

# **Across Unknown Bhutan.**

By J. CLAUDE WHITE, C.I.E., BRITISH POLITICAL AGENT AT SIKKIM.

An authoritative account of two important missions to the unknown State of Bhutan, to the north-east of India, in which the country was traversed in two directions—a journey never before attempted in modern times. The narrative is illustrated by the author's own photographs, the only collection ever brought out from Bhutan.

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## I.

**B**HUTAN, the beautiful hill State on the north-east frontier of India, is a *terra incognita* so far as travellers of the present generation are concerned. This land of entrancing beauty—of ice-capped ranges and pine-covered valleys—lies between Sikkim and a region of wild unknown tribes on the east. The last occasion (previous to that which forms the subject of this article) on which a British mission was sent to Bhutan was in 1863, when Mr. Ashley Eden, the officer in charge, was dispatched to demand reparation for certain outrages on the part of the Bhutanese. He was, however, subjected to the grossest insults, and he and his whole following had to return to India with all speed. Two years later the Bhutanese surprised a British garrison at Dewangiri—the spot from which the second of the missions here described started on its journey—and the post had to be abandoned.

Bhutan is quite unknown to travellers, and nothing like extensive exploration had ever been attempted until last year. In the course of the missions, some incidents of which I propose to narrate, Bhutan was first traversed from the extreme west to almost the farthest easterly point, and then crossed from the most southerly to the most northerly point. The accompanying photographs are selected from the only series which has ever been taken.

The mission to Bhutan was undertaken in order to present the insignia of the K.C.I.E. to the Tongsa Penlop, the *de facto* ruler of Bhutan, and I was entrusted by the Government of India with the presentation of the Order. I was accompanied by Major Rennick, of the Intelligence branch, Mr. Paul, late of the I.C.S., and an escort of the 40th Pathans. The photo. of the members of my first mission was taken at Rokbi, a place situated between Poonakha, the winter capital of Bhutan, and Biagha, one of the Tongsa Penlop's palaces. The mat-huts in the background were those erected for our followers by the Tongsa's people, who can be seen in the distance.



MR. WHITE (IN REAR), WITH MAJOR RENNICK, MR. PAUL, AND THE TONGSA PENLOP.  
*From a Photo.*

As a large portion of the country to be traversed was unknown, and as the variations of climate were very great, the equipment of the mission required much time and thought. The question of transport, also, was a serious one, and the large number of presents we had to take very much increased the loads.

No former mission to Bhutan has been received there with anything but hostility (if that of Captain Turner in 1783 is excepted), and I have alluded already to the fact that Mr. Eden's mission, which went up nearly fifty years ago, ended in disaster. We, however, were making our journey under happier auspices.

The route chosen, after careful consideration, was that from Gantok, fifty miles north of Darjeeling, over the Natu Pass into the Chumbi Valley, and thence *via* the Ha Valley—the line taken by Mr. Eden's unfortunate mission—to Poonakha, the winter capital. In entering Bhutan from the west and travelling to Poonakha, the whole of the watershed of the country had to be crossed, and every spur running down from the central Himalayan range had to be climbed, making marching difficult and slow, as no transport could be obtained except men.

A start was made at seven one fine March morning, but in less than an hour we found the roads snow-covered. In the afternoon blizzards commenced, and the miserable huts in which we spent the first night were filled with drift-snow and smoke, reducing us all to a condition of utter discomfort. The snow became very deep, and it seemed hopeless to expect to surmount the Natu Pass (fourteen thousand seven hundred feet), as there was not the slightest trace of a track. The wind, too, was bitter—so cold, indeed, that some of my carriers who had been dispatched in advance with the luggage were frost-bitten, two poor fellows being found dead on the summit of the pass. Before we reached the top it took us three hours to do a mile and a half. The descent was equally hazardous; there was no sign of a road, but fortunately for us we found a stretch of hard frozen snow, down which we slipped and slid in an unusually rapid fashion, until we reached the timber-line. Of our coolies about a third were snow-blind and had to be led, and even Major Rennick, who had forgotten his snow-glasses, was badly affected and had to be assisted into camp, being quite unable to see.

The next pass, into Hah, was not so difficult, and was crossed without any casualties. From then onwards to Poonakha and Biagha no hardships were encountered, as the Tongsa Penlop, with kindly forethought, had had all the roads repaired, so that we were able to ride practically

the whole way. Further, solicitous for our comfort, he had also sent a trusty steward to see to all our wants.

The scenery was of the most beautiful Alpine description; firs and rhododendrons abounded on all sides, and through these the snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas appeared. The weather was glorious, and the flowers—especially the primroses, wild rose, and clematis—were exquisite.

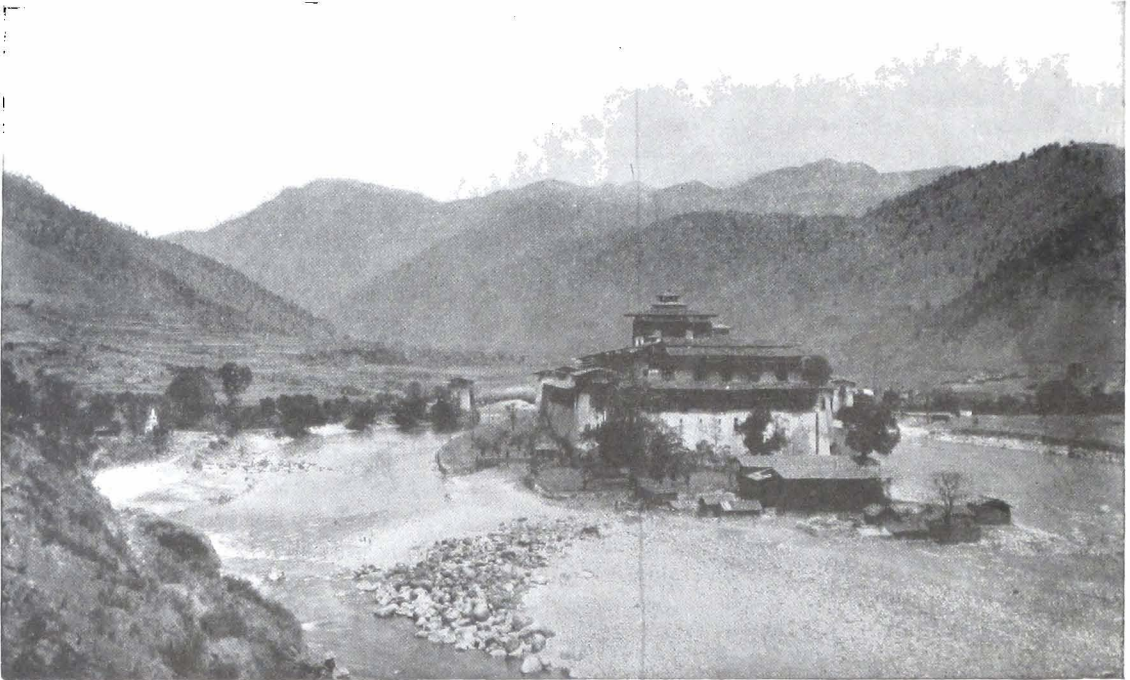
Our camps, which had all been prepared beforehand by the local magnates, were always well chosen and fenced in to keep off intruders, not only in the shape of natives, but also cattle and goats, and on more than one occasion we found these fences to be of great advantage.

At Poonakha the mission was met by the Deb Raja, the spiritual ruler of the country, the Tongsa Penlop, and his officers of State, and was conducted to camp with great ceremony by dancing men belonging to two local chiefs, the Deb's band, and a number of gaily-caparisoned mules. The camp was pitched on a flat, open space of ground, just beyond the fort and palaces of Poonakha, and newly planted with rows of young trees, as well as rhododendrons. Besides the tents, which had been brought up from India expressly for the mission, a very commodious mess-house of pine planks had been built for us, and so we were exceedingly comfortable. The photograph next reproduced shows that Poonakha is very picturesquely situated on a tongue of land between two large rivers. Both of these, by the way, swarmed with fish, and it was unlucky that none of the mission were fishermen. The place was, in the old days of bows and arrows, a strong and defensible fort. It is entered from east and west by two magnificent bridges, both of which can be seen in the picture. It is an astounding fact that the principle of these bridges is that known to Europeans as the cantilever, and is identical with that of the Forth Bridge, although no European engineer has ever been in the country.

This exquisite valley is broad and flat, well cultivated and terraced. Poonakha is the winter capital and the residence during the cold weather months of the Durmah and Deb Rajas (the sacred rulers), as well as of the Tongsa Penlop (the temporal ruler) when he comes up to transact business. The fort is immense, and it needs to be, for when all the above-mentioned personages and their followers are in residence it has to accommodate some three thousand souls.

The buildings comprise many temples and reception-rooms, and three large courtyards. The centre of the citadel is a fine structure of





*From a*

POONAKHA, THE WINTER PALACE OF THE RULER OF BHUTAN.

*[Photo.*

some seven storeys high, with temples on every floor. The roof is gilded, and presents a striking spectacle. Unfortunately the whole of these buildings have been destroyed on three occasions, twice by fire and once by flood. This is a great calamity, as all the priceless records were destroyed.

At Poonakha the ceremony of presenting the Tongsa Penlop with the insignia of the K.C.I.E. took place. Poonakha was chosen as the Deb Raja and his Council were still living there. It was a most interesting ceremony, and a brief account of it must not be omitted.

It rained heavily in the early morning, but cleared up soon after 8 a.m. Mr. Paul, at my request, went over to the palace early in order to inspect the hall and the arrangements that had been made by the Bhutanese, and to suggest any alterations that might seem necessary to suit the programme I wished to follow. On his return, learning that all was in readiness, Major Rennick and myself, in full uniform, preceded by an escort of sepoy and musicians, proceeded to the fort and were ushered into a large hall with a wide balcony. This was a fine, handsome room, with a double row of pillars on either side, forming, as it were, two aisles, the centre, or nave, affording a wide space open to the lofty roof, which was covered by a canopy of beautifully-embroidered Chinese silk. The space between the pillars was hung with rich silks, and behind the Tongsa Penlop's seat was displayed a fine embroidered scroll. At the farther

end was the high altar, in front of which was a raised dais covered with cushions, on which sat the Deb Raja (sacred ruler), attired in a rich yellow silk stole over his monastic dress, and having on his left the Abbot of the Poonakha lamas in gorgeous canonicals. On the right hand was placed a row of four scarlet-covered chairs, for myself, Major Rennick, Mr. Paul, and Subahdar Jehandad Khan, the officer of our escort, in front of each being a small table covered with fruit and other delicacies. Close behind us were drawn up my orderlies, with the presents. On the other side of the nave, facing me, was a low dais, covered with magnificent cushions of the richest salmon-coloured brocade, on which sat Sir Ugyen Wang Chuk—the Tongsa Penlop—dressed in a handsome robe of dark blue Chinese silk, embroidered in gold with the Chinese lucky character "Fu." Below him again were the chairs of the State dignitaries. In the aisles were double or treble rows of lamas, seated on white carpets, while four flagellants, carrying brass-bound batons of office and formidable double-thonged whips of rhinoceros hide, walked up and down between the rows to maintain order.

After my party and the higher officers, who had risen on our approach, had taken their seats, there was a short pause for order and silence to be restored. I then rose, while a short speech I had written out beforehand was read in Tibetan. I thought it advisable not to deliver

an English speech, as I foresaw the Bhutanese portion of the ceremony would be a lengthy one, and my English would be quite unintelligible to the audience. At the conclusion of these opening remarks, which seemed to give general satisfaction, I stepped forward in front of the Deb Raja, with Major Rennick carrying the insignia and warrant on a purple cushion fringed with silver, while the Tongsa Penlop advanced from his side to meet me. With a few appropriate words I presented the insignia of the K.C.I.E. to Sir Ugyen.

Major Rennick and myself returned to our seats, while the Penlop, standing before the dais, returned thanks. Again advancing, I presented the Penlop with a book of my photographs, a rifle, and a silver bowl filled with rice and other emblems of material prosperity, as a memorial of the day's ceremony. Finally, placing a white scarf in his hand, I offered him my congratulations. Major Rennick and the subahdar then offered scarves with their good wishes, and Mr. Paul, as an old friend of more than thirty years' standing, did likewise. This ended our portion of the ceremony. After this Sir Ugyen Wang Chuk turned to the Deb Raja and made his obeisance. The Deb, as spiritual head of the Bhutanese Church, gave Sir Ugyen his canonical blessing, and placed three scarves round his neck. After receiving the blessing of the Abbot, the Tongsa Penlop then reseated himself. Now began an almost interminable procession of lamas, officials, and retainers, each bringing scarves and presents, until the Penlop was almost smothered with scarves, while the whole nave from end to end gradually became piled up with heaps of tea, silk, woollen, and cotton fabrics of all colours and values, with little bags of gold-dust and rupees appearing on the top. As each present was placed on the floor, the name of the donor was called out by the chief steward. I have no means of judging the number of donors, but should think there were not fewer than two hundred. It was amusing to watch the flourishes some of these people gave when they dumped their presents with a bang on the floor and whipped out their scarves to their full length. At last, however, these congratulations came to an end, and tea and refreshments were offered to all who were seated, including the lamas in the aisles. At each course the lamas intoned a sort of grace.

When all had eaten and drunk, betel and pan were distributed. Before the commencement of the feast a large cauldron of native beer was placed at the end of the dais. A gorgeous official carrying a bowl or ladle then mixed the wine three times, and holding up the wine in one hand raised the other in prayer. This was

repeated three times, and he then advanced with the ladle full to the Deb Raja, who blessed it, and it was next taken to the Tongsa, upon whose hands a portion was poured. This ceremony was repeated to myself. The remainder of the wine was then poured into a cauldron and removed. A wooden spear with a piece of red cloth and a white silk scarf fastened to the base of the head was next taken to the Deb, blessed, and finally waved over the Tongsa, who reverently touched the end. Finally a short prayer, led by the Deb, was intoned, and the proceedings ended.

Sir Ugyen Chuk is the actual ruler of Bhutan, although the State is in reality a lama kingdom, with the Durmah Raja (the incarnate sacred chief) as head, and the Deb Raja as secretary. While we were in the country, however, the Deb Raja was acting as Durmah Raja, the latter having died a few months previously, and, as his spirit is not supposed to reappear on earth for three years, the Durmah Rajaship was in abeyance. The Durmah and Deb Rajas, however, attend principally to spiritual matters, and are both lamas. As they must have someone to look after the temporal wants of the people, the Tongsa Penlop has acted as temporal ruler for many years. Owing to his very great personal influence and strength of character, he has knitted together and consolidated the different factions, which used in former days to make war on each other's property.

Travelling through the country one was constantly brought into immediate touch with a condition similar to that at one time existing on the borderland between Scotland and England, and it was very interesting to listen to the stories of fighting, victories, and defeats, and to see the places where these historic events had taken place. The Tongsa Penlop has, however, entirely changed the situation, and for the last nineteen years the sword has not been drawn in Bhutan in internecine strife. This has naturally been a great benefit to the country, which has prospered materially during this period of peace. I hope that Sir Ugyen may live for many years, so as to carry on the excellent work he has begun and see the fulfilment of many of his schemes for the country. He is in every respect the good fellow he looks in his portrait. He is there shown wearing his State robe of yellow silk with a gold-embroidered headdress. On this will be seen a number of Buddhist characters, while it is also decorated with four skulls and is surmounted by a stuffed bird's head. Sir Ugyen, who is forty-five years old, married a beautiful wife, to whom he was much attached, but she died young, and he has not married again. She left him two daughters only, who manage the whole



of his large establishment, doing the work most thoroughly, and keeping a watchful eye on everything. I must say they managed extremely well. Sir Ugyen is a man of exceptional ability—strong, just, and with the welfare of the State entirely at heart. Out of chaos he has consolidated Bhutan into a well-governed and powerful State.

As in the old feudal days, his castles are surrounded by dependents and everything is made within their precincts. In his palaces there are large weaving schools, in which cottons, woollens, and silks are woven into serviceable and beautiful cloths. These schools are entirely supervised by his daughters, and in them only women work. There are workshops which turn out most excellent swords, well tempered and beautifully polished, and a certain number of matchlocks are also produced. The country also possesses foundries, which manufacture bells unsurpassed anywhere for tone and finish. These bells are first modelled in wax, which is covered very carefully with a mixture of clay, pounded charcoal, and straw. This compound is

allowed to dry very slowly, and when thoroughly dry the wax is melted out and the mould is ready for receiving the metal, which consists of copper, silver, tin, and a little gold. The Tongsa's silversmiths and goldworkers turn out work which it would be difficult to beat. Some very excellent carving in wood is also executed, and there are factories for gunpowder-making, which is, however, not manufactured on a large scale, and is, moreover, of an extremely bad quality.

During the stay of my mission some very beautiful examples of teapots in copper and

silver were shown us, which surpassed anything I have seen even in Lhasa.

Close to Sir Ugyen's castle at Biagha lives his sister, who is, like her brother, a personage of strong character. Nothing would satisfy her but that we should move down the valley and stay with her for some days.

She pitched a camp for us close to her house in a beautiful grove of willows, and entertained us most royally. According to the custom of the country, she and her daughters personally waited on us whenever we were actually in her own house; but on one or two occasions these ladies were induced to sit down at my camp, where a European dinner was served—a novelty to them all. Her son is married to the Tongsa Penlop's eldest daughter, and they have a boy who will succeed his grandfather. He is a jolly little chap, and if he shows any of the good qualities of his grandfather, or other relations, he will make a good successor to the present Tongsa.

The castles of Bhutan are well-built and massive strongholds, most picturesquely situated. They are constructed of stone, with

enormously thick walls, while every natural feature of the ground is used to the best advantage. The fact that they have been added to from time to time adds immensely to their picturesqueness and interest. The following photograph shows a beautiful courtyard in the palace at Biagha, where the Tongsa was living when he started to meet me. In some respects this courtyard is not altogether unlike that of an old English inn. The troughs in the foreground are for feeding the animals, and drawn up at the back can be seen the Tongsa's band, which has just escorted us to



THE TONGSA PENLOP IN HIS STATE RÔLE—"HE IS IN EVERY RESPECT THE GOOD FELLOW HE LOOKS." [Photo.]



From a

A BEAUTIFUL COURTYARD IN THE PALACE AT BHAGHA.

[Photo.

the palace. The private houses of the Bhutanese are also very fine, and contain a large amount of decorative woodwork. Unlike the jongs, or castles, they are generally built in a square, with a citadel in the centre. These vary considerably, according to the position and wealth of the occupant. The interiors of the principal rooms are usually decorated with swords, spears, matchlocks, shields of rhinoceros hide, and sometimes a few modern rifles.

Amongst the followers of Sir Ugyen was a jovial old medicine-man or doctor, of whom I took a snap-shot. He was always up in our camp, and showed great interest in everything. He was an easily pleased and good-tempered

old gentleman. On the next page he is seen blowing a trumpet made from a human thigh-bone and beating on a drum formed out of a human skull!

The scenery in Bhutan is magnificent throughout, and I am sorry that my pen cannot do justice to it; but suffice it to say that while in the upper valleys it is of the most beautiful Alpine description, at lower levels the densest tropical vegetation abounds. As the altitude of Bhutan ascends from a few hundred feet above mean sea-level to twenty-five thousand feet, the variation of scenery can be imagined. Another photograph we reproduce depicts one of the upper reaches of the Tchin Chu Valley, where the mountains on either side tower up into immense precipices of limestone. At many points in this valley the scenery equals, if it does not excel, that of the famous Yosemite Valley in America. The roads here had become bad, and it will be seen that mules had been abandoned for yaks; in the photograph a member of the party is seen astride one of these queer

animals. On these yaks we travelled the rest of the way, over places where it would have been impossible to employ even a mule, which is generally accepted as one of the surest-footed of riding animals. The yak is slow, but I have never known one, except on a single occasion, to miss its footing.

As we got higher up into the hills, into the abode of the yak, black yak-hair tents were provided for our followers. These tents were excellent, but very heavy; a matter, however, which does not much concern the Bhutanese, who only move short distances in order to change their grazing ground and have abundant pasture. One of the photographs shows the





A JOVIAL OLD MEDICINE-MAN -- HE IS SEEN BLOWING A TRUMPET MADE FROM A HUMAN THIGH-BONE AND BEATING A DRUM FORMED OUT OF A HUMAN SKULL.

*From a Photo.*

men sitting down to dinner -- a curious and picturesque sight. These wild and sturdy men, with the magnificent hills for a background, formed a picture not easily forgotten. Their evening meal consisted of a good soup with plenty of meat in it, parched barley flour, and tea--a very good dinner for most people. The men are made to sit in lines, with sufficient space between each row for the cooks to pass with the vessels from which they ladle out the contents into the men's cups, everyone receiving the same portion. Each man has his

Vol. six. 29.

own cup, which is generally turned from the knot of a plane tree, often well marked and of considerable local value. Sometimes they are lined inside with silver. The one cup is used for everything, both in eating and drinking, and is always carried inside the owner's voluminous dress. This, indeed, serves as a huge pocket, in which is deposited everything, from live stock to penknives.

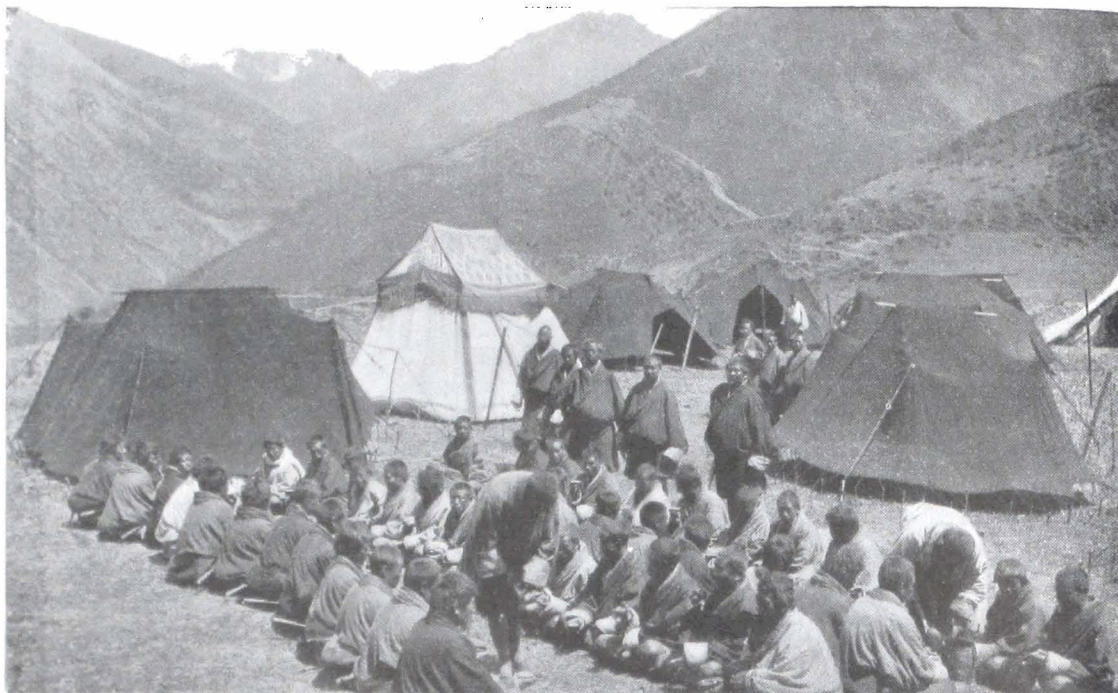
It is in these inaccessible mountains, high up along the snow-line, that the very rare animal known as the takin (*Budorcas taxicolor*) is found. This creature, which—in appearance, at any rate—is a cross between an ox and an antelope, has never yet been shot by a European, and never before seen by one. Specimen skins were



A SCENE IN THE LUBS CHU VALLEY, SHOWING THE AUTHOR'S PARTY ON THE MARCH.

*From a Photo.*





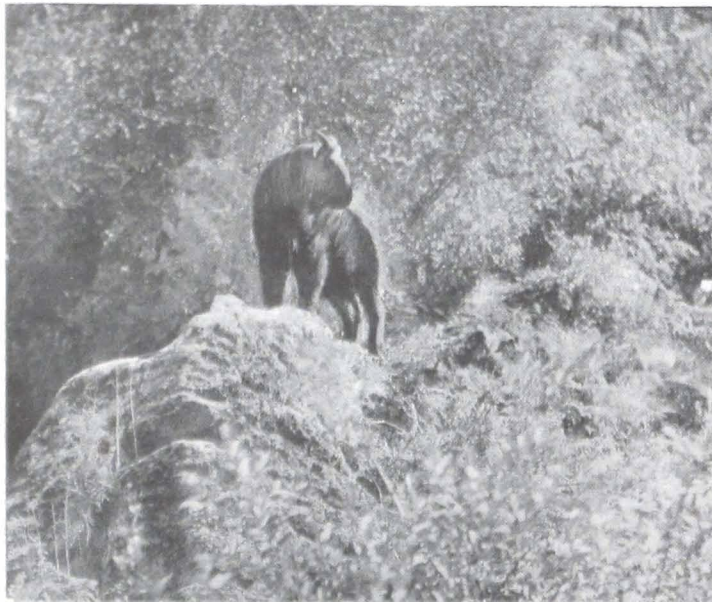
[From a]

THE BHUTANESE CARRIERS AT DINNER.

[Photo.

procured for me and sent with the entire skeleton to the Natural History section of the British Museum. A live specimen was also presented to me by the Tongsa Penlop, and was conveyed safely as far as Chumbi, where he remained for some months in perfect health, the long stay in Chumbi being necessitated by the impossibility of sending the animal down to the plains and on to England during the hot season. Unfor-

tunately, in the month of July he ate some aconite, and died in a few hours. This was a great loss, as he would have been an acquisition to the Zoo, which has never yet possessed a takin. This rare and remarkable beast is seen in my next photograph—the first ever taken of the animal. Although heads with a skin have been procured from the hills through Assam, the habitat of the takin was not known till our mission went into Bhutan.



THE ONLY PHOTOGRAPH EVER TAKEN OF THE RARE BHUTANESE "TAKIN," WHICH LOOKS LIKE A CROSS BETWEEN AN OX AND AN ANTELOPE.

(To be concluded.)

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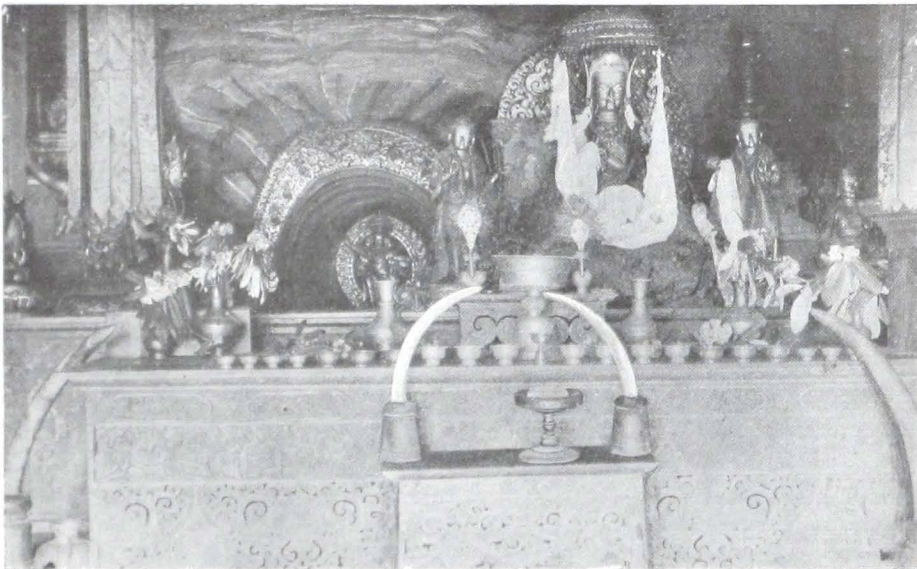
## II.



NE of the chief peculiarities which strike the traveller in Bhutan is the great number of monasteries; in all the more populous valleys they are perched in every commanding position on each side of the valley. Many of them are very fine buildings, especially those belonging to the Government, such as Tassitseudon, Paro, Pollakha, and Guru Lhakang. Their size is sometimes immense, the monastery of Tassitseudon measuring a hundred and twenty feet

offerings in front of the altars. One pair we saw was found to measure eight feet six inches—a good size for any Indian tusk. They were curiously carved, but not very massive. The large images in these temples are generally made of plaster-gilt, the small ones being of copper or brass.

The photograph here reproduced depicts the high altar in the very sacred monastery of the Guru Lhakang, near the Tongsa's house at Bhaqha. It is here that the revered Guru rested



*From a*

THE HIGH ALTAR OF THE SACRED MONASTERY OF GURU LIAKANG.

*[Photo.*

square. The ground-plans of all these institutions are very similar, either square or oblong, and their interior decoration is in many instances very fine. The wooden pillars are covered with beaten and embossed silver and copper, of fine workmanship, and the altar decorations and vessels, also of silver and copper, are well designed. A feature in every monastery is the number of elephant tusks, which are placed as

on his way through Bhutan, and left an impression of his charm-box against the rock whereon he sat. Around this hallowed spot a temple has been built, outside which is a fine specimen of a pine tree. The legend runs that this tree was originally a stick belonging to the Guru. On visiting the site of this monastery he thrust his stick into the ground, and it miraculously took root and flourished.



As may be imagined in a country like Bhutan, which has from the beginning been ruled by priests, the lamas play a very great part in the administration of affairs. The land is to a great extent priest-ridden, and it is very difficult to turn any way without seeing a monastery. All the best sites are occupied by religious institutions, every village having one, and often two, and the consequence is that the population is decreasing, for the lamas are literally eating up the whole country, and those who are not lamas have a hard time of it. The people have to feed and clothe the lamas, and it is not difficult to imagine what will be the result before long—either the lamas must curtail their numbers or starve, for the remaining population will not be able to keep them. Already the whole of the subsidy received from the Indian Government is absorbed in supporting the priesthood; and even with that, I am told, it is found exceedingly difficult to keep things going.

The "Sacred Government" consists of a Durmah Raja, who is supposed to be an incarnation of the Shabding Rimpochi (the first lama to enter Bhutan). He is assisted by the Deb Raja, who need not necessarily be a priest. The present Deb is a priest, and as such is acting for the Durmah Raja, who died in 1904, and whose spirit does not again appear on earth for three years after his death.

The second photograph shows the Deb sitting in his own room with his holy vessels before him. He is a man of kindly disposition, entirely given up to spiritual works; in fact, he boasts that he knows nothing of worldly matters. We visited him when in Bhutan, both

officially and privately, and he was very pleased to sit and listen to all we had to say, being particularly interested in the preparations for taking his photograph.

As we approached the higher northern ranges of Bhutan the scenery became grander and grander. The peaks in the range of summits along the whole length of Bhutan rise to a height of from twenty to twenty-five thousand

feet. The southern slopes are clothed in forest up to fourteen thousand feet, but even above this there is an impenetrable mass of rhododendrons for another thousand feet. Above this, as high as eighteen thousand feet, the ground is clothed with luxuriant grass and flowers of every description. Beyond is a desolation of rocks, glaciers, and snow. The northern slopes are much more barren, and on the other side of the border there is hardly anything in the shape of trees. This is accounted for partly by the elevation and partly by the want of water, the inner range of mountains almost stopping the monsoon currents from the south.



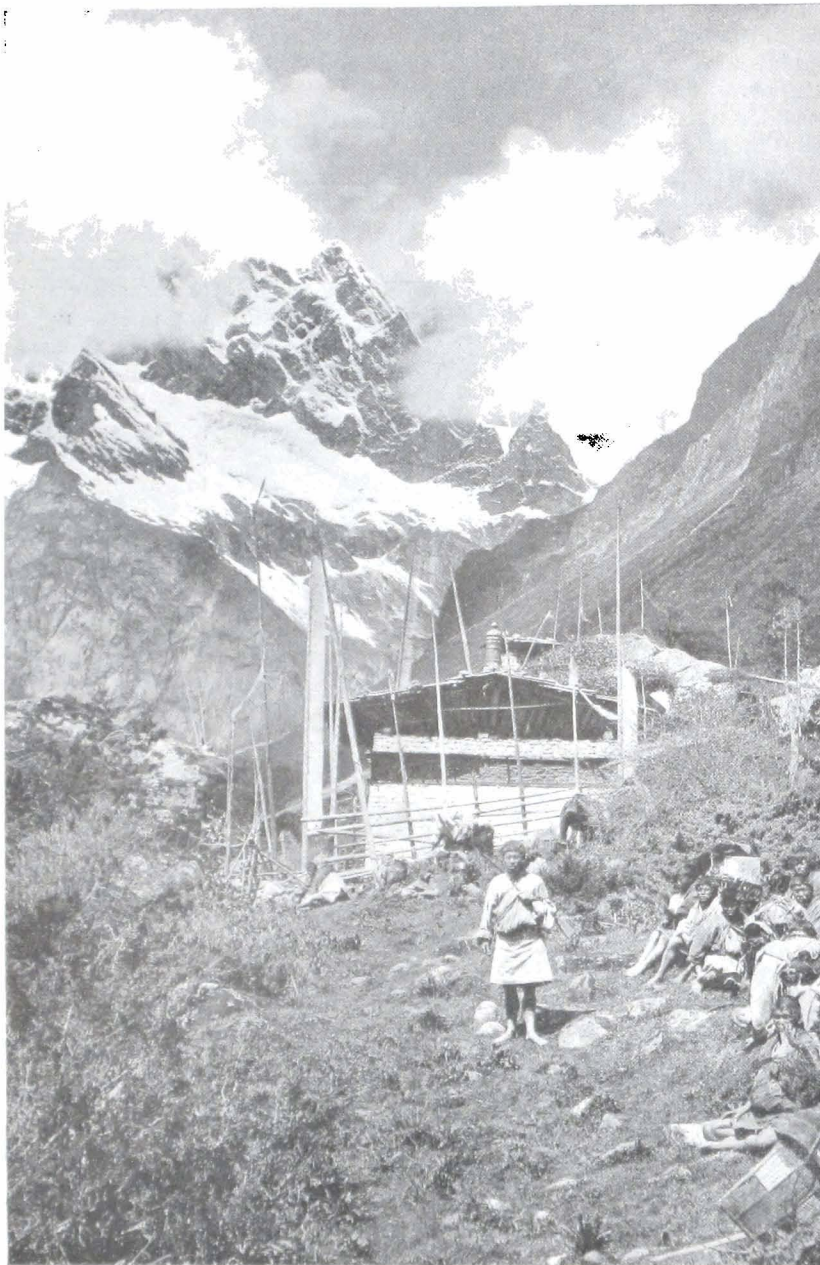
THE DEB RAJA, ONE OF THE TWO SPIRITUAL RULERS OF BHUTAN—HE WAS VERY MUCH INTERESTED IN HAVING HIS PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN.

*From a Photo.*

The third photograph shows a small fort, Singhi Jong, the last on the Bhutan side before reaching the actual boundary, which is shown in the fourth snap-shot at the point marked with a cross. On nearing the frontier the tracks became very bad, and on this particular road—save the mark!—no animals could be taken on account of the depth of the snow and the danger of their slipping into crevasses on the hillside, where a considerable glacier had to be crossed.

The blaze of the sun on the glacier and snow, combined with the cloud and mist, forms often





From a

A FORT IN THE MOUNTAINS.

[Photo.

the most weird effects. In the mornings and evenings these displays of glowing colours are very beautiful, as the usually cold-looking snows are lit up with exquisite rosy tints.

On crossing the pass shown in the view on the next page Tibet was entered, and when we had descended a few thousand feet the Tibetan officials met the party with riding and pack yaks, mules and coolies, and escorted us down to the Lhakang Fort.

Here our old friend the Tongsa again met us

and conducted us on a four or five days' march to the Lhakang Monastery, where a great reception had been prepared for us.

An invitation had previously been sent while we were in Poonakha, asking us to visit this monastery, where the incarnate lama happens to be the Tongsa's nephew.

The second photograph on the next page shows this young lama in his richly-brocaded ceremonial robes, with his monks on either side. He was a jolly little fellow, and showed a good deal of curiosity about our tents and the equipage generally.

As we approached the monastery we were met some miles down the valley by a deputation of lamas and villagers, who offered presents of liquor and fruit.

Farther on a larger deputation appeared with similar offerings, and close to the monastery itself were drawn up the lamas and laymen. These conducted us to a spot in front of the monastery where a camp had been prepared for us in a beautiful grove of willows, with green grass and watercourses. To appreciate our feelings on beholding this oasis, it must be remembered that we had been

travelling up a barren, stony, sandy valley, with a scorching sun and cold wind. The contrast was the greatest relief.

Here we found tents pitched, each in its own enclosure of willows, and a great repast of dried fruits and sweetmeats, walnuts, etc., had been prepared. We were glad to sit down and enjoy the cool and ease of this beautiful camp after the long, weary march. The next day deputations of both lamas and laymen came up to pay their respects from the neighbouring





From a] ON THE BHUTANESE BORDER—THE CROSS MARKS THE PASS THE AUTHOR AND HIS PARTY TRAVERSED.

[Photo.

fort of Tuwa. After they had left the lamas again emerged from the monastery and asked us to go back with them to inspect their buildings and witness a special function which had been organized in our honour. This proved to be a lama dance and was very remarkable, the most weird and horrible-looking masks, consisting of grotesque heads of animals, birds, and devils, being worn by the performers.

The masks, while sometimes made of papier mâché, are generally carved from the wood of a giant creeper which grows in Bhutan at an elevation of six thousand feet. They have to be carved while the wood is green, and are afterwards painted in brilliant colours.

A number of smaller dances were also performed, which, to the uninitiated, all appeared very



THE "INCARNATE LAMA" OF THE LHKANG MONASTERY—ALTHOUGH A HIGH DIGNITARY, HE WAS A MERE BOY AND A "JOLLY LITTLE FELLOW."

From a Photo.

much the same. A few lamas, with cymbals, trumpets, and drums, sat on one side of the courtyard, and after a preliminary and very discordant tuning-up the dancers themselves appeared from one of the entrances, and formed themselves into a circle. They then gyrated round and round in a heavy, though probably somewhat difficult, step. During festivals the dances continue for days, but for our benefit, after a few rounds, the performers returned to the dressing-room, to appear again in different masks and different silks.

Seen in the native surroundings the spectacle was extremely interesting and picturesque. The movements are symbolic of certain episodes either in the life of Buddha or some other sacred subject, but they are apt to pall on the European spectator. After the dance we were





A REMARKABLE CHINESE DEVIL-DANCE — NOTICE THE WEIRD AND HORRIBLE-LOOKING MASKS WORN BY THE PERFORMERS, REPRESENTING ANIMALS, BIRDS, AND DEMONS — TO THE LEFT IS THE ORCHESTRA. [Photo.]



taken to the monastery for refreshments before returning to our comfortable camp.

As is always the case in Tibet, the place swarmed with beggars, but those at Lhakang were perhaps a little more picturesque than most, and I think not quite so dirty. The goat-skins in which they were clad gave them a peculiar and unusual appearance.

Before concluding this short account of our travels I must devote a few lines to the pests

valleys, leeches are bad, but not nearly so bad as in Sikkim.

For beautiful and varied scenery Bhutan is difficult to beat. The architecture of the principal buildings is grand, and the people most interesting. There is an immense variety of races, those on the north-east coming directly from Tibet, from Sakya and Ralung. It is difficult to say, however, whence those in the eastern valleys emanate, but they are not of



*From a*

A GROUP OF BEGGARS CLAD IN GOAT-SKINS.

*[Photo.*

that infest the country. On reaching the foot of the hills horse-flies literally buzzed round in swarms, and we found it impossible to halt even for a moment. They not only settled on the mules and elephants, but even on us; the poor animals' sides were soon bleeding profusely—especially those of the elephants—while we ourselves were driven nearly frantic. Higher up the pipsa fly is very aggravating, and leaves a very nasty sore if one is careless and allows oneself to scratch the bite, which it is difficult to avoid doing. Then, on entering the grass-covered hills, the ticks are a scourge—here the dogs had to be examined every mile or two and the insects taken off in scores. There are more of these creatures in Bhutan than in any other part of the entire Himalayas. Higher up still, in the damp

Tibetan origin and they do not speak Tibetan. They probably come from Assam or the hills to the east of Bhutan, and the dialects spoken by them vary to a very considerable extent, even in the same valleys. Their customs are also different. The old legends I heard, moreover, tell of ancient kings of great wealth and power inhabiting many of the valleys, and evidently having some connection with the plains.

Bhutan is a country with every imaginable climate from tropical to Arctic, with moist lands watered by torrential rains in the south, and dry, arid plains in the north. It has, as I have shown, a very heterogeneous population, and it speaks well for the Tongsa's strength of character that he has acquired such a hold over the people, and turned the country from a land of continual war to one of peace.