERY AT BATANG	261
MONGOL TENT	270
DODNEVANGPO, THE GOD OF WEALTH	277
MONGOLS, TULKARJ DISTRICT	281
PADMAPANI, IN THIBETAN CHENRESI, A PROTECTOR OF THIBET	289
TOURGOUTH OF GYKSUN DISTRICT	301
THIBETAN SAVAGES	315
THE SIX-SYLLABIC PRAYER AND SYMBOL "OM MANI PADME HUM"	323
"SHE JUMPED INTO THE WAITING FLAMES"	331
BURIAL OBO WITH PRAYER FLAGS	339
HOE AND YAK PACK-SADDLE	353
SIX-SYLLABIC PRAYER "OM MANI PADME HUM"	361
"A LEERING, GRINNING FACE PUSHING TOWARD MINE"	383
THIBETAN WHIP AND COOKING UTENSILS	390
THIBETAN NOMAD	406
THIBETAN DWELLING AT CHAN-NAK	411
NATIVE BRIDGE ACROSS DJI CHU	419
THE MAGICAL FIGURE DABCHAD, "OCTAGON"	430
LAMA HATS AT MARU BULAK	442
CHENRESI, THE PARTICULAR PROTECTOR OF THIBET	447
TRAVELLING ACROSS A GLACIER TO LAKMO	459
A SOOTHSAYING TABLE WITH NUMEROUS FIGURES AND SEN- TENCES	469
TRUMPET OF LAMA EXORCISER	472
LOLO MAN AND WOMAN	486
BOOT AND KNIFE OF KOKO NOR THIBETAN	493

THROUGH UNEXPLORED ASIA.

CHAPTER I.

IN the summer of 1893 I had reached Peking, after an arduous journey of six thousand miles across the very heart of Central Asia. During that time I had successively encountered the manifold dangers of hostile tribes, the difficulties of topographical configuration, and the thousand and one discomforts and inconveniences incident to travel in a barbarous and hitherto unexplored country. With memories of the past still too vivid to be summarily dismissed, I had registered a solemn determination that never again should the novelty of exploration in untrodden wilds wean me from the haunts of civilisation. So much for good intent and firm resolution.

One month later found me at the cosmopolitan port of Shanghai, ready and willing to accompany an expedition which was being fitted out for the novel venture of thoroughly exploring the great unknown country of Western China among the headwaters of the Yangtse Kiang and Hoang Ho Rivers, — a region which had long remained a mystery, and frustrated the most indomitable efforts of travellers since the days of Marco Polo. Burton, my old comrade in arms, the sturdy veteran who but a few short

months before had pressed through the heart of the dark continent, and penetrated the impregnable fastnesses of Afghanistan and Thibet, with the old fever for exploration still as virulent as ever, had conceived this momentous journey as a fitting close to an extended campaign of thorough Asiatic research. He asked me to accompany him. After a few days taken for consideration,—days in which the poignant pain of months flashed constantly before the memory; days when the pangs of homesickness appealed to me with almost irresistible force,—the wrestling of spirit was at last overcome, firm resolution had been vanquished, and the upshot of the matter was that three days later I had agreed once more to plunge into unexplored Asia.

Preparations for journeying are invariably long and tedious, and are not interesting matters of detail except to those immediately concerned. I will, therefore, pass over the two months prior to our departure up the muddy stream of the Yangtse. We were prepared to find the government hostile to our intention, and expected to encounter the usual bickering delays incident to overcoming official obstruction. It was a surprise, therefore, and a welcome one withal, to discover that the civil mandarin of Shanghai, to whom we had confided our intention, far from being opposed to our idea, sought by every means in his power to remove any obstacle that lay in our path. He did not fail to weigh fully the manifold dangers to which we were exposing ourselves by plunging into a country inhabited by a hostile and suspicious people, over which the imperial government had none other than a nominal jurisdiction, and impressed on us the fact that no amount of official assurance would protect us from these real dangers. Finding, however, that such evidence was

unable to shake our original intention, he wisely abstained from further comment, and forwarded notice of our intent to Peking, — bringing to us one week later governmental sanction for the undertaking, accompanied by royal letters to the civil and military mandarins of the towns and cities along the banks of the great river so far as the active jurisdiction of the government extended. Thence onward, it was understood, progress was to be made by our own unaided efforts.

We had entrusted the expedition to the solid substance of two large sampans, with which it was our intention to penetrate up the stream of the Yangtse until craft of lighter draught should be rendered necessary. Our crew was composed of forty Kiangsi natives, — huge, muscular giants of the finest race of China, selected with a view to their fitness for the work in hand by the mandarin of Shanghai, who advanced the welcome information that their trustworthiness need cause us no concern, as they might be implicitly relied upon to do their duty whatever occasion should arise. With these preparations we at last set forth. The varied population of Shanghai gathered at the water's edge, moved by curiosity, and perhaps other motives, to watch our departure, and the little one-pounders in the bows of the sampans boomed forth a noisy farewell to them. In this manner we bade adieu to civilisation for many a weary month to come; to poor Burton, it proved, for ever.

Our long journey up the great stream to the threshold of Western China was unattended with incidents of other than an ordinary character. The various officials along the route, although doubtless entertaining for us no very friendly feeling, furthered the success of the expedition by every means that lay in their power, — thus obeying

the imperial mandate from Peking, fully weighing the chances of sure and swift retribution should they fail to comply with the demands of their superiors. At the end of five months' voyaging we had overcome the dangers and obstructions of the great stream, and, having run the gauntlet of shipwreck and famine, in due time had reached Luipo, the little border station marking the confines of known China, whence our campaign of exploration was to begin in earnest. Here we remained for a month longer, the interim being consumed in making final preparations for the arduous task lying before us, and in constructing a flotilla of light canoes, which the gradual narrowing of the stream necessitated. At last, after delays innumerable, and the surmounting of seemingly insurmountable difficulties, we set a day for our departure. When that day came, however, it brought with it a hurricane of frightful fury, which lashed the waters of the stream into a whirlpool, and produced such fierce waves that, had we been so foolhardy as to make the attempt to proceed, the sampans must inevitably have been destroyed. We consoled ourselves with the reflection that the morrow would bring more favourable conditions; but the morrow came, and the conditions were even worse, the storm having increased. The third and fourth days showed no abatement of the fury of the elements, and we had resignedly given up all hopes of ever being able to set forth, when we were waited upon by one of the priests of the town.

This dignitary, after much gesticulation, made us aware of the fact that the gods had been angered, but promised that he would intervene to the end that the "white princes" should not suffer further, — of course for a consideration. More for the novelty of the exhibition than

because of any belief in his abilities, we produced the necessary consideration; and early the next morning he made his appearance attired in an ill-fitting and vile-smelling robe of office, which for obvious reasons we abstained from examining too closely, and having called upon the whole population of the place to congregate within the narrow confines of the station courtyard, he proceeded, after his own fashion, to secure for us all the blessings of fine weather. Calling upon all assembled to stretch themselves prostrate on the ground, obliging us even to perform this portion of the ceremony, he proceeded to cut various animal shapes out of a thin piece of dough,—animals of a kind doubtless unknown to others save the gods themselves. These he was pleased to call *meléké* (sea-monsters); and having chanted over each successive piece of dough in musical ululations truly dolorous, he called upon all to rise and follow him through the drenching rain to the river bank, where, after going through various forms of mummery and incantation over each, he tossed the fantastic images into the water, solacing us with the information that fine weather would henceforth be our portion. Fine weather did come eventually, at the end of another five days; but notwithstanding this long lapse of time between the incantation and the promised result, the pious fraud was pleased to assume the responsibility of the same, firmly convinced, in his own mind, at least, that his efforts had found favour with the gods.

On the tenth day of January we left behind the last glimpse of the low-lying station of Luipo, and the honorary escort of canoemen, accompanied by the ataman, who had been following us for some hours with the accompaniment of numberless horns and drums, and with our

Kiangsi crewmen paddling rhythmically to the stirring air of a war chant, and the dingy little sails slatting at the peak, we entered upon the search into the great unknown lying before us. The original plan, strictly adhered to in our subsequent journeyings, provided that we should penetrate to the headwaters of the Kinsha Kiang, tributary of the Yangtse, and by a portage across the wild mountain fastnesses of Koko Nor descend to the source of the Hoang Ho, following its stream to the eastward and to civilisation once more. In this manner we should have penetrated through the length and breadth of China, and successfully have carried through to a consummation our original intention.

Any one who has ever seen a rockbound coast, and the war of sea wave against granite, basalt, and sandstone, will at once realise the effects visible in this majestic country on the upper stream of the Yangtse Kiang. On every side the view is hedged in by a successive series of gigantic blocks and crags of granite. Rock rises above rock, and fragment above fragment. Here towers a colossal mass five hundred feet high, bearing upon it a similar mass perhaps entire, but more probably split with a singularly clean and fresh fracture. These immense columnar masses rise like outstretched fingers towering into the clouds; but everywhere there is the same huge disarray, ruin, and confusion. Through this region we dawdled during the day, the swift current of the stream and a head wind beating strongly against us, preventing much progress, and calling upon the most valorous efforts of the crewmen to make any headway whatsoever.

Ten hours of battling effort carried us a little over twenty miles, and shortly after nightfall a shaly beach, serving as the foreground of the little village of Kulzun,

enabled us to make a landing. We had scarcely touched shore when the chief of the place came running toward us, attended by a conglomerate train that embraced everything having life in the vicinity. He halted when some hundred feet away from our encampment, — an example emulated by his satellites, — and having gained courage at our friendly attitude, approached nearer. But the innate suspiciousness of the old fellow



FISHING VILLAGE, UPPER YANGTSE KIANG.

could not be conquered by our best efforts, and, after gazing long and searchingly at us, he signalled to his followers, and clambered up the hilly slope to the village. We were anxious naturally to discover the cause for this reserve, but on no account could we induce them to approach nearer, every advance on our part causing summary flight.

We had intended remaining overnight only; but several of the smaller canoes having started seams from the severe buffeting which they had undergone during the day, and which bade fair to cause considerable inconvenience in the future if not attended to, we lengthened our halt a day longer. The defect having been remedied, we felt that it was lawful to set forward; but having been disappointed in foiling the curiosity of the inquisitive groups of natives during twenty-four hours, they had grown less suspicious, and the old chief, whom we had observed on the previous evening, unbended to the extent of inviting us to dine with him. As his regal

abode was little better than a pigsty, we declined with as much show of gratefulness as was possible, and extended a like invitation to him in turn. He was not so fastidious as we were, and, having accepted with undue alacrity, disappeared for a half hour, to return arrayed in an ill-fitting and flamboyant uniform several sizes too small for him, presenting from a distance the appearance of a perambulating scarecrow. Notwithstanding his somewhat invalid appearance, we soon discovered that, like the majority of natives of Western China with whom we were thrown in contact, he was in full possession of the natural talent of eating and drinking, his capabilities in this direction seemingly knowing no limit, until at last, in sheer desperation, and as a means of self-preservation, we were compelled to bring the feast to a sudden termination, much to the disgust, openly expressed, of our guest.

Before leaving next morning, however, we were idemnified for this rude assault on our commissariat by the arrival of this illustrious dignitary with a quantity of fresh buffalo meat, a number of live fowl, and several jugs of strong native liquor. We also took advantage of his friendliness to secure the services of a new pilot, the perfect antonym of the shaggy monster who had been guiding our course heretofore, — a quiet, polite little individual, who seldom opened his mouth except on matters of business, holding aloof from the remainder of the crew for the reason that his generally dejected appearance made him the butt of their ridicule. He was droll-looking in the extreme, his small face hardly bigger than one's hand, devoid of beard, and as wrinkled as a withered apple, its minuscular effect being further heightened by the enormous hat which he wore poised on his head by the tying of two gorgeous streamers beneath the chin. His other

costume consisted of short and very wide trousers, a little jacket, and an apron that reached nearly to his feet, — a wardrobe which had doubtless seen palmier days, and which presented a mirthful spectacle so appealing to our own risibilities that we could not find it in our hearts to rebuke the ridicule of the crew.

We had great need of this man's services during the day, for our course lay through a rock-bestrewn channel which threatened at every moment to wreck the boats. We had planned to go over the thirty miles to Tang-pi, which our host of the night before had informed us was governed by a powerful tribal chief, whose word was law in the surrounding district and far up the stream for many a day's paddling, who would provide for our comfort, and from whom we might buy provisions. Through the morning we poled along beneath a burning sun, the country on either hand being similar to that of the yesterday, an *encadring* framework of titanic cliffs and rock-ribbed shores. Clinging closely to the river bank we were enabled to make halting progress, when shortly before noon-time we were aroused to the sense of a new danger by the crashing of several of the leading canoes against a line of sunken rocks. Instantly there was confusion, the crew, menaced by this serious danger, losing their heads entirely. Burton and I vainly tried to reassure them, and it was only by the threats of stern punishment that we were enabled to prevent the men from jumping into the water and abandoning the canoes with their cargoes. The boats by this time were almost half full of water, when, motioning to the steersmen to keep off toward the shore, we shouted to the boats' crew to do or die. Desperately they rowed until they reached the beach. The damage to the canoes themselves and to their cargoes was considerable;

but as we had not the wherewithal to make other than a partial repair, we patched them up as well as the occasion would permit so as to withstand the action of the current temporarily, and proceeded, the bulk of the cargo of the damaged boats being transferred to the others.

We had fondly flattered ourselves on being able to reach Tang-pi by sundown, notwithstanding the misfortune of the morning; but though our men put forth their best efforts, as night fell we had gone over but half the distance, the river current flowing so strongly against us that no alternative presented itself but to beach the boats for the night near a little river village, buried in a gloomy recess of the surrounding rocky heights, and which was of none too prepossessing an appearance. We were all the more surprised, therefore, on landing, to be welcomed by a deputy opium agent, — an Englishman, — who put his own residence at our disposal, and sought in every manner to provide for our proper entertainment. He endeavoured to excuse the ill condition of his surroundings; but despite our best endeavours to engage him in conversation, he guardedly avoided all reference to the most potent reason for it, namely, the opium trade. The village, so we subsequently learned, had been populous and thriving before the district had been given over to the cultivation of the poppy; now it contained less than a hundred inhabitants.

At a former time the greater part of the opium used in China was imported from Patna and Benares in India, the revenue from this source accruing to the British government being an enormous sum. From India it was brought in fast-sailing ships, or overland, to China, where it was a contraband article, the penalty for growing it or conveying in its importation being capital punishment. With

the growth of foreign dominance, however, this condition of affairs underwent a radical change, until at the present time opium forms one of the staples of the Chinese Empire, — the amount of home production equalling, if not surpassing, the amount imported from India and elsewhere.

The evil of opium-smoking is in a measure confined to the more closely settled portions of China, the hardy peasants and farmers outside the larger towns shunning the drug as they would the plague. In former years most of the home-grown opium consumed in China was manufactured on the immense plantations of the eastern portions of the empire, but late years have shown that the climate and other natural conditions of the western part more readily adapt themselves to the cultivation of the poppy, until it has now grown to be an important industry, affording the means of livelihood for an enormous population.

When first put upon the market and before being prepared for use, the colour of opium is a dark, opaque brown. The first operation in its transition from a crude state to the opium of commerce consists in boiling it down to the consistency of a thin jelly. It is then sealed in little horn boxes, and eventually hardens to a soft gum, when it is ready for use. The pipe used in smoking opium is also of peculiar construction, formed of a straight, round piece of bamboo, or, in the case of those who can afford it, of ivory, fantastically decorated with mother-of-pearl, or even precious stones. This long stem is perforated through its length, a small bowl, scarcely larger than the top of one's little finger, being attached at one end.

The method of smoking opium is very singular. With a full knowledge of what the inevitable ending must be, the smoker assumes a reclining position, from which he

can fall into slumber, placing at his side a little box of opium and a needle about four inches long, terminating in a sharp point, the other end expanding into a broad spatula. The *debauché* takes a small piece of the opium, about twice the size of a pin-head, and, having inserted it in the bowl, presses it down with the needle, and holds it in the light for a moment, until it sputters and is fairly ablaze, drawing in the vile-smelling blue vapour with every apparent enjoyment. The first essay in the case of novices invariably causes a severe nausea and a deathly sickness, which wear off after one has mastered the practice. In general, two pipefuls of the mixture are sufficient to put one into a somnolent condition, although in the case of devotees of the practice it often requires, to obtain this result, as many as a dozen pipes.

The immediate effect of the drug upon the smoker is to cause a lethargic state of the senses, in which the most beautiful and fanciful dreams are his portion, — alas! but idle and transient vagaries, for the awakening is to such horrible torment that the victim must needs smoke another of the pellets in order to banish it. But though in this way, and by the possession of a vigorous constitution, he may thwart the action of the drug for a time, the inevitable end is accompanied by the most dreadful suffering.

Of the effect of opium-smoking upon the population of Western China as a whole, but few words need be said. As already stated, it is a practice indulged in by the natives of merely the large towns and villages; and one does not have to resort to searching investigation to be made aware of its dire influence, for the fact that the death-rate from this source alone exceeds that from nearly all other causes gives an idea as to the deleterious effects

of the practice. It is idle optimism to believe that the future, or at least the near future, will bring any amelioration of these conditions; for, as the drug was introduced by a Christian nation, and its importance as an industry is augmented by Christian support, we must chiefly look to this agency for the abolition of the destroying vice, and, considering the meagre progress already made in this direction, one is debarred from entertaining roseate imaginings as to the result.

A former writer on the opium traffic in China has very truly remarked that, in a measure, the trade bears some resemblance to wheat and cotton speculation in our own country. Both are gambling businesses, it is true, but here the comparison must end, for it would be manifestly unreasonable to compare even the reckless hazard of wheat and cotton speculation to the iniquitous career of the opium trade. Men who deal in opium are nothing short of murderers. With a full knowledge of what the eventual result must be on their thousands of victims, they are willing and content to revoke their allegiance to humanity in foisting upon an ignorant and unenlightened population the means of its death.

Before leaving, we had an opportunity to look around the village. The scene on every hand was one of rack and ruin. Hut after hut which we passed by was seemingly empty, but on pushing open the door the spectacle would be presented of human beings, — men, women, and even little children, — in every state of disease and debauchery, emaciated and filthy, and, in most cases, driven to a point bordering on insanity. We subsequently learned that five persons, three men and two women, had died from excessive use of the drug during the period of one week. In the plantations at the rear of

the village half a dozen men were at work preparing the soil for poppy growth; clothed in ragged and filthy garments, and overrun from head to foot with vermin and disease, these wretched beings, throbbing with the misery which follows a debauch, with haggard eyes and drawn faces distorted into fiends, were a spectacle for an innumerable horde of as ragged children, wan and shrewd, sitting dreamily beside their mothers, to whom they did not cling.

It was with unfeigned joy that we welcomed that moment when our boats could be launched and we could press forward, leaving these sickening sights behind us. It was a short, swift journey to Tang-pi, a strong current sweeping us along without effort. Never did country expose such delights for the delectation of alien eyes. The mountain ranges of the Kulgeh-Doh, which heretofore had clung closely to the course of the stream, had now retired to a distance, thrusting their gaunt summits in a serrated chain against the horizon. Verdurous vales peeped up here and there, promising abundant harvests to come by and by. Minuscular evergreen shrubs and lilies appeared, the swamps were covered with reedy plants, and the river current teemed with immense flotillas of rank vegetation, which exhaled a most delicious fragrance. The sun shone warm on the red sand; the air had lost its impurities and mists, and was giving forth a health-laden tonic, which titillated the cheek until every nerve tingled in joyous frenzy.

Shortly after noontime, rounding a bend in the river, we came upon a small herd of water buffaloes, wallowing in the slimy mud, who, descrying our approach, at once clambered up the bank and made for the thick cane-brake with snorts of mingled surprise and anger. As our pro-

visions had reached their extremest limit, the opportunity to secure fresh meat could not be passed by; so pulling to the shore, and calling on Yuen to bring the rifles from the canoe, we followed up the trail of the retreating animals. For half an hour we plunged through the immense brake, almost as impenetrable as a stone wall, when Yuen, who was leading in pursuit, suddenly sank to the ground, at the same time emitting a clucking noise and pointing with his finger ahead, thereby indicating that the object of our quest lay before us. Imitating Yuen's example, we lay flat on the ground and wriggled along until a sort of small meadow, in the middle of which was a pool, lay exposed, in the midst of which the buffaloes were grazing and disporting themselves in the water. We felt no little compunction in destroying the pleasing scene; but grim necessity waxing strong, I whispered to Burton to select a large bull that was sniffing anxiously at the left, while from my point of vantage I thought I might be able to pick off a couple of cows. Both weapons flashed simultaneously, and before we had time to see through the smoke Yuen was on his feet, crying with fear, and calling on us to strike into the cane-brake. We were not a moment too soon, for the bull, wounded by Burton's shot, had charged our position, giving us time only to withdraw to shelter. The rest of the herd, except the two which I had succeeded in bringing down, had scattered in the other direction, and, quieting Yuen's fears, we awaited the second charge of the infuriated animal. Onward he came with head lowered, and bellowing belligerently. All to no purpose, however, for first my rifle and then Burton's flashed, and the big beast tumbled to the ground with the blood falling from his nostrils, and, after a few convulsive shivers, was dead.

With two cows and the bull we had now plenty of meat, and, ordering Yuen to return to the river and secure the assistance of some of the crew in cutting up the animals, we waited patiently to protect the carcasses from the vultures, which were already circling over them, attracted by the smell of blood. The greater part of the afternoon was devoted to cutting the meat into long strips and drying it over the fire, while each of the crew seemed profoundly impressed with the necessity of forestalling future demands on his digestive organs by consuming injudicious quantities then and there.

We reached Tang-pi shortly before sundown, to find it a worthy prototype of the bailiwick in which we had been domiciled the night before, overtaken by the same fell curse of opium. At first not a single sign of life was apparent, which was a startling phenomenon, since we were acquainted with the fact that Tang-pi was the tribal residence of a mighty chief, and we were somewhat loath to approach, fearing treachery of some sort. As it was necessary, however, that we should secure material for the repair of the canoes and the services of river pilots for the morrow, we wended our way across the marshy beach, and after passing through the town, with its preternatural silence, we perceived a large gong, which we hammered upon vigorously to attract attention. No result being forthcoming, we stopped before a low-lying hut, which, however, presented an appearance sufficiently exalted over those surrounding it to warrant optimistic conclusions; and no answer being vouchsafed to our repeated knockings, we made bold to lift the latch and enter. The blaze from a smouldering fire of yak-dung, aided by the light from a crude oil-lamp swinging from the rafters, disclosed the interior of a well-appointed

habitation, so far as furnishings in Szchuenese dwellings go, which in this case was considerable,—a movable ladder of uncertain stability erecting itself like a gaunt spectre in the middle of the room, and leading up to the attic through a sectional opening in the roof.

The place seemed deserted, but, on closer inspection, a pair of feet were exposed on the upper rung of the ladder; and following up this remarkable discovery, we found that the feet had legs, and the legs a body, gradually making out the form of a woman, and a badly scared one at that, who sat aloft, with her small, rat-like eyes peering down into the amphitheatre below, and watching our every movement with fearful mistrust. We called to her to come down, but not a movement did she make, save to raise herself another rung on the ladder. There was something unnatural in the silence and the motionless figure; but as a last resort, finding that all our efforts to attract attention were unavailing, we discovered that we were too hungry to wonder much, even at the supernatural. Seating ourselves while Yuen ransacked the place in search of food, we found that this politic manoeuvre had the desired effect; for, after several guttural exclamations of mingled surprise and indignation, the feet moved on the ladder and came down step by step, showing at last that they were topped by a genial face and a mat of dark hair, which appeared beneath a most surprising and fantastic article of headgear, consisting of a large box of wood, bordered with metal and shell ornaments, giving to the wearer a most ludicrous appearance.

Her terror had now vanished before the more poignant sensation of injured dignity, and, seating herself opposite, she sought, by vacant stares, to impress us with the full sense of our transgression. Her mouth looked grim, but

the dim wrinkles about her shrewd eyes were benevolent and humorous, and, under the influence of the conciliatory gift of a few pieces of lurid red cloth, the grimness and reserve melted away, and her lips were unsealed. The men of the village, it seemed, including the illustrious chief, had been gone for two days on a hunt after meat, and would not be back for another week, — a fact which caused us much disappointment, for we had counted upon the chief's assistance in furnishing us with pilots for navigating the treacherous river current, and also with protection in the up-stream country over which he had jurisdiction. Our approach had been descried by some women fishing on shore, who had fled to the village with the information that two foreign devils were coming to kill them all, which explained the silence of our reception.

Finding that our intentions were none other than friendly, our hostess led us to another part of the village, where, emitting several warning cries, she ushered us into a long rambling building, built of stone and thatched with cane, which she explained was the house of the chief. The interior seemed deserted, but after a few moments she dragged forth several females, who it was plainly to be seen were literally frightened out of their wits. Seeing, however, that we did not threaten their safety in any way, and being further encouraged by the explanations of our guide, their fears were quieted, and they gathered about us with impertinent curiosity, feeling of our persons, gazing into our faces, and thrusting their filthy hands into our faces. They varied this interesting occupation with cracking and eating nuts, — a practice of which they never seemed to tire, for the dainty morsels were picked from their shells and cast into waiting mouths with the regularity of clockwork.

The wife of the chief was a fat, buxom-looking body, and on our acquainting her with the fact that we had an abundance of fresh meat, she readily agreed to exchange some fowls and milk for a portion of the same. The crew were called to come ashore with the precious burden, and until long after midnight the haggling for possession of the meat went on, the various contestants warring in dreadful earnest, scratching, biting, and struggling like a horde of wild animals. As we sailed away in the morning before the sun had risen, we could still perceive them gathered around innumerable fires, feasting on the buffalo meat and drinking huge potations of raw arrak, varying the monotony of the occasion by incipient riots at frequent intervals.

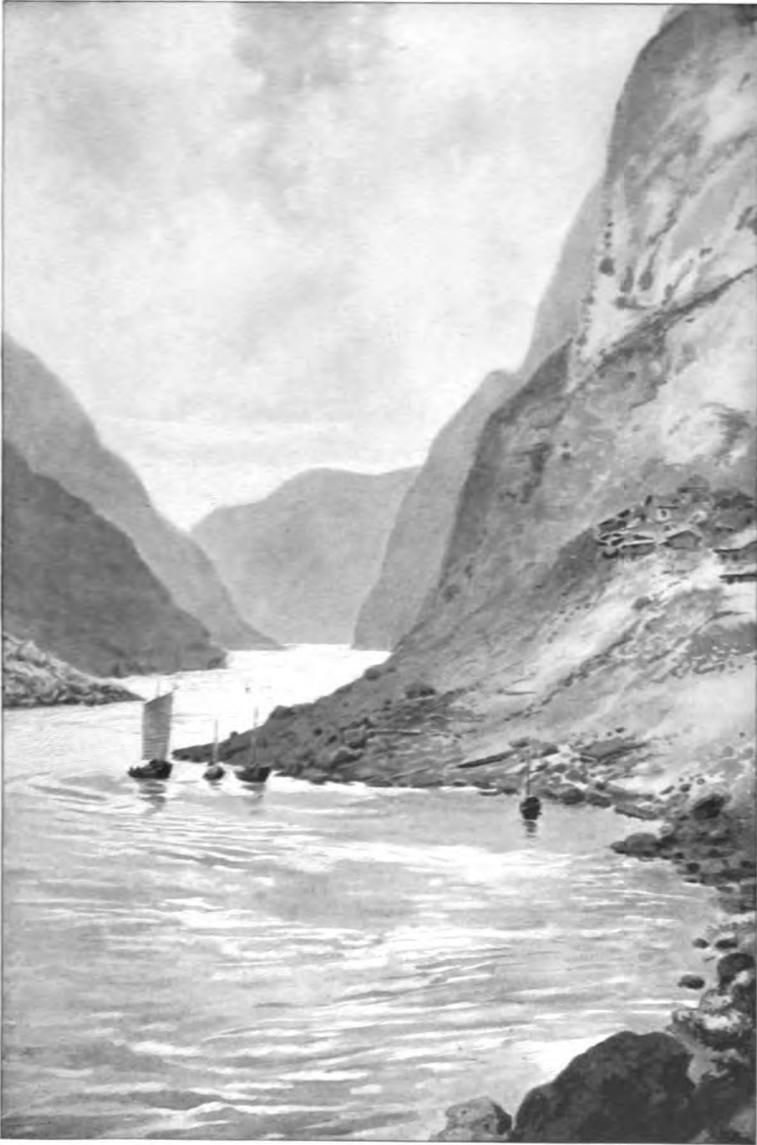
Continuing our voyage southerly along the river bank between two small islands, on which was quartered an enormous colony of rats whom we could see in hordes on the shore, passing a couple of creeks running at right angles to the course of the river, we came to Lu-Chow, a considerable town at the mouth of the Fu-Sung River. The population of the innumerable little fishing hamlets along the river bank had not bestirred themselves at our approach, and as we glided noiselessly along nothing could be heard save the swiftly rushing current of the Yangtse, dashing furiously against treacherous shoals and jagged rocks that beset our course. Nearly the whole distance to Lu-Chow, this almost supernatural silence continued, — a silence which we found was not to be our further accompaniment when once we had reached this bustling trading-post; for here immediately a flotilla of canoes, manned by dusky natives, shot out toward us, and with much screaming and howling escorted us to shore.

The functionaries of Lu-Chow treated us with remark-

able affability and courtesy, the military mandarin welcoming us in all the flowery hyperbole of Chinese superlatives, and leading us off to his own residence, where, after the necessary question of eating and drinking had been disposed of, we were joined by a dozen or more of the greater lights of the town, who remained in the audience-chamber until long after midnight, plying us with questions of every import, until, perceiving that there was no wearing out of their curiosity, we summarily took our leave.

Lu-Chow is one of the most important towns on the upper stream of the Yangtse Kiang, and we found it to be much above the average of the towns and villages which we had previously visited. While there is a lack of symmetry and majesty of contour about it which does not appeal to the Western eye, yet, as compared with many other Chinese cities, it has a cleanly and thrifty appearance; and, as is but natural where surface conditions are so favourable, the population is above the average, presenting a far more honest and intelligent appearance than those encountered elsewhere in Western China.

Here for the first time we were able to study the native population at close range, and it was a pleasant surprise to find them far more agreeable than our preconceptions of them had allowed. They were an important, dignified, and taciturn race, but with none of the narrow-minded bigotry and fanaticism met with elsewhere, and having a full recognition of the virtue of labour. The streets were filled with shops and bazaars, presided over by prosperous-looking merchants; and numberless itinerant hawkers, with much vociferousness and gesticulation, were calling forth the nature and quality of their wares.



LUKAN GORGE, UPPER YANGTSE-KIANG.

The vocation of barber was evidently a flourishing one, for throughout the busy throng might be seen these useful members of society in remarkable profusion, with their long bamboo poles, from either end of which were suspended their shaving implements. As the people cannot very well shave their own heads, and these heads must be shaved whatever else befall, it will readily be seen that the tonsorial profession offers tempting inducements. The process of shaving in itself is an important operation. The person undergoing the infliction, with apparently a full knowledge of what is in store, sits down on the ground with a very resigned and subdued air. After his head has been sufficiently lathered, the razor is brought into play. The blade of this instrument is a cumbersome affair, nearly in the shape of an equilateral triangle. Beneath the skilful hand of the barber, however, it answers the purpose fully; and it is really remarkable to witness the dexterity with which he handles the instrument, and hurries the task through to completion. He shaves the head entirely, with the exception of the spot of tail-hair, the patient in the meantime holding a large bowl in which to catch the falling particles of hair. The full meaning of Chinese thrift and economy may be appreciated more fully when it is understood that these particles are religiously preserved, and, mingled with other elements, are used as fertilising mixtures, — this minute attention given to fertilisation accounting, perhaps more than anything else, for the wonderful richness and productiveness of the Chinese soil, even in the mountain regions. The fine hair growing in the ears and between the eyebrows is shaved by these barbers, who also insert instruments under the eyelids, which accounts for the numerous instances of blindness with which the populace is afflicted. The shaving

operation is finished by the combing out of the tail, and plaiting it with great exactness. Having done with one patient, the itinerant artist hurries about seeking for others. It is a curious sight, indeed, to witness these operations going on with the utmost gravity amidst the excitement and bustle, without attracting notice.

The last day of our halt at Lu-Chow we accepted the invitation of the mandarin to accompany him outside the town's limits, to view the numerous plantations and evidences of fertility in the surrounding district. The graduated slope for miles, as far as the eye could reach, was given up to the cultivation of various cereals, forming a brilliant panorama of the greenest and most exquisite verdure. Continuing our ride through this gorgeous landscape, we came upon other objects of much interest. There were numerous labourers binding immense quantities of barley into bundles, and carrying them to the place where they were to be piled up into huge stacks. It was very interesting to watch the grand movements of the men who lifted these enormous bundles on the end of long bamboo sticks and gave them to those on top of the stacks, the growing darkness bringing out their figures against the background of the sky like an army of enormous giants. As we returned to the limits of the town the sun was descending below the horizon, and the whole extent of country was plunged into that vague and mysterious light which follows the setting sun. Our way lay through innumerable bands of returning labourers, and one could not help marvelling at the fact that the females outnumbered the males nearly in the ratio of two to one.

The social condition of woman, even in the more enlightened districts of Western China, is pitiable in the extreme, for, from the day of her birth to her death, her

life is one long story of suffering, misery, and degradation. On her falls the onerous burden of performing the major portion of the manual labour of the country, while her lord and master lives a life of comparative ease. From long practice this servitude of women has become the corner-stone of Chinese society. The young girl is born to the knowledge that her life must be spent in drudging labour on the plantations, without amusements or happiness of any sort. She is condemned to vegetate in complete ignorance, so far as social conditions go. Like an inanimate object, she is subject to the whims and caprices of whosoever may be her lord and master for the time being. In this manner she is obliged to spend her youth; and when at last the moment of wifehood arrives, she is bartered by some inhuman parent to a husband whom she has never seen, and for whom she may not entertain a spark of affection. Nevertheless, the women, in spite of these drawbacks, do not seem to find the weight of social ostracism weighing heavily on their shoulders, for they appear to be fully as contented with all their burdens as do their prototypes of more favoured lands, and it seems of questionable wisdom that, with this condition of affairs, meddling reformers should undertake to upset the social fabric of a nation which appears eminently satisfied with the present status.

To speak disparagingly of the efforts of Christianity in this region would bring such a storm of disapproval on my head that it would seem rash to venture on such a course; yet, from personal investigation carried on in an unbiassed and judicial spirit, I do not hesitate to affirm that, despite the large amount of money expended annually, Christianity at the present time is making no progress whatsoever in Western China. This non-success

may be attributed primarily to two reasons, the most potent being the disposition of the missionaries to trample on native custom roughshod, rather than to attempt conversion by gentler methods. The missionaries call the poor native "brother," but the relationship ends in mere verbiage, for they inconsiderately strive to brush aside his training of centuries, and to force upon him, willy-nilly, the seed of proselytism. The other reason is the disposition of the missionaries to intermingle with temporal affairs, arraying one faction against another in matters of merely political import, forsaking the spiritual field entirely.

With such evidences of abuse of opportunity, one has little difficulty in tracing the non-success which has attended missionary efforts here. As regards Western China taken in the abstract, it may be said that the field is ripe for the sowing of the seed of Christianity; the native mind is ready and willing to receive its principles; but so long as denominational strife and narrow-minded bigotry stalk openly abroad, so long will missionary effort, however sincerely planned, be unattended with material results. What is most needed in the country are missionaries of the gospel rather than mere interlopers who seek aggrandisement of personal self and temporal dominance by taking unfair advantage of the conditions which opportunity has presented. Until this patent necessity is adequately recognised, there is no hope for the mission of Christianity in Western China.

We left Lu-Chow on the twenty-second, a severe hurricane, which lasted for two days, necessitating a lengthening of our halt. The day began simultaneously with the rising of the sun, for the brilliant semi-equatorial climes know not the romance of twilight and dawn, and the

wind blowing in good earnest from down-stream, we peaked the little sails on our canoes and set forth against the strong current, with the white surf swishing and crunching against our frail barks with considerable force. We ascended the perceptible grade of the yellow stream, winding through curves innumerable, and filled with such swiftly flowing currents, that it was only by the sturdy paddling and poling of the crew that we were able to make progress of any kind. This lasted only for a short time, however, as by midday we had, in a measure, passed out of the power of the strong current, and were indemnified for the laxness of the morning progress by being whirled along by a miniature hurricane, which dashed huge waves over the boats, and necessitated frequent bailing to prevent them from foundering. In spite of the best efforts of the crew, our crafts careened at a frightful angle, and with the white foam hissing from jagged rocks on all sides, we could not, strive as we might, experience any keen sense of comfort or safety. It was with a fervid sensation of relief, therefore, that we shot into a little cove at nightfall at Lautien-Pa. Beaching the boats, we discovered but a short distance away the outlines of a little village, which from the river had been obscured to our view by a grove of trees huddled on the low-lying bank. Hauling up the canoes high and dry, and leaving the crew to pitch the tents, we tramped over the intervening distance in order to purchase fresh provisions and pay our respects to the head man of the place.

As we neared the village we could see that it was apparently deserted, and, moreover, there were ghastly evidences as to the cause of desertion. The huts were some score in number, dilapidated habitations built of straw and mud, partially torn down and ruined by the

action of the elements. Inside one of these abodes we peered, to be treated to the startling spectacle of a half decomposed body, from which a frightful stench emanated. The next ruin contained two similar corpses. With these grim and hideous evidences we hastily returned to the canoes, and, astonishing all by ordering them to be launched forthwith, we sailed on until ten o'clock, when we reached Kiang Ling. The heat and darkness intensified the quietness of the night, and, on nearer approach, the breathless stillness was broken only by the hoarse blasphemies of our crew and the numerous howlings of the native population on shore.

The inhabitants of Kiang Ling did not seem over friendly, regarding our landing with sinister glances and audible mutterings. We were resolved, however, that, whatever might be their likes and dislikes, they must receive us without hostile demonstrations. Taking Yuen on shore with me, I ordered him to acquaint them with our decision that if we suffered any molestation we would bring their village rattling down about their ears with scant ceremony. This exhibition of our animus was sufficient, for their attitude immediately became more friendly. On the arrival of the head man of the place, we saluted him by touching our heads to the earth, which concession to custom was sufficient to obtain the store of fresh provisions we were desirous of buying.

We were anxious, naturally, to have some explanation of the spectacle which we had witnessed at Lautien-Pa, and after considerable questioning learned that it had been visited by a virulent plague some months before, and that the population had departed, leaving the unfortunate victims who had contracted the disease to die of hunger and lack of care. One could not repress a shudder at this

cold-blooded selfishness; but our host was evidently not so squeamish, for he consoled himself by the thought, openly expressed, that "the bodies would be good for the soil," and that "the land might be utilised to advantage in another six months." With the evidence of such inhumanity on his part, we could not find it in our hearts to accept his invitation to pass the night with him, a resolution which was strengthened by the spectacle of a group of unkempt goitred natives. As we did not wish to run the risk of contracting a violent illness, we wrapped ourselves in our blankets, and passed the night beneath the cheerless interior of the overturned canoes.

About the middle of the night we were awakened from slumber by the frightful howlings of human voices, and starting up, fearing an attack, we perceived a dull red glare lighting up the surrounding darkness. The village had taken fire, and the flames, already fanned by a strong wind, were rapidly threatening its destruction. We roused our men, and with the assistance of the villagers made valorous attempts at combating the flames; but the low huts, built of the most inflammable material, were like tinder, and in spite of our efforts they soon burned to the ground. The next morning our admiration was much excited by the perfect philosophical resignation with which the natives received this visitation of fate; for as we started away they gave evidences of their surprising activity by commencing the erection of new structures, going about the operation with the most remarkable lightness of spirit, as if devastating fires were matters of daily concern in their experience.

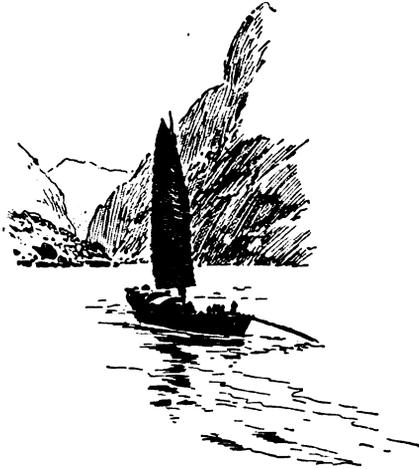
A violent rainstorm began at 10 A. M. of the twenty-fourth, which lasted four hours, necessitating the lashing together of the canoes to prevent them from being cap-

sized by the enormous waves into which the surface of the river was driven by the force of the wind. We struggled against these conditions for ten long hours, as we made our slow advance to Na Chu. This village consisted of a number of low wooden huts, roofed with cane, ranged round a sort of open courtyard, into which had gathered the population of the place, who were busily engaged in one of those gluttonous feasts for which the native of Western China is justly celebrated. As our canoes shot inshore, the feasters forsook their flesh-pots and rushed down to meet us; and we discovered immediately on landing that we were the centre of quite a promiscuous population of nearly naked men, women, and children. Although we had made a landing merely with the intention of camping for the night, the villagers seemed to think that we had come to make a free exhibition of ourselves as natural monstrosities, for during the night they remained near us, jabbering, gesticulating, and calling to one another with sufficient vociferousness to drive away all thought of sleep.

We had now been a fortnight on our long journey from Luipo up the Yangtse, and, despite the fact that we all felt the twinges of homesickness, there was an unbridled freedom attending our journey, which, in connection with our unquenched curiosity for further exploration, fully indemnified us for all our efforts. Moreover, we had constantly added proof of the courage and fidelity of our Kiangsi crew; so that all dubious imaginings as to the future vanished, and every one entered with unmistakable fervour into the spirit of the enterprise, and with an optimistic zeal which assured its successful consummation.

Skirting the range of hills which bounds the Ngan valley, by hugging close to the right bank of the stream,

we were able on the twenty-fifth to reach Pungto, after passing through a region of majestic loveliness which could not have been discounted by the beauties of Italy or Switzerland. The surface of the Yangtse was covered with numerous little islands, inhabited by a peaceful and industrious population, who invariably on our approach would swarm out in their little canoes and strive to barter with us. We reached the village at near midnight; but notwithstanding the inauspicious moment of our arrival, our approach was descried by a group of natives on shore, who immediately carried the fact to the head man of the place. Down upon us swept this important functionary in a flamboyant Joseph costume which would have shamed that of Biblical fame, and attended by a numerous



SZCHUEN TRADING BOAT.

body-guard of servants in the most gorgeous of similar rainbow hued trappings, as if to impress us duly with the might and splendour of his official magnificence. We in turn felt it our bounden duty to be fully impressed, and, having touched foreheads with him, took his arm and were led away to his dwelling, which was in a small way quite a pretentious structure. Our host was immensely tickled at our glances of curiosity and astonishment, and sought further to ingratiate himself with us by the preparation of a banquet, which gave rare evidence of his tact. He was a

most amiable and gracious host, and, having overwhelmed us with compliments and courtesy, introduced us to the minor dignitaries of the village, whom we found to be quite intelligent and enlightened individuals. The banquet was really wonderful in the number of concoctions displayed, and which were served according to all the strict formality and red tape of Chinese etiquette; but with the spectacle of the guests helping themselves and one another liberally by thrusting their grimy hands into the various dishes, we suddenly found our interest in the event waning, and satisfied ourselves by nibbling at several crusts of adamantine biscuit. In order that conversation should not pall, we spent the time consumed in this diversion by an interchange of the most flattering and lavish compliments, in every breath inviting each other reciprocally to the most exalted places.

With the feasting ended, a number of dancing women and musicians stepped forth, and commenced a performance which we were enabled to bear with Christian fortitude. The music was of an indifferent quality, consisting of various tom-tommings on drums and gongs innumerable, the air being carried on in a laudable imitation of Tennyson's far-famed brook by several squeaky one-stringed guitars, from which emanated a noise not unlike the chorus of a colony of enraged felines. The dancing, however, was more interesting; and having been prepared for a vulgar exhibition, such as is too often a distinguishing characteristic of the dancing of Eastern countries, it was a pleasant surprise to be treated instead to a remarkably chaste and even classic performance, the dancers moving to the discordant sounds of the musical instruments with wondrous ease and grace. Through it all the chief and his official group smoked in silence, as if

they were engaged in a function of awful solemnity, until at a movement of his hand the entertainment came to an abrupt ending. We were on the point of leaving, when we were made aware of the fact that the sumptuous feast to which we had just sat down was in the light of a hasty lunch, intended merely to stay the first pangs of hunger, and that the real repast was now to be served. We groaned inwardly at the inability of our overburdened stomachs to comply, but knowing full well that any attempt to beg off from the entertainment would be attributed to a churlish disposition, we sought to emulate with indifferent success the gluttonous example of those around us.

If one has ever entertained doubts as to what nation or race the palm for perfection in the culinary art should be awarded, a trip through Western China would efface all such incertitude. All the inhabitants, without exception, are gifted with a remarkable aptitude for cooking. If one is in need of a cook, it is the easiest thing possible to secure one here, the only thing necessary to do being to seize upon the first person with whom one meets and order him to cook for you, and it is safe to say that he will acquit himself of his duties to your admiration. The tribal chiefs and even mandarins of the larger towns under the jurisdiction of the government are accomplished epicures, carrying the business of eating and drinking to its extremest limit, — the mark of merit being accorded not to him who is the greatest warrior or hunter or benefactor to his country and people, but to him who has proved that his appetite is largest, and who is able to maintain a retinue of cooks to provide for the entertainment of perennially hungry guests. In feasts they delight; and in many cases large sums are spent in entertaining, your

real epicurean being unwilling to touch anything that is not in itself a rarity above the means of the common herd. Unlike the natives of the eastern provinces of China, those of the west are addicted to the use of meat in large quantities, and students of social conditions have sought to trace in this practice their predominance in barbaric traits.

I cannot refrain from pausing a moment here to say a word in regard to the effect upon the natives of China of the food which they eat. The opinion is generally entertained that diet has more or less influence on character, and not a few believe that a vegetable diet renders the eater more gentle than those whose diet in part consists of animal food. Vegetarians are, however, unfortunate in their comparison of the mildness of herbivorous animals with the ferocity displayed by those that are carnivorous. A little reflection shows that in such cases food cannot be the main cause of the disposition manifested. Many of the herbivora are capable of showing the utmost ferocity. Savage attacks upon inoffensive people by bulls, horses, and stags are by no means uncommon; while in the East rogue elephants, wild boars, and other herbivorous animals often inflict serious injuries upon human beings who happen to come in their way. So, likewise, the ordinary-minded Chinese native, feeding on rice and the simplest of cereals, is liable to become riotous, uncontrollable, and bloodthirsty when influenced by religious fanaticism. Perhaps the savage effects upon the habits and disposition ascribed to animal food are due to the alcoholic liquors consumed at the same time. The disposition of an average individual who leads a temperate life would probably not be altered for the better were he to substitute a vegetable diet for an animal one. Notwith-

standing the contention of vegetarians, the example of China gives palpable and unmistakable evidence that the mere using of vegetable food does not superinduce a mild and equable temperament, — conditions which are ascribed to many Asiatic countries.

We remained at Pungto for three days, owing to the weather conditions being such as to prevent our entertaining hopes of making successful progress should we depart. Before leaving, our host sought to perpetuate the memory of his hospitality by pressing upon us the acceptance of one of his best cooks, — a native boy some sixteen years old, whom we subsequently discovered to be, in spite of his youth, most wondrously adept in the preparation of savory morsels, of which before we had been serenely unconscious. He was a garrulous and light-hearted specimen of humanity, and, in view of so important an event as being honoured with the privilege of accompanying us, had donned the very best costume his wardrobe contained. He wore an enormous hat nearly four feet in height, made of interlacing layers of straw and variously coloured strips of cloth, to which was fastened numerous bells and a gorgeous and towering red feather; while the lower portion of his body was nearly concealed by innumerable strata of different coloured trousers and jackets, placed one over the other, until he presented the appearance of a would-be Arctic explorer. The perspiration poured off his body in a continuous stream, — a condition which he did not appear to consider, in his anxiety to impress us with his full value, and for fear lest without this sumptuous display of apparel we might be minded not to accept his services.

He was a pugnacious little rascal, for, having brought his entire household gods down to the embarkation in a

heavy bag, beneath which he staggered until nearly ready to drop with fatigue, on one of the canoeman striving to bandy words with him he dropped his precious burden and jumped at his burly antagonist with indiscreet zeal, fighting with all his puny strength, tooth and nail. The huge, muscular canoeman was taken aback at this assault, for he manifestly did not like to engage in a contest of such uneven forces ; so, as his little tormentor persisted in the attack, he quenched the ardour of the fiery young *bravado* by tossing him into the water, from which he emerged with his gorgeous raiment sadly spoiled. He was not bowed down by this misfortune, however, and by the middle of the afternoon had willingly laid aside his numerous wrappings for the more comfortable and less inconvenient dress of primitive origin. He proved to be a most welcome companion of our voyage, infusing a spirit of mirth into our company that had hitherto been sadly lacking, which, coupled with his other good traits, made him invaluable to us. He was an ardent fisherman, and during the day's journeying experienced no difficulty in catching enough fish to supply our needs (a species of mullet with which the river abounded), and which was a welcome addition to the monotony of our regular fare.

The country through which the course of the Yangtse now lay was different from that which we had been traversing heretofore, the river current expanding itself at frequent intervals into large lakelike expanses, the flat plains swelling into low-lying hills, covered with unmistakable evidences of prosperity and thrift. There could be no mistaking the fact, however, that the native population was constantly increasing in undesirable qualities ; for, while our numbers and the sight of our arms was sufficient to guard us from downright attack, the sinister

glances and furtive attempts at causing us inconveniences were too plain to be mistaken. Outside of the large towns, government, so far as the real meaning of the word is concerned, is an anomaly. The undisciplined and uneducated native does not recognise its existence; he does not place faith in laws of any kind, save those which admit of unrestrained personal liberty. He has no written language; all are equal in the scale of his democratic ideas. Wealth counts for naught; the man who seems little better than a beggar in his rags may be the millionaire of the hamlet, but he shares his riches, meagre as they may be, with his more unfortunate brethren.

In most cases we avoided these settled portions, except as they lay directly in our path, and as we were compelled by necessity to fall back upon them for supplies of provisions; in this manner we were saved from annoyance or danger, the river population having a sufficiently wholesome respect for our general appearance to leave us severely alone. Before long, however, we had to defend ourselves from some serious attacks; and although humanitarians may suggest that pacific methods will always succeed when persisted in, it was our invariable lot to find that such a position is not tenable, since we were compelled, as a last resort, to adopt stern measures.

Our first experience of downright hostility was on the thirtieth, at the little shore village of Li-Chuang Pa, which we had reached at the end of two days' paddling and poling from Pungto. As we put in at nightfall there was the usual crowd of natives assembled on the beach, who, on our approach, shook their fists menacingly and drew their hands expressively across their throats. We were resolved not to be intimidated by this cowardly rabble, and still kept toward the shore until showers of mud and

stones fell around us like hail. Halting the remainder of the canoes, Yuen and I approached to within speaking distance and vainly strove to make friends with them, until, finding their churlish natures incapable of meeting these pacific advances, I threatened the most terrible punishment should they persevere in the attack. The effect of this threat was to cause a succession of jeering yells, while the showers of stones fell in right good earnest.



YUEN.

Hitherto our dignity only had suffered; but with the wounding of several of the crew by the dangerous missiles, all hopes of pacification fled, and we decided that they must be given a salutary lesson for this unwarranted attack. Placing the canoes in line, I instructed the men how they were to act, ordering them on no occasion to make use of their firearms

unless absolutely forced to do so, but to make the attack with their paddles and long canoe-poles. Firing several shots over the heads of the howling mob, which caused them to fall back for a moment, we were enabled to run the canoes inshore; and then, without letting them have time in which to formulate resistance, we swept irresistibly upon them, the crew, anxious to avenge the wounds of their fellows, fighting like demons. It was all over in a moment, their determined front melting before our vigorous charge like snow beneath a tropical sun. They fought desperately with clubs and knives

for the space of a few minutes, but the sturdy blows from the paddles were too much for their courage; they wavered for a moment, and then bolted in all directions. We followed up this advantage by rushing into the village and seizing several prisoners, who, at the thought of the horrible punishment which they imagined was in store for them, turned white with fright beneath their dusky skins. The crew were in an ugly mood over the serious wounding of one of their number, and were in favour of punishing the captives vigorously; but with their general air of dejectedness we could not find it in our hearts to do so, and after detaining them till morning we allowed them to depart. This exhibition of Christian spirit was not without its result, for the released prisoners rejoined their fellows and related their experience. As we were making preparations to resume the day's journeying, a delegation from the tribe came down to the beach with offerings of fowl and some native wine, the poor creatures striving in this manner to show their gratitude for such unheard-of leniency. We shook hands with all, and distributed presents among the head men, which politic action had the effect of securing us half a dozen canoemen to guide us through the rapids during the day.

The approach to Pa-Ko-Shan was marked by a majesty of scenery, particularly the dominance of innumerable lofty and graceful mountain peaks, fading into relief against the cobalt blue of a cloudless sky, causing a desire to abstain from nearer approach lest the vision should be shattered. The cool night air, however, hurried us forward, and just as the setting sun was tingeing the varied panorama with its subdued and mellow radiance we shot into the little harbour, with the result of soon bringing the whole population about our ears, — those in boats crowding as near

as the vigilance of the canoemen would permit, while their less fortunate neighbours on shore expressed the sincerity of their welcome by a constant humming of curious anticipation. We had expected to find the population savouring, in a measure, of the barbarousness and uncouthness of the small river villages; but in this instance we were most fortunately mistaken, for they contented themselves, after the first satisfying of curiosity, by attending to their own affairs, an example in whose footsteps we sedulously followed.

We were waited upon during the evening by a staid-looking individual, who informed us that he was the government agent for the surrounding district. We were naturally at a loss to account for the necessity of his presence in this region, until from his conversation we gleaned the fact that there were valuable coal mines in the vicinity in a state of operation. At Pa-Ko-Shan we found a large native forge and smithy, where there were about a dozen smiths busily at work. The iron ore mined in the surrounding mountains is very pure, while the abundance of the coal supply furnishes the necessary fuel for its conversion to a practical state. We observed numerous implements of husbandry, and also a large number of knives and spears of native manufacture which were really creditable to their artificers. As the river current was liberally bestrewn with numerous rocks and other obstructions, we took advantage of the occasion to have the bows of the canoes armed with thin sheets of iron, and also to secure a supply of knives and spears, with which to arm the crew, securing these articles at an incredibly low price. Our telescope was the first ever seen in the district, and effected a striking demonstration in our favour, the natives imagining that through its

medium we were looking into the future. The effect of this general idea was to bring us daily crowds of anxious visitors, who, by the aid of small gifts of provisions or iron instruments, tried to induce us to read the future for them. As we were fully aware that no amount of explanation on our part would disillusionise them, and that failure to comply would lessen their friendliness, Burton and I during those few days carried on a bureau of general astrological information which would have been the fortune of a rising seer.

The manner of dressing the hair among the female population was very curious. They arranged it with a stiffening of light cane into a bonnet-shaped head-dress, allowing the back hair to flow down to the waist in masses of ringlets. They seemed to do all the work of the community, for at all hours they might be seen with their large wicker baskets behind them, setting out for the river to catch fish, or returning with their fuel baskets strapped across their foreheads.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN on the fifth of February we had left Pa-Ko-Shan behind us, it was with the knowledge that henceforth the real battling against the strong river current was to begin in earnest, the closely converging mountain ranges pressing together until the bed of the stream was but a long, narrow ravine, through which the seething waters foamed and roared as in a giant caldron. About 11 A. M. the current broadened into a wide pool, where the waters were less turbulent; here were numerous islands, which were marvels of vegetation and of curious shape, hanging like a picture against the mountain gallery in the background. The inhabitants of these islands, we soon discovered, were a miserable and filthy lot, and to avoid trouble with them we kept well amid-stream, ignoring their menacing shouts. With such evidences we were all the more surprised on reaching Tang Wan to find it a town of considerable pretence. It was impossible not to be struck by the superior deportment of its inhabitants, who presented a haughty, distinguished, and even elegant appearance, which was not altogether displeasing after one had been obliged to put up with the usual rabble of Western China.

We had intended to make an encampment on the shore, but before we had been landed five minutes the head man of the village, with proverbial courtesy, sent one of his servants to invite us to share the hospitalities of his abode. With full knowledge that the invariable custom of Asia

requires that the first invitation must be refused, we declined the offer, secretly hoping that this concession to Oriental etiquette on our part might not be without its just reward. We had not miscalculated, for in half an hour another servant appeared with a repetition of the invitation; and now that it was lawful to seize upon the opportunity, we accepted with alacrity.

Once gathered into the residence of our *ataman* host, however, we were half sorry that we had been so rash as to accept his hospitality without better knowledge of what was to be our portion; for his habitation was situated in the most vile-smelling quarter of the town, and was surrounded by a varied zoölogical collection which, upon short acquaintance, upset our equanimity to a considerable extent. When, however, we had accustomed our noses to the discomforting odours from without, with philosophical resignation we welcomed matters as they were, seeing that they could not be altered, and made the best of the situation. We found this building larger and richer than any edifice that we had yet encountered in Western China; it was wainscoted with highly varnished woods and porcelain, and with considerable elaborate and sumptuous ornamentation.

Our host was evidently a suspicious old fellow, and placed no great abundance of faith in our honesty of purpose; for he had stationed rows of servants where our every movement might be watched, evidently fearing that some of his household gods might excite our cupidity. He had also taken the precaution to place several round beads and strange bottles full of grayish powder in a capacious bag, which he hung around his neck, — these queer articles, we subsequently discovered, being a potent charm against illness or danger to their owner.

Our presence, and the knowledge of our expedition, attracted during the evening a number of the élite, who, finding our host ready and willing to place on exhibition the *mulkarjese* (white devils), could not find it in their hearts to leave, when once their curiosity had been partially appeased. With the constant addition of recruits to the assembly, by midnight the stuffy little room was filled to a point bordering on suffocation, the less fortunate denizens of the courtyard attesting their disapproval of proceedings by maintaining an unceasing ululation. There was apparently no wearing through of their inquisitive spirits; they seemed to be actuated with a desire to investigate everything, asking innumerable questions of great or lesser import, and some of no import at all; causing us no little embarrassment by feeling of our persons, examining our clothes, and finding endless delight in the mysteries of our chronometers and telescopes. This latter instrument was undoubtedly the "lion" of the occasion; and there being no cessation of the inquisitive demands concerning its supernatural powers, we were obliged at last, through the sheer necessity of saving it from destruction, to retire it from the field of exhibition. To avoid the wearisome task of incessantly answering the simple but puzzling questions of childlike ignorance, and to escape from the noise and tumult of innumerable voices jabbering all at once, we welcomed the opportunity, a couple of hours after midnight, to make an abrupt exit from the room; but, alas! what should have been the delights of privacy and repose were turned into further annoyance by the fact that the walls surrounding our sleeping apartment presented the appearance of a hydra-headed monster, with countless eyes glued to every opening and crevice, in order that not a movement made by us should be lost.

The morning brought us no relief, for there was no diminution of zeal in the curiosity seekers of the night before, who, entertaining the fear that we might take our departure before they could arrive, had guarded against this by remaining overnight, and, refreshed by a few hours' sleep, were ready and anxious to continue their cross-questioning. They could by no means, however, neglect their gastronomic indulgence; so, as became a generous host, the *ataman* placed huge bowls of *chou-mien* (a soup of meat and barley) where it could be assailed to best advantage by all present, and the varied company, partaking of this, and a large quantity of exhilarating native wine, fairly distracted us with their oral assaults. But at last every possible question had been answered in some form or other, and we welcomed the moment when the canoes were launched and we were able to proceed, our day's effort to be to reach Su-Chow.

The original colour of the stream had now been changed to a sooty black, owing to the dark-coloured waters of the listless Hunan River pouring into it just above Tang Wan. Halting about noonday on the river bank to prepare the midday meal, we were immediately surrounded by a horde of dirty savages, who seemingly sprang out of the very ground, for not a sign of habitation was visible in any direction. Although the weather was comparatively cold, owing to the high elevation, these natives were devoid of clothing, except a small breech-cloth around the waist. They gathered about us with menacing scowls, as the preparation for the meal advanced, evidently resolved to secure a share in the feast. On this occasion we had an opportunity of testing the temper of our little cook. One of the natives approached, and, calling the cook's attention to some object in another direction, took advantage of his

momentary abstraction to snatch a roasting fowl from the fire, and run away with it in the direction of the hills. After him went our cook, and, being more fleet of foot, soon overtook the sagacious rascal. Then ensued a battle royal. The native was determined to hold on to his conquest, while his small antagonist was as firmly resolved that he should not. In proof of the superiority of his claims, after a few minutes of this interesting strife, our cook returned sorely bruised and beaten, but holding aloft in triumph the remains of the sadly mutilated fowl, his face begrimed with dirt and blood, but wearing a look of mingled joy and chagrin, at having recovered the booty with so dear a cost.

The scenery of the region through which we passed during the afternoon was gorgeous in the extreme, the low-lying hills of our former course having given way to those of higher elevation, which hung like a glorious canvas against the cloudless sky. Down through innumerable dusky clefts, all overhung with daphne of every description, came silver-threaded brooks from a mountain tarn, whitening on the rough stones by the way, darting and lingering a spell in secret crannies under overhanging rocks, and then re-emerging with audacious quip and sally. We arrived at Su-Chow just as the sun was setting, to find, as usual, the inevitable gathering of uncouth natives in waiting for us, who, in some inexplicable way, had been forewarned of our approach. One pompous little individual, whom we rightly imagined to be the head man of the village, came forward and welcomed us with much obsequiousness, heaping flowery eulogies on our own persons as well as on those of our illustrious ancestry for many generations removed,—a compliment which we reciprocated. Our little dose of flattery (we had not

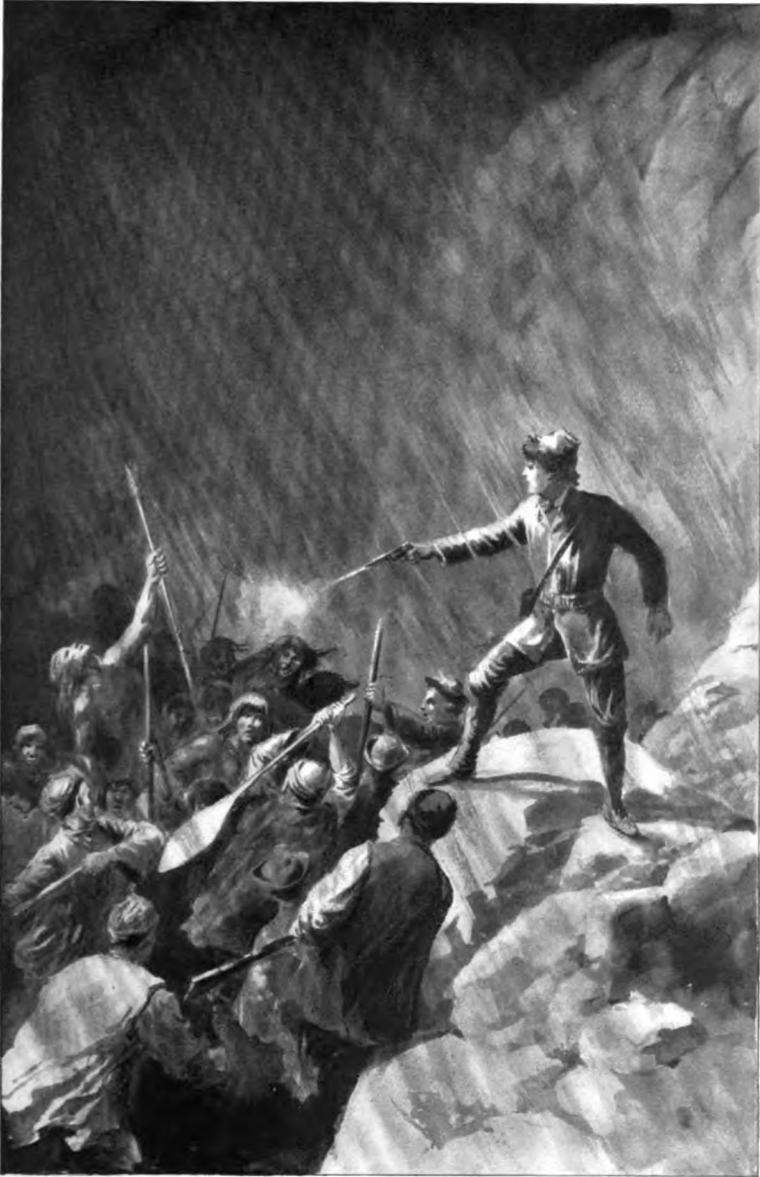
neglected the wildest flights of hyperbole) had the desired effect, for we were able to purchase an abundance of provisions, and also secure the promise of guides to pilot us on the morrow. There could be no doubt of the thievish propensities of the population, in spite of their grandiloquent promises, and it was only by the exercise of the greatest watchfulness that we were saved from serious loss.

Later in the evening the chief of the village invited us to pass the night with him, but as his residence was close to the quarters assigned to the animals, from which emanated a frightful odour, we were obliged to call into play all the subtleties of tact and diplomacy to explain to him our preference for encamping on the river bank. The scene of our encampment was like a page out of Dante's "Inferno," thrown as it was into relief against the dark background of the forest by the fitful glare of an enormous camp-fire, disclosing upon the edge of the dark circle of light a fantastic cordon of squatting natives, who passed the time in singing the stirring strains of a war-chant until the surrounding forest reverberated with the sound.

In spite of our habitual lightness of spirit, a feeling of discomfort came over us as we lay down on our mats, and, wrapping ourselves up in blankets, tried to sleep; for the pleasant weather which had hitherto been our portion had now come to an end, and immense banks of scurrying clouds, and a wind which was almost blowing a hurricane, presaged a storm of considerable violence. This prophecy was not belied, for soon the elements were warring in earnest, — the wind howling with frightful fury, the rain descending in blinding sheets, and the lightning playing around in fitful flashes, crackling and snapping like whip cracks, while ever and anon there was the sound

of ripping and tearing as immense forest giants were brought tumbling to the ground.

Suddenly the war of the tempest was drowned in groans of agony and yells of rage, and our crew came running up with the intelligence that a large body of natives was attacking us in force. So stealthily and silently had they come that the actual attack, and the whistling of slugs and rattle of muskets, was the first intimation of their presence. We rallied the crew behind the canoes, and, infusing them with a dash of courage by recalling the success that had attended their efforts on a previous occasion, we prepared to fight to the bitter end. We felt fully capable of beating off our assailants; but we felt also that this treacherous and premeditated assault must be visited with severe punishment, and, forgetful of the frightful storm, we proceeded to avenge ourselves. Hearing heartrending screams, we were able by the vivid flashes of lightning to see a couple of natives, armed with large knives, attacking one of our men of the outpost, who, though taken at a disadvantage, was making valorous efforts to defend himself. He was lying on the ground, however, and on the point of being despatched. All caution was now thrown to the winds. The comrades of the attacked man jumped to their feet, and, with Burton leading the left and myself the right, at the yelling horde we charged, who met this aggressive movement on our part with yells of impotent fury and a fusilade of spears which fell short and did no damage. We poured a volley into them, and, without halting, reloading as we ran, maintained the furious onslaught. Distracted by our attack, the two men who had been assaulting our canoeman now found themselves with the tables turned, for the plucky fellow having raised himself from his inglorious position,



"AT THE YELLING HORDE WE CHARGED."

made a tremendous assault on them with his knife. Stimulated by his example, we fired another volley, and then with clubbed muskets charged the wavering line of our foes, who, with the severe loss which they had met from our well-directed fire, felt their courage evanescent. They battled in despairing rage for a few moments, and then, as we drew our revolvers and poured a withering fire into the closely huddled mass, they broke and fled incontinently in all directions. We felt no little compunction in maintaining the pursuit, but as they outnumbered us ten to one it was no time for chivalry, and, besides, we felt forced to adopt these stringent measures, knowing full well that it would have a material effect in lessening the hostility of villages farther on.

Once within the confines of their village, the natives sought to make another stand; but our spirit was thoroughly aroused by this time, and we routed them out of their lair and drove them into the hills beyond. We were minded to teach them a salutary lesson that they should not soon forget; so, after setting fire to the village in several places, we returned to our encampment, where the remainder of the night was anxiously spent in preparing for what seemed an inevitable skirmish on the morrow. With several of their number killed, however, and twice as many wounded, they had no desire for continuing the conflict, and we were left to attend to our own injuries. Every one had received wounds of some sort or other, mostly bruises received from clubs and stones, but fortunately none were of a serious nature. They were sufficient, however, to prevent us from attempting to make any progress during the day; and indeed we remained in our encampment until the eleventh, when, most of the men having sufficiently recovered from their wounds, we

left the hostile spot. As we disappeared around the bend of the river, the last glimpse of the stage on which such stirring events had taken place within the past two days • revealed to us a conglomerate gathering of defiant and unsubdued natives, who shook their hands menacingly at us, but who, at the first sign of our turning the canoes in their direction, forgot their belligerent intentions and fled with undue haste to the shelter of the hills.

At this season of the year the shores of the stream were covered with a rank growth of long grass, and we were made painfully aware of its presence by prickly sensations all over our bodies. We could have borne the stinging annoyance to our bodies, but with the small particles blowing into our eyes we were reduced to a state of almost total blindness, and were nearly driven to desperation by the pain. One of the crew suggested that we allow him to make an ointment for our relief ; so pulling inshore, he gathered several roots of shrubs on the bank, and, having chewed them to the consistency of a pulpy mass, applied the plaster to the afflicted spot. Notwithstanding our lack of faith in the efficacy of his methods, we were forced to acknowledge its worth ; for immediately the healing mixture had touched our eyes, the pain vanished as if by magic, and we were spared further annoyance.

It has been said before that the Chinese are a nation of cooks, and it might be added with equal truth that they are likewise a race of doctors ; for the entire population seem to have a general understanding of the powers of simple curative principles. Disease of all kinds is cured by botanical means, and although they are of course unable to combat the more serious cases, and to treat those cases requiring surgical care, it is simply marvellous to

witness the success which attends their treatment of all illnesses of a minor character.

The river current for many miles above Su-Chow was covered with dozens of little islands, composed of deposits of alluvial sand, and covered with a rank vegetation. Immense flocks of spur-winged geese and other birds hovered around, and, as a diet of buffalo meat had palled on our appetites, we welcomed the opportunity to add fresh game to our daily fare. Turning our canoes inshore, we were able to obtain several dozens of these birds, the noise of our guns bringing to view solitary natives, who gathered wonderingly at a distance, following our progress in awed amazement until we had vanished from sight.

We occupied a beautiful camping-place above the Min, on a long stretch of pure white river sand, under the shadow of such an upright and high cliff that the sunshine did not visit us until 9 A. M. With Burton and an escort of the crew I clambered up the steep ascent during the morning, and shortly before noontime reached its summit. Here we stood for an hour, pondering unspeakable things, the moan and plaint of the mighty river, stretching off as far as the eye could reach in either direction, sounding almost human in tone. We remained on this high elevation during the greater part of the afternoon, making observations, and pursuing numerous herds of small antelopes and wild boars, which roamed the plateau in abundant profusion.

On the thirteenth we again set forth, having for our objective point Pa-Shin-Chi. The treacherous river current menaced progress, obliging us to hug closely to the shore. When half over the distance we were startled by the cries of the men in the canoe carrying the provisions, and, looking in their direction, we saw that, in spite of the

greatest vigilance, they had crashed against a jagged reef. The canoe was already filled with water, and, calling to them to jump for their lives, we hurried toward the scene, just in time to take them aboard, as the necessary effort required to resist the swiftness of the current had about used them up.

We dissipated our grief during the afternoon by regaling our artistic sense on the varied panorama of the ever-changing landscape constantly unfolding before us, — presenting an immense forest of dwarfed growth, among which were trees with fluted and beautifully carved trunks, set off by a mass of magnificent ferns, waving their plumed fronds in the balmy air. On the horizon of this animated scene were gathered trees of higher growth, arrayed in battalions as if to protect their lesser brethren beneath. Between these serrated lines of mute sentinels the eye met a compact mass of draperies and festoons of rank and gaily-coloured clinging vegetation, presenting a most charming and impressive appearance.

We reached Pa-Shin-Chi about two hours before sunset, our approach lying through a flotilla of boats of all manners and conditions, which had gathered duly to honour our arrival. On acquainting the head man of the village with an account of the attack to which we had been subjected at Su-Chow, he waxed exceeding wroth, and vowed all sorts of direful vengeance to be inflicted on the hapless villagers who sought to do us injury. He was, doubtless, far from being sincere in this determination, his grandiose and high-sounding boasts and promises having birth in the expectation of receiving presents. He explained his inability to set out on the punitive expedition at once by saying that he was just on the point of visiting a brother chief, a half day's journey down-

stream, turning us over meanwhile to the hospitality of one of his subjects. He had soon gathered together his body-guard, and set forth in three large sampans, manned by forty fine-looking warriors, presenting a general appearance of might and majesty which we assured him would, doubtless, have a potent effect on the chief whom he was intending to visit.

The satellite in whose hands we had been left was a queer-looking individual, with a face as keen as a hawk, who took advantage of our passive attitude to pour out maledictions on the country, its people, and things in general,—a noisy harangue to which we were obliged to listen without complaining, for the very good and sufficient reason that no alternative presented itself. His better half, however, was a more cheery body; and despite the fact that womanhood in Western China is on a low social level, she proved herself a very vigorous and efficient woman's rights-reformer by figuratively "wearing the breeches of the establishment," her stern look and manner finally causing her grumbling husband to relapse into an awkward and profound silence. She was a plump little person, as was in evidence not only from her personal appearance, but from a joke of her husband, who, when she had retired, related how a disrespectful relative had averred that whenever she fell down she "bounced like a rubber ball." The particular brightness of this retaliatory sally dominated his mind during the remainder of the evening, causing a general forgetfulness of his numerous grounds of complaint; and every few moments he would suspend the discussion of weightier subjects, by stopping to breathe forth a dry, rasping chuckle, and to murmur the phrase, "bound like a rubber ball."

The natives of Pa-Shin were given up to the cultivation

of a very edible species of ground-nut known as *melkeru*, and to catching quantities of a small fish about the size of a minnow. Food suitable for the preservation of working-men's strength was, in consequence, so scarce in this village, that for the first time we were seriously menaced by the possibility of famine, we being unable to purchase anything more than a few ground-nuts and fish, and these only at outrageous prices. With this dispiriting outlook, after several fruitless hunting expeditions in the surrounding country, we left Pa-Shin on the sixteenth. As the greater portion of our stay at this village had been spent to no purpose, we felt it incumbent on us, for this waste of time and opportunity, to put forth our best efforts during the day to reach the considerable village of Au-Pien, at the mouth of the Whau Kiang, where we were in hopes of being able to purchase a supply of provisions. A good breeze diffused a refreshing coolness, and being in the right direction, it helped us materially, permitting the canoemen to lay aside their oars and take their ease. They took advantage of the occasion to indulge in a gambling game, which consisted of guessing the number of grains of corn in a small box,—the excitement and turmoil at length growing so vigorous that a quarrel would have ensued, but that we stopped it by ordering them to resume their paddles. The breeze continuing to freshen, the canoes acquired an uneasy, jerky motion, perhaps superinduced by the rowing of the crew, which, to repay us for our interruption of their sport, was erratic in the extreme.

Our speed, however, increased every minute, until we were soon cutting through the water with the velocity of a well-aimed projectile, the foam brushing from the bows of our sharp-nosed craft in a long churning eddy. Al-

though the stream was less than half a mile wide, there was a movement of waters which suggested the ocean, and, with almost a gale blowing across this narrow expanse, it was with unfeigned delight that we perceived, about the middle of the afternoon, the low-lying huts of Au-Pien. It was a mournful disappointment to find that, contrary to our fond imaginings, it was a most undelightful spot, a sort of huddling together of numerous insignificant villages, covering an area several acres in extent, and given over to a filthy and sinister-looking population. This population, however, was infinitely preferable to a rascally set of priests, who, far from leading a solitary and monastic life, crowded on every hand, rendering existence one long-drawn-out period of torture. As we beached the canoes, a procession of some thirty of these dirty rascals came down to meet us, bearing aloft a grotesque figure, who, to his credit be it said, was the only one of the lot that appealed to our gratitude through reason of its silence. Eight chanting priests, in mourning garments, whose original colour had long since vanished beneath the accumulation of the filth of years of wear, supported this image on either side, which was gay with beaten gold, borne in a canopy of the richest of silk and lace, and elaborately decked with shell ornaments. The priests moved very slowly, as if to impress all with the sacredness of the spectacle, the common herd prostrating themselves at every few steps, with the accompaniment of dismal howlings. Hoping the sooner to rid ourselves of the abominable nuisance, and wishing to gain favour in the sight of the natives, we assumed a reverent mien, but welcomed with unfeigned joy the moment when the ghastly image had taken its departure, and we were able to think of secular matters of greater importance. Our

eneration of the image had not passed unnoticed, and we experienced no difficulty in purchasing an abundance of meat and barley meal, and also a sort of root-like substance which, when cooked, had the taste of a potato.

We had evidently arrived at Au-Pien during a season of the year when the gambling fever of the populace was at its height, and when quail-fights were engaging universal attention. We had an opportunity of witnessing one of these spectacles carried out with great *éclat*, later in the evening, the residence of the head man of the village for the time being having been transformed into a cocking-main. This pastime is essentially of Chinese origin and practice, being one of general favour,—not that it provides an interesting sport, but from the fact that it enables the gambling instinct of the populace to be sated. It would be impossible to imagine a more tame or uninteresting exhibition, as seen from a Western point of view, yet to Chinese eyes it is the pastime, *par excellence*, for thorough enjoyment. The method of procedure is as follows :

A miniature pit formed by a sieve is placed on top of a table, and into this arena two male quails are introduced, having for several days previous been deprived of food in order to make their gamy instincts more keen. A grain of millet-seed is then dropped between the two contestants, and the battle begins. Each strives to seize the seed, the rivalry of the attempt arousing such a spirit of combativeness that all thought of seed and hunger is forgotten, and at each other they fly, beating with their little wings, and pecking at each other with a comic air of ferocity which is ludicrous to behold. For a space of two or three minutes this contest is waged, when the defeated bird jumps into the air, or retires to one corner

of the cage, and leaves the victor to devour the choice morsel uninterruptedly. During the battle, and before it has been started, the spectators have wagered everything which they possess, even their own persons, the result being that the fervour of the betting ring causes sanguinary brawls, spreading from one to another till even those far removed from the scene, and who may be totally unacquainted with the cause of the encounter, are battling with misplaced zeal. The quails themselves are tenderly reared and looked after by their respective owners, for a successful champion is often of inestimable value, renowned through the entire country, and brings an enviable reputation to the village in which he is owned.

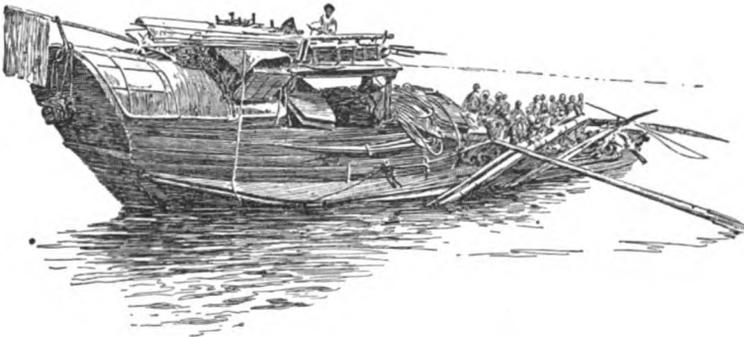
The notice of our arrival having been sown broadcast, the immediate effect was to procure us the honour of a visit from a horde of native physicians. Doctors seemed to thrive in the general squalor of Au-Pien, for it was situated in the midst of a quagmire, whose immense banks of alluvial mud, left by the varying course of the river, gave rise to pestilent, fever-breeding exhalations. We wisely decided to dispense with the services of these medical gentlemen, who seemed to form nearly the entire population, their sudden recruiting to the profession, doubtless, being influenced largely by the expectation of winning our favour and securing presents. We had no occasion to regret this decision when later on we had an opportunity to witness their method of curing disease. One of the natives having been taken ill with a malignant fever, his relatives called in the services of the doctors, who, after examining the patient critically, attributed (as is the invariable Chinese custom in cases of disease) the man's disease to the fact that a devil had taken hold of his body, and they decided that his cure could be effected

only by ridding the flesh of this unwelcome visitor. Although the unfortunate man could scarcely find strength enough to stand, he was led to the front of his abode and there suffered a chastisement with long switches until his back was lacerated into bloody strips from the force of the blows. His faith in the shallow fraud must have been considerable, for before we sailed away he was around and about, seemingly in good health once more ; and one could not help thinking that this would be a fruitful field indeed for apostles of the " faith cure."

A traveller in this wild country of Western China, where the people are so superstitious, is liable at any moment to be the object of popular fury. Sickness might overtake some native, plague or pestilence of some sort sweep the place, a severe storm cause loss of human life, or a thousand and one other things of a similar character happen, in which case natural conditions would never be taken into account ; for great disturbances, it is thought, must have occult reasons for their being, and everything would be charged to the malevolent influence of the stranger. This, in a measure, explains the general hostility of the people of the region to foreigners, since among themselves they are peaceable and contented, and little given to warfare ; and even to foreigners their antipathy does not seem to be of a personal nature, but is rather actuated by the idea that the presence of foreigners is liable to bring upon them dire misfortune, and the anger of their gods, who are so numerous that one cannot help pondering as to how the simple-minded and uneducated native is able to keep track of them all.

The natives of Au-Pien were exceedingly friendly. Gunpowder and firearms were abundant with them, every male capable of carrying a gun having one or

more. Most of them were crude flintlocks, doubtless purchased from the Chinese traders in their periodical visits to the country, but there were also a number of native manufacture, which were masterpieces of skill. We discovered cloth and brass wire to be abundant among these people, and in order to buy provisions we were obliged to pay for them in silver. They were far better dressed than any race of people we had yet met with in Western China, the long flowing robes being similar to those used in the eastern part of the country. One



SZCHUEN SALT JUNK. MAST UNSHIPED FOR DOWNWARD VOYAGE.

could not fail to notice the evil effect produced by this method of dressing, for chief of all the social ills they suffer is the mischief done them by the ugly and clumsy clothing which they wear, and which is not only unnecessary in this hot climate, but serves as abiding-places for disease germs. A wiseacre recently instanced, as evidences of the benefit of introducing Christianity and modern conditions into Western China, that thereby even the poorest natives could live and dress like gentlemen. The one privilege is just about as valuable as the other, for it would be impossible to imagine garments of greater ugly-

ness, unsuitability, and anti-hygienic qualities than those now worn. They are neither protection against cold nor the tortures of heat; they conceal all symmetry of proportion, and yet most impudently suggest nudity. The lightly garbed population of a past generation were far healthier and more vigorous than that of the present, for the reason that, though the disease germs might be in the air just the same, they were not carried around on the person in clothing seemingly constructed for that very purpose. When one considers the plagues and pestilences that have overtaken China in those regions where formerly the native population was accustomed to wear scant raiment, one can fully appreciate the baneful results accruing from that mode of dressing which "modern civilisation" has introduced, and which is so ill-adapted to the climate and uncleanly habits of the people. In a state of nature men recognise the obvious necessity of adapting their clothing to their inevitable climatic conditions, and experience none of that unnatural shame in existing together, which civilising agencies seek to inculcate and engender. By this I do not mean to intimate that civilising agencies have been totally at fault in their charitable intention; but it cannot be denied that the clothing which civilisation has imposed on the simple-minded and confiding Chinese native is not only unnecessary but positively deleterious, and one cannot help wishing that the vast amount of time and money expended in carrying on the mission of proselytism in China might be more discriminatingly applied both in spirit and in method. I have been led into these remarks by the sole desire to bring to the notice of those charitably disposed but misled individuals who love the heathen the inutility of sending clothing to torrid countries, and to impress on them the

fact that their action, far from being a Christian one, brings untold misery and disease on the objects of their solicitude.

We remained in Au-Pien until the twenty-second, in order to strengthen and repair the canoes, and buy large quantities of provisions ; these necessary matters having been attended to, we turned our course once more toward the setting sun. Our leave-taking was truly a regal one. The population gathered on the river bank, giving us a parting salute with their muskets, while the *ataman* led the way for us up-stream in a large state canoe for half the day, standards floating, and trophies of rich carving and gilding towering above long banks of rowers, who dashed their enormous sweeps into the water, and chanted stirring songs. The clearest of atmospheres surrounded us on leaving this hospitable spot ; the river wound in long, snaky configurations past green hills, surmounted by grotesque temples, and native dwellings, and the watch-towers of innumerable sleepy inhabitants, watching over the remains of remarkably wakeful ancestors ; but these sleepy inhabitants forgot ancestry and all else on our approach, following us in their little canoes for miles with unquenched curiosity. Almost straight the river flowed, the current being less impeded with obstructions than formerly. The right bank to which we clung was steep and high, and crowned with solemn woods of small dwarfed trees, in which could be seen numerous herds of antelopes and water buffaloes, and during the day we were able to shoot several of the latter on the shore. The clayey bed of the current had given the waters a yellowish tinge, making it impossible to see even for a few inches below the surface ; and knowing full well the treacherousness of the stream, we were obliged to make frequent soundings,

and station men in the bows of the canoes to guard against obstructions.

At one o'clock the course of the river carried us by a considerable island, where we could see groups of scantily dressed natives gathered on shore, brandishing guns and spears. As we drew nearer, they jumped into their canoes and pulled out into midstream, to await our arrival, still brandishing their weapons and giving every evidence of a belligerent intention. We felt abundantly able to beat off their attack; but not caring to risk the lives of the crew unnecessarily, we fired several shots from our long-range rifles over their heads, to intimate that we were not minded to submit peaceably. The effect of this attitude was magical, the vainglorious boasters, with the noise of bullets whistling around their ears, deeming discretion the better part of valour, for, seizing their paddles, they shot inshore and disappeared in the woods. A few miles farther on we captured a solitary fisherman, from whom we learned that the tribe on the island which we had just passed was the most warlike in the vicinity, making frequent incursions against their more peaceable neighbours, and that they were robbers of the worst kind, practically ruling all traffic on the stream, by right of might.

A sharp wind springing up during the afternoon, we were enabled to reach Lo-Tui, making the latter part of the journey through a thunder-storm of terrific violence, which drenched us to the skin and caused a general dampening of enthusiasm. Looking like bedraggled scarecrows, we anchored the canoes, as the shore was too muddy to draw far in, and waded through the pasty mass, to the village itself. The chief of the place was a most hospitable little Szchuenese, who seemed immensely tickled at

the idea that two "white princes" had thought enough of him to wander far up into the country and enter his muddy front yard. This seeming tribute to his importance did not go unrewarded, for he placed his own dwelling and everything else in the village at our disposal; nor were we disappointed on closer inspection, for it proved to be a structure of considerable pretence.

Western China, in the matter of architecture, is certainly a land of surprises. One might naturally expect, in the large towns, to find the most superlative attainments of opulence, but as naturally believe that in the smaller towns such beauties of architectural contour cannot exist. Nevertheless, actual encounter and further experience show an exactly opposite condition. It is in the smaller and less civilised towns that one must look for such pleasing conditions, rather than in the larger places. It would have been an impossibility to imagine a more pretentious place in a small way than the little village of Lo-Tui. The dwellings, although huddled together, were of sun-dried brick, made from the clay of the river bank, the base courses being of travertine, the roofs of concrete or plaster, and finished off with even some attempt at ornate decoration with porcelain tiles. The colour, applied with a vehicle of milk, or of glue and milk, with perhaps a touch of oil, was unusually agreeable. Pale tones predominated, such as light ochres and red and brown, which harmonised admirably with the sky and with one another, producing a general air of cheerfulness; the interiors were arranged with as much good taste and chaste ostentation as the prepossessing outside.

During the evening we were visited by the former chief of the place, a weazened-up specimen of humanity that caused one involuntarily to gaze round for the casket from

which this mummy had stepped forth. He was evidently addicted to the opium habit, his sunken cheeks and general air of lethargy giving ample testimony as to the period of his debauch. He received us graciously, almost with a regal condescension ; and we could not but feel a certain amount of commiseration for his generally dejected appearance, as having evidently fallen from his former high estate to one of abject poverty. He was a remarkably erudite and well-informed person, and gifted with a talent for asking various questions of weighty import that taxed our best endeavours to answer. He uttered many lamentations over the decay of his country, finding a reason for the same in the encroachments of civilising agencies and influences, and the growth of alien dominance. When we ventured mildly to hint that some portion of it might also be attributed to the weak-mindedness of that portion of the population who could not find sufficient natural energy to resist the fell effects of the opium habit, he discreetly relapsed into silence, evidently angered by this pointed reference to his own shortcomings. His volubility disappeared, and after a few meaningless remarks he left us with scant ceremony.

We had an opportunity of viewing a curious ceremony on the following day, for one of the villagers having departed this mortal spirit, we were invited to attend the ensuing obsequies. Partly out of respect for the deceased, and in a way to remunerate our entertainer for his kindly consideration, we mingled with the throng of mourners and accompanied the funeral cortège to the grave. Our presence was sufficient to dull the interest of the others in the ceremony, for the spectacle of viewing white men was evidently of more concern to them than a function of a kind in which they had served on many occasions.

A Szchuenese funeral is more of a cheerful ceremony than one would be led to believe, with a full knowledge of the grimness of death, for the pagan mind seems fully capable of accepting with resigned philosophy the knowledge of the fact that the hereafter is the true state, and that the passing through the portal of futurity is merely a transitory flash of pain. According to the private means or the number of friends of the deceased, the funeral is marked with more or less sumptuousness and display; but in the case of even the poorer natives every means is essayed to carry out a grand burial, though this should entail bodily discomforts and the pangs of famine to the relatives remaining. The corpse having been attired in the finest apparel that can be secured, the immediate mourners and other spectators are ordered to another room, while the *ayons*, or priests, are given possession of the body in order to pray the soul out of hell, — a place believed to be of the most terrible torment, from which only the ululations of these venerable men are able to save the sufferer. Many writers on China, not disillusioned by the knowledge gained from experience, have imagined that the many pictorial illustrations of the Buddhist hell are punishments of an earthly tenor, and have forthwith proceeded to acquaint a commiserating and startled world with depictions of horrors of the most sanguinary kind. There can be no doubt of the severity of Chinese justice and the atrociousness of some of the punishments meted out to unfortunate criminals; but the pangs of suffering the tortures of hell upon earth are not among the number.

Of course there are numerous observances connected with the death of a member of the household, which vary in different provinces of the empire, one which gen-

... by the cutting of a hole in the roof ... allowing the ghost of the departed ... with all possible celerity.

... having finished their prayers, the mourners ... and having commented on ... of the deceased, they throw ... pieces of paper on which are ... the body to be relieved from ... Others throw ... to propitiate these ... priests, in most cases, pre- ... the precious baubles ... for their own use. The ... stage, much like the trunk ... of hard wood, ... the action of the soil ... shell of iron ... the body is placed with scant ... with a gummy sub- ... which resists the inroads ... from escaping.

... as far as can conveniently get ... carried to the place of ... for the honour being ... resolves itself ... who cannot obtain the ... marching before and ... of prayer-paper, in the ... the body will stop and read ... to take possession ... In most cases the coffin is dumped into ... but in the case of ... the coffin is

allowed to remain on top of the ground for months, and even years, suspended a foot above the surface on cross sticks, and serving as the object of pilgrimage at stated intervals by the friends and relatives of the deceased.

The question of mourning after burial is one which the relatives are allowed to make their own choice of, it not being considered disrespectful to ignore altogether this part of the ceremony. In some cases the mourning consists in merely erecting a tablet, inscribed with the name and virtues of the deceased, and making it the shrine of devotion ; in others it provides that the friends and relatives of the deceased shall submit themselves to severe castigation, and undergo other trying ordeals in way of penance, for several months.

The delay caused by the illness of six of our crew, who from overfeeding were attacked with dysentery, was well utilised in familiarising ourselves with the language and characteristics of the inhabitants ; for, as we were without guides and interpreters, and lacked in most cases even official assistance, we were more or less dependent upon the people themselves, whom we encountered from time to time. The Chinese language, the most primitive in the world, is, perhaps, the most difficult to learn, owing to the fact that its poverty of words reduces its grammar almost to a question of syntax and intonation. Even when one has fairly mastered its rudiments, he is hopelessly at sea if he goes to a district even not a hundred miles removed, for the number of varying dialects and argot is simply bewildering in profusion.

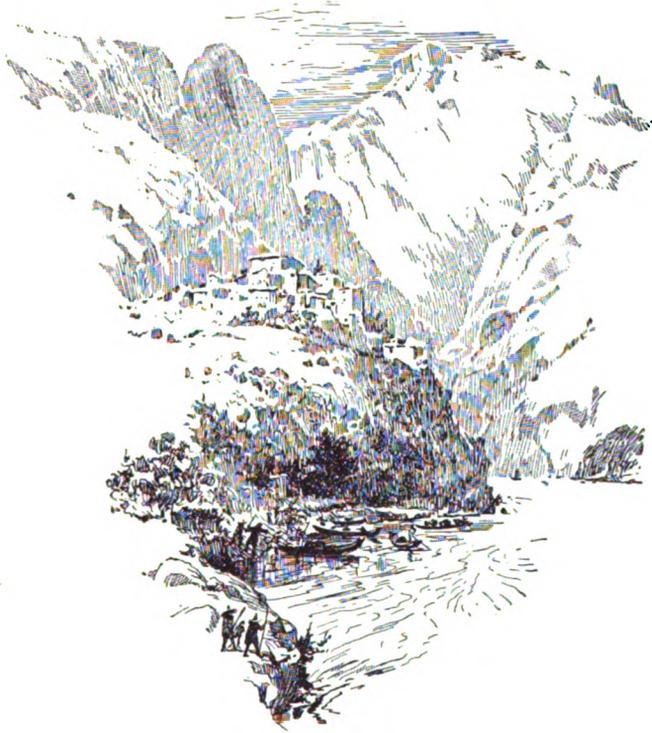
Copper and other metals appeared to be very abundant in this region ; and there were doubtless evidences of gold deposits in the vicinity, for the natives whom we saw wore numerous ornaments of this precious metal. They

had a full acquaintance with its commercial value, however, as, while they were willing to sell us knives, spears, and implements made of the baser metals, on no consideration could we induce them to part with the more valuable ones.

Four days of uneventful progress against wind and current carried us over a distance of but thirty miles from Lo-Tui. On the twenty-seventh we came upon the first line of rapids of the Yangtse, requiring a portage of the canoes along the river bank for six miles before they could be launched again, only to be forced ashore once more on the twenty-ninth, by the second line of rapids. After cutting brushwood, and laying it over a path three miles in length, we crossed from the lower basin of the Yangtse Kiang to the upper branch, which was of equal breadth but thirty feet above it. With these difficulties surmounted, we were able to paddle with comparative ease to Lo Tung Chau. Here, through the good-will of the natives, we traded with several of the tribes in the surrounding hilly country, securing an abundant supply of fresh meat, poultry, and beans.

On the thirtieth, after ten hours' poling, we were swept by a counter current running close to the shore to Fo-Yen-Chi, the last part of our journey being made beneath a dense canopy of green leaves that shaded the ground and gave a singularly sombre aspect to the surrounding country. Opposite this village a large flotilla of canoes was drawn up by the waterside. As soon as we came in sight down-stream, a great tumult arose from those gathered on the bank; a howling mob of natives jumped into the boats, and, armed with muskets and spears, advanced in our direction, making it impossible to mistake the hostile tenor of their scowling and sinister faces, and

their belligerent shouts of defiance. Their dialect was somewhat dissimilar to that known to our interpreters, but the latter were enabled to make them acquainted with the fact that the "big white princes" threatened to kill them with thunder and fire, should they persist in their



VILLAGE OF FO-YEN-CHI.

hostile aggression. These tidings were received with howls of incredulous defiance, and they invited us to give proof of our intention.

Fortunately for us, on the river bank, where we had beached our canoes, were several little clumps of grass and an old stone building, which might serve to protect

us in case of vigorous assault. Taking advantage of this cover, we placed our men in safety, and with Yuen I went forward and explained to the excited natives our desire to prevent bloodshed, and our friendly intentions in passing through their district. The answer was a shower of spears, while a few others, bolder than their comrades, ran forward with clubs in their hands to put a stop to further parley and to commence the attack.

Anxious to avoid bloodshed, if possible, we sought to pacify them, and at the same time to impress them with a knowledge of our strength, by firing a volley over their heads. Nothing could have been more ineffectual in warding off the ensuing conflict than this exhibition; for they naturally ascribed their immunity from injury to the ineffectuality of our weapons, and seized upon the opportunity to make a vigorous charge against our stronghold. We were ready for them, however, and as the leaden hail with which we met their advance crashed into their midst, they wavered for a moment, and then, completely discomfited, returned to their canoes and paddled upstream to their village. We were not to be denied the fruits of our conquest, for, finding that we were not intent on avenging their attack, they returned in the afternoon unarmed, for the purpose of making peace, gathering at a safe distance in awesome silence, and seeking to propitiate our favour by gifts of fresh fowl and bread. In return we touched foreheads with the principal men of the village, and distributed some red cloth among them, which presents they received with great glee, wrapping them around their nearly naked bodies, and strutting up and down for the delectation of their less fortunate brethren, and incidentally for our own. We returned with them to their village, where the night was passed in

feasting and in the fostering of friendship between our crew and the members of the tribe.

On the following day we were permitted to be witnesses of an interesting open-air service, in which the principles of Buddhism were explained to an audience consisting of the entire population of the town. We were unable to grasp the full meaning of the priest's exhortation, owing to the strange dialect in which it was spoken, but there could be no mistaking the power of the speaker to hold the rapt attention of his listeners. The priest began quietly. He reminded his hearers in a few words of the nature of the true principles of the religion whose interests he was there to represent. One felt that he spoke with tact, and with the kind of dignity belonging to an enthusiast of a great moral movement. He did not plead his cause with as much vociferousness as does the reformer, the philanthropist, the politician, or the devotee of a mystical and fashionable cult, but with a simplicity which might be understood by all. He spoke in a way that caused the surrounding group to become interested in the aims and purpose of the Buddhist faith, and under his influence the gathering acquired the dignity of a Browning society or a study in theosophy or hypnotism. The attention of the audience, from the start definitely respectful, became at last reverent and absorbed; and when in this state the speaker waxed more voluble, and gradually changed the quiet modulation of his voice into a constant crescendo, looking the whole throng in the eye as if it were one man, the crowd of hitherto passive spectators was transformed into an army of fanatical religious enthusiasts, dancing and screaming, and giving every evidence of the sincerity of their conviction.

We were somewhat worried lest this outburst of fanati-

cal zeal might cause the populace to take it into their heads to turn on us as unbelievers the full measure of their wrath; but whatever might have been their covert inclinations, the demonstration which we had given of our strength was sufficient to keep them in subjection, and we were not molested. Before we quitted their village, they made us still more regret our suspicions, for the chief and his subjects loaded us down with bounties of meat, bread, fowl, plums, and flour, seeming really cast down that we should leave them, parting from us at last with the assurance, on the part of the chief, that, should we ever happen to visit his country again, we should find that he would still be our good friend.

CHAPTER III.

FOUR days of uneventful journeying carried us swiftly up the current of the great river to Ping Shan. Progress during the last two days was necessarily laborious, not to say absolutely hazardous, owing to the infinite number of cross-currents and whirling eddies which we encountered; and although doubtless our crew, being accustomed to these dallings of fate, had come to view them with apparent unconcern, the effect on our olfactory nerves of their perspiring efforts was something oppressive, and had it not been that such action would have been liable to lessen the respect of our men, we should infinitely have preferred to do our journeying on the firmer substance of the river bank. Our arrival at Ping Shan, however, fully indemnified us for the hardships and open courting of danger that we had undergone. The day was just ending. The sun, a brilliant salmon pink, was slowly descending. Its rosy reflection, mirrored upon the murky waters of the Yangtse, created most exquisite effects upon the clouds above, as though they were lightly touched by a fairy's wand, and changed into a thousand bizarre and fantastic shapes. In the distance the green hills and sterner mountain summits made an admirable background to the shining surface of Ping Shan, resplendent in scintillating array of porcelain roofs, with its terraced plantations nestling in the lap of the sun-kissed prospect beyond.

The head man of the town, surrounded by his people,

was the very image of a father in the midst of his children, and a most hospitable and kindly disposed individual we found him. He was a thin, ancient man, with a cadaverous visage and a protruding chin, upon which a sparse growth of bristly white beard showed strongly against his amber skin. He wore an enormous felt hat, mounting skyward like a pagoda, which must have weighed fully ten pounds, for its brim was as umbrageous as the roof of a band-stand, and the crown was some five feet in height. It was filigreed with a tinsel of silver braid, and as the entire structure had a sort of dingy newness, we surmised that he only wore this stupendous headpiece on such exceptional occasions as the present. He had grown too aged to run actively the affairs of the district over which he governed, this duty having fallen on his son. One could hardly bring himself to believe that the latter was a member of the Chinese race. Physically, Nature had lavished on him her every charm. His skin was a dusky brown, through which shone a delicate pink; his frame was sturdy and magnificent, and ideally military, and was resplendent in a gorgeous and well-fitting uniform. Having for many years lived in Shanghai, which had enabled him to pick up a colloquial knowledge of English, we found him a friend and helper indeed. His conversation was characterised by terse and jerky phrases, with halting places at every few moments to catch breath, and with many interesting efforts at humour.

As soon as we had beached the canoes and made preparations for the encampment of the expedition, this vice-*ataman* led us away to his own residence in the rear of the village, situated in a sort of small park, the way to which lay through vine-laden and sweet-smelling

trestled paths. Our progress thither was not to go unattended; for the wondering populace, once they had recovered from the temporary stupor of surprise occasioned by our unexpected arrival, soon awakened to a knowledge that something unusual was occurring, and we were immediately beset by an unkempt rabble, top-heavy under the weight of enormous hats, counterparted by scanty lower attire, who thrust their hands in our faces and completely blocked our passage, until our host, exasperated beyond all endurance, scattered them right and left by valorous attacks with a long stick, thus enabling us to reach his abode without further interruption.

After having gathered with liveliest interest all the information we could give him concerning the matters on which he desired enlightenment, the young man was ready and willing to discuss with us the social conditions of the empire. As he had served in the army for many years, we welcomed this opportunity to secure information in that direction. He was evidently not actuated by any *esprit de corps*, for, although pride prevented his openly slandering the military establishment of his country, his strictures were too severe, mild as he sought to make them, to hide from us the fact that his personal opinion was that the army had reached its lowest and most demoralised state.

It is almost an impossibility to secure any just or fair estimate of the size of the Chinese army. According to the official reports of the government at Peking, it at no time consists of less than two million men. Such a figure, however, is undoubtedly no more accurate than the greater part of Chinese statistics. Doubtless an army two, or even three, times that number might be raised

with apparent ease, but the major portion would be but crude soldiers, — artisans, labourers, and the like, — practically inutile as fighting material. It is extremely doubtful if the high-water mark of trained and seasoned soldiery would equal a grand total of a million men. In our journeyings we traversed the very heart of China, and visited the larger cities where such a force was liable to be quartered, and everywhere we asked ourselves, Where are the evidences of this mighty army of which we have heard? So far as availability and power of mobilisation goes, it is seen to best advantage on paper; for, with the usual laxity of Chinese military methods, not one-half could be utilised effectively in case of actual conflict. Recent writers on Chinese military affairs have very erroneously sought to ridicule the personal attributes of the soldier population of China, on the ground that they lack courage and the inability to acquire soldierly discipline. This contention is both incorrect and fatuous. It arises from the tendency to judge the standard of the population of China by the semi-civilised and effeminate natives of the coast districts, reduced to a low level by manifold vices, inherent or acquired; yet when one has penetrated into the interior of the country, and viewed the splendid exhibition of vigorous manhood there to be seen (in a crude and barbarous state, it is true), one cannot but feel that China has here a latent force of appalling grandeur, which, under trained and efficient leaders, and with proper tactical schooling, would be the equal of the aggressive or defensive population of any country in the world.

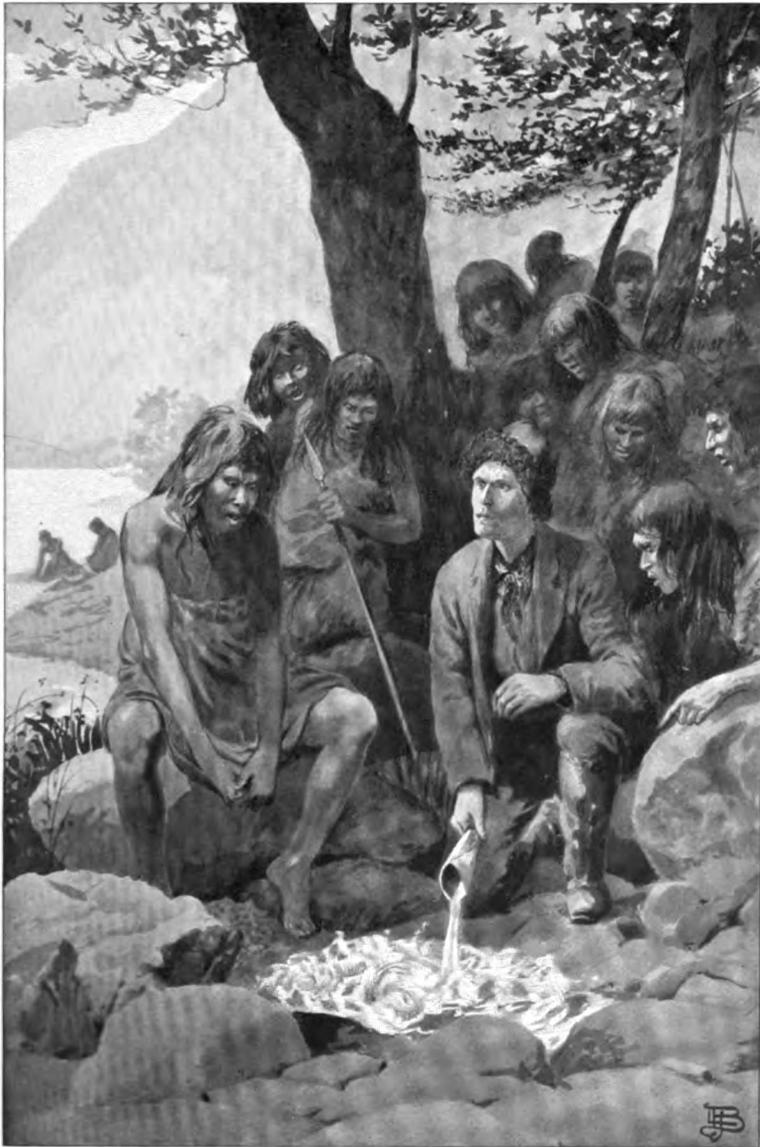
We remained at Ping Shan until March 7th, for a hurricane of frightful fury, lasting two days, had lashed the surface of the great stream into a boiling caldron of

menacing waters, where progress would not only have been hazardous in the extreme, but practically impossible. At the end of the second day, however, the wind and waves had subsided sufficiently to permit us to reëmbark ; when, with no diminution of zeal, and with our crew strengthened for valorous efforts by their enforced abstinence from labour, we set forth.

Between Ping Shan and Hgan Lu, which latter place we reached on the ninth, the country is extremely populous, the river bank sheltering innumerable small and dirty habitations, forming apparently one long, straggling village. According to our expectation, we found the natives a cowardly and treacherous lot, with whom, by choice, we abstained from intermingling, actuated as we were by the desire to avoid unnecessary strife. The whole distance had been marked by evidences of the frightful fury of the hurricane which had recently swept over the district, entire villages having been blown down and left in ruins, the inhabitants camping on the shore and in hill caves while the process of rebuilding was going on. We were unable to ascertain the loss of life inland, but that among the river population was appalling, overturned boats and dead bodies marking throughout the course of our two days' journey. Either by reason of this misfortune or their natural antipathy to foreigners, the natives of Hgan Lu were remarkably aggressive and hostile ; and notice of our coming having in some unexplainable manner been heralded, we found on our arrival several large boats filled with armed men awaiting us, apparently determined to oppose our landing. If we could consistently have left the inhospitable spot without touching at it, we should have done so ; but the renewed necessity of securing provisions could not be lightly passed by, and we were

resolved at all hazards not to be intimidated by this formidable aspect of hostility. As we drew nearer, those assembled in the canoes retreated and beached their craft, gathering on the shore and threatening us with defiant shouts. Shooting inshore, we charged them with the butts of our guns, and before this determined assault they reluctantly retired, with sinister scowlings and muttered threats of what our ultimate fate would be when night had fallen. We had unbounded faith in our ability to beat them off, however vigorous might be their attack; but, as in former similar cases, the idea of sacrificing human lives was a contingency that we could not look upon with satisfaction. We therefore resolved to see if friendly advances would change their threatening attitude, and despatched Yuen with a message inviting their leaders to a parley on shore. They were evidently minded to distrust our sincerity of purpose, but after considerable hesitation a half dozen of the head men approached, and, seating themselves on the ground, smoked in silence until we had impressed on them our desire for amicable intercourse and our willingness to barter with them.

The spokesman of this advance guard was a surly old rascal, and in reply to our pacific overtures said that his people were firmly convinced of the baleful influence of our presence in the district, as was attested by the late hurricane, and that nothing but our willingness to keep on our journey up-stream would satisfy them. Finding that our best endeavours were fruitless to overcome the potency of their superstition, we resolved not only to humour but to take advantage of it. Calling them to a small pool of water which had been left on shore, we reviewed in epitome the dire effects that had resulted from the recent hurricane; then pouring a little magnesia into



"THE WATER BEGAN TO BUBBLE AND FOAM IN AN ALARMING MANNER."

the pool, the water began to bubble and foam in an alarming manner. "Tell your people," we said, "that we have full power to bring upon them another hurricane. You see what we have done to this little pool of water. If we are molested further we will do the same to the whole river, and your village and people will be destroyed."

We waited to see the effect which this announcement would have on the surrounding group. Their eyes were fairly bulging out of their heads, and, marvelling at the wonderful spectacle of which they had been witnesses, they rejoined their comrades, relating to them the magic powers of the wonderful white men. The ruse was successful; all hostile aggression vanished; the frightened natives, fearful of our wrath, brought to us meat, potatoes, and other vegetables, and a large quantity of salt fish, all which we bought of them. As we left them next morning the last glimpse which we caught of the spot disclosed a wondering group gathered around the little pool of water, pointing and gesticulating, striving in vain to solve the mystery of the night before.

We had now been nearly two months on the journey up the current of the Yangtse Kiang from Luipo, and on leaving Hgan Lu we had planned to reach the mouth of the Kinsha Kiang in two days. With the current of the stream constantly expanding, and its force naturally lessening, we were not disappointed, for at nightfall on the eleventh we reached Hany-Yang. We had expected to find this town one of considerable importance, as it is a commercial centre of southern Szchuen, occupying a strategic position at the point where the confluent waters of the Yalung and Kinsha Kiang empty into the Yangtse Kiang River. It would have been an impossibility, however, to imagine a more desolate and uninviting spot. The

civil mandarin of the place was away at the time on a visit to some other dignitary in the country to the south, so that the burden of providing for our entertainment fell upon his proxy, — a morose and gloomy native of attenuated frame, adorned with the most luxuriant and patriarchal of artificial hirsute appendages. The long-bearded gentleman's views on the future of his country were unalterably pessimistic; the district, he thought, was constantly making a retrograde movement. Meanwhile, he had despatched a messenger to a brother official, proclaiming our arrival, which had the effect of soon bringing that individual on the scene to undertake the task of sharing in our entertainment. He was a frightfully obese little body, with a jolly, rubicund face, which gave palpable evidence that he had not entirely ignored the good things of this life. The glasses of optimism through which this *bon vivant* viewed everything were a complete foil to the gloomy forebodings of our other host; and with one exalting the present and future conditions of the country, and the other debasing them to the lowest level, we adopted the wiser course of maintaining a conservative neutrality between them, making due allowance for the roseate imaginings of the one and the gloomy spirits of the other.

The Hany-Yang natives were exceedingly friendly, a welcome change after the experiences we had undergone from the hostile tribes such a short distance removed. Gunpowder and firearms were abundant with them, and, as the surrounding district contains many valuable coal and iron deposits, their articles of husbandry were marvels of skilled workmanship. Chinaware and crockery of the finest make were very common, while in the open market we were able to purchase groundnuts, potatoes,

plum-wine, beans, onions, pigs, fowls, eggs, and meat of different kinds.

On the fifteenth of March we left the current of the Yangtse Kiang for the black and forbidding waters of the Kinsha Kiang, the stream of mystery, up whose narrow and tortuous current we were to penetrate into the wild and unexplored region to the north. I turned back to catch a last glimpse of Hany-Yang, which we were leaving. How cheerful and attractive it looked, in spite of its gloomy walls and low-lying buildings, crowning the shoulder of the grassy slope on which it was perched! How bright and warm appeared the plain border of the river as the sun shone over its wind-fanned waves of grass! For a moment longer the peaceful prospect lingered in view, then gradually faded in flickering spirit, and finally died out. The Dark Unknown lay before us!

Our direction lay due west up the muddy stream for the two days' effort to Tung-Kal, and, although the momentousness of the enterprise on which we were embarked had visibly left its impress on every one in the expedition, there was no cessation of zeal; and with constantly added proof of the courage and unselfishness of our crew, what dubious imaginings had been held out for the future now vanished before the unquenched ardour of penetrating into this land of mystery, be the hardships and dangers what they might.

It would be impossible to imagine a more pleasant journey than that during the first day's paddling from Hany-Yang, travelling lazily along between vast mountain ranges, and past a succession of beautiful stretches of scenery, with here and there little villages nestling in among the dwarfed pines that fringed the golden sand.

Groups of natives sat chatting and smoking among the trees, or industriously fishing from their little rafts made of skins and inflated bladders. In the foreground lay the verdured slope, covered with luxuriant plantations of rice and barley; behind, the stern gray summits of the mountain range of Nun-Luchu, rising five thousand feet straight into the air, and forming a beautiful background to the brighter colouring of the prospect below. Looking down into the water, one could see alternately patches of golden sand and miniature forests of the wondrous submarine growth, — dark, waving patches of the greenest of weeds, fantastic in outline and brilliant in colour, through which darted fishes of brightest hue, like flashing gems.

The stream, although at this point several hundred feet wide, was crossed at regular intervals by innumerable bridges, formed of iron chains, which were really marvels of engineering skill and construction. The region was well populated by an industrious race, who had transformed the stony mountain sides into gardens of waving cereals, until they hung like huge green curtains against the blue sky beyond. We had expected that with these unmistakable evidences of thrift and prosperity the population would be peaceable and friendly, and it was an unwelcome shock, on reaching Kiukiang, after fully fifteen hours of unceasing battling against a perplexity of cross currents and whirling eddies, to find the natives of the village minded to dispute our landing. As we drew into the sheltered cove on which the place was situated, a shower of stones and the whistling of bullets over our heads did not need further explanation to make us aware of the fact that the inhabitants were intent on doing us injury. Arranging the canoes in line, and calling upon the crew to put forth their most redoubtable efforts, we

rushed toward the menacing horde. We might have continued farther down-stream, and there encamped; but the men were worn out with their arduous labours during the day, and we were resolved for the sake of example to overcome this undeserved aggression. As we neared the bank the closely gathered group welcomed our approach with a jeering howl of defiance and a shower of stones. There could be no condoning this overt act of hostility, since one of the crew had been killed outright by a bullet, and many were sorely injured by the bruising missiles. We therefore did not wait longer, but, pouring a withering fire into their midst, we followed up the advantage gained by this diversion, and, effecting a landing, chased the natives into their village, where they seemed determined to make a stand. But our blood was now fully aroused, and, routing them out, we drove them into the country beyond and fired their buildings.

Much as we should like to have had it, the night was not to pass without incident. The loss of one of our crew had thrown an air of sombreness and dejection over his fellows, who for the first time awoke to a realisation of the dangers that lay in the country ahead of us, sampled as these dangers had been by the unmistakable evidences of hostility we had encountered when on its very borders,—a state of mind in which we somewhat shared, for the good and sufficient reason that no amount of optimism was able to subdue them. Our gloomy forebodings, however, were of but short duration, for we were soon compelled to face a more potent and manifest danger.

About nine o'clock one of the crew came running in with the intelligence that the natives were advancing upon the camp by crawling through the forest to the left, intending to take us by surprise before we should have time

to make an effective resistance, — the salutary lesson we had given them a few hours before evidently having inspired them with a determination to gain revenge for the destruction of their village and the loss of several of their men. We had not dared to light fires for fear of drawing stray shots in our direction, and now noiselessly arranging the canoes in a semicircle so as to form a protecting bulwark, we calmly awaited the attack. We did not have to wait long, for in another half hour, peering through the darkness, we could faintly perceive the attacking party wriggling along the ground through the long grass.

Our Kiangsis were worked up to a pitch where it was only by the sternest control that we were able to prevent them from rushing forward at once to avenge the loss of their comrade. There was an ominous silence of what seemed hours during those next few brief moments, and then down on us swept the yelling horde, shouting their war-cries and rushing forward like a herd of buffaloes. As the whistling bullets and spears flew around we crouched behind the shelter of the canoes. For a moment longer we waited, until they had drawn within twenty feet; then the word to fire was given. With startling unanimity our guns burst forth, and, jumping to our feet, we prepared to defend our position at all cost.

But it was needless. The leaden hail which we had poured into the madly rushing group had stopped their advance and put them in retreat. To the woods they retired, where already the lamenting for the dead was heard. Dressing the wounds of such of our party as had sustained injury in the attack (fortunately none of more than a minor character), we prepared for the morrow by distributing a new store of cartridges, and after waiting until 9 A. M.

next day unattacked, we sallied out and embarked once more.

Strongly impressed with the knowledge that nothing but a persevering, persistent, even impetuous advance would enable us to penetrate up the current of the Kinsha Kiang, we resolved henceforth that we would abstain from mingling closely with the native settlements, excepting those of large size, which we must visit in order to provision the expedition, — in this manner hoping that we might be able to escape the hostility of the population outside the larger towns and villages. Having ascertained that no rapids of a dangerous nature troubled the narrow and tortuous gap through which the river flowed for the intervening twenty miles to Tung Kal, we moved forward hopefully, albeit somewhat hesitatingly and cautiously, owing to the surface of the stream being covered with sharp-pointed rocks rising out of the seething waters and constantly threatening to wreck the boats. Tung Kal terminates the narrow, walled chasm; the defile through which the river rushes opens to a wider width, and the mountains slope away from it with a more rounded contour, dropping down only at intervals into abrupt cliffs. Consequently the river here expands, and being less tortured by surface projections of boulders and by narrows between cliffs, assumes somewhat of a milder aspect. The stone of these mountains is of the finest emerald green where the outside stratum has been washed off by the action of the waves, while in the bed of the river are many protruding ledges of the softer greenish shales, which, however entrancing from a scenic point of view, hardly recompense for the enormous labour required to evade the numerous whirlpools and dangerous currents that boiled around them. Every other mile or so the

river current still offered these interruptions to navigation, its surface being marked by thin lines of low waves and long foamy stretches.

Great banks of reddish mud, covered in many places with low, mushroom-like forms of plants, stretched out over darksome lagoons. No lofty forest trees varied the scene; in fact, there were no trees of any kind. Plants with long, soft, slender stems were the nearest approach to them. The waters teemed with waving reeds, and gigantic armoured fishes swept through them in pursuit of fleeing prey, and no doubt holding fierce tournament in those green depths. Here and there might be seen giant crabs ranging the shore, of which toothsome crustacea we were able to catch a large number. Immense hard-shelled *mollusca*, like oysters in shape, clung to the rocks, which must serve as the main source of food supply for the population of the district, as the shores of the river throughout the whole distance to Tung Kal were lined with natives gathering them in large baskets.

About 2 P.M., as we were proceeding quietly, peering with all our eyes and listening with all our ears for obstructions in the stream, our canoes being but some thirty feet away from the right bank, a score of natives, armed with stones and long sticks, darted into view from behind a thick clump of bushes, and shouting defiance, launched their crude weapons at us. The distance was too great, however, for the sticks to reach us, and, avoiding the shower of stones, we shoved off instantly farther into mid-stream to escape a repetition of the attack. Witnessing this action, those on shore quickly launched three canoes filled with men, and prepared to follow. They were covered with hideous blotches of paint and armed with great shields, one-half their bodies being daubed white,

the other half red, the *tout ensemble* being unique and diabolical. As we could not afford to risk the chances of an encounter, we fired several shots over their heads, hoping that this aggressive demonstration would serve the purpose intended. Fortunately the hint was taken literally, for the paddlers at once stopped their work, and after several moments of hurried confusion turned the boats around, and shot with all celerity toward the shore.

With this affair thus happily terminated, we resumed the arduous task of beating against the strong current until four o'clock, when a small line of rapids ahead necessitated the transportation of the canoes overland for nearly the remaining mile to Tung Kal. A half mile above the rapids we were able to launch them once more, and just as the sun was setting we glided into the little cove, at the farther end of which the village itself was erected. As we drew near we descried a large fleet of boats and skin-rafts coming out toward us, and, mindful of the treacherous attitude of the natives down-stream, we looked to our arms, prepared for what seemed an inevitable attack. As they approached nearer, however, we could see that they were unarmed, and we were soon mingling with them on terms of the most open-handed *camaraderie*. They had heard of our coming from a couple of hunters, who had fled back to the village with the intelligence that two white magicians were advancing, — the episode of the magnesia in the pool at Hgan Lu, it seemed, having become known throughout the district, for it was brought to us in a highly garbled form for many weeks after. One could not help thinking what thin barriers separate ferocity from amiability. Only a couple of miles removed lived the most bloodthirsty and hostile natives, who had repeatedly sought to attack us without

provocation; while here, right in their very neighbourhood, was a tribe who, far from being aggressive, readily formed with us a pact of good-will.

Tung Kal is the extreme easternmost locality inhabited by the traders from the Thibetan country to the westward. It stands on the right bank of the Kinsha Kiang, on the verge of a high and reddish table-land rising some forty feet above the water, with to the north a clear open country along the river for a distance of ten miles, as far as the confluence of the King-Pu. This stretch of low land, being irrigated into a state of marvellous fertility by frequent overflowing of the river banks, is covered with a deposit of rich alluvial mud, much after the fashion of the districts bordering on the Nile. Three or four crops are raised during a year, and by thrift and economy the town has grown to an important position among its neighbours. Its destinies were presided over by a warlike-looking chief who bore the unpronounceable cognomen of Kzghyth-Li-Th (the bone-breaking chief), but who, in spite of his blood-thirsty title and martial aspect, we discovered to be a mild-mannered mortal, more possessed with the keen spirit of trade than with hostile intent. He was superstitious beyond all measure, of enormous cunning and subtlety, a pertinacious beggar, and, as we have said, of keen trading instincts; but in all matters outside of trade we found him as simple as a child.

We soon discovered, to our sorrow, that our exalted opinion of the population had been in a measure premature, for, although peaceable enough, they were the most inveterate and painstaking of thieves. Notwithstanding our utmost vigilance, they stole from under our very noses, until at last we resolved that at all hazards we would catch the offenders. In this we were fortunate;

for two natives, tempted by the exposure of several guns, had sought to abstract the articles in question from one of the canoes, but, detected by Yuen, had been summarily captured. Far from viewing the matter in a serious light, they treated the affair as a huge joke, and, although caught with the guns in their possession, strenuously denied all knowledge as to the theft. For the sake of example, and to be spared further annoyance, we carried word of the theft and of the apprehension of the culprits to Kzghyth, who, after listening to a recital of the petty annoyances that we had suffered, consented to have the men tried the next day.

The trial was appointed to take place in the court square shortly after daybreak, and, taking with us those of our crew who had witnessed the theft, we were ready at the appointed time to go ahead with the prosecution. When we came up, Kzghyth was seated on a carved seat, attended on either hand by a retinue of lesser lights, attired in malodorous black robes of office and wearing the most hideous masks. The chief himself was decorated with sumptuous effect. On his head he wore a magnificent cap, ornamented with beads arranged in the most intricate and striking designs, and bordered with a number of solid gold spangles, with two eagle feathers towering high above the crown. On his arms and hanging around his neck were a number of similar gold ornaments, while his body was covered with a long robe of eagle feathers woven on hide, giving to the wearer the general effect of a moulting biped. As we entered he arose, and with his chiefs greeted us, and, motioning to a reserved space at his left, invited us to be seated. There was absolute silence. Kzghyth with his retainers and the various court officers occupied the seat in the centre of a semi-

circle consisting of the entire population of the village. They were all seated upon yak and goat skins, and anxiously awaiting the moment when the trial was to come off. The prisoners sat on the edge of the semi-circle directly opposite to our position, with their friends massed up behind them. One thing had surprised us, — that the accused had never tried to run away, and had not been detained in custody; but no one seemed to think of possible escape, least of all the prisoners themselves, who, to tell the truth, did not seem weighed down with their misfortune.

The trial did not last long, for there could be no doubt as to the guilt of the offenders, who, finding the weight of evidence against them too strong to be confronted, confessed and threw themselves upon the leniency of the court. We had expected to see them severely punished, but after an admonition they were allowed to depart, — no doubt remaining in our minds that the rascals were well aware of the fact that in the eyes of their fellows they had performed an act highly meritorious. With this decision we were obliged to rest content, but its effect was futile in saving us from further annoyance; and it was only by anchoring the canoes a few feet from shore, and placing them under the armed guardianship of a squad of the crew, that we were able to save any of our effects.

While we rested at Tung Kal we experienced, in the main, that repose of spirits which only the happy few who know neither care nor anxiety can enjoy. For the first time in many weeks we were able to sleep well. There was no simulation in the cheerful morning greetings which were passed from one man to another. That wide-eyed suspicious look and swift searching glance of distrust which so long had been habitual with us had

toned down, and an unreserved geniality pervaded the entire company.

Many of the customs of the natives were very curious, especially the peculiar art of winding the hair around a long stick, which protruded high into the air, poking upward from the shiny pate like the steeple of a church, and adorned with metal ornaments. It was evident that the mountains in the vicinity must be filled with fine gold deposits, for the amount of this precious metal worn by even the poorest individuals was such as to excite comment from our crew, who sought to trade for these precious baubles, — with indifferent success, however, as the Tung Kalese were more than their equals as traders, and inevitably gained the better side of the transaction. Tattooing was also carried on to excess, many of the natives being covered from head to foot with intricate designs, so that they presented the appearance of hieroglyphic charts.

While remaining at Tung Kal we made a discovery which we were firmly convinced was to revolutionise the cloth-making industry of the world. Many of the natives were dressed in garments, similar in structure to a thick woollen material; and what was our surprise to see these garments, when thrown into the fire, and there suffered to remain for a considerable time, eventually taken out whole and entirely cleansed! But we experienced a rude awakening from our dream of reaping untold wealth from cloth manufacture when we learned that asbestos is known in Western China.

Before leaving Tung Kal we accepted the invitation of the crafty Kzghyth to attend a feast that he had provided in our honour. We clearly perceived the ulterior motives which had prompted this generous outburst, — namely, the expectation of presents; but as we could find no good

and sufficient reason for refusing the proffered entertainment, we sent word by the messenger that we would call upon him in an hour.

On our arrival at our host's house, we found that it consisted of one large, oval-shaped apartment from twenty-five to thirty feet in length and of equal width, formed by a thatched roof resembling an immense beehive, which was supported by two or three large posts in the centre and a number of short posts placed around the sides some five feet apart, the gloomy dungeon being lightened by a solitary hole cut into the side of the structure, which likewise permitted the influx of a little air. We had great need of charity and forbearance, for our entertainer was eminently democratic, permitting men, women, and children, and numerous dogs, cows, and horses, to mingle together in his presence on terms of perfect equality, the stench arising from the closely quartered animals, and the annoyance caused by their restlessness, being better imagined than described. One by one the visitors arrived, until at the time set for the feast the inside of the stuffy abode was filled to a point of suffocation, and we welcomed the opportunity at intervals to rush to the narrow orifice in the roof for a much needed whiff of fresh air.

The company having at last relapsed into silence, and seated itself comfortably upon the floor, the delicacies were brought in. Several large bowls of a dark-coloured mixture, consisting of huge pieces of meat swimming in an ocean of rancid oil, constituted the first course of the dinner, and, stifling what pangs of squeamishness we could, we sought to emulate the example set by those around us. Knives and forks and even platters were evidently unheard-of luxuries, for at a signal from the host those assembled made furtive plunges with their grimy hands

into the dishes nearest to them, and began swallowing the meat like a pack of ravenous wolves. Not to offend the guests, notwithstanding our repugnance, we also made a grasp at several of the choice morsels, and bolted them with a fervour which would have done credit to the early Christian martyrs. We were no match, however, for those around us, for the voraciousness of their appetites seemingly knew no limit, each individual consuming immense quantities of meat, — the bowls being constantly filled by attendants, only to be emptied in the twinkling of an eye. At the conclusion of this attack on the more substantial things of the dinner, large jugs of a puckery acrid wine, made from a wild grape which grew in abundant profusion in the district, were brought forth, and in a half hour the company had worked itself into a maudlin confusion, the strong liquor taking such hold of several rash spirits that there was imminent danger of the interior of the abode being turned into an amphitheatre of sanguinary rioting. Wishing to avoid this contingency, the crafty old chief unceremoniously hustled his guests out-of-doors, where they might war on one another without disturbance, at the same time advancing covert hints in our direction, touching on a fitting reward for the munificent entertainment with which we had just been afflicted. Welcoming this opportunity to make a much desired escape, we presented him with an old muzzle-loading musket, and a few pounds of powder and bullets, and distributed cloth among the head men. His delight at this munificence on our part waxed so fulsome that it was only after a most affectionate greeting that we were able to rejoin our crew.

At noon of the twenty-second, after parting with many regrets from the hospitable spot, we continued following the course of the Kinsha Kiang to the west. Strong

about that is during the two succeeding days, but the
 is certain stages of reaching the summit of the stream we
 were not prevented from making it. The islands
 in the river were immediately crossed and channels wind-
 ing in and out among the slight rocks. The current ran
 with many rapids, with many dangerous whirls and broad
 patches of foam on its face, and was extremely narrow,
 but the three hundred feet in width of a distance of ten
 miles, was so suddenly expanded into a large open pool.
 Two fine wooded islands stood in mid-stream, and as they
 presented a good place of appearance we welcomed the oppor-
 tunity of evening and morning. We had not calculated
 wrong, for we had scarcely been landed when groups
 of heavily armed natives came running down and taking
 notice at our friendly overtures, and in abundance of
 bread, barley, corn, maize, and a very succulent and relish-
 able dried grass which they gathered on the shore, tasting
 much like watercress. Fowls and meat were very scarce,
 but we were able to secure several large baskets of little
 minnow-like fishes. We questioned these people, and
 found that they were an offshoot of the Sifanese tribes
 in the country to the northward, with the generic tribal
 name of Tehango.

Like the Tung Kalese, the Tehangoes were dressed in
 garments of asbestos and eagles' feathers, and wore caps
 of buffalo skin with long strips of fur, or the tails, dropped
 behind. Fishnets and baskets lay scattered around in
 abundance, while great bundles of iron and wooden spears
 proved that they were as warlike on occasion as they
 were habitually industrious.

On inquiring as to the chief who ruled over the island,
 they informed us that he would come before us in a short
 time, as our approach having been described, he had re-

tired to clothe himself in a manner properly befitting such an august occasion. A half hour later this illustrious dignitary was announced by the tooting of horns and the beating of innumerable drums. He was a fine-looking man, notwithstanding the fact that a number of ugly scars in broad welts across his face gave him a cruel and sinister aspect. Having touched foreheads with us, he seated himself on a buffalo robe, spread by an attendant on the floor, when we were able to view him more closely. His majestic form was covered with a long robe of buffalo skin, much in the form of a Roman toga, on which were sewn small brass plates overlapping one another, forming a splendid coat of mail. His head was covered with a towering ornament of solid iron in the shape of an inverted basin, which must have weighed at least ten or twelve pounds. He was a mighty hunter, and knew the country to the north distinctly, for he had roamed over it for years in search of game. Learning that it was our intention to penetrate yet farther up the current of the river, he sought to dissuade us from the enterprise by the presentation of such an array of alarming facts concerning the dangers to be met that we were not a little intimidated. Knowing well, however, the aptitude of the natives of the district to underrate and overstate the truth, we were minded to belittle the importance of his fears, until, discovering that we were not to be dissuaded from our purpose by mere hearsay, he waxed more gracious and solaced us with the information that, with the force of our armament and the assurance of *his* protection, we should experience no difficulty in making progress.

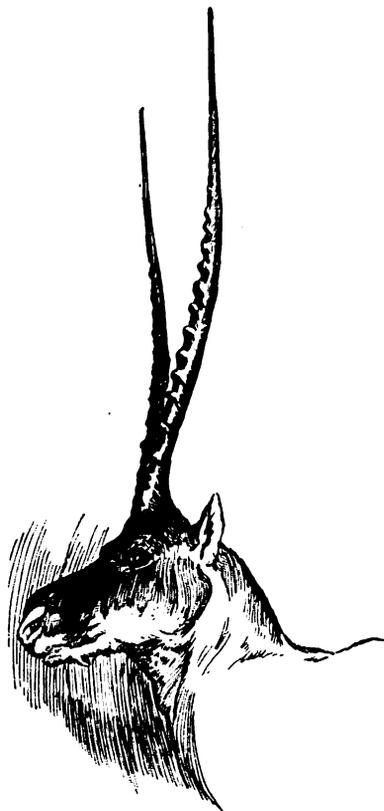
Close to our camp was a cemetery of the Tchangoes. The grave-mounds were neat, and from their appearance one would judge that they were not only the repositories

of the dead, but also of all the articles that had ever belonged to the dead. Each grave was dressed out with the various mugs, pitchers, kettles, weapons, and fishing implements of the deceased, while on each had been placed an abundance of food for the comforting of the spirit of their ancestors when attacked by the pangs of hunger.

Idol worship was carried on to a great extent, and the various ceremonies performed by these people were very curious. One of the most common is that which is practised before the setting forth of the men of the village on a hunting or fishing expedition. Numbers of little wooden idols are arranged in the open space in front of the chief's house, where the hunters or fishermen, as the case may be, assemble, and lying flat on their stomachs, with their backs bare and exposed, await the arrival of the chanting priests. These officials, always necessary to the ceremony, soon arrive, — hideous and ghostly objects smeared with paint and grease, — and armed with long thonged whips they beat the prostrate men with unconcealed glee. At the conclusion of this part of the function all take upon themselves the important business of satisfying the natural talent of eating and drinking, when it is lawful for the hunting and fishing party to set forth.

On the twenty-fourth we started up-stream to Tching, a distance of twelve miles, where the Tchangoes had informed us we should be able to secure abundance of fresh meat, as well as guides, from the tribal chief, that would assure us protection for a week's journeying. Until noon-time we were engaged in the ascent of a six-mile stretch, which brought us to the rapids of Basnugu, where further progress in the river became impossible. The natives in the hilly country farther back descended from their breezy

homes on the table-land to visit the strangers. They were burning to know how we intended to extricate ourselves from the embarrassing position with which we were confronted by these rapids; and learning that it was our intention to carry the canoes along the river bank until we had passed by the obstruction and were able to launch them in the smoother water upstream, they conferred together for a few moments, and then startled our peace of mind by the information that they could not allow us to pass through their territory unless they were properly recompensed for the privilege. If there had been an opportunity of making effectual resistance we should have done so, but as the thick woods offered a shelter to our assailants, who outnumbered our party ten to one, we were forced to comply with the request; and having distributed presents among the head men, and also several wine-skins, we were permitted to proceed with the arduous task of portage for three miles through a tangled swamp and across innumerable hilly summits.



ORONGO ANTELOPE.

place, of whose fame and enterprise we had already been apprised, formally waited upon us. He was attended by a body-guard of twenty fine-looking Szchuenese warriors, armed with muskets and attired in flamboyant uniforms, who sought duly to impress us with their magnificence by much swagger and bluster. Manona-li (the name of the chief) himself was a small-eyed man of about fifty or thereabout, of gigantic stature, with a kindly looking face which beamed with constant smiles. He was of a quiet, yet sociable demeanour, ceremonious and mild-voiced, with the instincts of a greedy trader cropping out of him at all points, and cunning beyond measure.

His acuteness in driving a bargain would have shamed the efforts of the most exacting Shylock, for on acquainting him with our desire to purchase provisions and secure his protection for the journey up-stream, he threw up his hands in horror and sought to impress us with the terrible danger of such an attempt. His surprise at our presumption, however, was doubtless put on for the purpose of stimulating our liberality, for after haggling far into the night he consented, for the price of two guns, to give us the desired guides and protection, and to sell us sufficient provisions for a week's journeying for ten ounces of silver.

To remunerate us in a way for this unlooked-for liberality, he invited us to the pleasures of his abode, which, because of the coldness of the weather, caused by the high altitude we had reached, we were but too willing to avail ourselves of. We soon had reason, however, to regret this hastily arrived at conclusion, for we straightway found plenty of occupation in ridding ourselves of the hosts of lice and fleas, with which the place abounded. During the long night we lay awake engaged in this practice, scratching with an assiduity which would have caused the learned

economist who mourned the loss of energy consumed in the wagging of a dog's tail to have shed tears of despair at the sight. A description of travelling in Western China would by no means be complete without some mention of the vermin with which the hapless traveller is compelled to become intimately acquainted. Lice and fleas seem to be the indispensable accompaniments of Chinese life; and, in fact, the itching caused by these parasites seems to furnish some of the natives their only means of exercise. In our own case there was certainly little rest for the weary.

The chief having announced his intention of properly celebrating the visit of two illustrious white strangers in their midst, the varied population of the village gathered on the following day in the large open square at the end of the long street, to attend the ceremonies which had been conceived to be suitable to the occasion. Manona had outdone himself, for he was attired from head to foot in a closely woven silk uniform of interlacing coloured threads, while from the crown of his head towered skyward a curious hat of closely plaited fibre nearly five feet tall, which he was able to keep in position only by the most marvellous process of equipoise. The enclosure was soon filled with young men and girls, who sat chatting, laughing, and smoking, and facing a clear space left in the centre for the performers.

The musicians beat a sharp tattoo on the drums, and, at a great sound of applause, half a dozen comely young women took their places in the open space. Their handsome forms were clothed in the lightest of silken gowns, their hair being decorated with shells and metal ornaments; each carried in her hand a crude sort of one-stringed guitar, which she thrummed industriously

to a doleful chant, all keeping up this unceasing musical performance in strains truly depressing, at the same time going through the steps of a stately dance, for which the group of spectators marked excellent time by a low, humming noise, and the clapping of hands. After an interval of rest the dancing girls retire, and the open space is preëmpted by four musicians, who come forward and perform a war-dance. The men wear loin clothes only, their muscular bodies and arms going through all sorts of dramatic gestures with imaginary spear and knife, a realistic representation of savage warfare, the music gradually working them up to a state of frenzy, till they are obliged to desist from sheer exhaustion. After this there was more singing and dancing; and then the most important business of the function, that of feasting, was inaugurated, the natives, with characteristic gluttony, gorging themselves until they were unable to move. Manona's people were evidently very loyal to him, for, during all the performance and feasting, they showed a remarkable submissiveness and devotion, whether real or assumed, it was impossible to discover.

The important business of eating and drinking having been disposed of, we gathered in Manona's dwelling with his more important chiefs, the common herd shambling off to their respective abodes to recover from the effects of their recent overindulgence. Here several long chibouques were lighted and passed around with great ceremony, being handed from one to the other, accompanied by the curious process of a constant snapping of the fingers. Thus the chibouque of peace and sociability went the round of the circle, as though it was a council of Sioux about to hold a pow-wow, Manona and his liege subjects indulging in the wildest flights of hyperbole as

THROUGH UNEXPLORED ASIA.

... promises awaiting us from their friendship, and ... promises as to the help which ... us in furthering the success of the

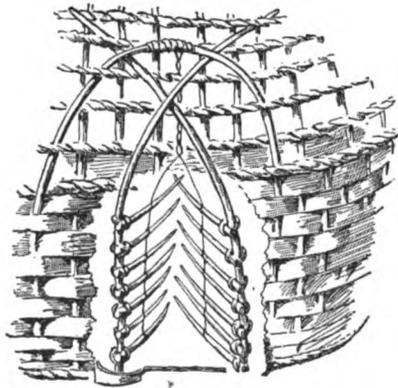
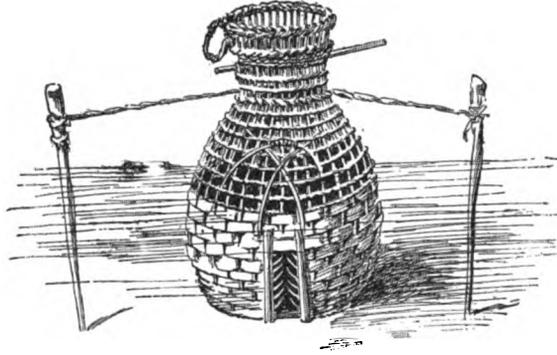
... of March we parted from the ... with an escort of ten men in ... the leadership of Manona's eldest son, ... to accompany us to the next ... upstream, where we were to be ... of a brother chief who ... From Tching we trav- ... a distance of six ... the confluence of the Yainsh ... waters into the clear depths ... appeared to have a breadth of ... where it rushed through a ... commingling moun- ... but that this is the ... in 1879, after his ... across Thibet, and where ... his men were massacred. We ... including those old ... to know of the occur- ... in averring that no white ... until we had

... Thing-Lang, after a long ... which had about ... we could see the lights of ... about the shore. As we ap- ... was borne toward us on the ... All the villagers forewarned of our ... had gathered on the strand, and as we drew

near several canoes containing the principal men of the village shot out, and, leading the advance with shouts of joy, gave unmistakable evidence of the sincerity of their welcome. When our canoes touched shore, and the awe-stricken crowd were able to catch a glimpse of our white faces, great was their joy. All were eager to bear a hand in drawing up the boats and unloading the stores, while a great torchlit crowd of yelling natives escorted us to the dwelling of the chief man of the village, who awaited our arrival with a great simulation of *sang-froid*,—a thin veneer of artifice which did not conceal his true feelings, for he was fully as inquisitive and awestricken at the sight of white strangers as his more humble followers.

This man was about forty years of age, of middle stature and with a complexion of almost negro tint, with a broad face, black hair just graying, and thin-lipped. He spoke but little, and that courteously. He did not appear very formidable, but from our guides we learned that he was one of the most renowned fighting men of the district, and that the village over which he presided was a remarkably powerful one. His right-hand man, however, in the management of affairs of state was a patriarch who had the rollicking look of a prosperous and coarse-minded old man, perfectly satisfied with the material aspect of his condition. He dealt in humour of the coarsest kind, which, imitating the example set by our guides, we laughed at with much apparent enjoyment, although we were unable to perceive the exact point of his innumerable jokes. He was very inquisitive concerning the reason of our presence in the country, but notwithstanding our most persistent efforts to impress him with the real reason,—namely, that of exploration,—he could not or would not bring himself to an acceptance of it, and in his

own mind evidently ascribed to us some ulterior motive. But, after all, how can one expect an unenlightened and uneducated barbarian to realise the full meaning of that insatiable desire, which has ever been an accompaniment



FISHING TRAP OF DHONG-LUNG NATIVES.

of the growth of civilisation, to pry into unknown corners of this world of ours, when even calm intelligence is unable to give a sufficient and potent reason for its existence?

We found that at Dhong-Lung we were in the centre of a country abounding in big game, large herds of buffaloes

roaming over the immense plateau to the southward. The chance to secure fresh meat, without being obliged to pay an exorbitant price for it to parsimonious and close-fisted natives, suggested a hunting expedition; and for two days we tracked the wary beasts, being rewarded with enough meat to supply our needs for a week to come, which we cut up into long strips and hung over the fire to dry, thus ensuring their preservation.

The last of these hunts was attended with an incident which, but for a most fortunate interposition, would have resulted seriously for Burton. Accompanied by Yuen he had wandered over into the long plain to the north in the hope of securing some small antelopes or other game, leaving us to pursue our buffalo-hunting until he should return. He had been gone but an hour when we descried Yuen rapidly rushing across the plain, followed by an infuriated bull buffalo. Reaching the point where I stood, he fell on his knees palsied with fear, and in gasping whispers related how they had been scouring through the bush, when they came upon a small herd of buffaloes, which had immediately charged them. Burton, he said, had fired, but missed, and, struck by the bull, had fallen with his leg broken over a small declivity to the plain below. Aghast at the catastrophe, I summoned the crew and hurried to the spot, to find poor Burton covered with blood, and insensible, lying on the ground. He was, however, not so badly injured as Yuen had related, his worst injury being a number of ugly cuts and a severe wrenching of his leg. We carried him back to the village, and at the end of the second day, except for a slight stiffness, he was as well as ever.

On the thirtieth a powerful chief who ruled over the district across the river from Dhong-Lung appeared with an

escort of canoemen and warriors, bringing large quantities of iron instruments and baskets of fish and bread, which he sought to trade with us for muskets. As we had only a few of these necessary implements left, sufficient for our own protection, we were obliged to refuse, but informed him that we should be willing to buy the goods of him for money. He retired for a short distance with his men to talk it over, and eventually consented to sell; but we did not buy, however, until we had brought him down to one-tenth of the original price which he asked for the things. Every chief was eager for a present, with which he was much gratified, and solemn covenants of peace were entered into, confirmed on their part by the presentation to us of innumerable charms, of whose potency against harm we were assured by their respective donors. The particular charm which was to guard over my destinies was in the shape of a small bag of buffalo-skin containing a few remnants of bone, a sort of grayish powder in a small wooden tube, and two round images of cast iron,—which gifts were accepted with a gratitude more openly expressed than inwardly felt.

We passed the last day in Dhong taking observations of our altitude and making preparations for our onward journey. An observation by boiling point disclosed to us an altitude of 6,502 feet above the ocean. At Tung Kal the river was 6,286 feet, a difference of over two hundred feet in a distance of seventy-three miles.

CHAPTER IV.

ON the morning of April 1st the expedition had reëmbarked, — the last bold step toward the land of mystery. As the outlines of Dhong-Lung faded from view, we instinctively felt that, in forsaking its sheltering arms, we had severed the cord that bound us in a way to the known world. Our bridges had been burned behind us; come what might, it was imperative that we should push up into the wild mountain fastnesses to the north, and by this route find our way once more to civilisation.

The number of islands encountered during the day proved so troublesome that we were compelled to crawl cautiously along at a snail's pace near the shore. The peaceful prospect which had dominated the scenery farther back was now shattered by the near approach of gigantic mountain peaks towering far into the clouds, while on the river banks hung low-lying vapours of dank moisture. The general appearance of the landscape was rugged, bare, and unpromising; but the country was well populated, and gave undeniable evidences of hospitality, — the natives crowding down to the shore during the day's journeying, loaded with vegetables and baskets of fish, which they sought with much vociferousness to sell to us. The tribal demarcations of territory and characteristic distinctions which we had noticed heretofore now became more openly apparent, those natives with whom we were able to make ourselves understood informing us that they were the northern tribe of the Tchangoes,

although known among themselves as the Djé-gu. Though they live closely commingled, there is as much difference between the Tchangoes and the Djé-gu as exists between a negro and an American Indian. The Tchangoes are pale-coloured, straight, thin-nosed and thin-lipped, while in many respects the Djé-gu present unmistakable negro characteristics.

The number of chain bridges crossing the current of the river could not fail to excite our comment; the amount



NATIVE ROPE BRIDGE.

of ingenuity and labour necessary to their erection must have been enormous, as, with the crude implements possessed by the natives, the construc-

tion of this vast amount of iron chain must have been the effort of years. These bridges are of inestimable benefit to the country, however, and one could not help estimating the abundance of revenue that might be derived from them, could they be collectively gathered under an efficient toll system. Below Lung-Chou-Fu the river valley was more open, and enclosed only by low hills and by undulating, closely cultivated spurs from the mountains behind. The hills retreat from the river at the bends, and leave immense flat plains, on which have been exercised the industry and skill of a numerous population, vast tracts of growing rice and grain waving in long green stretches, while here and there were to be seen innumerable little hamlets and villages. The latter were interesting merely for the stereotyped pattern after which each seemed to be cut; not a shade of difference could one detect in size,

form, or colour. Built of mud, with straw roofs, they were surrounded by vegetable gardens, and wide ditches opening out into little ponds, where men and boys were busy in the black mud, netting the small minnow-like fish which seems to be the staple article of diet in the surrounding district ; while the women were given plenty of occupation, for the time being, in threshing corn, making bean-curd cakes, or grinding flour.

About six miles from Lung-Chou-Fu, a long point from a spur projects into the river, and, nearly joining the other bank, forms a rushing rapid, which necessitated the portage of the boats for a distance of half a mile. The Djé-gu we found to be most hospitable and kindly people ; perceiving our predicament, they rallied manfully to our assistance, and, when we offered payment for their services, refused with apparent anger, and really seemed to be quite offended that we should have so misinterpreted their benevolent intentions.

We had visible evidences of the growth of the silk industry in this region, for the river current carried us by innumerable plantations of mulberry-trees, nearly despoiled of their leaves. In the villages the silk cocoons were spread out on long wooden frames, which might easily be carried from place to place, in order to face the sun as long as possible, and the women might be seen gathered out-of-doors engaged in spinning silk.

The Djé-gu villages cease as soon as the eastern plateau is reached, and the Akja-gu settlements begin. The latter, however, do not monopolise this region, for many villages either partly or wholly Tchango are met with, especially on the lower waters of the Ngan-luen-Kiang, which empties its crystal torrent over an eight-foot cascade, two miles beyond Lung-Chou-Fu. The Koko-Norese also have

strayed southward from Ulh-G'th, and inhabit a few villages on the river bank; and there is a sprinkling of nondescripts who call themselves Chyrunes, but are probably Thibetans, inhabiting one or two of the villages east of the Ngan-luen-Kiang. (As these numerous tribes are in commercial and racial hostility with one another, the benefits accruing to the district in which they are domiciled have been considerable, in a measure subduing the natural antipathy of the population toward strangers.)

The valley of the upper Chin-ka, which divides the western and eastern ranges of the Nushan mountains, is as striking a region as any in the world. Pinned in between precipitous walls, it lies apart from the rest of Szchuen, and possesses a character of its own; it is easy to understand how it attained a mysterious sanctity in very ancient times as the seat of the great goddess Mun, and preserved for so many centuries a worship peculiar to itself. At the present day it is the main stronghold of a singular nomadic race, who appear to have come from India to the southward, and to have been forced to this region of mountain fastnesses by the physical superiority of hostile tribes. Additional weight is lent to this theory of origin by the darkness of the skin, which is a very dark brown, almost black, and by the straight black hair, characteristic of the present tribes of Northern India. Their religion, which is of the crudest form, professes a passive allegiance to Buddha and a number of minor gods; but, like the wild races to the southwestward, they are idolaters and offerers of sacrifice, defying alike the efforts of Christianity to convert them, and the repeated attempts of the Chinese government to bring them into a state of subjection. The Chinese to the east

shake their heads at the name of Ch't'lan, regarding those who bear it as devil-worshippers and broken men, worthy of the attack of every true follower of Buddha.

Notwithstanding this reputation for lawlessness and independence of spirit, we found them to be a hospitable, intelligent, and trustworthy race, who seemed to be wholly free from those petty vices characteristic of the more effeminate tribes to the eastward. The state of woman among them was also much exalted over that seen in the regions through which we had heretofore been travelling. Women seemed to be on terms of equality with the men, mixed and talked freely with them, and evidently had a share in the government. A distinguishing characteristic of both sexes is an inordinate love of dress, almost amounting to a mania. Brilliant colours are worn, bright blues and reds; and the women arrange their hair in numerous fantastic shapes, and deck themselves out with lavish display of long metal pendants and a profusion of gold amulets. The plaits of hair are thin and numerous, and are strung upon transverse sticks, which serve to keep them apart and away from the wearer's shoulders and face; in fact, these sticks serve much the same purpose as do combs in the Western coiffure. Both sexes are remarkably well built, and even handsome.

Certain of these tribes migrate in winter to the warmer districts to the eastward. Nomadic habits are still strong even with the most settled of these people; the inhabitants of Kuch-li, 7,230 feet above the sea level, situated near abundant water and a fertile country, remove two or three miles away to the forbidding mountain grazing lands during the summer months when the heat is unbearable, and we found the inhabitants of many of the settled vil-

lages encamped not two hundred yards from their own doors.

On the third we continued to battle up-stream along this rugged shore, margined at the water's edge with immense flotillas of almost impenetrable weeds and water-growth, which greatly retarded progress. Five miles brought us to I-Chu, a settlement doubtless pleasant enough under a fair sky, but now, with low-lying clouds prophetic of a furious tempest soon to come, it bore an air of universal gloom and squalor. As we did not wish to undergo the risk of being caught in the chasm-like stretch of the river beyond, we decided to make a halt until the weather conditions should become more propitious.

I-Chu is one of those villages which may be regarded as indispensable both to the traveller and the trader. At the junction of numerous highways which intersect the surrounding district and form a natural trade-route from the provinces of Western China to Thibet, it is a place of much more than usual importance. During our halt of two days, to make necessary repairs and to prepare for the arduous journey up-stream, we were waited upon by a number of the chief officials of the town, whom we found to be above the general average of similar functionaries with whom our lot had heretofore been thrown. Their curiosity, however, was a trait positively appalling to behold; for had we not persisted in maintaining a passive silence in order not to be bored in this direction, we should literally have been questioned to death. The more intelligent of these questions were about our own and other countries of the world, especially England and Russia, of whose influence in Asiatic affairs all seemed cognisant; but the generality of them consisted of a series of interrogations of the most trivial nature and of

almost childlike simplicity, such as: "How old are you?" "What makes your beards grow?" "Have you a wife?" and so forth.

At I-Chu we were more than ever able to gain an adequate idea of the mineral richness of this country. Gold and silver seemed to be exceedingly common, being profusely worn in the form of ornaments, whilst the amount of the baser metals was equally as well demonstrated. There can be no doubt but that, were this country colonised by energetic and progressive whites, it would prove to be one of the richest mineral regions in the world. Repeated excursions into the mountain country revealed to us the richness of these hidden treasures, cropping up even on the surface. In the present condition of affairs, however, these metals are practically useless, for the native population seem incapable of realising their full value or of mining them in large quantities, while their hostility to foreigners would prove a sufficient barrier to prevent the latter from working these deposits.

We halted a day longer in I-Chu than had been our original intention, in order to make new paddles and to await the weekly market day, when we were enabled to buy several bags of flour and vegetables. The first village we halted at on the seventh was Uhi-l'n. It nestles in a sheltered nook in a bay-like indentation of the lofty mountain wall, crowded with wheat plantations and numerous huts scattered under their impenetrable shades, with a strip of gray gravel beach gently sloping from the water's edge upward to where it meets the base of the mountain. As we drew near, the village gave no evidences of being inhabited; but as the canoes touched shore we became cognisant of the presence of a dozen natives, clad in dingy garments, seated on the beach, and

in a state of beastly intoxication from drinking the insidious pundu. To our greetings they responded by vacant stares of distrust, and with ludicrous celerity scrambling to their feet offered us some of the nectar, and then hobbled off as fast as their rather unsteady legs could carry them. In half an hour they returned to the shore with their forces augmented by two dozen other individuals in a similar state of inebriety, which, on questioning them, we discovered to be their usual method of celebrating the memory of their honoured ancestors. Those natives whom we saw were all males, not a single child or member of the other sex being visible. We subsequently learned that these ancestral celebration days were observed by nearly all the tribes in the country bordering on the Kinsha Kiang in a similar manner, — the inevitable sequence to these protracted drinking-bouts being sanguinary brawls, in which numbers were killed and injured. The women and children, until the time of celebration had passed, camped in the open country or took up their residence in some near-by friendly village.

Before we left they presented us with several jugs of pundu, and as the task of voyaging was stimulating to the cause of thirst, we accepted this hospitable gift, and, in return, distributed a few presents among those good souls who, with minds less fuddled than their fellows, were able to appreciate the value of such presents.

Leaving I-Chu, we proceeded in an amiable, light-hearted mood along the majestic shore separating the Luch'ien and Th'lyu Mountains, and halted about nightfall at the village of Tir'ghu, where we found the population remarkably hospitable and friendly. They had been forewarned of our approach by a couple of fishermen, and had at once sent word to the chief man of the village, who was on a

visit to the graves of his ancestors in the hills, a few miles away. During the evening he came back in breathless haste to witness the marvellous spectacle of two white men, of whose wonders he had been informed by the messenger; and, having apologised for the shortcomings of his village to provide proper entertainment for two such illustrious "kings," he invited us to his own abode,—a long, one-storied hut, in which, with characteristic frugality, he had domiciled his immediate family, and a number of small ponies and cattle. He spread out before us a feast of buttermilk, baked fish, and potatoes, and despatched a messenger overland to Lo-Ching-Tong, to announce the coming of white strangers in the land, at the same time declaring that he would accompany us personally the whole distance, and introduce us to the head man of the town, in whom he smilingly assured us we should meet a friend, and under whose protection we might voyage for many a day's paddling up-stream without molestation.

Promptly next morning, just before daybreak, he was at the river bank, attired in his most sumptuous robes of office, ready for the embarkation. Nor did we have need to regret his presence during the day, for he was of the greatest assistance to us in designating the numerous dangerous spots in the river current, and pointing out the objects of interest, with their names, in the surrounding country. The river for some distance wound among high hills of five hundred or a thousand feet, sometimes shaded by forests of minuscular evergreens, or dotted with innumerable little villages, looking the very emblems of peace. One could not help marvelling somewhat at the large number of cemeteries, out of all proportion, it seemed, to the number of inhabitants in these settled places. The

discrepancy, however, was not so great as seemed apparent, for, it being the custom to bury the dead of the district as near to the great stream as possible, these cemeteries, besides offering a depository for the disposal of the deceased of the river villages, were also of similar use for the population of the inland villages for many miles.

As an evidence that the greatest reverence is shown to their dead, these cemeteries were really sumptuous in small religious shrines and temples, formed of the green-coloured marble found in the mountains, and carved in all manner of grotesque shapes. At the shrines the ignorant natives might be seen depositing money and presents of various kinds, also articles of food; and the hold that religion has taken on the country may be properly understood when it is known that, although among themselves the most inveterate of thieves, the presents laid in these cemeteries are never disturbed, many of those which have existed there for generations containing small-sized fortunes.

Beautiful as the country below I-Chu is, it is eclipsed by the grandeur of that leading up to Lo-Ching-Tong, through the Gh'tan gorge. The river current diverges from the centre of the stream, and closely hugs the left bank of the river, proceeding for about six miles through the chiselled bed of granite. All at once this wall of rock retires to a distance, and the sides of the gorge, which have been gradually descending, expand, and transform the stream into an open, lake-like pool. Without a moment's warning, and just enabling one to catch a glimpse of the grassy plateau above, the cliffs once more close in, the belt of turf ceases, and mighty walls enclose the stream between rocks two hundred feet high. On the

right bank hardly a goat could clamber; on the left, a fringe of fallen rocks affords a possible passage for horses and hardy pedestrians, until a great rock, which juts from the mountain wall, bars the way. Right under this rock we saw the ruins of a bridge, whose abutments on either bank remained like a stoical advance-guard of civilisation, attesting undying hostility to the wild diorama of relentless barbarity unfolded on all sides.

There is a native legend regarding these remains, that they were erected thousands of years ago by the great god Mozu, who, to do penance for some wrong that he had inflicted on the fountainhead of all knowledge, the immortal Buddha, was obliged to perform some act of benefit to mankind. He sought out the most stupendous task of all,—that of building this bridge across the stream of the Kinsha, mining the iron and forging it into chains with his own unaided skill and toil, until Buddha, impressed with the completeness of his humility, freed him from the task, when he had but just completed the abutments. For thousands of years, according to the native belief, these abutments have withstood the action of the mighty river current and the elements; nor will it ever be possible for them to be destroyed, being of supernatural construction.

As we drew into the sheltered cove at Lo-Ching, across the stream of the Kinsha we noticed a lofty mount, which I should judge to be fully five thousand feet above the bed of the river. From the natives of the town we learned that it was known in the district as Mugrua-Pien, and had never been visited to its summit by other than the gods. The population of the surrounding country gather twice a year at its base, while the priests ascend a little way and make propitiatory gifts, craving abun-

dant rain and fine crops and protection from harm. We decided to undertake a journey to the place and make the ascent; but we had reckoned without taking account of the antipathy of the natives to such a step, for, on our mentioning it to the head man, we were confronted by such a positive and unanswerable refusal that we did not dare to mention the subject further. I have studied the former maps of this region and taken the altitude of this summit, and there can be little doubt that it was this sacred mount which Quincy makes mention of in his first report on the region of western Szchuen, and where he averred barbaric human sacrifices of prisoners of war and malefactors took place, — its position (long. $100^{\circ} 27' E.$, lat. $27^{\circ} 26' N.$) being that occupied by Mugrua-Pien. There can be as little doubt, however, that he was misled regarding the practice of human sacrifice, for, although we made the most searching investigation, we were unable to find traces of its present or past existence. The custom prevails of carrying the dead to the foot of the sacred mount, and there offering its spirit to the protection of the gods before burial; and it is doubtless a misconstruction of this ceremonial rite that led him to his erroneous conclusion.

The art of pleasing was never attempted with such zeal as by the population of Lo-Ching-Tong, who sought to overwhelm us with kindness, the spectacle of two white strangers for the time being serving as a seven-days wonder. A score of crude rafts of tanned skins drawn tightly over bladders, loaded with peaceful, harmless souls, came toward us as we neared the shore, and watched our every movement with open-eyed wonderment until we had landed, when we were immediately surrounded by a closely gathering horde, all bent on the one

object of catching a glimpse of us, or touching our persons and clothes, until we were in imminent danger of being literally crushed to death.

We found the town to be one of considerable importance, situated on a jutting point of land lying between the current of the Kinsha and a number of lake-like pools, joined by narrow streams, to which the natives had given the name L'tili ("the long one"). We inquired of them as to the length and importance of this river, but they could only give the information that it flowed for many day's journeying to the southward, where it was swallowed up by another stream as broad and long as the Kinsha,—doubtless the Suchu headwaters of the Mekong. Its waters were remarkably clear, enabling one to see down to its granite bed, and had a briny taste, which we discovered it gained from the constant mingling with its current of several small streams from innumerable salt lakes in the vicinity.

As the town is a natural centre for the various trade routes radiating in all directions, its population is eminently cosmopolitan, made up of a sprinkling of all races,—Thibetans, Koko Norese, Szchuenese, Tchangoes, Sifanese, and even typical Eastern Chinamen, who, notwithstanding the dissimilarity of the races with whom they have been thrown in contact, manage to maintain their distinguishing personality. These latter are the real administrators of the town, and, having banished that peculiar inertia and slothfulness usually an attribute of the Chinamen from the eastern provinces, seem to have imbibed all the good points of their surroundings and eliminated all the bad ones, until the general result is not altogether displeasing. One could not help thinking of the benefits that would accrue, not only to China, but

to the world at large, could the populations of the two extremes of the country exchange their dominions, — those of the east awakening to their opportunities by a course of western hardship, and those of the west suffering their uncouth and untamed natures to be softened and polished by contact with the broadening influence of civilisation. But, alas for idle optimism! the field of Western China offers but little encouragement for those imaginative mortals, who, peering through rose-coloured glasses, are firmly convinced that already they see the beginning of the glorious end when Christianity and civilisation will stalk hand in hand over this unenlightened region.

It may be said that the agricultural importance of any country is exactly measured by the quantity of phosphates of lime that it consumes; and the activity displayed here in collecting this material is truly feverish. Doubtless to this cause more than to any other may be ascribed the growth of Lo-Ching to a place of considerable importance, the remarkable productiveness of the soil in its vicinity giving ample testimony as to the richness of these deposits. Nevertheless, the natives do not seem adequately to realise the mine of wealth which lies at their very doors, and which, if properly worked, would soon raise their district to untold opulence; for with true dog-in-the-manger obstinacy they use what little amount is required for their own needs, and jealously guard the remainder from menacing commercial intrusion.

We were informed by the natives that, in the country south of their town, a day's journey, there were great numbers of red deer and water buffaloes, and we were promised abundance of game if we wished to make the attempt in search of it. As it was impracticable to leave

altogether unprotected the canoes and the remainder of the outfit, we tossed up a coin to see which one of us fortune would favour with the choice of this diversion. Burton, with his invariable good luck, won; and before daybreak he set forth, mounted on the back of a shaggy Sifanese pony, which, notwithstanding its general air of humility, was possessed with the inordinate desire to rid himself of his unwelcome burden. Burton had scarcely departed when I was waited upon by a lama (one of the native priests), who, diffusing a powerful and unpleasant odour, and having critically stared me out of countenance, launched forth the startling information that he had come to secure my conversion to the true faith. I received him graciously, avowing my desire to learn the tenets of his religion. After labouring over my unreceptive mind for four hours, he slowly departed, with the far from pleasing intelligence that he would return on the following morning with a brother priest, when my conversion would be carried through to completion. To Western eyes nothing could be more repugnant than the blind infatuation and unquestioning faith with which the native population of Western China follow the teachings of these dirty rascals, who are really but a grade removed above the lower order of animals. They have no idea of religion of any sort other than a sincere and loudly iterated belief in mummery and witchcraft, and a firm conviction of the favour in which they shine beneath the glorious effulgence of numerous deities.

The next morning the dirty individual who had visited me on the yesterday arrived shortly after daybreak with a long, gaunt individual, whom he introduced as the head lama of a monastery in the hills two miles away, adding, by way of apology for their early descent, that they had

come to give a proper and dignified ending to my conversion. As I did not wish to run the risk of incurring their enmity, I apparently submitted; and having tacked up several small bits of prayer-paper in my apartment, they proceeded to mumble forth prayers before a row of grotesque wooden figures, until, after an hour of this monotonous practice, I was ready and willing to declare myself fully converted, irrespective of the truth or falsity of their religion, only seeking some good and sufficient reason which would enable me to be rid of their vile-smelling presence.

Shortly before noontime Burton appeared, weary and bedraggled from the jaunt across the dusty plateau. He had hunted the whole country with two guides, but not an evidence of game of any kind had he seen excepting several large musk-oxen, which he was forbidden firing at on the ground that in this season they were under the especial protection of the gods. He had managed to secure a couple of pheasants, which made a welcome change in the strict monotony of our diet.

Before leaving Lo-Ching, under the escort of the head man of the place we were enabled to make a little tour in the surrounding district; and one could not help manifesting genuine surprise at the wonderful evidences of fertility on every hand. The crops were well grown and numerous, — wheat, oats, barley, potatoes, and other domestic vegetables being especially abundant. The principal food of the people is barley bread and barley porridge, the barley being roasted before grinding it into meal. Butter is made in small quantities, but, as it is very little used, is so rancid and vile-smelling that one cannot blame the populace for abstaining from making liberal use of it. The market of Lo-Ching is remarkably

interesting, and we took advantage of the opportunity it offered to purchase yak meat and fish, giving in exchange ten yards of red cloth and a few pounds of lead bullets. Great quantities of fine vegetables were displayed in the market, — large cabbages as round as cannon balls, fine turnips and brinjals, and excellent cucumbers, in such quantities that it would have been impossible for us to make use of them without the crew, whose cast-iron digestions enabled them to eat vegetables in their raw state, skin and all. There was another vegetable unknown to us, in appearance, colour, and shape like a very large and smooth cucumber; which, when boiled, formed a most palatable and strengthening food, having remarkable similarity of taste to plum-pudding.

We left Lo-Ching on the twelfth, to continue the journey up-stream. For two days' journeying the Kinsha traverses a wild and beautiful country, destitute, it appeared, of permanent villages, and inhabited only by nomadic Djé-gu. The mountain slopes gave every evidence of fertility, and the valleys contained good pasturage. Both at Ghua-lu and T'hin, we found the natives most hospitable and friendly to strangers. There are five or six villages of these wild tribes on the right bank before reaching Nh'juri, who are not Chinese or Thibetans, but aborigines to all appearance. They are almost completely ignorant of the world outside their own meagre district, and their agricultural implements and abodes are of an extremely primitive character. It is probable that they represent the dying remnant of an original population of the valley never completely converted to Buddhism, for their religion is dissimilar to that of the neighbouring tribes and entails the worship of numerous strange idols. They have the delicate facial type and timid manner

which one associates naturally with a worn-out race. It was in these villages that we first noticed a curious form of cart without wheels. The back end of the poles are bent around under the cart, and form runners, upon which it rests like an elevated sledge, thus avoiding the difficulties of the rough ground.

The general aspect of the country is much like that in the region near Luipo on the Yangtse Kiang. If there is any distinction between them, that in this Kinsha region is a little more bare and sterile, — the land lying so high that the hills lack character, having no striking outlines, but rather extending along in continuous ridges. There is a total lack of trees, the few meagre shrubs which furtively poke their way a few feet above the surface being lost in the general barrenness.

Ghua-lu is thirteen miles from Lo-Ching along the river bank, although doubtless the numerous windings of the river itself lengthens considerably the distance by water. It is a large village, half Thibetan, half Chinese, situated in a wide, shallow basin between two low hills. The land round about is well cultivated. There is a considerable monastery near by, and also innumerable temples constructed of marble mined from quarries on the river bank. The village is evidently of some antiquity, for the temples show evidences of partial repairing and rebuilding, and numerous bronze images and statues of apparently great age are found in the cemetery. We sought to purchase some of these relics, or at least gain permission to photograph them, but were met with an instant refusal, the natives seeming angered that we had even dared to suggest such sacrilege. To the south and west of Ghua-lu stretches Uhn'ln, an elevated tract of country, very sparsely inhabited and haunted by predatory nomads, —

renegade offshoots from Thibet, who are in general warlike and aggressive, menacing all trade in the district, and swooping down on the defenceless river villages at frequent intervals, leaving a track of fire and massacre in their wake. A few villages of true Kuza Mohammedans undoubtedly exist in this district, shunned and despised by their neighbours, with whom they have nothing in sympathy, neither bonds of trade nor of friendship. Through hundreds of years they have retained in a measure their tribal organisation, ruled by their own chiefs, and defying the most rigorous efforts of the followers of Buddha to extinguish them. They are essentially nomadic in their habits; and owing to the great elevation of their plateau, on which snow lies for two or three months of the year, their houses are either sunk many feet below the level of the ground, or where the rock is soft are hollowed out in the hillsides.

After leaving Ghua-lu, a short journey up-stream brought us to T'hin. Streams now became numerous, all flowing northward; but though it is a well-watered country, the cattle in it were gaunt and starved-looking, while what cultivation was apparent seemed of the most sickly and unthrifty sort. The people in a measure partook of the nature of their surroundings, for they presented the appearance of having passed through a succession of rigorous fasts. Disease was frightfully prevalent, especially smallpox; and, as we did not wish to run the risk of jeopardising the health of the expedition, we wisely abstained from mingling with the natives, preferring to encamp on a small island opposite the town, which we found to be overrun by numerous large water-snakes. One of the crew was bitten by one of these reptiles, and came running to our tent, his face blanched

with terror, fearing that he had been poisoned. As we were unaware of the harmless nature of the snakes we dosed him with pundu, until, in a state of maudlin emotion, he confessed himself as fully recovered. The snakes were not venomous; and, having tried the effect of their bite on a stray dog which they had captured, the crew, being envious of the treatment that had been administered to their comrade, and supposing snake-bites would bring them similar treatment, were bitten frequently enough to cause a serious drain on our limited stock of pundu, until, having our eyes opened to the clever ruse, the number of patients was immediately lessened.

On the fifteenth, emboldened by the apparent growing friendliness of the natives as we progressed farther into the wild country to the north, we began our voyage to Cheo-Chu-Su. We had been under way scarcely ten minutes before we saw a small canoe, followed by another and yet another till ten were ranged in line, boldly approach us from the shore of T'hin. They signalled to us to await their coming, but as we perceived a number of weapons in the hands of those in the boats we scented danger immediately, and made answer by calling on our crew to put forth their most valorous efforts. Perceiving this movement, those in the canoes threw aside all secrecy, and, howling yells of defiance, fired at us a volley of slugs which fell harmlessly in the water. Without giving them time to reload, we paddled strenuously against the stiff current, and in an hour had left them behind.

The country on the river bank was thickly wooded, interspersed here and there with long stretches of grassy plains. Our impression of the land was that it was a

pastoral country and thickly populated, for smoke curled frequently above depressions and sheltered positions.

Besides their reputation for turbulence, the people of Sien-lu are miserably poor, — an anomaly which one is incapable of understanding, with the evidences of fertility and thrift in the surrounding country. At least this was our conclusion, for, although we offered to buy vegetables and meat of them at liberal prices, they informed us that they could not sell us any, as they had only enough for their own immediate needs. Their curiosity and inquisitiveness were seemingly insatiable, and had we endeavoured to satisfy them we should have been literally consumed; for, not content with watching us from a distance, they gathered around us and sought to carry away portions of our clothing as souvenirs, until as a measure of protection we were compelled to sleep in the canoes anchored a few feet from the river bank.

The dress and manner of living of these people were very primitive, the sole garment for male and female alike being a sort of sinuous sheet of thin cloth wrapped across the shoulders and falling to the knees, leaving the legs and the upper part of the body exposed; while their habitations were squalid little huts built of a few loosely piled stones covered with a roof of cane and yak-skins, containing but a single room, the entrance to which necessitated one's crawling through on his hands and knees, with imminent danger of being taken *hors de combat* by some aggressive cur, dogs seeming to form the most numerous evidences of life in the village. The evil effects of opium might also be traced in the pallid countenances and palsied limbs of many of the populace, and we discovered that considerable quantities of the deleterious drug were manufactured in the district for exportation to

Thibet. The soil was a gray clay, over which was a layer of rich black mould; but although it might have yielded fine crops of rice or wheat, it was given over to the cultivation of the poppy.

The head man of Sien-lu was a miserable whiskered figure, given over to two inordinate vices, that of opium-smoking and drunkenness. Either by natural inheritance, or as the effects of these pernicious habits, he was possessed of the faculty of distorting the truth in a manner which would have caused the lamented Ananias to turn in his grave. He sought in every manner to discourage our progress into the country up-stream, working with telling effect on the crude and superstitious notions of the Kiangsis, until, as a matter of precaution, we were obliged to get rid of him summarily. There were, he said, a people dwelling on the shores of the river, but a week's journey away, who were terrible fighting men, and killed everybody that came into their country by toasting them over a fire, and then eating their flesh; while yet farther on, he declared there was still another tribe gifted with a happy penchant for carving with epicurean zest every one who entered their dominions. The result of all this alarming information was what we had expected: the Kiangsis, with every spark of their credulity awakened by these fantastic narratives, at first demurring at our resolve to penetrate farther up-stream, at last boldly announced their downright determination not to go. The great unknown country at the headwaters of the Kinsha, because of its vagueness of outline and the character of its people as seen through the distorting fogs of misrepresentation, so aroused their fears that the dangers of the prospect were too much for their courage.

For the time being the outlook was dark. Could it be

that all the hardships and dangers which we had endured for months were to go for naught, all on account of the rascally lying of a dirty and barbarous native? These and many other questions of similar import crowded on each other's heels through our startled imaginations; for none so well as those who have experienced the sensation know that sickening of feeling, that heaviness of heart, which steals over one when, on the eve of consummating those cherished plans which have been the acme of life's ambition, he sees them all threatened with absolute disappointment.

We sought to stimulate and renew the ardour of our men by the recital of their trustworthiness in the past, and the comparative ease with which they had overcome more menacing dangers than any which the future might have in store. We appealed to them somewhat after this fashion:

“Are you, after all, but fools, but the weak children of children, to be cowed and made fearful by a drunken infidel, whose mouth speaks naught save that which is untrue? Have we not led you far from your homes without bringing upon you grievous injury? Have you not promised your father in Peking that you would stay with his white brothers whatever danger came upon them? How, then, can we take you back to your people, and say, Your men are as cowardly as she-buffaloes, weak and afraid of their own shadows, listening to the babble of old men, and deserting their friends? We have led you far from your homes, it is true; but have we not given word to your father in Peking that we would bring you back to him, and pay you tenfold for every bruise and scar that you bore?”

“You, Yuen, — we know that you are a leader among

your people, — tell us, tell us without reservation, what reason makes your hearts weak and your hands tremble at the babble of a drunken buffalo-calf. Are not all your bellies well filled, and are you not now able to battle as you have done before? If so, tell us. If you wish it, we will return; but what man of you can return to his people, and say, We were afraid, and made our masters come back? Would you not then meet instant death, the death of a coward? We wish you to feel that we have not brought you thus far from your home to thrust you into a land from whence it is impossible to return. We have paid you well in pure silver; we shall pay you better yet when the journey is over. Can you still refuse, or is the heart of the Kiangsis frozen to adamant by their woman's fears?"

The effect of this impromptu speech was magical. For a few moments they remained cowed, and passive, as if heartily ashamed of their attitude, and then we knew that the battle was won.

"I will go if none others will follow!" cried Yuen, seizing our hands. "I will follow the masters wherever they may bid me go. I was drunk with fear, but I am now a man; and if the masters will forgive, I am their slave."

"And I! And I! And I!" went up the cry, until every one of the recent malcontents had crowded around us, and signified a hearty willingness to proceed without delay.

It was our intention to have left Sien-lu on the eighteenth; but a hurricane of considerable fury — such as we had experienced on several former occasions — made it impossible to launch the canoes and proceed with any chance of safety, and we passed the day in strengthening the boats and drying quantities of fresh yak-meat, which

we were able to purchase in the open market. At 6 A. M., on the nineteenth, the warring of the elements had ceased, but huge banks of lowering clouds indicated that the hurricane might be renewed. As there was a possibility that it might hold off for a day or two longer, however, and there was no further reason to retain us at Sien-lu, we embarked on the boiling current of the stream, resolved to make the effort to reach Cheo-Chu-Su by continuing to the northwestward. At 11 A. M. the lowering clouds hanging over the mountain summits descended again upon us, and soon discharged both squall and gale. We steered as much as possible from the shore to prevent being dashed to pieces against the huge palisades of rock that rose like a shining wall of ebony hundreds of feet into the air, and the scene soon became one of frightful peril, and wild beyond description. We were now involved in the dreadful chaos of watery madness and uproar, the howling wind sweeping huge volumes of water into the canoes, until it seemed that each succeeding moment must founder them altogether. Rocks and fearful projections rose from the seething torrent like grinning jaws of relentless demons, as we drove unresistingly along. Grimly and with lion hearts—the hearts of men that face death and hope for life—did the noble Kiangsis respond to our encouraging cries; in desperation and firm resolve not to be conquered, they fought rock and breaker until, at 3 P. M., with bodies drenched and chilled, and muscles stiffened and weary, we saw calm water ahead in a little pool to the right.

Not far from the pool we saw something of unusual aspect. It was a large stockade, the walls being of loose stones instead of wood, in which were some long low buildings where only a few people stood about. The

place looked miserable and deserted, and as those natives whom we could see did not make friendly approaches of any kind, or take any seeming interest in our arrival (although the spectacle of two white men was undoubtedly one that they had seldom, if ever, witnessed before), we were undecided whether to approach the forbidding spot, lest we should become the subject of hostile attack; for with the generally worn-out condition of our crew after the terrible tempest which they had just passed through, such an attack was likely to end disastrously, as we were in no proper mood or condition for making an effective resistance.

We had entertained foolish alarms, however, for in ten minutes we perceived several fine-looking men coming out of the narrow opening to the stockade and approaching in our direction. Their dialect was harsh and guttural, almost appalling in tone; and they talked in a strain so fierce, and mumbled the words together in such profusion, that we were not a little intimidated. With this strangeness of dialect it was some little time before we could elucidate the facts that the name of their village was Khen-pui, — one of the nomadic offshoots of the Tchangoes down-stream, — and that they had taken up their residence in this forbidding region in order to be sufficiently protected against the constant encroachments of their enemies in the surrounding country, who made hostile raids at frequent intervals. It was owing to their fears that we might be new assailants which had prevented their making friendly advances at first; but now that the ice had been broken, they treated us with marked hospitality, until we could not but feel that the exciting scenes of the morning had met with a most gracious ending.

These people are very much like the Chinese of the eastern provinces in general appearance; they wear the same dress, plait the hair in a long cue in a similar manner, and are altogether a superior race in every condition that can exalt one class of men above another. Their abodes were constructed of the crudest materials, and loosely put together; but they presented that one feature so uncommonly met with in China, cleanliness, and with this welcome innovation one could well afford to overlook many other shortcomings. Their teeth were also white and even, in contradistinction to most of the natives of Western China, who invariably file off their teeth and darken them with some indelible compound, until the general effect is extremely barbarous,—a fashion much in vogue also among the natives of central Africa.

On entering the village, we met abundant evidence of the deeply religious character of the population, for numerous wooden and stone idols were scattered around in remarkable profusion; and although doubtless the natives had passed in review these same inanimate figures for many years, they would stop before each one and mutter some prayer. We subsequently calculated the time consumed in this operation, and came to the conclusion that on an average the natives of this village spent one-third of their existence on earth in making active preparation for entrance into the next. What an example to Christianity is this blind and dogged faith, this simple, unaffected, and sincere devoutness, which no amount of scoffing or contumely can lessen or change!

The head man had abstained from coming down to the shore to meet us until he had witnessed our reception of his envoys; but now being apprised of our friendly intentions and our desire to form a pact of good-will, he led

us to a large building in the rear of the village, which was built of square blocks of grayish stone, and some thirty feet in height. This was his own residence, and in a small and unassuming way it was quite a pretentious structure. It consisted of two large apartments, one being reserved exclusively for his numerous ponies, cattle, dogs, and other household possessions, whilst the other was given over to the use of himself and his family.

When we were seated he brought forth innumerable cups of tea, so bitter and strong that, accustomed as we had become to drinking the Chinese liquid, we paled before the necessity of swallowing this mixture after we had tested its strength with a few furtive sips. The natives in this part of the country mix a sort of weed, known as *gulhu*, with their tea, which they are convinced possesses numerous medicinal properties. However that may be, there is no doubt of its exhilarating effect; for small quantities of the bitter mixture as we drank it at once went to the head, until we were reeling and staggering like intoxicated men. The important ceremony of tea-drinking having been disposed of, a number of the chief functionaries of the place were ushered in, who in turn were provided with cups of the mixture. To our astonishment, our host took each cup and sipped a little therefrom, which we immediately construed as a sign of his authority over his subjects. We eventually, however, learned the real reason, which was to furnish evidence that the tea was not poisoned. To judge from the precautions which are taken in this district against assassination and poisoning, these people must be veritable Borgias. With a full knowledge of the deleterious influence of strong tea upon the bodies and nerves of the Western peoples, when consumed steadily year in and year out, we

were at a loss to account for its not producing any serious effect upon the general health of this populace. The only plausible explanation of this fact would appear to be that the extreme salubriousness of their climate, and the active life which they spend out-of-doors, offsets or neutralises the bad effects.

From Khen-pui the Kinsha bends southeast for four miles, turning again northeast at a point marked by a considerable graveyard, — undoubtedly one of the general repositories for the dead of the surrounding country, in which we saw some really sumptuous temples. The mountain ranges farther back gradually retire, and permit a long sloping plain covered with grassy wastes to extend from the river bank for miles. Immense herds of yaks and small native horses might be seen grazing, giving to the region a remarkable pastoral appearance.

Lying as it does on the direct road to Lhasa, and serving as a natural trading outpost of the Szchuenese and Sifan provinces, one would naturally infer that Cheo-Chu-Su would be a place of considerable importance. It must be confessed, however, that appearances in the immediate neighbourhood leading up to it are not directly favourable to such an inference, and seem to indicate that the surrounding district must have fallen into comparative desuetude long ago. Before reaching the town we were made aware of its presence by numerous flotillas of native fishermen with their hide-coracles and bladder-rafts, who were unresolved whether to fly or wait until we had drawn up with them. Ungovernable curiosity in the end dominated over fear and surprise, and, furtively making advances in our direction, we soon established friendly terms with them by the presentation of several pieces of red cloth and twenty loaves of barley bread, with the added

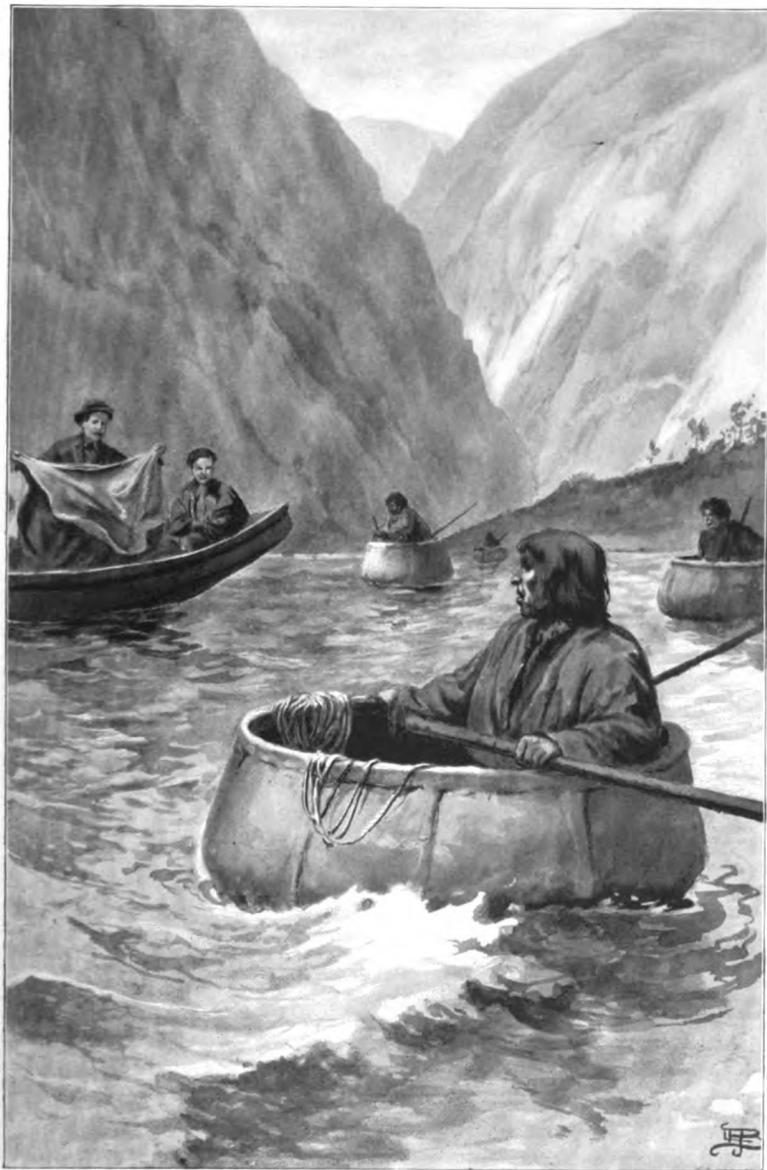


"TRADING WITH CHEO-CHU-SU FISHERMAN."

munificent disposal in reckless profusion of our dried yak meat.

The people of Cheo-Chu-Su do not enjoy a high reputation, and we found that their general character had in no wise been slandered; for they were an infamous lot of as dirty and rascally thieves as ever lived, who, notwithstanding their outrageous inquisitiveness, seemed utterly devoid of the power of observation. There were several fairly clean-looking houses in the village, however, and on the hospitality of one of these abodes we cast ourselves, albeit with some fear and trembling. We were soon ready and willing to exchange its delights for the less unpretentious ones of a camp on shore, as a numerous horde of pigs, for which the people seemed to entertain a sort of gluttonous reverence, made their familiarities too pronounced.

The next morning we were waited upon by the T'ng, the real head man of the place having been absent several weeks on a journey to a sacred shrine in the mountains to the southwestward. The official who presided in his absence was far from presenting a sufficiently exalted appearance for such dignity as had been conferred on him, and really seemed quite bowed down under the heavy burden of temporary government. He was a funny little man, who, with even a towering hat on his head, did not come above our chins, with a rotund body that seemed capable of holding untold gallons of tea, for he drank this mixture with a persistency which caused us constantly to wonder when the exact point of satiation would be reached. His bombast and braggadocio, characteristic of most small bodies, was a wonderful thing to behold. He sought duly to impress us with the fact that his warrior reputation had made him a being greatly feared in the whole country around. We were somewhat minded to



"TRADING WITH CHEO-CHU-SU FISHERMAN."

doubt this last assertion, for when several vermin-clothed lamas entered, later on, he appeared to be under their very thumbs, seeking with ludicrous anticipation to gratify their every desire.

We had an opportunity on the following day to witness a curious ceremony attending the sacrifice of several yaks and fowl to the special deity supposed to guard over the traders of the town, who took this infallible method of securing protection for their journeyings before setting forth. Shortly after daybreak the traders, with their families and friends, gathered in the open market-place, where half a dozen lamas in black robes of office were already awaiting, and handed over the animals to be slaughtered. At a signal from one of the priests, all fell prostrate to the ground, chanting the strain of a dolorous chant which extolled the worth of the particular deity whose favour was desired. At its conclusion there were a few brief moments of silence, during which time the priests prostrated themselves toward the four directions of the compass and diffused a grayish powder in the air. Then, without a moment's warning, the dumb beasts were led unresistingly forward and stabbed to the heart. As the warm blood gushed forth it was caught in a large iron receptacle, and, having been tasted and blessed by the lamas, was passed around from lip to lip to be sipped,—the person so inoculated being supposed to be impervious to danger of any kind. The efficacy of this particular function may well be doubted, for it does not seem to have had the effect of preventing the massacre of many of the traders; and it would be interesting to note in what manner the lamas, shrewd as they undoubtedly are, can explain away these frequent failures. But after one has been in Western China for a few months, it does

not take long to appreciate the fact that in the guise of religion nothing is impossible.

The vicinity of Cheo-Chu-Su is really remarkable for the immense enterprise displayed in the erection of numerous substantial and much needed bridges. In most cases these are made of iron chains, with immense stone foundations; but across the smaller streams the cruder form of bridge is seen, which, as it is in general use throughout Western China, may here be described. These bridges con-



ROPE AND CARRIER BRIDGE, CHEO-CHU-SU.

sist merely of two ropes stretched across the numerous streams and chasms, arranged much after the manner of the breeches life-saving line used in modern coast-guard service. There are always two ropes, — one for going and one for returning, — so stretched that each has a considerable slope downward. A small runner consisting of a half cylinder of wood is placed on the rope, which is generally constructed of twisted bamboo withes. The intrepid voyager seats himself in the runner, and then with both hands grasping its sides shoots down the incline at a hair-raising pace until the opposite bank is reached.

It need hardly be said that it requires considerable courage to undertake this performance of shooting from shore to shore, when a raging torrent of menacing waters foams and hungrily leaps up a hundred feet below.

We halted for a week at Cheo-Chu-Su, as our situation was truly deplorable. Either from the effect of the stagnant water which they were obliged to drink, or from frequent contact with vile-smelling and diseased natives, a number of the Kiangsis were attacked with a most virulent fever, and it was only by unceasing care that we were able to save their lives. The poor fellows were not ungrateful, for their mutinous episode at Sien-lu still rankled in their minds, and they implored with tears in their eyes that we would forgive them. We readily did so, firmly convinced that the result could not fail to work to our advantage, for our long journeying had made us aware of the fact that nothing so presages unqualified success as unanimity of determination in master and servant.

On the twenty-eighth of April, with an addition to our force of eight steersmen and two guides, and encouraged by favourable reports of the country ahead, we left Cheo-Chu-Su; and almost immediately thereafter the river current expanded and grew less restless, enabling us to make more expeditious progress than we had hitherto been able to do. The water was strangely clear, and in the bed of the stream we observed granite boulders, blue shale, basalt, porphyry, and quartz. We were now entering the province of Sifan proper, and we could not but feel considerable elation over the fact that, notwithstanding the pessimistic outlook which had been repeatedly forecasted for us, we had not as yet been called upon to face any of these prophesied dangers. The country during

the afternoon was majestic in the extreme. Peaks, cones, mountain humps, and dome-like hills shot up in every direction, while ice-cold streams rolled between riven and dismantled rocks, or escaped beneath natural bridges of granite with furious roar. The cliffs on either hand had been worn into a thousand numerous and fantastic shapes, standing mute and gloomy like an immense army of giants with distorted and eccentric forms. The traces of some tremendous convulsion at some long removed period were plainly evident in this huge jumble of natural ruin and disarray. The strata were perpendicular; seams of white quartz travelled along the lay of the strata in some places, and in others it appeared to have been encased in round moulds, which the impetuous waters of the madly rushing Kinsha had worn through, sweeping away the quartz and leaving large hollows, cavities, and fissures in the sandstone.

This country is admirably adapted for a mountain tribe to defend themselves in; and after one has gazed on these immense bulwarks of nature, one can well understand the long sequence of disaster and ruin which has overtaken all efforts of the government to bring it under territorial authority.

Our first night in this country was passed in the small fishing hamlet of Nha'hi'wan, which we reached at 9 P. M. It was a miserable village, situated on a little triangle of flat ground at the mouth of a narrow gully, through which a sheeny cascade fell two hundred feet from the top of the cliff overhanging the river bank. The village was surrounded by a palisade of roughly laid stones, enclosing a space about two hundred feet in diameter. We counted the houses as well as we could, and at a rough calculation put them at fifty or sixty. They were,

however, more substantial and pretentious looking than those met with elsewhere, but here their merit ended ; for the interiors were little better than pest-houses, into which was crowded a wild-eyed and unkempt population who answered our questioning glances with low growlings and the grinding of teeth, much like a huge colony of hungry wolves. One could not help thinking that vile smells are perhaps, after all, not so unhealthy as we civilised people imagine, for in no other way is it possible to explain the comparative isolation from disease of the Chinese, who truly live their entire lives in the midst of sewers and cesspools.

We were not a little intimidated and minded to distrust the peaceable character of the villagers, when we beheld the spectacle



THIBETAN — REDSKIN TYPE.

of numerous bones and skulls hanging in rows over the doorway of each dwelling, which, beneath the full moon, and with the witch-like stage-setting of the mountains behind, was not unlike a stamping-ground of spooks. On investigating more closely, however, our fears were quieted, for we soon discovered that the bones and skulls which had caused us such concern were those of antelopes and yaks, the trophies of innumerable hunting expeditions.

The curious custom prevailed among these people of

painting the body with a thick gummy substance, black in colour, the exact meaning of which was never apparent, except that it in a measure afforded a waterproof epidermis and was protection against the cold, which, with the high altitude of the district, notwithstanding the fact that it was the end of April, was keenly discernible.

Like the natives of Central Africa, these people wore numerous large iron rings in their ears and noses, which, coupled with their general fierce and forbidding expression, gave them a sinister appearance that detracted from their real natures, which, once understood, we found, despite the uncouth and barbarous exterior, to be remarkably hospitable and honest; nor did we notice in them any of that inordinate curiosity manifested by the tribes we had encountered farther back.

CHAPTER V.

THE little insight we obtained into the manners of Sifan at Nha'hi'wan impressed us with the idea that we were about to enter into a land of an extraordinary people, as different as possible from the stereotyped tribes of Western China. For four long months we had toiled up the resisting current of the Kinsha Kiang; for one hundred and twenty days we had battled successfully against its hungry reefs and rocks; and now the great moment had come for the most arduous and difficult task of all,—the penetration still farther up the stream of the great river, through a land which for centuries had resented intrusion of any kind, not alone from white men, but even from the wild and semi-barbarous tribes of the adjacent districts. Should we succeed? Would this land of mystery unlock its doors to the assault which we were about to make upon it, or would all our labours fail, and we be driven back broken in spirit and defeated in purpose? Should we share a fate similar to that of the intrepid Quincy twenty years before, as with his torn and bleeding band he staggered back after repeated quests to his untimely death in the heart of a continent, defeated but not conquered? We looked into each other's faces for the answer and read it there: The future alone can tell!

Such were our reflections as on the morning of the first of May the canoes were launched, provisions for a month's journeying having been stored, and the dingy well sur-

rounding the little village where we had been quartered for the last few days faded from view behind the towering wall of mountain peaks that at once shot up and closed in on the river bank.

A journey of sixteen miles north by west, through a sterile country which gave no evidences of cultivation or fertility of any kind, carried us to Us-mu-hui, a large straggling village situated on the slope of a hill. There were few huts visible, but the hillside itself was bored full of innumerable caves, from which the natives were seen emerging as soon as they descried our approach, giving the appearance of a colony of ants swarming out of their holes. We took an opportunity, before landing, of noting their general characteristics. They were in featural respects similar to those whom we had seen at Nha'-hi'wan, but a larger, stouter, and apparently more civilised race, for they were clothed in cloth garments instead of the miserable shaggy skins of yaks; and that they were industrious we were led to believe from the numerous fine plantations of wheat and barley which we could see waving on the hillsides. But what pleasure might be derived from these facts was soon banished, as we immediately had evidences of their hostile nature; for as the canoes drew near to the shore they crowded down to it, armed with long spears and poles, and loudly manifesting their pugnacious intentions should we persist in landing. As no other place offered itself where we could beach the canoes, and as it was an impossibility to think of making farther progress up-stream in the darkness of the cavern-like obscurity ahead, we offered several ounces of silver for the privilege of landing; but with a gesture of contempt they refused everything, and from their action and manner we soon became convinced that no amount of

parley would win the day. Therefore, we prepared to make a landing and encamp for the night at all hazards.

The natives at first fell back at the show of this determination on our part ; but, emboldened by an increase in their numbers, and perceiving the small size of our force, they finally became aggressive, throwing showers of stones and mud at us, until the crew, exasperated beyond all measure of endurance, looked at us appealingly for the necessary permission to avenge their injuries. As we were anxious to avoid bloodshed, if possible, we waited a few minutes longer to see if the weight of threats or further promises would have any material effect ; but it was like talking in the teeth of a north wind. Neither cajolery, promises of presents, nor downright threats of punishment produced any effect upon them ; and, perceiving that with the flying missiles there was a chance of our sustaining serious injury, we ordered the crew to charge the ranks of the hostile natives with the butts of their guns, but on no account to fire unless pressed to do so by necessity. We soon discovered that their valorous front was only as real as they imagined would be our fear of their menacing shouts, for they did not await the onslaught of the Kiangsis, but with creditable discretion rushed back to their cave dwellings, whence they did not venture forth again until after we had reëmbarked on the following morning. With this manifestation of the vapidty of the valour of these people, we could not but feel that the dangers ahead, upon which we had brooded with no little concern, were materially lessened ; at the same time, recognising the character of the natives we were about to encounter, we were fully impressed that the price of safety must ever be unflinching vigilance.

From Us-mu-hui to Ruza-tal, a village on Dui-chu, which we reached on May 4th, game is abundant, but the landscape is very bleak and sterile. We were obliged to carry the canoes across numerous lines of rapids at intervals of every four or five hours, the river in this part of its course being very shallow, in some places not over two or three feet deep. Granite boulders protruded above the surface, and the boiling point at one of the fords showed an elevation of 8,233 feet above the level of the sea. There were numerous suspension bridges across the river, constructed of bamboo withes and strips of yak-skin, which were marvels of native ingenuity. For some reason or other, the country for the whole distance was apparently depopulated, for not a sign of human life of any kind did we perceive; but we saw numerous herds of red deer, which were so timid that, despite our best efforts, we could not shoot any of them. The natives of Ruza-tal and the surrounding district speak the same dialect as do the races on the upper Yangtse Kiang near Luipo, and are much given to personal adornment. They split the lobes of their ears, and introduce bits of wood or iron to extend the gash, from which hang ponderous iron or brass rings weighing several pounds. They also dye their faces with various coloured mixtures, and dress their hair in long ringlets, which are adorned with pendants of copper or large red and white beads.

The population of Hui-su-lan, six miles farther up the stream of the Kinsha, which we reached at noontime of the next day, is reported to be about the same as that of Ruza-tal, and the town hangs in a similar manner on a hilly spur jutting northward into the gorge of the Zei-tun-du. It is, however, more picturesque, better built, cleaner, and shelters a far more peaceable-looking popu-

lation than Ruza-tal. On a hill which commands it from the southwest the natives have built several almost impregnable redoubts. The slopes of the gorge have been covered with the black alluvial deposits taken from the river bank and transformed into elongated plains of waving corn-fields ; and few prospects in all China are more charming than this magnificent valley with its tumbling streams, scattered gardens, and the picturesque town perched on an eyrie above. We found it hard to realise that in this smiling region more trouble has arisen during the last two centuries than in nearly any other part of China. So, however, it is. Hui-su-lan has been the stronghold of Southern Sifan from time immemorial, a thorn in the side of the pastoral and peaceably disposed districts to the south, owing to the numerous incursions of the fierce robber bands who acknowledge no sovereign's right to hamper their freest liberty. The facial type and spirit of the free aborigine have survived here ; tall, handsome, though somewhat sharp-featured, agile as mountain goats and brave as lions, these fierce tribes have maintained their independence in the past, and seem bound to maintain it in the future, until the slowly moving wave of civilisation shall in turn have crushed their haughty spirit.

Grand and impressive scenery met the eye in every direction as we journeyed to Su-Chu, the next village, where we attained an altitude of over nine thousand feet above the ocean. Peaks and knolls rose in all directions, for we were now ascending to the eastern front of the Siu-Chau Mountains. The summits of the loftiest of these ranges were seen to the north, their slopes offering sustenance to large herds of yak and red deer. We had intended to engage in a hunting expedition in this dis-

trict, but the appearance of numbers of uncouth and armed shepherds effectually banished any desire to have with these cut-throat gentlemen more than a passing acquaintance. Between Hui-su-lan and Su-Chu I was much struck by the resemblance which much of the scenery bore to that which I had seen in Switzerland. In fact, had it not been for the natives themselves, one would have had difficulty in believing that he was not really among the peaks and valleys of the Alps. As we neared Su-Chu, villages were seen dotted over every hill, the inhabitants of which, emboldened by frequent successful marauding expeditions, were formidably aggressive.

The Pa-Urgs, who inhabit this part of Sifan, are the finest people in physique that we saw in Asia. They were tall, robust, manly in bearing, and possessed very singular features. Notwithstanding the appreciable coldness of the climate, they were dressed in the thinnest of clothing, the children running around in a state of absolute nudity, without any deleterious effects manifesting themselves from this apparently suicidal exposure. Like the tribes farther down-stream, they were possessed of an inordinate love of display, wearing enormous ornaments of brass and iron around the loins, armlets and leglets of brass, brass-wire collars, gold beads plentifully sprinkled over the hair, and about a dozen long necklaces of silver or gold beads hanging from the neck. The women are a shade lighter than the men, and are really good-looking, judging by the Asiatic standard. I failed to notice any Chinese traces, the general featural characteristics being more negroidal, particularly the hair, which was short and curly in those who had any at all, the general practice prevailing of shaving the head until it was absolutely bald,—the effect of these shining

pates when gathered in groups being ludicrous in the extreme.

The evidences that had heretofore confronted us regarding the abundance of gold and silver deposits in the country were strengthened on reaching Su-Chu, for there the search of the precious metals formed a considerable industry. There was no systematic effort, however, to mine for it, that which was obtained being mere surface deposits, and what could be washed by a panning process from the small streams in the vicinity and from the sands of the Kinsha.

The natives of Su-Chu we discovered to be a reserved and haughty race, who, although making no hostile advances, refused to sell us more than a few dozen eggs or to permit us to encamp on the shore beneath their village. It cannot be said with truth that the Sifanese method of preparing eggs is to be highly commended, for we concluded that they were decidedly nasty, although the crew seized upon them with every token of relish as delicacies not to be scoffed at. The eggs are taken when fresh and steeped in a solution of lime and salt; the lime penetrates through the shell, turns all the egg quite black, and leaves a burnt and bitter taste. After this initial preparation, the egg is encased in clay and baked for several hours. In this way, with the clay outside, they will keep for months. The white is in the form of a gummy jelly, while the yolk is of the consistency of a hard-boiled egg.

On our arrival we discovered that we had come at a most inauspicious time of the year in which to hope to secure hospitable entertainment, as the native population was given up to the enormous undertaking of washing the bones of their ancestors. When we first

saw this operation it struck us as being remarkably funny; but it is an exceedingly serious matter to the natives themselves, and is a custom pretty generally existing among the tribes of Western China and Thibet. For many centuries it has been an established rule among them once a year to exhume the bones of their ancestors and wash them. This annual washing usually lasts for a period of two or three weeks, or even a month, and is a function attended with much ceremonious pomp and religious devotion. Huge pots of water are placed beside the graves, and one by one the bones are taken out, carefully scoured, and then tenderly consigned to their resting-place once more. These bones are also looked upon as having a high market-value, it being considered a mark of great esteem among the members of the tribe to be the proud possessor of the largest "bonery," so that the trading and bartering of them for other objects forms a considerable industry. They are frequently seized upon by creditors for debt, when at once the unfortunate debtor is shunned by the rest of the tribe, and is suffered to remain in disgrace until he shall have redeemed them.

There is a singular fascination about this country. The land might be admired for its glorious diversified prospects even though it were a howling wilderness, but it owes a great deal of the power which it exercises over the imagination to the consciousness that in it dwells a peculiarly fascinating people. On all sides rolls in grand waves a voluptuous land of supreme majesty, filled to abundance and overflowing from the horn of plenty, bathed in early summer verdure, and cooled by soft breezes blown from snow-begirtled mountain tops. Isolated hill cones and square tabular masses rise up from the beautiful landscape to attract with mysterious awe the

curious stranger's observation ; the varying diorama constantly unfolded to view suggests peace and hospitality, while on the far verge of the horizon the beauty and charm of the land may be seen melting into the blues of distance.

The Sifanese villages in this district are the earliest settlements made by this race, when the grim irony of fate drove them a thousand miles inland from the fair Pacific provinces ; and under the rule of their tribal chiefs and lamas they prosper exceedingly, and overawe the Chinese government and the neighbouring alien tribes. Having stipulated for immunity from interference, these chiefs keep their tribesmen quiet, and enjoy (comparatively speaking) a good reputation. East of Su-Chu, however, during late years, a large number of Koko-Norese villages have been founded, of which the principal is Nhi'l'tu on the right bank of the Dja Chu, for whose inhabitants no one, Chinese or Sifanese, has a good word, since they are a most infamous and lawless race of brigands, who pillage the trading caravans and levy toll on passengers over the road, and when necessity requires even combat with the aggressive and valorous Sifanese, generally managing to come off first best. It is owing undoubtedly to this pressing need of home protection that, during the last few years, the Sifanese antipathy to strangers has been softened, the maxim of fighting fire with fire seeming to all intents and purposes to have worked admirably ; for it is a rumour, and one which seems to have some modicum of truth appertaining to it, that the idea of settling the warlike Koko-Norese is a part of a plan originated in Peking itself to waste this country by tribal strife until its subjugation will be fairly practicable.

On the tenth of May, after a very necessary halt of two days at Su-Chu, we entered the Djé-ga country near a strange valley which bore innumerable evidences of great antiquity of human occupation. In the numerous small villages on shore we discovered the ruins of what were undoubtedly ancient structures of considerable magnitude; but the natives were firmly convinced that these interesting spots were the homes of the ubiquitous gods, and no amount of persuasion would secure from them permission to undertake the exploration of these interesting relics, which are unquestionably the same that Marco Polo refers to as seen by him when passing through this country to the westward to Eastern Thibet. We were able, however, to examine closely several small stone and iron images which had been taken from these tombs, which seem to justify the contention of Prejevalsky and other ethnologists, who have made a minute study of this great region of Central Asia, that many centuries ago this portion was inhabited by a highly cultured race of people, who were either driven to the southward and across the wild fastnesses of the Himalayas into India, or who retired toward the west and were gradually absorbed into the tribes of Persia and Asia Minor. The features of these carvings were invariably of classic mould, with none of the characteristics of the latter-day Chinese present in any manner or form, and chiselled with undeniable skill.

On the eleventh we reached Mu-ghra, and became acquainted with a chief of whose prowess we had heard for many miles down the river,—a rather left-handed compliment, however, as his reputation had been gained from his general lawlessness and the persistency and skill which he had shown in harassing all trade passing through his district; until, to quench his brigand assaults,

when the armed force sent against him had proved futile, the government very wisely offered him a substantial pension to abstain from his nefarious practices. He was an artful old fellow, and, learning of our approach, came down to the river bank in person to extend to us the hand of good-fellowship, at the same time advancing covert hints as to substantial reward he expected for this unusual unbending of dignity. We presented him with an old musket in the last stages of decrepitude, in the hope that if, in a rash moment of attempting to fire it, it should carry off his head, we might with justice enter a claim for reward for having rid the country of as precious a rascal as ever drew the breath of life. Either through reason of an uncommon mood of amiability or the expectation of more presents yet to come, he announced his intention of duly celebrating our arrival by the usual stock method customary in this country, — where people live to eat, not eat to live, — of holding an enormous feast on the following morning.

Our previous experience in this line had not been altogether satisfactory; but deeming it a measure of policy to accept, we fortified ourselves for the ordeal by a twelve-hour fast, and at the appointed time were ushered into his residence, which was a pretentious abode (so far as pretention in Sifan goes), where with much dignity we went through the ceremony of touching foreheads with his numerous wives, and caressing with simulated affection a numerous colony of naked and unwashed children. In the meantime the feast had ¹⁰ $\frac{3}{4}$ prepared, and with a number of the head men of the place we adjourned to the banquet-hall. Down the centre of the floor were laid long strips of bamboo covered with yak and antelope skins, and on these were piled all sorts of edibles, con-

spicuous among which a couple of small roast pigs held the place of honour. Fowls, fish, bread, potatoes, and large plums were piled in such volume that we should have wondered where the necessary guests were to be found to dispose of this vast mountain of food, had we not been made well aware by numerous experiences in the past of the inordinate capacities of native stomachs.



LONG-HAIRED YAK.

We all took our places on the mats, and the chief proceeded to chop the pigs into enormous proportions, which were distributed among the guests. A wooden trough of clean water was passed around, in which each one rinsed his hand; and with this formality the test of their internal area of capacity began. In the twinkling of an eye, it seemed, the vast mountains of food had summarily disappeared down dozens of yawning chasms which were repeatedly calling for more with all the pertinacity of

Oliver Twist, till, stuffed to the extremest limit, human endurance rebelled, and the feast came to an end, those who had partaken too liberally of food or of the strong pundu being trundled to their respective abodes by submissive and meek-eyed females.

Next day we witnessed a masked dance by half a dozen monks, who, having been apprised of our arrival, had ventured down from a monastery in the hills to inflict upon us their evil-smelling and sinister persons. Their immense inquisitiveness having been satisfied by a general inspection of our features, clothing, scientific apparatus, compass, and guns, they resolved, as it were, to kill two birds at one stone, and crowding into the open square in front of the abode of the chief man of the place, with an enormous tom-tomming and beating of gongs they summoned the natives to attend the promised spectacle. The open space was soon crowded, and among the closely huddled spectators we noticed a dozen unprepossessing looking nuns, with shaven heads and yellow caps, — an innovation which we could not rightly account for, as in Western China womanhood is generally barred from taking part in all religious ceremonies. It was evidently not the custom among them to doom the best-looking females to a convent life, for the nuns whom we saw were a most wicked-looking and repulsive set of viragoes, who during the dance of the lamas took advantage of the opportunity to rush around like a colony of escaped lunatics, outpouring a continuous tongue-lashing, and worrying the spectators to, it must be confessed, a rather halting liberality. The dance of the monks was one of the quaintest and weirdest sights imaginable; around and around flew the hideously masked figures, adorned in long red garments, while a solemn dirge eminently befitting a funeral

was chanted in monotonous repetition by the surrounding group of spectators. The exact symbolic significance of this custom we were unable to ascertain at the time ; but we subsequently learned that it was to accustom the people to seeing fearful images, in order that after death, when their spirits were wandering in space, they might not be frightened by the innumerable demons they would be called upon to encounter. Be that as it might, one could not help thinking that even the best efforts of the gods themselves could not conceive more horrible objects than these masked and madly whirring lamas.

The Buddhist religion, as seen in Sifan and the other provinces of Western China, would puzzle one who had made some small acquaintance with the pure morality preached by Gautama Buddha, whose religion is the prevailing one in the eastern provinces. In general precepts the two forms are in antithesis. Gautama Buddhism is essentially simple and readily understood even by the most unreceptive mind. Lama Buddhism, however, shows a striving after something more tangible ; and the effort to present a worldly aspect which may be viewed with the eye and heard with the ear rather than accepted as dogma and theory, which are looked upon as too abstract for the ordinary human mind, has evolved a new religion entirely. This in time, fostered by the grossest superstition and by the unintelligent sympathies of a debased and barbarous population, has grown to a form similar to that of African Fetichism. The religious destinies of the people have been consigned to a rascally crew of monks, who take advantage of the cloak of religion to be offenders against every principle of equality and right.

On leaving Mu-ghra, several of the crew were stricken with asthma in the most violent form, doubtless owing to



DANCE OF MASKED LAMAS AT MU-GHRA.

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the continuous clouds of dust which blew in the vicinity, and to the intense cold of the high altitude we had reached. During the next few days the thermometer seldom rose above forty degrees; in the early morning it fell as low as ten, and during the night it was below zero. The course of the stream, however, remained clear of ice, owing to the swiftness of the current; but with the constant benumbing of our bodies until it was almost an impossibility to make any progress whatsoever, we were confronted by the contingency that, unless the weather conditions should become equable in the immediate future, it would be absolutely material to our continued safety to abandon the river, and continue our journey overland along some one of the numerous trade routes leading to Batang.

Seven miles from Mu-ghra we came upon the considerable village of Pien-Chu, where we found that the natives, though they were tolerant of our presence, and by no means ill-disposed, would not condescend to sell us provisions or provide us with river guides. In consequence of this, we were afterward exposed to a series of calamities, which at one time threatened our very existence. This region was remarkable chiefly for the immense flocks of birds which could be seen wherever the eye rested. Among them we noticed plover, snipe, herons, spoonbills, three different varieties of geese, and numerous eagles and buzzards. They were remarkably tame, and we were able to shoot a great many.

Beyond Pien-Chu the current of the river became exceedingly tempestuous, which, accompanied by a wind blowing almost a gale, rendered our position highly precarious. For two long hours the canoes pitched and tossed through the heavy, sluggish waves which crashed

upon us with giant force, when our sturdy efforts were rewarded by the sight of smoother water ahead, a sort of small bay surrounded by an impenetrable hedge of thick cane-brake. As we were compelled by numerous obstructions to keep close to the right bank of the river, we were only twenty feet from shore, when, rounding a jutting cape, we saw half a dozen natives almost totally devoid of clothing, who, apparently perceiving us for the first time, extended baskets of fish and barley meal, at the same time beckoning us to approach nearer. We acceded so far as to approach within a few feet of them, when, almost immediately, they seized upon some large stones and hurled them at us. We sheered off instantly, and rejoined the rest of the canoes farther out; nor were we a moment too soon, for directly nearly forty of the infamous wretches, throwing aside all concealment, rushed out of the dense cane-brake, and began throwing huge rocks at us from long leather slings, striking the canoes, and seriously wounding two of the canoemen. To prevent their continuing this undeserved aggression by following us along the river bank, I discharged my revolver rapidly at them, and one of the natives fell, whereupon the others desisted from their attack and retreated, leaving us to pursue our way unmolested.

Usu'h'nuen, which we reached on the sixteenth, is the commencement of a most beautiful pastoral country, over which heaved and rolled in low, broad waves a green, grassy plain, whereon fed hundreds of yaks and small antelopes, and even a few musk-deer. We tried to stalk several of the latter, but they were exceedingly wary, owing to the assiduity with which they are hunted by the natives, and, despite our best endeavours, we were unable to get near enough for a shot.

As soon as we had encamped at Usu'h'nuen, a mounted messenger arrived with a present of three baskets of fish and an abundance of yak meat from the head man of the village, with the assurance that this illustrious dignitary would call upon us later, as soon as he had gone through with several lamas some tedious religious business regarding his ancestors. We were somewhat minded to doubt the sincerity of this generous outburst of hospitality, for the fish were of that unpleasant odour which is suggestive of long and protracted absence from their natural homes. As we did not wish to antagonise him, however, we returned by the messenger five yards of red cloth and two pounds of lead, which was repayment a thousand fold for the present that he had sent us. In a couple of hours he arrived on the scene in person, attended by half a dozen frowzy and unkempt-looking females, frightfully repugnant and obese, whom he informed us were his wives. As soon as we had touched foreheads all around, they seated themselves on the floor, and began talking in such loud and fierce tones that it was almost an impossibility for us to make ourselves heard. The general appearance of their bodies, which were but scantily concealed beneath a small cloth extending from the shoulders and falling half-way to the knee, confirmed most strongly the general opinion which we had already formed, that the Sifanese never wash. There may, however, be another reason for this neglect, namely, to secure a protecting epidermis of dirt; for, experiencing later the violent attacks of innumerable hordes of vindictive flies, we could not abstain from the desire for similar protection ourselves.

In the afternoon, in return for the courteous visit of the morning, we called upon the head man at his own

residence, a small, cave-like opening in the hillside, and as dark as the entrance into another world. How the Sifanese are able to live in these human graves, with their accompanying stench, darkness, and squalor, is quite beyond my ken; but, after all, custom is able to reconcile us to almost anything. When we had become wonted to the gloominess of the dungeon, we saw that it consisted of one long apartment, with numerous beams overhead, from which hung a vile-smelling and infamous collection of dried fish, putrid yak meat, and various dirty skins all jumbled together, which, notwithstanding the fact that we had in a measure become accustomed to kindred spectacles by our protracted sojourn in the country, we immediately sickened at, until an occasion arising, the remainder of the interview was transferred to the healthier, if not much cleaner, environment out-of-doors.

The head man of Usu'h'nuen, like another of his ilk whom we had cause to remember with less than charitable feelings, was a most vainglorious boaster and buffoon, with the added undesirable accompaniment of being a liar of the first rank. His tales of the people and dangers to be met with in the country to the north were marvellous. Without compunction, he told of regions that we must pass through, where there was a race of men with but one arm and leg, who could run swifter than the fastest horse, and lived by sucking the blood of their captives. Yet another wonderful narrative concerned a long plain which we must inevitably cross, inhabited by the spirits of departed herds of yaks, who, unseen and unheard, trampled down men and caravans into the ground. It was only by the greatest exercise of self-restraint that we were enabled to refrain from committing a most serious breach of etiquette by laughing outright at these numerous narratives,

which outvied the most subtle imaginings of a Munchausen; and it need hardly be said that, with a vivid knowledge of the effect that similar tales had produced in the minds of our Kiangsi crew, we took the extremest care that these nebulous fancies should not reach their ears.

In the evening a troupe of professional dancers gave us a performance which in its general effects was similar to that of the lamas at Mu-ghra, the masks used being the most hideous impersonations of innumerable animals of which the most erudite books of natural history never make mention; yet, as we witnessed these gruesome objects, we could not for the time being help imagining ourselves transformed to another planet inhabited by a race of the most evil-looking demons. The dancers, having as a necessary precaution taken up a collection in advance, began by walking around the enclosed space in slow time to the monotonous beating of two drums. Soon the beat of the drums quickened, aided by the thrumming of a five-stringed banjo, and around and around the dancers whirled in true dervish style; gradually working themselves up to an insane frenzy of zeal, they began to emit the most horrible yells, and glided around faster and faster, until sheer muscular inaction caused them to fall to the ground. As soon as the first batch had tired, their places were immediately taken by a new set, with masks of devils instead of beasts, who went through a similar performance, chanting a dirge appalling in its mournfulness, until we were undecided as to whether we were not ourselves serving in this most doleful function.

The summits of the mountain ranges in the vicinity of Usu'h'nuen were clothed with an abundance of coarse grass, and it was but natural to suppose that the natives were owners of considerable herds. They were in most

ways hospitable and friendly, but their keen trading instincts impelled them to demand such exorbitant prices for every article that we were unable to purchase from them more than a few baskets of meal.

We halted three days in this village, to give the crew a little of that rest which they so well deserved before continuing the arduous progress up-stream. During this time we were waited upon daily by numerous chiefs and lamas from the surrounding district, whom we found, if anything, a lower grade removed from the barbarous wretches with whom we had already foregathered. Western China in this respect is truly a land of surprises, for when one imagines that he has reached a spot where the force of squalor and retrogression can no farther go, immediately it is to stumble on a region in comparison with which that already witnessed is a paradise of every virtue.

Before leaving Usu'h'nuen the head man provided us with four guides to navigate our course up-stream, with whose much-vaunted faithfulness he sought fully to acquaint us. They might just as well have remained behind, for, in fact, they accompanied us only so far as our noon-time halting-place, when they gave us due notice of their unwillingness to accompany the expedition farther by making their escape. Their defection brought us this compensation, however, that we resolved in all future arrangements of this kind to ensure the integrity of those we employed by not paying them until their services had been dispensed with.

The country on either bank of the Kinsha had become extremely populous, and gave unmistakable evidences of fertility; but the native villages and individual habitations constantly progressed in a retrograde scale, until we were anxious to avoid them as much as possible,

owing to the constant menace of contracting some violent epidemic with which we should be unable to combat.

After a journey of sixteen miles through this country, we camped, on the seventeenth, on the east bank of the Kinsha, a short distance below the spot where the rapid stream of the Pag-Chu empties into it. This stream takes its rise near the base of the Snow Mountains to the eastward, and, flowing through the long plateau, is met by countless little streams percolating through the country, until the united torrent, rushing with impetuous force a little north of west, after numerous falls plunges into the Kinsha, forming a rapid, flowing at an altitude of nearly twenty feet, a mile in length.

Our arrival soon became known to the natives in the surrounding district, who crowded down with alacrity from the heights surrounding to witness the novel spectacle of two white men. Through their head men they expressed their desire for friendly intercourse, and we were enabled to buy of them immense quantities of fresh vegetables and other necessities at ridiculously low rates. On several occasions we ventured into their villages, which were in most respects similar to those we had already encountered in the country, gloomy cave-habitations dug out of the steep faces of the hills.

The natives in this region are undoubtedly the most highly civilised to be found in Sifan, and seem possessed of a fair knowledge of a form of government, which is eminently democratic in most respects, each village or tribe being governed by a chief, who is selected by the men of the place at infrequent intervals, remaining in office so long as he merits the popular good-will, and when ceasing to do this being summarily ejected and returning to his low estate, to make room for a more popular claim-

ant. The result, as might be expected, is that the various aspirants for the honour are strongly supported by their factions, the contest not infrequently ending in bloody feuds which continue for months and years at a time, or until the defeated but not conquered party moves to another district, and there inaugurates a village of his own, which, in turn, is split up by political war, — and so on from generation to generation.

The average altitude of our camps after entering the Sifanese country was not at any time below eight thousand feet; and as we journeyed north the nights were bitterly cold, caused, no doubt, by the chilly blasts hurtled down on to the plain from the mountains in the near distance. Thick, foggy vapours, hanging low over the river current during the day, likewise added to the general gloominess of the scene; and it was a welcome relief, when, having with the assistance of the natives carried the canoes past ten miles of rapids, we were enabled to go over the day's journeying to Su-hien-fu, a considerable village standing at the foot of Mount Prejul.

The whole of the journey of the last two days was through a magnificent landscape, — a wide valley in which monasteries and villages were scattered about, some of them high up upon the mountains, perched in places apparently inaccessible to anything without wings. Cultivation extended to a considerable height on both sides of the river, and behind all a glorious panorama of snowy peaks formed a fitting background to the gorgeous scene.

The curiosity we excited among the inhabitants was becoming a great nuisance, so we decided to get some native garments, not as a disguise, — for without egotism it might be said with truth that, notwithstanding our long



BIHAR GYALPO, THE PATRON OF MONASTERIES AND TEMPLES.

isolation from civilisation, we had not as yet gained a likeness to that of the natives, — but simply in order that our personal appearance might excite less curiosity. Arrayed in these unsightly and loose-fitting regimentals, we were objects of considerable mirth to the crew, who took advantage when we were not suspected of looking in their direction to provide pantomimic entertainment for the delectation of their fellows, until the novelty of the situation had in a measure worn off and we were more in accord with our surroundings.

At Su-hein-fu we took advantage of two days of beautiful weather to take hypsometric readings and make geological investigations in the surrounding country. This action was likely to have caused us considerable inconvenience, not to say downright danger; for several herdsmen who had descried our actions promptly returned to the village with the intelligence that the two "white magicians" were digging into the ground and bewitching the country. Immediately we were surrounded by a menacing horde, clamouring loudly for our lives. In an unfortunate moment Burton with the butt of his revolver struck one of the natives who seized hold upon him, the man, stunned by the blow, falling to the ground. At once an angry mob fell back for some distance, when gathering numerous clubs and stones, they returned to the attack. Matters looked dark for awhile, until, after considerable expostulation, we fully convinced them that our intentions had been perfectly harmless, and having returned to the canoes and distributed a few yards of cloth to the injured man, and presents of less value to the head men of the place, the *entente cordiale* was resumed.

The chief of Su-hien-fu, truth compels me to state, was a most woebegone specimen of humanity. No amount of

exercising of one's imagination could present a good and sufficient reason why he should have been selected by his fellows to rule over the village. He was, it must be admitted, naturally an amiable man, and his amiability might perhaps have been increased to enormous proportions, provided that he could be stimulated by endless supplies of pundu. From habitual indulgence in this strong liquid, however, he had already attained to that bleary-eyed, thick-tongued, husky-voiced state from which there is no redemption. On our arrival he had just recovered from a prolonged debauch, and was on the point of inaugurating another but that the necessary wherewithal was lacking. Learning that we had several jugs of the liquor in the canoes he offered to buy them of us for three of his wives, but as we were at a loss to know what advantage these decrepit and miserable specimens of humanity would be to us, we declined to sell. Instantly his amiability vanished, and with maudlin rage he threatened to seize upon the jugs at all hazards. However sincere he might have been in this determination, the spectacle of our well-armed and alert crew caused him to reconsider his first intention, and, finding that his bluster and braggadocio carried no weight, he deigned to wax more gracious.

The natives here credited us with marvellous knowledge of medicine, for one of their number having been seized with a mild sort of fever, we soon relieved him by liberal doses of quinine. The effect of this was to cause our renown to be pretty broadly sown throughout the surrounding district, and we were continually beset by the ailing, praying to be relieved of their many ills; but we were obliged to refuse to treat them, for fear that the little prestige which we had already gained might be lost.

The affliction of blindness seems very common in this district, it doubtless being occasioned by the practice of cutting the lids, through which to hang metal ornaments.



YAK DRIVER WITH PRAYING-WHEEL.

A man hopelessly blind came to our quarters to be doctored, and on being told that his case was hopeless he stayed to beg. This was a very favourite ruse among the natives, as we subsequently discovered. They came to us

for medical treatment, and, having received the best advice and help available, manifested their gratitude by becoming the most importunate and persistent mendicants.

The road systems in the country around Su-hien-fu, westward to Thibet and eastward to China proper, converge upon the village itself. The great highway of communication between the east and west lies over the Chim-Dhu and the passes of the Siu-Chau or Snow Mountains. Owing to the number of broad chasms and streams, considerable ingenuity has been displayed in the bridging of these otherwise impassable spots, many of the bridges showing evidence of having existed for centuries. It is easy to understand the importance of Su-hien-fu in such a situation. That importance is of no recent growth. It is undoubtedly this town, or rather village, of which Prejevalsky heard from the natives to the northwest in Thibet such glowing tales of fabulous wealth. The lack of evidence on this point may suggest that the modern town does not occupy the exact site of the ancient; but several magnificent ruins, and the remains of what must have in former centuries been large temples, attest the fact that in remote ages a nation of considerable attainment must have dominated the surrounding district.

The river bed of the Kinsha is here over four hundred feet wide, and is crossed by a stone bridge of eight arches, with a slight bend against the current in mid-stream. We questioned closely the natives as to the time of its erection, but none could answer definitely, save that it had been standing there hundreds of years before their fathers' fathers. To archæological students this region would be one of untold delight, containing, as it does, numerous evidences of former interesting races, who must have stood high in the standard of civilisation. But one

objection stands in the path of such investigation, — the narrow-minded bigotry and suspicion of the natives themselves, who, fearful of magic machinations to consummate their undoing, are an effectual barrier to the work of learning much concerning the antiquity and meaning of these relics of past time.

CHAPTER VI.

SU-HIEN-FU is the commencement of a most beautiful pastoral country, which terminates only at Tu-Tchi-Koang. The immense green cliffs of limestone, towering into the clouds along the river bank, give a continuous twilight, touched here and there by some stray sunbeam which a rift in the stern face of the adamantine walls has let through. At the foot of a vast column I found the morning-glory, and was surprised in such a place to come upon this ornament of the domestic sill, and the companion of the bright face of childhood ; but its glistening blossom was as fresh and dewy amidst these religious shadows as in any sunlighted and human garden spot, — not seemingly, however, without a sense of exile, and as if conscious of the absence of those welcome voices and shining eyes of the cottage door.

From the summit of these weird green rock-piles one may enjoy that unspeakable fascination of an apparently boundless horizon. On all sides there merges toward it the face of a vast circle replete with peculiar features, — detached hills, great crag-masses of riven and sharply angled rock and outcropping mounds, between which stretches away to the dim edge of the entrancing scene a green grassy plain, whereon are clustered innumerable little villages and vast herds of meek-eyed yaks, attended by fierce-looking shepherds dressed in skins, and carrying long mountain muskets.

For two days our journeying lay through this amenity of prospect, reaching Tu-Tchi-Koang on the twenty-fifth, after paddling nearly the whole distance against a head wind. The region in this vicinity is well watered by a multiplicity of little mountain streams, hardly worthy the dignity of being called rivers, which empty into the current of the Kinsha over numerous cascades and waterfalls hundreds of feet in height, making the scenery, besides being the most entrancing, the most novel that could be found anywhere.

Tu-Tchi-Koang, however, is a most unprepossessing and unimportant spot, and, notwithstanding the fact that it ranks as one of the principal trading centres in Western China, it is in no wise superior to the numerous villages leading up to it. Yet after our arrival it became a place of great local importance; for notice of our coming having been sown broadcast, it attracted an unusual number of native traders from on all sides within a radius of twenty or thirty miles. Upon us they descended in a wild, untamed, and furious avalanche, with stores of dried fish, wheat and barley, flour, butter, baskets of wild plums, live yaks, iron implements of husbandry, and a thousand other evidences of the thrift and prosperity of the country, which they besought us to buy of them, each striving for the coveted honour until the assemblage, forgetful of all amity, had resolved itself into a sanguinary brawl.

As soon as the trading process had been satisfactorily adjusted, and we had announced our intention of not purchasing further, we were waited upon by the head man of the place (a sinister-looking Thibetan), and a detachment of about half a dozen Chinese traders, who, with characteristic curiosity, were desirous to question us to the extremest limit on the reasons for our presence in the

country, and concerning our future intentions. The Thibetan, in spite of his appearance, we found to be far more intelligent than the Chinaman, and from him we were able to gain much valuable information regarding the country ahead of us, and also the assurance of providing us with river guides. Of the inhabitants of the town, after all, the less that is said the better for their general reputation, for, like most of the people of this country, they are notably deficient in the sense of justice due to others. They are suspicious, avaricious, and greedy, and the most abominable of thieves, the absence of the requisite pluck being the only thing that prevents them from being excellent brigands.

The people in this district are much given to all forms of magic. Storm-dispelling they have learned from the Thibetan tribes to the westward, although their success in this line is not of sufficient magnitude to warrant one's saying more than that the practice exists. A curious custom, claimed to be infallible, of warding off sickness and death, consists in taking some article of wearing-apparel belonging to the afflicted person, and dipping it into fresh yak's blood and then powdering it over with wheaten flour and allowing it to dry in exposure to the sun and air. At the end of the second day the lamas recite prayers innumerable over this foul-smelling garment, and, its charm having been thus ensured, it is put upon the person whose cure is desired. As there are at all times bound to be a considerable number of ailing persons, the stench arising from and the general effect of these landscape adornments may perhaps be better imagined than described. As the lamas will only say the necessary prayers for a substantial consideration, these sacred relics are of inestimable value, being handed down from generation

to generation, until when worn out a new one is procured in a similar manner.

On the other hand, it is also claimed that certain among them are possessed of the power to bewitch single individuals, or even a whole tribe, by making small dough images, and having procured something from the person of the intended victim, — several hairs, a piece of nail-paring, or, most potent of all, a tooth, — the image is touched or pricked with these. If the death of the victim is desired, it is only necessary that some vital part, such as the heart, lungs, or brain, be perforated; but if the intention is not so bloodthirsty, pricking the image in less vital parts, muttering potent charms the while, is sufficient to cause the victim to suffer the most acute pains in those parts. The punishment of those suspected of sorcery or witchcraft is speedy and sure; they are either condemned to be burned to death by the lamas, who hold the prior right in the market of mummery and magic, or else are placed in a long wooden box and buried alive, — these two methods being considered the only ones that will effectually dispose of the devil supposed to inhabit the body of the sorcerer, and prevent his taking refuge in some other body.

The inland villages are not in general respects different from those bordering on the river, except that they have, if such a thing were possible, descended to an even lower level of civilisation. From Tu-Tchi-Koang we made several expeditions into the surrounding country in the expectation of finding traces of ancient ruins or temples; but, alas for the charm of research! the region through which we penetrated was most painfully modern, with its miserable population, dirty habitations, and inquisitive lamas, — our daily progress being much in the light of a

triumphal procession, from which we could not have escaped if we would.

One of our daily sallies took us to a small hill village, where, as we drew near, we became aware of the fact that some event of importance was in progress. On entering it we were further enlightened. The population had ceased all other labour, and were intent in going through the gruesome function of burying the head man of the place, who, it was claimed, had died from the effects of a wicked spell, cast over him by a rival chief in a village ten miles to the southeast. Assuming an air of reverence, we entered the gloomy abode of the departed chief. With all his weapons and magic paraphernalia he was lying stretched out on a sort of raised dais of earth, his numerous wives gathered around him, chanting the most dismal kind of dirge, and lacerating their bodies with thorn-pronged whips until the earth beneath their feet ran red with blood. On one side stood the sons of the dead man, splendid in the richest of their finery, robed in silk, and half covered with agate and beaten metal ornaments. Around about the body were scattered pipes, bottles of wine and spirits, tobacco, weapons, food, and personal belongings of every description.

The scene was rudely interrupted by the presence of half a dozen lamas in red robes, their heads covered with hideous masks, who, with a disdainful wave of the hand, motioned every one out of the dwelling, leaving them alone with the body to pray the evil spirits away. For half an hour they wrestled with the demons, and at last, having declared the body immaculate, preparations for the final part of the ceremony were made. A long litter, borne by the head men of the village, was carried into the dwelling, and on this was placed the body of the

deceased, with his belongings gathered around him. With impatient haste the corpse was then taken to the adjacent cemetery, and without further formality deposited in the hole already dug, which was quickly filled up by a number of grave-diggers, — the mourners, as if glad that the function was at last completed, gathering around the grave and drinking great quantities of strong pundu, and commenting on the many amiable characteristics of the dead chief.

The hospitality of these people is boundless, when they are assured of some reward in return five or ten times the value of their outlay. Rockhill, in his very interesting account of the region to the westward on the border line of Thibet, relates the munificent bounty of the people, — of chiefs who daily feed from fifty to sixty persons, and of minor individuals, who, although possessed of barely enough of this world's goods to keep body and soul together, divide that which they have, meagre though it may be, with their fellows. The only deduction that can be drawn from this statement is that the native chiefs, with their characteristic aptitude for elaborating the truth, magnified their many good qualities, or that a difference of less than a hundred miles works inestimable wonders; for surely, in the Sifanese provinces, which in general characteristics are practically Thibetan, hospitality in the general acceptation of the word is unknown.

After leaving Tu-Tchi-Koang on the twenty-ninth, we had a boundless horizon on the east, while on the west stretched the snow-girdled fastnesses of the Chaum-Du Mountains, clothed half-way up to their summits with a meagre growth of scrawny laurel. From this point the current of the Kinsha gradually widens and extends to the northwestward, expanding into a bay-like opening

nearly an eighth of a mile in width. Into this bay issues the Phi-Chu in one powerful deep stream, pouring over a succession of rapids. At its mouth it is about one hundred yards wide, and two miles above suddenly narrows to about fifty yards. We attempted to ascend higher, but the current was so strong that we were unable to make any progress, and after an ascent of three miles were obliged to abandon it. This stream undoubtedly extends to the western border of Thibet, connecting there with the headwaters of the Yain-hu-chu, and, flowing in a southerly direction, must eventually mingle with the headwaters of the Mekong River. The chief constituent rocks of the mountain ranges in the vicinity are silicious schists and granite, with occasional quartz reefs, bearing surface traces of valuable gold deposits. The most striking features of these mountains are their immense height, and therefore great number of snowy peaks, the comparative absence of cliffs, the general sterility of the soil, and, as is but natural to suppose, a poverty of flora and fauna.

The stream of the Kinsha for a distance of nearly forty miles was now a boiling torrent, with frequent obstructions caused by enormous reefs rising up from its depths, giving unmistakable evidence of great disturbances during past ages. It was also very deep, repeated soundings showing alternating depths of fifty to two hundred feet. Observations at a boiling point showed an altitude above the sea of 10,247 feet.

On the first of June we reached the town of Yuan-ning-pu in the midst of a terrific thunder-storm, during which one of the canoes foundered with a large store of provisions, the two men manning it being rescued only by the most arduous labour as they clung with deathlike tenacity to a protruding boulder. Having arrived at



anchorage at dusk, and not venturing to enter the place until we should be more fully acquainted with the character of its population, we took shelter under the lee of an immense cliff. We had moored both by bow and stern, to prevent being swept by the restless surf against the rocks. About midnight the storm ceased, and the clouds passed off to the east; but in an instant, and hardly before we had an opportunity of remooring the canoes, another storm arose, exposing us to all its fury. We were swept with great force against the rocks, and should inevitably have been lost had not the bales of cloth, which we had lashed outside the boats as fenders, nullified the danger. In the pelting rain, and amid the thunderous roaring of the river current as it whirled by in inky blackness, we laboured strenuously, and just as the first faint tinge of dawn lightened the mountain tops we succeeded in beaching the canoes without injury.

Once with an insight into the character of the natives in this place, we could not but feel thankful that we had not made the effort to enter the village on the preceding night. As several bales of cloth had suffered from the buffeting experience of the last twelve hours, we had stretched them out on the shale beach to dry. Our movements had been descried by those behind the stone palisade, and we were summarily startled by the whistling of bullets over our heads. In our exposed condition it would have been suicidal to attempt to remain for an instant longer, and, calling to the crew to forsake the cloth, we took up our position on the rock summits to the right, from which we could command the immediate foreground, and also watch the movements of our assailants. They evidently were convinced that our rout had been final, for their cupidity being excited by the spec-

tacle of so much richness, they poured out of their village to seize upon the cloth that we had abandoned. We permitted them to approach nearer, and, seeing that they were fully armed with guns and spears, we had no compunction in quenching their undeserved aggressiveness.

As the leaders of the party were on the point of seizing upon the cloth, Burton with ten of the crew on the right opened fire over their heads; while I, taking advantage of the diversion created by this fusilade, and with Yuen to assist me, sought to make friendly advances, offering to barter with them, and at the same time making dire threats as to our vengeance should they persist in the attack. The knowledge of our strategic position was more potent reasoning with them than the mere bandying of words; and the leaders, having consulted together for a few moments, announced their willingness to sell us meat and provisions, but on no account, they said, must we strive to enter their village, as in that case they would defend it to the last. To this arrangement we readily consented; and the natives having retired for half an hour to collect the necessary articles of barter, we took advantage of the opportunity to strengthen our position by rolling a loose breastwork of stones at the entrance of the gully, and stationing the crew at points of vantage, in case further treachery was contemplated.

This precaution had been well taken; for, forgetful of their promises, the villagers, emboldened by their numbers, waxed noisy, then insolent, and finally again aggressive. From behind the shelter of their stone stockade they hurled at us jeering epithets of defiance, pouring upon our heads all the maledictions of the Sifanese dialect, and winding up this bombastic display by numerous

threats as to the pleasure which they were to experience in dangling our heads from their walls. We glanced anxiously toward the black current of the Kinsha flowing by at our feet, to see if the waters had quieted sufficiently to permit us to launch the canoes and press farther up-stream, with the chance of stumbling upon a more hospitable bailiwick ; but the curling eddys and crashing waves, as they hurled against the gaunt headlands, banished all hope in that direction. But one alternative was left,—to present a bold and determined front to our assailants, and if the worst came to the worst to die fighting to the last.

We had been so occupied with the truculent rabble in front that we had not taken notice that a new danger menaced us on the right, where a considerable band of natives, led by a giant, whose burly form was clothed in a long garment of antelope skin, were ascending to a higher elevation than the surrounding plain, from which they could command our position, and pick us off with apparent ease. No alternative offered itself. Fight we had been forced to, and fight we must ! Ordering Burton, with his force, to make a dash for the position, while we covered the advance, in five minutes we had the satisfaction of seeing this danger that had menaced us removed ; for, baffled in their intention, the assailing party, with a loss of three of their number, sullenly retired once more to the village, where, for a couple of hours longer, a desultory and harmless fire was kept up on our position.

Through the long day we awaited their assault ; but the destructiveness of our fire had taught those inside the village a lesson, and they were evidently determined to wait until nightfall before making another advance. As darkness set in, the danger of our position momentarily

increased. With our small force, it was manifestly an impossibility to think of properly fortifying our position so as to command all approaches; it was the beginning of the end. The villagers seemed to be cognisant of this fact, for we could hear their shouts of frenzied joy, as they pictured the easy conquest that lay before them.

Once more we looked at the sombre current of the Kinsha; the waters still foamed and roared as if fired to action by a thousand hidden volcanoes. One hundred yards across lay the shale beach of the opposite shore. Over there lay safety. It was one chance in a hundred that we could reach it alive; but men who face death must take chances. We glanced in the direction of the horde of excited natives, who were already making preparations for the attack; then our eyes rested on the forbidding expanse of water beneath us. The course of the future had been determined.

Silently we stole down to the river bank; twice, thrice, we sought to launch the canoes, only to be driven back. To be saved, we must act quickly; once more the canoes were thrown on the face of the torrent, one after another. To attempt to describe the events of those few brief moments, while we lay in the lap of a living chaos, would be futile indeed. There was no time for one to watch the course of the others; each canoe had enough to do to see to its own imperilled existence. With grim determination we battled; the Kiangsis strained every nerve in response to our encouraging shouts. Like cockle-shells, our canoes tossed upon the curling waves of foam, and shot unresistingly past yawning eddys; fighting, fighting, we persevered with grim determination,—the determination of men who *will not* die. Another mighty effort; yet another sturdy battle against death; one brief moment

of peaceful quietude, and then, tossed high into the air, boat after boat fell with a resounding crash on the long, gray beach, while our lips, formed in prayer that tongue could not utter, gave thanks to a Divine Providence. We had succeeded in our perilous effort, and, thank God! not one man missing in all that heroic band. We hugged one another; we screamed with frenzied joy; we wept; we were possessed of an insane fury to mock the grim current as it rolled by, sullen and conquered. We were saved! saved! Ah, what words to those who have been pulled back to life, when the jaws of death were closing with fateful grasp! Then the reaction came, and we slept, — slept on the hard beach without a murmur. The howlings of our disappointed enemies, as they searched the hills in vain, seemed softer than the sweetest lullaby. We had fought with death, and had conquered!

At last the morning came, bringing with it that feeling of restful content which only those who have been sorely pressed can know. The sun rose over the mountains, cutting like a scimitar through the murky canopy of the heavens, making all the landscape to appear one vast blight of Nature, like an enormous saucer of dull brass, lying there in famished lassitude, in parched languor and heaviness, — all its vitality and strength, containing the potency of prolific wealth, now dormant and undeveloped. Over the broad landscape stalked a weird vegetation, all interspersed with green blades and white inflorescent clusters; while through this otherwise wilderness of sterility, silently glided the moody stream of the Kinsha, now as docile as a child, spent with its enormous labouring of the night, its black volume going down to the valley to be absorbed by the sun and sands.

Never, since leaving the broad expanse of the Pacific,

were we weaker in spirit than on this day. Had we been attacked, I doubt if we should have made much resistance. The terrible trials of the last twenty-four hours had utterly unmanned us ; not one had escaped unscathed. Bruised and bleeding, drenched and famished, we were an unspeakably miserable and disheartened band ; yet urged by our destiny, we were resolved to fight the battle to the bitter end ; to struggle on, be the cost what it might.

The howling of the savages on the opposite shore came as loud as ever ; through the clear morning air resounded their curses and demoniacal yells, as, like tigers despoiled of their prey, they coursed the narrow beach, in idle fury dashing to their waists into the black current, and with futile efforts striving to hurl stones in our midst. We might have avenged ourselves, but revenge was no longer in our hearts ; there was a wild and uncontrollable desire to press forward, to leave behind all trace of the living nightmare through which we had passed. But our condition was too weak to think of making progress ; so, during the long torture of another day and night, which seemed as if they would never have an ending, we nursed our wounds and bruises, momentarily expecting to be forced to fight for our lives by a renewal of hostilities. It was not to be, however. Slowly the sun descended, and the long hours fled ; and again the radiant orb of day arose, the morning of the third of June. The spell of despair was broken at last ; the past had died save as a thrilling memory ; once more we were pushing forward, a step farther toward the end !

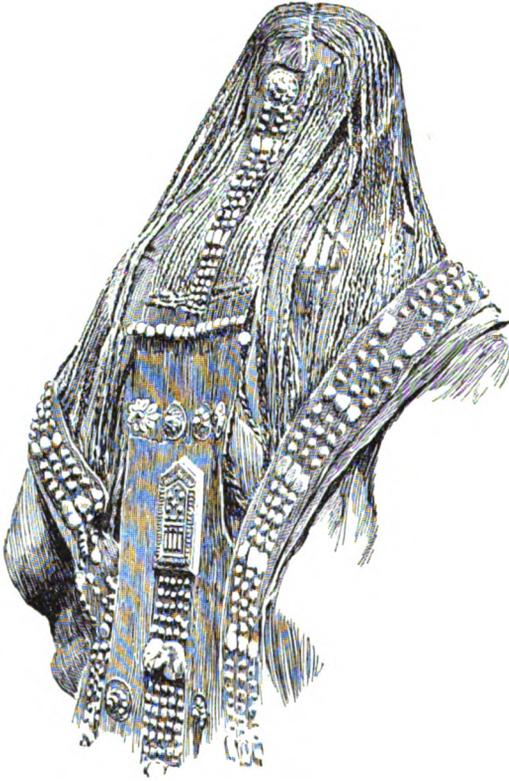
At noon of this day we camped on the western bank of the Kinsha, at a spot where numerous mountain streams bubbled down from craggy summits ; and here we caught a number of delicious fish, much like a salmon in shape

and flavor, while Burton, venturing forth with sportsman's instinct, returned in an hour with two small antelopes, welcome food, indeed, to famished men. Till long into the afternoon we feasted ; with stomachs replenished, spirits rising higher, until, exhilarated by liberal draughts of pundu, we felt fully capable of making effectual resistance to an aggressive enemy, however numerous or hostile.

Two miles farther up-stream we came upon a small village, called Kugun, containing a population of a hundred or more natives of the most miserable kind, absolutely naked, excepting for dirty yak skins hanging over their shoulders ; who, descrying our approach, forsook their habitations and clambered up the hilly slopes beyond, until, seeing that our intentions were none other than friendly, they were induced to return. The present of several yards of cloth among the head men, and gifts of lesser value to the minor satellites, broke down the last barrier of reserve ; and it was a welcome relief, indeed, after our recent experience, to mingle with people whom one did not have to stand in fear of, lest each moment should be the last on earth. From them we gleaned some information regarding our assailants down the river. The latter, it seemed, were a tribe of the fierce Tam-Ba, — a race that for years has remained hostile to and aloof from all outsiders, warring on their neighbours, and making frequent incursions into Chinese and Thibetan territory, gaining a name for bloodthirstiness and lawlessness which has ensured them immunity from retaliation. “Lucky, indeed, it was that you did not fall into their hands,” said the head man ; “for had they been able to capture you, they would have turned you over to their lamas to be burned alive after they had robbed you.”

The people of this village were externally more like

some of the races of Western Asia than like Chinese. They were an agricultural people, having transformed into a tractable soil the sterile plateau by years of fertilising and industry. Their faces were round, with flattened features,



HEAD-DRESS OF WOMAN AT KUGUN.

cheek-bones prominent, eyes and hair black, mouth rather large, and bodies gigantic in stature and thick-set.

The men shave beard and hair, leaving the face and crown perfectly smooth, ornamenting these places, however, by numerous tattooed designs of grotesque form. The females, could one see through the accumulated dirt and filth of years, would be really

good-looking, their features being very regular, and their forms perfect. So far as agility and endurance went, they were fully the equal of the men, their strength being something enormous. I have seen some of these women, without apparent effort, shoulder a good-sized yak calf,

weighing, at least, over three hundred pounds, and carry it considerable distances without showing signs of distress. They have a peculiar method of wearing the hair, plaiting it in innumerable long tresses behind, on the ends of which are hung pieces of bone and small metal ornaments, which articles are supposed to ensure the happy possessor from bodily harm.

Notwithstanding the poverty of their own habitations, there were a number of really sumptuous temples and monasteries in the immediate vicinity. In one of these we saw two immense idols, nearly fifteen feet in height, formed of solid brass, and liberally bedecked with numerous gold ornaments, which must have weighed all together several pounds. It is strange that these precious baubles have not before this attracted the attention of the brigandish Tam-Ba, who, having no religious scruples to restrain them, might, it would seem, have seized upon them without encountering much opposition. But even the mildest and most unwarlike of people will retaliate when their religion is assailed, and doubtless a full knowledge of this fact has served as a considerable restraint to the robbers. What a rich field this will be for the mercenary and adventurer, when the sway of Christianity has spread over this region,—this vast Eldorado, to which the only obstacle at present is the hostility and religious bigotry of its population!

The state of womanhood in this district was much exalted over that in regions contiguous; for whereas, to the southward, a woman's value was rated at but two yaks, or its equivalent, here the market price had advanced two hundred per cent.! The customs attendant on marriage are very curious. Love, or affection, is but abstract quality, which never enters into their considera-

tion at all. The young girl, as soon as she has arrived at the proper age when it is right that she should begin to look around for a husband (usually when she is thirteen or fourteen), is advertised in the surrounding district by her male parent, who enumerates her charms much in the manner that a connoisseur of blooded stock would dilate on the good points of one of his animals. If any eligible bachelor, or even married man, is moved to serious intent by the description of the parent, he goes to the abode of the latter, and, having announced the object of his visit, asks that the girl be shown him. He surveys her critically, and, if perfectly satisfied, the bargain is struck at once; but more often he begs leave to think the matter over, and in the space of two or three days announces his final decision. If he decides that her price is too high, he asks for a reduction; and so the quibbling goes on, till a mutual agreement, agreeable to both purchaser and disposer, has been arrived at. The wife that is to be, with a cord tied around her neck as a badge of her subservience to man, is led to the home of her prospective husband, where she is paid for at the price settled upon. The marital initial consists in being beaten severely by her spouse, who in this manner asserts his title and authority over her, and, with this ceremony ended, she engages herself in her household duties without murmur or complaint. As polygamy is practised here, she may be only one of many wives, in which case her domestic woes are in a measure lightened; otherwise, the remainder of her life must be spent in unceasing drudgery and hardship.

The dress of the people in this district was very meagre, consisting of a long sheep or yak skin robe, very dirty and very greasy, hanging down to the knees like a kilt. As in many cases these are tanned with herbs and other vile-

smelling mixtures, the presence of any considerable crowd of natives in the near vicinity may be readily detected. Of weapons they have but very few, and these of the crudest sort. What little hunting they do consists in running down the ponderous and slow-moving yaks with spears, or catching them in enormous pitfalls,—the presence of these latter rendering a journey through the country highly precarious, owing to the danger of being summarily pitched onto numerous rows of sharp spikes. A description of the people and their customs without special mention of the yak would be incomplete, for this animal is to the natives of this district what the reindeer is to the Laplanders, providing them with food, clothing, and the wherewithal for fuel. As there are practically no trees in the country, the only substance which can be utilised as fuel is dried yak dung, the sole objection to its use being the abominable odour emanating therefrom; but as China is truly the “land of smells,” doubtless such a shortcoming may as well be glossed over with a charitable hand. Many a time have we eaten yak meat fried over a fire of yak dung, our bodies meanwhile protected with garments made of the skin of this useful beast; so that in a way we have come to have a downright affection for this noble animal, who has done so much to alleviate our sufferings.

On the seventh we left Kugun. About six miles to the northwest was situate Hui-lag-Su, a sparse settlement overlooking the magnificent plain of Du-lang. It was near here that Quincy had his first hostile encounter with one of those predatory tribes, the terror of peaceable caravans in this region. The Kinsha, which constantly narrows after leaving Kugun, is here not over two hundred feet wide, and the current so swift that it is impracticable to passage save at the fords, where it is crossed by native

boats. These are of the most primitive construction, being merely yak skins stretched over a clumsy wooden framework; but, notwithstanding their clumsiness, the natives handle them with considerable skill, and carry them through seething eddies and yawning whirlpools where stancher craft could not live for a single moment.

The Du-lang plain in former ages was undoubtedly the bed of a great lake, for evidences of this are distinctly visible. The upper portion to the eastward is a remarkably fertile country, extending for nearly fifty miles toward China proper, and is given up to the growth of various cereals, and also to the cultivation of the poppy. That expanse, however, extending toward the south is a vast salina, or salt swamp, receiving the drainage of the streams from the bordering regions. Most of these streams disappear into the ground on issuing from the mountains, but several of the larger ones flow for a considerable distance in the salina, and, according to native information, unite their waters thirty miles to the southward in one large lake, which increases and decreases in size according to the season of the year, while in winter its salinity prevents it from freezing. We followed the course of one of these streams for a distance of some ten miles, when it suddenly seemed to dry up and disappear in the ground, the same result attending an effort to follow the course of others. As to the reasons for this remarkable fertility and absolute sterility existing in juxtaposition, the only one capable of acceptance is that given by the natives themselves, to the effect that the former is the result of hundreds of years of industry in fertilising the land and transporting the earth forming its upper layer from the bed of the Kinsha. The fact that nearly one hundred square miles of land have been filled

in this way may test the credulity of the cool and calculating reasoner; but as there is no evidence that can be



MANJUSRI, IN THIBETAN JAMJANG, THE GOD OF WISDOM.

entered in rebuttal, there remains but to fall back upon native reports, which, however lacking otherwise, are never failing in prolific nebulous theories.

The method here of obtaining salt is very singular. For this purpose immense wheels, much in the form of water-wheels, are placed on the edges of these deposits of brine, flanged with enormous buckets. Domestic yaks, harnessed to this machinery, are then started running around in a circle, and the wheel revolving scoops up the water, when it is emptied into long troughs and spread over the flinty ground. The heat of the sun completes the process by evaporating the liquid, leaving the crystals, which are gathered in bags and crushed in a pestle until of marketable fineness, when the product is exported to the surrounding country over the caravan roads. The spectacle of these enormous wheels scattered over the treeless plain, especially at night-time, is startling to say the least, their skeleton forms being silhouetted against the sky like the remains of innumerable giants of an ancient race jealously guarding their wild domains against the encroachments of civilisation.

The head-dresses of the women were here more ornate than any I had previously seen, consisting of innumerable little plaits forming a *mantilla* hanging over the shoulders, and screening the face completely. Innumerable pieces of coral, turquoise, amber, and silver jewelry covered them; and on the whole they were highly ornamental.

From Hui-lag-Su we were obliged to make our journey overland, carrying the canoes. Progress in this way was arduous in the extreme, and it was the tenth of June before we had passed beyond the rapids of the Kinsha and were enabled to launch the boats once more. We could not but feel what a kind dispensation of Providence it was to find the natives in this region hospitable and friendly, for had they been otherwise it would have been

a manifest impossibility to have progressed farther, since, hampered with the canoes and our heavy outfit, with no knowledge of the surrounding country, our fate would inevitably have been sealed. On the contrary, however, the natives were of the greatest assistance to us in the journey, and, notwithstanding their thievish tendencies, we in no wise begrudged our losses when taking into consideration the results obtained; in fact, we congratulated ourselves on having made the overland portage at a minimum cost of wealth and energy.

On the thirteenth the stream began to broaden again, and almost immediately the country began to expand into a plateau of lower elevation than that farther back, opening out on a stretch of beautiful plain-land, green as the finest lawn, dipping into lovely vales, and rising into gentle ridges. Thin, shallow threads of water percolated through the region, clear as crystal, but of such salinity as to be far from potable. The Kinsha itself had also taken on a brackish taint, and for the time being we were threatened with a water famine, for, unaware of this possible danger, we had not taken the precaution to have the water-jugs filled.

Sukul, which we reached shortly after dusk, was a bustling, even pretentious village, with numerous evidences of semi-civilisation. We noticed a number of substantial buildings made of squarely chiselled blocks of granite, after the pattern of the architecture of Eastern China. The villagers, however, were timid and suspicious, and refused to sell us water or provisions until we had aroused their cupidity with the spectacle of numerous presents, when their sordid natures conquered, and we were able to purchase as much as we desired.

A remarkable plant, which Prejevalsky describes as

medicinal rhubarb (*Rheum palmatum*), grows in wonderful profusion in this region. The natives credit it with supernatural powers as a curative agent, with characteristic inaccuracy prescribing it as a panacea for all the ills that mankind was ever heir to. There is no doubt, however, of its wonderful efficacy, for the dried root and leaves, which have for years been used in civilised countries, have gained considerable favour with physicians. It is exported in large quantities to Eastern China, where it finds a ready sale and is in universal favour. As the natives asserted that its tonic effects were marvellous, we ate considerable of the root; and whether through an effort of the imagination, or the real effects of the plant itself, we were wonderfully exhilarated and strengthened. The Sukulese sow it over vast areas, propagating it by means of seeds or young plants. The third year after sowing, the root is about the thickness of a man's fist, and in about eight or ten years it attains maturity.

From the head man of Sukul we learned that there were numerous large beasts in the country, among them tigers and wolves; but although we spent two days in roaming over the plain, our most arduous efforts were rewarded with but a pair of snow vultures. As these latter are very difficult of approach, and much desired by the natives for their feathers, our mission was not altogether fruitless. Wild horses, called by the Sifanese *Dzerlik-adu*, are very numerous in the country to the eastward, at the base of the mountain ranges. They are generally in large herds, very shy, and when frightened continue their flight for days. They are never hunted, owing to the difficulties of the chase, but are captured by strong nooses attached to sunken stakes, distributed in the districts which they are known to frequent,

in this manner ensuring their capture without injury. These horses usually roam over the country in groups of ten to twenty. Each lot of mares is led by a stallion, the size of whose family depends on his age, strength, and courage, his individual qualities keeping his herd together. Over this he maintains the most strict watchfulness, for if he descries intruders from other herds in his ranks he rushes to the encounter, and tries in every way by biting and kicking to drive them off. During the breeding season the males are exceptionally aggressive, and encounters among themselves, and even attacks on human beings, are of frequent occurrence.

Long before reaching this country we had been entertained by numerous narratives of a more or less nebulous character concerning the almost human characteristics of these animals, in which stories we had placed no more faith than in those usually told by the natives. The head man of Sukul we had immediately concluded was no better than his fellows, for he went on with such astonishing tales of the doings of this equine nation that we momentarily expected he would tell of cities, forts, and houses built by them. We were all the more surprised, therefore, when on the second day he came to us with the assertion that, if we were still incredulous, he was ready and willing to put proof to the test, as several of his hunters had reported a number of herds in the valley plain to the southward. Accordingly, shortly before nightfall, we rode for some hours, until we had reached a spot whence we could overlook the plain where we were informed the astonishing wonders of which we had been told might be performed. About ten o'clock, as, shivering with the almost arctic coldness of the weather, we were making futile efforts to keep warm, and cursing

our stupidity in coming to verify fairy tales, we were aroused to action by an ominous stir among our ponies, who were straining at their tethers and whinnying nervously. A few minutes later a weird, shrieking howl, as of some soul in dire distress, floated through the air, sounding near at hand and yet far removed. Following the guide, we mounted to a little jutting crag overlooking the broad plain which stretched away for miles from the foot of the broad plateau, and there, indeed, saw a sight which almost beggared description. The broad expanse, lighted by the new moon, which rendered the surrounding country almost as luminous as day, was filled with herds upon herds of horses of every size, colour, and description. For several moments we were dumbfounded at a sight so thrilling and awe-inspiring, — a vast, surging mass of living, breathing animals busily engaged in feeding on the luxuriant grass of the valley. Suddenly upon the night air resounded a blood-curdling neigh, as clear as a bugle call; and immediately the herd stopped feeding, and stood with heads erect, as a mighty army at the call of its leader. Another prolonged neigh, pitched in a somewhat higher key, and, like a whirlwind, the whole herd bolted up the valley, as orderly and regularly as the finest disciplined army, with the three or four who seemed to be the leaders symmetrically arranged ahead of the main body, and flanking and rear detachments posted with studious exactness.

On reaching the head of the plain once more, they came to a halt, and grazing was resumed. Our attention had been so drawn in following the action of this herd, that we had not noticed that another and fully as large a one had come from far down the valley, and had installed themselves on the feeding-grounds just vacated. The

scene in front was now all-engaging; cold and fatigue were alike forgotten in the enthralling interest of the moment. For half an hour both herds cropped the short grass in silence, when a shrill neigh from the group nearest to us attracted our attention in their direction. They had all stopped feeding, and stood restless and fearful, as if detecting the approach of some terrible enemy. Suddenly from out the compactly gathered mass sprang a gigantic stallion, who, after pawing the earth and meanwhile neighing fiercely, proceeded at a gallop, a full half mile up the valley, stopping every few hundred feet to repeat his bellicose neighing. Following his movements, we now saw that another animal was galloping down in a similar manner from the other herd, doubtless, to accept the challenge. The newcomer was a magnificent snow-white, and, with the clear light of the moon shining upon him, he presented a gigantic appearance when contrasted with his smaller antagonist. When within a quarter of a mile of each other, the two beasts came to another halt and stood facing their respective herds, pawing the ground and neighing fiercely, bending their shapely necks much in the manner of two actors in sword-combat, making the preliminary flourish previous to deadly action.

This overture lasted for fully fifteen minutes, when with startling suddenness both animals leaped around, and rushed at each other with the velocity of well-aimed projectiles. Nearer and nearer they came in their mad, onward career, and we were waiting the moment when the two grand beasts must come together with tremendous force. But, no! for when within twenty feet of each other they came back on their haunches, and eyed each other cautiously for a moment,

as if awaiting the necessary opening. And then, with one last defiant neigh at each other, they leaped to the encounter.

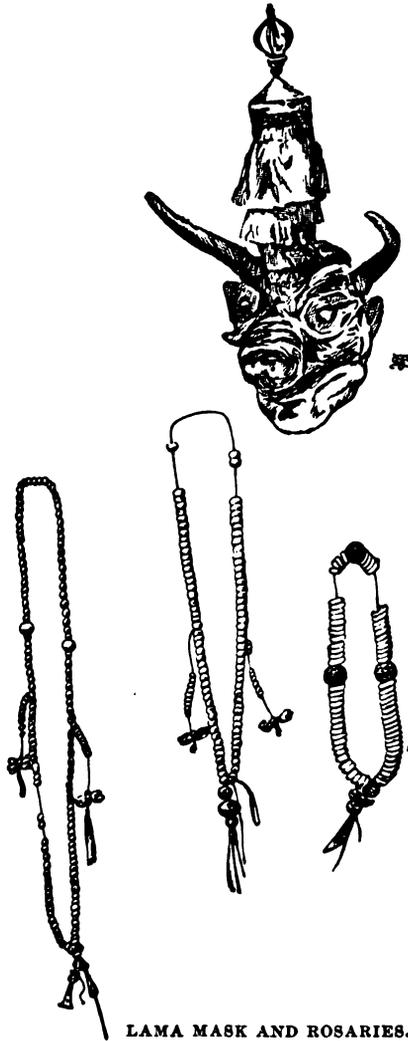
To describe the events of the next ten minutes would require pages of hyperbole, to in any measure give a faint idea of the supreme grandeur and weirdness of this herculean struggle between two giants. They rushed at each other time and time again like immense catapults; they fought with tooth and hoof, while no other sound could be heard,—the two herds, who had meanwhile approached nearer to the struggle, gazing on their leaders as if carved in stone. One would have had to be within a few feet of the titanic combat to describe accurately the events of that short quarter of an hour. The two beasts could be seen rearing in the air, locked together like two wrestlers, their teeth tearing each other and their great hoofs relentlessly kicking in all directions with the force of pile-drivers. Both animals were tiring perceptibly, when in an instant all was over. A sharp rally, and then the ghostly form of the big white stallion rose alone, and on the ground lay the prostrate body of his antagonist. The victor contented himself with giving utterance to short, exultant neighs, and ever and anon kicking the body of his defeated foe.

We had seen the great equine duel, but we little knew what was yet in store for us. Soon there was a movement in both herds, and with the same military promptness as we had witnessed before, with the mares and colts in the centre, the two bodies formed, and without the least warning or signal rushed at each other. It seemed as if the very heavens were falling in. The din and crash as they swept together, even at our distance, was terrific, and in the clear moonlight could be seen the rolling mass

of contestants surging like a huge wave over the plain. At the end of ten minutes, and as suddenly as it had commenced, the battle terminated, and the two herds slowly separated. We could now see some of the results of the awful conflict, for scattered here and there all over the plain were the forms of those who had fallen in the sanguinary conflict.

The sun had risen before we started on the return journey to Sukul, and already the vultures and snow-headed buzzards were feasting on the relics of the gruesome battle of the night. For days and months afterward the memory of that weird, terrible scene came over us like a veritable nightmare or some vain imagining, a phantasy that we could hardly credit, but that seeing was really believing.

On the twentieth, at dawn, we once more reëmbarked ; and the whole of that day and the day following our



LAMA MASK AND ROSARIES.

journeying lay through a forest of stunted laurel, intersected by singular narrow plains, forming at this season of the year so many quagmires of saline deposit. Other features of this region were enormous bare rocks, looming like castles through the forest, and hillocks composed of great fragments of splintered granite and glittering marble. Before reaching Dubana, the mountains once more closed in on the river current, split in two by a long, narrow gully, half a mile wide, which, from searching observation, we concluded had at one time been the resting-place for an enormous glacier. The sides of the mountains were extremely sheer and precipitous, so smooth and inaccessible that they would have defied the best efforts of the most experienced mountain-climber. We pushed on to the head of the glacier valley, until, at the end of six miles, it debouched into an amphitheatric hollow, in which were nestled the crumbling remains of a considerable village. The spot must have been visited at no distant date by a severe earthquake, for the habitations were new and with every evidence of having been recently deserted. As we entered, we were greeted by the spectacle of a number of dead bodies in an advanced stage of decomposition lying around, on which were roosting a half a dozen voracious vultures, who reluctantly left their feasting as we approached. We should have liked to give the unfortunate wretches a proper interment, but that the fear of contracting some serious disease prevented.

We reached Dubana on the twenty-second, and became acquainted with the head man, whose reputation in the surrounding district was considerable, for at the small river villages we had been frequently enlightened as to the dazzling effulgence of this celebrated

luminary. His imaginary importance consisted in being the proud possessor of half a dozen guns of ancient construction and several uniforms of red cloth, and in having, at a recent date, visited chastisement on the head of a renowned brigand chief ruling over the plain to the southward, who had repeatedly made devastating incursions into his territory. He was a hearty, jovial soul, possessed of an inordinate fund of good humour, and so given to an exaltation of his own intrinsic merits that, blinded by his fantastic narratives and his glowing tales of wonderful prowess in war and the hunting field, we, too, were inclined to look upon him with a sort of reverent awe. On our arrival he was just on the point of setting forth on a yak-hunting expedition, and, seeing that under his sheltering guidance we might be enabled to make researches in the surrounding country without restraint or menace, we gladly availed ourselves of his invitation that we should accompany him.

On the morning of the twenty-third we were awakened two hours before daybreak by several greasy and vile-smelling hands taking hold of our noses, and arousing us to wakefulness by shutting off our breath, to find that all was in readiness for the start. A raw, penetrating drizzle made the thickest of clothing ineffective in combating the cold, and for several hours we urged our puny steeds along to their best efforts, until, shortly after nine o'clock, we had reached a sloping plain covered with a sparse growth of shrubs and scrawny grass, which we were informed was the most available spot in which to hunt.

Sure enough, in half an hour we observed three yaks browsing in a defile half a mile away, and, leaving the ponies in charge of the *temlik*, we made a wide détour, until, sheltered by the innumerable boulders covering the

plain, we were enabled to reach within a hundred paces of them, when we fired. All three scampered off; but, following their trail, we soon descried them browsing half a mile to the right, and after another tortuous stalk, by wriggling our bodies over the adamant surface, to the severe detriment of our garments and, likewise, our persons, we were able to come this time within fifty feet of them. We could see that our previous shots had not been futile, for the largest of the three, a fierce-looking bull, was evidently hard hit, lying down on the ground, and bellowing dismally.

As we rose to fire, he caught a glimpse of us; and then, with head lowered, his wicked little eyes fiercely snapping, and bellowing with rage, he charged toward the spot behind which we had taken shelter. Shot after shot we poured into him, apparently producing no more effect than if we had been firing at a target. We could see the dust fly up from his tawny coat as the bullets struck him; nevertheless he still advanced, forcing us to run for our lives. At this moment the head man came up with two muskets loaded with an extra heavy charge, which he emptied into the lumbering mass of flesh. Although mortally wounded, the great beast struggled on for a hundred feet farther, and then dropped to the ground dead. We counted sixteen wounds in his body and three in his head, one having fractured his skull, and three having penetrated through the lungs; yet he had managed to live for fully fifteen minutes when, by all logical events, he should have been dead. Knowing with what force a bullet is projected at almost pointblank range, we could not help being amazed at the supernatural strength displayed by the animal in resisting such tremendous wounds.

Leaving the body to be cut up by the *temliks*, we chased after the two others, whom we eventually came upon in a thick copse of shrubby growth. They were far less suspicious and aggressive than the bull, for we were enabled to approach within thirty feet of them, and, by a couple of well-directed shots behind the shoulder (the most vulnerable point), secured them both. Prejevalsky, in his wanderings through Northern Thibet and Mongolia, relates instances where bullets have entered the hearts and other vital parts of these animals, yet their enormous powers of endurance enabled them to survive for a considerable time after receiving the fateful injuries.

The native method of securing these animals consists in running them down with horses and killing them with spears, in a similar manner to that formerly adopted by the American Indians in hunting the buffalo. The latter animal and the yak are much allied in traits and general characteristics, and, like the buffalo, the yak seems doomed to total destruction at no far distant date, for they have been hunted with such assiduity by the natives that there has been already a terrible decimation in their number, until in regions formerly containing large herds none can be found at present. Besides eating the yak beef, the natives use the heart and blood of the animal, taken internally, for medicinal purposes; the hides are used for clothing, and ropes are spun from the long hair of the tail and flanks.

Another animal existing in this region is the white-breasted argali, a sort of wild mountain sheep of enormous size, which is very shy and difficult of approach, but fierce and aggressive when cornered. Although existing in considerable profusion, their wariness prevents the natives hunting them with any degree of good success.

When trapped and brought in contact with civilising influences, they are easily made tractable, and have been found to be of inestimable value in carrying light loads over the rough and stony caravan roads, although not capable of bearing such heavy burdens as the yak or camel, which are able to travel with greater speed, and remain unaffected by varying and sudden changes of heat or cold. Like the wild horses, they roam in numerous herds, each under the protection of a ram, who jealously guards his charge, lest it should fall into the hands of some rival. As proof of their blind and relentless fury when aroused, Prejevalsky avers that he on one occasion shot a ram in a vital part while fighting with an adversary, yet it continued the combat until physical collapse came, and it expired.

CHAPTER VII.

ON the morning of June 26th, we left Dubana for the first day's essay on the week's journeying up the current of the Kinsha to Batang, not without regrets; for with the marked hospitality and friendliness which had attended our rather protracted halt in their midst, we could not but feel a certain amount of regret that the time had come when we must leave all behind, since from the nebulous dreaming of those few days of undisturbed happiness it was a rude shock to be awakened to the stern reality of the future.

Two days' paddling carried us to Uh'hien'l, which we reached about 9 P. M., for we had been delayed by a strong wind since noon on the last day. As it was pitch-dark, and we had no knowledge of the character of the villagers, we encamped on the shore. The light of our camp-fires soon had the effect of bringing us unwelcome visitors, for we were immediately forced to face the predicament of dodging innumerable huge boulders, which were rolled down the slope in our direction, and which, but for a cry of warning from the outposts, must inevitably have crushed some of us to death. Perceiving a fisherman and boy who were essaying to land unnoticed about a hundred yards down the stream, we sent two of the crew to seize upon them and bring them before us. Though they were literally frightened out of their wits with the marvellous spectacle of gazing on

white men, they were discreet enough to remain passive ; and, to calm their fears, we assumed an air of extreme blandness and amiability, and having acquainted them with the peaceful nature of our errand, we sent them off to rejoin their comrades, enriched by several yards of cloth and a large jug of pundu. When once released, they cast a look around to make sure that they had heard aright, and then, as fast as their legs could carry them, scrambled up the slope and joined their comrades. The stone-rolling instantly stopped, and in place of the menacing shouts could be heard interjections of surprise and innumerable questionings. Ten minutes later we descried several figures stalking toward the camp, who halted at some little distance as if fearful to enter. As we approached and saluted them in the grave Sifanese fashion of placing the hands over the head and sticking out the tongue, their fears were banished, and we soon discovered that the attack made on us was not in the light of a hostile aggression, but that they had mistaken us for members of a fierce tribe, who inhabited the country on the opposite bank of the river, against whom they were in a continual state of warfare. A dozen other important functionaries now came forward, and, having heard the report of the embassy, they touched foreheads with us, and declared, with unnecessary vigour, that we were welcome. The chief motioned with his hand, and amid a perfect concourse of drums and gongs, which drowned all attempts at conversation, we entered the village, followed by those very persons who, but a few moments before, had been attacking us with barbarous fury. We were presently joined by a number of lamas, who, strange to relate, were cleanly in person, and neatly attired in long black robes with red stripes. Before leaving Luipo, we had

acquainted ourselves fully with the precepts of Buddhism, and had embraced the faith,—not from theological motives, but knowing full well that in our subsequent journeyings it would be of inestimable benefit in nullifying the religious antipathy of a bigoted and fanatical population. Therefore, when the priestly gentlemen asked if we were followers of Buddha, with perfect composure and without conscientious qualms we were in a position to answer in the affirmative. The elder priest informed us that he was glad to learn of it, as the best abode in the place was the temple, but that, had we been unbelievers, he would have been obliged to refuse us shelter or food. Once quartered within the sacred edifice, we were minded to doubt its worthiness over the hard shale beach, where it had been our original intention to encamp; for it was overrun by an infamous colony of monstrous rats, who sadly disturbed slumber by playing hide-and-seek over our bodies, taking advantage of our quietude to give us sundry nips, rousing us to immeasurable exasperation, and causing us to pass the remainder of the night with ceaseless groaning and gnashing of teeth.

Early next morning we were waited upon by one of the numerous wives of the head man, who informed us that her royal lord and master was desirous of seeing us by daylight. He had gathered about him a numerous group of lesser satellites, and, having passed around the cups of pundu, we soon found that he was not in the habit of remaining incurious before strangers. Hosts of questions were fired off at us regarding our health, our journey and its aim, America, Europe, and the rest of the world in general, the sun, moon, and stars, angels and devils, religion, magic, witchcraft, and a thousand kindred subjects,

until at the end of two hours of this interesting practice we were classed as being graduated.

We eventually discovered, however, that the sly old rascal had a deeper motive in inviting us to this confab, for, after wasting in our laudation all the idiomatic redundancy of the Chinese language, he broached the real question at hand. As in the past he had been unable to remain more than passively defensive against his fierce neighbours across the river, he saw in our arrival the necessary means for launching forth an expedition of conquest against his enemies, with our assistance crushing them so effectually that the peace of the future would be assured. With diplomatic tact he recited his brotherly affection for us, and his desire to be of service in furthering our progress; and when at last he imagined that he had firmly established a claim on our gratitude, he broached his desire for our assistance in the punitive expedition which he was about to undertake. On learning that no amount of cajolery or persuasion was able to shake our firm intention not to intermingle in the affair, he assumed a threatening air, and with theatrical effect warned us of the consequences that must inevitably befall should we sacrifice his friendship. We were by this churlish attitude placed between the two horns of a dilemma. We fully recognised the danger which we should be running by persisting in a refusal, while, on the other hand, we were resolved at all hazards not to assist him in his warfare. We therefore begged time to think it over, and at the end of a half hour announced our willingness to assist him if he would postpone the expedition for a week, until we could reach Batang, when, having stored our supplies, we could return fully armed and prepared for such serious work as that he desired to

undertake. To this he assented. Alas for his credulity! On the morning of the twenty-eighth, when with his lesser chiefs he gathered to see us off, he little thought that from henceforth our ways were to lie for ever apart, or that we had decided that critical situations must be met with strategic measures. Many a time afterward, when encamped in some filthy little village, we looked back upon his naïve confidence as he bade us depart, wondering if, after all, he still suffered in galling silence the hostile assaults of his unfriendly neighbours.

Muen-chi-hei is a small settlement of Djun Ba, the chief of which declares that he owes a nominal allegiance to the Chinese authorities at Batang, the evidences of which are distinctly visible. It is a village of some size, situated on the right bank of the Kinsha, and, being at a point where numerous caravan routes converge, it contains a truly cosmopolitan population. The general aspect of the surrounding district is that of a flat, even country, dotted with

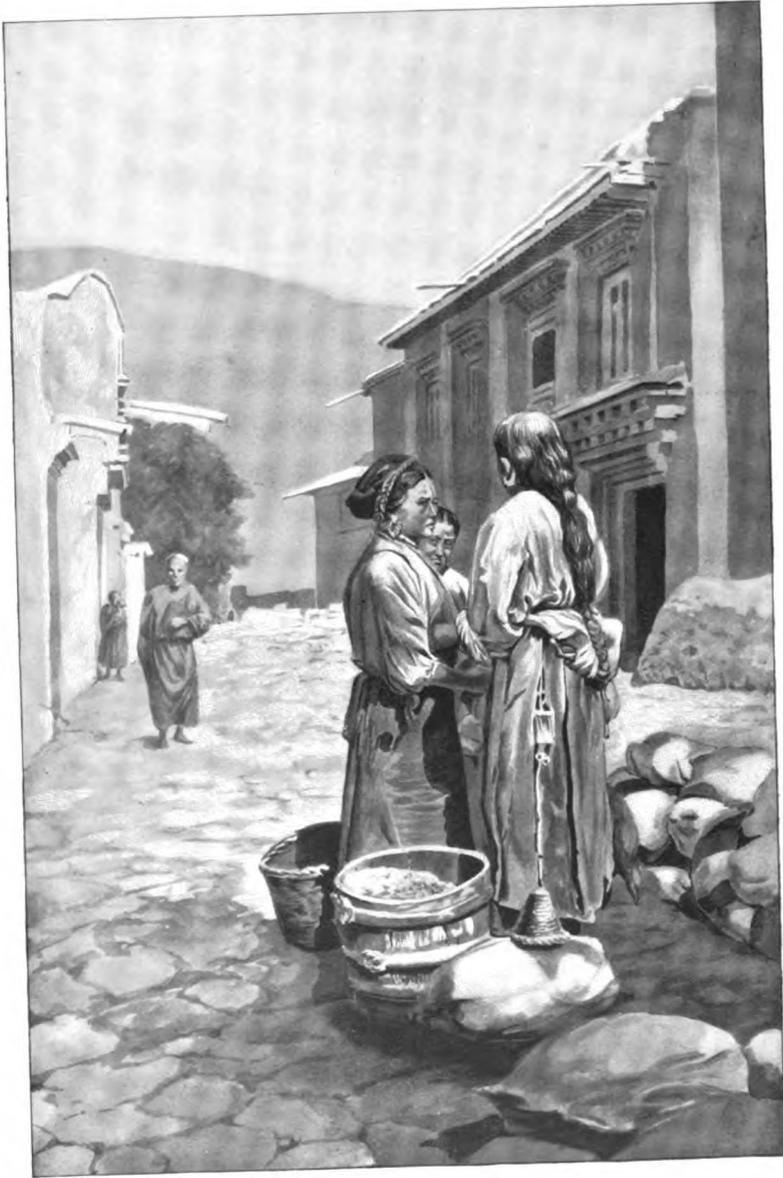


TAOIST PRIEST, BATANG DISTRICT.

numerous plantations of wheat and barley, and intersected by a perfect network of dark-coloured and sluggish streams. There is not a hill or hillock in the whole region, the immense plateau extending as far as the eye can reach, in a surface as smooth as the palm of one's hand. Nevertheless, it derives a certain picturesque beauty from its wide expanses of cultivation, and from the greenness and freshness of the vegetation. This is especially conspicuous when the rain falls, which is only at infrequent intervals ; but at no time of the year, so we subsequently learned, does the district present a dried-up or burnt appearance. The villages in the immediate vicinity are invariably surrounded by stone walls, or deep moats filled with water, although for what apparent purpose it is impossible to state, — surely not from fear of aggression, for the natives of this region are an agricultural people little given to turbulence.

The language of this people is a strange admixture of the numerous tribal dialects for hundreds of miles around, the inevitable result of which is, to say the least, rather confusing. Their chief occupation is agriculture, although there is a considerable trade in silk and opium, and those more enterprising among them have of late years worked the valuable gold and silver deposits in the mountain country to the westward with some measure of success. Procuring river guides here on the thirtieth, we ascended the river current until four o'clock in the afternoon, at which time we reached the caravan road leading to Batang.

We had scarcely landed when we were visited by half a dozen Chinese functionaries, who welcomed us with much obsequiousness, informing us that they had been awaiting our arrival for a week, as notice of our coming had been



STREET IN BATANG.

brought to them by several caravans which had lately arrived from the country to the south. We soon discovered that the real motive of this unbounded friendliness of spirit was impatience for presents ; but as we had nothing but cloth and arms and ammunition, we could only present the head man with a breech-loader, and a couple of ounces of silver to the other dignitaries. They had doubtless expected gifts of a more munificent character, but finding that their broadest hints had no effect in stimulating our generosity further, they left us with scant ceremony. Hardly had they departed when our peace of mind was again destroyed by three lamas suddenly bursting into the privacy of our abode, who, stimulated by the spectacle of the success which had attended secular efforts, were minded to discover if those of a religious nature might not be even more potent. They were the most persistent and boresome of beggars, and although we had firmly resolved not to be wheedled by their unceasing importunities, we were at last, in sheer despair and to rid ourselves of their presence, obliged to give them each several yards of cloth and an ounce of silver.

We remained a week at Batang, the time being spent in patching and repairing the canoes, which, from the severe usage to which they had been subjected during nearly six months of the most trying circumstances, were more or less shaky, and in securing a short respite for ourselves before plunging into the hitherto unexplored country to the north. What time was not consumed in attending to these very necessary matters was spent in a campaign of general research in the surrounding country. There were numerous salt lakes in the vicinity, and, as is but reasonable to suppose, the preparation of this natural product was a considerable industry, the greater part of

the population of the district being engaged in digging it away from the lake shores, which, in some places, were encrusted with layers of pure salt, five to ten feet thick.

The salt is obtained in the following way : First, a thin covering of dust is removed from the surface ; the salt is then dug out with iron spades and washed in the water which collects in the excavated holes ; it is then poured into bags, and laden on camels or yaks, and carried to Batang. A custom of about two cents a load is levied by the Chinese custom officer, who lives in the latter town and has charge of the salt industry, although how much of this revenue ever finds its way to the imperial coffers at Peking, may well be left open to doubt. Certain it is that the position is one eagerly sought after, and one that the happy occupant is usually able to retire from with a substantial competence at the end of a few years' service.

Burton's health, which had been very poor of late, was at this time greatly jeopardised by a severe attack of malarial fever, contracted the day before we reached Batang. His condition was rendered more serious, owing to the lack of proper medical assistance, for, although we had a few drugs with us, I had not sufficient confidence in my skill as a practitioner to administer them. Happily, his marvellous power of endurance, gained from a life passed among the most perilous hardships, pulled him through, and when, on the eighth, we were ready to set forth, he had, in a measure, recovered his old time jauntiness, in spite of a continued weakness which incapacitated him from vigorous effort.

In leaving Batang, we were entering upon the second and most difficult stage of the great enterprise which we had set forth to accomplish ; and although, as we watched its stolid and dwarf-like substance gradually fading from view,

there was an almost audible parting murmur of anguish, we were not bowed down with gloomy forebodings, but cheered by the belief that a kind and all-seeing Providence, who had watched over us in the past, would likewise be with us in the future. There was a sort of unbridled freedom, a lofty purpose, and an unquenchable desire to penetrate into the great unknown lying before, which aroused in our breasts unforgotten energies, and urged us forward with impatient zeal. As we all enjoyed, with the exception of Burton, unusual good health at this time, we could not help fancying that it was to the far-receding prospects opening on every side that we owed much of our healthfulness. It was certain that the blood flowed quicker, that the eye kindled with brighter light, and that we breathed more freely when in the wide and open country than when cooped up in squalid towns and villages, with their menacing dangers of bloodthirsty hostility and disease.

The landscape, for two days' journeying north of Batang, presented a series of smooth, rounded, hilly ridges, separated by broad, grassy valleys, dotted with innumerable villages, and overrun with numerous herds of yaks and horses. It was a fine pastoral country, eminently suited for grazing, the eye, wherever it wandered, resting on extensive prospects of rolling prairie, grassy hills, and verdurous valleys, following one another in regular series.

We stopped at Dzun-Hak at nightfall of the first day, and were received with the greatest cordiality by the chief, who sent messengers to a large village, which, he informed us, lay some miles inland, where resided the head man of the district, to purchase food and wine for our entertainment. As with these portending evidences of munificence we were obliged to show something more substantially fitting than verbal thanks, we presented him

with half a dozen yards of cloth and several sketches of ourselves. Concerning these latter, he was inordinately curious, questioning us as to whether they were our spirit forms which we carried around for protection against harm. As we knew full well the impossibility of conveying to his benighted brain the real reason for their existence,—namely, the vanity of mankind in general,—we adopted the wiser plan of confirming his first conjectures, when, with religious zeal, he punched a hole through the top of each picture, and, hanging them around his neck, strutted forth for the delectation and general mystification of the others, who gathered around in a noisy, if not overcritical, audience, taking the pictures in their hands, feeling of them, tasting and smelling them, until after half an hour of this unique experience one would have had great difficulty in tracing the original.

Not until next morning were we made fully aware of the duplicity and double nature of the crafty old rascal, for although we had seen a number of the men, who had started out on the journey to the neighbouring tribal chief, walking aimlessly around the streets, he informed us, with the most brazen impudence, that they must have been overtaken by some accident on the road. As we could give no good and sufficient evidence to the contrary, notwithstanding our suspicions, we were obliged to maintain a discreet silence, and to console our sorely troubled minds with the vow that henceforth our liberality should be withheld until we, in turn, had been made recipients of something substantial in the same line.

The natives of the district adjacent to Dzun-Hak, although members of one of the most important branches of the Sifanese, externally present many differing traits, more closely allying them with the races of Turkestan

and Central Asia. In height they are above the average, with thick-set figures and broad shoulders; long hair and scanty beard, which are never shaved off, as among the other races, and invariably jet-black in colour; the eyes dark and rather large, never narrow, like the Chinese or Mongols; the nose decidedly aquiline, but sometimes turned up with a curious tilt; the lips thick and protruding; and the cheek-bones high and prominent, as in the North American Indian type.

The women were the equal of any that we had ever seen in Western China, with long, oval faces and regular features, and the whitest and most even teeth, which, coupled with the pale olive colour of their complexions, gave to them a prepossessing appearance, markedly noticeable. They were, however, evidently not at ease in their own minds as regarded their attractiveness, for they immediately destroyed the exalted judgment we had formed of them by dyeing their cheeks a bright vermilion colour, and piling their hair on top of their heads until it gave them a remarkably top-heavy appearance, causing us momentary concern lest they should be toppled over by this weighty-looking burden.

The natives are very superstitious about death, and follow a custom which, as it seems to be held in general favour in Western China, may be here described. As soon as a man has died, his relatives or friends forthwith proceed to find a suitable place for his interment; and for this purpose they take a basket of eggs into the surrounding country, and, having selected a favourite spot, drop an egg to the ground from a height of six inches. If it breaks, it is considered an ill omen; and a search is then made for another spot, where this unique process is repeated. In this way, hours, and even days, may be spent in dis-

covering a fitting place, the searching party wandering around with truly commendable zeal, and without shirking in any manner the task imposed upon them. There are also numerous other ceremonies attendant on the occasion, — among them the beating of the corpse with long switches, to drive therefrom the evil spirits, or the stabbing it through the heart or other vital organs, with a similar purpose in view, of course, however, not before death.

Once in the country north of Batang, we were more fully impressed than ever with the constantly waning power of Buddhism, each tribe, and in general each town and village, having a religion distinctively its own. The Dzun-Hak practically have no religion, although they worship a species of albino yak, and make many sacrifices of and to it. During these festivities all the bad members of the tribe are brought to the scene of the sacrifices, in order that the devils may be dismissed from them. To accomplish this, a straw image is made and carried around the streets on the shoulders of the backsliders, after which it is set on fire by them, and, as the flames consume the effigy, so they also take away the evil spirits from the turbulent members of the tribe. One novel trait, which one cannot help wishing might be seen with greater frequency in more favoured regions of this great world of ours, is their respect for old age. In Africa and Western Asia, and shame to confess it, even in more civilised lands, the position of the aged is pitiable in the extreme, for, looked upon in most cases by those younger in years as a constant drag and hindrance, the winter of life is but too apt to be passed in sorrow and misery, which no amount of bodily comfort can properly atone for. In this land, however, barbarous though its people may be, as soon as a person becomes too old, or is otherwise incapacitated for

work, he is taken care of by the younger members of the tribe, is looked up to and revered as a patriarch, and invariably consulted on all matters of importance touching the general weal and woe.

Suspecting, after leaving Dzun-Hak and penetrating farther up-stream, that a river of considerable importance emptied into the Kinsha a little way above, owing to the ever increasing force of its current, we paid particular attention to every indentation on its uneven banks; but although numerous small streams, ranging from ten to thirty feet in width, emptied their waters into the Kinsha, there was no trace of any tributary stream of considerable size. The general course of these streams lay from the west, the velocity of their currents giving evidence that we were on the outskirts of the immense watershed dividing the diverging river systems of the eastern Thibetan border.

The Kulién Mountains, properly so called, consist of two ranges, which enclose the valley of the upper Kinsha Kiang, and lie at right angles to the general direction of the Kuen Lun, and are among the loftiest ranges in Asia. There is really more affinity between these mountains and the westernmost of the Sadagh, than between the latter and the Kuen Lun, for the last named belongs to a distinct system, and is divided from the main mass of the central Asiatic chain by a deep and wide depression; whereas both the Kulién and the ranges to the westward, which have no single name, are joined to the Kuen Lun at their southern extremities, and are hardly distinguishable at first from it. The western Kulién range springs up abruptly on the east of the plain country, at the end of the Kinsha plateau, on which have settled a medley of tribes. This region, although almost entirely treeless,

is very fertile in the seasons when the rainfall is plentiful, and, being at an average height of ten thousand feet above the sea level, for eight months of the year is swept by a climate of arctic severity.

This region, formed by the Kulien ranges, is impassable at any point in its northern configuration for beasts of burden or wheel traffic, and the traveller who wishes to see the country must double either the northern or southern end of the range, whose snow-streaked cliffs pierce far into the clouds. The natives who inhabit the country are for the most part unenlightened and hostile savages, who are known under the generic name of Dzrik ; but as no explorer has as yet summoned the necessary amount of courage to make the hazardous venture of penetrating into their wild domains, little is known of their general characteristics save from the narratives of the Sifanese tribes on the Kinsha, who aver that they are a nation of the most bloodthirsty and hostile of monsters, with the added demerit of being cannibals of the worst kind. This latter fact, however, should receive substantial corroboration before implicit faith is placed in it, for both Rockhill and Holmes, who approached nearest to this region, state that there is but little doubt of the falsity of these rumours.

After two days' halting progress from Dzun-Hak, on the tenth we had reached the hilly coast of Tchi-su ; the lowlands faded from view, and the black mountain masses appeared to the right and left like giant hands closing together to embrace us between their relentless grasp, rising grim and lofty, with their peaks bedded in snow. Clusters of gray, rocky islets animated the coast, unenlivened by forest or verdure, causing the current of the river to flow through innumerable narrow channels, up

which it was only by the most hazardous labour that we were enabled to pole the canoes, threatened each moment to be capsized by the numerous whirlpools and cross-currents, or dashed into pieces against protruding reefs and jagged boulders. This fractiousness of the stream continued until noon of the eleventh, when we had reached the mouth of a river which the natives called Guhi, where the Kinsha expanded once more to a distance of several hundred feet. The river bank was here lined with dozens of little villages perched on the sloping face of the mountains, or with fishing hamlets of the most miserable kind grouped on the edge of the current, inhabited by an ill-favoured and sinister-looking generation, who refused to sell us provisions of any kind, and received our friendly approaches with unconcealed hostility. As there were no demands, other than that of curiosity, requiring us to persist in the attempt to overcome their churlishness, we wisely left them to their dirty habitations, and kept on until long after nightfall to Kiebzun. The natives here were in no wise more charitably disposed than those we had met earlier in the day, but their trading instincts were so strong that even their innate hostility was conquered by their cupidity and avarice, and we were able to dispose of numerous of our stores to good advantage. For obvious reasons we refused their request that we take up our quarters in their village, as their sinister scowlings and furtive glances of envy at our belongings were too openly manifested to be misconstrued, and we felt more at ease encamping on the river bank.

Next morning there was a peculiar air of discontent, like a foreshadowing of trouble, among the natives who appeared before our camp. We could see that they had

armed themselves with guns and spears, and were gathered in hostile groups, giving vent to ominous mutterings, of which there could be no mistaking the tenor. Trouble seemed imminent; so, taking Yuen with me, I went to them and sought to discover the meaning of this attitude, reproaching them for their churlish conduct when we had done them no harm. This had the effect only of making their anger more openly apparent, and at a signal from the others a gray-headed chief stepped forward with the information that some one of our party had entered their temple during the night and abstracted a number of idols, which must immediately be forthcoming, or at any rate their equivalent, or they would at once attack us. We well knew that he was lying, for had we really stolen the idols they would have had no compunction in at once rushing upon us and fighting to the death; but anxious, if possible, to avert conflict, we pointed out the difficulty of tracing the offender, and inquired what they considered a fair price for the stolen images. With suspicious promptitude they settled upon a bale of cloth; but we were resolved at all hazards not to suffer this extortion, and finally were able to compromise with ten yards of red cloth.

Shortly after 9 A. M. we were once more under weigh; but scarcely had we gone fifty feet when two large boats, manned by ten men, boldly approached from the shore and followed in our wake, while a hundred or more natives ran along the bank, shouting yells of defiance, and threatening us with long tufted lances and guns. We were far enough removed to entertain no fears from the spears, but in our exposed condition the possible effects of the muskets were not to be lightly reckoned on. As we made no demonstration of resistance, the canoes rapidly

overhauled us, and when thirty feet away swerved aside, wheeling around us in a defiant style. We maintained our progress for ten minutes longer, when the danger at last having reached a point where our lives were menaced, we commanded the crew to stop paddling, and, addressing those in the canoes, demanded the reason for this warlike demonstration. To this query they made no answer beyond threatening scowls, while a number of the more foolhardy and passionate hurled several lances at us, which, had we not dropped with amazing celerity into the bottom of the canoes, must inevitably have killed some of us. We had been loath hitherto to wax aggressive, but with this open demonstration of violence the time for parley and speechifying had gone by; and, calling on the men to drop their paddles and fire at the canoes, we soon had the satisfaction of seeing both the boats sinking to a lower level as the water rushed in, while with yells of terror the valorous warriors who had been manning them swam hurriedly to the shore, where, having rejoined the others, they were on the point of firing a volley in our direction, when we again quenched their ardour by a well-directed fire, which sent them scampering back to their village, leaving half a dozen of their number either killed or badly wounded. Fearful of another and more successful attack, we hastened forward with as much speed as possible.

On the thirteenth we arrived at Uhihl after a long day's fight against the swift river current during a storm of sleet and hail. The village had for nearly a month suffered from a severe famine; but now the huntsmen, having made a successful foray in the wild country to the east, had returned with an abundance of yak meat, on which the people were gorging themselves like a pack of hungry

wolves, being camped in the streets around large fires of dung, roasting the meat on the end of short sticks for a



CHOICHONG GYALPO, THE GOD OF ASTROLOGY, AND PROTECTOR OF MEN AGAINST EVIL SPIRITS.

few minutes, and eating it practically raw. The head man demanded that we should pay tribute for the privilege of landing, and, to guard against engendering hostile feelings,

we presented him with some cloth and a musket. With this evidence of the friendliness of our intentions, he invited us to the feasting, and really seemed put out at our repeated refusals. As, however, we had not as yet descended to the level to which one is reduced by famine, we did not, for obvious reasons, avail ourselves of this exhibition of generosity. We could not but feel flattered by the attention of the females of Uhihl, for they crowded around us with huge pieces of half-cooked meat, which they thrust into our faces in the manner that animals are fed at a menagerie, much to the delight of the Kiangsis, who, having received back pay for three weeks, expended their wealth with profligate generosity, for sailors in port they were for the time being, and as sailors in port they flung their wealth in every direction to the entire satisfaction of the avaricious Uhihlese, who expressed the desire that such "munificent princes" might fall into their midst every day.

We halted four days at Uhihl, as our situation was deplorable. Owing to the ever increasing high altitudes we were attaining, many of the crew had contracted violent lung affections, and two or three had slight touches of fever, while both Burton and myself were not in the best of spirits. We had twenty-seven men ailing. Some suffered from mountain fever, some from asthma, chest diseases, and malarial fever; lungs were weak, and rheumatism had its victims. The short respite from the arduous labour of travelling, however, worked almost miraculous wonders; for when on the morning of the seventeenth we were ready to set forward once more, the greater number of these evils had disappeared, although six men, including Burton, were not sufficiently recovered to be of much physical assistance.

A sad event took place on the afternoon of this day. Yuen, the valorous little coxswain and interpreter, the soul and life of the expedition, when we camped for the night complained of dizziness and severe pains in his head. As soon as he had eaten his supper and been revived by several cups of pundu, he informed us that he felt better. It was but the exhilaration of the moment, however, for shortly before midnight we heard him groaning and writhing in agony in his tent, and on entering found him in the throes of the dreadful fever. His face was fearfully pallid, and his mind seemed to be wandering, while he complained of great thirst. Through the long night we remained by his side, essaying by every means at our command to break up the course of the disease. Our efforts were futile, however; his condition rapidly changed for the worse; and just as day dawned, recovering consciousness for the last time, he asked that we each place a hand in one of his, and with a faint smile passed to the great unknown as peacefully as a child dropping to slumber. We buried him next day beneath an enormous mound overlooking the vast region which, to help his masters, in penetrating he had given up his life.

For days and weeks afterward we brooded in sorrow and silence over our irreparable loss, missing his sunny good-humour and light-hearted optimism; for his trustworthiness and courage had been of inestimable service to us. He was equally beloved by his comrades, to whom, although their superior, he was always a kind-hearted and just friend; never chiding or correcting them unless they were combating the will of the white masters; ever ready to take the paddle of some worn-out canoeman and labour on uncomplainingly, although physically almost incapable; discreet in council, but a very lion in the forefront of dan-

ger. Many times in the future his kind, determined face came before us when danger clouded around, as if being with us still in spirit if not in body, which was buried in an unknown land, far from kindred and home, a martyr to the cause of civilisation.

The next camp northward from Uhihl which we established was at Tuj-su-an, at an altitude above the sea level of 11,231 feet. From the head man we learned that the place had at a former time been a town of considerable importance, one of the large caravan centres, carrying on an extensive trade in the surrounding country. All this had been changed with the introduction of the manufacture of opium. The entire population had been swept away by plague and disease, no doubt superinduced by the deadly drug, — leaving to the village only such traces of its former greatness as innumerable ruined and deserted habitations, and a miserable population of a hundred souls, who, it would seem from outward appearance, had been overtaken by the fell curse of laziness, for no evidences of thrift or prosperity could we discover. The surrounding plain was fertile and capable of cultivation; numerous herds of yak, argali, and antelope could be seen scattered over the face of the country; the river abounded in fish, yet not a single pound of food could we buy, for though on every hand it existed in abundance, the villagers went along from day to day in a half-famished condition rather than search for it, maintaining their slight spark of life by consuming the few shell-fish that could be gathered on the river banks.

As we were in need of fresh meat, we suggested to some of the natives that they should guide us to a spot where we might be able to do some hunting, for their assistance offering to divide with them the spoils of the

chase. To our astonishment, this offer was met with a pointblank refusal; but, as we were resolved at all hazards to go, we took with us six of the crew, and in half an hour succeeded in shooting two small antelopes and a yak cow. Leaving the men to cut up the game, we rushed off in another direction after a flock of sandgrouse, which we had descried settling in a thick clump of bushes; but in a few minutes we were alarmed by shouts of terror from the direction of the carcasses, and, rushing back, found the men whom we had left in the centre of a wildly expostulating and threatening group of natives, who, relying on their strength of numbers, were demanding that the prizes should be turned over to them for disposal. On our arrival on the scene, they fell back a little; but one burly-looking rascal, seeking encouragement in the eyes of his fellows, brushed by the crew, and, throwing himself on the carcass of the yak, drew his knife and proceeded to skin the animal. His action stimulated the bravery of his companions, and, seeing that we remained passive, the rest of the ill-conditioned horde closed in to press once more their claim, and, if need be, seize upon the quarry by force. We vainly expostulated with them, reviling them for their laziness and cowardice; but our words were as but oil added to the flames, their hostile attitude increasing each moment, until we felt that, in order to protect our lives, it was necessary that we should throw pacific measures to the winds, and combat their churlish menaces by sterner measures.

The dirty rascal who had seized upon the body of the yak had, by this time, made considerable progress, when, covering him with my revolver, I ordered him away. He paused for a moment, as if doubting that he had heard aright; but his wholesome respect for the weapon con-

quered in the end, and, with a sheepish attempt at opposition, he rejoined the others, who had gathered in a scowling and muttering group fifty feet away. Ignoring them entirely, we cut up the yak meat, and, having distributed it among the men, placed the antelopes over our own shoulders and proceeded to return, when we found our way confronted by half a dozen of the more aggressive savages, who announced their decision to fight if we did not surrender the meat. As there was no place of shelter for them in the vicinity, and noting the crude weapons of our adversaries, we felt fully capable of making an effectual resistance without running serious danger; and we therefore firmly answered that, if they were disposed to fight, we were ready and willing to have the right of ownership of the prize decided by combat. This bit of braggadocio on our part was not without effect, for there was an immediate waning in their ardour; their bluster and threatening attitude underwent a change, and after much cogitation they proceeded to fall back upon an effort to stimulate our generosity by the recital of their numerous woes, until, to rid ourselves of their presence, we turned over to them one of the antelopes, and seized upon the opportunity, while they were engaged in squabbling for its ownership, to return to our camp.

A terrific storm, accompanied by a heavy fall of snow, although it was the middle of July, prevented us from making progress on the twentieth or twenty-first, which time was consumed in sorting and repacking the stores and drying the meat, the frigidity of the atmosphere meanwhile rendering our exposed condition uncomfortable in the extreme. Several of the men were frost-bitten, and most of them, having never seen snow falling before in their lives, were much exercised over it,

lest it be a portending evidence of the anger of the deities. We assuaged their fears by explaining the phenomenon, and for several hours care, danger, and toil were forgotten in the inexpressible pleasures of a good old-fashioned snowball fight, Burton with half the force arrayed against the remainder, which were led by myself. When once warmed up to the combat, the struggle waxed fast and furious, until, perceiving that the hot-blooded Kiangsis, overwhelmed by the spirit of the rivalry, were fast losing their tempers and coming to blows, we ordered the sport to cease. Meantime the group of natives, who had gathered wonderingly around us at the spectacle of such unexplainable frivolity, began to imitate our example, until a sanguinary riot of no mean proportions was in progress, which might have ended more seriously had we not stepped in, and, by diverting the general attention to ourselves, cooled their hot spirits.

Having hired three guides, and purchased two skin boats in which to carry the meat, on the twenty-second we struck north again. The stream of the Kinsha for some ten or twelve miles at this point runs along the side of an expansive valley, close under the western mountains, which have receded to some distance from the course of the river itself. This continues as far as Comanu, where, with a gradual expansion, the current becomes very shallow except in midstream, only a few feet in depth, and forming a number of practicable fords, while the sides of the ravine then draw together, and the river becomes difficult of progress. Former disturbances have brought down avalanches of earth and rock from one side and then from the other, until the main current of the stream has been divided up into a number of minor ones, which rush through the narrow openings

with fearful velocity. There is plenty of tree-growth, but no evidences of other cultivation, although the country is well populated, the eye being at all times able to rest upon isolated villages or habitations of some sort, while numerous temples and monasteries crown the mountain summits, like picturesque mediæval castles perched on cloud-bathed pinnacles. The colour of the rocks is very striking, being a brilliant yellow streaked with red, which forms an agreeable contrast with the green crest overtopping them.

We were as great curiosities to the natives as they were to us, for as we wandered along near the shore our progress was continually beset by the men and women of the little river settlements with pressing invitations to stop in their villages and barter. As we had already suffered considerable delay on the two previous days, we were obliged to ignore these friendly offers, which, however, were none the less welcome, assuring us for the time being, at least, immunity from hostile tribes. We were, therefore, all the more surprised, when drawing near to a considerable village which loomed up on the river bank, at nightfall, to perceive a group of fifty or sixty bellicose natives advancing in boats, menacing our approach with uplifted spears and noisy show of war. Instantly apprehending danger, we ordered the crew to see to their weapons, and proceeded forward cautiously. In a short time, however, our fears were quieted, for from several of the men in the leading boats we learned that our reception was not one of aggression, but merely a way of showing their desire to welcome fittingly such an auspicious occasion. With our equanimity restored, albeit the natives continued to manifest their prowess further by numberless grandiloquent boasts and much frantic action, we pitched

our camp and announced our willingness to barter ; when almost immediately we were surrounded on all sides by a howling, excited mob, striving to make themselves heard, the weaker trodden under foot by the more powerful, all swayed by the desire to be the favoured ones, until this danger became even greater than open hostility itself. With diplomatic tact, we traded only with the leading men, from whom we might expect some measure of return ; but a most conscienceless lot they were, for in the end we discovered that we had been completely out-bargained if not deliberately robbed.

From the natives themselves we inquired the name of their village ; but either it had no general name, or else they were the most painstaking of liars, for in answer to a dozen questionings we received as many varying answers. The determining of proper names is one of the greatest difficulties incident to accurate geographical research in Western China and Thibet, for the names enumerated by one traveller are more than likely to be upset by the new category of another immediately succeeding him, until the general result is, to say the least, confusing. In determining names of all towns and villages, and other geographical data requiring accuracy, it has been my invariable rule to fall back upon the phonetic methods which have of late years become necessary in uncivilised countries, and in cases where there has been any serious disagreement to accept invariably the decision of the majority, which, whether right or wrong, is the only feasible method that offers itself.

The single night that we spent at Churak was a disturbed one, as the flood-gates of heaven seemed literally opened for a period, while a strong wind repeatedly levelled the tents to the ground, until, in despair, we gath-

ered together beneath the shelter of the enormous cliffs, and were able to pitch our tents in a less exposed position, only, however, to be awakened after several hours of indifferent repose by the yells of the crew, and, jumping up, fearing treachery of some sort, to discover that the waters of the river had overflowed the low-lying shale beach, and that we were encamped in the middle of a lake-like expanse. With no loss of time we rushed out into the open, to look upon an area of curling waters, while the canoes, which we had seen safely on the shore, were now nearly twenty feet away, tugging at their moorings, and threatening at each moment to tear loose and be carried off with the strong current. It was no time for hesitation. Battling against the swiftly rushing waters, which repeatedly carried us off our feet, we were able finally to secure every one of the canoes and carry them to a point of safety.

By morning the waters had in a measure subsided; but the Kinsha was still a rapid stream, nearly two hundred feet wide, flowing in a stony channel, in some places between precipitous walls of rock, but occasionally forming picturesque valleys, in one of which, sheltered by enormous cliffs, stands Chutong, which we reached at 3 P. M., on the twenty-third. Opposite to Chutong a bold bluff projects into the stream from the end of a low ridge, and astride the neck of this promontory is another village nearly as large, which possessed an infinite variety of names, but which, following our usual method of procedure, we decided was generally called Turzh. A wooden bridge, showing considerable ingenuity in engineering and construction, crossed the Kinsha under the eastern face of the rock; and it is probable that there was an ancient bridge at about the same point, for there were remaining

evidences of the same in the shape of half a dozen crumbling piers.

On the surrounding upland country there were considerable areas of cultivation, grain and vegetables of familiar sorts growing with astonishing fecundity. There were, however, no traces of arboreal growth, except numerous groves of dwarfed bushes, a mongrel and degenerate variety of tree much like a pine, from which exuded bunches of a sweet-smelling and bitter-tasting gum. We eventually discovered that this substance is possessed of considerable medicinal value, forming the basis for various herb tonics, which are manufactured by the natives and exported to Thibet and Eastern China. Its effect was peculiar in the extreme, for after one had chewed it for a little while the mind was clouded and the muscles relaxed, as if one had been partaking of considerable quantities of strong liquor. It was doubtless from the effects of this substance that the natives of Chutong acquired their listless and enervated condition, for they presented the appearance of having at no recent date passed through the experience of a severe debauch, staggering around much like a colony of inebriates.

The head man of the place was a very remarkable person, nearly seven feet in height, and admirably proportioned. He was wholly unembarrassed by any feelings of modesty, fully impressing us at the outset with a recital of his many exalted qualifications, and with the innumerable historical events of the region, of which he, of course, was the central and luminous figure, with naïve innocence and unstinting wealth of bombast relating the most Munchausen-like tales. He was a hospitable individual, however, and invited us to take up our residence in his house, which was a long, two-storied structure, built of

loosely piled stones, held together by a plaster of mud, and which, built on the face of sloping ground, had acquired an extremely uncertain aspect of stability, keeping us in a state of momentary terror lest it should collapse and



THIBETAN LAMA WITH THIGH-BONE TRUMPET.

bury us beneath its ruins. After questioning us on an infinity of subjects, he introduced us to several of the other important functionaries of the place, who gathered around in awkward silence, blinking idly at us with

maudlin curiosity, and chewing the gum of the tree which we had noticed, with the most tiring assiduity,—at odd moments, for no apparent reason, bursting into fits of hysterical and uncontrollable laughter.

We presented our entertainer with a musket, and distributed other gifts among his guests, with which they were delighted, and we soon became fast friends. Unfortunately, their dialect was so different from the usual language of the country, that, after numerous efforts, we were obliged to give up conversation in sheer despair, contenting ourselves with idly gazing into one another's faces, and making mental conjectures. Burton took advantage of the opportunity to draw forth his sketching materials, when he was immediately surrounded; but he heroically carried through the work to completion, and, having made a very capital sketch of the gathering, presented it to the head man, who surveyed it for some few minutes with a critical stare, and then hung it around his neck, to the general envy of the others, whose joy knew no bounds when each in turn was presented with a similar token.

The natives of this region in the vicinity of Chutong, are classified by geographers as the real Tangutans, or Sifanese. In no general characteristics are they allied to either the Chinese or Thibetans, but seem to be a different race entirely. As to their origin, ethnologists are silent, for the most erudite research among native sources has been futile in the essay to learn whence they originally came. By many it is claimed that they are the race which has sprung from those fanatical Buddhists, who, many centuries ago, were driven back from Eastern China into these wild mountain fastnesses, and that the difference in featural and physical traits may be explained by the fact that they have subsequently intermarried. The

more plausible theory, advanced of late years, suggests that they are undoubtedly branches of the wild native hordes, who, for untold centuries, have lived on the northern borders of India, penetrating into this region by the numerous streams connecting the two countries, as the encroaching advances of civilisation or territorial strife have impelled them. True it is that they more nearly resemble the hill tribes of Northern India to-day, than they do the Eastern Chinese or Mongols, being very dark in colour, and with regular features, and manifesting a similar tendency in their religion, with but few traces of Buddhism, — each tribe worshipping its own gods, which exist in remarkable abundance in the material substance of idols of stone or metal.

Many of their customs are curious in the extreme. Polygamy is practised to very little extent, each male having but one wife, although, according to his wealth, possessing one or more concubines, whom he trades off to his friends and to rival tribes, for various considerations, — sometimes cattle, or metal implements, more often for another woman to whom he has taken a fancy, — the transaction being carried on with all the gravity and decorum of a stock-market in the dull season. Yet, notwithstanding this looseness of morals, the condition of the lawful wife is much ameliorated; for she is, in a measure, lifted above the common grade of womanhood, the drudgery and hardships falling on the concubines, who are little better than domestic slaves.

The stealing of one another's wives is a common custom, and one which engenders, in most cases, serious results; as, aside from the fact that the market value of women is extremely high, the native, whose wife is purloined, until he has killed her ravisher, or is in turn killed,

must suffer the insults and contumely of the rest of the tribe. We witnessed many instances of the effectiveness of this practice of mortal combat in settling such difficulties, a description of one of which will suffice to give an idea as to how it is practised.

A wife of one of the tribal leaders, having decided that the cruelties of her lord and master prevented her living longer under his roof, gave short notice of her intention of leaving him by stealing one of his ponies and fleeing to the abode of a neighbouring chief; and as she was a comely person and good to look upon, the chivalrous spirit of the latter forbade his refusing her mild request, that he should take her as his property. As a wife, and especially one of such goodly parts, is a more or less valuable commodity, the deserted husband was, very naturally, loath to give her up, and promptly carried his complaint to the tribal head man of the district. This important functionary, having listened to the facts of the case, in turn summoned the chief to whose arms the erring wife had fled, and, having questioned him fully, retired for a day to ponder over the matter, at the end of which time he gave as his just decree that the matter should be settled according to the unwritten law of the land (as inflexible as that of the Medes and Persians), requiring that the two claimants for the woman should gather, with their friends, and prove their rights to the claim by mortal combat.

The event having been duly heralded in the surrounding district, as the time for the encounter drew near the natives of the villages containing the rival chiefs gathered at a point of vantage on the hillside near the town, whence to view the subsequent proceedings. The narrow plain below formed a sort of elevated platform, on either side of which had gathered the respective factions, — the ag-

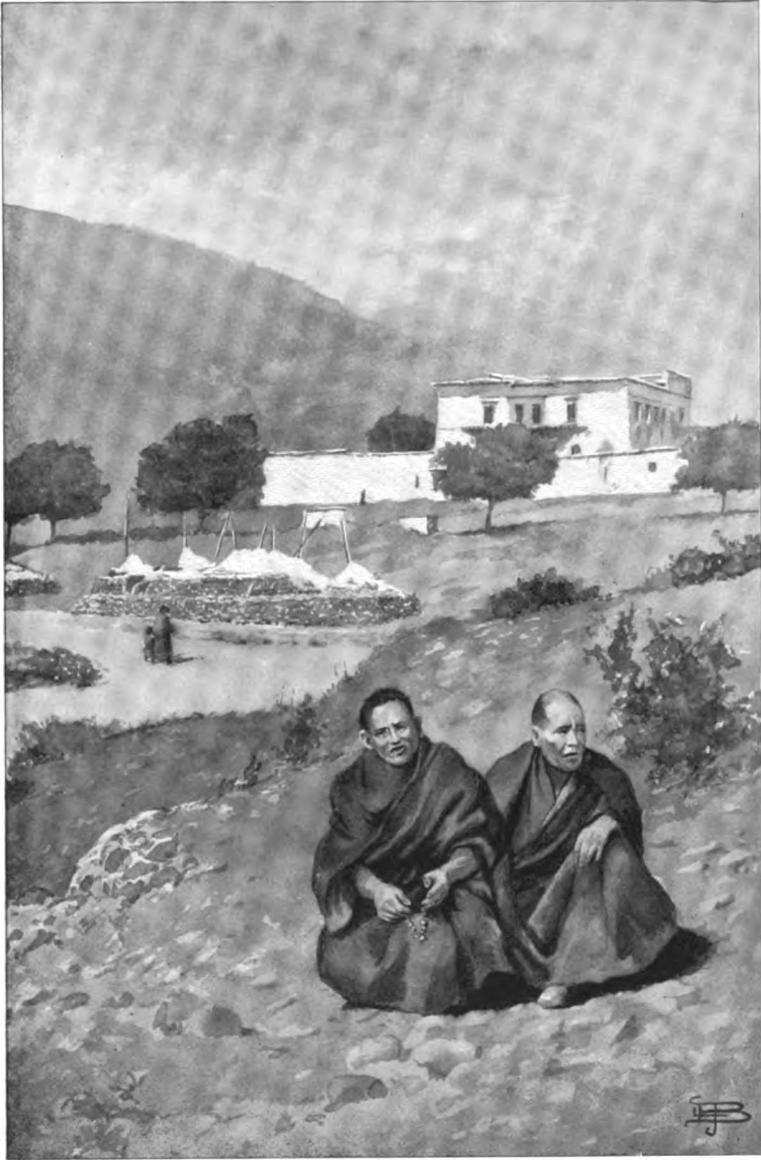
grieved husband with his friends and retainers, and directly opposite those of the rival chief, each ready and anxious to defend his claims to the woman in dispute. The latter, under the protection of the tribal chief, was seated on the ground a short distance away, and with true feminine depravity seemed immensely pleased at the turmoil of which she was the willing cause. The actual contestants were a dozen in number, naked except for a small loincloth, each carrying for purposes of offence and defence a dagger and a spear.

The tribal chief having recited the facts of the case, and likewise dilating on the good points of the woman in dispute, raised his hand as a preliminary signal. Instantly the two principals stepped forth from their respective groups, and as the chief's hand dropped they rushed toward each other with the velocity of well-aimed projectiles. An ominous pause of a few moments occurred, which seemed like hours, and then with blood-curdling yells they clashed together, spear against spear, knife against knife, — those in the respective groups meanwhile keeping up an unceasing musical ululation in strains truly dolorous, beating the ground with the butt-end of their spears, and anon breaking forth in a wild chant, until they had worked themselves up to a frenzied pitch of sanguinary zeal.

The two combatants, with a full appreciation of each other's skill, fought warily, biding the moment when a lucky thrust might end the encounter. For a quarter of an hour this terrific duel continued, the excitement increasing each moment. The men were growling like wild animals, incited to bloody fury by the cries of their followers, dashing at each other their knives and spears with lightning-like thrusts, but without avail.

For a short time longer this continued, till their bodies were covered with perspiration, while their laboured breathing and increasingly listless efforts showed that both were rapidly weakening from the terrible strain which they had undergone. Then in a single moment all was over. The fighting had waxed furious again, when there was a flash high up in the air, shooting downward like a falling meteor of light, and the body of one of the contestants sank to the earth, the hilt of a spear sticking from his breast like the great mast of a foundering ship, the enormous paddle-shaped blade driven nearly half through his body. Looking more closely, it was to discover that the inanimate and unresisting corpse was that of the original husband; while the victor, fittingly to celebrate his triumph, danced on the prostrate form in an ecstasy of bloody satisfaction.

But the end was not yet. Again there was a momentary halt, during which the aged chief raised his arm for silence; but in an instant the two factions were on foot, shouting demoniacal yells at the top of their lungs, passing through the steps of an imaginary war-dance, and jeering at their antagonists, brandishing their knives and spears, and picturing in glowing and suggestive pantomime what their ultimate fate was to be. The old chief was evidently unwilling to begin the encounter, for upward he poised his hand, until the combatants had ceased their warring strife and fallen into moody silence, crouched on their haunches with every muscle poised in magnificent tension for the fateful lowering of the arm. One could hardly believe that the bloody panorama was real; but rather the vague imaginings of disturbed slumber, — that these human beings, in whom had been lighted all the sanguinary passions of barbarism, were but innumerable fantastic



LAMAS AND MONASTERY AT BATANG.

mannikins operated by some distorted fancy of the imagination.

This only for a moment, however ; suddenly the hand of the old chief fell, and all doubts as to the reality of the scene vanished. There was the sinuous, serpent-like motion of quickly fleeting bodies, and then the air resounded with the clash of weapons, the groans of the wounded and dying, the shouts of the victors, the fierce breathing and guttural snarling of those locked in mortal combat ; while there, removed but twenty feet away, was an applauding audience inciting this bloody orgy, gazing on the spectacle with the *sang froid* and blasé air of a first-nighter.

The strife had long since waxed fearful in murderous intensity ; the very ground reeked and steamed with blood ; the original twelve combatants had dwindled down to a meagre two, who, fighting amidst the prostrate bodies strewn around, appeared like incarnate demons from another world. There were a few lightning flashes of steel, the clash of metal against metal, and then only one form stood silhouetted against the sky beyond. It was but for a moment. Advancing toward the woman, covered with wounds and bathed in blood, he struck her forcibly with his hand two or three times to establish his claim and press on her his badge of subservience, and then strode off amidst the acclamations of the spectators. The combat was over ; Sifanese justice had been satisfied ; a dozen men had been killed or wounded ; the right of ownership of the woman had been settled.

Another strange ceremony of this remarkable people is that attendant on marriage, and it is curious because it is so closely connected with their burial customs ; in fact, whenever there is a burial there is simultaneously a

wedding. The widow of the dead man, immediately life is extinct, at once seeks another spouse, her success being graduated according to her personal charms and capabilities. On no consideration can her deceased husband be buried until she has found another one; therefore the disgrace of remaining unmarried for any considerable time is a signal one. If she finds a new husband immediately, she rises to an exalted place among the women of the tribe; but failing to secure a husband at the end of a week's time, she is obliged to become one of the concubine train of the head man, or else to escape to a neighbouring tribe, where her search for a husband may be rewarded with greater success. There are no unmarried women, — the young girls, so soon as they have reached the proper age, either being sold by their parents as wives, or else purchased by the wealthier members of the tribe to grace their harems. There are also many fixed rules regarding the rights of children. Those born of lawful wives are recognised as heirs to the name and estate of the male parent, — those of the concubines, however, in all other respects save this, being treated as members of the tribe, and capable by dint of industry or prowess to rise to its command.

As a race those Sifanese in the district contiguous to Chutong are a dirty and filthy lot, building no substantial dwellings, but with their herds of yaks and horses wandering over the country, living in tents made of yak skins or in a small hole dug in the ground, spending the time not consumed in attending to their cattle in sitting around small dung fires and drinking enormous quantities of tea, — not the ordinary tea of commercial standing, but a bitter, insipid, and altogether inferior mixture consisting of dried yellow onion-heads mixed with numberless other

herbs. Although the most vainglorious and loud-talking of boasters and buffoons, they are a cowardly crew, never straying far from the more closely settled portions, and forsaking their villages without protest at the first intimation of a raid by the wild mountain tribes, with whom they live in a constant state of hostility and dread.

CHAPTER VIII.

HAVING received our guides from the head man of Chutong, and likewise some facts concerning the nature of the river above his village, on the twenty-fifth we struck north again. The Kinsha from this point onward is regarded as a Thibetan stream by geographers, classified under the general name of Dji Chu, although from native sources it receives a different name at nearly every five miles of its course. As might be expected, the result has been, that, placing too great reliance on native reports, those explorers who hitherto have approached near to this region, but not through it, have enumerated the existence of a number of large streams flowing through the surrounding country, which although seemingly having an existence, are but one and the same stream. As the Dji Chu seems to be that in common usage, in the future I shall speak of it as such, although in reality not a separate river, as the diversion of names might suggest, but merely the headwaters of the Kinsha.

The perceptible rise of the Dji Chu leaving Chutong is more rapid than farther down-stream, and consequently gullies and broken country are encountered more frequently. Its enclosing walls are formed of a highly crystallised but not durable limestone, which, having rotted at the base where it has been worn by the current, has fallen in huge blocks and boulder lumps into the stream, causing a succession of low cascades and innumerable swift rapids.

For ten hours we battled against the swiftly rushing current, and at 3 P. M. had gone over but a distance of three miles to Tarya. The natives here we found to be a race of cave-dwellers, and most filthy and repugnant in general appearance, but markedly hospitable and friendly; for they immediately crowded down to our camp, bringing huge baskets of grain, beans, potatoes, herbs, honey, and bundles of tobacco, which they offered to us at astonishingly low prices. They seemed to be a race of hunters and agriculturists rather than with the usual amount of cupidity characteristic of the Tangut, for they had little or no knowledge of the value of articles, and our Kiangsis, to avenge themselves for unsuccessful bargaining in the past, fared right royally. Tobacco seemed to be an article growing in considerable profusion in the district, for it was exposed in long sheaves drying in the sun, or gathered into enormous piles ten or twelve feet in height. It seemed, however, to be different from the ordinary tobacco of commerce, a lighter and smaller leaf, and with little or no flavour. Its deleterious effects also could not have been great, for the entire population was engaged in smoking it all the time, — men, women, and children, the latter sucking away as contentedly at their pipes and with as much preternatural gravity as their elders. The pipes themselves were enormous affairs nearly ten inches long, formed usually of a hollowed stone, and holding at least half a pint of tobacco, rendering the process of smoking somewhat formidable.

There were also unmistakable evidences of the presence of considerable iron deposits in the neighbourhood, for we saw many implements made of this metal, which showed no little skill in their manufacture. As became a race of hunters, weapons, ranging from long, narrow-bladed knives

to muskets, were seen in abundance, and the accuracy with which these latter were used could not fail to excite our comment. A few hills to the southeast showed a number of yak and antelopes feeding, but owing to the persistency with which they had been hunted, they were extremely difficult of approach. Yet we saw one of the natives, at a distance of nearly two hundred yards, with one of these crude-looking muskets, pick off an antelope whose head and shoulders showed but for a single instant from behind a huge boulder, and then, with the most apparent unconcern, trot after his quarry as if such marksmanship was but an every-day exhibition of his skill.

Here, for the first time, we were enabled to gain some idea as to the severity of the weather in this region; and after once encountering its vagaries, we could not but wonder how the native constitution, rigorous and inured to hardship though it might be, could stand the sudden and dangerous changes. One hour the wind and snow, accompanied by a penetrating iciness, would make it an impossibility to be out-of-doors; the next would find the sun shining with almost tropical heat over the parched plain, drying up the moisture in clouds of steam, and rendering the thinnest of clothing necessary, although in another half hour it might be necessary again to enclose oneself in the thickest of furs. While these frequent gales lasted, and for hours afterward, the air was laden with clouds of dust, which, penetrating into the lungs, made breathing difficult in the extreme. Custom, however, among the native population has, in a measure, reduced the inconvenience from these climatic changes, for their scanty attire of yak skins seems to ensure sufficient protection against both heat and cold. Notwithstanding the abundance of the atmospheric deposits, and

the humidity of the soil, the watercourses contained less water than might have been expected, whilst the psychrometer indicated considerable dryness in the air. The first of these phenomena was probably due to the circumstance that the frozen earth imbibed a great deal of the moisture which fell; and the dryness of the atmosphere in clear weather was doubtless caused by the influence of the surrounding barren plains, which presented a parched and withered appearance. The small rivers which percolated through the region were extremely saline, while the current of the *Dji Chu* itself bore evidences of a brackish taint, which rendered the securing of proper drinking water considerable of a hardship. Notwithstanding these seemingly unfavourable conditions, the flora of this region was extremely rich and fecund. Vegetation of all sorts was most abundant. Fine, tall trees, dense underwood, and a variety of flowers animated the face of the landscape, rendering a pleasing contrast in comparison with the aridity and repellent topography of the immense mountain deserts beyond.

The thrift and economy of the Tangutans in taking advantage of the conditions that nature has bestowed on them cannot fail to excite the commendation of the traveller who passes through their country. Ornamentation, or the existence of things for show purposes only, is an anomaly; not a single tree or shrub, not a plant or weed, not a single foot of dirt or water that has not some measurable degree of practicability; whatever the eye may rest upon, to some practical use is it put.

We discovered that there were two different and distinctly differing races living in this region in harmony with each other, — one being clearly of Mongol origin, with the flat noses, large mouths, and small eyes characteristic

of that race; the other much lighter in colour, almost white, having exceedingly fine features, aquiline noses, slender necks, small heads, with a grand and proud carriage, possessing splendid traditions, and ruled by an inflexible custom which admits of no deviation. The Mongols were a more indolent and stupid race, devoting the greater part of their time to agriculture; while the Tanguts were valorous and skilful hunters, roaming the



MONGOL TENT.

surrounding district in search of game, or darting in all directions over the fierce river current with their little hide-boats, paddling with apparent ease past jagged boulders and over raging whirlpools. The general effect of this arrangement was agreeable in the extreme, racial feeling in a mildly combative sort of way running high, and between its equal intermingling of Tangut and Mongol, agriculturist and hunter, some attempts at civilised progress having been made. The Tanguts, however, have a most supercilious contempt for the agriculturists, and on

no condition will allow members of their tribe to intermarry with them on pain of expulsion and degradation. On the other hand, the Mongols are equally inflexible, regarding the rude hunters and nomads as a race of unenlightened and barbarous savages, with whom they exist on cordial commercial relations only, and whose protection against the brigandish mountain tribes they are willing to receive.

The religion of the two races also is dissimilar, the Mongols following the pure precepts of Buddhism, while the Tanguts worship a number of deities, the most important of which is one known as Da-to-h, who is supposed to have jurisdiction over the destinies of the hunter and fishermen, sending an abundance or dearth of game and fish according as he is pleased or angered. The native tradition regarding the Dji Chu is very singular.

In olden days, long, long before the time when the sun and moon were born, this district was ruled over by a great and powerful chief, an enormous giant ten feet in height, who was a mighty hunter, and beloved of all his people. His followers numbered thousands of the bravest of warriors, and the whole country acknowledged allegiance to him. But in due time from out the mountains to the west came another chief, a giant of even greater stature, not brave in war or the hunt, but with a profound knowledge of witchcraft and magic. At that time there was no great river, but one long plain, on which grazed countless millions of the largest of yaks and argalis.

The rival chief, looking down from his own sterile and unfruitful mountain home, was envious, and became possessed with an inordinate desire to obtain possession of the beautiful valley, with its enormous herds and mighty

hunters. So for two long years he shut himself up in his cave-home, gathering strong and subtle charms, and mixing them together, until he felt that he had one sufficiently potent for the purpose. Then he proceeded to the lowlands and sought to cast a magic spell over his rival, and thus to seize upon the fair valley. But the great and good god Da-to-h had from the sky seen him approaching the hut of his rival, and, moved with compassion, had anointed the latter with a charm ensuring him immunity from danger. The wicked sorcerer arrived when the chief of the valley was sleeping, and sought to work his magic spell; but at that instant the sleeping chief arose, and, seizing his weapons, rushed at the intruder.

The sorcerer, seeing that his plans had failed, at once rushed out of the hut to flee to his mountain stronghold; but in the meantime Da-to-h had placed between it and him an impenetrable mountain barrier. Seeing this, the former muttered an incantation, and immediately the mountains opened, disclosing a long ravine; as he rushed onward the ravine constantly elongated, until he had left his adversary far behind. But the good Da-to-h's wrath pursued the invader, and discharged a mighty flood of water after him, which, rushing up the ravine, eventually overtook the fleeing giant and drowned him; and so a river has been there ever since, tracing the course of his flight, and offering a natural barrier against their mountain enemies to the descendants of the former illustrious chief who lorded over the plain.

Yet another tradition ascribes the presence of the stream to an enormous upheaval which took place thousands of years ago, when a queer race of people issued from out the bowels of the earth, and essayed to conquer those living on the plain; but they were seized upon by

the gods, and confined with chains at the bottom of the ravine, while an enormous river was spread over them,—the angry rushing and boiling of the waters to-day being caused by their futile efforts to shake off their fetters, while the natives assert with the blindest naïveté that their groanings and shouts of defiance can be heard above the roar of the waters when a storm is in progress.

The head man of Tarya was a Mongol, and, having lived a number of years in Eastern China, was, in a measure, an enlightened and progressive official. He was a hoary-headed old patriarch, with sunken features and small rat-like eyes that peered from beneath bushy eyebrows like pinheads of light. He had been ten times to Lhasa with caravans, but refused to advance any information regarding that city, notwithstanding our most vigorous and persuasive questionings,—all our inquiries eliciting from him only a covert and subtle chuckle of satisfaction, implying that he was more than our match in diplomacy, and that he was fully aware of the reason why we desired to learn something concerning that unknown spot. He was the most intelligent man in the district, and gave us a great deal of information on the countries through which we were travelling. Like all Mongols, however, he was a lazy and suspicious old hypocrite, and sought duly to impress us with his religious zeal by babbling innumerable prayers, and at frequent intervals going through several forms of mummerly and magic. He showed us an ordinary wheaten biscuit, about the size of an apple, which he solemnly averred had been in the possession of his family for ten thousand years, and that it was a remarkable relic, owing not only to its age, but to the fact that whoever looked upon it and said a few prayers would have both hunger and thirst appeased. From much hand-

ling in innumerable filthy and greasy hands it had become the colour of highly polished ebony. Notwithstanding its potency to prevent hunger and thirst, we did not fail to notice that the old fellow himself had provided more substantial and fitting fare for the benefit of the inner man.

On this point we proceeded to question him, when he was nonplussed for a moment ; but recovering his self-possession, he asserted with brazen impudence that he never touched food himself, that the stores which we saw were those he kept on hand to present to his friends. He held the magic biscuit up to our gaze for half an hour longer, and then, having decided that the moment was propitious for action, he announced the sincerity of his regard for us, his desire that we should pass through our journey in safety, and concluded by offering to sell us the biscuit for ten yards of cloth, — assuring us that the only reason that could induce him to part with this illustrious relic of his ancestors was his suddenly acquired affection for us. Finding after much palaver that on no consideration would we purchase the precious relic from him at any price, he waxed moody and silent ; but seeing that he was rapidly losing his temper, we welcomed the opportunity to take our departure. During the evening we had occasion to return again to his habitation, when we discovered him eating immense quantities of yak meat, and giving other unmistakable evidences that he did not totally ignore the good things of this life.

From Tarya we journeyed along a curving expanse of the river for ten miles, until noon of the twenty-seventh, when once more we were confronted by a series of impassable rapids extending over a distance of two miles. Our first efforts against these obstructions were successful.

The current was swift and dangerous, breaking out into great waves now and then. For a distance of a quarter of a mile we beat up-stream by herculean efforts, paddling on one side hard, while the starboard crew grasped at overhanging bushes, or with boat-hooks snatched at the uneven boulders on the bank. But strive as we might, the current was too strong to be contended with, and at 2 P. M. we gave the order to beach the boats and undertake a portage along the bank to the quieter waters above.

The country on the right was covered with a considerable growth of forest-land, and we were hurrying along all unconsciously when the peaceful character of the scene was destroyed by a flight of spears over our heads. Instantly calling upon the crew to drop their burdens and take shelter behind the canoes, we ranged in position for what seemed to be an inevitable hostile attack. For ten minutes longer we waited, but not a sign of a human being could we descry. Rushing toward the woods, we searched in vain for our assailants; not a trace of them could we discover. Conjecturing that the attacking party had been a small one, and that they had been frightened away, we resumed our journeying; but in half an hour more our equanimity was again disturbed by another cloud of spears, thrown this time with more effect, as two of the crew were seriously injured. We did not wait for a repetition of the assault, but rushed toward the direction whence the weapons had been thrown just in time to see a horde of twenty or thirty nearly naked natives making off through the dense brush. Instantly the crew with exultant shouts rushed in pursuit, and, being more fleet of foot, had soon overtaken and captured three of the fugitives. We sought to question the prisoners regarding

their reason for this hostile attack, but the language which they made answer was so strange and that but very little of it could we understand. We learned enough, however, to convince us that they were members of the brigandish Tam-ba, and that those who had escaped had fled to a nearby village to give notice of our approach.

We fully recognised the danger to which we were exposed in our present unprotected position, and, before more seizing upon the canoes, were in the course of an hour gladdened with the spectacle of clear water again on which we were soon launched. We had scarcely gone forth, however, when from the wooded heights poured forth innumerable bodies of ill-conditioned savages, with painted faces, and carrying long spears and shields, who shouted at us defiance from a distance. As we well knew that as they were without boats of any kind, we were safe from their pursuit, we satisfied ourselves with several effectual volleys into their midst to avenge the wounds of the crew, and paddled along until 9 P.M., without perceiving villages or habitations of any sort, finally taking advantage of a sheltered cove to encamp for the night. We did not dare to light fires, for fear that they might be seen in the surrounding district, and bring upon us another hostile attack from our aggressors of the afternoon, but were obliged to sup on smoked yak beef, seasoned with the wild onion that at any moment we might be fighting for our lives.

The next day we arrived at 11 A.M., after a push through terribly wild water, at a sharp bend curving to the eastward, and almost immediately the stream was hemmed in with enormous precipices, filled with such countless obstructions that it seemed as if the river had



DODNEVANGPO, THE GOD OF WEALTH.

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come to an end. Stepping on shore, before we had gone far within the bend, and standing on some lava-like rock, I saw at a glance that this was the end of navigation by canoes for the present, at least. The cliffs rose up to a bolder height, in some places five or six hundred feet; the stream was contracted to a width of ten yards, rushing wild and furious through a long gorge, descending from a considerable height in a series of cataracts, bellowing with tremendous uproar among the echoing rocks.

Our condition was now crucial in the extreme,—all hopes of further progress by water shut off, burdened with the weighty impediments of the canoes and their loads, and our journeying on land taking us through a country of whose barbarity and sanguinary hostility we had already had evidence. For the first time the spectre of defeat stared us in the face; the possibility that all our most valiant efforts in the past, with their consequent dangers and hardship, were to go for naught; that at this moment, when we were on the eve of seeing the fructification of our fondly conceived plans, we were to be conquered by the whims of fortune and the hostility of nature. No more gloomy spot could be imagined than this wild, untamed region, encompassed by rocks and hemmed in with lowering mountain cliffs; the eye gazing on a monotonous cataract of wrathful waters whirling by in frightful fury, coiling and twisting into changing columns as they dashed along in white fragments of foam, and when looking for relief, only to rest on a dark, relentless plain, spreading upward and around, grim, forbidding, and menacing.

All the day of the twenty-ninth we encamped in this gloomy spot, in which was reflected the full weight of our forebodings; until at last, the fetters of pessimism being

broken, and trusting in an all-seeing Providence, we resolved that retreat was out of the question, that but one course lay open to us,—to push onward, onward, onward, till the end had been reached.

On the thirtieth, after wandering a quarter of a mile to the eastward, we came upon the main caravan route running through the district; and almost immediately evidences of habitation appeared on every side, innumerable villages springing up in every conceivable place. In each we discovered but a population of women and children, who, desecrating our approach, deserted their dwellings and sought refuge in the mountainous country beyond. At last we succeeded in capturing several of these fugacious non-combatants, and from them we learned that the men of the district were away on a grand hunting expedition to the southeast, and that they were not likely to return for a fortnight. The villages which we passed through were mostly well built of square hewn stones and patched with mud, while there were numerous other traces of considerable civilisation. Instead of wearing the dirty skins of beasts, those natives whom we saw were dressed in silk cloth of a firm texture, and altogether seemed to present an air of exalted deportment over those in the country farther to the south.

The village of Tulkarj, wherein we rested that night, was 12,603 feet above the sea. It had been a fine day for travel, and, notwithstanding the burden of the canoes, we had been able to go over a distance of fifteen miles, a soft breeze of refreshing coolness tempering the rays of the sun, without which we should have suffered from the great heat. As the sun set it became very cold, and snow fell in fitful, blinding showers; by midnight the temperature was as low as 15°. We had made a forced

march during the day, and all complained of fatigue from the constant excitement, while several of the crew were severely cut and bruised about the legs, owing to frequent collisions with the jagged boulders which beset the path over which we had been journeying.

Tulkarj (and, as we discovered later, all the villages in



MONGOLS, TULKARJ DISTRICT.

this district) was remarkable for the variety and excellent quality of its products. Nearly all the huts contained large baskets of superior tobacco, weighing from ten to twenty pounds each, — such quantities indeed, that each of the natives smoked daily a couple of pounds of the mixture. It was very mild and fragrant in itself, but when mixed with another herb of a peculiar variety, to which the natives gave the name of *tua*, the effect was

disagreeable in the extreme, causing a shortening of breath and a generally nauseated condition which was decidedly unpleasant. Here also we discovered that the growth of the poppy and the manufacture of opium was a considerable industry, leaving its fell traces in the emaciated and debauched appearance of the natives.

Having resumed our march on the following morning, after another arduous journey across the sterile plateau, we came to an elevated region, the entrance to which lay through a group of small villages. The inhabitants evidently construed our approach in the light of a hostile attack, for, as we drew near, we were met by an embassy with the information that on no account could we be allowed to enter any of the villages; that no trade or communion would be carried on with us in any shape or manner; and that, if we persisted in our intention to enter their villages, they would attack us.

This was the thirty-first of July, and until the third of August we marched across the open country, which was nothing but miles and miles of a trackless waste in various degrees of altitude, the noonday sun beating down with almost tropical heat, while at night, sheltered only by the folds of our tents, we were forced to withstand a temperature below the freezing point. Our food supply was also reaching a low ebb, while at all times the pangs of thirst appealed with such violence that it was only by the sternest measures that we were enabled to prevent the crew from drinking the brackish waters of the small streams and lakes, upon which we arrived at intervals of every few miles. Penetrating a trackless wild for the first time, our march was naturally at a funereal pace, and it was nightfall on the fifth of August before our long journey overland had been completed without serious

disaster, and when, with conflicting emotions, we once more saw the current of the Dji Chu lying before us, glistening beneath the rays of the declining orb like a thread of spun silver.

The contrast between the sadly worn men who reached Kuiekeng, from that hot-bed of suffering across the Tian plain, and the beautifully sleek and glossy men who had left Tarya a week before was most marked. Their flesh was wasted, their muscles had become shrivelled, their sinews were shrunk, and their distinctive and peculiar individualities seemed to have altogether vanished, until it had become a difficult matter to recognise them. Hunger, thirst, and privation had left their traces; despair and dogged determination were depicted on each face; but as once more we felt the soothing pulse of the mighty stream beneath us we did not need to speak.

Each man knew that the danger and hardship had been met, battled with, and overthrown. We had conquered!

Kuiekeng owes its importance to the fact that it is a trading village of considerable importance, and the seat of the Chinese deputy collector of customs for the surrounding country. This functionary's position, however, is merely nominal, as the fierce native tribes have for years defied all efforts of the government to bring them under its jurisdiction, or to in any manner quench their unbridled spirit of freedom and antagonism to all restraint. The village is really a village within a village, there being two distinct portions, separated by a circular stone wall some twenty feet in height; and being placed in a strategic position on the side of a mountain, it commands the surrounding plain for some distance.

The head man of the place was a remarkably polite and ceremonious Shansi, who, learning of our arrival, sent an

invitation by a servant that we should call upon him. Unlike the majority of the native abodes, his residence was a spacious and comfortable gable-roofed house, two stories in height, and constructed in a finished manner. He had a number of concubines, and several children, and was evidently a man of no mean erudition, for he was possessed of an intricate knowledge of various questions of international import, and able to give us much needed information regarding those districts through which we must inevitably pass. Although fully acquainting us with the dangers to which we should be constantly exposed, he saw no reason why, if we had come thus far, we should not be able to go over the remaining distance in comparative safety.

At mention of the hostile and brigandish tribes to the southward, he threw up his hands in horror, as if the passive recital of their names could in no measure give an idea of their manifold abominations. Their escapades were evidently a touchy point with our Shansi host, for he informed us, in a burst of confidence, that those who fell into his hands he ordered to be beheaded without further ado, whether guilty of crime or not ; for, he added, with sanguinary suggestiveness, "they all need to be killed for what they would do had they but the opportunity ; in my hands, they must never expect to receive quarter, for I have made a vow to utterly extinguish them."

On August fifth, we continued our journey up the current of the Dji Chu, after a single day's halt in Kuiekeng. We had now entered a more hospitable country. The river bank was lined with small villages, arranged in sequence, and habited by a dwarf-like race, who were evidently in the midst of some religious season ; for on no

consideration, even by the most tempting offers, could we induce them to forsake their gruesome little idols, which they had gathered on the river bank, and before which they prayed for hours with the most commendable persistence. Neither in manners, customs, nor dress, was there much difference between these natives and those which Stanley describes on the upper parts of the Congo, their features being flat and irregular, and the colour of their skins almost as dark as that of a full-blooded negro. Both men and women wore the hair long, and arranged in high masses on a basket framework, decorated with feathers and metal ornaments. Innumerable bracelets of polished iron, copper, and brass were hung around their necks, arms, and ankles, the weight of which must have been considerable.

As is common to the races of Western China, their form of religion is fanatical and primitive in its precepts, entailing the necessity of sacrifice at frequent intervals. Very few traces of Buddhism are found among them; the custom of worshipping the remains of their ancestors is largely practised, and oftentimes accompanied by many quaint ceremonies. A native desirous of sacrificing chooses the best animal from his herd, trims his horns, fattens him, and, when the time arrives, sets him to fight with his neighbour's cattle. Should he come off victorious, the omen is considered an extremely lucky one, and he is then slaughtered, amidst the greatest excitement on the part of the natives. The chief worshipper on these occasions is always naked, except for a white loin-cloth, and divides the flesh of the sacrificed animal among the members of the tribe.

The varying distinctions between these tribes cannot fail to excite the curiosity of the traveller through this

country. The most bloodthirsty and savage races live within a few miles of other tribes possessing almost as much civilisation as the Eastern Chinese. Some of the tribes live in caves, excavating their homes in precipitous cliffs, to which they gain access by long ladders constructed of yak skin. Others live on hilly plains in fairly well-constructed stone dwellings. The existence of this independent people in the heart of such a populous country cannot be considered as other than remarkable. It is in the inaccessible nature of their mountain retreats, however, that lies their main perfection; yet, notwithstanding this natural advantage, it seems very strange that they could have thus maintained their independence for so many centuries. Although the Chinese government has spent immense sums of money, and sacrificed thousands of soldiers, in an effort to subdue or absorb them, such attempts have repeatedly failed; and to-day it seems as far from holding any authority over this savage people as it did ages ago.

The region in the vicinity of Kuiekeng has a poor and sandy soil, so unproductive that most of the food supply of the district is secured from the river, or else gained by barter with the more productive regions to the north and south. The price of food was accordingly very dear; and, for the time being, with no other alternative offering itself, we were forced to fall back upon half rations to each man until we could stumble on a more prosperous region.

To the north of Kuiekeng, lies the northern border of the eastern half of the Tamen plateau. It stretches from east to west for upwards of seventy miles,—an arid, waterless range of high altitude, and covered, for a considerable period of the year, with ice and snow. The Dji Chu here, with a width of several hundred feet and with

a listless current, flows between narrow precipitous ramparts, the slopes of its valleys, north and south, forming a steep glacis from one to two thousand feet in vertical elevation. These slopes are absolutely barren, aridity being a marked feature of the Tam-Tagh,—at all events on the south side, where there are no traces of brooks or springs. The gradients are exceedingly steep, and in the upper belts covered with detritus, while the ravines are narrow, also precipitous, and nearly devoid of vegetation. In these, and at the foot of some of the lower slopes, occasional clumps of wormwood, mugwort, and other allied plants are found. Tamarisk and camel-thorn appear, while here and there are scattered an occasional clematis, statice, and some small grasses.

In spite of this dearth of vegetation, the fauna of the country is considerable, comprising the wild donkey, the argali or mountain sheep, wild goats, wolves, hares, foxes, and a few wild yak.

The Tangutans who inhabit this region in the vicinity of the Dji Chu are for the most part quasi-Mohammedans (at least in many practices), whereas those who live farther removed from the stream and inhabit the wilder mountain regions are Buddhists pure and simple. The last race mentioned have invaded this district within fifty years; the tenure of the Mohammedan tribes is probably at the extremest limit not older than the century, and there does not appear to be half a dozen villages in the region of a date earlier than the advent of these peoples. Of the possible causes of this paucity of inhabitants in the past there appears no other explanation save the general sterility and repellent nature of the country itself, which does not seem capable of affording subsistence to a single blade of grass, much less a quarter of a million people.

Here for the first time we were made acquainted with the enormous power which the lamas hold over the wild, nomadic races. In them seemed to be vested all the rights of the different tribes, both spiritual and temporal; and in general they are a rascally crew, capable of the most impudent and audacious frauds, working on the credulity of the unsuspecting natives with a bold and brazen artificiality at once apparent. Many of them have inflicted self-torture by piercing long iron skewers through various parts of the body, from which hang numerous bright-coloured ribbons, or by producing upon their persons numbers of festering sores, which render them the most evil-smelling and repugnant specimens of humanity. Like most of their ilk, they place abundance of faith in strange incantations and the potency of witchcraft, going through these shallow forms year after year, until doubtless they themselves in a measure really believe that efficacious results are obtained.

Leaving Kuiekeng, three days' journeying separated us from L'hiou, which we reached on the eighth. It was nothing more nor less than a miserable little village of poverty-stricken Mongols and Sifanese, who had barely enough food for their own immediate use, and assuredly not enough to sell. Our position was growing precarious in the extreme, for our stores had now reached their lowest point, and, even at the short rations on which we were existing, could not at the outside last more than for two or three days. Something, it was plainly manifest, must be done; so beaching the canoes, we spent the ninth in a hunting expedition, attended with such success that, whatever else was lacking, we were provided with an abundance of meat. The animals which we had shot were a sort of antelope, very shy and difficult of approach, and

which it is doubtful if we should have secured had we been obliged to use the short-range native muskets. With the long-range Martinis, however, we were enabled to pick



PADMAPANI, IN THIBETAN CHENRESI, A PROTECTOR OF THIBET.

them off at a distance of six or seven hundred feet, much to the astonishment of the native trackers, who regarded this seemingly wonderful feat with open-mouthed awe.

The villagers, by reason of their long fast, were surly and morose, and had not the narrative of our prowess in the hunting field been carried to them, bearing with it a salutary lesson, we should undoubtedly have experienced some difficulty in retaining the game which we had shot. As it was, we were waited upon by several of the head men during the evening, who, after beating around the bush for a considerable time, acquainted us with the fact that it was usually requisite on strangers passing through their territory that they should pay tribute. If we had possessed more than a bare necessity to cover our own needs we should have listened to this request; but as there was no knowing when we should again be menaced by starvation, we declined to pay tribute, offering, however, to exchange some of the meat for vegetables and corn. After considerable arguing they agreed to the proposition, and early the following morning come down to the encampment with several baskets of potatoes and barley, and two sacks of dried fish, for which, having made only a surface examination of the articles, we readily traded one of the antelopes. Alas for our credulity! as further search revealed the fact that we had been duped unmercifully, — the baskets below the covering layers of barley being filled with loose pebbles and earth, and the bags of fish treated in a similar manner. We recognised the inutility of striving to remedy the bargain, and resolved that in the future our bartering should be carried on with greater care. We proceeded to launch the canoes and journey over the twelve miles to reach Namgha, which, on reaching, we found to be a worthy prototype of the unprepossessing spot in which we had been domiciled the previous night.

The native dwellings at Namgha were the perfection of squalor and uncleanness. The abode of each family

was surrounded by a palisade of loosely piled boulders, and topped with iron spikes, the exact purpose or necessity of which we were at first unable to ascertain. We were not kept long in ignorance, however, for before we had been encamped many minutes we discovered that the villagers were the boldest and most impudent of thieves, stealing from one another and likewise from us with scant compunction. The huts themselves were in most cases constructed after the fashion of the native boats, only on a larger scale, — a framework of wood, over which was stretched yak and argali skins; the roof thatched and covered with a plaster of mud, which, having hardened in the sun, renders them impervious to moisture.

These natives of Namgha are the Chen-ta; a sort of offshoot of the real Tangutans. The men are well grown and fairly good-looking; but the females are the most repulsive creatures, with huge features, and having great faith in the pernicious habit of disfiguring themselves by numerous slits in their ears and noses, from which are hung strings of small metal beads. The males are nearly naked, and tattooed upon the stomach, sides, and backs so closely as not to permit an inch of the original flesh to be seen, especially when they are rubbed with red ochre, which seems to be the prevailing fashion. The only hair upon their persons is a small tuft on the top of the head, which is dressed into a cone-shape and ornamented with feathers, or else carried down the back in greasy plaits, stretched out on a fan-shaped frame. The women are absolutely free from hair, their heads being shaved.

All these natives believe in sorcery, each possessing spells and conjurors; and every event, whether it be commonplace or not, is ascribed to this cause. For example, if a chief dies, his relatives and friends look around for the

person who is supposed to have bewitched him ; and having at last through the element of chance happened upon a likely victim, they hold him before a fire, exhorting him to confess his connection with the deed. In most respects this punishment is similar to the good old-fashioned ways of our Puritan ancestors, when witch-hunting was a favourite pastime ; for the poor wretch, tortured and roasted until the pain is longer unbearable, at last confesses his guilt, whether really culpable or not, and is immediately despatched. If, on the other hand, he refuses to confess, he is slowly toasted to death ; so where the righteousness or justice of the affair enters may well be left open to conjecture. These exercisings of magic not infrequently lead to bloody and long-continued feuds, which are handed down from generation to generation, until one side or the other has been totally exterminated.

L'hiou is more or less a religious centre of the region, for the priests who live here number about two hundred, while as many more inhabit the numerous monasteries and temples in the surrounding country. The form of worship is according to the Lamaism doctrines, similar to those prevailing in Thibet, at least among the Mongols and alien races, although the real Tangutans cling with unswerving pertinacity to their own religious views, and worship a number of deities. The inevitable consequence follows that religious disturbances are of not infrequent occurrence, in many cases leading to prolonged and bloody internecine strife ; but thus far, notwithstanding the vigorous assaults of their opponents, the Sifanese have generally managed to come out first-best on all occasions, their personal valour and the bigoted fanaticism of their religious views eminently fitting them for such turbulent disruptions.

On the tenth we halted at the base of one of the three cones of Tam-Tagh, the sacred mountain which Prejevalsky in his second journey sought to reach, but in vain; and which his native escort pictured in such fantastic and glowing narrative. It had been our original intention to ascend it; but neither bribes nor threats could cause a weakening of the native determination that we should not go, and after half a day's halt we returned to the canoes and proceeded. It could not have been this mountain that Holmes mentions in his narrative as "the sacred mountain of the Tanguts, at an altitude of fourteen thousand feet above the sea;" for it is a very low-lying peak, not over five hundred feet in height, covered half-way to its summit with a meagre growth of dwarfed trees, and thence up to its top bleak and deserted. The cone is broken and jagged; and although we could not verify the fact from a distance, it gave evidence that the mountain at a former time had been the scene of some violent upheaval, if not of an active volcano. It is removed a distance of some three miles and a half from the banks of the Dji Chu, and surrounded by a level plateau, from which break forth numerous bouldery peaks like so many malformed excrescences. Numberless rivulets and lakes watered the region, but the water was very brackish and impossible for drinking purposes. The soil of this plateau, I observed, contained considerable alkali; and it is probable that this substance is favourable to the growth of several species of herbs and medicinal plants, the gathering and preparation of which seems to be the principal industry of the population. The natives of the villages are timid and suspicious, but the nomad tribes who wander over the plain with their herds of cattle and live in tents are a hardy and vigorous race,

prone to a full recognition of the savage virtues of war ; for when aroused, or prompted by cupidity, they are the most bloodthirsty and inhuman of monsters, with little or no compunction at taking life.

Some of the temples in this region are remarkably striking and effective, usually built in fantastic forms of the variegated limestone which exists in the district, and ornamented with metal images. The interiors are beautiful in the extreme, containing dozens of gruesome idols formed of stone, iron, and even gold and silver. In addition to these main temples there are a number of little shrines,— each family capable of the expense maintaining one or more,— giving to the country the general effect of a considerable graveyard. As the native population is very devout, and in the natural course of events worships once a year at least at each of these temples and shrines, the thought cannot help arising as to when they can find time to devote to other and more needful pursuits.

Yen-lu-she, a populous village, was reached on the thirteenth. It was shortly after nightfall that, after making only groping progress through the gloomy vault of the river ravine, we reached it, to find that a religious demonstration of some sort or other was in progress. The streets were filled with crowds of enthusiasts carrying torches, and worked up to a fanatical pitch by a number of dirty lamas and ayons. With this spectacle confronting us we did not dare to make an entrance, but encamped on the river bank, and, after passing a restless night, during which the shouts of the worshippers forbade slumber, we prepared to reëmbark. Before the canoes could be launched, however, we were beset by a howling, vindictive mob, who assailed us with showers of stones, while several of the bolder approached with clubs and

knives, as if to attack us more murderously. Perceiving one surly and sinister-browed rascal in the act of picking up a stone, I seized a paddle from one of the crew, and brought him a sharp blow across the arm, while at the same time I pointed my revolver at the menacing horde, and informed them that, whatever their likes or dislikes, we were resolved at all hazards to protect ourselves and our property, and that at the first signs of malevolence we should fire upon them.

This threat was potent reasoning to the majority; but the rascal whom I had chastised had gathered around him a number of similar turbulent spirits, and we could see that, with their angry mutterings and exhortations, they were rapidly changing the attitude of the more peaceably disposed, and that, unless vigorous action was taken immediately, we should, in a short time, be compelled to face a more serious danger. Ordering Burton to hold the crew in position in case an attack was contemplated, I advanced toward them, and, pointing my revolver at the head of the ringleader, I announced my intention of shooting him on the spot if he persisted in his evil intentions of inciting his companions to violence. This served the purpose of effectually cooling his ardour, for he very discreetly retired to a more obscure position. Having acquainted the natives with our friendly intent, provided we were not molested, we found their churlishness rapidly vanishing, and, following up this opportunity, we cemented the bonds of good-will by purchasing from them several baskets of corn and fish.

From Yen-lu-she we moved to Gyksun on the fourteenth, the absence of rapids or a swift current enabling us to go over the intervening distance of twenty miles in a little more than six hours. The river continued to be

from a hundred to two hundred yards wide. The bank was a trifle more open than farther back, with no signs of arboreal growth whatsoever, enabling us to view the surrounding plain, which, notwithstanding its parched and sterile appearance, gave unmistakable evidences of fertility, for villages and considerable fields of grain and vegetables might be descried on every side. As we approached Gyksun, a number of natives in a skin boat as round as a washtub, which they propelled forward with a rotary motion, shot out from the shore, and when thirty feet away hailed us. They were naturally anxious concerning our presence in the country, for they had learned by reports from down-stream that we were a crew of brigands and thieves, who had come for the purpose of desecrating their temples, purloining their idols, and carrying away their wives. We replied through one of the Kiangsis as to the peaceable errand on which we had come; but they still seemed to mistrust our motives, for they demanded that we should not attempt to land until they had taken their report back to the village. To this arrangement we agreed; and in ten minutes the entire population of the place, with all doubts as to our integrity removed, crowded down to the shore, where, learning of our desire to trade, they soon brought forth a number of fowl, ten baskets of adamant biscuit, and several large jugs of pundu. As the crew had just received back pay for a fortnight, they were minded to expend their substance in a grand carousal; but, fully realising the danger to which the expedition would be exposed in that event, we forbade the natives selling the pundu to any others than ourselves. To this the crew demurred, until we quenched their sulkiness by threatening to place all those on half rations whom we saw in any shape or manner

showing mutinous tendencies. This threat proved sufficient ; and, although several sought by stealth to barter with the natives for the liquor, we were enabled to detect them in time, and the summary justice which we inflicted prevented the others from doing likewise.

The Gyksunese villagers were excellent blacksmiths, mining the ore from the surrounding mountains, and producing a result which would astonish artificers in more civilised countries, considering the rough nature of their tools, which were confined to an anvil, hammer, and tongs, and to a forge of baked clay with a fire of yak dung. The process of manufacture was necessarily a laborious one, requiring considerable time and patience, which would doubtless sorely tax the temper of one accustomed to more expeditious methods.

In spite of our amiability, the villagers could not disillusion themselves of the fact that we were travelling through the country for unlawful purposes, and dogged our steps with the most monotonous assiduity, feeling positive that in walking aimlessly about we were biding the moment when we might seize upon their wives or household gods, and continue our flight up the river. The head man, a surly Tangut, with a most evil-looking face, which had been scarred with smallpox and evidences of the chase until it presented the general appearance of an ordnance map, was very insolent and aggressive. He was a religious bigot of the extremest kind, and not learning of our arrival until after we had completed our trading with the natives, he waxed exceedingly wroth, and forbade them to sell us anything, or have anything to do with us, at the same time threatening to bring down the full weight of his official displeasure on those who had already shown sufficient temerity

to do so. He grew more amiable, however, after we had called upon him with presents, and took advantage of the opportunity to treat us to a religious discourse of no mean consideration, in which the principles and doctrines of Buddhism were laid down before us in full. On acquainting him with the fact that we were also members of that faith (at least for the time being), his joy knew no bounds, and he immediately gave orders for our proper entertainment, apologising for his having not visited us before by the fact that he was troubled with gout in both feet, which rendered progress of any sort more or less of a hardship. The feast was soon served; but, although we had fondly imagined some variance from the monotony of our daily fare, we were doomed to disappointment, the courses consisting of yak meat prepared in various forms, from soup to roast, with yak milk, and butter made from the latter, as extra delicacies, which only such an august occasion as the present would warrant.

From our host we learned that the surrounding region abounded in game, herds of wild yak and antelope wandering over the plain, while camels were also numerous in the country to the west. These, however, are undoubtedly but stray animals which have wandered across from Thibet; for the camel is not generally considered as belonging to the fauna of this region, the uneven and hilly surface of the landscape preventing their use by the Sifanese for caravan traffic. They are occasionally met with in small herds of five or ten, but are extremely shy and wary, and possessed of such acute sense of smell and hearing that it is extremely difficult to approach them. Their appearance is somewhat different from the domesticated breed, their humps being smaller,

the muzzle more pointed, and the colour of the hair gray. Their flesh, however, is considered a great delicacy, and they are assiduously hunted by the natives, with, however, rather indifferent success. There may, perhaps, be a more cogent reason for this than is at first apparent; for it is obligatory that when one of these animals is killed it shall be immediately carried to the head man of the district, who, having reserved the best portions for his own use, allows the successful hunter to keep the remainder, in some cases paying the full value for what he has reserved, but more often seizing upon it by right of the power vested in him. There are very few infractions of this law of camel-hunting, as the penalty for not complying with it is instant death.

Wild asses also exist in this district, but they are of no practical value save for their hides and carcasses, — the one furnishing clothing, the other being chopped up fine and mixed with herbs into a sort of meat hash, which is inserted in skins much like sausages, and forms the staple article of diet for the caravans, owing to its ease of transportation and the fact that it is unaffected by climatic changes. How the native stomach can stand this daintiness is beyond the ken of ordinary mortals, for it is seasoned with a sort of pepper-relish, which, to the one who eats it, causes the sensation of swallowing a mouthful of live coals.

Still other favourite dishes in this region are *cha-tun* and *kaly*. The former is prepared in the following manner: A yak calf — or, what is still better, a young argali — is taken and killed; and after the hide has been stripped off the entire remaining part of the animal (flesh, bones, intestines, and all else) is chopped up in a huge pestle, the bones being ground to pieces with huge mallets,

and the meat and fat being cut up fine, until the substance has been reduced to a sort of pulpy mass. With this is mixed yak milk and pundu, and all is then seasoned with herbs, the minced substance being laid in thin layers before the fire and roasted for several hours. A soft dough of barley meal is made, and between two folds of it is placed a sheet of the meat mixture; the whole is then baked to a crisp, and the delicacy is ready for eating. In a short time the crust hardens to almost rocky firmness, and may be carried from place to place without difficulty, the belated voyager having but to break off a piece when the pangs of hunger assail him, or, in case of dire necessity, one might even make effectual use of it as a shield. It is a tasty and relishable mixture, however, and with every portion of the animal utilised is strengthening in the extreme.

Kaly, on the other hand, is a tasteless and nauseating composition, consisting of huge lumps of fat mixed with a liquor of stewed herbs and salt, and boiled over a fire of yak dung until it has been reduced to a consistency which on cooling permits it to harden into long sticks, — the effect of eating one of these savoury morsels being similar to that pleasure which would be experienced in swallowing a highly perfumed tallow candle.

From Gyksun two caravan roads lead eastward, and one toward the west to Thibet. Although not of artificial construction, untold centuries of traffic having passed over them, they have been worn to a tolerable smoothness, permitting of free and easy communication throughout the country. The life of the caravans, however, is not an easy one, owing to the brigandish and murderous characteristics of the native population, — one and all being wretchedly poor, and when once outside the larger



TOURGOUTHS OF GYKSUN DISTRICT.

towns and villages having no knowledge whatsoever of civilising influences. At intervals of every few years, when their demonstrations become too openly bold and violent, a force of Chinese soldiers is sent against them, only to meet with such determined resistance that, after burning a few villages, and losing many of their number, they are but too glad to leave the spot to its barbarous occupants, who immediately resume their brigandish tactics until the natives themselves, alarmed at their incursions, declare war on them, and, having slain them by hundreds, and reduced them to the sorest straits, are able to secure peace for the space of seven or eight months, when the entire operation is again repeated.

It was at the Kiaur-mak Pass, five miles to the southwest of Gyksun, that the insurgent leader Arg-u-tuen, in 1871, with a band of intrepid followers, lured a Chinese army nearly a thousand strong into the intricate mountain ravines, and there, rolling down huge stones to prevent their retreat, slaughtered them nearly to a man. The effect of this signal victory has in a measure secured to his equally wild and barbarous descendants absolute freedom from Chinese rule, save for a nominal tribute of two herds of cattle each year, which are paid or not, according to the general temper of the natives.

We halted at Gyksun until the nineteenth, owing to stormy weather; when, the climatic conditions having once more waxed propitious, we launched the canoes for the two days' essay to Gharlkau, where it was our intention to halt for a month, the interim to be spent in exploring the country to the westward, the heretofore unknown and untrodden northeast corner of Thibet. The scenery for the whole distance was majestic and impressive. Close to our right towered the snow-capped summits of the

Yuten Tagh, and on our left stretched the inhospitable area of the Thibetan plateau. These mountains are neither entrancing nor beautiful, for there is a stern chasteness about them which forbids this description, but regal and kingly looking, as if conscious of their adamantine might.

The waters of the Dji Chu at this point were nitrous and bitter to the taste, and covered for considerable areas with a rank vegetation, which bred innumerable clouds of mosquitoes. We were soon made aware of the presence of these unspeakable pests, for clouding around us in swarms, they penetrated the thickest of clothing, and crawled down our backs and beneath our clothing, biting with such vindictiveness that we were almost driven frantic with the pain, — although, emulating the native example, we had by this time secured an epidermis of dirt which afforded some meagre protection. We could not but shudder at the thought of what our inevitable fate must have been had we not been thus in a measure protected from their assaults; we should undoubtedly have been completely devoured.

On the twenty-first we pursued our way on through a valley where a number of little rivers rushed and roared, as they mingled their streams with that of the Dji Chu. On our left was a rugged line of rocks that rose in huge and detached masses, or else shot a couple of hundred feet into the air in long, bony projections. Connecting these huge rock-masses was a lower line of rocks, more uniform, forming the bare spine of the ridge. The country was undoubtedly inhabited, although we did not perceive signs of human life or habitations of any sort; for the current of the river was crossed at intervals of every few miles with suspension bridges, in some cases constructed

of iron chains and wood, in others merely the single rope and carrier connecting the opposite shores.

About noontime, however, the stern face of the landscape underwent a change; the rock summits retired to a distance, and almost immediately the plateau descended with an abrupt slope, expanding into a plain of lower elevation, remarkably green and fertile, in which lay nestled Gharlkau. On entering this rich crop-bearing valley, a chorus of war-cries, pealing menacingly from both banks, caused us no little trepidation lest we were to be doomed to a hostile reception. As on a former occasion, however, we discovered that the Tangutan method of boisterous welcome is closely allied to that of war; for we eventually were made aware of the fact that the warriors with guns and spears, who were supposedly crying wrathfully at us, were in reality but giving us such a welcome as seemed most fitting in their eyes.

CHAPTER IX.

GHARLKAU has been from old a position of great importance, even as far back as the time of Marco Polo, who makes frequent allusions to it in the narrative of his journey through this country. It is situated at a spot of great strategical importance, and is the point toward which converge nearly thirty main caravan roads intersecting the country, affording a practicable means of communication from China to Thibet, and to the other regions of Central Asia. Through its gates pass several tribute missions from Peking to Lhassa; and it also serves as the customs station for the district, although the collection of these customs is a more or less difficult task.

At a former time the town was ruled over by a Chinese mandarin and a regiment of Chinese troops; but of late years, with the gradual deflection of commerce to the trade routes to the north and south, the town, relegated to its former owners, has retrograded to a place of meagre importance, until it is now an uncivilised village of the second rank. Remains of its former greatness, however, may yet be traced in the crumbling ruins of stone houses and its palisade walls; but the Tangut and Mongol population have reverted to the almost primitive state of savagery of their ancestors, living in miserable skin huts, and gaining a meagre subsistence from their herds and a few mild attempts at carrying on systematic cultivation.

On our arrival in the village we made the acquaintance of the *ataman*, or head man of the place, — a short, pom-

pous little Mongol,— who welcomed us with much obsequiousness and an invitation to lodge with him during our stay. As his regal abode, however, was little better than a pigsty, we for obvious reasons declined this munificent offer with as much show of gratefulness as possible; and having called into requisition the entire population of the village, we erected a station of our own, which, if not presenting more charm of architectural contour, at least secured for us a decent amount of cleanliness. The result of this domestic fastidiousness on our part was that our Mongol friend, finding the pleasures of our abode more attractive than his own, turned guest himself, and foisted upon us the unsought dignity of being his host. We did not begrudge him this delight, for he was subsequently of the greatest assistance to us in the consummation of our preconceived plans.

Our halt at Gharlkau had been made for two reasons: first, it afforded a headquarters from which we might prepare for the final part of our arduous journey through Western China; secondly, it was a base whence we might explore the surrounding country, to do which was one of our main reasons for visiting this part of Asia. Having stored our canoes and provisions, where for the time being they would be safe from the thieving propensities of the population, on the twenty-fifth of August our plans had been made for a fortnight's journey to the westward, to accomplish the most difficult and venturesome task which we had yet been called upon to face,— the penetration through the Ping Mountains to the Chite city of Tzuchan.

And here, before setting forth, let me give a brief history of this strange race of people who for centuries have defied the most persistent research of explorers and

ethnologists. Many centuries ago, according to Chinese historiographers, in the vicinity of Shanghai, lived a highly civilised and enlightened race known as the Chites. They were the most fanatical and bigoted of Buddhists, so fanatical, in fact, that their turbulent spirits and eager desire to sow the seed of proselytism caused frequent revolutionary disturbances. These continued during a period of fifty years, until the government as its only measure of salvation made war on them. For ten years longer they battled against overwhelming odds, until at last, broken in spirit, and with their numbers fearfully reduced, they gradually retired to the west, settling here and there, only to be again overwhelmed and driven back. Eventually they penetrated up the stream of the Yangtse Kiang, and then up the Kinsha, until, after years of wandering, they located in this wild mountain region of northeastern Thibet. For untold centuries they have held entirely aloof from their more civilised Chinese neighbours, and lived wholly independent of them; and to-day they are as untamed and barbarous as their fierce ancestors. They are for the most part semi-civilised, many of them, however, being savages of the worst degree; even cannibalism is said to be prevalent among numbers of them. They acknowledge no allegiance to the emperor, entirely ignore the authority of the mandarins, and hold no communication with the outside world. Yet we have visited their wild domains; we have penetrated into their stronghold, have witnessed their strange customs, and for the first time are able to give to the world some facts concerning this strange people.

On the morning of August twenty-seventh, we left Gharlkau on our advance journey to Tzuchan. Fully weighing the dangers which would beset such an ardu-

ous undertaking as that on which we were now engaged, we had after mature consideration wisely concluded that our real strength lay in a paucity of numbers; and for that purpose we had selected two of the most trusty of our Kiangsi crew and three native Gharlkauese, leaving the remainder of our expeditionary force to guard the canoes and stores until our return. We had attired ourselves as Tourgouth peasants,—not in the expectation that our disguise would be impenetrable, but actuated with the desire to be spared from an overabundance of troublesome curiosity. We had planned to reach Tzuchan at the end of five days' expeditious journeying across the sterile mountain plateau, before the fact of our presence in the country should become widely known, and, having gained as many scientific points concerning the region and its people as we could gather in that short space of time, to return with as much celerity as possible; for the impending evidences of an almost arctic winter settling in over the high altitudes could not be lightly reckoned on.

Just as we were on the point of starting, the *ataman* and another official made their appearance to bid us a last good-bye, and to console us with the rather dubious reflection that they never expected to see us again; for they declared that we must inevitably be murdered by the fierce people among whom we were on the point of casting our lot.

Our first day's effort carried us over the long plateau; and purposely avoiding the larger settlements, where our progress was liable to be impeded, by nightfall we had reached the lowest range of the Ping Mountains, where our arduous task was to commence in earnest. We were utterly fagged out by the long jaunt of the day, and,

selecting a small grove of trees which afforded some shelter from the chilling blasts hurtled down from the snow-capped mountain summits, we pitched our camp. In full view of this spot there was a considerable river, nearly as wide as the current of the *Dji Chu*, on the surface of which rested a number of small islands, devoid of arboreal growth, and sheltering numerous little villages. On exploring this river on the twenty-eighth, — by no means an easy task, so strong was its current, — these islands appeared to have been originally a flat mass of rock a few inches above the current of the river, with inequalities on their surface which had been filled in with earth carried from the left bank. The people who inhabited them were much shorter than either the *Tangutans* or the *Mongols*, and much different in general characteristics. They were very ugly in shape, with enormous stomachs, out of all proportion to their tiny spindling arms and legs, with the most repulsive faces, broad and flat, and covered with numerous slits and scars. Tattooing was very common, while those who had not been adorned with figures had painted their entire bodies with a yellowish red composition, which gave them a most hideous appearance. They were, evidently, a race of fishermen, for the stream was covered with their little skin boats, which they managed to shoot over the uneven surface with marvellous skill and celerity. We soon discovered, however, that they were unnaturally hostile and aggressive, for as we sought to cross the stream they crowded down upon us with loud cries, brandishing knives and spears, notwithstanding the fact that from their distance they could by no means have penetrated our native disguise. With such evidences we could not but congratulate ourselves that we had not adhered to our original

intention of passing through the country without disguise of any sort ; for, as subsequent events proved, it was this alone that proved our salvation. We fully realised the danger menacing us should we allow these natives to approach nearer ; so, as a last resort, we fired our revolvers over their head, when, with this show of determined attitude on our part, their valour and pugnaciousness took wings, and we were enabled to reach the opposite bank in safety.

Continuing our journey to the westward, we at first made good progress, there being plenty of fresh water, while, so long as the five days' provisions which we were carrying held out, we had nothing to fear in the way of starvation. All this, however, came to an end, and shortly before noontime, when we came upon another little mountain stream, beyond which extended, as far as the eye could reach, a sandy waste, covered with a sterile and towering mass of innumerable lofty rock-summits. The two native porters, following our example, plunged boldly into the current at the ford ; but either from the weight of their loads, or frightened by the seething waters on each side of them, they missed their footing, and attracted by their shouts we saw that they were being carried rapidly down-stream, the load which each bore pressing them down into the water in spite of their most valorous efforts to maintain the surface. We called to them to slip the thongs from over their shoulders, but this they refused to do, until, seeing that there was no hope of saving their loads, they reluctantly abandoned them, and after herculean efforts reached the shore.

Then for the first time the terrible danger which stared us in the face came home with frightful certainty. Here we were alone and unprotected in a barbarous country,

without food, and with no prospects of securing any. To make matters worse, the iciness of the climate increased each moment in rigour, penetrating through the thickest of clothing, while the wind-storms increased in vehemence and frequency, accompanied by stinging clouds of alkali, which filled our eyes, noses, ears, and lungs, until breathing and seeing became painful. The Kiangsis were for turning back; but Burton, with all his old-time bull-dog tenacity and hardihood, sounded the advance, and with hearts sick and weary we continued the ascent of the Ping slope, over a pebbly plain, where only occasional tufts of stunted camel-thorn and rhubarb appeared above the ground. A dead quail and thrush were picked up in the arid tract, these birds having, doubtless, dropped from exhaustion during flight, and fallen victims to their inexperience in attempting a direct passage across so desolate a region. With wolfish intensity we seized upon these prizes, and having cooked them over a fire of yak-dung, and eaten them, we again pressed on in the expectation of stumbling upon some native habitation or village where we could obtain food. Before nightfall, from across the barren verge, we detected the outlines of a small village, and, cheered by the knowledge that the country contained inhabitants of some kind, we had soon reached its limits and entered.

Our approach was welcomed by the barking of an unconditioned pack of noisy curs, who rushed savagely at our heels, until, exasperated beyond all measure of endurance at the actions of one shaggy monster, who persisted in making violent efforts to seize one of the Kiangsis, Burton fired at him with his revolver. Almost in a moment the unnatural quietude which had surrounded us was broken with shrill screams of rage, and we were con-

fronted by a group of fifty howling, threatening savages, with spears poised, ready to launch at us at the first command of the head man, who stalked forth, and, having gazed long and earnestly into our faces, ordered his men to retire, inviting us to his own abode. Suspecting treachery of some sort, we did not take our eyes off him for a single moment; but he evidently was not a hostile-minded individual, for he invited us to drink tea with him until long after midnight, when, utterly fagged out in body and spirit, we huddled together on the floor in an effort to secure some protection from the frigidity of the climate.

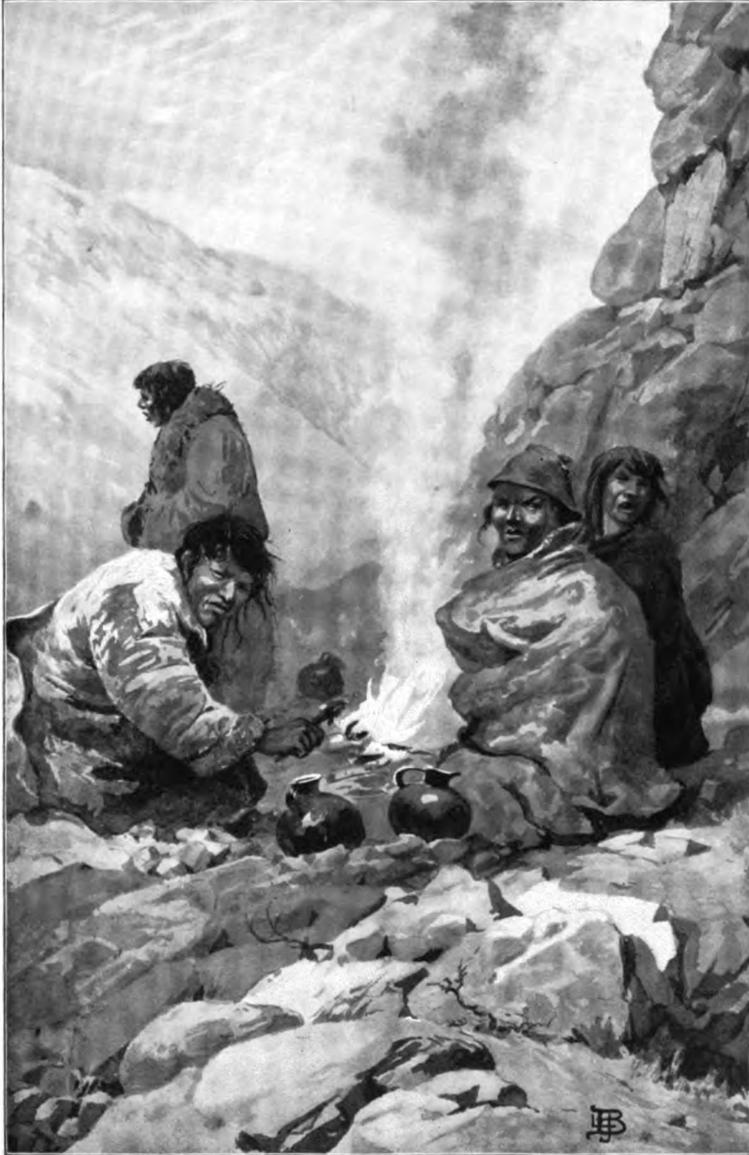
At dawn of the following day we were awakened by our host of the night before, who informed us that, with several of the villagers, he was on the point of setting forth on a hunting expedition in the direction which we were following, and that if we wished to travel under their guidance we might do so. We accepted their invitation, and about ten o'clock fell in with an encampment of Tangutans with their black tents and herds of long-haired yaks, from whom we were able to purchase a small supply of meat. After crossing some more spurs of the great range we reached the banks of the Dhill-gol, where we took leave of the hunters, and, pressing onward for several hours more, encamped for the night near the village of Chihuan, for as it was a considerable place we did not wish to undertake the risk of intermingling with its narrow-minded and suspicious populace.

With all its shortcomings, this vast region to the west of the Dji Chu is a curious country to see,—a treeless, rocky-visaged plateau, across which pile in monotonous sequence innumerable lofty mountain ranges, devoid of all featural charm whatsoever, but presenting a bizarre and

uncouth appearance which attracts and repels one at the same time. Over the vast sterile plains and hilly slopes are disposed innumerable mounds, — the sepulchres of a past generation, which would doubtless be mines of untold wealth to archæologists and students of the great primeval age, but that they are jealously guarded by the natives of the present, who would resent any attempts that might be made to disturb the tombs of their ancestors.

It would be an utter impossibility to imagine a people more unenlightened and barbarous than those we found here, being but a grade removed from the lower order of animals. No spark of civilisation has yet made itself felt, and one might as well essay to change the direction of the wind's wild course as to sow the seeds of Christianity with hopes of fructification. Nature is without attractions of any kind, except a sort of rough majestic grandeur which may satisfy the traveller in search of landscapes monotonously bleak and repellent; never a tree is seen, and scarcely a flower, except for a few months in the year. Vast mountain peaks are covered with a soil which by thrift and industry might be made phenomenally productive, but which is left in its wild state for the growth of coarse grasses, furnishing pasturage for the small herds of scrawny cattle. The more favoured regions are inhabited by small herds of wild asses, antelopes, and long black-haired yaks, which afford subsistence to a sinister and uncouth population.

Of amusements there are but few, the male portion of the population spending what time is not engaged in manual labour in gambling, for which they show a remarkable aptitude, and into which they enter with all the passion of devotees, risking their entire possessions and even their own persons on no worthier a pastime than



THIBETAN SAVAGES.

guessing the number of stones which another may hold in his hand.

There is no outdoor occupation for the women, who are rarely seen outside their gloomy cave-homes, — a wretched race of emaciated and haggard beings, who bear every evidence of the hardness of their lot. Occasionally the lords of creation will condescend to take their wives (for as polygamy is practised they have one or more) on a visit to some neighbouring village, or permit them to have a short airing by themselves; and with these meagre pleasures they are not only required to be, but are in reality, satisfied.

Speaking of the social conditions of the country, a few further words may be said concerning the state of woman in this region. Her condition is pitiable in the extreme, far worse than the very animals of her lord and master's herds, for they at least, with mercenary motive, are treated humanely. She, however, is invariably looked upon as a serious blot on society, worthy only of the most violent abuse and contempt, and condemned to a state infinitely more degrading than slavery. On her falls the task of performing the manual labour of the community, while her master lives a life of comparative ease, and eats and drinks himself into a constant state of maudlin and gluttonous emotion. Happy for her when death prematurely relieves her sufferings. When one has viewed her horrible condition, one can understand the little compunction which exists here regarding self-destruction, suicides causing greater reduction of the population than almost all other sources combined.

Yet it is of this unenlightened land that we hear from time to time of the success of missionary efforts and the spread of Christianity. From accurate and dispassionate

sources I have penetrated sufficiently into the situation to know that the proselyting mission of Christianity has never been carried on in this country; nor after mature investigation have I any hesitancy in saying that before our arrival here no European had ever been seen by these natives. By these strictures I do not necessarily imply that those responsible for missionary endeavour have deliberately misstated the facts of the case; but they have undoubtedly been misinformed as to the exact geographical position of the district in which these conversions are said to have taken place. The region referred to must be in the country far to the eastward.

As a practical instance of the faith which may be placed in the protestations of the native population, I have in mind the declarations repeatedly made by the Buddhist lamas at Gharikau, that many converts to that faith had been made in this territory. With the view of ascertaining the truth or proving the fallacy of these statements, I made assiduous investigation and inquiry, and found that some quasi-conversions had been made, in the following manner. For several months, at one time, there was a severe famine, and the natives accepted the easiest and least incommodious method of relieving the pangs of hunger, by consenting to become legitimate Buddhists, whole villages swerving from their ancient faith in a day. The only conversion, however, which really took place, was one of appetite over conscientious scruple, these religious renegades returning to their own faith so soon as the famine had passed, and they were no longer compelled to rely for assistance upon outside sources.

The native religion, when there is any, is the usual debased and lowest form of idol worship, attended with much sincere belief in witchcraft and mummery. The

sway of the priests is all-powerful, they being the real rulers of the country, and directly more responsible for the narrow-minded bigotry and exclusiveness of the natives than any other cause. One of their strangest beliefs is that concerning childbirth. The mother who gives birth to a female for her first child is accounted cursed by the gods, and sometimes is beaten to death by her own relatives. If the child is a male, however, it is looked upon as a sign that the family has found favour with the deities, and in a measure the mother's condition is ameliorated.

Death, as is but natural where it is of such frequency, is here not looked upon or awaited with fear, and suicides, as stated before, are of frequent occurrence. The funeral ceremony is a function attended with great *éclat*. Whatever may have been the foibles or frailties of the deceased, or however undeserving he may be of the honour, so soon as he is dead, his relatives and friends, far and near, are summoned to attend the obsequies. The corpse, arrayed in the most gorgeous habiliments that can be procured, and surrounded by his possessions, is seated in a chair, and placed in the open air in front of his former dwelling. For two or three days the body is allowed to remain in this position, and when decomposition has begun, soon after death, the stench arising from one of these landscape adornments is something which the civilised sense of smell is incapable of withstanding. During that time the relatives and friends gather around, and indulge in mourning dances, and in drinking huge potations of fiery pundu, complimenting the corpse on his newly acquired state of blessedness, and expressing the cheerful desire that they might be in his shoes.

At the end of this time, the grave having been dug and

exorcised of evil spirits, the whole population of the village is summoned. After a big feast, in which every one gorges himself to the extremest limit, the chair containing the corpse is lifted upon the shoulders of the immediate relatives of the dead man, and in this upright position is carried to the grave, where, having been saluted by each of the mourners with a patting of the head and a sticking out of the tongue, it is dumped into the hole with scant ceremony,—the male mourners meantime beating on drums and dancing, the females chanting doleful dirges and torturing themselves with knives and sharp instruments. This ceremonious burial, however, is accorded only to the male, the female being buried in the first convenient spot which presents itself, without display of any kind, and most often by one of the wives of her husband.

While burials are usually matters of great rejoicing, in which everybody joins with a happy face and smiling countenance, wedding ceremonies, on the other hand, are remarkably gloomy affairs. Wives and concubines are bought and sold like animals, changing ownership as many as a dozen times in a single year, according to the fortunes of their spouses, and their success in gambling. In this region, unlike those along the *Dji Chu*, the children born of the concubines enjoy equal advantages with those born of the lawful wives.

By 10 A. M. of the thirtieth we had passed over the first mountain range, and were at last in the country of the *Chites*. Food and water were very scarce, but in the middle of the afternoon we were able to shoot several sand-grouse with our revolvers, as they tamely approached; and happening opportunely upon a mountain tarn, from which bubbled forth streams of deliciously cool and clear water, we filled our pouches. One of the native guides,

owing to insufficient protection to his feet, was bruised and bleeding from the roughness of the mountain trail, and at last sank to the ground unable to move a step farther, begging that we press forward and leave him to die. Burton also was ailing from the effect of the rarefied air on his lungs. A halt, however, was not to be thought of in our present exposed condition. To add to our troubles, immense banks of lowering clouds, dark and bitterly cold, presaged a snow-storm at no distant time. We took one of the skin blankets and bound it about the man's feet, and blindly, furiously, stumblingly, groped onward during the remainder of the day, without perceiving a sign of human life, nothing but the wild, barbarous, and seemingly never-ending waste of mountain peaks and sand. When the sun fell, we dug out holes in the sand with our hands, and lay down in them, covered with our blankets; and here we rested until daybreak of the thirty-first.

As we pressed forward once more we saw at last a black line on the horizon, very dark and thin, and we understood that it was forest land. It was deep and dense, gloomy as a tomb; and into it we plunged fearfully. We saw the tracks of wild beasts, and anon we could hear their cries, — sometimes near at hand, sometimes at a distance. Our water supply had reached its lowest mark, but there were no signs of springs or mountain streams, and we were compelled to husband the little which we had left. The clouds of dust constantly penetrated our lungs and parched our throats, while the agony of hunger and thirst was terrible. Shortly before noontime we saw a herd of small mountain camel grazing in a thick clump of the bushes. I stole upon them on all fours, hoping to shoot one of them, but they ran away before I could fire. We halted again to relieve the suf-

ferings of the unfortunate Gharlkauese, his condition being exceedingly painful. I gave him my boots, and pressed forward with improvised sandals formed of sapling withes. One of the guides informed us that we were now approaching the Chite city, and that we should be able to enter it shortly after nightfall. The low-lying plain late in the afternoon again began to rise. At various times we descried fierce-looking shepherds and hunters roaming over the region, but we did not dare to call lest this might add a new danger to our other misfortunes. The sun went down with its succeeding blanket of icy coldness, and the moon was hidden behind the clouds so that we could scarcely see five yards ahead in the cavernous gloom. But grim and determined, and with set teeth, we stumbled on somehow until seven o'clock, when the prospect ahead lightened, and, halting on the edge of the forest, we saw in a shallow plain before us the object of our quest. We were instantly seized with a wild and fierce desire to rush toward it, but caution restrained us, notwithstanding our condition was deplorable, hunger and thirst appealing with almost irresistible force.

It had been our intention to steal into the city under cover of the night, but from our position of vantage we could see that some religious demonstration was in progress, and we did not dare to move. One of the Gharlkauese, accompanied by one of the Kiangsis, volunteered to cross the open space and enter the city in search of food. With fearful hearts we saw them depart, and half dead with cold and exposure waited in silence for two long hours, when we breathed a sigh of involuntary relief as they reappeared with several loaves of bread and two large pieces of yak meat, which they had been able to secure from a deserted hut. The reports which they

brought of the condition of the town were far from reassuring. The natives were engaged in a week's religious orgy; should we dare to enter the city our presence would be immediately detected, and, with their fierce and vin-



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THE SIX-SYLLABIC PRAYER AND SYMBOL "OM MANI PADME HUM."

dictive natures fed on the fires of religious frenzy, our instant fate would be assured. For another half-hour our guides crawled out on to the plain, and returned with the information that they had discovered a considerable

cave in the hillside to the left of the town, which would screen us from observation, and at the same time permit us to watch the movements of those inside the walls.

Cautiously we crawled along on our bellies for what seemed to be ages of time, until one of our guides pointed to a narrow opening ahead, just sufficient to admit a man in a stooping position. With a sigh of relief we entered, and with thankful hearts feasted on the raw yak meat. Fearful and watchful we remained all night, like wild beasts pursued by some unknown terror.

Next morning the religious festival which we had witnessed the night before was still in progress, and we were about to venture forth to secure a better view, when we were hurried back by the unnerving spectacle of a long procession approaching in our direction, beating drums and tom-toms and led by a dozen filthy-looking priests. They halted for a few minutes, and then, having re-formed, commenced the ascent of the hilly slope where we were concealed. Onward still they came, the priests chanting in dolorous voices, while the horde following took up the wild refrain until the din was simply indescribable. If we had entertained hopes that they were bound elsewhere, we were doomed to disappointment, for they were now scarcely thirty yards away and approaching the cave entrance.

We had just time to retire from our position and clamber up a steep ascent at one side of the cave, to a place of concealment, when the leaders of the procession entered the narrow orifice, and halted while torches were being lit to guide their passage through the gathering gloom. Following them pressed forward the unkempt crew, until the interior of the dome-shaped cave was filled to the point of suffocation.

For half an hour the ~~per~~-torturing strife of discord waxed louder at every moment, until a hundred devils in human form flitted beneath the sepulchral glare of flickering torches, like a weird and supernatural picture of another world. A frenzied enthusiast would leap into the air, frothing at the mouth, carried away by the sanguinary and fanatical spirit of the moment; lacerating himself with a knife, grasping the gory strip of flesh, and grinding it under his heel, or taunting a neighbour into the spirit of emulation by flaunting before his eyes the ghastly piece of flesh.

Suddenly from out the compact mass rose a howl of mingled anguish and fury. At the farther end of the amphitheatre was a sort of raised platform, upon which a solitary individual was mounting, evidently one of the chief priests. Having made the ascent, he stretched forth his hand. Instantly there was silence, — the silence of a hundred human beings who but one short moment before had been a yelling horde of demons. The light of the torches enabled us to see the priest who had mounted the platform. He was a tall, gaunt individual. Overtopping his thin visage, and hanging over his shoulders and down his back below the middle, in witch-like locks, fell a covering of sun-scorched hair in thick, greasy masses. His eyes were burning bright. All his right side was naked, and of the brown parchment colour of his face, and quite as meagre, covered with gaping rents of knife-wounds, from which the blood trickled. A garment of the coarsest cloth covered his body below the waist, adorned with numerous pieces of bone and fetish boxes. The torches gave out an unwonted flicker, and, peering through the gloom, we could see that five others of similar appearance had followed him on to the platform of raised earth.

The same deathlike stillness pervaded the awestricken multitude.

Heretofore the farther end of the cave, where the platform was erected, had been somewhat obscured; but at a signal from one of the priests a dozen natives stepped forward with lighted torches, and, mounting the elevated space, arranged themselves in a circular group on either edge. The glaring beacons penetrating the surrounding gloom discovered a huge recess in the wall, at the rear of which could be seen the distorted form of a gigantic image, — a stony, impassive figure, of such grotesque ugliness that, with all their barbarous and fanatical natures, one could not help wondering how any race of people, however unenlightened, could bring themselves to worship an object of such repulsiveness.

Suddenly there was a stir amidst the group of priests on the platform, and from the dark cranny, in which the leering image stood, a newcomer, a man of admirable proportions, not so tall as powerful and patriarchal looking, descended. He advanced rapidly forward, loosening his ragged garments as he came, until he was naked, save a small cloth girdled around the loins. As he turned toward the stone image and raised his hand, the group of worshippers ceased their turmoil and fell prostrate to the ground, meanwhile keeping up an incessant groaning. Toward this grotesque, incongruous, inanimate piece of carved stone the eyes of all were turned in adoration. For a time the prostrated horde lay bowed to the floor in prayer, until a quickly discernible stir and show of interest gave evidence that some moment of extraordinary interest was at hand. Quietly and unobserved, a dozen men had been carrying immense armfuls of wood on to the platform and placing them before the stone image.

Soon the full import of this movement was apparent. Here before our eyes was to take place one of those barbarous human sacrifices of which we had heard rumours at Gharlkau. It did not take long to confirm our suspicions, for quietly and without murmur of any kind half a dozen newcomers had mounted the elevated space, absolutely naked and bound with cords, — the intended victims of the bloody carnival which was to follow. The fire had already been touched to the wood; the first faint flicker had been fanned into an open flame, and in a minute the whole mass was a seething, roaring furnace, lighting up the interior of the cave as with the noonday sun. The bright glow of the fire permitted us to secure a better view of the doomed victims. Five were men in the sere and yellow leaf, scarcely able to totter alone, and whose lives in the natural course of events could not be prolonged many years. They were huddled together, apart from the other victim, — a young girl, who could not have been over sixteen years of age. She had a comely, nut-brown face, with dark wavy clusters of hair tumbling over her forehead and reaching down to her waist. With a cool, if not openly disdainful look, she gazed with exalted dignity on the surrounding group, with never a waver in the stoic composure of her attitude.

At last the fearful moment arrived. One of the old men was seized and stretched on a sort of stone altar, raised a few feet above the floor of the platform. He fully realised that his last hour had come, for his stoicism vanished, and he struggled in impotent fear and fury to escape from the grasp of his captors, giving vent to shriek after shriek, until, weak and exhausted, he fell into a stupor, with only spasmodic efforts attempting to throw

off the restraining hands of the priests. Four of the minor priests held the faintly struggling body down, while from the gloomy niche stalked forth the chief sacrificial priest, his hand holding a long glistening knife having a broad, paddle-shaped blade nearly six inches wide. Once, twice, thrice he abased himself to the ground before the unresponsive image, and then turning around like a beast ready to leap on its sleeping prey, with his small rat-like eyes glistening with overpowering fascination, he rushed toward the prostrate form. A flash of light, as of a falling meteor, and the keen blade sank to the hilt in the flesh of the victim with a soft, soothing purr like firm steel gliding over velvet, while the blood spurted forth in little fountains of spray. Again the gleaming and dripping blade flashed in the air; again it descended in a murderous sweep; yet again and again, five times in all, until the very air reeked with the odour of blood. Three times did the worshippers on the floor raise and abase themselves, and then as quickly as a lightning's flash the minor priests seized the lifeless corpse and held it in the air. For a moment it silhouetted against the fitful glare of the fire in a long, ghastly shadow, and then, shot through space, the red flames leaped forward in eager ecstasy to receive their prey.

With hardly a moment's intermission the next victim was hurried forward. He was either possessed of the full amount of native stoicism, or else reduced to an unknowing stupor; for without a tremor, or the faintest attempt at struggling, he was stretched on the sacrificial altar, stabbed to the heart, and tossed to the flames. The third, fourth, and fifth victims were similarly disposed of.

The last scene of the bloody drama was now at hand. The young girl stepped forward without invitation or

assistance of any kind from the priests. The whole assemblage seemed spellbound, and it was more than civilised manhood could withstand. I grasped Burton's hand, while the other instinctively sought for my revolver. We tried to rise, to call out, to fling ourselves on the murderous rabble lying there in sanguinary apathy before our eyes, but our nerves were paralysed into inaction; we were powerless, held speechless and fascinated, as a serpent holds its prey, by some irresistible spell. For a brief space of time the frail body of the girl lay prostrate on the floor before the grotesque and stony image above, — a spectacle of blind, confiding, whole-souled devotion, which would put a Christian martyr to shame; and then, before we could realise the full import of the movement, she had deliberately jumped into the waiting flames. One long, despairing shriek, and all was over.

We sank back stunned and overpowered, unable to move or breathe, paralysed by the horrible nightmare through which we had just passed, the sickening odour of burning flesh permeating the atmosphere, and making our position simply unbearable. In a moment, hardly before the hideous spectacle was finished, the very beings who but one short moment before had been gazing on untold suffering and agony were stalking forth happy and contented, while the gloomy vault of the cave served as the tomb of their murdered victims. The lawful tribute to the gods of their fathers had been offered up; six human beings had been sacrificed to satisfy the bigoted religious frenzy of a few thousand. Back to the village wound the serpent coils of the procession. Little, torpid, filthy gnomes, with murder dozing in their small black eyes, they might have crawled from holes in the sand, or hatched out of the brown, cracked pods of the weedy

growth around. Sanguinary appetite had been quenched ; the body called for that of a more substantial nature ; and back to their abodes they wended their way, there to spend a time in feasting and gluttony, and one long-continued and bestial debauch.

Never can the memory of that long day of suffering on the second of September fade from my memory. A blue, pellucid sky, flecked by not a single cloud ; a vast azure dome, in which the white, round sun hung high, and struck its rays upon the earth like fiery arrows ; a baked, ambient air, which danced and shimmered over the broad, brown surface of the surrounding plateau ; at our very feet a landscape gashed here some sixty feet in depth by the wide wash of a thin river, heaping up in pink, gravelly cones on the farther side ; all these and more we descried from our vigil place, with forty-eight hours of such anguish of body and soul as our blunted intelligence was capable of experiencing. It was a moment when the earth seemed to have rolled back upon itself, and brute instinct was once more contending with the forces of humanity and civilisation for the mastery. The sky above us grew bluer and bluer, and even the sun had long since ceased to appear natural. The mountains lay in corrugated ridges all around, streaked with numberless chasms lying like hair lines on the surface. Everything had shrunken and faded into a bizarre and hideous panorama. The wildest imaginings of Dante's Inferno here found their earthly counterpart.

Only a hundred feet away was a wealth of waters and food in abundance, but between us and those was placed an impenetrable barrier of danger. How we suffered during that long day, we ourselves can but know. We licked the moisture off the rocks as it collected, and ate the



"SHE JUMPED INTO THE WAITING FLAMES."

remainder of the raw yak meat, until our natures had reached an almost tigerish ferocity. At last night fell, and the Kiangsi and Gharlkauese once more stole into the village. For a long time we awaited their return, and then gave them up as lost; but in another half-hour they crawled into our midst, covered with blood and dirt. They had entered the village easily enough, but had been detected by a couple of natives, who had immediately sought to give the alarm. Upon the latter they had sprung before they could succeed in their purpose, and, having killed both, had been able to find some provisions in a small hut, of which they had brought as much as they could.

It was now no time for indecision; we were confronted by an emergency which left no room for possible doubt. If we waited until the following night, the bodies of the natives would be discovered, a search would ensue, the tracks of the two scouts in the fresh soil would be traced, and the inevitable ending was horrible to think of. There were yet four hours before dawn, and, having roused the others, we stole forth weary and bedraggled, half crazy, and mumbling like madmen, with mingled dread and desire, and as the first tinge of the radiant orb of day shot up from behind the mountains, no trace of the Chite city was in view. With stumbling and fierce determination we groped our way along on our return journey until nightfall again, each moment expecting to hear the shouts of the avenging horde behind us; on through the gloomy forest which we had passed once before, where we hid ourselves like wild beasts of prey seeking refuge from the hunter, nourishing our famished bodies, and quenching our parched throats as best we could, until nature had been satisfied, and then for the first time for days we fell

into undisturbed and heavy slumber. The fourth and fifth days passed without incident, as with eager steps we blindly plunged over the path which we had been traversing a short week before. Soon familiar sights once more came into view; the untamed waste of mountain summits gradually softened into a landscape of a milder nature; streams grew more frequent, with consequent evidences of cultivation, and, finally, on the seventh of September, we reached Gharlkau, where we were received by our crew and the natives with the prodigality of fervour extended to men who have risen from their graves. In another three days we were completely restored from the fatigue and exhaustion incident to the stirring events through which we had passed, and, with danger for the time being removed, were enabled to proceed in tabulating the scientific data which we had collected.

One thing was indubitably proven by this expedition to the west of Gharlkau,—that the existence of the Chite city of Tzuehan, which Prejevalsky and others have been minded to doubt as one of the startling tales of the natives, told to dampen the ardour for exploration, is an absolute geographical fact; also that the statements of the Sifanese, that human sacrifice is carried on in this city, are true beyond all manner of doubt. As to the exact geographical position of this stronghold of barbarism, it is impossible to say to a point of dead reckoning, as we were unable, owing to the hazard attending our expedition, to take accurate observations. With a very near approach to accuracy, however, it may be set down as lat. $33^{\circ} 21' N.$, long. $97^{\circ} 3' E.$, which undoubtedly would be found to show only a slight difference from that gained by dead reckoning.

And now a few words as regards the orography of this

region. In our journey we had passed for a considerable extent along this unknown belt of the most ancient ranges in Asia. We find that the principal chain forms an arc, the eastern and western extremities of which lie in the same parallel of 32° , while the northern periphery touches 33° N. lat. A line drawn to the westward of this, in about the 97th meridian of east longitude (reckoning from Greenwich), at the point where the still more northerly chain of the Dum-tagh separates from the main range, would serve to define approximately the centre of the Ping Range proper, where the system is characterised by a ramification into parallel chains, serving as a gigantic buttress to the highlands of northern Thibet, and facing on the north the desert and saline plateau of Koko Nor; while on the east it cuts off the upper basin of the Kinsha Kiang, and continues far into China.

That this is a principal and no subsidiary chain, is proved by its continuity, and the connection between its eastern and western parts through no less than ten degrees of longitude. Other ramifications of this system fall away to the north and south at almost right angles through five degrees. From this point the North Thibetan rampart turns to the northwest, where it eventually swells into the ranges of the Kuen Lun proper. Between these two ranges lies a narrow, confined valley, which is barren in parts, but in others abundantly watered. This valley is known as the Ghisan-tokhoi, and contains the source of the Sochou, a tributary of the Mekong, which it joins six hundred miles to the south above Shunning.

As one might infer from the aridity of this range, due to the absence of much rainfall, and the remarkable porosity of the soil, vegetable and animal life are very deficient. The western parts of the Ghisan-tokhoi, as yet unexplored,

in all probability are even more deficient in water. Outside of meagre herds of small, wild camels, and a few herds of yak, we saw absolutely no other evidences of animal life, save a few sand-grouse, which undoubtedly were not denizens of the region, but those which had strayed or been blown into the gloomy desert from happier climes. The mountains we are describing are quite barren, but in the ravines there grow small dwarfed species of medicinal rhubarb, tamarisk, and variegated poplar, called by the natives *tugrak*. The valleys and slopes of the plateau nearest to the current of the Dji Chu were covered with loess, but beyond that region the desolation and sterility was appalling.

As loess is met with more or less in all this region of the northwest of China, it is proper that some idea should be given of its importance to the country, and also some facts concerning its general nature. Loess is nothing more nor less than a dull, yellowish earth, in general similar to potter's clay, but very porous, and, when dry, may be reduced to an almost impalpable powder. Its porosity, however, is the main feature which renders it of inestimable benefit to the country in which it is found; for, absorbing rain and other moisture, its spongelike tendencies enable it to retain sufficient wet to feed the roots of the plants which penetrate through it. This moisture is maintained for weeks, and even months, without being replenished by rainfall, and although on the surface presenting a bleak and sterile appearance, it is highly fertile and capable of sustaining vegetable growth. In some portions of the country, where it covers the substrata of soil to a considerable depth, its softness and ease of being fractured permits the natives to cut out cave-dwellings, which, unless destroyed by some convulsion of nature, are

enduring and comfortable, being amply protected against the heat of summer, and the arctic coldness of winter.

As to the origin of these loess deposits, perhaps the most accurate explanation is that given by Baron von Richtofen, who has made a minute study of the geological phenomena of Central Asia, and who propounds the theory, now generally accepted, that the action of the wind, sweeping over the treeless steppes of Central Asia, removed the sand and dust eastward, the latter finally settling in the grass-covered districts of northwestern China and Koko Nor. New vegetation was at once nourished, while its roots were raised by the constantly arriving deposit, — the decay of old roots producing the lime-lined canals which impart to this material its peculiar characteristics. At those places, however, where it has been deposited on the river banks, the ceaseless action of the water has undermined the friable structure overhead, which, falling in huge lumps, soon disintegrates and is carried off by the waters, to be, farther down, deposited on the shore, where it forms the rich, alluvial deposits used in fertilising the districts of lower China. As to the value of loess to the country at large, it is needless to say more than that, without its presence, there could never be any possibility of making this vast territory of practical value, for the native soil in itself is too sterile and unfruitful to support vegetation of any kind whatsoever.

And now as regards the people of this country. Unlike the Tangutans or Mongols, they are not of large frame, but rather tend toward the other extreme, most of those whom we saw in Tzuchan and the surrounding country being of almost sufficiently meagre stature to be classified among the dwarf races. Many of the males are not over four and a half feet in height, while the women

are even less. Their features are sharp and angular, and in general respects not unlike the southern Indian tribes of the American continent. They are extensive metal workers, and seem to have a proficient knowledge of many of the civilised arts. According to territorial disposition, they are either agriculturists or hunters, but with none of the nomadic dispositions of the other Central Asiatic tribes, fierce and untamable, but always settled in congregated habitations, and never straying from them. They are a vain and boastful people, and in conversing with them as to the extent of their tribes and numbers, they seek to impress one with the enormity of their country, and their unconquerable prowess. Clothing is worn only by adults, and consists of merely a cloth over the loins; while tribal distinctions are shown by different grotesque methods of doing up the hair with a plaster of mud into fantastic designs, or various slits in the body.

Their dwellings are exceptionally miserable and filthy; when not dug out of the loess banks or in the side of a hill, they are conical-shaped huts, built of stones and mud, with a narrow opening in one side serving as the entrance. The people are all pagans, although some have an idea of a supreme spirit or power. Each tribe has a religion of its own, with its own fetish gods and idols, which represent various animals and grotesque monsters, usually the crudest specimens of clay pottery or stone sculpture. Instead of lamas, as in Thibet and other districts of Western China, they have magic doctors, who are much practised in mummery and witchcraft, and perform cures, or anything their patient wishes, by applying to a particular god, according to the patient's ability to pay.

The principal stronghold of this strange race, Tzuchan, although we were not able to penetrate beyond the near

approach of the surrounding slope, we calculated, from what observations we were enabled to make, was a quarter of a mile long, and of equal width, containing a couple of hundred huts of the miserable kind heretofore described, with no traces of high civilisation, as many travellers who have sought to reach its vicinity have been led to believe. It is surrounded on three sides by a mud wall nearly twenty feet high, while on the other it is guarded from approach by the roaring torrent of a considerable mountain stream. In the open plain to the south, three hundred yards removed from the walls, there are six temples constructed of sandstone; but, like the native dwellings, these temples are of an inferior kind, and give no general appearance of sumptuousness.



BURIAL OBO WITH PRAYER FLAGS.

Of the Tangutans of Gharlkau and the surrounding region the less that is said the better, for their moral code is excessively corrupt and lax. In general they are restless and seditious, the vainest and most painstaking of liars, with no compunction whatsoever for taking human life, even if the victims be of their own kin, and for the most trivial reasons, such as the desire for the ownership of a knife or equally valueless articles. They are eager

for office, but far from trustworthy, the proverbial Chinese honesty being a myth which has but a nebulous existence in the minds of charitably disposed apologists for present conditions.

Nevertheless, it is to this sort of rabble that China must entrust the ruling of her western and northern frontier, for the reason that the constantly growing menace of Russian aggression requires the placing of the administration of the country in native hands. Thus far, however, this policy has proved more disastrous than successful, the Russian spies and diplomatic agents finding in the treacherous populace their best confederates. There can be no doubt but that already Russia is holding a whip-hand over this vast region of Central Asia as far south as the Indian border, — rulers in substance if not in name, quietly pushing forward to consummation her gigantic schemes for Slavonic aggression and dominance in the East. Already her traders, her spies, her military officials and diplomatists, have threaded through the wilds of Turkestan, and even into China proper, — sowing sedition in one spot, conciliating the native tribes in another, blinding the Chinese officials and the world at large as to their real intent, and carefully maturing their plans for the grand *coup* when the moment shall be propitious, which will ensure Russian preëminence in Asia.

It is not difficult to account for the exceptional interest which the Empire of China possesses for Russians, and indeed for all cultivated inhabitants of the West. Through a large cycle of the life of the ancient world China has filled a conspicuous place in the political hierarchy; and although her power has sadly waned in these later days, she still remains an influence of great importance in the future of Asia. The political value of China has long

been recognised ; and it has indeed formed a constant factor in English and Russian politics for the last quarter of a century, if not longer. There are Western powers to which the past, present, or future of China is of little or no consequence ; but to the two great European powers, Russia and England, China must ever remain an object of especial interest, dividing as they do so large a share of Asia between them ; and at no time more than the present has it been the obvious wise policy of England to support the Chinese in the development of their country, and assist them in their endeavours to increase its power and augment its prosperity. England has in this direction no designs of conquest ; and the policy which she pursued toward the present Amir of Afghanistan, in placing him upon the throne, and supporting him there when the whole country was at her mercy, has demonstrated to the Asiatic world, or at least should have done so, that the interests of England do not so much demand the acquisition of new territory as the consolidation of existing institutions, the maintenance in greater strength and security of the present established order of things, and the permanency of those rulers who show themselves capable of administering their ancestral possessions. There is nothing in China to excite the cupidity of any English government, for as an ally, or even a commercially related nation, China is more valuable to England than an acquisition. If Great Britain is to retain her Indian Empire, a collision between her and Russia seems not only possible, but assured. There are many to-day in the British government who do not think that the possession of her Indian Empire adds anything to England's power. She has never derived any real benefit from it, and the Indian expenditures exceed the revenues. With this fact in view,

it is not only misleading, but downright fallacious, to suppose that, in interesting herself in the growing crisis in the East, England is doing so in the hopes of territorial aggrandisement.

On the other hand, it may be said that Russia, in aggression on China, is but plainly playing the shrewd scheme which she has sought to fructify for a century. It may be that the *vis inertiae* of the East, the traditional and hereditary antipathy and disinclination to change which seem to belong to all Asiatic races, may prevent, at any rate for some time to come, the accomplishment of all that the promoters of this great undertaking propose. With the exception of the Persians, the Chinese are, perhaps, the most actively intelligent of all Central Asiatic races, possessed of a remarkable subtlety of intellect, and of considerable ability in managing affairs of state importance. English influence, wherever it is exerted, is in favour of free trade, and it asks for itself neither protection nor any advantages which are not equally offered to all the world; and, although it is patent that the commercial policy of other nations is more or less protectionist, with a consuming desire to obtain exclusive use of all the new markets which they acquire, it is not possible for them to say that the British commercial policy is hostile or unfriendly to them.

It is difficult to predict at the present time what the future of China will bring forth; and it cannot be denied that political considerations have greater weight here than in almost any other country in the world. She lies between the powerful Asiatic empires of England and Russia, and she cannot help sharing the anxiety of the earthenware jar, which was compelled to float down the river with its companions of brass. It is possible that

China in the future, as she has done in the past, will pursue an independent policy, looking first to one side and then to the other, to gain the favour or deprecate the wrath of her powerful neighbours. Although the menace of Russian aggression never grows less, there is no reason to believe that at the present time her influence is to be greatly felt ; while the peaceful and friendly disposition of the English government is notorious. Whatever may be the political attitude of Russia toward China or England hereafter, there is no reason to conclude that it must necessarily be successful. Apart from political considerations, and assuming that China will be allowed to enter upon the path of commercial development and to pass through the sprouting period of civilisation, there is every hope for the future. Yet there is no telling what the future may bring forth ; and it is this potent fact which must ever provide food for the alarmists, who view with apprehension the onward march of Slavonic dominance toward the East.

One need but look at the map to understand plainly the fears which haunt British diplomatic minds when there is a tremor of more than ordinary character in the smouldering earthquake which may outburst with fearful violence at any moment. The success of Russia in China would not only double but treble the mighty power which she already holds at her command in the Pacific ; indeed, to the most casual observer, such success suggests commercial and military dominance in those waters. Possession of strategic points in China would give Russia a fearful preponderance in the commercial and political world ; and while Great Britain would be the first, and, perhaps, the only nation seriously to suffer from it, there is much reason to believe the often reiterated statements

of diplomatists that Russia would use such power to further other aggressions, which might, in the end, affect the interests of other nations.

Speaking, however, of Great Britain alone, the success of Russia in Central Asia would most seriously menace, not only the further growth, but the very existence of that nation in the East. Nor is this an exaggerated idea of the subject. Russia has shown herself to be a grasping nation. That her success has not been greater has been due to a number of untoward circumstances, which have severely handicapped her. For years she has had to bear the combined affronts and antagonism of every European nation; but slowly and surely her diplomatists have worked out their plans of intrigue and coercion, until she holds the strong hand over Europe, and with the other menaces the whole of Asia. With the possession of important interior posts and seaports in China, Russia would be able to maintain a Pacific fleet of enormous strength, which would cope with any that England could spare from her home defences, while it would be a comparatively easy matter to forward troops across Siberia, and, with base of supplies in strategic points of Central Asia and China, to let loose the semi-barbarous and Anglo-phobist tribes of Turkestan, Afghanistan, and Thibet upon the luxuriant plains of India and Persia.

These are the conditions as they exist. Can England stay the inevitable ending? and if so, for how long? How long, the future alone can tell.

CHAPTER X.

ON the fifth of October, our prolonged halt at Gharlkau came to an end, loath as we were to have it do so; but the lateness of the season, and the necessity of passing up the stream of the Dji Chu and across the wild Koko Nor before the terrible spell of an arctic winter had settled in over the vast region, hurried us forward. It was with a feeling of regret that we saw the low-lying huts and palisaded wall of the straggling village fade from our sight, and give way to the toneless, murky current of inky blackness, which glided swiftly and noiselessly by. There were to be no more days of ease and languor, no more hours of indolence, no more living in the midst of peace and plenty, without fear of thirst or hunger, at least for a season.

Never did voyagers start off under more gloomy circumstances. The sky was overcast with moisture-laden clouds, which hung around us like a cold, dank shroud; the dark water of the stream was obscured by a penetrating fog blown low from over the mountains; and the land, sympathising with the gloom above and around, appeared silent and lonely. The crew sighed dolorously, and paddled with lagging hands and hearts, their faces reflecting the glances of men who feel that they are going forward to their death, turning first toward Burton, and then toward myself, as if striving to read in our eyes some ray of hope, or some faint signal of weakening, which might lead to a message for the turning around

of the canoes, and a return to the undisturbed delights that had been theirs for a long month, during which time most of them had acquired a disagreeable fullness of girth, and a certain tightness and shininess of the skin, which gave ample evidence that they had not neglected their opportunities for material enjoyment.

By noonday, however, the foggy enemy had been put to flight, and, with the sun shining out of a blue, clear sky, warming all the earth with its cheering rays, our spirits gradually rose, until the crew, forgetting their low-spiritedness of the morning, were swinging their paddles rhythmically to the stirring tones of a warlike chant, calling to one another in good-natured badinage across the waste of waters, or pressing forward with valorous haste to lead the van.

The appearance of nature in this land, immediately to the north of Gharlkau, was as that of a spot accursed. We seemed to be on the shores of the Dead Sea, where the towns of the plain had sunk under a fiery wave, and where desolation for ever reigns, to mark an awful judgment; or, as if the glowing hills of Pandemonium had been raised from their dreadful depths, to sully the face of the earth with their most forbidding aspect. Great masses of crags rose in huge disarray, split in long ravines, and hurled into unutterable confusion, the sun beating down on their glistening surface, and baking the parched and pebbly plain with vindictive heat.

Ten hours from Gharlkau brought us to Jizlu, at the mouth of the Chuan-gol, which, at this point, we discovered to be a considerable stream of remarkable depth, seven consecutive soundings gaining readings varying from forty to one hundred and sixty-five feet. Its current for some distance was bordered with fantastic and peaked

hills, and filled with such an abundance of fish that the waters seemed to be fairly alive with them. They were very easy to catch, a couple of the crew striking several dozen of them with their paddles, and throwing them into the canoes. Their appearance, not unlike that of a salmon, was the best thing that could be said in their favour, for whether it was owing to the nature of their food, or to some other cause, they had an unpleasant, rancid, oily taste, suggestive of decomposed fat.

A most hospitable old Tangutan presided over the affairs of Jizlu. He was the owner of nearly a hundred head of cattle, and a vast number of horses and sheep. Unlike the generality of the people of this region, he and his family were remarkably cleanly, and on our arrival were engaged in a practice never counted as belonging to the Sifanese code, — that of taking a bath. The united families of his wife and concubines formed a community of thirty persons, living in small mud huts, gathered around the more pretentious central dwellings of loosely gathered stones, much like a brood of chickens around the mother hen. In spite, however, of their apparent cleanly natures, nearly all of them were suffering from some disease, which bore many evidences similar to those of smallpox, the body being covered with numerous festering sores, — a sickening and repugnant sight. We eventually learned that this ailment, which is called “blood sickness,” is contracted by the Sifanese, to a considerable extent, from eating cattle which had been attacked with the disease.

The next morning, before we reëmbarked, the head man invited us to visit the surrounding plain, which was covered with a short growth of stubbly grass and weeds, on which innumerable herds of sleek-looking cattle

and sheep were grazing. The cattle were very small, and the sheep almost liliputian, but the latter generally give birth to three at a time, and thus multiply quickly.

Jizlu seemed to be a religious centre of considerable importance, for its secular population seemed out of all ratio when compared with the large number of lamas and lesser priests, who waited upon us at all hours of the day; with the most persistent curiosity crowding in upon us during the middle of the night, and arousing us from sleep, in order that they might ask some question of the most trivial import. Their religion is principally a mixture of fetish worship and idolatry, like the other Sifanese tribes, with numerous local gods and deities. Each native has devil-huts and idols, before which offerings of pundu, grain, and meat are placed, and almost every man has a small figure of his patron protector tattooed on his chest. Many magicians also move about with idols, which they pretend to consult for the benefit of their clients; and some, being very clever ventriloquists and sleight-of-hand performers, manage to impose upon the credulity of the unsuspecting native, and do a flourishing business. The great headquarters of their religion, however, is a temple nearly thirty feet in height, erected within a stockade, at the rear of the village; it contains a monstrous idol over twenty feet in length, which is supposed to be the earthly incarnation of *wohwi* (a number of deities who are the especial patrons of fishermen and herdsman), and to be all-powerful for good or evil. Around the temple live a number of lamas, who guard the sacred precincts from all intruders, and receive offerings for the idol. Although the unsuspecting public is allowed to worship this idol, they are not allowed to look upon it; such profane

sacrilege would entail terrible results on the tribe. That privilege is reserved alone for the lamas, who consult the idol on momentous occasions, and make offerings to it upon any signal victory over the brigandish tribes of the mountain districts, who sweep down with persistent fury on the peaceful villagers, stealing their cattle, and taking prisoners right and left, the prisoners being carried to the villages and strongholds of their captors, where their position is little better than domestic slaves. They can, however, be redeemed by their tribe by the payment of a stated ransom, which is never forthcoming save in the case of the head man, or other major officials. As soon as one of the ordinary natives is captured in this manner, the lamas, like a pack of ravenous wolves, sweep down upon his possessions, seizing upon them as their own, and turning his family out-of-doors, where, unless there be grown males among them capable of serving the tribe, they are doomed to a slow and torturing death by starvation, neighbourly love or charitable humanity being to them an abstract social virtue, a part of an unnamable code of ethics, which the native mind seems incapable of understanding.

The chief lama here was a most fantastically dressed madman, his body being disfigured with numerous scars which lay in broad, angry welts all over his person from head to foot, and with a number of brass rings fastened through slits in his lower lip, which, coupled with the shiny bareness of his small pate, gave him a ludicrous appearance in the extreme. The minor priests, by reason of not having exercised the sacred office during so long a period, were not so repulsive, and, although giving evidences of treachery and cupidity in their suave and smiling faces, were undoubtedly a race of higher intelligence than

the common herd. In fact, we discovered that many of them were remarkably erudite in a number of weighty subjects, and although their arguments touching religion were shallow and meaningless, they were advanced with the gravity of a minister of state and the persuasive reasoning of a diplomatist.

On the sixth we pushed forward about the middle of the forenoon, after waiting several hours for the melting of the penetrating vapours which hung low over the stream of the *Dji Chu*. The country on the right, as we proceeded, expanded to a plain of lower elevation, which had a gradual uplift toward the northeast, and was covered with dense, low bushes. The river narrowed considerably, and its current was ill-defined and constantly increasing in turbulence,—the unvarying evidences of cataracts or other obstructions ahead. The banks were well lined with native habitations and, in some cases, villages of considerable size. The population, as at *Jizlu*, was either given up to the labour of tending their herds, or catching fish, which were split open and salted, after which they were arranged on long sticks and exposed to the sun to dry,—the spectacle of innumerable groves of these queer-looking trees being very singular.

We were evidently passing through a country occupied by a different tribe, if not a different race, for those men whom we saw were thin and athletic, of an olive-brown complexion, and with short noses, pouting lips, and narrow but keen eyes; their general height is nearly six feet. For weapons they had old muskets, some evidently of native manufacture, and broad paddle-bladed spears with shafts of enormous length, in some instances as much as fifteen feet. These they used in catching fish, dashing them down into the dark current with no apparent aim,

time and time again, with great rapidity, bringing them up to the surface with as many as a dozen fish impaled on the sharp barb.

The men were absolutely naked, excepting a short kilt of yak skin gathered below the waist. The women wore petticoats of similar material, reaching to the ground in front, but showing only a short oval flap behind. These garments were trimmed with long ropes of shells or beads, which they used at times for the practical purpose of chastising their children. The women were plump, good-looking, and fairer than the men, who in many cases seemed much wasted, either from disease, or the hardship of their lot.

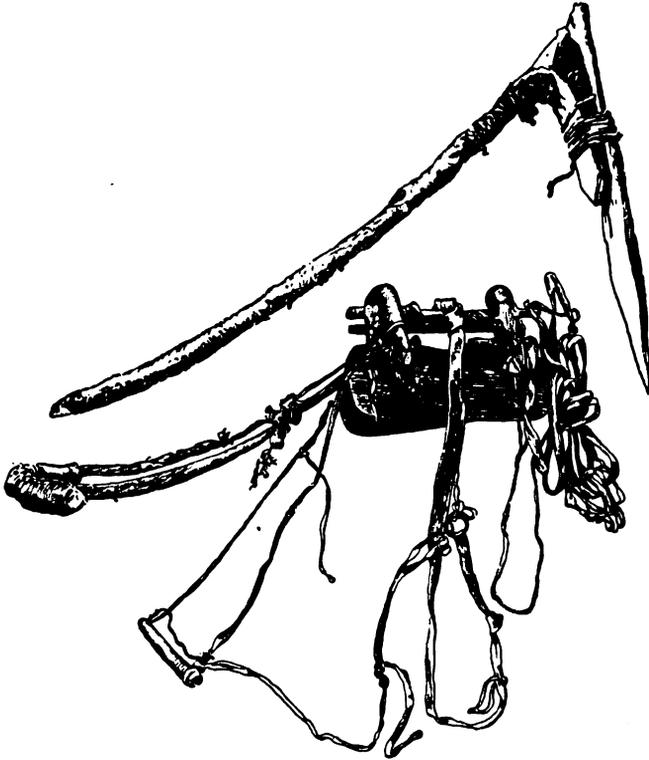
Many of these natives are very rich in cattle, which they willingly bartered with us ; but, notwithstanding the awe in which they held the spectacle of white men, they did not allow their personal inquisitiveness and astonishment to enter into their bargaining, for they were the most exacting and persistent traders. We discovered considerable gold among them in the shape of ornaments and idols, the priests being especially rich in this respect ; and, on making inquiries as to where they secured the precious metal, they pointed to the country to the westward, where they informed us it existed in abundance, but in a country so untenable and sterile that only the most hardy members of the tribe could penetrate across the sandy waste. They also had a settled financial system, trade among themselves being carried on by small metal coins ranging in size from a disc half an inch in diameter to one nearly five inches, constructed of various metals, in a few cases of gold or silver, but generally of iron or copper.

They also had some idea of a settled form of govern-

ment, their institutions being eminently democratic,—the head men being selected annually from the members of the tribes, whose position is absolutely executive; the administrative branches being carried on by a council, in which all those who are possessed of a requisite number of cattle are allowed to serve. The custom of holding captives secured in warfare and domestic malefactors as slaves is also practised, although in each case the unfortunate can secure his liberty by the performance of a certain amount of labour, or by the payment by his friends or relatives of an allotted sum to the community.

On the seventh, after paddling nearly the whole day against a strong current, we arrived at an open expanse of water, the presence of a succession of little falls and rapids for the last half mile, necessitating the portage of the canoes along the river bank. The *Dji Chu* here expands to a width of an eighth of a mile. On the western side its coast line is marked by an almost unbroken ridge of low-lying mountains, about two miles inland, varied here and there by rounded knolls and hills, from whose base a gradual slope, covered with dwarf tree-growth, extended down to the water's edge. The eastern end of this bay-like expanse is closed by the land of the *Wo-je*, consisting of a group of sterile hills, which a few miles farther on sank down into a naked plain. This bay, to which the natives gave the name of *Wuhen-Ba* (home of the Water Gods), is filled with half a dozen small islands, an acre or less in extent, on which a closely gathered population is clustered, while the mainland is practically deserted. Though the islanders secure but a scanty subsistence from the soil and their piscatorial efforts, they find considerable consolation in the fact that they are in a great measure protected by natural barriers from the sudden onslaughts

of the fierce Djia-la, a barbarous race of half warriors, half traders, who inhabit the district to the east. The fear of their powerful neighbours, however, had in no measure worked an appreciable effect on their own characteristics, for they were a most hostile and vindictive lot; and had



HOE AND YAK PACK-SADDLE.

it not been for the size of our numbers, and our generally combative appearance, we should, undoubtedly, have been called upon to face more serious dangers than menacing scowls, furtive imprecations, and blasphemy.

On one of these islands we encamped at nightfall, when

almost immediately we were surrounded by a group of some fifty or sixty filthy specimens of humanity, who sought with their long-shafted spears to prevent the canoes from landing. Sundry belabourings from the paddles of our crew in the leading boats quenched their ardour, and they retired sullenly to a distance; and on our making another forward movement, they retired behind the sheltering stockade of their village. Soon we heard the noise of an enormous war-drum, resounding across the *Dji Chu*, and through the gathering gloom perceived a flotilla of skin boats rapidly approaching from several of the neighbouring islands, in which were seated a number of yelling and threatening natives. Our position was precarious in the extreme, and, not relishing the idea of this new horde of aggressors, we called to them to return to their villages, at the same time threatening to fire on those who sought to land. They halted for a moment in moody silence, as if weighing the possible chances of our carrying this threat into execution, and then, with jeers of defiance, several of the more headstrong hurled their spears in our direction, and rapidly paddled their little boats to the beach, a short distance below our position. This, however, was as far as they dared to proceed, the wholesome respect which they entertained for our weapons, doubtless, curtailing their ardour. No slumber, however, did we get during the night, for we had to be ready at any moment to receive what seemed a probable attack; and it was with a great sense of relief that after passing hours of darkness and climatic severity the day broke without bloodshed.

In Western China it is impossible to define with any degree of accuracy the exact boundaries of particular districts or tribal regions, owing to their enormous number

and to the confusing manner in which they merge one into another. Nomadic people, who are constantly shifting their position or haunts, are found on the banks of the river or far removed inland, while again they may be met with at some point fifty or sixty or even a hundred miles beyond, with entirely different tribes and races lying between. Therefore it was necessary that our progress at all times should be made guardedly and watchfully, owing to the fact that we might at any moment pass from hospitality to hostility, from peace and semi-civilisation to war and barbarism.

The current of the Dji Chu, which for several days past had been growing turbulent and headstrong, reached the culminating point of fractiousness on the ninth, when having battled up-stream for ten miles, requiring as many hours of sturdy effort, we approached a considerable deflection in the river bed, forming a very sudden rapid. As we approached this obstruction, by clinging to the smoother water close inshore, I perceived that a canal or ditch had been worn away by the action of the waters to the right, and about ten feet wide. This canal was already choked with masses of floating vegetation and natural rafts of weeds; but not wishing, if it could be avoided, to incur the arduous labour which would be necessary in making a portage, we ordered the crew to enter the narrow channel, paddling at full strength, hoping in this manner to be able to pass by the obstruction in the course of the river. The first canoe made the attempt, and dashed with great velocity at the apparently passable channel; but in a moment we were attracted by the yells of the four men in the canoe, who were violently gesticulating and pointing down into the water. In our haste to follow, we had almost piled on top of them, but backing water,

we were now made aware of the treacherous character of the current, its dark waters sheltering continuous ridges of needle-pointed rocks. We were not able, however, to save the canoe which had pioneered the way, and which, deserted by the crew in their haste to get ashore, plunged back into the torrent, and sank almost in an instant, carrying with it our entire supply of meat, and two bales of cloth. This was a catastrophe indeed, but, like many others we had met, it had to be endured, and we proceeded on our way as best we could.

Karchok, or Kiam, stands at an altitude, by aneroid, of 13,875 feet. The considerable mountain range in the vicinity, as we afterward ascertained, forms a watershed which divides the streams flowing west into the current of the Dji Chu from those that trend northeast. We reached this village at 4 P. M. on the tenth. The surrounding country was generally flat and unattractive, but abundantly watered with a most confusing network of small rivers and lakes. From the natives we learned that there were a number of large springs in the vicinity whose waters were much sought after, caravans coming from great distances to secure the waters, and take them back to their tribes. On the eleventh we proposed to visit them for the purpose of securing half a dozen jugs of the water, but, learning of our errand, the villagers refused us permission to make the journey until we had paid tribute for the privilege. After considerable haggling, a price agreeable to both parties was agreed on, and, the head men having been satisfied, we secured half a dozen guides to point out the best springs. They are undoubtedly medicinal springs of considerable saliency, the water clear and sparkling, with a most remarkable taste, which may be best described as burned saltiness, and exceedingly

exhilarating. On testing them, we discovered that they had a temperature of 134° Fahr., while those of larger area, which served as bathing pools (when the native population were inclined to indulge in this most necessary process), showed a temperature of 110° Fahr. As we were all most sadly in need of heeding the time-worn maxim that "cleanliness is next to godliness," the entire afternoon of this day was spent in a dirt-eliminating process.

After leaving the low-lying coast of Karchok, the highlands of Taj-Ba rose into view, towering grim and lofty into the clouds from the sandy desert plain at their base. Clusters of gray, rocky islets studded the river close along the right bank to a distance of five or six miles, — sterile and uninteresting bouldery projections, unenlivened by forest or verdure, and which, when the waters of the river are swollen, are probably overflowed by its current. This continued to the mouth of a river, which the natives called Ayu, but, as it is quite an important and powerful stream, we mapped it as the Gordon Bennett River, in order to save confusion from the conflicting local names, which, as is characteristic of Sifanese geographical data, were most verbose and superficial. We essayed to penetrate up the stream in order to gain a more general idea as to the direction of its course, and, likewise, as to its size and importance above its mouth. At the end of two miles, however, the current became very shallow, while immense cliffs a hundred feet in height closed in, forming an elongated ravine, through which the waters rushed with such force that we were reluctantly obliged to turn back.

On the shores were three native villages, practically deserted, except for a score or more of miserable-looking fishermen. Their dialect was very strange, conversation

with them being carried on more by vague and grotesque gestures than by word of mouth. When they did speak their tone was so coarse and raucous that one instinctively glanced around to discover the gloomy cavern from whence these sepulchral voices emanated. We sought to gain some information concerning the river itself, but they were either unwilling to give us information, or really did not have the necessary knowledge concerning it; for, in response to our most vigorous questionings, we elicited only the scanty information that its shores beyond the point where we had penetrated were inhabited by a race of the most terrible monsters, having but one leg and one eye, with which they were able to run with the swiftness of the wind, and to see for amazing distances. One hoary-headed old patriarch even went so far as to assert that he was the only man who had ever visited their country and been allowed to depart unharmed. From close study of the maps of Prejevalsky and others, there can be no doubt that the Gordon Bennett River is a powerful stream penetrating through the north Thibetan watershed, and emptying a hundred miles to the westward into the Mekong headwaters. Additional weight is lent to this theory by the fact that, although there are innumerable other streams in the near vicinity, none of them empty into the Dji Chu, but all flow in a southwesterly direction toward the point where the latter stream winds through the country.

As for the race of monsters upon whose traits the river natives dilate with such gusto and reckless disregard of veracity, there can be no doubt that they are warlike tribes of the fierce Djia-la, whose general love for rapine and pillage has worked with such effect upon the minds of the meek-mannered and credulous river population

that their real attributes have been exaggerated into the most fantastic and nebulous conceptions, — a practice in which the wily Tangut is more or less of a past master.

From the natives at this point we also learned that three days' journey to the southeast there was a considerable mountain inhabited by numerous deities who, when angered, belched forth fire and smoke. All concurred in saying that no human being had ever been able to approach near to this sacred spot, as the Djia-la regard it as one of the most sacred of their mountains, and would instantly put to death any one whom they discovered making the effort to reach it. Holmes, in his narrative of exploration in the watershed of the eastern Thibetan border, makes mention of an active volcano, of whose existence he was informed by the native tribes, but which he was unable to reach, owing to their invincible opposition. As there does not seem to be another of these natural phenomena in this region, the mountain of the Djia-la is that which he undoubtedly had reference to.

Continuing our course up the Dji Chu on the thirteenth, the difficulty of journeying constantly increased, until our progress against the swiftly flowing current was meagre in the extreme. As there was, however, no available country over which to travel by land, we were obliged to continue our battling progress by water, fourteen hours of unbroken effort carrying us over a distance of eight miles to Sok-Buchen. As we landed, a queer specimen of humanity came running toward us, dressed in long greasy robes, and wearing a most hideous mask, which towered several feet above his head. After considerable difficulty we learned that he was the chief priest of the village, and had been delegated by the natives to approach us to learn what tribute we would pay for the privilege of landing.

We well knew that we were not called upon to make this unnecessary outlay, but, anxious to avoid ill-feeling of any sort, we told him to return to those who sent him with the information that we would give each of the head men a yard of cloth, and minor gifts to each of the lesser luminaries of the place. To this he offered a stern refusal, and demanded that we quadruple the offer, or on no consideration should we be allowed to land. This outrageous extortion we were minded at all hazards to repel, and with considerable spirit ordered him to return with the first message we had given, informing him at the same time that, unless our offer was accepted within a quarter of an hour, it was our intention to make the landing by force if necessary, as our crew were utterly fagged out in body from the hard labour of the day, and it was necessary that we should secure shelter for the night.

With a vindictive grin he ambled off to the village, and five minutes later we were waited upon by several of the head men, armed with guns and spears as if to impress us duly with the determination of their demands, who, after several warlike gestures, repeated in substance the terms which had been made by the priest. Again we declined to entertain such a proposition; and being angered at their insolent attitude, we endeavoured to impress them fully with the fact that no opposition on their part would alter our firmly rooted purpose to effect a landing immediately. As the canoes slowly proceeded toward the bank they hurled at us a yell of defiance and ran back to the village; almost immediately thereafter we saw forty or fifty men issuing from the narrow opening in the stockade, armed for the conflict, and slowly advancing to the stirring air of a droning war-chant.

Calling upon the Kiangsies to paddle with all their



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SIX SYLLABIC PRAYER, "OM MANI PADME HUM."

The combination of the letters so as to form an anagram is called "Namchu vangdan," the ten powerful.

might, we shot the canoes far up on to the bank, and, ranging them in line so as to form a sheltering bulwark, we awaited the onslaught of our enemy. Their valour, however, seeing that their warlike demonstrations had no appreciable effect, rapidly evanesced, and at the spectacle of our weapons ranged in their direction the war-chant came to an end, and they gathered in silent and sullen groups, until Burton with his force on the left rose up with loud yells of defiance as if to advance, when instantly the horde, who but a few minutes before had been so demonstrative of their stern opposition to our landing, broke in wild confusion and retired to their village. Having gained this bloodless victory, the tents were pitched in a sheltered position beneath an overhanging wall of rock, and we prepared to encamp for the night. A half-hour later we were again called upon to receive emissaries from the neighbouring village, who, after having recited with much wealth of oratory their indomitable prowess in the region, expressed their desire to welcome us as brothers, and said that they would be satisfied with twice our original offer. With a full knowledge of the upper hand which we held, we turned a deaf ear to their often reiterated pleadings; and, finally, disgusted and angered with their persistent importuning, we ordered them away to their village, threatening that, if they returned again with a renewal of any offer save that which we had extended, we should order the crew to beat them soundly with their paddles. At this moment we were aroused to a new danger by loud cries from the Kiangsis encamped on the right, and, rushing in that direction, we perceived half a dozen rascals, who had stolen down the face of the cliff, running away with two guns and several long pieces of cloth. It was impossible

to think of pursuit, as the thieves were already half-way back to the shelter of their village ; but we adopted the wiser expedient of seizing upon the persons of the emissaries, who had not yet taken their departure, informing them that it was our intention to hold them as hostages until the stolen goods had been returned and the thieves punished.

For several minutes they made vigorous efforts to escape, rushing at the Kiangsis with their long spears, until, as a measure of safety, we felt called upon to subdue their fiery spirits with the butts of our guns. With their arms and feet bound they grew surly and morose, venting their impotent wrath by menacing yells, and by shouts to their kin to come to their rescue. The latter, however, were actuated more by a firm resolve to maintain the integrity of their own precious skins than to risk their lives in the desperate effort to rescue their unfortunate brethren ; and although we waited in anxious suspense during the greater part of the night, momentarily expecting attack, when day broke the position of the night before had not been altered, the villagers being still possessed of our guns and cloth, while as security for the same we held half a dozen of their principal men. Looking, however, in the direction of the stockade, we saw that there was an ominous air of preparation which boded evil. A consultation was in progress, at first being carried on quietly enough, and it was plainly apparent that the bulk of the natives were not in favour of strife ; but their warlike spirits were gradually worked up to a point of frenzy by two or three prominent figures, who raised their voices, the loud, sharp, and peremptory tones of which showed that their owners would carry the day. There was a bellicose activity about their move-

ments, an emphasis in their gestures, and a determined, wrathful fury about the motion of the head and the pose of the body which was unmistakable.

Again ranging the canoes in line, and passing thirty rounds of ammunition to each man, we took the prisoners and placed them in the open space in front of the breast-work. At sight of this manœuvre there was a perceptible movement of anxiety among the turbulent horde in the foreground; the leaders no longer raised their voices for war, but retired sullenly at a distance to talk over this latest phase of affairs, and to devise some new method whereby our position might be carried. Long and strenuously did they cogitate, until at last discretion got the better of their valour. With open hands three of the leading men approached, and announced their willingness to abstain from further hostility on the condition that we should release the prisoners and make payment of the original tribute, while they would return the guns and cloth which had been stolen. They had come, they said, to take away the prisoners, and in half an hour would see that their part of the bargain was carried out. After complimenting them on this friendly attitude, we announced our willingness to terminate the affair as they had suggested,—adding, however, that we preferred that the initiative of exchange should be taken by them. Perceiving that their cunning was unavailing (for they would have had no compunction in resuming hostilities once the prisoners were free and safe in their hands), they retired to the village, and returned with the guns and cloth, which having examined we allowed the prisoners to depart, carrying with them the stipulated tribute. In this manner the bloodless battle of Sok-Buchen was happily terminated.

The fourteenth was passed in camp, for the crew, what with loss of sleep and the stirring experiences which they had been obliged to put up with during the last two days, were in a greatly fatigued condition, while both Burton and myself were utterly fagged out. Dividing our force into watches, we passed the next twenty-four hours in slumber without molestation of any sort from the turbulent villagers, who, with the scant success which had attended their previous efforts, were markedly unwilling to resume hostilities.

We were considerably alarmed on the morning of the fifteenth, when we broke camp and prepared to embark, to find that five of the Kiangsis complained of illness. Their faces were flushed, their minds seemed wandering, and their bodies were covered with numerous flaming spots like smallpox pustules. There seemed no doubt but that they had contracted the dread disease, and, quarantining them in one of the largest canoes, Burton and myself (who had both been vaccinated, and were of course impervious to the effects of the ailment) paddled it against the headstream, while the others led the van. About 9 A. M. the current of the river grew smoother, and, a gentle breeze springing up from shore, we raised the little lug-sail, hoping that it would continue fair for a northwest course. But we were to be disagreeably disappointed, for an hour later it fell a dead calm; the sun shone down on the unprotected boats with fearful intensity, while the ailing men groaned dismally and continually called for water. We covered them with an improvised shelter of cloth, which in a measure ameliorated their condition; but which we had no sooner done than we were called upon to face a new and more portentous danger. A cry from those in the leading canoes

caused us to look ahead, and to our horror we descried a curling wave of water rushing angrily toward us, driven by a squall of fearful intensity. At the same time a low-lying cloud descended like a grim hand of fate, rendering it an impossibility to see more than five yards ahead, while the wind whistled by with terrible fury.

Our position was crucial in the extreme. We called to the other canoes to come to our assistance; but the foggy vapours obscured them from view, and even had they heard our calls, they were too busily engaged in maintaining their own perilous existence to lend us aid. In a moment the protecting shelter over the sick men caught the full blast of the wind, and, bellying outward like a sail drawing full, lifted us clean out of the stream while huge waves surged around us, pouring volumes of water into the canoe, until, notwithstanding our best efforts to maintain our position bow on toward the waves, we were in imminent danger of being sent to the bottom by the weight of water pressing us down, which had half filled the boat. For the time being forgetting their ailment, the Kiangsis, menaced by this new and more imminent danger, seized their buckets and baled with vigour until we rose higher out of the water and our position was less dubious. In another half-hour the squall had blown away, when we were able to catch a glimpse of the other canoes. Some had not been so fortunate as ourselves, having been blown by the force of the gale high up on shore, where they suffered considerable damage from the severe pounding to which they were subjected. All were more or less strained or damaged; so dismissing all expectation of further progress for the day, we encamped, and proceeded to attend to our injuries.

Our load of anxiety was a little bit lightened by an

examination of the sick men, for, notwithstanding the rigorous experience through which they had just passed, they all seemed to have improved. The fever had abated, and the pustules had disappeared. Questioning them closely, we learned that they had eaten considerable quantities of tainted yak meat which we had ordered to be thrown away, and this had undoubtedly caused their sickness. We reproached them for their gluttony, and for the danger which they had thereby brought not only upon themselves but upon all the rest of the expedition, at the same time expressing our disgust that they could eat such evil-smelling food. To which stricture, with characteristic Chinese philosophy, they replied that they ate the meat, not the smell; and with this unanswerable view of the question we were forced to remain satisfied.

Reaching Dju Kharmau at 3 P. M., on the sixteenth, we found it to be a well-populated and hospitable river settlement. The head man had evidently never been treated to the curious spectacle of gazing on white men before; for, after making furtive inquiries as to whether we were real men, or merely ghosts of men, and being at last satisfied in his own mind that we were of more solid substance than spirits, he invited us to share the pleasures of his own abode, — a long, rambling gallery apartment cut for thirty feet into a bed of loess, piled against a considerable mountain peak. After indulging in becoming self-control on the remains of a roasted sheep and huge quantities of fresh pundu, he ordered torches to be lit and placed in crevices of the wall. The flambeaux, dimly lighting up the interior, permitted us to observe the entrance of a number of the villagers, who, having in turn examined our persons to their hearts' content, and asked an abundance of meaningless and foolish questions,

sat down in a circle to dispose of the good cheer which the host had provided for their entertainment. Their gluttonous appetites seemingly knew no limit; for each consumed huge quantities of food, washed down with such long and deep draughts from the huge receptacle in which the pundu was passed around that we could not but wonder where these vast quantities of edible and potable matter found lodgment. But to solve the mysteries and capabilities of a Tangut stomach is a task which would puzzle the most erudite mathematician, while the scientist in search of examples of perpetual motion would not have to look further for an illustrative instance of his theories.

At the conclusion of the feasting we were treated to a dance, in which, contrary to the general custom of the country, both males and females joined. A dozen men assembled in the open space in the centre of the apartment, with fifes and flutes constructed of bone and argali horns, and, after several preliminary flourishes, started off on a wild and dismal chant, which ever increased in vigour until the noise was deafening. The rest of the men, and ten or a dozen women and girls, stood by or squatted on the floor, and kept time to the music by humming through their closed fingers, meanwhile swaying their bodies in a sinuous motion. At last, the music having attained its highest pitch, they discarded all clothing, and absolutely naked began to dance with considerable vigour, ever increasing their efforts as the music stirred them, rushing about madly and frenziedly, shouting at the top of their lungs, until, incapable of maintaining their feet longer, they sank on the ground through exhaustion.

As soon as this dance had come to an end one of the musicians (save the mark!) blew on his fife, holding it

with the left hand, his fingers opening and shutting to modulate the sound, while in his right hand, pressed close to his ear, he held a slight stick which he used to clear the instrument. The leader blew strongly, his head stooping forward and his feet stamping the ground to keep time; the others of the orchestra joined in the refrain. Wild music arose; the musicians circled around, looking inward, stooping and beating time, and from time to time stopping before the females with the most suggestive gestures. The music quickened, the women sang, then sprang forward, clapping their hands, and ran around the circle of musicians, giving their bodies various odd twists, and ending by dexterously turning a succession of hand-springs until they had regained their original places. Sometimes the women got into the middle of the circle and played on the crude-looking instruments, while the men stamped and danced around them. Thus they continued for two or three hours, when the entertainment came to a fitting close by the laving of innumerable parched throats, superinduced by the great exertion, with fiery pundu, and we were enabled to roll ourselves up in yak skins and secure that most blessed panacea of tired nature, sound and undisturbed slumber, — for the first time in many days being able to retire without the dire probability of being wakened at any moment to battle for life and property.

The seventeenth and eighteenth were spent in exploring the surrounding country, and venturing upon several hunting expeditions, as the low state of our meat supply made a change to fresh diet not only agreeable, but necessary, if we wished to prevent a recurrence of the disease that had attacked the Kiangsis a few days before. The weather continuing clear and of equable temperature, we were able

to make a number of observations, the most important that of ascertaining the exact altitude of the Dji Chu at this point. Two successive readings at boiling point showed an altitude of 13,977 feet above the sea level.

That part of the Kuen Luen system which bounds the plateau of Keriavun on the south forms a section easily to be distinguished from the continuation of the range east and west. From Dju Kharmau to the southern end of the Baian-Kara-ula range, near Nian Tsu, the system takes the form of a great ridge, sloping gradually from the plain to a broad summit, varying from twelve thousand to fourteen thousand feet above the sea level, and falling to the Thibetan plain in a series of steppes. So distinct is this section from the broken ranges to the west and south that the general title of Lesser Kuen Luen may be appropriately applied to it; not because the elevation is much inferior to that of the summits of the other parts of the range, but because few peaks rise above the general level, and the gradual slopes give so easy a character to the plateau that the evidence of the aneroid is needed to afford one any exact idea of the height to which he has climbed.

The western wall, formed by Lari Ula, is impassable at any point for beasts of burden, even the sure-footed yak being unable to pursue his way over the treacherous surface of loose boulders and pebbles, which have the durability of granite and the treachery of quicksand,—at one moment bruising and cutting the limbs, at the next released in masses by the inadvertent displacement of some protecting stone, rushing down with terrible force and sweeping away everything that may lie in its path.

The valley lying between the two parallel ranges of the Lari Ula, through which presses the swift current of

the Dji Chu, varies in width from two to five miles for a day's journeying, when, a number of rapids and cascades having been abridged by land portage, the river bed grows deeper, and passes over a gentler altitude without precipitancy, where the flow of the stream is sluggish, and its banks and bottom soft ; a few miles farther on, however, it becomes more rapid and the bed more rocky, owing to a gradual contracting of the two ranges toward each other. Above Kung Nak the river turns westward, and as the Lari Ula maintain their southerly direction, the river valley is enclosed by precipices, descending sheer and forbidding where the waters have cut their way through the solid adamant by centuries of ceaseless engineering. The stream presently begins to expand more into the plateau, and then flows for some distance through a very narrow gorge, after which it again expands into a sterile valley, dotted with villages and fishing settlements, and inhabited by an ill-favoured and miserable generation of the lowest order of Tangutans, reduced to a state of inoffensive barbarism. The higher elevations to the north and south, however, are inhabited by a more progressive and aggressive race, who have made considerable headway in the laudable effort to reclaim the barren waste from its natural sterility. Loess covers many of the plains, sufficient to make them capable of cultivation, but not sufficiently deep to enable the natives to cut therein their abodes, which for the greater part are built of loosely-piled stones cemented with a composition of loess and mud, which has baked in the sun to rocky firmness.

There were a number of considerable streams in the surrounding country, whose general course, instead of being deflected toward the current of the Dji Chu, led to

the southwest toward the headwaters of the Sok Chu, the left range of the Lari Ula doubtless forming the watershed of the region.

The Tangutans of the Lari Ula plateau differ in general characteristics from the other tribes of that race in that they more nearly present the flabby, featureless expression peculiar to the Thibetans or western Mongols. They rarely if ever cultivate the soil, leading more or less a nomadic life, and furnishing their food supply by hunting and fishing, or among the more provident by the maintenance of small herds of argalis. They show little or no forethought in providing for the future, famines being of frequent occurrence, and sweeping them off literally by the hundreds. Like most of their race, they are gourmands and gluttons of no mean order, their only object in securing food being to eat it all at one sitting if possible, or as soon as the capabilities of nature will permit, even if they have a full knowledge of the fact that they must inevitably face a period of starvation during weeks to come; for, according to their method of reasoning, there is no telling what the morrow may bring forth, and they at least are determined to take advantage of conditions furnished by to-day. Whenever they have an opportunity they willingly exchange their game for the vegetables and fruits which are brought to them for trade by other tribes, having a commercial instinct of the most sharpened kind.

A peculiar feature concerning them is the wide variance of their orthography. Many of these tribes living within a few miles of each other have totally differing languages and dialects. Prejevalsky asserts that in the country to the northwest, among the Dumbure ranges, two families living half a mile apart have not the same words for

mountains, trees, guns, and kindred common nouns. In short, among this primitive race there are almost as many languages as individuals.

The only prominent trait in their character which we were able to discover was a fondness, almost amounting to a passion, for music,—what time is not given to attending to the more necessary things of life being devoted to impromptu concerts, which, however melodious and interesting in native eyes, one cannot with truth justly celebrate for their harmoniousness. As an example of the character of these concerts, one which we listened to at Kharmau may be cited. A stick about an inch and a half in diameter was placed upon the ground; two women, holding in each hand a wand, struck this rudimentary instrument as vigorously as they could. As an accompaniment to this, a large piece of wood, hollowed at the top and covered by a sheepskin, served as a drum, and a metal instrument, in the form of those bells which the European mountaineers attach to the necks of their cows, was used as a cymbal. The women and men who had no place in this orchestra chanted with commendable vigour, and maintained excellent time with their hands.

As regards their moral characteristics, it is difficult to see how Prejevalsky and other travellers who have been through this region, or that contiguous to the west, should have gained such distorted ideas regarding their many amiable qualities. The former asserts in all seriousness, in his first report to the Russian Royal Geographical Society, that their life is simple and peaceful, their morals pure; indeed, he mentions no deterring conditions whatsoever, but ascribes to them almost unlimited praise. This is a case surely of distance lending enchantment to the view; for, so far from being friendly, inoffensive, good-hearted,

liberty-loving, detesters of falsehood, respecters of the property of others, and very hospitable, they are all these in antithesis only. They have no sentiment of honour, are vainglorious boasters and cowards, and live under a régime of polygamy which reduces the state of womanhood to a level more degrading than slavery. Although all infractions of conjugal faith are punishable by death, the most brutal licentiousness is prevalent; while robbery, infanticide, and murder among themselves are of common occurrence. On the whole, it may be said that they are not remarkable for their domestic virtues; neither have they a profound respect for the property of others; while their enormous conceit makes it an impossibility to sow among them the seeds of Christianity or civilisation, for their distorted imaginations seem incapable of picturing or believing in human intelligence superior to their own.

A curious belief which they entertain is that the sun is a great mass of fat, which daily descends to the earth after having been melted, when it sinks into the ground at a spot which no human being has ever seen, and is there replenished, to return again the next day or in the course of a few days, ascribing to it no stated periodicity of action, but accounting for its non-appearance on cloudy or rainy days by the theory that the supply of fat has given out, and that it takes longer to build it to the proper size again. Concerning the moon they also have a similar belief, describing it as the smaller ball of fat which is set in the heavens while the larger one is being prepared for the morrow.

Very few of the races of Western China or Thibet have less ceremonies or observances. They take wives to themselves merely by giving presents to the parents, or by seiz-

ing upon them by force ; sometimes two men will have half a dozen wives between them. When a young girl attains to the age of womanhood, she is led around the village to touch various things for good luck ; thus she touches the teats of the cattle or the rams in the fold. In case of sickness the magic doctor, who exercises the dual profession of ministering to the body as well as to the soul, orders a sheep or yak to be killed, as the patient cannot improve without eating plenty of fat. Having gorged the unfortunate victim to the fullest extent with this nauseating mixture, he smears the body with what remains, or sacrifices the flesh over the seat of the disease. When death happens, the body is enclosed in a yak skin, which is then sewn up, and, if near any considerable body of water, thrown therein without further ceremony ; or, this convenient place of disposal being absent, it is buried in a shallow hole dug in the ground, with such a scanty covering of earth that it not infrequently happens that the action of the rain washes this surface deposit away, leaving numerous evil-smelling corpses bestrewn throughout the region, which breed terrible pestilence and disease.

What scant geological research we were able to make in this region confirmed the opinion of Richtofen and others that the great mountain belt of Central Asia for its entire length is remarkably rich in mineral wealth. In the vicinity of Dju Kharmau we secured several specimens of iron ore, picked up at random, which might be taken as fair examples of the deposit of the region, and which subsequently yielded thirty-two per cent. by accurate assay. There do not seem to be traces of gold or silver deposits, however, nor did we notice any considerable quantities of these precious metals among the native population, whose idols and ornaments for the most part were constructed

of stone or iron. There may be, however, more precious metals found in the mountain fastnesses along the *Dji Chu*; those desolate and dreary regions may yet be found to teem with subterranean wealth of gold and silver, to compensate for their forbidding exterior. That there will be white men inhabiting this sterile waste at no distant day there can be no room for doubt. Inaccessibility and the deterring obstacle of a narrow-minded and suspicious population have heretofore been the practically insurmountable obstacles to the consummation of such an event; but can one believe that a civilisation which has penetrated into arctic cold and torrid heat will suffer itself to be baffled by these barriers offered by nature? Perish the thought! A half century hence will witness revelations of which this steady-going and prosaic world of ours has never dreamed.

On the nineteenth we launched the canoes and resumed our journey up the current of the *Dji Chu*. We paddled along at a good pace until 3 P. M., when the wind, which for the last few hours had been blowing with considerable force, veered around to the northwest and menaced a furious tempest. Welcoming the opportunity to make a landing, we beached the canoes and erected the tents in the shelter of an overhanging wall of rock rising in a sheer black precipice, cutting off all view of the landscape beyond. Clouds surged up in thick, black masses, and cast a gloom over the white-crested breakers of the stream until the waste of waters became as black as a velvet pall, and as quiet as though vitrified into glass. Soon lightning began to play around us in fitful, blinding flashes, while the thermometer registered 56° , soon followed with a frightful storm of huge hailstones, which tore through the tough canvas of the tents with the force of bullets,

causing us as a last resource to seek shelter beneath innumerable piles of yak skins. The groans of the Kiangsis were terrible to listen to, for with their superstitious natures aroused by the spectacle of this, to them, supernatural phenomenon, the like of which they had never witnessed before, they ascribed it to the just anger of Buddha, notwithstanding our best efforts to allay their fears and calm them with the assurance that the worst would soon be over. After an hour of this unpleasant experience, during which we were sadly bruised by the falling hailstones, the storm passed away over the mountain tops as suddenly as it had come; but it was out of the question to think of making further progress for the day, as the men were all unnerved by their recent experience and utterly incapable of performing manual labour. The evening was therefore spent in repairing the injuries to the tents and alleviating the pain of our own bruises. An utterly miserable and dispirited band we were, with but scant protection from the almost arctic coldness of the weather. There was plenty of tree-growth to provide the wherewithal to form a fire, but the recent warring of the elements had so saturated it with moisture that, despite our often repeated efforts, we were unable to start a flame. We passed the night in gloomy silence, broken only by the incessant babble of the Kiangsis, to whom the novelty of the unusual spectacle which they had witnessed during the day was too fresh and potent a memory to enable them to fall asleep.

Pursuing our journey on the twentieth, about noontime we came in sight of the high promontory of Jomguk, rising nearly five hundred feet above the level of the river bed, and around which is a low, brown plain, viewed from a distance having the appearance of a broad sheet of

water. In the sheltered bay-like expanse on the north side were three small islands several acres in extent, doubtless merely sections of the river bed which had been elevated a few feet above the surface, and which in time had gathered a covering of a few feet of alluvial deposit. There were numerous well-built habitations to be seen on these islands, but they were deserted, the natives themselves for some unaccountable reason having encamped in their little yak-skin tents on the river bank. We subsequently learned that repeated risings of the river had overflowed the islands, flooded their habitations, and caused them to take refuge on the more substantial shores of the mainland. They bore this usurpation of their domains with the philosophical spirit of resignation; and on our inquiring as to why they did not build their permanent habitations on the spot where they had pitched their miserable tents, they seemed to be put out that we had dared to suggest such a thing.

As a considerable gale which lashed the waters of the *Dji Chu* into a perilous whirlpool was blowing on the morning of the twenty-first, we gave the crew a day's respite, and took advantage of the opportunity to accompany several of the head men of the native settlement on a hunting expedition. We marched over the pebbly plain until shortly before noontime, when the route which we had been following led us into a sort of valley-like depression, covered with a scrawny growth of tamarisk and camel-thorn, and a few straggling poplars. This we were informed was an excellent hunting-ground, as it contained several fresh-water springs, at which the animals for miles around gathered to drink, there being no others which they could reach. There were indeed many evidences of their presence, for the ground was cut up with their hoofs,

while several heaps of bones scattered around showed that man or savage beasts had created havoc at some past date.

Sheltering ourselves behind some craggy boulders which commanded the position, we awaited the arrival of the game. In half an hour an almost inaudible clucking noise from one of the natives on the right gave warning that he had descried the approach of a large herd of wild yaks, and a moment later the very earth trembled as a considerable number rushed forward and wallowed in the pool, while twice as many more took up their position on the right, to await the moment when the first comers should have satisfied their thirst. The splashing and scrambling was extraordinary; at length a couple of fine-looking bulls ascended the bank, and having sniffed the air for a few moments gave a short grunt of surprise, and before we could aim and fire had stampeded the herd to the southward. Involuntarily breathing forth muttered imprecations at our slowness, we emulated the example of the Tangutans and started off pell-mell over the uneven plain after the rapidly vanishing herd. We were not accustomed, however, to this native agility, and several sharp falls and numerous bruises caused us to slacken our pursuit to a pace which more fitted our capabilities.

After an hour's labour of this exacting kind we came upon the herd grazing in the lee of a small hill; but immediately sniffing our presence, they at once dashed off in a heavy, lumbering gallop which soon carried them out of sight. They evidently seemed inclined to play a game of hide-and-seek with us; for repeatedly, after an exhausting run across the uneven plain, we would come upon them again, only to arrive just a moment too late to secure a shot. But the spirit of the chase had by this time taken full possession of us, and, in spite of the

fiercely beating rays of the sun overhead and the torturing substance of loose pebbles and sharp boulders beneath, we rushed on until shortly after 3 P. M., when we were able to get to leeward of the herd and work down upon them by crawling over the flinty surface on all fours. In this manner we got within fifty yards and secured a pot-shot, and as a result of our first volley brought down a splendid bull and two cows,—the bull and one of the cows falling respectively by my own and Burton's fire, while the combined assault of the crude weapons of the Tanguts stretched the second cow low.

Rushing forward toward the quarry, we did not notice a long, tawny body crouching behind a growth of tamarisk, which, unobserved by us, had been only some thirty feet away from our position. We were startled to the sense of this new danger by howls of terror from the natives, and, glancing in their direction to ascertain the cause of their outburst, we perceived that they were in active flight at top speed across the plain. Almost immediately a low, snarling growl came from the group of tamarisks to the right, and, instantly discerning the presence of some large beast, we ran for a short distance and took refuge behind a huge boulder.

Burton, who was farthest removed, called on me to fire, and, catching a glimpse of yellow fur through the thickly gathered tamarisk, I sent an explosive forty-four crashing toward the spot. There was a low growl, then a huge form emerged and rushed toward my position. There was no time to reload, and seeing that if I maintained my present place of concealment I should be exposed to great danger from the infuriated beast, I sought to reach a more secure spot near to Burton's shelter on the right. There was a hollow roar, and the great beast came leaping

toward me in tremendous jumps. The events of those next few brief moments passed like some vivid nightmare. Fearfully I plunged on with futile desperation until I tripped over a sharp boulder; then a big yellow mass of fur, reeking with carrion, for a moment rose over me and descended, pinning my arm to the ground. A delightful feeling of numbness came over me; the desire to laugh at the gaping mouth with its cruel octaves of teeth seemed too strong to be resisted; everything was delightfully painless, as if danger was present but yet far removed. I had a vague sense of a strong weight pressing down my right arm, a leering, grinning face pushing forward with sickening odour toward mine, two huge balls of fire blazing like live coals; then, after untold ages it seemed, a deafening report at my very ear, and suffocated and blinded with a flood of blood that flowed down in warm streams I fell into the sleep of insensibility.

When I recovered consciousness, it was to find myself lying on the ground, with Burton anxiously gazing into my face, and the awestricken Kiangsis and Tanguts standing around with grim and solemn faces. Ten minutes later, although still feeling very shaky, I was able to rise. Fortunately no bones had been broken, the intent of the beast to have jumped on me having been frustrated by my fortunate tripping over the stone, which had entirely carried me out of harm's way, except that where the fearful claws had gripped my arm there were several long gashes, and a bruised numbness which did not wear off for several hours.

We had now time to look at the animal we had shot. It was one of the small Thibetan tigers which are found at infrequent intervals in this region, as in general they do not usually live in the country so far to the north-



"A LEERING, GRINNING FACE PUSHING TOWARD MINE."

ward, but nearer to the mountain ranges in the south. As compared with the Indian species, they are much smaller in body, of a general tan colour, without the distinguishing stripes, and unaggressive and cowardly except when wounded or emboldened by hunger, when their ferocity is terrible.

The one we had shot measured a little over five feet in length, which, according to the Tangutans, was of enormous size; and on no consideration would they draw near to the inanimate carcass until they had been fully satisfied that the monster was dead, when, with characteristic conceit and braggadocio, they waxed exceeding valorous and boastful, announcing with often reiterated disdain their ability to kill in single combat any tiger that ever lived. That they might have done so was a matter of conjecture, but, with the recent exhibition of their cowardice, and the celerity with which they bounded away when Burton pointed in the direction of another supposedly approaching tiger, we were inclined, notwithstanding the cloak of charity which we spread over their failings, to think differently.

Cutting up the yak meat, and taking the skin of the tiger, we stumbled back over the uncertain path across the plain, until an hour before midnight, under a dank and lowering canopy of rain-clouds, we once more reached the native settlement on the bank of the *Dji Chu*. With body and mind utterly worn out with the thrilling experiences of the day, we sought to sleep, — an effort attended with rather indifferent success, for the villagers, at the spectacle of so much plenty, were unable to restrain their gluttonous appetites until the morrow, but spent the remainder of the night in a prolonged debauch, until the limit of satiety was reached.

CHAPTER XI.

ON the twenty-third of October, notwithstanding the fact that rain was falling in torrents, the smoothness of the current of the Dji Chu urged us forward. A fine six-knot breeze was blowing, and, with the added assistance of the small lug-sails, we were able to make a good day's work, journeying nearly twenty miles in a little over ten hours. The river current still continued wide in parts, interspersed with small, rocky islets, while a glance at the country on either hand showed it to be exceedingly populous, and for a considerable area covered with loess deposit extensively cultivated. The waters of the stream were very clear, owing to its shallowness, although ever and anon merging into round, inky-coloured spots hovering over some treacherous eddy or pool of greater depth. The crew speared a number of large fish, whose bodies were covered with an armour of spiky scales, the snout prolonged in an extended serrated appendage similar to that of a swordfish. They were delicious eating when cooked, with more animal than fishy taste, having a dark-coloured flesh not unlike venison, and with a striking similarity of taste to the latter. I have essayed to find some traces of the name of this fish in the accounts of previous travellers in this country, but as they do not make mention of it, there can be no doubt as to its being merely of local existence. They swarmed the stream in considerable abundance, and seemed to form a most important element in the food supply of the native villages,

for the current of the river was dotted with their little hide coracles, which revolved over the smooth surface until one was dizzy from following their rotary evolutions.

On the twenty-fourth we continued to coast along this district, — a low, bare plain now approaching the stream, watered by a number of little rivers, and extensively cultivated, margined at the water's edge by a considerable growth of dwarfed poplars and aromatic shrubs, which perfumed the air with a delightful fragrance. At 3 P. M. of this day we arrived at a point where the river widened to a considerable extent, forming a lake-like expanse nearly a quarter of a mile in width. We searched in vain over our route maps for some information regarding the name and position of this pool, but it evidently had not been explored before, or else had been considered of too trivial importance to be placed on the map. We therefore took advantage of the occasion to discard the native name of Bogo Cho for the improvised one of Reid Pool, and so enumerated it on our charts. On the eastern side of this pool lies the district of the Djia-la, a pebbly plain extending inland, as smooth as a billiard-table, for a distance of twenty-five or thirty miles, its farther extremity marked by an almost unbroken ridge, which really forms the southwestern point of a mountain range. There were a number of conspicuous peaks five hundred or a thousand feet high, looking toward the northeast, of the most startling similarity, ranging skyward like the teeth of a gigantic saw. In the sheltered valley at their base were a number of small villages, inhabited by the most evil-looking and murderous of brigandish natives, who, doubtless having learned of our approach up-stream, had quitted their inland homes and emigrated to the river

banks, where they had encamped in their small skin tents, greeting our appearance with such menacing shouts of defiance that we were in no wise tempted to mingle more closely with them, being satisfied beyond all measure with the cheerful reflection that, without boats of any kind, pursuit and hostile demonstration were out of the question.

In the evening we camped on a small island to the north of Reid Pool, which was inhabited by a tribe of fifty or sixty goïtred and filthy Tam-ba. As soon as the canoes had been beached, they crowded down around us with such fierce and insolent cries that we were not a little intimidated. With difficulty gaining some knowledge of their strange dialect, we found that their food supply had given out a week before, and that they were in a starving condition, life being maintained only by what fish and oysters they could secure from the river. It was manifestly out of the question for us to furnish them with food, as our own supply was limited ; but distributing pieces of yak meat to all those who came to our camp, we in a measure alleviated their sufferings for the time being, the miserable wretches seizing upon the meat like famished wolves, tearing it to pieces, and swallowing it in raw lumps.

We left this famine-ridden spot on the twenty-fifth with a feeling of sickening horror at the thought of what must be the ultimate fate of the unfortunate islanders. A gradual ascent over a turbulent stretch of water brought us to the valley of the Sil Chu, which empties into the current of the Dji Chu over a succession of seventeen low cascades. The latter stream at this point was very shallow, and hardly twenty yards wide, filled at frequent intervals with sandy bars, which extended from bank to

bank, affording an easy and practicable ford. A few hills on the east bank showed cliffs of silicified feldspathic rock crowned with peaks of loess, into which the native population had cut their abodes. Wild yak were quite numerous, feeding on the dwarfed growth of camel-thorn and tamarisk, but the country was too open to permit of stalking them with any chance of success. However, Burton with his long-range repeater succeeded in dropping two small antelopes at a range of a hundred yards, which proved to be a species of dwarfed argali, with black hair and enormous horns rising straight as an arrow for nearly three feet from the head. Notwithstanding their diminutiveness, the huge-bodied yaks seemed to entertain for them the strongest dread, rushing off in a long, lumbering gallop as soon as they descried the approach of any of the pugnacious little beasts.

In the afternoon the stream of the *Dji Chu* again expanded in a succession of open pools, and villages became numerous; but they were inhabited by such a suspicious and barbarous populace that on no consideration would we mingle closer with them, notwithstanding their numerous persuasive cries from the river bank inviting us to trade, for there could be no mistaking the hostile and bloodthirsty intent beneath their suave and smiling exteriors. An hour before nightfall we were gliding over a sheltered bay, when, rounding a rocky promontory, we found ourselves in the midst of a fleet of thirty or forty coracles, much larger than those of the fishermen downstream, and evidently used for far different work. The length of these craft varied from ten to twenty feet, each of which contained five or six men, fierce-looking warriors dressed in yak skins, and armed with long spears and knives. These savages were unlike either the Mongols



or Tangutans, being in many of their characteristics but little different from negroes, almost as dark in colour, and with long woolly hair, of which they seemed to be very proud. Their teeth would probably be white, had they not the detestable habit of chewing various herbs and ground-nuts, which terribly destroys and blackens them. Their ears were deformed by the monstrous metal orna-



THIBETAN WHIP AND COOKING UTENSILS.

ments attached to them; their noses, naturally flat, were artificially compressed, until nearly all trace of this organ had disappeared. They were not, however, so repulsive as might seem from this description, for they were mostly tall and well formed, and had a majestic air of superiority which could not fail to impress the be-

holder. Nearly all of them were tattooed with the most exaggerated designs, while others had smeared their bodies with a coat of red or yellow paint until no semblance of their original colour had been left.

We were rather dubious as to their real intent, until from one of the head men we learned that they were just returning from an expedition against a rival tribe, who lived on the plain two days' journey to the eastward.

We halted for the night in their village, which as near as we could make out was called Hissik Karpo. As became the generally exalted nature of its population, this village was a settlement of a hundred well-constructed stone dwellings, erected with considerable skill, and some approach to symmetry, while many even showed some meagre attempt at ornate decoration. The women in feature and stature were much like the men, although of a somewhat lighter colour, some being almost white. We were naturally curious regarding this wide variance in tribal characteristics until we learned that the dark women were real members of the tribe, while the lighter ones were concubines that had been purchased or captured from other tribes. These natives of Hissik Karpo showed considerable skill in the artificing of metal, for their arms and tools of husbandry were made with great care, and denoted real intelligence. Many of them had discarded the absolutely valueless musket for bows and arrows, which they were remarkably adept in the use of. Their arrows were made of a very hard wood, tipped with iron points, and of enormous length, though very light, some measuring four to five feet. The force with which these were projected by the strong bows was terrific, the hunters having no trouble in killing antelopes, and even such large and powerful game as the yak, at considerable distances.

Their taste for fantastical sculpture was quite highly developed. The prows of their coracles were cut, grooved, and ornamented in every possible way, and a similar taste for ornate decoration was shown (as we have before said) in the construction of their dwellings and likewise in their personal adornment. The head man was a most sunny-disposed old polygamist, who counted his wives and concubines as he did his herds, and the happy father of such

an innumerable colony of children that we could not help wondering how, in spite of his untiring zeal and great wealth, he was ever able to support them. His wives were treasures in another sense than the usual acceptation of the word suggests, for each had a collar of silver riveted around her neck, except in the case of the concubines, where the precious metal was superseded by similar adornments of iron or brass.

Prejevalsky from native sources was informed of the remains of an ancient civilisation in this region, with evidences of numerous ruined temples and fortresses which showed that a race of superior attainments had once held sway in this wild country. His statements have hitherto been regarded somewhat dubiously by archæologists, who have dismissed his theories with the charitable suggestion that his information was doubtless faulty, coming as it did from native sources. Whatever may be the dubitation or the contention of these gentlemen, however, there can no longer be doubts as to the authenticity of such reports, for we have received visual evidence of the previous existence of these structures.

About five miles from Hissik Karpo to the southeast is a long plain, in the midst of which are well-preserved ruins of what at a former time must have been an important town, and which was doubtless destroyed by an earthquake or some other convulsion of nature. The ruins of a fortress of great extent are here visible; the walls are constructed of tempered clay about six feet thick. The principal building stood on an eminence, but the walls were continued to the foot of it, like regular circumvallations, the ascent winding around the hill like a labyrinth, having many angles, which probably served as outworks to defend the place. In this neighbourhood, so

we learned from the Tangutans, much treasure has been excavated, all of which must have been concealed by some wonderful prehistoric race, for there is no evidence that this region has been populated by its present occupants for a space of longer than two centuries. Two miles to the northeast of this ruined city, on the face of a hilly slope, lies an immense cemetery, where skulls, legs, arms, and whole skeletons of the human body may be seen imbedded in the loess,—legs attached to pelvis, and bent up, still with mummified skin on them; arms in the same state; relics of plaited straw, forming swathes; pieces of netting, of cloth, and many other such accompaniments of funereal occasions.

We also saw numerous articles of pottery similar to those found in the Egyptian pyramids, and of a very superior quality; but on no consideration would the natives permit us to handle them or carry them away. As to the shape of the graves, there are some of an inverted cylinder form, like that of a lime-kiln, the insides of which are lined with masonry work. In these the body is placed in the upright condition. There is also the ordinary longitudinal grave, in which the corpse is directly in contact with the earth; there are also graves cut square, to a depth of six or eight feet, at the top of which or within one or two feet of the surface of the ground is a roofing or covering of mat-work, placed on iron rafters.

Farther on are relics more remarkable still, the remains of what must at one time have been enormous temples or dwellings. They are constructed of mighty blocks of sandstone, corresponding in a great degree with the substance of the hill itself, piled one upon another without cement, holding together simply by their own weight, arranged in tiers, according to their different lengths.

Nothing could well be more instructive than this, as throwing light upon the much-debated controversy as to the possibilities of a former enlightened people having existed in this region, for a whole world of architecture and history is illustrated in these interesting remains. It is clear that these builders, whoever they may have been, the labour of whose hands is thus shown, were not barbarians in the ordinary acceptation of the term. They possessed at any rate the instincts of grandeur, and of harmony in proportions, to a high degree. Moreover, these masses of masonry are found to bear peculiar marks and inscriptions, not painted, but cut deeply into the stone, and affording easily traceable data upon which archæologists might work.

Naught save an earnest, painstaking investigation will throw any light on the past history of these interesting remains; for the natives of the present have absolutely no knowledge and, even what is more strange, have no legends concerning them, save that they have existed as far back as their own history can trace,—their present belief concerning them being that they are inhabited by a race of spirits, who stir abroad at night and devastate the surrounding plain during certain seasons of the year.

The twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh were spent in exploration of these ancient remains, although our absolute ignorance of archæology prevented our making a search with the attainment of any material results. We may claim to be the first travellers who have viewed these traces of an ancient race in this region, and fixed the exact location occupied by them. Prejevalsky and Richtofen have both had a knowledge of their probable existence, gained from native sources; in fact, in 1875 the former made an attempt to visit them, but was obliged

to give up the quest owing to the hostility of the native tribes. That their more thorough exploration by archaeologists will disclose innumerable important facts concerning an ancient civilisation in Western China and Thibet, there can be no room for doubt.

Before daybreak of the twenty-eighth the canoes were launched, and until noonday we hugged the low-lying shore in order to escape the sharp-pointed reefs lying across the face of the current, and which, having gathered numerous obstructions, had stimulated a weedy growth that rose for several feet into the air, forming an impassable barrier, as elastic as India rubber but as impenetrable as adamant. The water at points was very shallow, and the bed of the stream growing very rocky we were obliged to proceed with the utmost caution, lest, should we attempt to accelerate our progress, the canoes might be seriously damaged. We soon discovered that the low-lying plain which had heretofore sloped to the river bank had vanished for good, and almost immediately we found ourselves in an assemblage of mountain peaks, some of them comparatively young and small, while others were hoary with age, rising above their neighbours as a giant towers in a group of children, their summits covered with snow and ice.

Much of this great mountain region needs further exploration before it can be described adequately,— a practically impossible task at the present time, for the reason that the penetration of the snow-begirtled summits of the Gata Ula would necessitate a base of supplies whence to press forward such a stupendous task, and that the hostility and aggressiveness of the small villages near the river would seriously embarrass such an attempt.

From Sak Dap, the current of the Dji Chu leads north-

westward, cut into two parallel channels by a lofty spine of rocks, which causes a considerable increase in the swiftness of the stream and likewise an increase in depth. The westerly half is altogether impossible to navigation of any sort, filled as it is with such an innumerable number of rocky projections and cross-currents that the surface is churned up into a seething mass of whirlpools and breakers. The eastern channel, however, is less impeded, keeping as it does some distance away from the spiny ridge under the southern slope of a low range, which, springing from the Gata Ula, runs parallel with the course of the stream as far as the confluence of the By Chu, and encloses on the east the rolling plateau of the Hoang Ho watershed. The inhabitants of this region are true Tangutans, with a few Mongols, — one and all wretchedly miserable and barbarous, living on a scale lower than that of the most disgusting animals, in collections of ill-built huts or caves dug into the ground. I have seen no region of Western China wherein the conditions of life are less agreeable.

Chaka Syur is situated on the Turag Chu, a small mountain stream which, after a course of two miles, pours over a series of cascades into the Dji, at the southern end of a high plain contracting gradually to the westward, and forms a clearly marked depression between the western range of the Kharmtua Ula and the low mountain peaks of the eastern extremity marking the commencement of the northern slope. Some miles before reaching it, trees and vegetation of all kind cease, and a bare, sterile country, all too familiar to travellers in Central Asia, stretches toward the horizon, relieved only by a distant prospect of the forests and snows of Baian Kara Ula on the north, and the loess-covered slopes of the Dji Chu

valley to the south. The most peculiar feature of the Turag Chu is its immense source a mile east of Chaka, — nothing more nor less than a lake covering an area of six square miles, and of such salinity that anything thrown into it, even if of considerable weight, floats with apparent ease. The waters are extremely cold, although, on account of their saline nature, they do not freeze, but issue forth under a natural bridge, tunnelled for a distance of three hundred feet in the face of a rocky peak, and form the current of the Turag Chu, which, just before its junction with the main stream, expands into a succession of open pools, covered for six or seven feet from the shore with a crust of crystallised saline deposits. The gathering of this forms the principal industry of the natives of the region, who chop it into large blocks, and by its sale carry on a thriving trade with the Thibetan trading villages to the westward.

At Chaka Syur, which we reached about noontime of the thirtieth, we were forced to make one of the hardest fights for existence which had yet confronted us in all our long sojourn in Western China; for the natives, than whom no more fanatical or bigoted people can be found in Central Asia, having been apprised of our approach by several fishermen whom we had descried earlier in the morning, were armed and positioned to attack us as soon as we sought to make a landing. With this bellicose spectacle standing in our path, we sailed by their village with the intention of camping for the night on an isolated spot on the shore a mile farther on; but the rascally crew were not to be denied the pleasure of strife, for, at once divining our intention, they forsook their village and maintained even pace with our advance by running along the river bank, meanwhile brandishing their guns and spears and

hurling at us yells of undying hatred and defiance. They were led by a tall, well-formed native, whom we rightly conjectured to be the head man, who was covered with a complete suit of mail fashioned from numerous iron discs. This immobile armour sheathed only the front part of his body, the buckler, something like the head of a fish in shape, having a tremendous helmet three or four feet in height, all in one piece. The mail did not bend, but hung before him in a solid sheet, naturally rendering the movements of the wearer awkward and somewhat difficult. Many of the others had lesser suits of mail, or a hide shield covered with iron facework; their faces were smeared with crimson paint, or concealed beneath ponderous and hideous masks, giving to them a generally deformed and extremely unprepossessing appearance.

Perceiving that, in spite of our best efforts to maintain peace, they were determined, at all events, to obstruct our free progress, and happening upon a sheltered cove at the farther end of which lay a shelving beach on which the canoes might be ranged, we turned our course at right angles to the current of the stream, and, ordering the canoes into line, paddled slowly toward the bank, at the same time impressing on the hot-headed Kiangsis our desire, if possible, to avoid conflict, and warning them not to fire until we should think the occasion warranted it, and should give the word. As we slowly paddled toward shore, the Chaka Syurese formed in line with their guns and spears, ready to commence the attack so soon as we had drawn within range. The Kiangsis became restless, but I restrained them. Seeing no signs of belligerent intent from our direction, the natives at once concluded that we were too frightened to fight, and boldly fired several shots toward the canoes, the distance, how-

ever, rendering their crude weapons ineffective. We still proceeded without firing, and the savages, not comprehending this extraordinary forbearance, concluded that their first supposition as to our being too cowardly to fight was correct, and promptly discharged another volley, — this time with more effect, as several of the slugs whistled unpleasantly over our heads on the rebound from the water. Even yet I felt capable of overcoming their hostility by the pursuit of peaceful measures; but Burton, not so sanguine, was in favour of not jeopardising the lives of the expedition longer. The Kiangsis also were growing turbulent and almost mutinous with the thought of being liable at any moment to be stretched low by a bullet without striking back; so I ordered the canoes to halt, and, with two of the Kiangsis as interpreters, approached nearer shore, whence I could address the threatening horde. I expressed our desire to avoid all conflict, and explained the peaceable nature of the errand which had brought us in their midst. But this effort at conciliation was futile; each word of peace was drowned in a chorus of warlike cries; and, at last, realising the fact that nothing would have an effect upon their savage natures but a crushing defeat, I announced to them our intention of delaying no longer, but at once advancing for battle. This threat they received with howls of incredulous defiance, dancing in a frenzy of sanguinary zeal, and boastfully declaring their intention of killing us all. As the closely gathered mass of canoes offered too centralised an object for their fire, I ordered the different crew-leaders to deploy in line, with a space of twenty feet between each boat, — Burton, with one of the large boats, guarding the left, while I led the charge from the centre. Paddling within range, we halted for a moment,

and then poured a volley into the compactly gathered mass on shore. As most of the Kiangs is had loaded their guns with loose, heavy buckshot, instead of bullets, the effect was magical, the shot ploughing along in fan-like expansion, and causing terrible havoc in the ranks of the natives. Perceiving the murderous effect of our superior weapons and the danger to which they were exposed in the open, they wavered for a moment, and then fled to the shelter of the rocks, but not before we had emptied another volley into their midst.

Our position, however, had been little improved for the better. The natives being sheltered behind a projecting bulwark, and commanding the shore, it was a manifest impossibility to think of landing without serious loss. Ordering the crew to resume their paddles, we made a feint of once more moving up-stream; when, deceived by this new attitude, the enemy forsook their shelter and rushed along the bank to maintain a running fight. This was the opportunity for which we had been waiting; and, suddenly turning our course inshore, we called upon the crew to paddle for their lives, and, as soon as the canoes had reached the beach, to seize upon their guns and advance to the charge. A volley of bullets passed uncomfortably near us, followed by a cloud of spears which flew harmlessly over our heads, they evidently having been discharged under high nervous tension, which detracted from effective aim. Forward we rushed, and, taking advantage of every opportunity, fired indiscriminately as fast as we could reload whenever a native head or body exposed itself to view. The Chaka Syurese fought with determination; but their severe losses blunted, in a measure, their faith in their own fighting prowess, and at the end of a half-hour's conflict they sullenly retired.

The blood of the Kiangsis was up by this time, however, and, rushing in pursuit, they maintained a brisk encounter for an hour longer, when we recalled them to camp.

Fully realising that the night was not liable to pass uneventfully, much as we should like to have it do so, we saw to the strengthening of our position. Burton and fifteen of the crew were engaged in erecting a breastwork of stones, while the remainder employed themselves in constructing marksmen's nests at points of vantage. By nightfall our camp was secure and perfectly defensible. Having posted sentries and positioned our forces, we patiently awaited the probable attack. For three hours we lay shivering and cramped, stretched on the ground and huddled against icy stones, until, there being no signs of an enemy in the vicinity, our spirits lightened and we wondered if, after all, the punishment which we had inflicted on them during the day had proved sufficient. We were soon disillusioned, however, for at nine o'clock the sentries discharged their muskets and came running in with the intelligence that the savages were creeping upon us from two different quarters, having evidently calculated on effectively making a flank assault while we were busily engaged in opposing that in front. Ordering the tents razed to the ground and the camp-fires banked, we waited in anxious silence for the impending conflict. The frowning mountain-face obscured all light from the moon, rendering the surrounding open space as dark as a cavern, while not a sound could be heard save the lapping of the short waves of the *Dji Chu* on the shale beach, or its more muffled roar on the opposite bank.

Our eyes accustoming themselves at last to the gloom, we peered in the direction whence sundry noises gave evidence that our assailants were rapidly crawling near to

our position. Finally, a row of silently moving forms were descried crouching low on the ground, and edging their way forward by taking advantage of every disparity in the contour of the slope. The Kiangsis were chafing and restless, grinding their teeth with mingled anxiety and the fierceness of their passion, restraining themselves from firing only by the greatest effort. At last the long line of crouching savages was dimly exposed, but sufficiently distinguishable to show us where to direct our fire. The word was passed along the line to take aim, and await the signal for firing. Onward still crept the dark line, until, throwing aside all further concealment, they sprang up with blood-curdling yells and rushed toward our position. Ordering the Kiangsis to fire, I seized upon my own weapon, and, aiming at the mail-covered chief whom I had observed during the day, saw him fall to the ground as a result of my shot. Then followed a scene of unutterable confusion. Order was thrown to the winds; the struggle waxed in bloody intensity; each man loaded and fired as rapidly as possible, with no concert of action. Huge spears with long shafts passed by in fitful shadows, striking with metallic ring against the rocky front of our breastwork, or stretching low some poor victim.

Burton's men were as busily engaged, judging by the rapidity of their fire and their victorious shouts, while the demons in front rendered the din almost indescribable with their frenzied yells. The advantage of our shelter and the mortal effect of our fire, however, were too great to be contended with, and at the end of a half-hour the Chaka Syuresse retreated. The Kiangsis begged that we allow them to continue in pursuit, but weighing the great dangers to which they would be exposed, we ordered them to maintain their position in case of further attack.

Morning broke at last, clear and warm, upon a scene of fathomless gloom. Evidences of the terrible nature of the conflict were present on every hand; the open space beyond our shelter was covered with dead bodies, while four of our own brave fellows had been killed, and all bore more or less serious souvenirs of the conflict. Never did a day pass so gruesomely; for, although we had been over twenty-four hours without sleep, under excitement and hardship of the most fatiguing kind, there could be no thoughts of slumber with such enemies near, who, even yet, gave evidence of their unconquerable and barbarous spirit by ever and anon sending a stray shot into our midst from some point of vantage in the mountain country overlooking our camp. Therefore, as soon as the canoes could be launched, we set forth, towing the bodies of the dead men in one canoe, and those who had been seriously wounded in another, until at 10 A. M. we had reached a small island in the current of the Dji Chu, where we could land without fear of hostile aggression. The most solemn work of having properly interred the bodies of the dead men being completed, we were able to take account of our injuries. Most of the men had wounds of some sort or another, many a considerable number, which having treated to the best of our ability, we were fain to patch up our own cuts and bruises. Burton had received a long, gaping wound on his right arm from a spear, which, had it gone a few inches more to the left, must inevitably have killed him. After rendering thanks to a Divine Providence, the overmastering desire for sleep conquered; and, in spite of the stirring incidents through which we had just passed, we slept until long after nightfall, with the hard ground as a bed, and a canopy formed by the azure dome of the heavens, — awakened to consciousness



at last by the disagreeable sensation of cold, which chilled our bodies, and threatened, if we did not take greater precautions against its rigours, to add to our misfortunes the danger of being frozen to death.

As a gale, blowing with intermittent fury, continued on the first and second of November, we profited by the enforced delay to tabulate scientific data, and to climb a high mountain which rose precipitously above us, shutting in the current of the Dji Chu on both sides with a rocky wall. Apropos of this climb, it is remarkable what difference one finds in the appearance of a bit of country when simply surveyed from a single point, and when actually travelled over. Especially is this true of mountains. Broad slopes, which appear to be perfectly easy to traverse, are in reality cut up by narrow and deep ravines, impossible to cross; what seems to be a trifling bench of rock, half a mile up the mountain, grows into a perpendicular cliff a hundred feet high, before one reaches it; and pretty gray streaks become gulches filled with great, angular rock fragments, so loosely laid one over the other that at each careful step one is in fear of starting the whole mighty avalanche, and of being buried under tons of rocks. Owing to difficulties like these, after an early start, it was nearly noontime when we had gained the peak of this summit. As far as the eye could see, in all directions, there arose a wilderness of barren peaks, covered with snow; while to the east lay a desolate, lifeless tableland, shut in by higher mountains, its stern, forbidding surface reflecting well the nature of the barbarous and ill-favoured generation that inhabited it. Numerous mountains poked their serrated and jagged cones into the sky, forming basin-like craters which seemed to lend substantial evidence to the theory of Prejevalsky and others,

that there are the remains of numerous volcanoes in this mountain range.

The Sherori-Dzagar-Ola range of mountains begins at this point with the Numza Ula, which extends as far west as Mumitan, when their elevation gradually increases. The northern slope is precipitous, and there are no important gaps in the long crest; the average elevation is about five thousand feet, and the summits are never quite free from snow. The Numza Ula rises like a wall out of a lacustrine plain, which is the easternmost deflection of the Hoang Ho watershed; north and east are high plateaus and the remains of extinct volcanoes. Its central peak, a square tower of rock, so steep as to admit of snow lying only in its crevices, is the most conspicuous feature of the landscape. This majestic region is interesting both to the geographer and the archæologist; for, although its almost absolute impenetrability has hitherto forbidden research, there can be little doubt that the statements of the natives, that ruins of considerable villages and cities still exist, have some modicum of truth attached to them.

Continuing our remarks concerning this region, we find it, with its base level of thirteen thousand feet, much higher than Colorado, where the maximum elevation of the ranges is little over nine thousand feet. Except for the Dji Chu there are no large streams or evidences of any considerable expanses of water; those few meagre streams which can be seen rise out of the ground, and after a short course disappear again through the porous soil. Where shallow rivers are formed, these quickly disappear on leaving the foot of the mountains, while the wet-weather torrents are dry during the greater part of the year. Erosion here is mainly dependent on winds, — those active aerial agencies which disintegrate and

...the hardest rocks, producing effects noticeable on every leaf and twig, and at the same time raising clouds of fine dust which obscure earth and sky. The whole country



THIBETAN NOMAD.

presents a singularly desolate aspect, except during the short season of rains, and at spots where moisture is supplied by underground springs.

Few traces of vegetable growth are to be seen, while there is an absolute dearth of fauna of all description. Nevertheless, the country shelters a numerous population of the most unenlightened and hostile of savage tribes, who secure a scanty sustenance from systematic pillaging of the more amenable regions to the east and west, being brigands of the worst sort. For the greater part they have no permanent settlements or abodes, leading a nomadic life, and pitching their greasy skin tents where-soever the conditions may seem propitious for their sanguinary and thievish forays.

CHAPTER XII.

It was our original intention to journey to the north-westward on the morning of November 4th, but once outside the protecting shelter of our tents we saw that such a step was a manifest impossibility; for a frightful wind-storm, accompanied by a heavy fall of rain, had swollen the waters of the stream into a yawning chasm, which had we shown sufficient foolhardiness as to have set forth, must inevitably have swamped the canoes. With well-considered deliberation, therefore, we halted for another twenty-four hours at our desolate camping-place, hoping against hope that by the next day the weather conditions would have become propitious, and that we should not suffer any injury. The morning of the fifth dawned, only to show us our hope to the lowest depths of gloomy despair; for the warning of the elements had meanwhile increased, the waters rushing by in a roaring torrent, and crashing against the towering walls of rock with impotent fury.

For the eighth we waited for the change in the wheel of fortune, when at last our patience was rewarded by the removal of our weather, and with unflagging zeal we were enabled to press forward against the strong current, which once more showed evidences of the severe lashing which it had undergone for the last three days. Progress was however on the extreme, owing to the strength of the current and the presence of menacing obstructions; and despite the most laudable efforts on the part of the Angles we had by nighttime gone but a little over three

miles, when further advance was barred by a succession of rapids shooting up ahead, which continued for a distance of two miles. Beaching the canoes, we examined the face of the current in order to ascertain if there was a clear channel in the foaming sea of waters whereby we could make the ascent; but the inky waste gave no hope in that direction, and with the most laborious effort, scaling the sheer surface of the mountain slope, the entire afternoon was spent in the hazardous portage of the canoes and their burdens across an uneven country, cut up with numerous icy peaks and yawning chasms, which only the might of necessity carried us across.

We encamped at night near a little village, where the habitations were built of sun-dried brick and skins, or in some cases of logs, which gave unmistakable evidence that we had reached a land of plentiful timber. The head man of the place, who seemed to be the sole inhabitant, was a sinister-looking scoundrel, most repugnantly filthy in dress, and covered with eruptions from some skin disease. He received us coldly, and had he had a large force at his command, he undoubtedly would have made that reception one of hostility. He sought to dissuade us from further progress by giving most unfavourable accounts regarding the natives of the country to the northward. He told us that he was the head man of the district, but could supply us with no river guides, as all of his villagers had departed on a trading expedition to the eastward. The potent promise of reward, however, was more effectual than the mere bandying of words, for he immediately sent a woman off on the back of a yak to another village in the neighbourhood, to see if she could secure guides. She returned after some hours, having searched the villages, and even wandered for a consider-

able distance on the mountainside, but was unable to get a single man. Whereupon the surly old rascal, ascribing the loss of the emolument which we had offered to her ill success, was on the point of giving her a severe beating when we interceded in her behalf.

On the ninth we ascended the Dji Chu for ten miles to the next important stage, Chan Nak, a scattered little village of half a hundred souls, which, situated at a strategical point, had advanced to a considerable condition of opulence. Most of the houses and tribal buildings were built of square-cut blocks of stone, while the population, meagre though it was, comprised seventy-five per cent. of males, mostly full-grown men, and no less than ten different dialects, in fact amounting to ten different languages, were in constant use here, — Mongol, Thibetan, Koko Norese, and the various Tangut *patois* and *argot*.

We soon discovered that, in spite of its unamenable surface conditions, the surrounding district was extensively populated by Djun-Ba. A number of them lived in the village itself; but the greater part were pastoral, living in rude tents, made of two rough poles, supported by hair ropes, over which were hung coarse blankets of fur, of their own making. Each family possessed its own flock and a few camels, the tent already described, and two or three earthenware pots and cooking bowls, with a few sacks of flour. When several families live and move in concert they form a "hineu." While the men watch the flocks with arms at their side, the women make bread and cheese for the winter, buttermilk and *chou-mien* for daily consumption. On the march, the women help to load the camels and pack the tents; in fact, they perform all the manual labour of the community other than that of tending the herds.



THIBETAN DWELLING AT CHAN-NAK.

The dress of the men is the invariable skin-toga, hanging from one shoulder and covering the body to the knees, the legs being bare, or protected by boots of yak hide, with iron soles, the clanking of this metallic substance over the flinty earth being audible for a great distance. The women are dressed with more pretension, in brown or black cloth robes, which cover the entire head, except the face, and trail for a considerable distance along the ground, with as much ostentation as the train of "my lady." The older females in addition have a thin veil, which is drawn over the face either as protection from the sun, or to ward off the inquisitive stares of overbold members of the sterner sex. That these attentions are not wholly disagreeable is shown by the fact that the veil is in far from common use, while those women whom we saw were most assiduous in their unceasing importunings and unbridled curiosity.

Like the higher class of Tangutans, their features were very regular, and the colour of their skins a light brown, in some cases nearly white. Most of the men were of enormous height, and physically well-proportioned. They were well matched in this respect by the females, whose features were regular, but somewhat masculine, and their figures tall and good. Unlike the practice in other districts, the custom of marrying late is here prevalent; and doubtless to this cause may be attributed the ability of the females to keep their good looks for a long time.

The method of betrothal and marriage is very singular, the entire transaction being carried on by the respective parents of the bride and bridegroom. When a young man has arrived at the age when he feels that his soul calls for the state of connubial bliss, he appeals to his father, who, having weighed the matter carefully, looks around on all

the eligible women of the village, and having at last happened upon one in whom he perceives all the numerous graces desired, waits upon her male parent with a proposal of marriage for his son. The bride's father having felt his way carefully (for a refusal may provoke a long and bloody feud), names the amount which he feels is consistent with the worth of his daughter; and then ensues a long scene of careful bargaining, until at last a settled determination is arrived at. Between the time of the betrothal and the marriage but a few hours intervene, the latter ceremony being carried out with much feasting and entertainment, according to the wealth of the groom's father, who is called upon to assume the entire expense of the affair.

The state of womanhood among the Djun-Ba is much exalted over that of the other Sifanese tribes, the males rarely, if ever, having more than one wife, and no concubines,—although the wealthier members of the tribe sometimes have female slaves, whose duties are perfectly manual. The marriage state is generally very happy; the women are rarely beaten, and often consulted. They are fond of their husbands, kind to their children, and altogether important personages in the general welfare of the community.

This race likewise seems to have a deeply religious nature, the form and precepts of their faith varying with as amazing abruptness as their language. There does not seem to be any great or generally worshipped deity, each household or community having a number of local gods, in whom are embodied special privileges, such as ruling over the herdsmen, the fishermen, the hunters, or the warriors. Numerous shrines and temples have been built, which really form the sole architectural exponents of the country.

One of the most curious of the paraphernalia attached to their religion is the praying water-wheel, an instrument of considerable popularity in the region of North-western China and Thibet. The ordinary prayer-wheel is turned by the hand, while the person engaged in so doing mumbles numerous prayers of inordinate length, sometimes taking a day off from his other labours to pour forth these unmusical ululations with the most tiring monotony. The praying water-wheel, on the other hand, keeping in advance of the growth of civilisation, is a much more practicable piece of machinery, and by logical reasoning should ensure the religious devotee much easier access into the realms of paradise. This consists of a number of metal cylinders arranged on a frame, and fixed across a stream upon an axle. Into these cylinders are placed rolls of prayer-paper, which are manufactured by the lamas or priests, and sold at a good profit; thus the busy man, whose time is more limited than that of his neighbour, enjoys equal advantage in the devotional scale. It is rather strange, however, that if these people really do have an abundance of faith in their praying machinery, they do not put up more of these water-wheels; for it is at once apparent that, revolving unceasingly day and night, in the natural course of events they must do more work than the praying-flags and hand-wheels. As a former traveller in Thibet has very tritely remarked, "An enormous amount of praying-power is wasted in the rushing streams, which, properly utilised, might be made to ensure the joys of this after state to every soul in the country." Good missionaries should see to this.

The country in the vicinity of Chan Nak is very difficult of being traversed by land, owing to the almost impenetrable mountain chains which wander in all direc-

tions, as if with no settled purpose of continuity. A few straggling apologies for caravan roads wander aimlessly to the westward, but so miserable and obstructed that their utility is questionable. It may be possible that the sure-footed yaks can find their way over the uneven surface, but they are absolutely impassable to camels, who are here bred more for their flesh and hides than for caravan purposes.

The only method of penetrating through the country, therefore, is by the stream of the Dji Chu and its tributary rivers, which are generally so turbulent and descend with such abrupt altitudes that only by the greatest exercise of skill and courage can they be navigated. In the wilder parts the river frequently divides into several channels, but of such depth that nowhere and at no season of the year is it fordable. Hence, innumerable bridges have been thrown across the current at intervals, which are all constructed after one stereotyped plan in the following manner: Rough piers of alternate rows of stones and timbers are raised on either bank, and, if possible, several more in midstream, where foundations can be worked upon, those on either bank being so raised as to gradually incline over the river,—the higher, the more they overhang the river and diminish the span. Connecting these piers and resting upon them are timbers, which form the bed of the roadway, a surface being made by the intertwining of boughs and vegetable withes, which are then filled in with loose mud and earth. This gradually hardens, and soon presents a fairly smooth and solid surface. The existence of these bridges, however, is very precarious, for the swift current of the stream frequently washes away the supports of the piers and tumbles the whole mass into the river, where it is suffered to remain

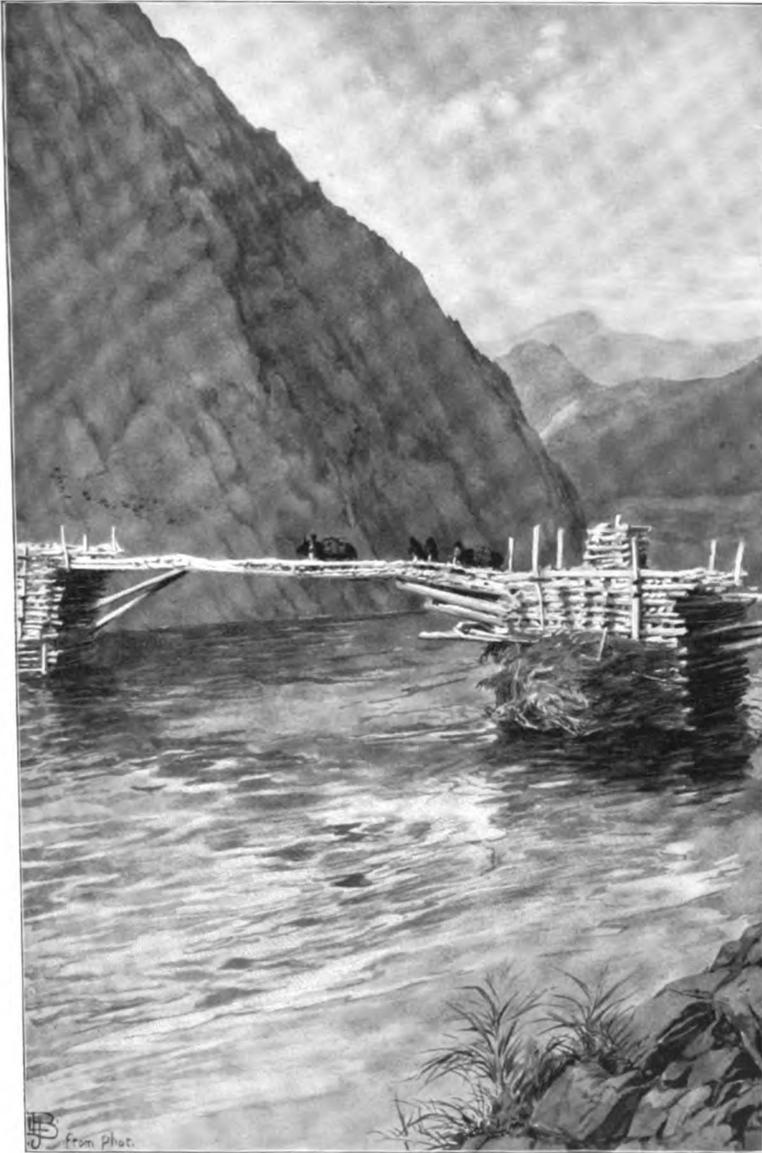
and acquire a growth of débris and alluvial deposit until an impenetrable obstruction has been formed across the bed of the stream, greatly accelerating its turbulence and the swiftness of its current. As there are no carts in the region, the bridges are generally constructed so as to admit of a single horseman or a couple of pedestrians passing abreast, a hand-rail being dispensed with as an altogether effeminate and unnecessary adjunct. The effect of crossing one of these shaky structures, with a boiling torrent foaming fifty or a hundred feet below, may better be imagined than described, — the foot dislodging at each moment immense pieces of the roadway, sending it crashing down below, or sinking through the uncertain mass up to one's knees, with the by no means improbable possibility of letting the remainder of the body follow through after, and being dashed to pieces on the jagged rocks pointing upward their hungry-looking teeth.

Although there is doubtless considerable iron ore in the district, it is not utilised in the construction of these bridges; neither are there evidences of its great use for other utilitarian purposes. In places where there are no bridges provided for the crossing of a stream, the usual method adopted consists in swimming across, supported by an inflated goat or sheep skin, with the momentary danger of its being punctured by some sharp obstruction and filling with water, allowing one to sink to the bottom. When the natives are obliged to follow this practice they are usually joined together by a rope, which permits one of their number being continually on shore and looking after the welfare of the others.

The Gata Chaka Ula, which is the real backbone of the mountain system of this region, consists of two ranges, instead of the four which Prejevalsky has asserted, enclos-

ing the valley of the upper Dji Chu, and lying at right angles to the general mountain system of Central Asia. The western range springs up abruptly on the east of the plateau south of the Tsitsu Kiang, upon which has settled a medley of tribes,—Turkomans, Thibetans, Mongols, and Tangutans. This region is almost entirely treeless, very fertile, and, being of an average height of fourteen thousand feet above the sea level, very hot during the hours of the day and in the warm season, and inundated with almost arctic frigidity during the nights and the long winter season. Westward, both the Gata Chaka ranges are merged in the higher elevation of the Tangla system,—a vast succession of mountain peaks, well watered but treeless, and at no point with an elevation of less than twelve thousand feet above the sea. In this, the most eastern point of the Thibetan watershed, the Tsitsu, Kartug, and Sigu-murren take their rise,—streams of meagre importance, whose flow is to a greater or less extent regulated by the rainfall of the district and the dryness of the soil.

The western range is composed of several small mountain groups mostly rising to about five thousand feet, with low intervening depressions, and bordering the left bank of the Dji Chu for a distance of fifty miles, when they merge into the Baian Kara Ula range. Their continuity is frequently interrupted by deep passes or wide valleys, which afford subsistence for a meagre growth of grass and other vegetation serving as food for the numerous herds,—grazing being an industry of no mean consideration, providing, as it does, the sole means of livelihood for a large population. The Turkomans, who for some unexplainable reason are found in such numbers in the triangle of which Djou Kung is the apex, are for



NATIVE BRIDGE ACROSS DJI CHU.

the most part Mussulmans, and looked upon by the Sifanese and alien tribes with the greatest contempt,—contempt, however, not unmixed with fear, their brigandish and fanatical valour saving them from further annoyance than contumely and furtively whispered verbal assault.

At an early hour on the morning of November 14th, we arose with lightened spirits, after a five days' halt, for the continuance of our journey up-stream. It did not require much evidence to make us acquainted with the fact that the races with whom we were now mingling were far more hospitable and less suspicious than those met with farther back; although acknowledging no allegiance to the imperial government, they have nevertheless in a measure been brought under its control. For the greater part of the way to Jia Charing our course wound between deep and narrow gorges, where the scenery was majestic in the extreme, but also gloomy and somewhat depressing on account of the scarcity of cultivation and the shutting off of the sun's rays, which rendered the course of our journeying as dismal as the tomb. At intervals these gorges suddenly opened out, the mountains on either side retreating, leaving broad lake-like expanses between them, bordered by sloping plains. It is on these slopes only that cultivation is possible, what is naturally a sterile and stony desert having been reclaimed by the industry and thrift of the population to fertility, by the spreading over it of the alluvial deposit gathered from the shores of the river.

Three or four miles before reaching Jia Charing the Dji Chu divided itself into numerous channels, flowing between shoals and rocky islets, but with very few minor obstructions. We kept well toward the right bank, where as a rule the stream was least strong, for it would have

been an impossibility to exercise any control over the canoes in the swifter channels farther out. Yet the native coracles, with a charming disregard of danger, flew over these exposed spots, the hardy navigators with their bladeless poles constantly revolving their queer-shaped craft with the most amazing revolutions, spinning them around with nearly as much celerity as they would so many tops.

The inhabitants of Jia Charing were of a peculiar type ; and, after viewing their miserable habitations and their generally filthy and unprepossessing persons, one could not but think that the wild mountaineers, with all their uncouth barbarousness, were infinitely preferable to these cosmopolitan savages. The men were generally of small stature (some might be described as dwarfs), and they varied in the retrograde scale, until the force of ugliness or depravity could no further go. Most of them had gôtre or repugnant skin diseases, while many of them appeared to be victims of the opium habit. In diplomatic ability and craftiness they were superior to their fellows of the less settled regions, practising the code of flattery and hyperbole to its fullest extent.

As we approached the village we were met by a fleet of some two dozen coracles, in which were seated the head men and the élite of the place, who, having saluted us by much sticking out of the tongue and gesticulation, informed us that the "coming of the two white princes" had been foretold by their fathers' fathers, and that for years they had waited for this auspicious moment, — a greeting which it need hardly be said we reciprocated with much poetic earnestness. We could not but wonder as to what had been the original state of the village, if that which was now presented to our eyes was its condition after having been prepared for our arrival, for existence

was synonymous with torture, hosts of vindictive vermin rendering living indoors one long-drawn-out spasm of anguish ; while the mind and body wandering out-of-doors was confronted with hardly more desirable conditions, by being called upon to face innumerable vile-smelling odours, and the disagreeable practice of the population of supplementing visual curiosity by poking filthy and diseased hands into one's face with no compunction whatsoever.

Many of the natives were troubled with sore eyes, owing to the immense clouds of alkali dust blowing around ; and hardly had we landed before our tents were surrounded by a supplicating horde of the afflicted, who prayed us to relieve them of all the ills that their flesh is heir to. Burton, who had taken upon himself the duties of physician for the expedition, with characteristic bluntness recommended a treatment of cold water applied externally at not infrequent intervals ; but his sarcasm was wasted on the evil-smelling horde, who could not understand the ability to cure unless they witnessed the more visible evidences of the curative agent. As a last resort he distributed some ointment among those who were badly afflicted, and a composition of yak grease to the others, when they departed in peace, and we were enabled to secure comparative quiet for the night, save for the timid raising of the flap of our tent every few hours, and the peering in of various grinning faces of tardy sufferers, who were immediately sent away rejoicing.

As the following day was deliciously clear and bright, we took advantage of the opportunity to do considerable exploring in the surrounding country, at the same time furnishing an abundance of entertainment for the entire population of the village. The telescope and scientific

apparatus was undoubtedly the most important bit of their local history for years, as it was immediately believed to be possessed with life, and capable of reading far into the future with unerring accuracy. This strange fancy was spread among the wondering group by the more erudite, who, with the wisest looks and the most fantastic tales, worked upon the credulity of their more susceptible kin until the general awe regarding the strange instrument had surpassed all understanding. As magic and astrology are much practised among this people, we were more or less interrupted by being called upon to answer the innumerable questions of various import which were fired at us with the most persistent monotony, until, as a measure of self-defence, we were obliged to spread the information that the telescope had become angry, and that if more questions were asked we could not be responsible for the results to follow. This threat happily proved sufficient; for, although the curiosity in its mystical powers was not abated, we were at least spared annoyance from the babel-like turmoil which we had previously suffered in silence.

A number of really remarkable idols, some thirty in number, were gathered on the plain to the south of the village, ranging in height from six to ten feet, hewn out of a single piece of stone into the most fantastic and hideous of shapes. We endeavoured to gain some reliable information regarding their age, but our most vigorous questionings were unable to elicit more than that they had existed for many years in the same spot before the remembrance of any living native. Although the erosion of the air and atmosphere has a quickly appreciable effect upon all landmarks in this region, it is very possible that these stone images are contemporaneous with the further

remains of an ancient race found at infrequent intervals. They undoubtedly mark the site of graves of illustrious personages, but our best efforts were unavailing in securing permission from the natives to make more than a surface examination.

During our stay at Jia Charing we received a visit from a number of chiefs belonging to inland tribes to the eastward, who had been apprised of our arrival in the country. In general characteristics they were similar to the river natives, except that the few evidences of semi-civilisation existing among the latter were totally wanting in these inland tribes, and their hostility was too openly marked not to be understood. On being made acquainted with the wonders of our instruments by the Charingese, they received the narrative of these miraculous objects with sniffs of contempt, announcing their determination not to be wheedled into believing any such impossible tales until they should have the evidence of their own eyes. To save our entertainers from the mortification which this reflection upon their veracity would imply, we permitted several of the strangers to look through our field-glasses, when instantly their barrier of punctilious reserve was melted, and, with eager delight, they asked to be shown the remainder of the sights, which, having inspected in turn, they departed to their villages mightily impressed with the wonders which they had seen.

As our food supply was running short, we took advantage of the opportunity to secure some fresh meat and fish. The meat, through having been freshly killed, was such as we desired; but the same could not be said of the fish, for that they should be used as an article of diet by the native population is remarkable. Those which were brought to us, and which in no wise differed from

those forming one of the staples of local diet, were only partially sun-dried; and, being packed in baskets in lots weighing about forty or fifty pounds, soon degenerated into a mass of putrefaction. There could be no doubt as to their total unfitness as an article of human diet, but a continued sojourn in Western China soon makes one aware of the too true fact that taste and smell are but synonymous terms. We also discovered to our sorrow that the art of cheating was fully as well understood in these parts as in others we had passed through; for I found the centre of some of the baskets to be filled with stone, earth, and other inedible morsels, which doubtless to the native mind combined economy of expense with marked durability, and which they looked upon as one of the many justifiable tricks of their trade; for when their cupidity was discovered and pointed out, they asserted, with the most brazen naïveté, that we had purchased with our eyes open what they had sold us and that if it did not come up to expectations, it was distinctively our own affair, assuredly none of theirs. With this dénouement we were obliged perforce to be satisfied, seeing that no other alternative presented itself.

It was with pleasure that we learned, on leaving Jia Charing, that the country through which our journeying would henceforth lie was inhabited by a less ill-favoured generation than those we had been obliged to mingle with heretofore. Happy indeed it was to straggle leisurely along for mile after mile, touching shore wherever inclination listed, sleeping for the night in undisturbed slumber, with no longer the menacing fear of being called to arms to repel savage foes. Who but those that have been sorely tried can appreciate the full meaning of these words, — viewing danger but in retrospect, eagerly pressing

toward the end, mingling with strange regions, strange people, and strange customs uninterruptedly, without that fearsome dread which dulls the keen enjoyment of exploration?

There was considerable trouble in making effectual advance against the current of the Dji Chu on the nineteenth and twentieth, by reason of vast areas of rank vegetable growth, which covered the face of the stream until it presented the appearance of a carpet of green verdure; only the most laborious effort, by clinging close inshore, enabled the sturdy Kiangsis to push the shallow craft ahead. We had to go backward and forward again with wearying monotony, until, after nearly twenty-four hours of this unpleasant experience, we really felt as if we had been retrograding rather than progressing. The mountains on either hand were so precipitous as almost to be cliffs, through which many gorges, formed by landslips and waterfalls, had been cut.

The country from Jia Charing to Ghanu may be considered a sort of tableland, bounded on the northwest by the Tain Mountains and on the east by the southern projections of the Baian Kara Ula range. Ten miles north of the former village the plain attains its greatest elevation, and declines toward Ghanu. Between the two great ranges a low chain of hills conducts the drainage from both sides into the Dji Chu. The general landscape is a brown, stony moor, bounded by distant mountain peaks, whose black, rocky tops and shelving sides, covered with a deposit of loess, admit of patches of cultivation, looking from a distance like green specks in the large waste; sometimes forty or fifty are in view at once, but they never hide the naked plain, and the general aspect is one of desolation.

The Tain range runs N. N. W. It is the chief of the southern Kara Ula chain. To the south, where it approaches nearest the plateau just described, it is very low, and penetrated by innumerable small rivers, doubtless streams of but transitory existence. All the streams of its western slope force their way to the Dji Chu, showing that no intermediate range is so high or continuous. In the valleys enclosed by its branches there exists a numerous population of Tangutans and a few Lolos, who are engaged for the most part in herding cattle, or making devastating and brigandish forays on the river settlements, when the opportunity presents itself. This range for its entire length is tolerably wooded; its western face and higher peaks are covered with pine and small arboreal growth, while in the valleys crops of wheat, barley, and various vegetables are possible of cultivation.

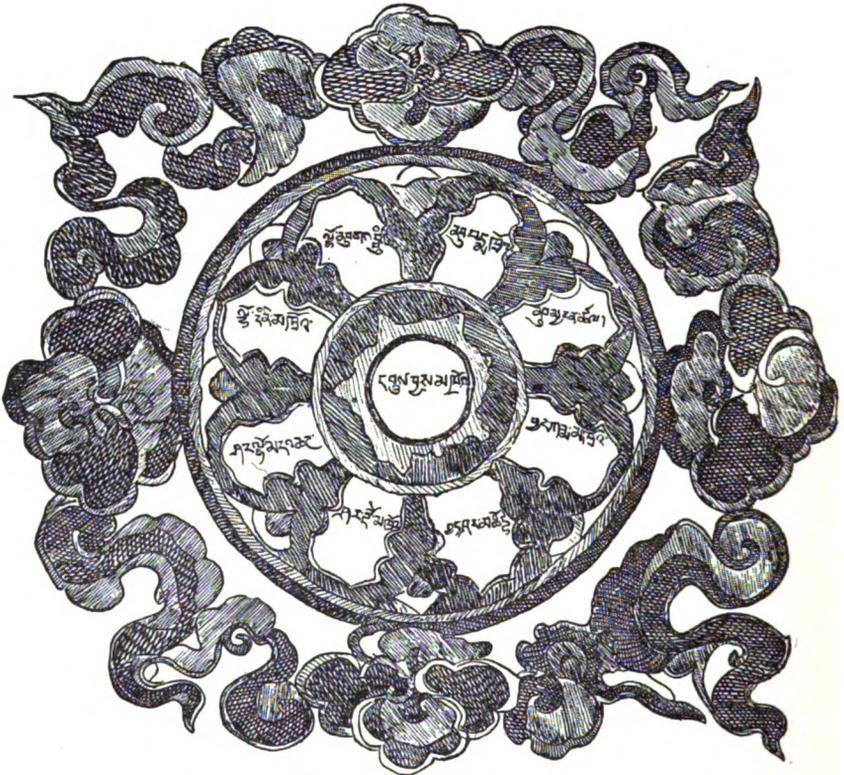
As previously mentioned, the greater part of the Tangutans of this region are pastoral; they live in rude tents, and wander from place to place as the necessity of providing food for their herds demands. They have no peaceable instincts, acknowledging no allegiance to law or authority of any sort, have no settled form of government, each man ruling over his own immediate family, and amenable to no one else, being unenlightened and barbarous in all the meaning that the term savagery implies. The natives who live near to the river, however, are not pure Tangutans, but a mixture of the latter with Mongols and other alien tribes, — the change, small though it is, being much for the better, as verily hospitality and peaceableness cover a multitude of shortcomings.

The great obstacles to the improvement and civilising of this part of China are the tribal antagonism of the varying races existing in such close juxtaposition, and

the difficulty of internal travelling caused by the want of a common government. All races detest any government which interferes with the rights of the individual, and they view with alarm the prospect of taxes or tribute to support a government from which they can expect little or no advantages. The mountain tribes — Sifanese, Lolos, and others — trust that the impenetrability of their domains will keep them independent, and in this belief it cannot be denied that they have behind them the weight and preponderance of indubitable evidence. The conquest of the region — should that prove feasible — by some strong civilised nation (say England or Russia), with the introduction of a firm and vigorous policy, would, I am convinced, alter the country in a generation. The land is not phenomenally rich, but is gradually being reclaimed by the nations to fertility, and is already capable of producing good crops where water can be procured; and the supply of this might be greatly increased. The people without doubt have the seeds of many virtues that it would not be impossible to bring out by civilising influences. It must be confessed, however, that the progress already made does not encourage wholly optimistic views as to the future; yet, on the other hand, it should be remembered that hitherto, or at least not later than the last twenty-five years, this vast region of Central Asia has attracted but scant notice from the civilising agencies necessary to reclaim it. Now that a healthy interest has been aroused in this one of the most wonderful and interesting of the world's regions, hopeful results may be looked for, and the future of this enormous territory will in a measure be decided.

Ghanu, which we reached on the twenty-first, was the most extensive oasis in this part of the country, and serv-

ing as the junction of nine caravan roads, it is a village of considerable importance. It is situated at the base of an immense mountain cone, in a beautiful vale, the surrounding landscape being similar to that which one sees



THE MAGICAL FIGURE DABCHAD, "OCTAGON."

in Italian Switzerland. As we neared the shore, shortly before sundown, we were made aware of the presence of a number of functionaries in robes of office, who had gathered at the water's edge to welcome us fittingly into their midst. They brought us several bowls of pundu, and half a dozen platters of fried fish and half-baked yak meat, as

evidences of their friendly intent, which we received with a corresponding show of gratitude, presenting gifts of cloth and several muskets to those who seemed to be dignitaries of more than ordinary importance.

As we entered the village we had an opportunity to note its general characteristics; and it was a surprise, and a welcome one withal, to discover that our fondest imaginings had been realised by actuality. The residence of the head man was a two-storied structure of loose stone, cemented together with mud plaster, and whitewashed within and without, surmounted by an elongated dome of bricks which really showed considerable skill in construction. The owner of this pretentious edifice was a lean old Mongol with a stern and forbidding countenance, across which so much as a vestige of a smile never passed. Had fortune cast his lot in more favoured lands, he must inevitably have been a lawyer of the most phenomenal talent; for, after having invited us to drink tea with him, he manifested the usual native trait of worrying us through a cross-examination of the most exacting and impertinent kind, receiving our answers with no other demonstration than a low grunt of sepulchral tone, implying surprise, contempt, and other varying emotions. He evidently had great faith in his gift of persuasion, for as the interview drew toward an end near midnight he asked with blunt frankness, and without previous beating around the bush, that we give him as a present half a bale of cloth and three muskets to repay him for our entertainment. As the gifts which we already had made repaid tenfold the small quantity of food we had received from him, we very properly declined to comply with this request, which declination he welcomed with the same matter-of-fact expression as heretofore; that is, with a guttural grunt of disgust.

His son visited us next day, and, besides bearing an open and frank countenance, was possessed of a certain majesty of carriage which at once commended him to our observation. He was better dressed than the commonalty, wearing garments of cloth instead of yak skin; the nails of his left hand had been allowed to grow to enormous length, to show that he was not obliged to labour for a living,—and showing also that they were utilised for a more utilitarian purpose; namely, that of tearing his food to pieces like a ravenous eagle. He evidently considered himself no small personage, for he apologised for not having received us on the previous evening by saying that he had but just returned from a long journey to Thibet. He was a great traveller in these parts, and recited for our delectation many of his adventures; but with tribal disregard for the truth, he sought to work on our credulity to no little extent. With this constant ignoring of accuracy, what information we gleaned from his verbose and blustering narrative was most unsatisfactory and inconclusive.

This son of his father had scarcely departed, and peace and quietness been restored, when our equanimity was further imposed upon by the arrival of four red-clothed lamas from an adjacent monastery, who, having followed pretty much the example of the common herd by staring us out of countenance and asking innumerable puzzling questions, requited our endeavours by inviting us to return with them to their abode, half a mile south of the village. Wishing to take advantage of this opportunity to gain some idea as to the religious traits of the country, we accepted their invitation, and were straightway mounted on two restless little Sifanese ponies, who evidently must have been gifted with a keen sense of humour; for after repeatedly brushing us against sharp projections which

lined the road, or suddenly tossing us over their heads, they would stand meekly by with the nearest approach to a smile on their faces that one could well imagine.

The lamasery which had so fondly raised our hopes was nothing more nor less than a succession of chambers carved out of the loess cliff, forming with some other cliffs of the same description a giant flight of stairs on the slope of a bleak mountain of loose stones. As we drew near, the cliff rose sheer and vertical two hundred feet into the air, causing us no little wonderment as to how its denizens managed to reach their aerial abodes. At the shout of one of our guides, a perfect colony of heads shot with startling unanimity from as many little openings which we had not previously noticed, and several minutes later a long rope-ladder came sliding down the face of the cliff, up which, following the example of our guides, we clambered with halting steps, unnerved each moment with the far from pleasant reflection that an attack of vertigo or a chance misstep on the unstable structure would send us hurling to our doom through several hundred feet of space on to the flinty bed below.

Once inside the huge cave habitation, we were for a short time undecided as to whether it would not have been better, after all, to have met our doom from this dizzy height than to submit tamely to the torturing process of inquisitorial curiosity through which we were now put. The chief of the lamas was an elderly patriarch with a scant growth of white beard, and a straggling cone of gray hair rising from the centre of his cleanly shaven pate; and notwithstanding the fact that his holy office should have taught him better, with the most reckless abandon he informed us that he had lived for over two hundred years, — a statement concerning which we felt it

our bounden duty to express considerable astonishment. The conversation was at this point interrupted by the sound of a huge drum beating at the farther end of the apartment, at which the lamas waddled off to the point whence the sound came, and squatting on the ground began chanting in dismal monotonous tones from long strips of prayer-paper, which performance they kept up uninterruptedly for an hour with an unswerving fortitude that was miraculous; while others, taking positions on either side, turned the numerous prayer-wheels with a rapid rotary motion which must have been fatiguing in the extreme. During the progress of these devotional exercises we peered out of a narrow opening in the wall, and were able thus to secure a splendid view of the surrounding country, which was particularly fantastic and impressive. Snow-covered peaks were piled high into the sky as far as the eye could reach, gashed and broken in places by a network of little gullies in regular furrows and waves overlapping each other, of various vivid colours, — great streaks hundreds of feet long of pink, ochre, white, green, blue, brick-red, and other colours, — forming a general effect which was very curious. In other parts of the landscape broad streaks of petroleum slowly sought a lower level in dark, filthy streams, giving out a vile-smelling odour perceptible for many miles.

Beyond what we have related, our visit to this lamasery was doomed to be without substantial results.

As is but natural to suppose, there are numerous valuable coal areas in this region, which would furnish an abundance of fuel, but that the natives, either through inertia or ignorance of the worth of these precious deposits, persist in leading a half-frozen existence over miserable fires of yak and camel dung.

As both Prejevalsky and Dagleish assert that there is no evidence of slavery in this region, we must suppose that their investigation was superficial, for its existence is too prevalent and openly manifested not to impress itself upon the traveller here as part and parcel of the social fabric of the community. The slave-trade is rapidly spreading into China from Thibet, and will continue to do so until it is put down with a strong hand, or until it dies a natural death from the total destruction of the population. As the law of the country permits a parent to sell his children, or lease them out to whomsoever may desire their services, the condition of youth is here pitiable in the extreme, for not until the male parent dies is this period of bondage terminated. Malefactors and prisoners of war alike have the choice presented to them of being executed or consenting to serve harsh and exacting masters, compelled to lead a life that no spirited animal would accommodate itself to, and suffer in silence, contumely, and abuse the most inhuman treatment.

The cheering hope of having a free and unobstructed passage up the current of the Dji Chu as far as the mouth of the By Chu, where our journey by water was to come to an end, rallied our spirits to the highest pitch as we started from Ghanu on the morning of the twenty-fifth. The head man of the village had assured me that he could procure guides and yaks for us when we should have entered upon this overland stage of our journey, as he was friendly with chiefs for the entire distance up-stream, who would carry us safely over the fortnight's journeying through the Baian Kara Ula to the shores of Lake Charing Nor, the westernmost source of the Hoang Ho, where it was our intention to encamp, previous to the hazardous exploration of the unknown country in the headwaters of

that great stream, as the lateness of the season and the menace of an arctic winter effectually forbade all hopes of making the effort at this time of the year.

For nearly the whole day after leaving Ghanu we journeyed through a fairly populous country, with small villages of well-built and clean huts disposed in long streets, which, if other evidence was lacking, gave us reason to suppose that we were now entering a land where the forces of civilisation and enlightenment had worked some effect in lessening the barbarous hostility of the populace. All the streets of these settlements ran east and west; the reason for this custom I was unable to discover, save that it served as an artificial watershed for the drainage of the respective villages. The people seemed friendly, and as we journeyed painfully along against the strong current the head men were usually waiting on the river banks with small presents of corn and meat, and were perfectly satisfied with small presents in return. The passage up the river was pleasant and inspiring, although (as we have said) somewhat arduous, the scenery being all that could be desired, with its wide variance of conditions,— in one spot the eye resting on long, grassy river valleys, or brown, pebbly loess plateaus, while in another direction it was met by an unbroken ridge of snowy mountain peaks which faded into dim obscurity with no apparent ending. On the left bank the shore ascended gradually, till it culminated in a range of wooded hills ten or twelve miles distant; while the right bank rose abruptly in small cliffs, crowned by weedy growth or dwarfed vegetation, and here and there broken by the embouchure of one of the numerous affluents of the *Dji Chu*. In the wider expanses of the stream we came upon islands, populous and wooded, inhabited by an agri-

cultural population, who whirled their little tub coracles before and behind us for miles. As the strict monotony of our diet had palled on our appetites, we welcomed the opportunity late in the afternoon to "bag" a couple dozen of duck from flocks feeding on the numerous sandbanks. In appearance and taste they were precisely like tame ducks, but differing in colour. The body was white, speckled with brown; wings, head, and tail black, shot with greenish blue.

At sunset we noticed a considerable village on a bluff overhanging the river, nearly a hundred feet high; and jumping ashore, we learned from the natives who immediately surrounded us that the name of their settlement was Maru Bulak, and that the tolerable caravan roads which we saw on the right bank led straight through the mountain country into Thibet, and were very easy of passage. After having bartered with them until a bond of amity and friendship had been established, we were led into the village itself, which, like most similar places in this region, was surrounded by a high stone stockade, in front of which was stretched a deep moat, — in the rainy season undoubtedly filled with water, but which was now a dry gully crossed by half-a dozen rope drawbridges.

After the disgusting and hostile tribes among whom we had been travelling for nearly eight months, it was a delightful change to find ourselves once more in comparative civilisation. This was evinced, not only in the decency of clothing, but also in the manufactures of the country. The blacksmiths, of whom there seemed to be an astonishing number, were exceedingly clever in making instruments of iron and copper, — with their crude implements drawing fine wire of a superior quality, and constructing articles of husbandry of an excellent kind.

Although traders pass freely through the country, it is clear that the various tribes are not very amicably united: for the adage "In time of peace prepare for war," is here practically exemplified in the assiduity with which warlike weapons are manufactured. There can be no doubt as to the necessity of this provision for defence, since several races of the Tangutans, upon whom the leaven of civilisation has as yet had no effect, possess the whole hill country beyond the river villages. This region is said to have wood, water, and grass in plenty; some valleys are partially cultivated with rice, millet, wheat, and barley. — the rice crops proving that there must be plenty of water in some parts. Their successful forays have given them a large stock of camels and yaks, which enables them to add meat and bread to their food. In spring they live principally on milk, and on the fish which they can catch in the numerous deep mountain streams. They usually do all their travelling on foot, and are most active in the mountains; a few great men of the tribe have horses, which are rarely used, but maintained as evidence of the wealth and position of their respective owners. They generally attack caravans and their enemies by night, their natural cowardice forbidding their risking the chance of encounter by day, except when victory is practically assured by an overwhelming preponderance of numbers. They have the habit while fighting of eating a little raw flour, which doubtless has given rise to the repeated statements that they never cook their meals. To get wonderful stories about them from the natives of the river villages is very easy, but otherwise real information is very difficult to obtain, for no sooner is one of them caught by another tribe than he is forthwith despatched in order that there should be no chance of his possible rescue.

The natives of Maru Bulak were among the best that we saw in Western China. They were a tall, well-formed race, very few of the men, and certainly none of the women, being less than six feet in height, and of very majestic carriage. They were almost without exception straight built, with slim but muscular limbs, many of them robust, but with no evidences of obesity. Their chests were deep, as becomes mountaineers, and their agility and endurance wonderful. Their features were equally as attractive as their persons,—handsome oval faces, of a reddish brown, in some instances nearly white, aquiline noses, large dark eyes, an ordinary mouth, somewhat thin-lipped, and a pointed and characteristic chin, forming a most agreeable *tout ensemble*. The rank and importance of any member of the community might immediately be determined by the height of the horn of hair on the top of the head. In the males, all the hair is gathered in a knot over the forehead, and there twisted up in a shape resembling the horn of a unicorn, many of these adornments projecting from the pate to a height of eight or nine inches. These coiffures are held as a sacred portion of the body, the loss of which immediately degrades the person to the lowest level,—a man wishing to avenge himself on an enemy having but to cut off this horn of hair, to attain the desired result.

The clothing worn in these parts was generally constructed of a very fine-textured cloth, woven by the native women, who were remarkably adept with their spinning wheels. In the case of the more opulent, this cloth was woven of silk or flax threads entirely; but among the poorer classes, a fabric of closely knitted grassy fibres answered the purpose. A fine quality of flax grows wild; but the thread most common in use is formed from

the fibre of a dwarfed pine which grows with remarkable profusion in the district. Tobacco is also extensively cultivated, and when ripe the leaves are pounded in a mortar and reduced to a pulp; the mass is then placed in a conical mould of wood, and pressed into long bricks almost as hard as stone. Very often the tobacco is mixed with yak or camel dung, your real epicurean smoker finding in the added odour of this disgusting combination the *ne plus ultra* of delight.

By observation we determined the altitude of Maru Bulak to be 14,623 feet above the sea; yet, despite the fact of the near presence of snow-covered mountain ranges, the temperature never fell below 40° during the daytime, while the nights were particularly balmy and agreeable.

The head man visited us on the morning after our arrival, with several of his most important subjects. He was an extraordinary-looking man, about fifty-eight or sixty years of age; but he was far from possessing the dignity usually belonging to a gray head, acting the buffoon for our amusement, like a clown in pantomime. He was evidently an ardent disciple of Terpsichore, for, having gathered together a dozen of the villagers, he led the step of a dance, in which the most disgusting licentiousness was the prevailing feature. Presuming that the merit of his first performance warranted its repetition on a larger scale, we were waited upon by one of his servants in the afternoon, with an invitation to attend a second function of a like nature.

About twenty men formed a circle, each man holding in his left hand a small, cup-shaped drum, formed of hollowed wood, one end only being perforated, and this was covered with the skin of a yak's ear tightly stretched.

In the centre of the circle were the chief dancers, — a man and a woman without clothing of any sort, their bodies smeared with red paint, ornamented with yellow stripes, giving them a demoniacal appearance. On the right stood the head man himself, armed with a huge pair of cymbals, from whom the rest took their cue. The dance began by all singing, in a droning monotone, a wild but agreeable tune, the clanging of the cymbals directing the time, and all the little drums striking at certain periods with such admirable precision that the effect was that of a single instrument. The dancing was most vigorous, but of a shocking vulgarity, which detracted from its merit as a pleasing performance, and indicated a looseness of morals which subsequent investigation confirmed, — polygamy, polyandry, and adultery being the rule rather than the exception.

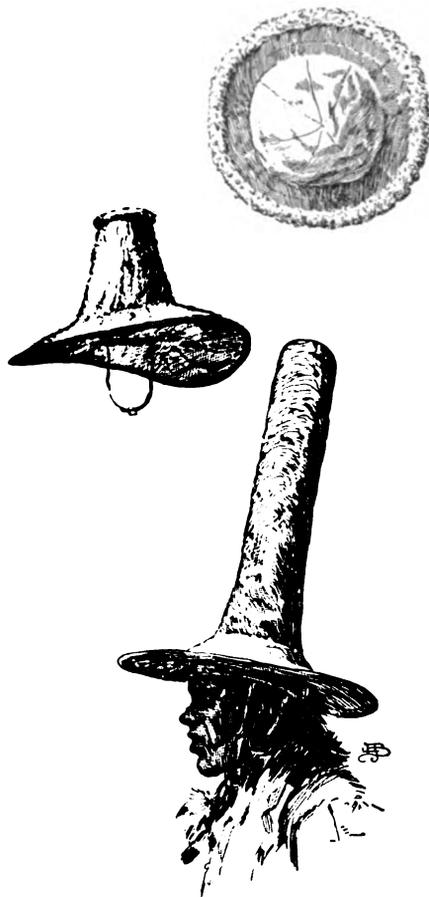
It is remarkable that Buddhism does not make greater advances in this country against the crude native beliefs, which do not seem to have a permanent value, but are more or less of merely transitory existence. Their cult, whatever it may be, is fostered by a class of medicine-men, who are held in great reverence, monopolising the entire religious business of the community, and generally the greater part of that of a more secular nature. It is very difficult to elicit any information from these professional gentlemen, for, doubtless with a full knowledge of the many shortcomings and the general incompleteness of their doctrines, they are averse to having them examined too closely. Many of the rites and customs attached to their religious beliefs are very curious, of which the following may be taken as examples. The deities are consulted by tossing sticks into the air, and examining the position in which they fall; or by burning mutton

bones, the marks produced by the calcination indicating the fortune, good or evil, which has been decreed. The feathers of a fowl blessed by the lamas, and dipped in yak blood, when spread upon the roof of a house, ensure the occupants from harm.

Sacrifices of sheep and other animals are very common ; but it is doubtful if those of a human character ever take place, notwithstanding the assertion of many travellers to the contrary.

The process of justice is closely allied to that of religion, the administering of both resting in the hands of the priest. In case of theft, the suspected persons are summoned to one of the numerous temples of the neighbourhood, and are there each given a handful of rice with

instructions to chew upon it. When it has been masticated, the mass is then placed on the floor and covered by the hands of the accused. One of the lamas, after



LAMA HATS AT MARU BULAK.

performing several feats of mummery and incantation, orders the hands to be removed, and a stain of blood on the chewed mouthful (so it is claimed) infallibly betrays the real culprit, who is then seized upon and soundly thrashed with long sticks by the others for not having confessed and saved them from the indignity of suspicion.

Yet another peculiar custom is that incident to the admittance of a youth into the councils of the tribe or village in which he lives. When he has arrived at the proper age, and signifies his intention of adopting the state of manhood, he is visited by the patriarchs of the village, who, having examined him physically and mentally, decide on his rights to the honour. If not found fit, he is at once rejected; but if they look upon him with favour, he is ordered to shut himself up in his hut for the space of a week without food or water, there to pass the time in reading unceasingly from the strips of prayer-paper furnished him by the lamas, who visit him at frequent intervals and belabour him with a stick for the purpose of ridding his body of all evil spirits. At the end of this crucial period, when sadly reduced by terrible privation and discipline, he is brought before a council of the men of the tribe, and set at the head of a sumptuous feast which has been provided at his own expense. While the others eat and drink he must not do either, nor give any visible evidence of the hunger consuming him. If he is able to do so, and the head men are satisfied with his deportment during the ordeal, he is welcomed as an influential man of the tribe. If he fails, his position is little better than that of a slave, being subject to the beck and call of any one who may desire his services, and serving as an object of ridicule and contumely for the younger portion of the population,

who banter and worry the poor wretch until he seeks solace in suicide.

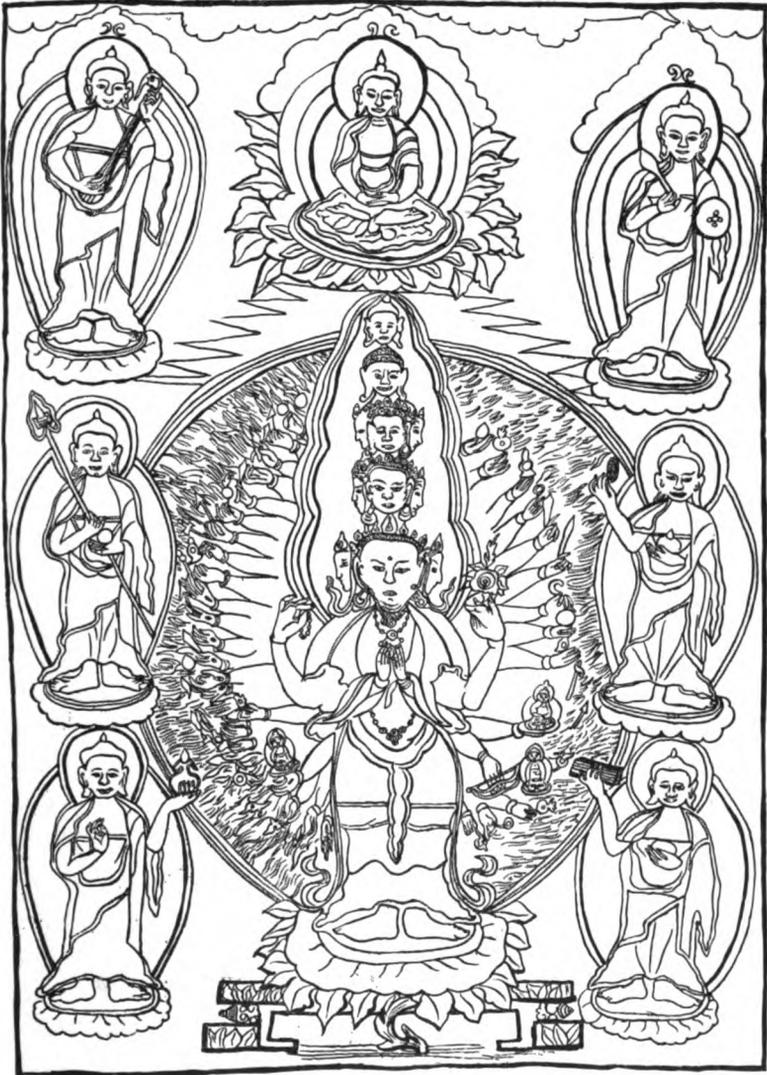
One of the sights at Maru Bulak was the market, held daily between half-past seven and ten in the morning, and again in the afternoon, in an open space in the town close to the shore. However pressing the need, it is only at these times and places that trading or bartering of any kind is permitted, — the native infringing this law, and selling or purchasing from his neighbour in the forbidden hours, suffering a chastisement from the others which generally prevents his repeating the act. The principal articles of barter are vegetables, flour, pottery, fish, and meat, both dried and fresh ; and on less frequent occasions, when a special day is appointed for their sale, iron implements, tobacco, and other so rated luxuries may be offered. A curious currency is in vogue here, everything being priced in round metal balls, called *huku*. At the commencement of the market, men with baskets full of these balls deal them out in exchange for others to people desirous of making purchases ; and when the bargaining and trading have come to an end they receive them again from the market people, making a profit on both transactions after the manner usual among money-lenders. The dealing with the metal balls is simply one of convenience and not obligatory, those who are not frightened by the possibility of the purloining of their wares trading and bartering direct, with no intermediary, exchanging one product which they possess for its value in another which they desire. Between these free traders and the money-lenders there is at all times a bitter hostility, — the latter hiring mercenaries to steal right and left from the former in the hopes of weaning them over to the new custom ; while the direct barterers retaliate by rushing upon the money-

lenders and seizing upon their wares, overturning them summarily, until the affair has resolved itself into a sanguinary brawl, in which both sides suffer more or less damage, while their more industrious neighbours take advantage of these golden opportunities to pillage right and left.

The journey from Maru Bulak to Chuchtang occupied us three days. Each day's journey brought us to a higher altitude and to a colder climate. We had left the semi-fertile country to the southward, and were now entering upon the great region enclosed in the offshooting ranges of the Baian Kara Ula. No one who has not visited these almost impenetrable regions can fully realise the difficulties which beset any effort to pass through them. What routes of communication are open are those provided by nature, which, notwithstanding their picturesqueness, one cannot help wishing the hand of man had improved upon. The deserted condition of the country is, to a very large extent, due to the abandonment of the cultivated lands by the persecuted inhabitants, who, being unaggressive and peaceably disposed, are no match for the nomadic and brigandish hill tribes. In consequence of these constant raids, these valleys and sheltered plains, which are capable of sustaining vegetation, have been almost abandoned by their inhabitants, so that the traveller in these parts frequently comes across deserted villages, the walled terraces of bare earth and dead fruit-trees alone remaining to show where were once green and laboriously irrigated oases. The Chia-Ta tribesmen received a severe punishment at the hands of the imperial troops some years ago; but the effect of this salutary lesson has worn away, and the district is rapidly falling back into the state of primeval savagery, from which at one time it bade fair to be reclaimed.

Gunza, which we reached on the first of December, is situated near the narrowest part of the Dji Chu, just below the point where the waters of the By Chu empty in their swiftly rushing currents; and it was at this point that it was our intention to abandon the canoes, and begin the long journey of nearly one hundred miles overland. In answer to our formal announcement of arrival, we received a servant the following morning from the head man, inviting us to breakfast with him, stating that he had placed his house at our disposal, and that he should see to it that every effort should be taken to further the success of our expedition through the country. We at once proceeded to his residence, and were welcomed most warmly, finding already prepared for us a capital breakfast of curried fowl, wheat cakes, butter, milk, and tea. To this meal we did such ample justice that we must have fairly astonished our host, as he witnessed the devastation caused by our seemingly never-satisfied appetites.

The remaining week of our halt passed under similarly auspicious conditions to those which marked its beginning. Much as we desired it, there was no chance for rest or abstinence from labour, the interim being passed in disposing of the canoes for pack yaks, and in sorting and rearranging the loads in smaller parcels for the journey across the mountains. We took advantage of the last day of our stay to explore the country to the westward on the opposite river bank, in the hope of finding the remains of numerous ancient tombs, of whose existence we had been apprised. An entire day's search failed to reveal their presence; but the time was not wholly ill spent, for in our extensive peregrinations we were able to study the inhabitants of the district to great advantage.



CHEMISI, THE PARTICULAR PROTECTOR OF THIBET.

The people of these villages were full-blooded Tangutans, with all the general characteristics of that race; fond of painting and tattooing their bodies, and wearing little or no clothing. There was scarcely any vegetation to be seen, the soil, springs, oozes, and pools being all salt. In one instance, a small running stream was also salt, but it soon fell into fresh water.

The manner in which salt is manufactured here differs from that already described. A frame, shaped like an inverted cone, made of sticks joined together by hoops at short intervals, is fastened to four or five stout stakes planted in the ground. The inside of this cone, after being carefully lined with the fresh skin of a yak or argali, with several handfuls of loess placed at the apex as a filter, is filled with the soil, and boiling water poured into it. The salt, being dissolved, passes through the loess, and drips with the liquid into an earthen pot. The water is then evaporated, and the salt which is secured bound in huge bundles and carried long distances for purposes of trade.

Although strategically situated, the trade of Gunza is slight, about a thousand camel-loads of different products passing through during a year. In the surrounding region iron is worked very well. The ore is broken to pieces and burned in a charcoal furnace, which is kept heated by bellows made of whole sheep skins. The iron runs out in rough pigs. These are heated again and slowly cooled, when they are worked into horseshoes, gun-barrels, and swords, with which the natives of this part of Central Asia are well supplied. Iron is abundant enough, but without coal they never can export it, although there is no reason to doubt the statements of Prejevalsky and others that coal does exist in this region, and merely

awaits its taking from the ground. Lead and antimony are also found in considerable abundance. The vegetable productions, as is but natural to suppose, owing to the sterility of the soil, are very meagre, and, at the utmost, no more than meet the demand for local consumption. The pastoral tribes merely make pundu, or ghee, and sell wool to procure grain for their own eating, while the settled tribes produce a surplus of grain only to barter for ghee.

Regarding the dialect of the Gunza district, we will only say that the farther we advanced toward the north the purer we found the language, in but very few respects differing from that spoken in Eastern China. The *patois* was sufficiently intelligible to our Kiangsi followers, who, being accosted in a familiar and luminous speech, felt for the time being as if they were nearing home. Philologists would have considerable difficulty in tracing the reason for this seeming anomaly; but Grosvenor, in his admirable report to the British government, without doubt touches on its main reason, — being similar to that governing the introduction of the Mandarin dialect into Yunnan and other western provinces, — to the effect that, after the conquests by the imperial government, one of the conditions requisite in the treaty stipulations provided that the natives of the conquered provinces should, under pain of death, forsake their own dialect and learn the new language. However arbitrary this requirement, there can be no doubt that the despotic and grammatical rules of this educational policy have produced admirable results.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON the ninth of December we started from Gunza for the dreaded journey overland through a hitherto untrodden and unexplored country, offering well-nigh insurmountable difficulties in topographical contour, not to speak of the possibilities of being thrown among savage and hostile tribes. It now became necessary to engage men to guide us in the course which we were to pursue ; to whose hands we could entrust the safety and success of the entire expedition, and from whom we might learn the names of the different places through the country. Several who had at various times passed through the region which we proposed to explore were brought to me, who announced their willingness to serve us in the required capacity for what we considered a very moderate price ; but in the weighty matter of engaging them, the head man and several lesser satellites must have a finger, and their fees as middle-men were greater than the wages we were asked to pay.

At last, after considerable haggling, and the greatest exercise of vigilance to prevent the theft of the larger part of our outfit, we managed to get away ; and notwithstanding the general feeling of regret that the hardships and dangers of journeying were to recommence, there was an air of optimism and determination pervading the spirits of the Kiangsis, which banished all lugubrious forebodings that arose as to the future. It was somewhat of a novelty to find ourselves trudging along over a steep

mountain country behind meek-looking yaks, instead of feeling the undulating motion of water beneath us ; but in a few hours our sea-legs had been exchanged for land ones, and we plunged as freely and unhesitatingly along as if we had never been accustomed to any other method of journeying.

The By Chu valley, which we had now to ascend for our first five marches, is considered one of the finest regions, from a scenic point of view, in Western China ; but it is, doubtless, seen to best advantage on paper, for majestic though the varying landscapes may be, they do not appeal to one who is obliged to toil over their uneven surface. The province of Koko Nor, which we had now entered, like Chinese Thibet, is for the most part a desert of bare crags and bouldery plains, with vast arid tablelands of high elevation, — a land where there are no forests or pastures, where one can march for hours without even seeing so much as a blade of grass ; a cloudless region, always burning or freezing under the clear blue sky, for so thin and devoid of moisture is the atmosphere that the variations of temperature are extreme, and rocks, which exposed to the sun's rays may be almost too hot to lay the hands upon in the daytime, are freezing in the shade. Such was the land on which we had now entered for a fortnight's toilsome progress, when the first half of the long journey which we had undertaken through unexplored China would be ended.

The By Chu, the banks of whose current we were now following, is a large and important affluent of the Dji Chu, which rises in the mountains of Gatun-Du, and after flowing twenty-five miles in a southerly direction, turns abruptly to the southwestward, where its volume is increased by the influx of dozens of smaller streams, when,

with rapidly descending gradations, it rushes along in a continuous rapid. The river has a very meandering course, which carries it through a considerable area. Its practical utility is very meagre, however, for although wide and deep enough to be navigable by craft of a large size, the swiftness and obstruction of its stream prevents its use for this purpose. As it is abundantly filled with fish, it contributes not a little to the food supply of those tribes that live along its shores, large numbers of fish being caught by the women, who unhesitatingly paddle the small coracles out into the seething waters, and spear them with great dexterity, while the lords of creation sun themselves on the banks, smoking tobacco and drinking pundu, and commenting upon the methods of the fisherwomen.

It was a twelve-mile march from Gunza to Langur, requiring ten hours of toilsome journeying, immense avalanches of loose boulders having rolled down the steep face of the mountainsides, and filled up the ravine through which we were painfully picking our way. To add to the weight of our misfortunes, shortly before noontime snow began to fall, furtively at first, but soon descending in blinding sheets, accompanied by a raw iciness of the atmosphere, which required constant exercise to keep us from freezing. The gaunt, sterile face of rock and the vast, undulating wastes of snow combined with the dark and menacing crags to form an intensely dreary and melancholy picture. As the storm ceased, and the sun gained power, the snow became soft, so that the yaks sank deep at every step, often fell, and finally reached Langur totally used up, one having cut and bruised his legs so severely against the sharp rocks that we were obliged to shoot him.

The head man of Langur, a dirty, greasy old fellow, with a moist and lickerous eye, and a nose which denoted his devotion to ghee and pundu, waited upon us directly we had drawn within the confines of his village, and unhesitatingly asked us for a bale of cloth; but when that modest request was politely refused, he lowered his demands, and made us aware of the fact that he would be satisfied with five yards. From him we learned that the Tangutan tribes to the eastward, who had been fighting the imperial troops for four years, were still unconquered; but that, though they had swept down on his village time and time again, he had always been able to defeat them. In his cups he was a most vainglorious and pompous boaster, and having excused himself for a short time, appeared in full war-dress, going through a pantomimic war-dance for our entertainment, working himself into a maudlin frenzy, and dashing his long spear recklessly around with a severe disregard as to the safety of others. He was soon followed by a begging lama, who came into camp dressed in a suit of net-work of native manufacture, covering every part of the body except the head, over which he wore a carved and painted mask. The net suit was striped horizontally black and white, and beneath the uncertain light it gave him the appearance of a fantastic and exceedingly lively visitor from another world. On inquiring as to what this strange individual was supposed to be, we were informed that he was a "devil-dispeller," and we afterward ascertained that his functions were to frighten away the devils that haunted human frames, for more or less substantial considerations.

The tenth and eleventh passed very miserably, for a heavy snow-storm commenced, lasting for forty-eight hours, and placing the whole country under an icy spell. The rains

formed innumerable torrents, which rushed down the face of the surrounding mountain slopes and flooded the whole village. The ditch and bank around our tents were washed away, and it was only by the most arduous labour that we were able to carry the packs to a place of safety. To add to our misfortunes, we found that our two guides, with three pack-yaks, had taken advantage of the general confusion to leave for parts unknown. We instantly started in pursuit; but, with the dangerous condition of the country, covered with a treacherous layer of ice, we were soon convinced of the ineffectuality of this movement, and were obliged to console ourselves with the reflection of what worse might have been.

The new yaks which we purchased from the head man of Langur were loaded and ready for the continuation of the journey on the morning of the twelfth; but the country itself was as dangerous as ever, and, after consulting with our new guides, we decided to hold over until the fourteenth, when progress would be less impeded, and carried on with a greater degree of safety. We took advantage of this forced abstinence from labour to observe the customs of the people in the district; for every morning as soon as it was light they came out of their own abodes, and crowded around our camps, smoking their matutinal tobacco in pipes of enormous size and length, some extending in a long curve from the smoker's mouth to within a few inches of the ground, and being evidently a considerable burden to carry, — their respective owners taking advantage of every occasion offering itself to rest the bowl on the ground, while they blew immense clouds of smoke in a steady stream from their mouths. They did not seem to be engaged in labour of any sort, but passed the entire time in smoking, dancing, and singing,

— and drinking, too, when pundu was forthcoming. The women never mingled with the men on these occasions, going off to some other point to indulge in their own amusements, which for the most part consisted of immoral and indecent dancing. Neither the men nor the women had any objection to being gazed on by the opposite sex while going through these antics, though they never appeared to mix or dance together.

The domiciles of these tribes are more pretentious and substantial than those among the more savage races on the Dji Chu, very few cave dwellings being visible, and these even of a better and cleaner kind. The huts in which they usually live are built of stout posts planted in the ground, the interstices being filled with clay. The roof is flat, with a slight slope toward the front, and the rafters are covered with hides, or, in the case of the less opulent, with bushes and weeds, over which is spread a thick coating of earth. In the interior of these huts there are two and sometimes three divisions. The first contains small bed-places covered with hides, and the universal fire-place hollowed out of the earth, in which a meagre fire of yak or camel dung is constantly burning. The cooking utensils used in the ménage are of primeval simplicity, consisting merely of a few earthen pots, which are used indiscriminately for different purposes,—one moment used for watering the cattle, and the next for preparing the ingredients of one's dinner.

In the second division of the abode the cattle and sheep are kept, with only a low partition separating their quarters from those for human habitation, the ammonia rising from their vicinity, and the persistency with which they voice their numerous feelings, naturally requiring considerable fortitude to accustom one's self to. The third apartment,

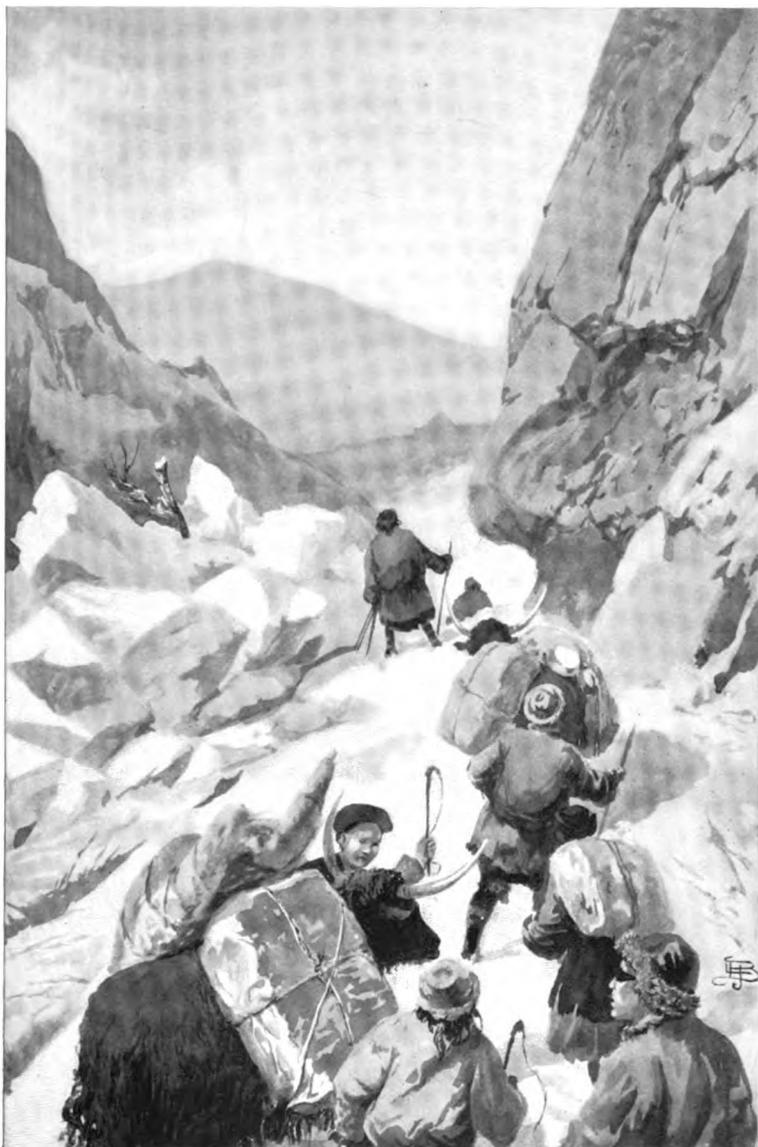
and the largest in the structure, serves as the general reception-room and council-chamber of the owner of the abodes. Here it is that he gathers his friends and the influential members of the tribe for the great feasts, and transacts all business of importance. None of the rooms, except this one, have light of any sort, save that furnished by the uncertain glow of the fire ; while here but a small slit in the roof admits of that very necessary comfort, and likewise provides the sole means for the escape of smoke and odours. As a consequence the rafters and walls are black and shiny, and the cobwebs with which they are festooned are loaded with soot. Among the rafters walking-sticks, spears, bows, and arrows are stored, to become seasoned by the smoke.

As might be expected, these dwellings are infested with vermin, whose bites are so annoying that even the tough native cuticle is not impervious to their assaults, the inhabitants monopolising considerable of their time in the very necessary process of scratching. There can be no doubt that these insect pests give rise to many of the repugnant skin diseases with which the native population are afflicted, for they assert that the bite of several species are venomous, and often cause severe illness.

The main staple of food here (as indeed through all Northwestern China) is "unula," a sort of porridge consisting of a mixture of barley meal, lumps of fat, and various herbs. It is made by boiling water, and then mixing in the flour and fat, and stirring until the mixture becomes a stiff and heavy mass ; when it is turned out, the superfluous moisture allowed to drain away, and cut up into cube-shaped pieces, which, notwithstanding the repugnance the method of their preparation causes, are very nourishing and tasty in these elevated regions, where fat

is more or less a necessary article of diet to ensure the needful amount of bodily warmth to combat the rigours of the climate. Meat is so rarely obtained that it is most voraciously devoured, the yaks never being used for this purpose, but merely as beasts of burden. If one of these animals dies, however, the natives have no compunction in cutting up and eating the carcass, although with a full knowledge of the fact that the inevitable result of such incontinence must be a sequence of untold misery and disease, if not of death. Even fish, which can at any time be easily caught, are never eaten in their fresh state, but are allowed to remain in huge baskets in the sun until they have acquired a most disagreeable and tainted odour, when they are eaten with an evident relish, which confirms the belief that there is more truth than fallacy in the native philosophy concerning the "eating of the substance, not the smell."

As regards the physical and featural characteristics of this people, they do not differ widely from the Mongol types, having the same fat faces and bodies, slanting eyes, compressed nasal organs, and thick lips, which are sometimes drawn out to an enormous length by the insertion of long iron frames between the lip and gum. The various tribes may easily be distinguished by the different way in which each dresses the hair, the preparation of the coiffure forming a considerable part of the daily labour of the average native. Sometimes the head is smoothly shaven, save for a cone-shaped projection, which may extend forward like an immense shield over the face, erect itself from the middle of the pate, or fall in a long tail from behind, according to the fashion of the tribe which the owner belongs to. In other instances the hair is closely cropped all over the head, and various fantastic



TRAVELLING ACROSS A GLACIER TO LAKMO.

designs shaved in the dark background,— the effect of a row of these heads bowed in prayer being much similar to an elaborate picture gallery of design.

On December 15th we had a long march to the village of Lakmo ; and each hour's progress brought us to a colder climate, until a number of the Kiangsies were so worn out with the icy coldness of the climate, and the general unevenness of the road, that their loads had to be transferred to the backs of the yaks, who, with this addition to their already heavy burdens, stumbled and scrambled along until each moment we expected that they would give out. For the greater part of the day we crossed an undulating plateau, which sloped toward the banks of the By Chu, on which were occasional patches of poor pasture ; but for the most part it was a waste of stones, covered with a treacherous coating of ice, which rolled down on us in constant streams as we dislodged the obstructions at their base. We were tormented during the latter part of this day's march by the strong wind that blew up the valley, driving stinging showers of granite sand into our faces. We all wore snow-goggles, for otherwise the injuries to the eyes would have been serious ; our native guides, however, having through custom become used to these annoyances, ignored such adjuncts as effeminate and ludicrous in the extreme, ours seeming to serve them for considerable boisterous merriment.

We observed solitary argalis and antelope once in a while, and Burton, by a fortunate stalk up the hilly slope, managed to secure two of the latter animals with his long-range repeater. The Tangutans, with the spectacle of so much prospective good cheer, at once increased the pace of the yaks by calling to them in stentorian tones,

and over the uneven surface of the narrow mountain path the huge animals started in a lumbering gallop, while with indifferent success we sought to accelerate our pace to keep up with them. We called to the guides to stop; but they evidently received our cries as an invitation to go faster, for away they went, helter-skelter, with the yaks bellowing and snorting, tumbling their loads right and left, and rushing wildly in every direction. Cursing Tangutan stupidity in general, and its immediate exponents in particular, for a couple of hours we wore out temper and garments, and likewise considerable flesh, in gathering together the stampeded animals, and after this exacting labour marched over the remaining distance to Lakmo without further incident.

In the course of this march we ascended a low-lying ridge forming the watershed between the current of the By Chu and the Hua-murren and another small tributary of the Dji Chu. On this pass, the Nan-su, we were fourteen thousand feet above the sea; but there was little snow on the ground, the heat of the sun having melted it into a number of minor watercourses, which rushed down either watershed in a series of broken and turbulent gullies. The ridge was a continuous mound of earth, white with a surface layer of nitre or other salt, while several pieces of loose ore gave evidence of valuable mineral deposits.

Our entrance into Lakmo fully requited us for the dampening experiences of the day's journeying, for as we neared the village strange music greeted us, and almost immediately we discovered a long procession of the head men of the place advancing in our direction, led by three or four musicians playing with lusty might on small drums and pipes, who had been sent to do us honour with their wild and barbaric, if not impressive, strains. When

the hysterical congratulations and verbose flattery on both sides had been dispensed with, we entered the village itself, to find that the population for the most part was made up of hordes of red-clothed lamas carrying prayer-wheels and flags, and gorgeously arrayed in flamboyant finery, who evidently were fully impressed with the necessity of unceasing vigilance in their sacred offices, for they turned these instruments with the most monotonous assiduity. The religious spirit in this part of China is undoubtedly deeply grafted in the popular mind, owing to the near presence of the fanatical and bigoted tribes of northeastern Thibet. One sees the villagers unceasingly twisting these little instruments while walking on the road, chatting or trading together in the market-place, in fact on all occasions, save what little time is consumed in sleeping; for to concentrate the attention on the revolution, or even be conscious of it, is quite unnecessary, since one can attain the Perfect Peace by automatic muscular motion. I was greatly amused by one of these holy men, a most feeble specimen of humanity with a wizened-up face, who in all seriousness entered my tent directly we had encamped, and announced his intention of saying prayers for me. He took much pride in the possession of an immense umbrella, as umbrageous as the roof of a band-stand, keeping it open on all occasions, night or day, continually spinning it round and round in a most ludicrous fashion. When he was ready to begin the proselyting mission on which he was engaged, he added to the absurdity of his appearance by taking off all of his clothing, save a small loin-cloth. The sight of a perfectly naked lama of most attenuated frame, with all gravity chanting dolorously and twirling an immense umbrella over his head, was too much for my gravity, and I fairly exploded

with laughter. He was evidently angered and put out by this sacrilegious conduct on my part, for, without further ado, he gathered up robe, umbrella, prayer-wheel, and all else, and departed in high dudgeon in the direction of Burton's tent, where very soon similar outbursts of uncontrollable laughter gave evidences that the latter had likewise found it impossible to restrain his risibilities.

The practice of self-torture was very prevalent among the priests whom we saw at this place, many of them being literally covered with scars and fresh wounds from head to foot as a result of this self-chastisement. Several had long iron rods perforated through each cheek, and extending on each side to five feet in length, which constantly hit against obstructions, causing the wearer the most excruciating agony. Others wore huge collars, with projecting iron spikes pointing upward, which necessitated the keeping of the head in a constant stiffly upright position, lest the result of a momentary abstraction or an accidental movement of the head should prove fatal. The most common form of self-torture, however, consisted in the binding of the lips together with iron rings, which, though inflicting much suffering on the wearer, at least afforded the benefit of silence to those who were not minded to put up with his manifold verbal assaults.

Two long and uneventful marches on the sixteenth and seventeenth carried us to Thok Syur. For nearly the whole distance the uncertain path led over a rising country covered with boulders and patches of hard snow. The marked sterility which had hitherto been an accompaniment of travel, however, was missing, for pine woods and flowery pastures covered the hillsides, save here and there where some great landslip of débris, like an unsightly scar, clove the green vegetation from the mountain top to the

torrent edge. Little tributary streams rushed down shady dells. There was no lack of water here ; in places reedy swamps filled the valley bottom, and it was indeed refreshing to see a damp morass again, after the arid country through which we had been travelling.

At Thok Syur we were cordially welcomed by the head man, who offered us the use of some of his huts, and, remarking that we must be hungry, brought some meat and fowls for Burton and myself, and fish and flour for the men. We intimated to him that we wished to gain some information concerning the country ahead, when he told us that he would call the next day and talk the matter over. Come he did the next morning, several hours before sunrise, while we were in the delights of slumber, and showed little or no compunction in unceremoniously routing us out of bed. He had brought with him a boy about eight years of age, his only son and heir, who was in a terrible fright at his first sight of a white man, taking advantage of the first moment to scamper bellowing away at the top of his speed.

In order to recruit after the fatigues of the trying march from Gunza, and to prepare for crossing the higher elevations of the Baian Kara Ula, we remained at Thok Syur for two days, during which time we were able to gain some insight into the character and customs of the natives of the district. A great contrast to the Kinsha Sifanese were some of the Tourgouths who came over to see us from the mountain country surrounding. They stalked about among the timid villagers, openly telling them that whenever they thought fit they would plunder them. The Tourgouths were a fine, tall, manly race, despising all such refinement of civilisation as clothing, — the men, and many of the women, being stark naked, with

the exception, perhaps, of a small cloth gathered around the waist. The men carried enormous shields of hide, five feet high by three wide, stiffened by a piece of iron bowed to form a handle down the centre, and having a small withe around the end to keep it in shape. On the right-hand side of the centre-piece were two baskets, in which were kept a heavy spear for close quarters, and a bundle of six or eight beautifully finished shafts, ornamented with brass wire, and balanced by a small knob of the same material at the butt. It was marvellous to witness the terrible force and accuracy with which these missiles could be thrown, some of the more skilful having no difficulty whatever in driving a shaft clean through the body of a large fowl at a distance of seventy-five feet. Of these wild and uncouth strangers, the more peaceably-disposed villagers seemed to be in a state of constant dread, so fully impressed were they with their warlike prowess that they never dared to resist them.

The hill-tribes of Koko Nor are so much alike in every respect (with few exceptions all branches of the Tourgouths) that a description of the Thok Syuresse tribes may serve for all. The latter inhabit the upper plateau of the By Chu, the southern peaks of the Baian Kara Ula, and the country to the north of Mt. Gatu-dju. Many of them have been worked upon by the influences of trade and civilisation, but by far the greater number seem to have preferred the wandering life of brigandish nomads. They have seen sheep, cows, asses, and mules, but horses are very seldom seen among them. Their whole wealth consists of large flocks of goats and domestic antelopes, which feed on bare peaks or ravines covered with pines and scanty minor vegetation. They live in tents made of a few blankets and sticks, or in rude huts cut out of

the hill. In spring the people subsist entirely on milk, which is abundant, as the kids are then born. Pundu, butter, and cheese are made in large quantities; and when their brigandage for the time being receives some set-back they become traders, selling these products in the settled villages for flour, and also iron with which to manufacture their weapons. In the winter they eke out their milk diet by a small portion of bread; but their improvident natures cause frequent and disastrous famines among them. Their houses have nothing in them but a few loose skins, serving as beds, and an iron pot; yet with all this poverty they have fine weapons, and from accustoming themselves to hardship and their severe climate are for the most part a healthy, robust race, although abominably dirty in their persons. They have no weights, measures, or means of estimating time and distance. Right of soil is only thought of in cultivated spots; a piece of grazing land, however long occupied by a family, is intruded on, even by a man of a different tribe, without ceremony. This shows how thin the population is. The pine-seeds, however, are considered to be property, and a stranger must not gather them. These latter contain an aromatic gum possessed of medicinal value, and being merely of local growth serve as a valuable staple of trade.

The Tourgouths are divided into hundreds of small tribes, sometimes composed of a single family, of which the eldest male of the settlement is chief. These chiefs have not the slightest power, the dignity being merely titular; but a certain respect is paid to their birth. When two men have a dispute, they sometimes fight it out until the neighbours interfere and effect a reconciliation. Should one of the parties refuse to abide by the decision, the

neighbours give up speaking to him or having any communication whatsoever with his family or tribe; and herding goats on the side of a hill, without any one to talk to, and suffering social ostracism, is so unpleasant that the recalcitrant eventually gives in. This rude kind of a jury is called a "mulo;" and when an attack is threatened this jury is called, and all the armed men obeys its orders.

The granaries of these parts deserve notice. They are built on posts, raising the floors about three feet from the ground, and are from four to twelve feet in diameter, while some of the larger may be twenty feet high, exclusive of the conical roof. Those for old corn are plastered, and have under the eaves a small hole for access, which is reached by a notched trunk used as a ladder; while the others are generally constructed of boulders plastered together, or of sun-dried bricks.

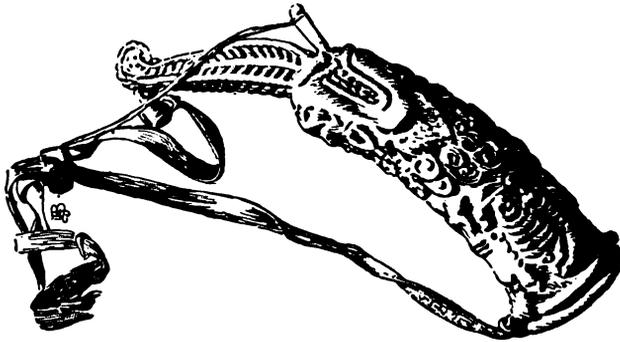
In facial characteristics most of the Tourgouth tribes, except those far to the westward, possess the Mongol type of flat and expressionless features, the original colour of the skin, a light brown, in many cases being concealed beneath several thicknesses of paint or elaborately tattooed designs. The mode of salutation here is very ceremonious, and varies according to the rank of the saluters. When two head men or important personages meet, the junior leans forward, bends his knees, and remains in this position until the elder has struck him two or three sharp blows on the top of the head with a small walking-stick, which the males invariably carry with them on all occasions. This part of the function having been completed, the assaulted individual jumps up and strikes his assailant twice under the armpits, at the same time sticking out his tongue to the fullest length,— the vehemence of the sal-

utation altogether depending upon the force with which the first blow is struck, not infrequently rousing the wrathful spirits of both with rather belligerent results. When a great man meets an inferior, however, the method of sticking out the tongue and patting the head is usually practised; while on two commoners meeting, they pat their stomachs, clap their hands together a number of times, and finally shake hands. These greetings are observed to an unlimited extent, and in a settled village the sound of patting and clapping is almost unceasing.

It was snowing slightly and bitterly cold when camp was broken, on the twentieth, and we entered upon our last march from Thok Syur along the banks of the By Chu. Immediately the country grew less broken, and with amazing swiftness descended to a lower altitude, in a few short hours, supplemented by the warm rays of the sun, carrying us from wintry coldness to appreciable heat. This was another long march; but the surface of the country was fairly passable, and the route for the greater part of the day lay down hill, enabling the yaks to make expeditious progress, which taxed our best efforts in keeping pace with them. The wide glen which we followed during the morning, however, narrowed shortly after noontime; in many places the road had been carried away by landslips, and for several hours travelling grew more and more a laborious task. On several occasions we had fortunate escapes from huge boulders which came rolling down the sheer slope with fearful rumble and roar, crashing on to the flinty mass at our feet and splintering into fragments like an exploding shell. It was with a sigh of relief when, after running this gauntlet, we found that the crags rose on either side of us like a giant portal, and the country immediately expanded into a broad, sandy

valley, backed by great precipices, and covered with numerous small and insignificant villages, scattered indiscriminately over the landscape.

For the time being, however, it seemed as if we had jumped from the frying-pan into the fire. Emerging on to the plain we found the villagers perched among the rocks, armed and hostile, and refusing to have any intercourse with us whatever ; informing us through two inter-



TRUMPET OF LAMA EXORCISER.

mediary envoys that on no consideration could we be allowed to halt in their district. The cause of this unfriendly behaviour was that they mistrusted our honesty of purpose, having suffered much from the slave-trade by being preyed upon by the savage mountain tribes, who sell them to the Thibetans. This they are enabled to do in consequence of there being no friendship or compact among the villages, each little hamlet of perhaps two or three or half a dozen families asserting its independence, lending no assistance to one another, and naturally looking for none. Finding that we had no intention, however, of interfering with them, they waxed more gracious, and,

selecting a spot near one of the larger villages, we encamped for the night.

About seven o'clock we were thrown into dismay by the cries of some of the Kiangsis, and, seizing our weapons, we rushed out-of-doors to ascertain the cause of this uproar. We soon discovered that our fears were groundless, the turmoil which we had heard announcing the approach of the head man of the village, who was undoubtedly a great chief of the district, for his following train was sufficiently imposing in quantity if not in quality. An individual authorised by the chief to do duty as master of ceremonies then arrived, carrying a long, carved walking-stick as a badge of office, with which he lay around him with much energy, driving back the anxious sightseers and forming a narrow space in front of our tent for the forthcoming reception. After some time spent in this manner, much drumming and shouting heralded the approach of the great man himself, who, attired in a long robe of yak skin trimmed with metal ornaments, and wearing a tall hat of red cloth nearly three feet in height, walked toward us leisurely, as if duly to impress us and likewise the surrounding group with the full measure of his importance. As soon as he had saluted us and taken the seat at our right which we had reserved for him, a ring was formed, and a number of men, gaily attired in short kilts and with their greasy hair piled high on top of their heads in fantastic designs, performed a wild dance, accompanied by fierce shouts and a vigorous hand-clapping by the spectators, who kept admirable time together. The Terpsichorean performance being concluded, we invited him into our tent, and there matters of weightier import were considered. I acquainted him with our wish to press as rapidly over the remaining distance to Lake Charing

Nor as possible, and found that, aside from the ruggedness of physical features, the journey presented no great difficulties, and that we should be almost certain of meeting with hospitable tribes, who would sell us food and provide us with yaks.

The women of these villages could not fail to attract our notice, for they seemed to enjoy a higher state in the social scale than those we had met with hitherto. Many of them were dressed in bright-coloured cloth garments, with a long scarlet or sage-green veil hanging down behind nearly to the feet, while each had a sort of metal crown set with turquoises upon the head. We were not a little surprised to see the abundance of these precious stones lying around; but we subsequently learned that they are very common, and may be gathered in the loose earth of the mountain streams in large quantities. We inquired as to whether there were gold or silver deposits in the surrounding country, for we also noticed evidences of these precious metals amongst the males; but these inquiries were invariably met with silence, or the diplomatic changing of the subject. Prejevalsky, who has explored parts of this region, asserts that these minerals are found in considerable abundance in the higher regions, but that the dangerous altitude of the country, with the absence of coal deposits or fuel of any sort, and the entire lack of means for the transportation of the same elsewhere, would forbid for many years to come the mining of this ore with success.

Like the Tangutans, the Tourgouth tribes are the most voracious of gluttons, indulging in huge feasts whenever the opportunity presents itself. Before we had left this spot on the following morning, half a dozen natives took up their position in front of our tent, carrying with

them the head of a wild yak in a horrible state of decomposition, and alive with maggots. They soon had a fire of dung lighted, and proceeded to cook the savoury morsel by sticking it into the flames. Immediately the skull became too hot for its inmates; swarms of maggots rushed from the ears, nose, and mouth like people escaping from the doors of a theatre on fire. Without viewing this fact with concern, the feasters merely tapped on the skull to assist the exit of the intruders, and the whole mass being burned and smoked sufficiently to roast the surface, it was drawn from the fire with a long stick and placed on the ground, where each attacked it with tooth and nail like a pack of ravenous animals, eating the half-baked flesh and sucking the bones with an evident relish. However putrid meat may be, it does not appear to affect the health of those people, who are unwilling to sacrifice the smallest morsel on the altar of abstinence.

On December 21st we left behind the sloping valley of the By Chu, deflecting our course at right angles to the northeast for the ascent of the frightful steep of the high country terminating in the Baian Kara Ula range. The low-lying haze which had obscured the landscape on previous days had now disappeared, and looking to the north I perceived some stupendous mountains rising above the lesser ranges. It had now ceased snowing, and the sky was clear, so that from here I could distinguish the details of the immense landscape which was spread before us, — leagues on leagues of barren and pebble-covered moor, couloirs of stones and rocky pinnacles, range behind range of great mountains, with glaciers glittering in the hollow of them, the white snow lying wherever the crags were not too steep, — a weird and desolate scene, such as one imagines may exist on the Antarctic continent. It is

an impossibility to calculate distances in this region with any degree of certainty, owing to the remarkable thinness of the air, which renders objects twenty-five or thirty miles off as near as two or three miles, and magnifying ordinary peaks into enormous summits.

The effect of this high elevation had also an appreciable effect on our general health, both Burton and myself, and the greater part of the Kiangsis, suffering from asthma and other affections peculiar to elevated regions. Once we had accustomed ourselves to the change, however, the general tone of our health was excellent, and the disagreeable ailments were banished or in a measure nullified.

For the first part of the day we marched over undulating slopes snow-coated to a considerable depth, and consequently fairly easy to walk upon; but as the ascent grew more abrupt travelling became fatiguing in the extreme, as we had to ascend a slope of thirty degrees deeply covered with soft snow, into which the heavily laden yaks descended up to their knees at every step, necessitating frequent halts in order to permit them to catch breath, and in a measure regain the strength wasted by these exertions. A shocking calamity took place during the afternoon. One of the Kiangsis, who was a few hundred feet to the left of the expedition, suddenly uttered a cry of terror, and almost immediately sank through the puddingy mass out of sight. Dropping our loads, we rushed toward the spot where he had disappeared, to halt just in time on the edge of a deep cleft in the solid rock, nearly fifty feet in depth, with sides as sheer and smooth as glass. The unfortunate man lay on a pile of jagged stones, with his head crushed and torn completely off the body. As we did not care to jeopardise human life unnecessarily, we rolled a few loose stones down upon

the corpse to protect it from the vultures and snow buzzards, leaving another brave fellow beneath a monument erected by nature, a sacrifice to the cause of exploration and geographical research.

Fearful of a repetition of this catastrophe, we groped our way painfully along, unnerved by the reflection that each succeeding step might send us headlong to the bottom of some deep gully, until 9 P. M., when we reached a small native settlement buried in a gloomy little hollow of the mountains, — our approach being welcomed by the blowing of horns, the strange cries of the populace, and the bellowing of the yaks. Crossing by a shaky bridge the deep moat lying before it, we entered the village itself. The head man came forward in a very maudlin state, and insisted on shaking hands with us a number of times, vainly essaying to breathe forth a fitting speech of welcome. After much waste of our patience, and the display of considerable erudition on his part, we learned that the name of the village was Laotai, and that another day's march would carry us over the higher part of the mountain range to the headwaters of the Djangin Gol, one of the largest streams of the Charing Nor watershed, and whose course we might follow nearly the entire distance to that lake. Having imparted this information, he introduced us to some of the lesser nobilities, whom we discovered to be in as sadly befuddled a condition as their chief. We learned that this ebullition of conviviality was duly to celebrate the escape to a happier sphere of some mutual acquaintance, who had departed this life three days previously, leaving his property to be divided among his friends, for the purpose of securing their prayers in his behalf.

We remained at Laotai all day of the twenty-second,

owing to the fear of a snow-storm, which threatened at any moment to break forth with violence over the mountain summits, taking advantage of the opportunity meanwhile to readjust the loads of the yaks, and to purchase meat and provisions for the succeeding day's journey. The Kiangsis, who had received their back pay, invested their earnings with characteristic prodigality, stuffing themselves to the extremest limit, and purchasing numbers of iron implements for which they could not possibly have any practical use; but, as true voyagers, wealth burned in their pockets so long as it remained there. The manufacture of iron was here a considerable industry, each dwelling having connected with it one or two iron foundries, upward of thirty feet long by twenty wide, with low walls, and an enormously high roof. In the centre was a pit six feet wide, four deep, and twenty long, rather shallower at one end than at the other. Across this, about six feet from the shallow end, was built a clay furnace four feet wide. The smaller of the two divisions of the pit was used as a stoke-hole, while the ore and slag ran into the other, and around the sides were small divisions containing charcoal and iron ore. As many as a dozen pairs of bellows were used at one time, in order to make a sufficient blast. These bellows were formed of two upright and parallel shallow wooden cylinders, with vents leading into one nozzle, which was protected by clay from the effects of the fire; the cylinders were covered with fibre cloth, having a stick three feet long fastened into the centre, and were worked by holding one stick in each hand, and moving them up and down alternately as fast as possible. By this means a continuous and strong blast was secured. After being smelted, the iron was worked by smiths into small pieces weighing

about two pounds, shaped like two cones pointing together at the base, and a piece or rod the size of a large knitting-needle projecting from both ends. In this form the metal was stacked in huge piles until it was wanted, when it was taken to the smithies, and worked into the implement desired. I noticed several guns of native manufacture which (aside from their mechanism, being muzzle-loaders) would compare favourably, in finish and practicability, with those of the best civilised manufacture.

As might naturally be expected from these evidences of thrift and industry, the population of Laotai and the surrounding villages were advanced to a higher plane of civilisation than the nomad Tourgouths. Instead of wearing garments made of skins, or going around in a nearly naked condition, both males and females wore garments constructed of vegetable fibre, and iron-soled shoes, — the fair sex even going to the extent of indulging in considerable decoration, encircling their waists with small belts of leather, from which hung iron and copper spangles extending almost to the ground, and which must have been a considerable weight to carry around. The men shaved their heads entirely, save for a narrow ridge down the centre, while the women arranged theirs in a sort of trellis-pattern, with bunches of ringlets hanging down the backs of their necks.

There are ten monasteries in the district around Laotai, which are inhabited by a race of warlike lamas who, aside from their priestly offices, render inestimable service to the peaceful villagers by guarding them from the assaults of the fierce hill-tribes, who frequently essay to dash through the mountain passes, and sweep over the peaceful vales and slopes. The principal edifice of this kind is an eighth of a mile to the southeast of the village, and is

built on the summit of an isolated peak,— a most picturesque place,— with the usual inleaning walls and overhanging galleries that characterise architecture in Central Asia. On the invitation of several of the lamas we clambered up the steep path to the monastery gate, and were ushered into the presence of a distinguished-looking individual, who, in his red robes, needed but a change of *venue* to transform him into the crafty and catlike Richelieu of history. He was a man of considerable erudition, profoundly religious, and totally unwilling to discuss any other subjects with us, save the wonders of the Buddhist mysteries, his dark eyes glowing with a hidden fire, and his pallid face lighting up with fervent zeal, as he warmed to the great question which meant so much to him. One could not help feeling that even the most heterodox nature must, in a measure, be convinced by this earnest and whole-souled devotion to a faith followed bigotedly and narrowly, if you will, but likewise steadfastly, grimly, and honestly. When we arose to go it was with profound regret, and, in spite of our natural skepticism, we learned henceforth to credit even the wild and half-civilised Tourgouth mind with possessing some of those finer sensibilities which we are too prone to believe are but an accompaniment of our own enlightened ethical code.

With the rigours of the climate and the dangers of the topographical contour of the country daily increasing in undesirability, we deserted the long plateau on leaving Laotai on the twenty-third, and struck northeast into the mountains, ascending a slope which rose gradually but continuously, until at noontime we had attained a ridge over fourteen thousand feet above the sea level. The hill-tops here were much less bare and sterile than the country

which we had abandoned, and even the summits of some of the higher peaks, covered with snow, seemed capable of sustaining the tree-growth. Innumerable lake-like accumulations of water and small rivulets careered down the abrupt slope through darksome gullies, but their waters were remarkably saline and not fit for drinking purposes.

The country from Laotai to Kengathka, which we reached on the twenty-fifth, may be considered a sort of table-land, bounded on the north by the higher ranges of the Baian Kara Ula, and on the south by the headwaters of Prejevalsky's Robber River. Twelve miles northeast of Laotai the plain attains its greatest elevation, being repeatedly crossed by unbroken mountain ridges thousands of feet high, when it gradually sinks toward Kengathka and the valley of the Djangin Gol; between these ranges a low chain of hills conducts the drainage from both sides to the southward. Elevated from fourteen to fifteen thousand feet above the level of the sea the climate is severe. Water freezes every evening during the year, and the ice lasts until midday; in December it never thaws, and the country is inundated with snow, rain seldom falling. This has retarded the decomposition of the rocks and the formation of soil; but the time may confidently be predicted when much of the limestone, slate, and trap shall have crumbled to powder, and the barren slopes turned into fertile areas. This idea is confirmed by the fact that the Jadri range, whose height and situation intercept much of the moisture destined for the plains, thus contributing to the dryness of their climate, is well covered with soil and sprinkled with trees; while hills of the same formation, but placed in its lee, have scarcely soil enough for shrubs a foot high. The rocks here splinter by frost, not crumble by rain; their

general appearance is a precipitous crest, with a base of angular débris, at first waving in hillocks, and then sinking in a long gentle slope to the plain.

The Jadri range, the branch of the Baian Kara Ula, which we crossed to reach the Charing Nor watershed, runs in a general direction N. N. W. It is the chief of the southern half of this long mountain system, and among the highest regions of Central Asia. It is named for the wild Jadris who live on its northeastern slope. Toward the south it gradually decreases in altitude, and is split up by numerous small rivers which have no definite source or outlet. It throws out branches which shelter the Uras, Kaniz, and other hill-tribes, whom Prejevalsky avers are hostile, treacherous, and brigands of the worst sort, but whom it was our good fortune to find quiet and hospitable and altogether peaceably disposed, living a simple, nomadic life which called for no greater daily routine than the herding of their small flocks of goats and sheep, and the cultivation of slow-growing grain.

The revenging of personal wrongs is the worst trait of these people, which encourages feuds more than it punishes aggressions. Two men quarrel in a field, and one strikes or wounds the other; the relatives and friends of the antagonists take it up, and on every occasion in which they meet fight and kill a man. From that moment the quarrel is deadly. If of different tribes, and the quarrel important, the whole tribe goes to battle. Semi-barbarians constantly looking for injury and insult have always feuds on their hands, and when the enemies are distant, the feud often lasts for generations; but when they are neighbours, an earlier settlement is arrived at by allowing both parties to fight until an equal number has been killed

on both sides, when some tribe not in the quarrel steps in and effects a reconciliation. The party or tribe who draws the first blood is looked upon as the aggressor, whatever may have been the provocation, and is obliged to pay the expense of a feast and give presents of sheep and clothing to the others. In case this settlement cannot be made, the price of reconciliation is much higher; but it never exceeds a feast and a few virgins. These girls are not given as concubines, — which the Tourgouths rarely, if ever, have, — but are married and well treated. The expense of marriage being heavy, to get so many of their young men well married without expense is a great object, and a real money compensation.

A Tourgouthian rarely divorces his wife even for the most severe breaches of the moral code, mainly for the reason that she is more or less a valuable piece of property for which there is always a brisk demand, and whose individual possession is the sign of no little power in the social scale of the country. The Tourgouthian is a very practical minded and complaisant husband, his jealousy taking no violent form; he is, as a rule, willing dispassionately to discuss his dishonour with a detected lover, assess the damages his wife's indiscretion has inflicted on him, and compound the matter for a small payment. As the male population is far in excess of the female, owing to the utter negligence shown in the care of infants of the latter sex, polyandry is rather the rule than the exception, — the paucity of children in the country being markedly noticeable, and giving just ground for the fears of the more far-sighted that the present races are destined, should the course of events not suffer a change, rapidly to die out.

At midday on December 25th, from the rapidly de-

scending mountain slope we caught the first glimpse of the silver thread percolating swiftly across the face of the landscape which we knew marked the near ending of our trials and tribulations, — the stream of the Djangin Gol. Across the uneven country we madly rushed in joyous haste to Kengathka, little recking its dirty and miserable dwellings and filthy population, all else being forgotten and obliterated from our minds by the cheering fact that the arduous journey across the steep mountain ridges had been completed, and that the end was nigh. What glad souls we were that evening around our camp-fire, in this gracious haven to which a benignant Providence had led us, storm-tossed, bruised, buoyed up only by that Christian desperation which overcomes fatalism! No wonder that before retiring, feeling ourselves indebted to the Supreme Being who had preserved us through so many troubles, we thanked him for his mercies and his bounties.

Kengathka was a miserable place, situated about a mile from the banks of the Djangin Gol in a sheltered valley, with a soil so impregnated with salt that no cultivation is possible. Salt is the natural product of the country; and the population are employed in its manufacture, which constitutes the business of the district, being exchanged with neighbouring tribes for articles not locally procured. I went to examine the pits. These were about six feet deep, from which was dug a black, sandy mud that was placed in large earthenware jars. These were supported on frames, the contents being mixed with water, which, filtering rapidly through small holes in the bottom, was received in jars underneath; this water was again used with fresh mud until it became a strong brine, when it was boiled and evaporated. The salt was white, but very bitter, the saline deposits doubtless being formed by

the decay of aquatic plants washed ashore by the waves, which, decomposing, formed a mud deposit, and much potash is combined with the salt.

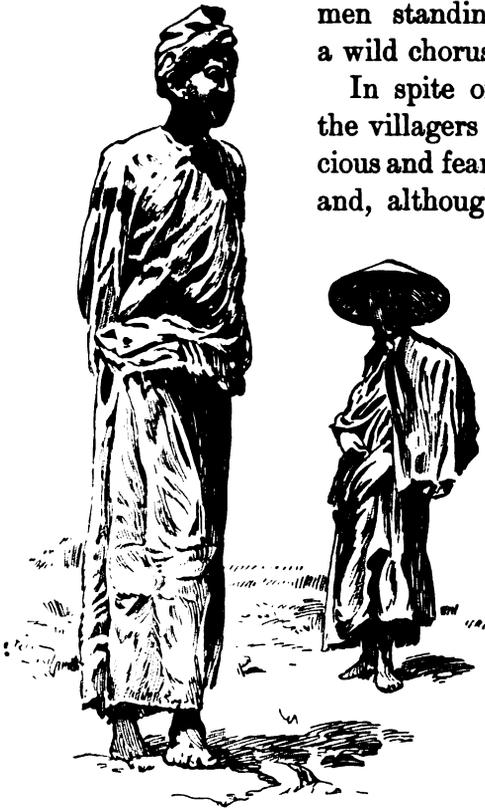
The evening of the twenty-fifth was passed joyously, for, securing an abundance of fresh provisions, we sought to celebrate duly the occasion of our safe journey across the mountains by feasting the Kiangsis, who, to their credit be it said, had held up well under the meagre and monotonous diet on which they had been placed. We soon discovered that the villagers themselves were also minded to share in the good cheer and camaraderie, for they immediately crowded around the camp, sticking their grimy hands into the stew-pots, examining our weapons, and prying into the packs until they became intolerable nuisances. As soon as the meat was taken out of the pots they rushed upon us in a yelling and gluttonous crowd, seizing upon the edibles and attacking them like a pack of famished wolves. But the Kiangsis were not to be despoiled thus easily of the entertainment which had been provided for them. Perceiving that the voracious forays of the Tourgouths bade fair to leave but little for their own use, they rose up and mingled in the general scramble, until a hundred human beings were struggling, fighting, and battling for the meat like an escaped colony of madmen, forming the most ludicrous spectacle, so that Burton and I, forgetting our momentary anger and chagrin, laughed until the tears rolled down our faces.

When the tumult had in a measure subsided, the villagers, showing evidences of their rough usage, but signally triumphant in having secured the greater part of the feast, assembled to witness two hideous old hags dancing to the sound of large drums beaten by men. This performance was very disgusting, the principal feature

being a sort of convulsive trembling and twitching of the body and limbs, while the shrivelled and wrinkled breasts of the dancers shook about like a couple of empty leather bottles. They howled a song, and at any particularly hard shake the men and women standing around joined in a wild chorus.

In spite of their peaceableness the villagers were naturally suspicious and fearful of our intentions; and, although they were willing

to trade with us, on no consideration would they supply us with guides or pack-yaks, or give us any information concerning the country ahead. They were evidently of the opinion that it was our intention to take summary vengeance for the theft of the meat, as the head man sent



LOLO MAN AND WOMAN.

us a little sour milk and a few mouldy loaves of bread, for which we made a small return, evidently much to his surprise, since he had been awaiting our probable action in fear and trembling.

There can be little doubt that there are many Lolos in this region, or at least a number of their customs are prevalent, especially those incident to birth, marriage, and death. When a boy is born he is washed in cold water, for the first and doubtless for the last time in life, after which his forehead is baptised with cow dung, to which the native belief ascribes many potent powers,—among others, the rendering him robust and fearless. He is then passed around to each one of the assembled throng, who, touching the lips of the child with the tongue, passes it around to his next neighbour,—the infant generally being the only one who seems to offer any serious objection to this undue familiarity that is taken with him. Unlike the Sifanese, these races allow almost equal privileges to female children as to the males in ceremonial and civic rites, the birth of a girl generally being regarded with as much satisfaction as, if not more than, that of a boy.

The customs pertinent to marriage are more elaborate and complicated. The first step in the ceremony follows immediately after the ardent youth has happened upon the lady of his choice. It consists in ordering a feast prepared at some convenient spot out-of-doors, to which the bride that is to be and her relatives are invited. If the father of the girl is satisfied with the sumptuousness of the affair, and convinced of the desirable position of the young man, he signals his satisfaction by eating out of the same bowl and drinking out of the same cup as the latter. The betrothal is then ratified by a present from the prospective husband's family of several jugs of pundu and a quantity of meat or other delicacies. At the end of a month, if the young couple are still determined to wed, a day for the ceremony is appointed, when the func-

tion is carried out with the most melancholy rites. Colborne Baber, in his very interesting report to the Royal Geographical Society, describes the first or lamentation part of the service peculiar to the Lolo tribes in the following manner :

“ On the wedding morn, the parents of the bride assemble their friends, and the ceremony is opened by the bridesmaids with a melancholy song : ‘ In spite of all the affection and care your fond parents have lavished upon you since the day you were born, you must now desert them ; never again will you sit beside them at work or at meals. You will not be nigh to support them when they grow old, nor to tend them when they are sick. You must leave them, and go for ever to the house of a stranger.’ At this point the bride takes up the melancholy strain, weepingly : ‘ Leave them I must, but not by my desire or fault. They must bear with my absence ; my brothers and sisters will support them. I go to my husband, and my duty will be to help his parents, — not, alas ! my own. But if any trouble befall my dear father and mother, I shall pine to death ; I am sure I shall. Seldom can I visit them ; but when they are sick, let them send for me, and I will come, I will come !’ As these chants of lamentation are extemporised, they, of course, vary somewhat at each ceremony ; but their general tenor is as above.”

For some time longer this period of tearfulness continues, when suddenly the party of the groom bursts upon the scene, and, rushing incontinently into the centre of the weeping group, knock them down right and left, and seize upon the bride. The latter is placed upon a horse and led away to the home of the husband, while his followers have meanwhile deposited presents of pundu and food at the door of the bereaved father’s hut. The heart-breaking period has doubtless been more simulated than keenly felt, for without further ado general merriment succeeds gloom, and the ceremony is concluded by much feasting, dancing, and singing, until the strong pundu has produced an effect which, it goes without saying, is *not* simulated, but really felt.

Yet another method of matrimony is less ceremonious, but hardly more desirable, on the part of the groom at least. The bride that is to be is placed at the top of a tree, while her parents are stationed on the lower limbs, — or close at the farther end of her father's hut, while the parents remain near the door, — in both cases, the father being armed with long thorn-sticks. The groom rides up on his horse, and, dismounting before the tree or hut, announces his intention of taking his bride, and immediately rushes to seize her, — a practice which requires considerable hardihood, even ardour of the most potent kind, since the relatives, armed with the sticks, beat him unmercifully, until he has touched the toe of his adored one, when he is immediately welcomed into the family and complimented on his courage and the ardour of his passion. In regard to the marriage settlement, it is the custom for the husband's family to furnish the young couple with horses, cattle, and sheep; the parents of the bride supply clothes, ornaments, and corn, — chiefly maize and buckwheat.

The rites of burial are fully as strange as those of birth and marriage. When a member of the tribe dies the fact is at once made known by his relatives, who, denuded of all clothing, rush through the streets howling dismally, and torturing themselves with long rows of thorns or knives. This is looked upon as a direct invitation of the attendance of the neighbours of the deceased; and the next day they assemble in the hut of the departed native, each placing a small cylinder of prayer-slips at his head and feet, in the hope that the devils, who inevitably must read these sacred papers, will be torn in halves, and with their power thus broken disappear from the corpse. The latter is then placed in a long yak skin, mixed with potash or some other disintegrating agent, and hung over some steep

cliff or from a limb of a tree for several months, at the end of which time if the body has disappeared it is regarded as a favourable omen that the gods have carried it off to the realms of Perfect Peace. If it still remains, however, more prayers and curious functions are gone through with, and it is transported to a more likely spot until it has disappeared. It need scarcely be added that the personal handiwork of the lamas has more or less to do with these sudden disappearances, the bodies being removed by them during the night and buried in the ground, or else hidden in some deep gully, to be swept far away by subterranean streams.

The Djangin Gol is a large and important affluent of the Charing Nor watershed, and rises in the Baian Kara Ula, a short distance from the Byjun Gol of the Dji Chu watershed. This stream, although of considerable width in parts and very deep, like most of the watercourses in this country, is impracticable to navigation, owing to the numerous obstructions in its stream and to the succession of swiftly rushing rapids over which its current is carried. For nearly its entire length, however, it is bordered by a low-lying plain, free of mountain ranges, and presenting a comparatively easy and natural caravan road. Through this plain it was our intention to journey for three days, when, abandoning it at the point where the course of the stream is deflected to the eastward toward Lake Oring Nor, a day's farther journeying would carry us to our destination.

On December 27th we left Kengathka and ascended the Djangin-Tang, — a cheerless area, sterile and unprepossessing, without a sign of vegetation, save at infrequent intervals a few scrawny clumps of camel-thorn or tamarisk. We had now fairly entered Hua-ta, and, having

heard many wonderful stories of the extortions practised by the fierce tribes who inhabited this land, and of their generally hostile nature, we anticipated some difficulty in passing through their country. They were reputed to be great thieves, and so overbearing that any insult they might inflict must be borne by us without resistance, else they would attack us, and have little or no compunction in murdering and plundering the entire expedition. We had, however, so often before been apprised of danger, and in so many instances discovered that these dire prophecies were not borne out in reality, that we were not concerned greatly with this information, but with a full knowledge of the dangerous countries through which we had already passed felt fully capable of offering effectual resistance to any band of aggressors we might meet. It did not take us long to discover that the native estimate of their prowess was very much exaggerated. Doubtless their insolent and bullying nature had produced an appreciable effect on the peaceably disposed and unwarlike villagers; but though the characteristics possessed by them were, in a measure, similar to those of which we had been apprised, we found them to be in truth the veriest cowards and poltroons it was possible to conceive.

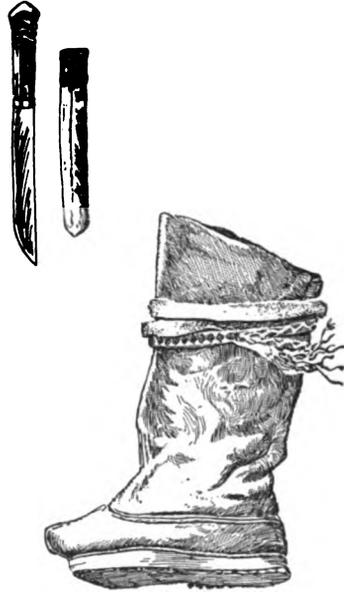
It would be an impossibility to imagine a more desolate and uninviting country than that over which we passed on the twenty-seventh to Zaga-Cha. The country was arid and parched, scorched to an almost unbearable heat by the sun's rays until the brown pebbles fairly steamed and smoked. One of the Kiangs is was attacked with sunstroke, while nearly all were more or less affected by the severe heat. But the unobstructed plain offered no place for shelter, and forward we marched with as much speed as possible. Numerous watercourses were met with, but

they were almost all dry and burned up, only a few small natural ponds having any water left in them. When other resources fail, the inhabitants dig pits to contain sufficient rain until the wet season arrives. After a time the water in these holes becomes indescribably nauseous, and is very often rendered brackish by the large amount of salt in the soil.

At nightfall of this day we reached Zaga-Cha, a large village of Tourgouths and Lolos, who had been made aware of our approach through the country, and had prepared for our coming by sending forward a few of their head men to discover what payment we should make for the privilege of encamping in their territory. At the moment of our arrival, the chief and his people were celebrating the obsequies of some departed member of the tribe, and consequently every one was drunk. It was fortunate, after all, that they were in this condition, for the emissaries were perfectly contented with very small presents, and, in maudlin generosity, presented us with food and entertainment worth a hundred times the amount which we had given them. Not only were wine and beef brought us, but we were supplied with excellent flour, milk, butter, and cheese; so we came to the conclusion that we had found a very Capua in Zaga-Cha. Very little pundu was to be seen in this village, and likewise in all those villages with which we henceforth foregathered, its place being taken by a wine called "elusonh," — a sweet, syrupy sort of liquid, the colour of cold weak tea, but remarkably strong, a very small quantity having the most unpleasant effects. It is made of a small wild plum which grows in the sheltered spots of the plain, and when cold is a very palatable drink. The Kiangsis, accustomed to their full measure of pundu, demurred somewhat when

they witnessed the curtailment in the quantity of their liquor; but we were decided that we could better stand their momentary chagrin than to run the risk of being called upon to look after a colony of inebriates.

A magic lama visited us while we were at Zaga-Cha, his errand, so he informed us, being to tell the fortunes of people about to journey to Charing Nor; and he also professed to be able to cure diseases and expel evil spirits. He was followed by some lesser lights, who carried iron bells, which they occasionally struck with small pieces of iron in horrible discord and lack of concert. On arriving before our tent, the priestly magician seated himself on the ground, surrounded by his attendants, and commenced a monotonous recitative. In this he accompanied himself by shaking



BOOT AND KNIFE OF KOKO NOR
THIBETAN.

a rattle made of basket-work and shaped like a dumb-bell, while the circle of his attendants joined in the chorus, sometimes striking their bells, and at others varying the performance by laying them down and clapping their hands in a rhythmic cadence. This being finished, the soothsayer was ready to be consulted, provided those coming to him were prepared to pay in advance for his predictions. His principal instrument for reading the decrees of fate consisted of a basket trimmed with small

skins, the bottom being formed of an inverted earthen cup. This was filled with small baked images of clay in various fantastic forms, and a heterogeneous collection of rubbish. The person desiring his fortune told had but to pay the necessary fee, when the small images would be thrown out of the receptacle over the ground, the magician being enabled to tell from the position in which the respective figures fell the fortune of the seeker for such occult information. He also did a thriving business in curing any ailment with which the flesh might be affected, offering to sell to us for a fabulously small sum, an ointment to anoint the body, which unctuous liquid had been handed down for generations, the person so protected being proof against all danger, and, unless the effect of the charm should disappear, sure of living to an extreme old age.

From what little we were able to see of their religious customs, we gathered that the faith held in these parts is a sort of commingling of a few of the doctrines of Buddhism with the characteristic mummery and fetich worship common to the Lolos and Sifanese. Several deities and innumerable lesser gods are worshipped and sacrificed to, — each family, and in fact each individual, being watched over by some patron deity, to whom he is directly responsible, and to whom he must pledge his soul at death. Prayer-wheels are very common, and by means of them a unique method of revenge is often practised by a man on his enemies. This may be done by securing the prayer-wheel of the person with whom one may be at enmity, and turning it in the opposite direction from the customary one; in this way one is able to postpone indefinitely the attainment of post-mortem felicity to the person whose wheel is so treated. This is looked upon as a deadly

insult, and, according to an unwritten code, is a sufficient provocation for the inauguration of a bloody feud.

The twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth were miserable days. The sky was overcast, and a wind of deadly chilliness, for which we were scantily protected, howled over the exposed plain, driving clouds of freezing dust before it. The country we marched through was bare of any vegetation, a chaos of rock and ice and snow. The mountains which bordered the plain were of extraordinary steepness, and terminated in sharp, snow-covered pinnacles. A short distance beyond Zaga-Cha we had to cross a large glacier which descended to the river bed, picking our way for two miles among boulders of green ice, conditions that confronted us almost uninterruptedly for the whole distance to Chimphu. Notwithstanding this forbidding nature of the landscape, the country seemed to be well populated with herders and nomad tribes, with whom we were frequently thrown. They were usually rather drunk and abusive, and in some instances attempted to rob us by stealth, so that it required great forbearance and some tact on our part to avoid getting into serious collision with them. They asserted that we had no right to be travelling in their country, and that we should be the means of opening this region to other strangers and traders, thus bringing them to a state of poverty and subjugation. Although these people of the less settled parts were thus unfriendly toward us, the head men and natives of the villages and larger settlements were kind and civil, and invariably brought us jugs of "elusonh." To have refused this proffered hospitality would have been a dangerous policy, and have lessened the good feeling which existed; but although Burton and I drank very sparingly of the mixture for obvious reasons, the Kiangsis

were not troubled with any such scruples of abstinence, and took advantage of the good cheer until the task of keeping the caravan in any semblance of order became decidedly arduous. We could afford, however, to look upon their weakness with a charitable consideration, for the end was now drawing near; and we could not find it in our hearts to begrudge them this meagre enjoyment, when we remembered the unswerving fidelity which they had shown in firmly seconding us in many a trying moment, when the clouds of despair hovered low and dark over our fortunes.

We were certainly marching through a very changeable climate, for summer and winter alternated at intervals of every few hours. At one moment the heat would be keenly felt; a little later a bitter blast would rush down the mountainside from the snowy wastes and glaciers a thousand feet above us, bringing with it snow and icy rain, while immense banks of moisture-laden clouds spread around their dank and chilling vapours.

At Chimphu the whole population turned out to stare at us, and their astonishment at gazing on white strangers was manifested in a more or less undesirable manner, for they were evidently not concerned with the truth of the adage that "seeing is believing," but must needs cause us to undergo the more crucial examination of being pinched and pounded and generally knocked around in order to assure themselves of the genuineness of the exhibition to which they were being treated. This curiosity was in no wise diminished by the wonderful stories related to them by our native guides, who, to play further on their credulity, openly asserted that we had weapons capable of killing whole villages at once, and ascribing to us many more or less imaginary abilities of the most

extraordinary character. This enlargement of the truth was not, however, without its beneficial results, for the head men were mightily impressed with the narratives they had heard, and sought to propitiate us by presents of fowls and buttermilk. From them we also learned that the great lake was but a day and a half's journey to the north; likewise that they would send some of their guides to show us the way over the remaining country.

At noontime of the thirtieth we bade adieu to the current of the Djangin Gol and turned our course to the north. On again we marched across a rough and waterless plain lying between us and our destination, over precipitous hills formed of limestone, having the appearance of cliffs which might once have faced the sea. Eagerly we pressed forward, stumbling and bruising ourselves against sharp obstructions and huge boulders that beset our path. But what did it matter? The next day would see us at Gajum, with rest and peace at last!

The country from the Djangin Gol to the shores of the Charing Nor was closely filled with mountains, inhabited on the north by Turkomans and Mongols, and on the south by Tourgouths. The latter were of middle size, but stoutly made; small gray eyes, high cheek-bones, and without beard, showing a Tartar origin. The severe climate and barren country increased the harshness of their aspect. Their clothes, made by themselves, were of coarse haircloth; their boots rough goatskin, and their girdle a rope. They lived in small towers containing five or six families, supported by scanty cultivation and flocks of sheep. Their ignorance corresponded with their poverty; but despite their innumerable shortcomings they were a light-hearted, careless, hospitable set. We halted for the night in a small village of a dozen families, perched

on the side of a steep slope. We were immediately waited upon by a most regal-looking dignitary, a fine fellow got up in very gorgeous attire, covered with arms of all sorts, including an immense hide-shield fully six feet in height. He had visited us for the purpose of demanding tribute, but seeing that his bluster and braggadocio produced no effect on our equanimity, he became at last more gracious, and ended by begging for a musket and some powder, which, to rid ourselves of his presence, we gave him.

Long before daybreak on January 1st there was a bustle in our camp; fires were lit and breakfast was prepared; every one being excited and happy with the knowledge that the end was nigh. A couple of hours before the rising of the sun we were all on the move, groping our way fearfully over the treacherous surface of the country. A steep climb brought us to the summit of the last ridge. Eagerly we peered through the low-lying vapours, and there before our eyes stretched for many a mile the broad expanse of waters, glittering in the sun like a precious cameo of pure silver set in the stern encasement of rock-ribbed shores. With shouts of frenzied joy all organisation was thrown to the winds, and for three hours we scrambled without order or reason over the uncertain road. Both Burton and myself ran down the slope and swinging our rifles around our heads, almost wild with joy, and the men, carried away by the same spirit of the occasion, joined in the mad career. It was thus we drew near the town, to find the natives armed and positioned to meet us, having viewed our frantic approach as an evidence of hostile intention from some of the fierce hill-tribes.

Half an hour later, as we rested in the residence of the head man of the place, a worthy Mongol trader, we

enjoyed that repose of spirit which only those who have passed from death to life can know, having been by a divine Providence borne through an almost overwhelming sea of danger and disaster. We had successfully accomplished the mission which we had set out to perform. The vast region hitherto occupying a blank space on the map of an immense continent had been traversed in safety, and the reward was fully equal to the sacrifice. There had been moments of hopelessness and despair, days of misery when the future had appeared dark and fatal ; but we had been strengthened in our weakness, and led, when apparently lost, by an unseen hand. There was no feeling of triumph, but one of calm contentment and satisfaction.

It is not my intention to claim a higher value for our discoveries than justly belongs to them ; neither would I in any way diminish the lustre of the achievements of Prejevalsky and those other indomitable spirits who have sought to reclaim this vast region of Western China to civilisation. That we were enabled to succeed where others had repeatedly failed is the highest reward which we can merit or desire.

THE END.



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