

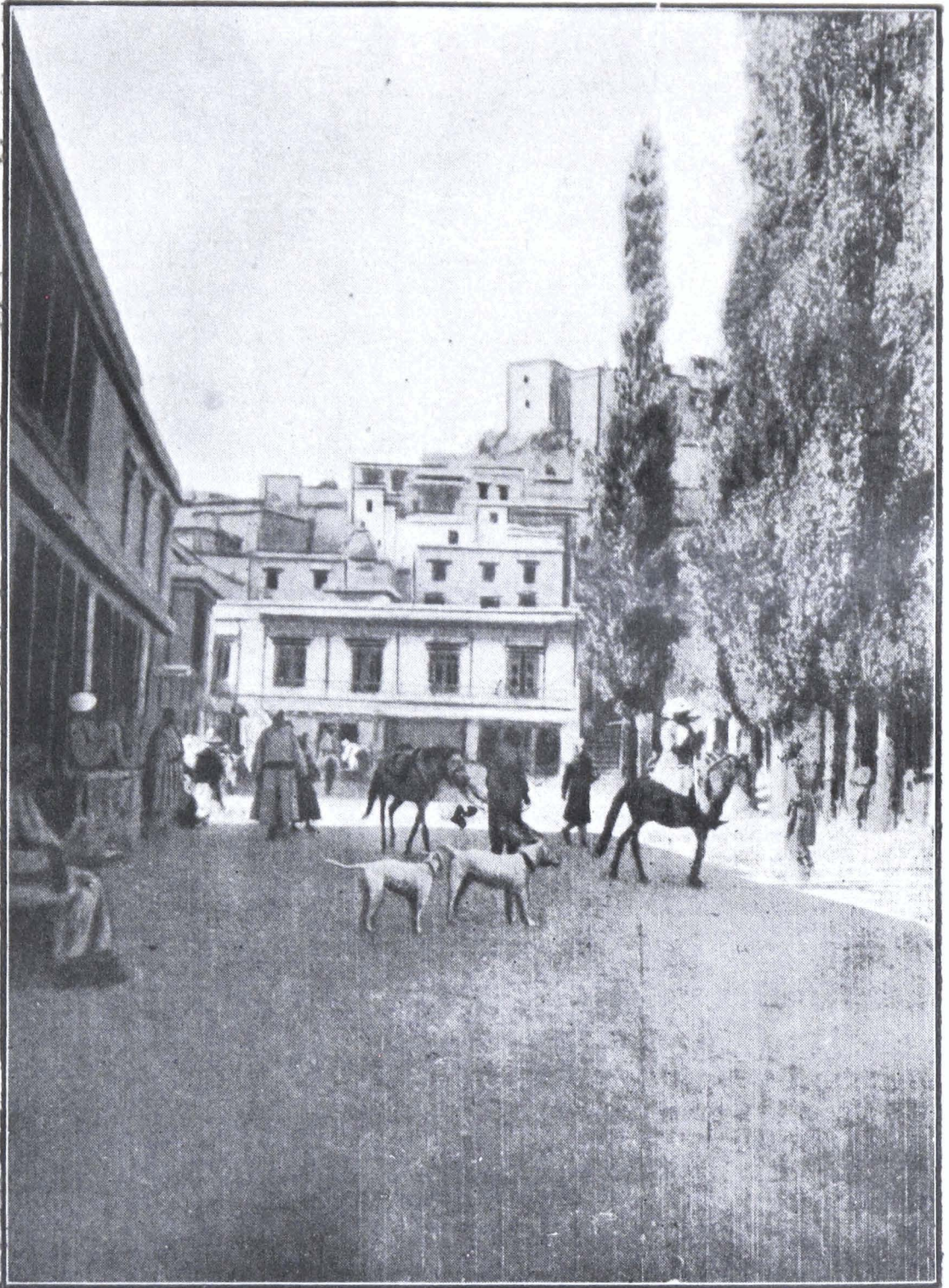
A Ride to Lech

By

Mrs. Golbrooke Greenup

A RIDE TO LEH

*To the Sick and Wounded Soldiers
I nursed in Chow Section Hospital
1917-18*



Leh.

A RIDE TO LEH



BY

MRS. ASHBROOKE CRUMP



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A RIDE TO LEH.

LEH is said to be about 250 miles from Srinagar, but Ladakhi miles are ever so much longer than English, and as there are no mile-posts beyond the Zoji La—they say they have all been burnt for fire-wood—it is impossible to say exactly what the distance is. Incidentally, it seems curious that in a country where the chief product is stone they should have no milestones. This is rather a sore point. On many a sun-scorched march, I have longed to know how many miles remained to be done.

The route lies over shelves cut out of the sheer rock overhanging precipices, then down the side of ravines, and along stony, sandy desert. It is the historic road, from time

immemorial, of trade between Central Asia and India. There are 16 stages between Srinagar and Leh. The first we did by boat to Ganderbal. It is best to engage ponies at Ganderbal to go right through to Leh. Beyond Dras, though one can get ponies, they are changed at every stage, which is inconvenient, and the men have no proper ropes and sacks for tying up things like the Kashmiri ponymen have; so odds and ends are apt to get lost. We found we did very well with 12 pack ponies and two saddle ponies. One of the pack ponies was reserved for the cook, who generally went on ahead to get lunch ready for us. The rates for ponies are given in one's passport and are reasonable enough. The men always expect a little extra *backsheesh*, and it is usual to give it to them.

Khagan, 10th July, 1918.—Ganderbal to Khagan, 12 miles. We started at 5 A.M., but the sun rose early and it soon became hot.



Group of Ponymen in Apricot Grove at Nurla.

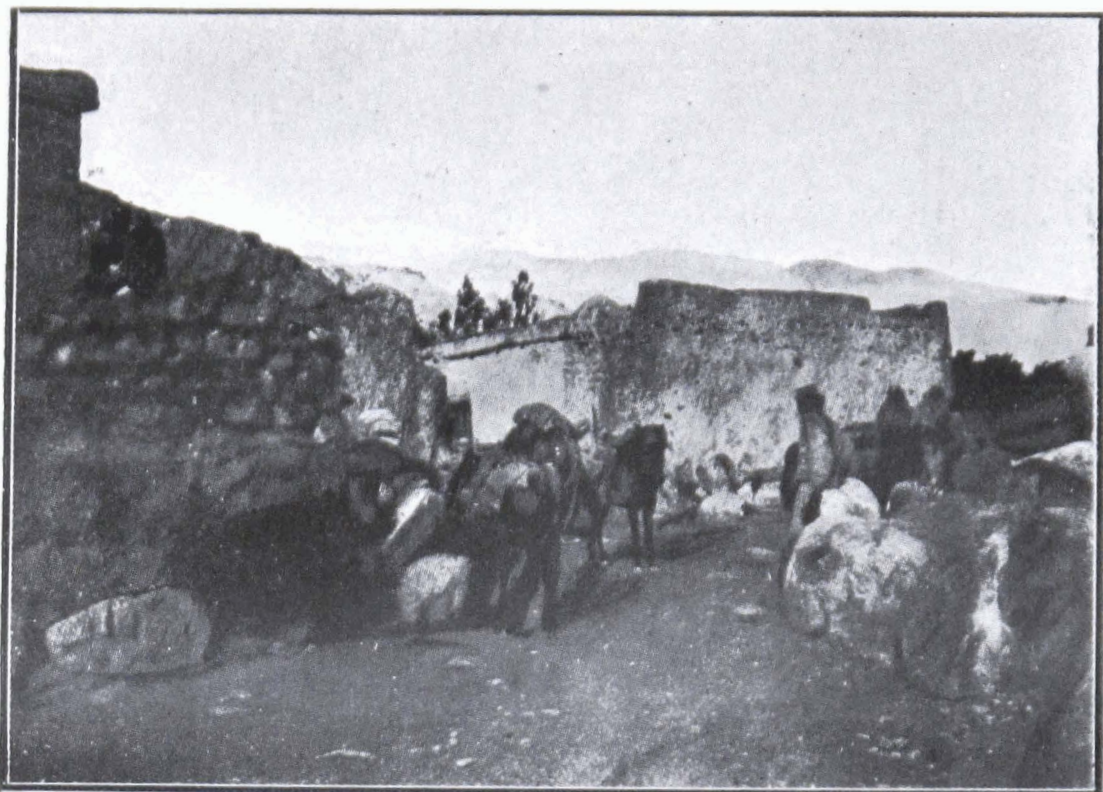
Our Kashmiri ponies are not bad little beasts, though they hardly deserve the high-flown praises of Guffar, their owner, who is coming with us as head ponyman, and general factotum. Our Indian servants have all shirked and stayed behind on one excuse or another, and as they have a firm belief they would die of hardships on the way, we are better without them.

So they are left to enjoy their ease and to look after the good house-boat *Nautilus*.

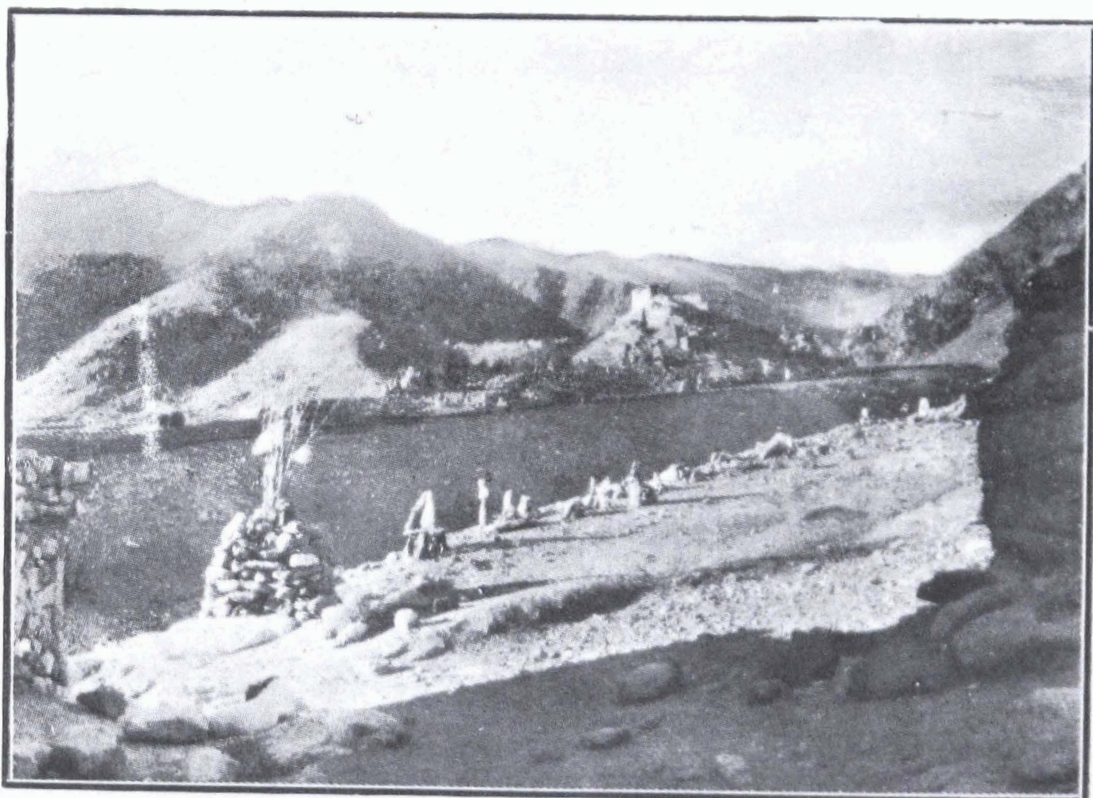
We have a Kashmiri as cook. He is nimble, obliging and does the work of three Indian servants, while Rahim, a shikari, is in charge of the caravan. These three are rough and ready, but it is a wise traveller who goes light and doesn't expect too much on a trek of this kind. One finds that most of the things one had considered necessities are only superfluities after all. Lalla, our cook, had ridden on ahead, and by the time we arrived at

Khagan, we found our tents pitched and breakfast nearly ready under a walnut tree. The Sind river ran by, only two or three yards away, with a most appalling din. We had to shout at each other, and even then it was hard to hear. This afternoon we walked up to the dâk bungalow and saw a sick officer, who had fallen ill while shooting on the Zoji La. We gave him what help we could, and he is to start for Ganderbal at 4 o'clock to-morrow morning to avoid the sun.

Gund, 11th July, 1918.—This morning, one of the much-belauded ponies, the Red Man, was not forthcoming. He, with all the pack ponies, had been turned loose to graze, while, I fancy, his owner and brethren were having a farewell feast in their village. So my saddle was put on a pack pony, which I liked as well as, or better than, the errant beast. The great advantage of Guffar is that he has two most comfortable saddles, and I appreciated this after a horrible



Caravan at Nurla.



Mani Wall at Khalatse

experience on narrow wooden saddles up the Erin Nala last month.

The march to Gund was a pretty one, but Lalla had pitched our tents in the serai compound, the only place available, and it was very dirty. Our two bull-terriers, Sol and Kaifal, for whom we had paniers made in the hope that they would ride, refused to sit in them, jumped out ; and so we let them run, though we knew the sun would be too much for them ; Sol, too, is permanently lame.

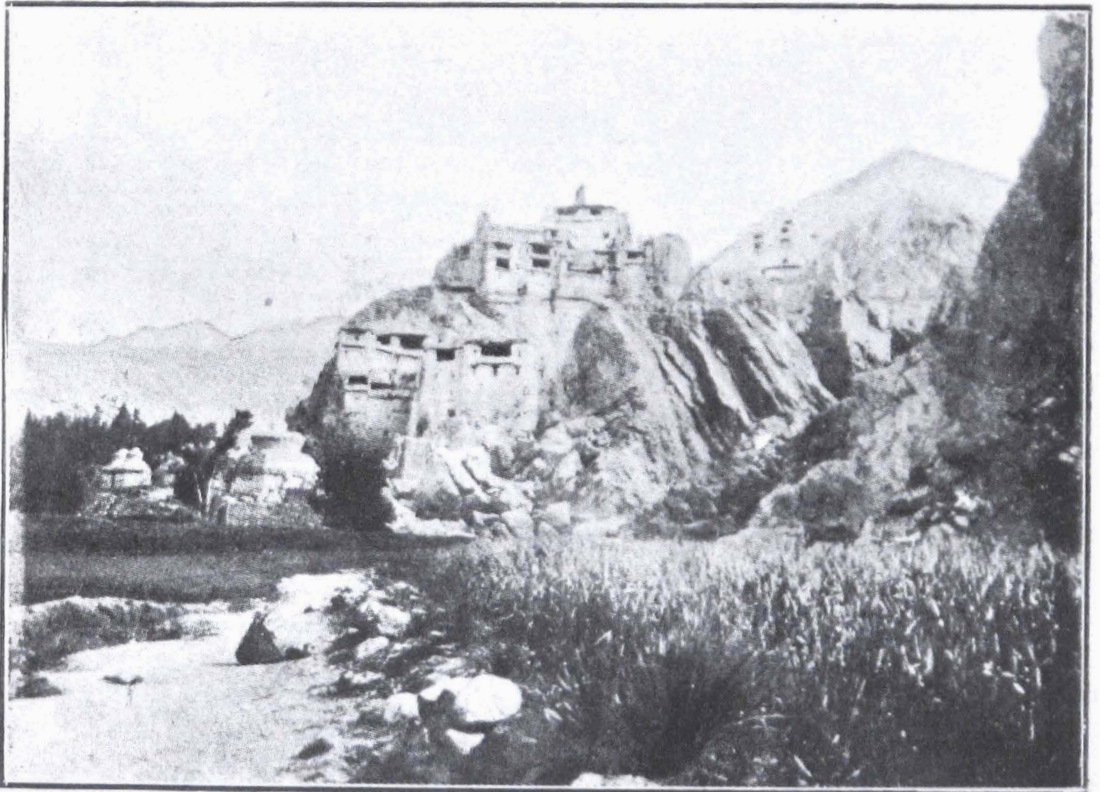
Sonamarg, 12th July, 1918.—Gund to Sonamarg, 14 miles. We rode through enchanting scenery ; many people prefer it to Switzerland. The first view of the glaciers above Thajwas was astonishing in its radiant beauty. We could not linger to look at them however. Our pack ponies were late, and rain threatened ; so we rode on two miles further to the serai, in which two rooms are reserved for Europeans. The rooms afforded us shelter, but that was all.

They were small, and looked out on the public courtyard of the serai ; apart from the clatter and noise that went on half through the night, it was anything but pleasant. I wonder why there is no rest-house at Sonamarg, where it is more needed than in most places.

Baltal, 13th July, 1918,—9 miles.—The new bridge across the Sind river was not quite finished, but we rode across it on our way to Baltal, 9 miles, the most pleasant ride thus far. The air was sweet with pines and clover, the road along meadows for a great part, and on either hand were superb mountains. The rest-house at Baltal is a comfortable little place and stands on a slope surrounded by a thick wood. There are many birch trees, and a perfect glory of flowers. We saw white and blue columbines, asters, fumitories, violets in thousands and a glorious white lily. Baltal is over 9,000 feet high and the air is colder and more bracing than hitherto. You can't buy



Lamayuru.



Buzoo

anything here except milk, and you have to go and catch your *gujar* first for that. Then he says he has only one cow and can't give you much. In the evening a storm came up from the west, and it rained heavily all night and the greater part of next day. So we halted, and here we met the last Englishman we were to see for many a day. He had been over the Zoji La to Dras, and told us Dras in the sun was as hot as the plains of India. This was not pleasant hearing for me, as the one thing I loathe is a puce-coloured complexion. Have I explained that I belong to the sex that is supposed to care for complexions ?

Matayan, 15th July, 1918.—On the 15th, a bright and heavenly morning, we crossed the Zoji La, 11,500 feet, and rode on to Matayan, 15 miles. The pass for 5 or 6 miles had frequent frozen snow slopes. The ascent after the first very steep 3 miles is gradual, and you hardly know when you are at the top. The little

rest-house at Matsoi is supposed to mark the summit, and we ate a hasty lunch, and made and drank the coffee, which our tiffin basket is never without. Then on we hurried to get to Matayan and shelter. It was blowing a gale and was icy cold, but the *chowkidar* at Matayan is a man of resource and had a big fire ready. Just before Matayan we passed a field full of edelweiss.

Dras, 17th July, 1918.—On to Dras, 12½ miles, through scenery which is totally different from anything in Kashmir. All trees are left behind, and now we have bold bare mountains, of most astonishing colours,—emerald, yellow ochre, deep purple, almost black rocks offer a perpetual feast to the eye. As for the sun, my enemy, we were fortunate in having a cloudy sky. So far so good. Dras stands in an open plain, and we rode on past the old Sikh fort to the rest-house—rather a picturesque building with its steep pitched roof. The people here say that they have snow six yards deep for the greater



Yaks on the Foti La.

part of the year. We are now in Baltistan or Little Tibet, and the people here are the Dards. Horace Wilson says of them :—“ Few people can be traced through so long a period in the same place as these, as they are evidently the Daradas of Sanskrit geography and Daradæ of Strabo.” On his death a Dard goes to Heaven, says Moorcroft, but as the gate is guarded by a Kashmiri, who would probably refuse to admit him, the corpse is provided with a bow and arrows, with which, if necessary, he may fight for entrance. Vigne says that “ Dardu,” when spoken of, consists of 5 or 6 of the numerous wild states that border on the Indus from Hazara downwards,—Chilas, Tor, Jelkot, Palus and Kholi. Dardu is called Yaghistan or a country of rebels or natives without rule, by the Gilgitis. The country of the Dards is mentioned by Herodotus. He calls it “ The country of the gold-digging ants, which were smaller than dogs, but larger than foxes.”

Our Kashmiris dislike the Baltis and say they are awful thieves. But we take this *cum grano salis*, having ourselves our own opinion of the Kashmiri.

There is a telegraph and post office at Dras, and one feels sorry for the poor clerks condemned to live in such a place. Let us hope their term of service is short. There is also one shop and what is called a kothiali, a most important person, who is in charge of a store of grain and flour, which he sells to traders and travellers on behalf of the State at fixed and reasonable rates. Our servants refused to have any truck with *grim*, a coarse kind of barley which they are expected to eat.

Tashgam, 17th July, 1918,—19 miles.—The clouds still formed a canopy on our march, which continues down the open valley.

The people one met seemed cheerful, and I thought the women looked attractive in their coal-scuttle bonnets. Their faces are broader

and flatter than the Kashmiris'. They carry heavy loads, but don't seem to mind much, and wear pretty felt boots in white and red while working in the fields. We are still in the polygamous country, and women seem plentiful. Twenty-one Ladakhi miles to Kharbu was too long a march and too tiresome on our slow Kashmiri ponies, so we pitched our tents in a willow grove at Tashgam. It was good to see trees again. The rain clouds followed up from the west (our route of course lies due east) and it drizzled a little now and then—interesting to see the efforts of the monsoon to make itself felt in these remote hills.

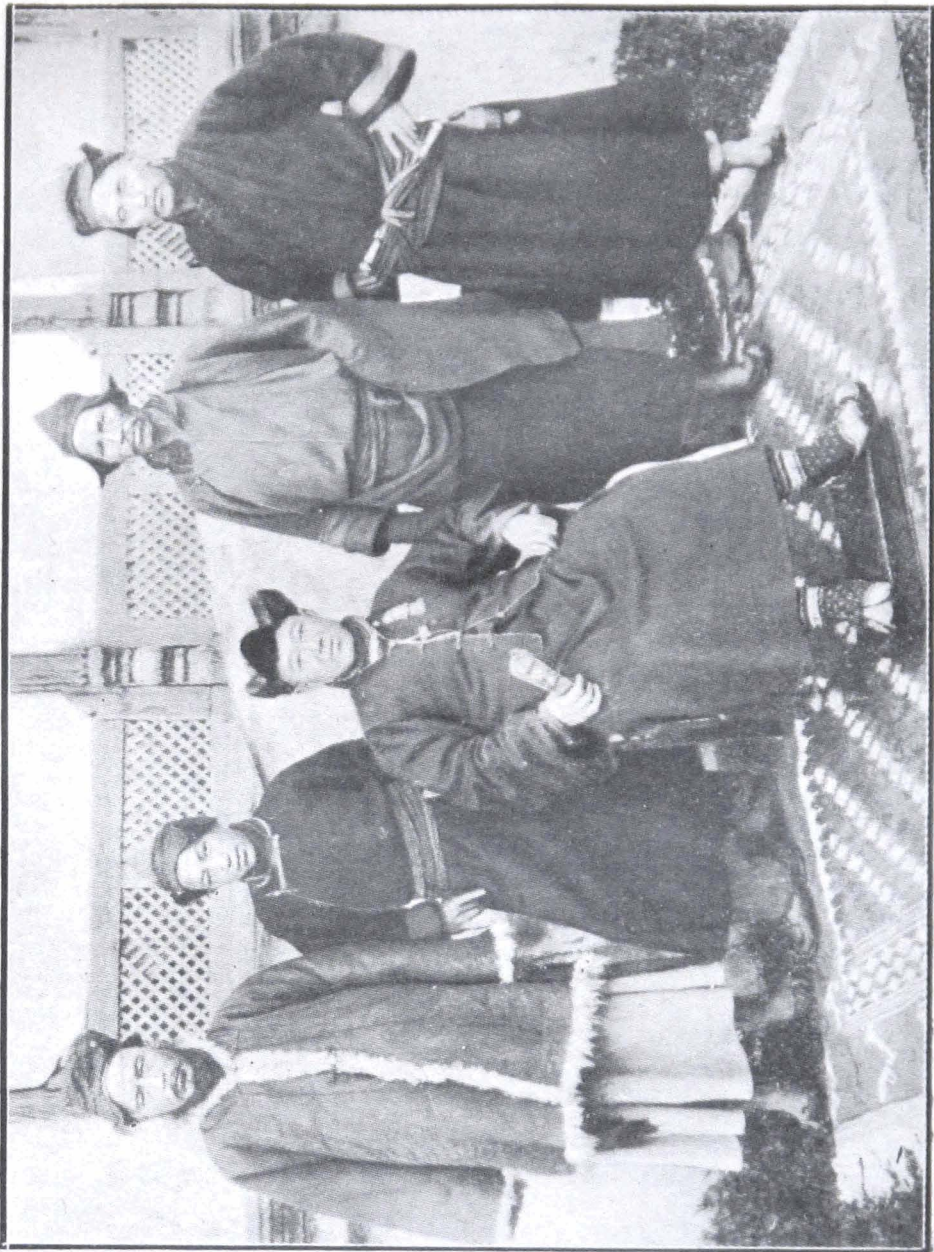
Tashgam is a curious village. The houses are built with boulders six feet above and about three feet below the ground. They burrow down into the earth to cheat the cold.

The nimble Lalla soon had lunch and the ever-welcome coffee ready. I now carry a

bottle of milk in the luncheon basket, as there is always a delay in getting it on arrival. In reply to our request for supplies, the toothless old lambardar moaned that there was already one sahib "baito-ing" in his village, and where was he to get enough milk for us? However, we gave him the milk pail and told him to go and do his best; and at 10 o'clock he appeared with 2 seers of fresh milk. That blessed word *backsheesh* is as magical as ever.

Chanegund, 18th July, 1918.—It was rather an uninteresting march of 15 miles to Chanegund. The ravines and gorges repeat themselves, till they become wearisome in their monotony, especially when one is hurrying along on a Kashmiri pony at the giddy rate of $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles an hour.

Of course one could go faster, but I prefer to be with the caravan and the beloved dogs, not knowing what might happen to them if



Lamas.

they were left to the tender mercies of the ponymen.

We camped in a willow and apricot grove, and the apricots, just ripening, were delicious. These groves are uncommonly damp places, as rivulets are running in every direction, and now and again a great big river is let loose in them. Nor are we done with the monsoon. Heavy clouds came up at sunset and it rained off and on during the night. We are wondering when, if ever, we are to get out of the malicious monsoon's reach. Temperature at 7 P.M. 62°.

Kargil, 19th and 20th July, 1918.—It was only a baby march of 7 or 8 miles to Kargil. All along the road are lavender bushes, and now and then a hedge of lavender. It is of a darker colour than ours. We turned to the right up the ravine, while the jade-coloured Dras river was joined by the Suru, here a dirty gray, and soon turned off in the Skardu direction ;

but we followed the Suru up to Kargil. The guide books call it a good road, but a little of it goes a long way, and, as Knight says, what is called a rough road in this country is calculated to make one's hair stand on end. Kargil, which is the capital of Purig, stands in a green valley teeming with vegetation. The chief crop is barley, but a kind of pea is also much in evidence. As every inch of ground is taken up with cultivation, there was nowhere to pitch our camp, and so we went to the rest-house. Gaily painted on the outside, it was horribly dirty inside. The floors are *kutchas* and supposed to be covered with *durries*, but, as we learnt later, the *chowkidars* of these rest-houses frequently hire the *durries* and beds to Yarkandis and others willing to pay for them.

The *bazaar* is interesting, but one shops under difficulties, as all the inhabitants accompany you, and follow you about, offering



Women in Zanskar.

advice. I could find no turquoises, but an old grey-beard, who has been here for half a century, said he had whisky and wines—and that this was the dearest year he could remember. He supposed it was the *Fauj*. The women here no longer wear the picturesque coal-scuttle bonnet. They array themselves in a pork-pie hat, with straight black woollen gown reaching above their ankles to show wrinkled close-fitting trousers, while their long hair is braided and swings almost to the ground with a heavy tassel made of turquoises and cords. At last we seem to have got clear of the rain. A brilliant blue sky recalls the Riviera at its best and brightest; and the moonlight has to be seen to be believed. Temperature at noon 68° in rest-house.

Lotson, 21st July, 1918.—Leaving Kargil we got on to the plateau we had always imagined formed the greater part of the Tibetan route, but it was only for a few miles, when back we

came to rock and ravine once more—but with a difference. The valleys are more open, the colouring brighter, the air lighter, and altogether we begin to feel as if we really were in the veritable Tibet. At Lotson it is a problem where to pitch a tent, as every inch of flat earth is cultivated. However, eventually we found some turf and a few willows by a stream. Tried fishing, but caught nothing.

Mulbeck, 22nd July, 1918.—The guide books call it 9 miles to Mulbeck, but it seemed more like 14, and the greater part ran on ledges of rock overhanging frightful precipices. At last the defile opened out and we saw Shergol, the first Buddhist monastery. It was most astonishingly placed against a gold-coloured rock, hanging miles up in the air—a striking object painted white with red bands. We rode on under a scorching sun through bare and barren rocks to Mulbeck. It is a strange, uncanny place, with long *mani* walls and *chortens*, and

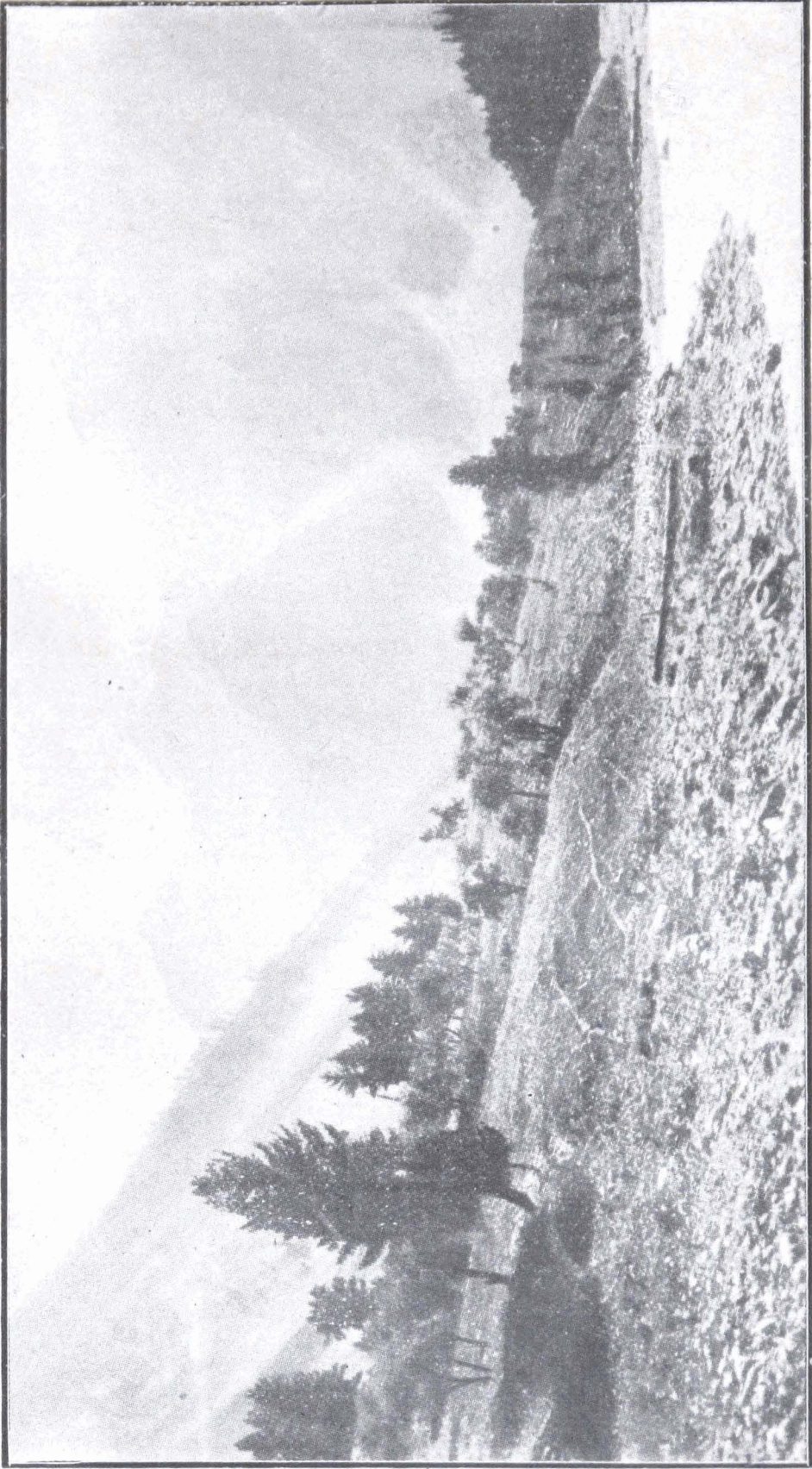
a monastery high above the village with yellow rocks cutting sharp against the turquoise sky.

The sky alone is worth coming to see—it is an intense glowing blue, seen only in Tibet ; and here it may be as well to recall Vigne's definition of the three Tibets. He says, " Lassa or Yul-Sung, the residence of the Grand Lama, is the capital of Bhutan or Upper Tibet ; Leh or Ladakh of that part of Bhutan called Middle Tibet, and Skardu is the principal place in Little Tibet."

The camp here was dust and sun, especially dust ; and a violent storm of wind raged all night and covered our things with it. In our caravan to-day we had our first *dzo*, a cross between a yak and a cow. They are slower than ponies, but carry more, and usually march by night.

Kharbu, 23rd July, 1918,—14½ miles.—This day's scenery reminded us of Arabia Deserta as described by Doughty—a chaos of barest rocks

and sand, without even the aromatic herbs we have noticed on other days, when the air was fragrant with wild thyme, mint and lavender; whereas here the sun has scorched the scent out of the air. We crossed the Namika La, 13,000 feet, and but for a slight difficulty in breathing, would never have known it, so gradual is the ascent. Hardly a speck of snow to be seen, and that only in the distance. Very different from the Zoji La which, though nearly 2,000 feet lower, has any amount of frozen snow and ice even in July. The air here is so dry that the snow line is as high as 18,000 feet. At last, a most welcome relief, the Kharbu valley, comes in sight, with its long stretch of greenery. No end of barley dotted here and there with bright mustard patches. The high rocks towering over Kharbu are crowned with ruined forts and castles, and show that the sleepy place has had a stormy past. No room to pitch tents. So we went to the rest-house, just behind



Looking towards Zoji La and Sind River.

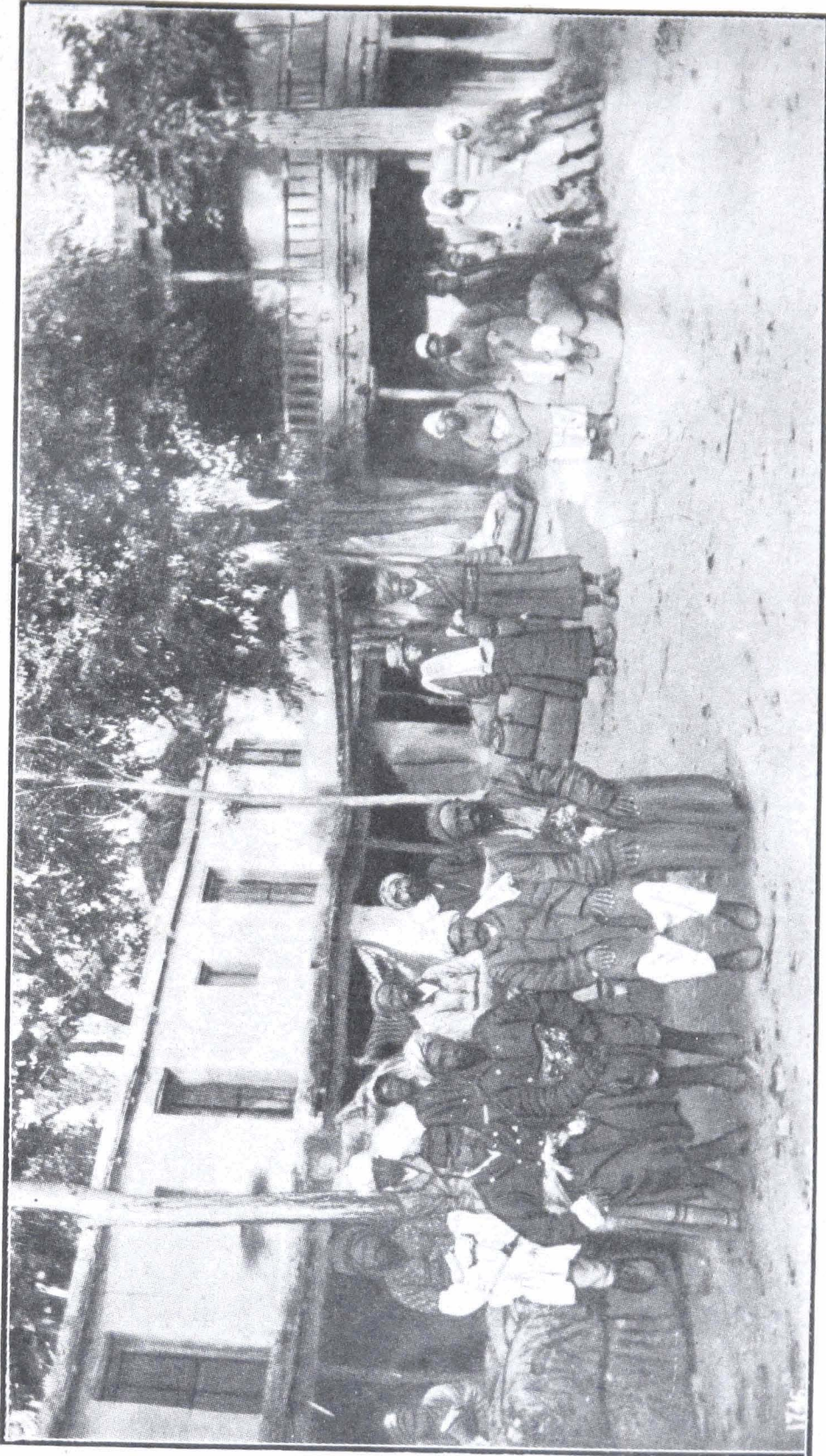
which was the serai full of caravans and traders.

Lamayuru, 24th July, 1918,—15 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles.—Although every one told us it never rains in Tibet, heavy clouds hung low on our march to-day, and it rained on the Foti La, 13,400 feet. The ascent to this pass, too, is very gradual, and to-day none of us suffered from breathlessness except the grey pony. The view from the top is marvellous and beggars description. A steep descent of 5 miles brought us to Lamayuru, poised with its monastery on the crest of a rock.

The lamas have certainly chosen the most startling positions for their monasteries. In no other country in the world could they be more noticeably placed. Compare the *gompas* with the Chartreux monastery; while the latter in its beauty and complexity expresses something of the sublime Catholic religion, the strangeness of the lamaistic worship is revealed

in their fantastic *gompas* perched in impossible places. Nearly every village has its *gompa*, and the monks are allowed to hold land on very favourable terms and are comfortably off. In fact, I suppose there is no more church-ridden country in the world than Tibet. The people are subservient to a degree, and believe in letting the lamas regulate their lives for them. For the lamas, too, the best of everything must be reserved, and on my rides I have often seen loads of apricots with the finest fruit set apart for the *gompas*. But I, too, have had my share of the reserved fruit at a price. There are about 40 lamas at Lama-yuru. Some of them came to see us, and we conversed through an interpreter. They were not very intelligent, and could tell us little of what we wanted to know.

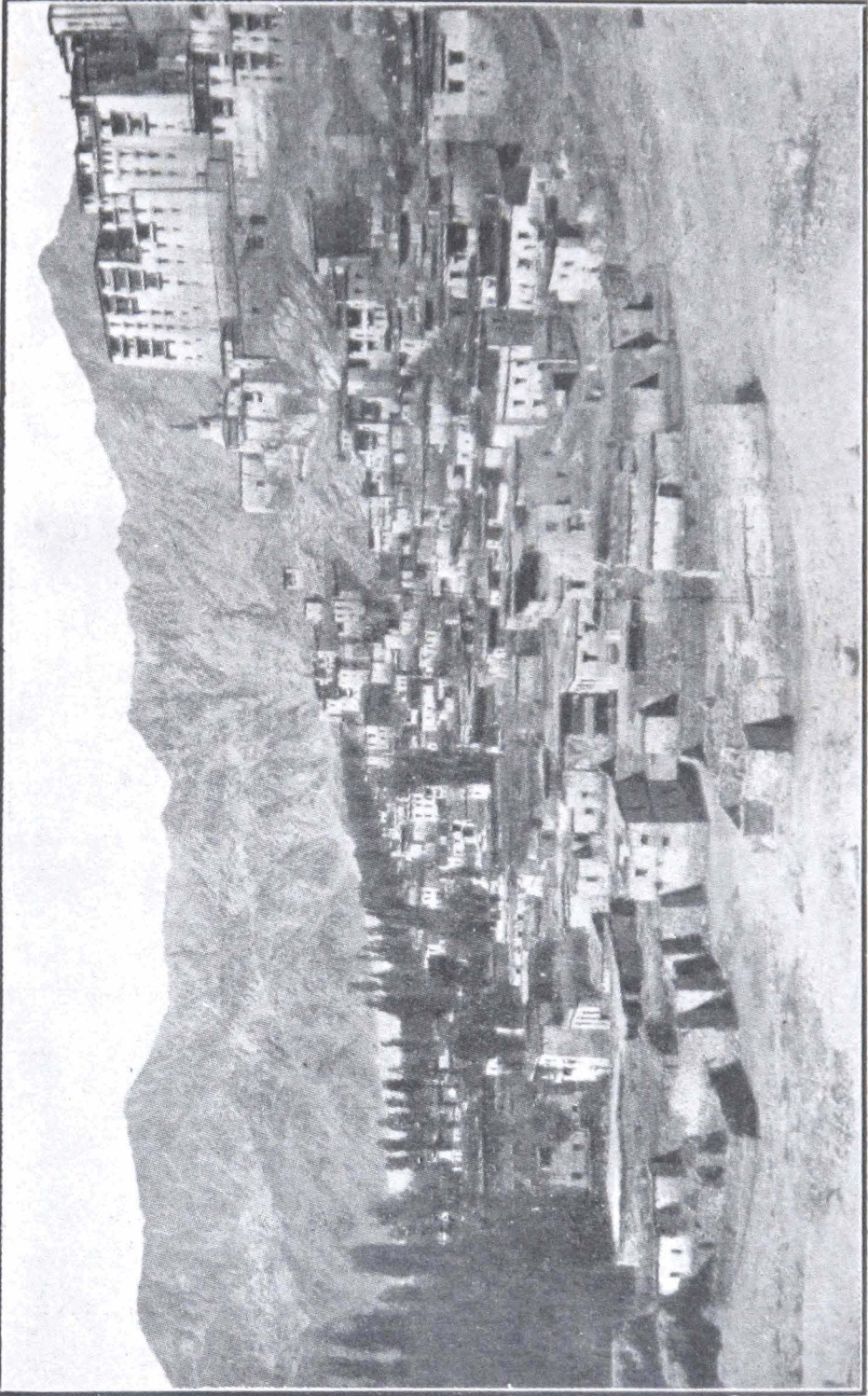
Khalatse, 25th July, 1918,—10 miles.—Let no one imagine it is a joy ride to Leh. The country is a desert, and a desert full of gloom.



Yarkand Agency at Leh.

At every village entrance and exit the dead salute you. The long line of *mani* walls, the *chortens* (rather Chinese-shaped structures), the curious mountains, are all rather uncanny and give you a creepy sensation. One cannot wonder at the people being devil-worshippers as it seems a country full of hobgoblins and djins. Horrid ravines and fearful precipices marked the greater part of the march to-day. The narrow torrent rushed on its way through appalling defiles, and when at last we came to its junction with the Indus, it was with a sigh of relief one saw the broad bed of this famous river. One wearies of moving along a narrow shelf of rock hour after hour. Even on these bare rocks a plant found sustenance. It was a caper with large white flowers. The steep descent from Lamayuru is interesting from a geological point of view. Limestones mixed with slates of every colour were the predominant rocks. And close to Lamayuru there is an extraordinary

band of yellow clay about a mile wide and nearly 1,000 feet thick, across the valley, cut into fantastic shapes. After the desert march it was bliss to see the green, fertile Khalatse appear. It is a garden of apricot trees, with here and there a walnut grove. Shawe says: "These villages look like bits of some other country, cut out with a pair of scissors and dropped into a desert." Every one was eating apricots, which were in the greatest profusion, and some of the best were in the fine garden planted by the Moravian Mission, who have a house here. Khalatse was the capital of the ancient Dard kings, who came to an end in 1200 A.D., and their fort is still to be seen on the Indus. There are, too, a great number of rock carvings. In fact, the whole of this region is of historical interest; and the curious thing is that all through the never-ending wars between the petty kings, trade from India to Central Asia went steadily on.



Leh City.

Where the present suspension bridge across the Indus stands, King Naglug, a Tibetan, built the first bridge. An inscription cut in the rock close by records the fact that the " Great King " built the bridge, and winds up with this weird curse on those who may damage the work :—

" Whoever thinks evil of it in his heart, let his heart rot.

" Whoever stretches his hand towards it, let his hand be cut off.

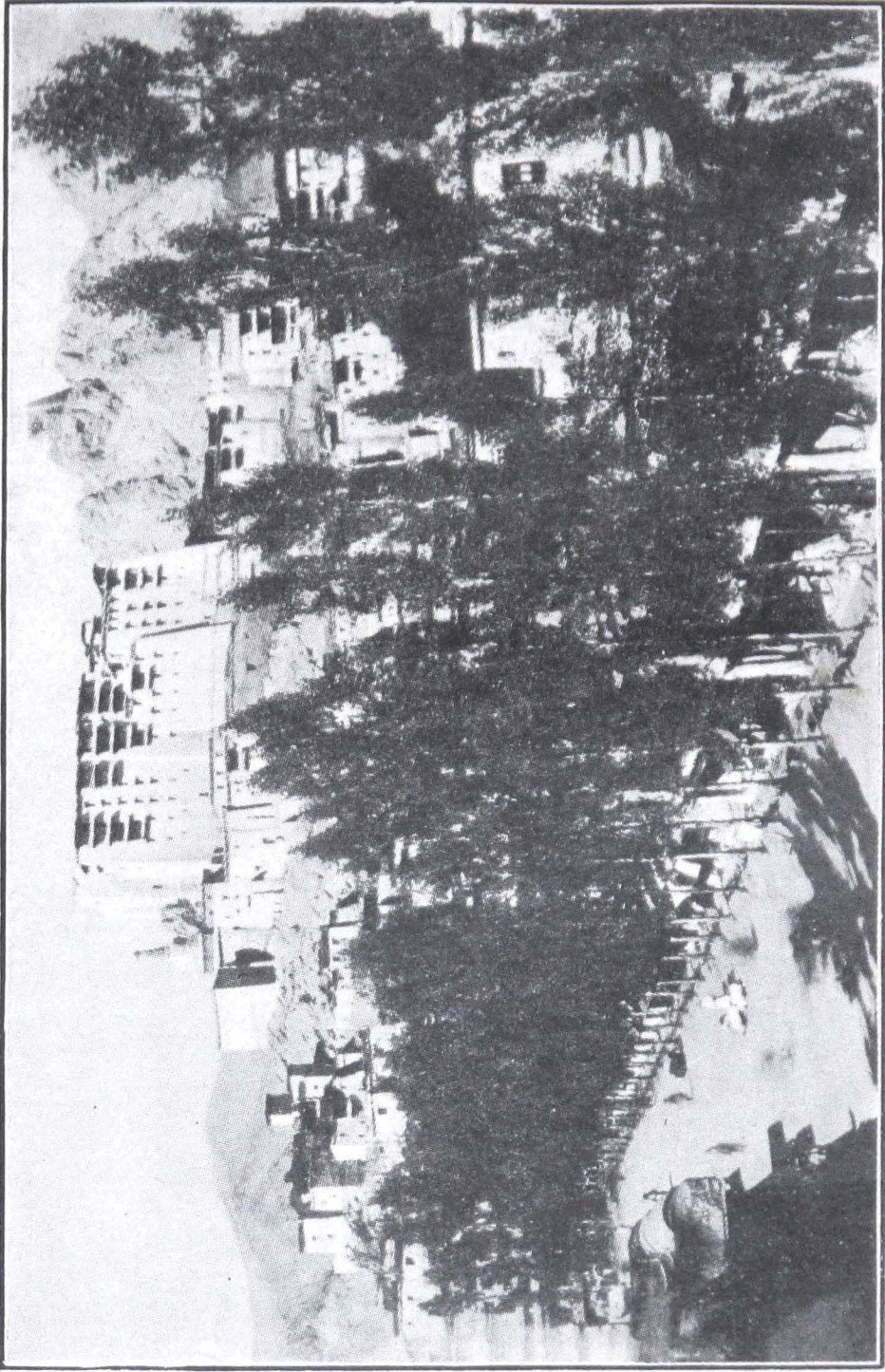
" Whoever harms it with his eye, may his eye become blind.

" Whoever does harm to the bridge, may he be born again in hell."

We met a great number of caravans on the road, and a large part of the loads carried *charas* from Yarkand. It appears that the resin exudes from the *ganja* only at a certain height, and although the plant grows wild in Kashmir, it will not produce the resin, which is therefore brought from Yarkand.

A high official whom I asked about it said that most of it was going to the Punjab.

Nurla, 26th July, 1918.—To-day's march was over a wilderness of sand and stones in the blinding glare. Not a blade of grass or vegetation on the bare rocks. Great was our delight at seeing green Nurla. At its entrance four little flat-faced maidens met us with offerings of apricots. This is real apricot land,—apricots, apricots everywhere. I saw even a goat eating them. The head-dress of the women has again changed. They now wear an almost Mary-Stuart-shaped cap made of leather, long at the back and studded with turquoises. The richer the woman, the larger and finer her turquoises, and some of them carry their whole dower on their heads. The men wear coarse wool of their own weaving, and most of them carry a wheel, spinning as they go. They wear amulets of curious design, and, of course, all the Buddhists wear a pig-tail.



Leh Raja's House and City.

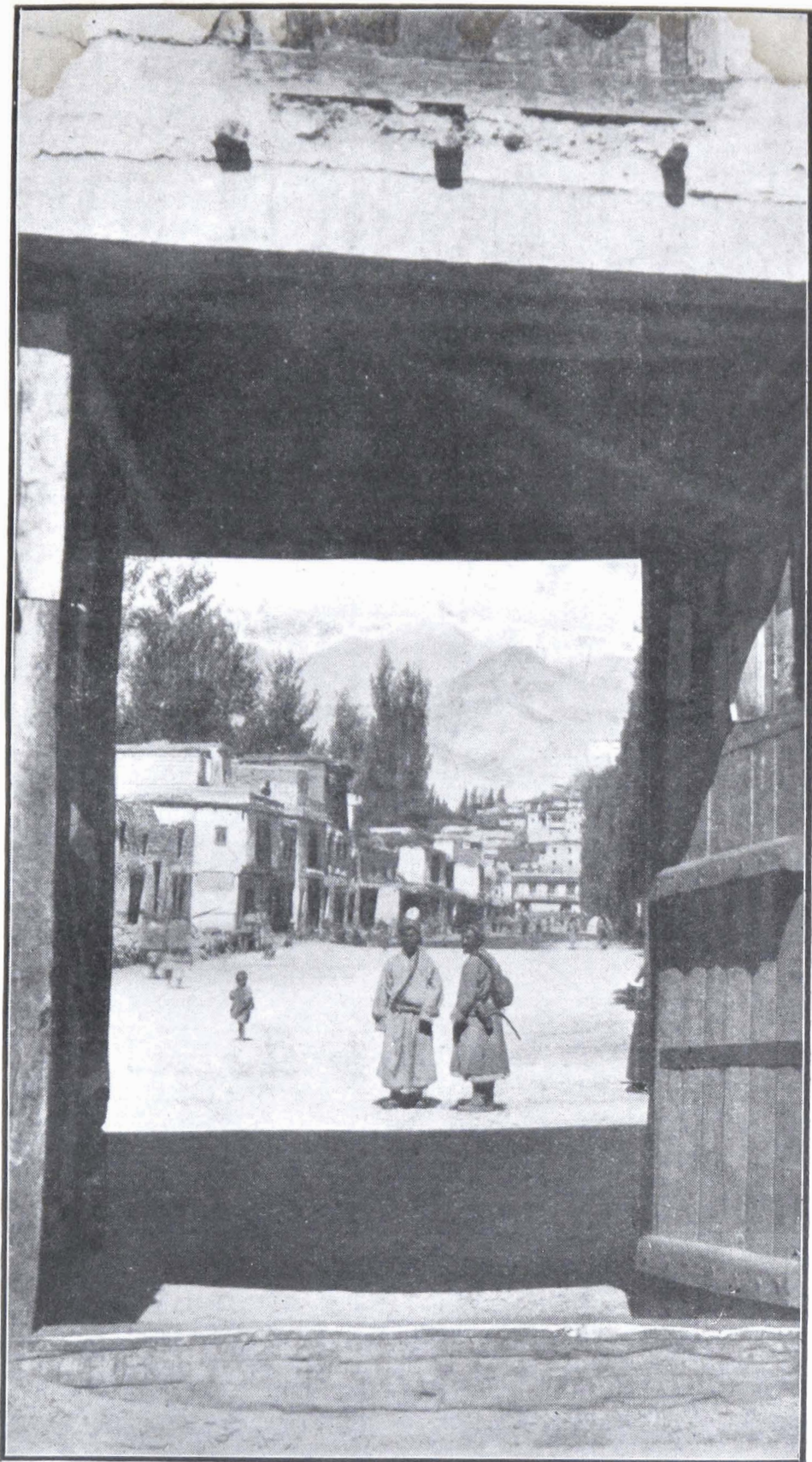
Saspul, 27th July, 1918,—15 miles.—The road to-day was the abomination of desolation. No solitary living thing, vegetable or animal. Range on range of barren mountains, the whole of the 15 long Ladakhi miles. Saspul is a pretty village,—one mass of barley and green trees. The rest-house was said to be dirty, so we camped in a walled garden of poplars. One does not see many birds even in the villages, but the two kinds most in evidence are the English magpie, and ever since we entered the Indus valley, the pestiferous Indian sparrow.

The Ladakhis like the magpie, and it is considered lucky if one lives near a man's house. The sparrow here is not like the Kashmiri one, which is a free and open-air bird, and does not play parasite to man. This bird haunts houses and builds nests in rooms just like the Indian sparrow we know too well. Once or twice we have seen a party of choughs.

But the hoopoes, the friendly hoopoes of Kashmir, are rarely, or never, seen.

Nimu, 28th July, 1918,—11½ miles.—We were not sorry to leave the Indus on this day's march, and to make for a high plateau which, after some miles, led us down to Bazgo, the most picturesque and strange of all villages. After some miles of desert and sand, we suddenly came on it, some 400 feet below us standing on a pinnacle of rock. The closer one gets to Leh, the larger the villages become, and so too do the *mani* walls.

We camped at Nimu, in the large garden attached to the serai. It was much larger, with finer trees, than any we had seen hitherto, and great was our delight thereat. The trees were Kabul poplars, and our joy was soon turned to groans, when we found the beautiful trees shed fluff by the bushel on us, all day long. There it was, thick in the air just like snow, and nothing escaped its fluffy attentions.



Looking through Leh Gate.

And at sunset millions of gnats, which had been lying hidden on the leaves, fell on the lamp like a plague, and we had to flee from our uneaten dinner.

Leh, 29th July, 1918,—18 miles.—A dreary, monotonous march of heat and blinding glare, when at last, a long way off, to our unspeakable relief, we spied a green garden. It was Spitok grove, where there is a restful little house in which we sheltered from the sun and glare. Oh, the delight of a garden after the desert! We had lunch here, and rested during the day, while Rahim went on to Leh with the tents. At about 3 P.M., we started on our last stage of 5 miles to Leh. This bit is a flat, bare wilderness of stones and sand. At last we turned out of the Yarkand road, through the narrow gate of the city, and there was Leh, the goal of so many dreams and hopes. We were content. All the caravans had come in, and their drivers were out in the street enjoying

the evening air. And such air—one must come to Leh to know what air is!

Baltis, Tartars, Yarkandis, men from Lhasa, Kabulis, every type of Asiatic, was to be seen in the broad street, with the Ladakhi Raja's palace high up in the background. A curious and interesting scene, and quite unlike anything we had seen before. Everywhere, giving a note of true Tibetan colour, were the Ladakhi women, with their turquoise-studded head-dresses.

Kaifal had run on when we turned in at the city gate, and was now far out on the Yarkand road. H. got on the grey pony and pursued her, and brought her back to camp. There were people already encamped in the only good grove in Leh, and so we moved up to the rest-house, which is quite a good one. The Kabul poplars, however, were here, too, in their fluffy season, and the compound lay several inches deep in their fluff. It blew



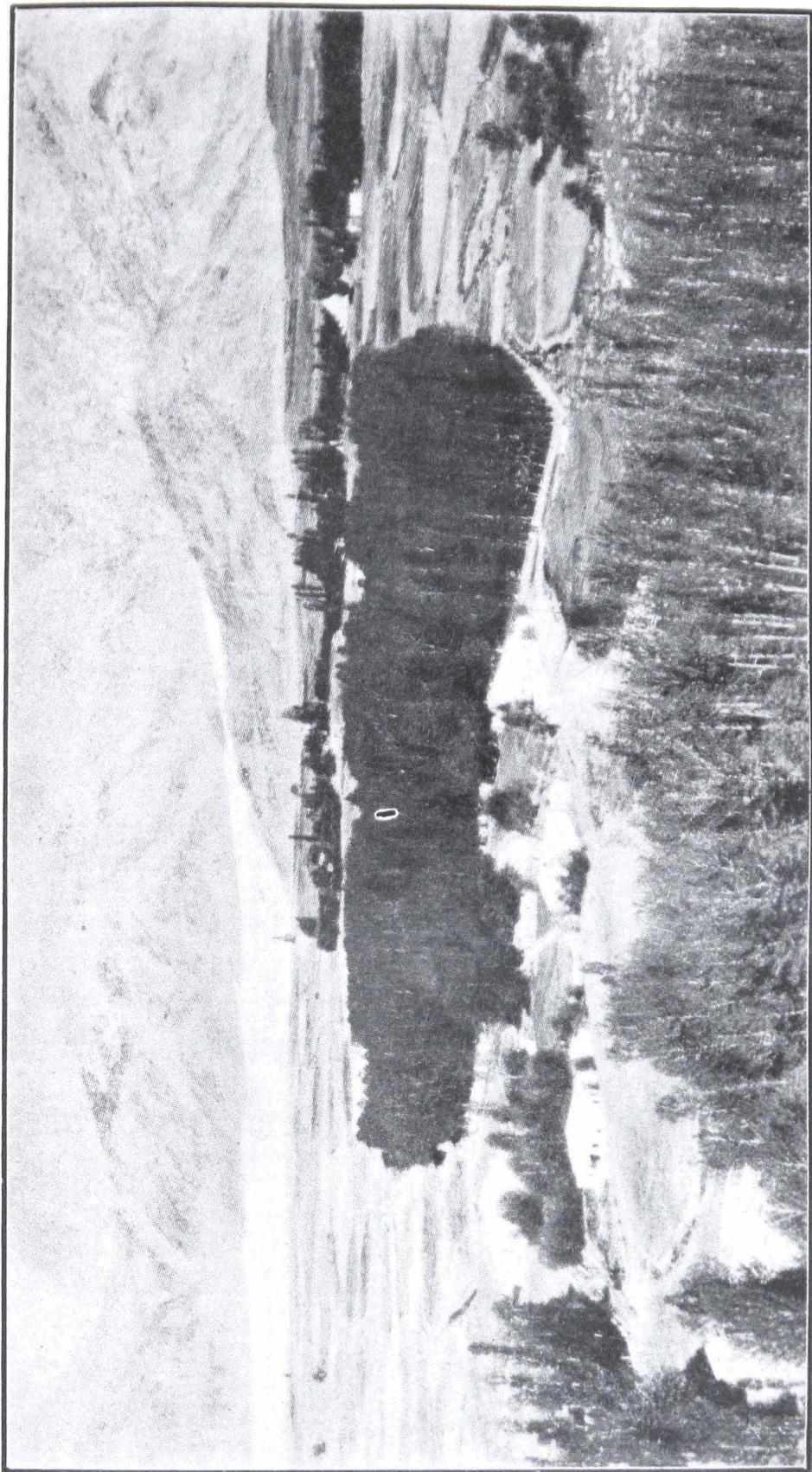
Looking from Zoji La towards Snowy Mountains.

about and got into everything and was a great nuisance.

The next few days we explored the *bazaar* and were never tired of wandering in and out of the streets and watching the strange people. As far as shops go, there is not much of interest to be bought, but by ferreting about in the houses one can unearth treasures, and the people bring things to the stranger to buy. We found great difficulty in changing notes into silver, and had it not been for the courtesy of the Wazir, I do not know what we should have done. He ordered the Treasurer to let us have silver in exchange for notes. The hospitable Wazir gave a very pleasant party for us in his handsome house with its terraced garden. Here we met all the notables of Leh, and two ladies from India who are shooting in the *nalas* beyond.

There is only one family of the Moravian Mission here now. They are Swiss, and were

very helpful and kind to us during our stay. On the anniversary of the War, Mr. Peter held service in the Mission room, and a strange sight it was to see this handful of Christians in this remote place. The service and sermon were in Tibetan, and Mrs. Peter played the harmonium to hymns which were sung in Tibetan to English airs. The tune and time were good, but the voices were harsher than English. The men sat apart from the women, and the latter were gorgeous in all their finery and ornaments. One noticed some extremely intellectual types, and some the very reverse. There was a higher proportion of children, as is to be expected, among the Christians, where polyandry is not allowed. The missionaries are hopeful of conversion; but one doubts whether these people with their strange habit of polyandry will ever become largely Christian. The Mission school-master is a very intelligent man, and does a good deal



Residency Garden at Leh.

of research work for the Indian Archæological Department.

It was a treat to get fresh vegetables, and at Leh are grown the very finest we have seen in the East. The mutton too was good, so was the milk. In fact, all the necessaries of life are easy to get and cheap, except sugar—and as for kerosine oil, it is Rs. 18 a tin.

The Dogras conquered the Ladakhis early in the 19th century, and the descendant of the Ladakhi raja now lives in a village a few miles from Leh. The people are said to look up to him and to treat him with respect. The Leh people are cheerful, and as the men go about their work and carry loads, etc., they sing a tuneful, lively chant, which though monotonous, is pleasant. Leh is 11,500 feet above the sea and we find the air exhilarating and never get tired. They have had only 60 centimeters of rainfall since January.

Spitok, 4th August, 1918,—5 miles.—It was with regret that we said good-bye to Leh, and started on our homeward journey. We rode this afternoon as far as Spitok garden. It blew a gale the whole of the dreary way, and furious gusts of sand nearly blinded us,—the daily Indus valley strafe, that never fails.

There can be no more beautiful view in the whole world than from Spitok garden looking east at sunset. The monastery stands in the foreground with its strange pinnacles and turrets, while away to the right the snow-topped mountains of the Kara-koram catch a purple radiance shot with flame ethereal, the like of which I have never seen in my life.

We halted here and visited the famous monastery. It is situated on an isolated hill in the plain overlooking the Indus. The road up the hill leads to a small gate in the walled enclosure in which the monastery stands, for the hill was in old days a fort and an important

strategic position barring the road down the Indus.

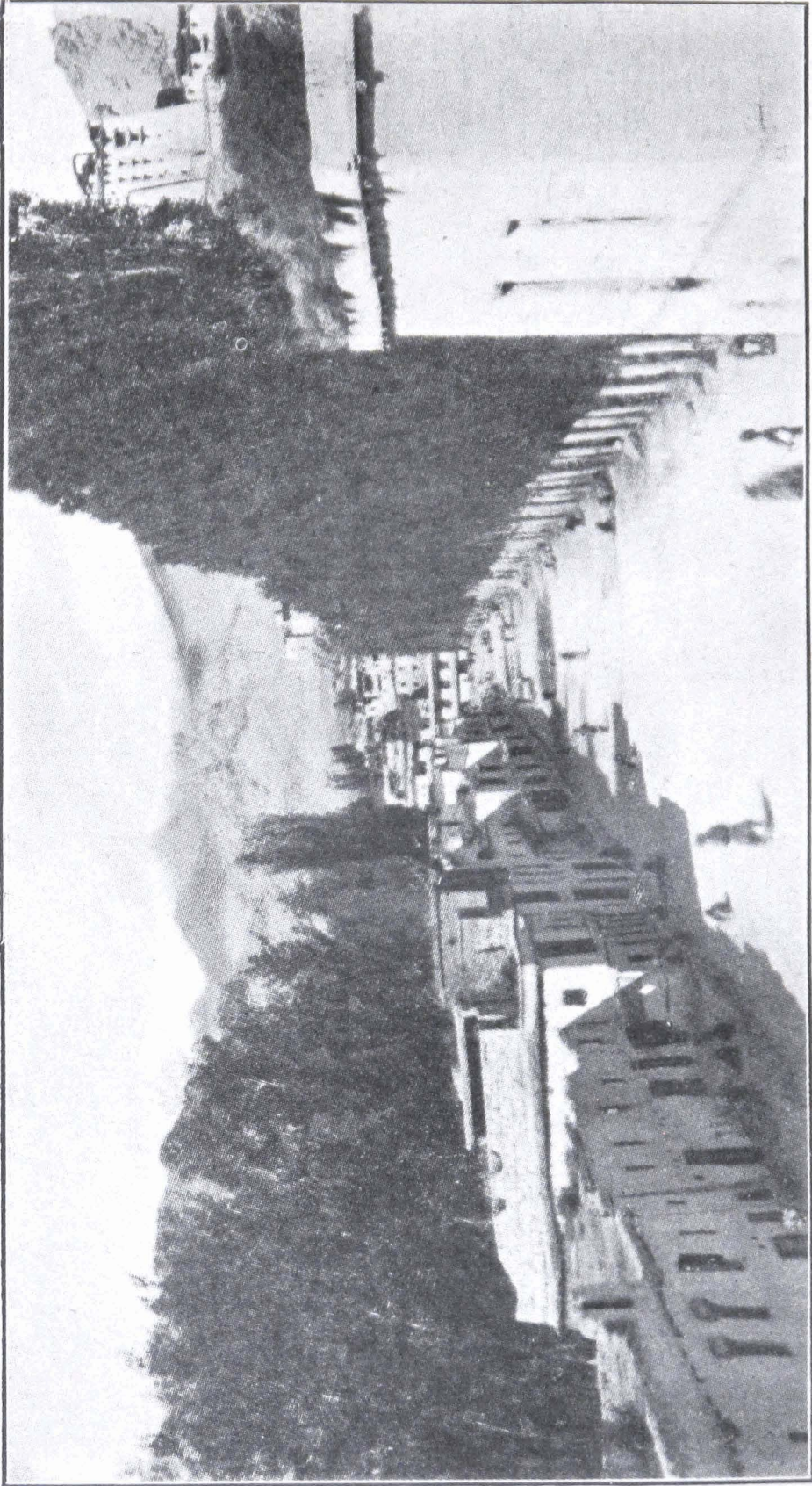
Facing the river is a small courtyard with a raised stone dais opposite the temple ; on this the head of the monastery sits when the passion plays are performed. In the verandah in front of it there are painted frescoes of the Wheel of Life and of the scenes in the life of the founder of the monastery. Inside, facing the door, stands a statue of Buddha with a long row of seats for the lamas on which, at the time of our visit, all the community were seated, having their evening tea. Down the sides of the temple were shelves of books, and the whole was hung with silken banners.

The kitchen in which the tea was prepared lay on a terrace a little below the temple, and a huge wood fire was burning, with a large pot of boiling water, holding about ten gallons, over it, and in this the tea was stewing.

On a higher terrace overlooking the whole temple was the room for the head lama. He had died about six months previously, and the monks were anxiously awaiting the news from Lhasa of his reincarnation. We were taken into his room, which was spotlessly clean and ready for his arrival. His bed and chair were ready for him, and fresh flowers stood in water about the room, while his teapot and cup and a brass vessel of drinking water were laid out ready for him on his reappearance.

The room was hung with beautifully worked silk banners and carpeted with thick rugs, and pictures were hung on the walls, while shelves of polished brass vessels lit up the room.

Nimu, 6th August, 1918,—13 miles.—Back to Nimu and its popular garden again, and the fluff of the seeds lay thick on the ground, and the gnats were a pest as before. It was much cooler on the march to-day, as we are now going



Leh Bazaar.

north-west, and have the sun behind us. The breeze too at this season always blows from the west, which makes it pleasant and cool.

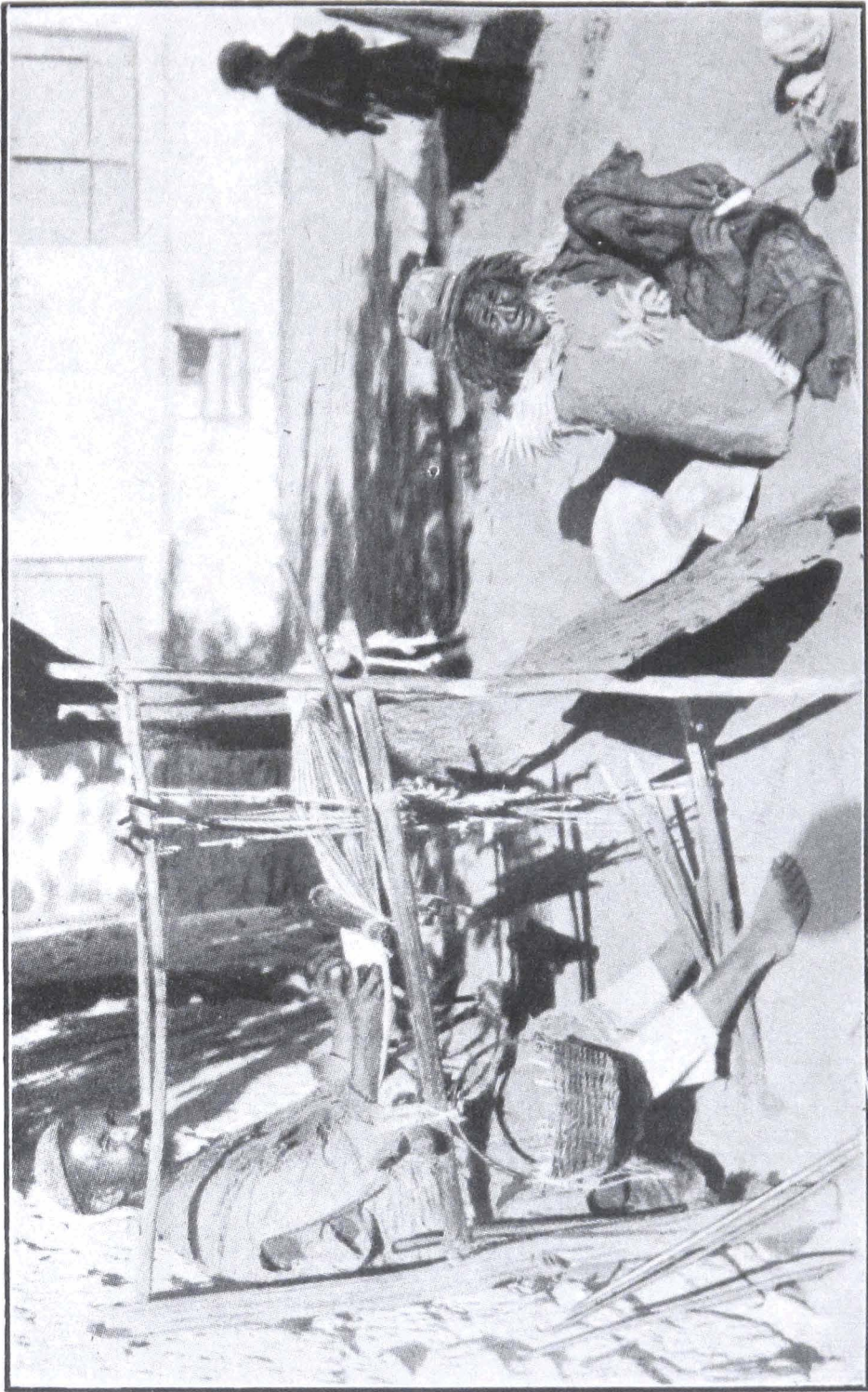
One can always buy quite good sheep on this route. They are sold by live weight at a fixed price, 6 seers for the rupee. Naturally our followers share them with us.

We met two ladies on their way to Leh, and they dined with us. It was a pleasure to meet one's countrywomen, and not the less so in finding them well-dressed. I often wonder at the almost universal custom which decrees that Englishwomen, when travelling, should wear their oldest and most unbecoming clothes, and then they are "out" to get as brown and weather-beaten as possible. This is all very well in countries where there are a lot of English. But away in remote tracts, they are the only specimens of their country offered to the wondering gaze of the inhabitants, and for the honour of old England they might garb

themselves better. Temperature in tent at noon 78°.

Likir, 7th August, 1918.—We decided to leave the beaten track to-day, and rode northwards after passing Buzgo. The road led over a plateau with magnificent views, far finer than anything we have seen on the regular route. We ascended gradually till we arrived at Likir, where we found our camp in a little willow grove by a swift running stream fresh from the snows. The lambardar is an intelligent, obliging, old man. We hear, to our great disappointment, that ponies cannot go by this route to Rizdong, the monastery we wish to see ; so we must go down the ravine four miles, and rejoin the road at Saspol to-morrow.

I never want to go to Likir monastery again. What one felt transcends description, but you knew a little what sorcery was. As we entered the dark, evil-smelling chamber, some noxious herbs were being burnt, and by



Weaver at Leh.

the oil-lamps held in the hands of red-robed lamas we could dimly make out the images of hideous gods. But no Buddha. This monastery, the oldest in the country, dating back to 1100 A.D., does not possess a single image of him. I hope I am not doing the Likir lamas an injustice in saying that their practices and worship are far indeed from the Buddha's philosophy. They were without exception of a low type, had evil, leering countenances, and, to crown all, smelt strongly of beer !

Rizdong, 8th August, 1918.—Down ravines this morning to rejoin the road, and on, through endless desert, to Saspol. After a time we turn to the right and the approach to Rizdong is up the side of a mountain torrent, which one crosses and re-crosses, and horrible crags you would imagine a cat could hardly cling to—a somewhat arduous pilgrimage in the noon-day heat. The monastery lands are fertile

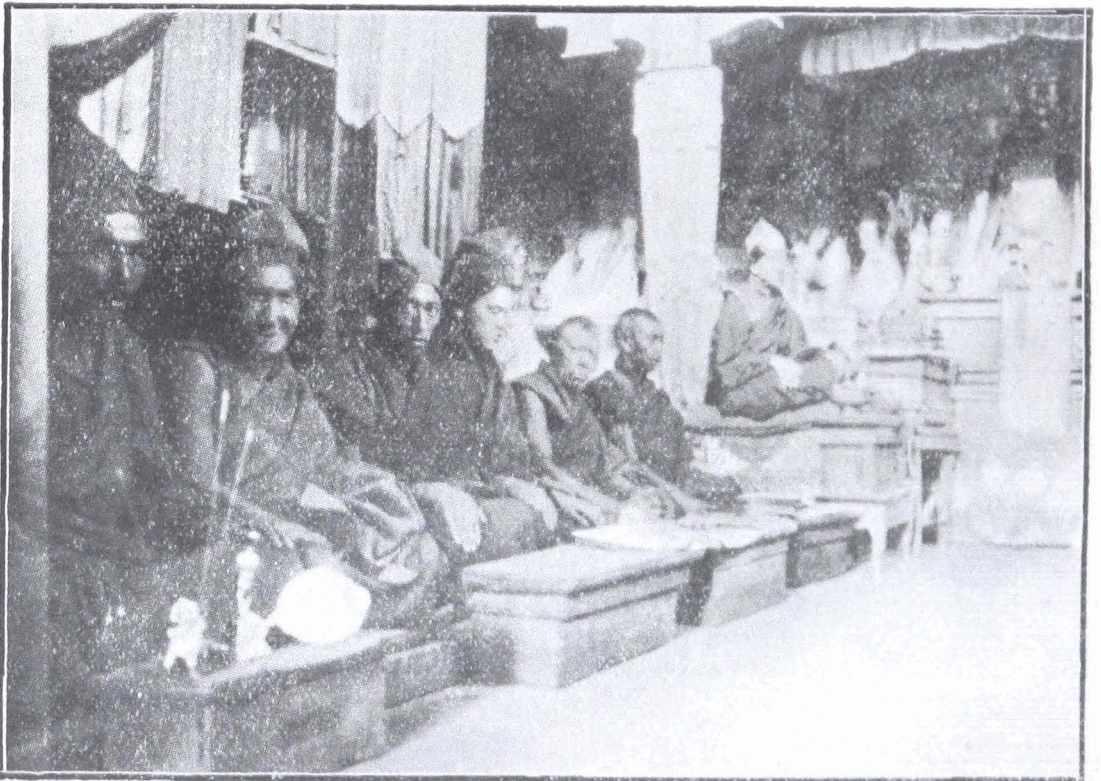
and beautifully planted with trees, while a mile or so below is the nunnery, where a few homely nuns live and carry on cultivation for the benefit of the monastery.

On questioning a learned Tibetan on the subject of these nuns, he informed me that were they to study for 100 years, they would not be fit to qualify for the degree of Doctor of Theology. It came as something of a shock to find that even the Buddhists treat their women *de haut en bas*.

Very different is the monastery of Rizdong from that of Likir. The abbot, who is a reincarnation of the founder, is an ascetic, intellectual type of man. Most of the other lamas too are of a good type, with refined, thoughtful faces. They eat no meat and drink no wine here, and seem in every way the very opposite of their brethren of Likir. The Rizdong Gompa is the only institution in Ladakh that can confer the degree of *Gelong* (Doctor of



Monks at Rizdong Gampa.



Monks at Rizdong.



Women at Leh.

Theology). The monastery is most strikingly placed at a great height at the end of a defile. It looks like a picture hung up in the sky. Roman Catholics believe that the outward forms of the Lamaistic religion, which so curiously resemble their own, were copied from the early Christians with whom they came in contact. Dr. Wiseman, in his lectures delivered in Rome, and published in 1836, says :—

“ At the time when the Buddhist patriarchs first established themselves in Tibet, that country was in immediate contact with Christianity. Not only had the Nestorians ecclesiastical establishments in Tartary, but Italian and French religious men visited the court of the Khans, charged with important missions from the Pope and Saint Louis of France. They carried with them church ornaments and altars, to make, if possible, a favourable impression on the minds of the

natives. For this end they celebrated their worship in presence of the Tartar princes, by whom they were permitted to erect chapels within the precincts of the royal palaces. An Italian archbishop, sent by Clement V, established his See in the capital, and erected a church, to which the faithful were summoned by the sound of three bells, and where they beheld many sacred pictures painted on the walls."

Nurla, 9th August, 1918.—We crawled along ledges of rocks and horrible ravines on the way to Nurla, which I thought we would never reach. The grey pony was weary, and fell, sending me over his head. When at last Nurla came in sight, with its fields of barley, the ponies hastened their stride till we arrived at the apricot grove in which our tents were to be pitched. Boys and girls hurried up with plates of apples and apricots, welcome offerings after our desert journey, on which we hadn't seen



Leh Women.

a single green thing—if I except the thorny caper which clung to the sandy hills here and there; and which, in spite of its thorns, I saw a yak eating.

Our Tibetan caravaners are good-natured, cheerful men and sing on the march lively airs with quite good voices. Francke says that the people of Western Tibet possess a natural genius for poetry, but that neither it nor a national literature have been allowed to develop properly. He says that under King Ngorub (1300) Lhasa became the literary centre. “Without the authority of Lhasa nothing could attain to any popularity; so we find that national literature, with few exceptions, is not found in the country. But the high standard of Western Tibetan folklore shows plainly what a high position the literary genius of the people would have taken had it been given free and fair play.”

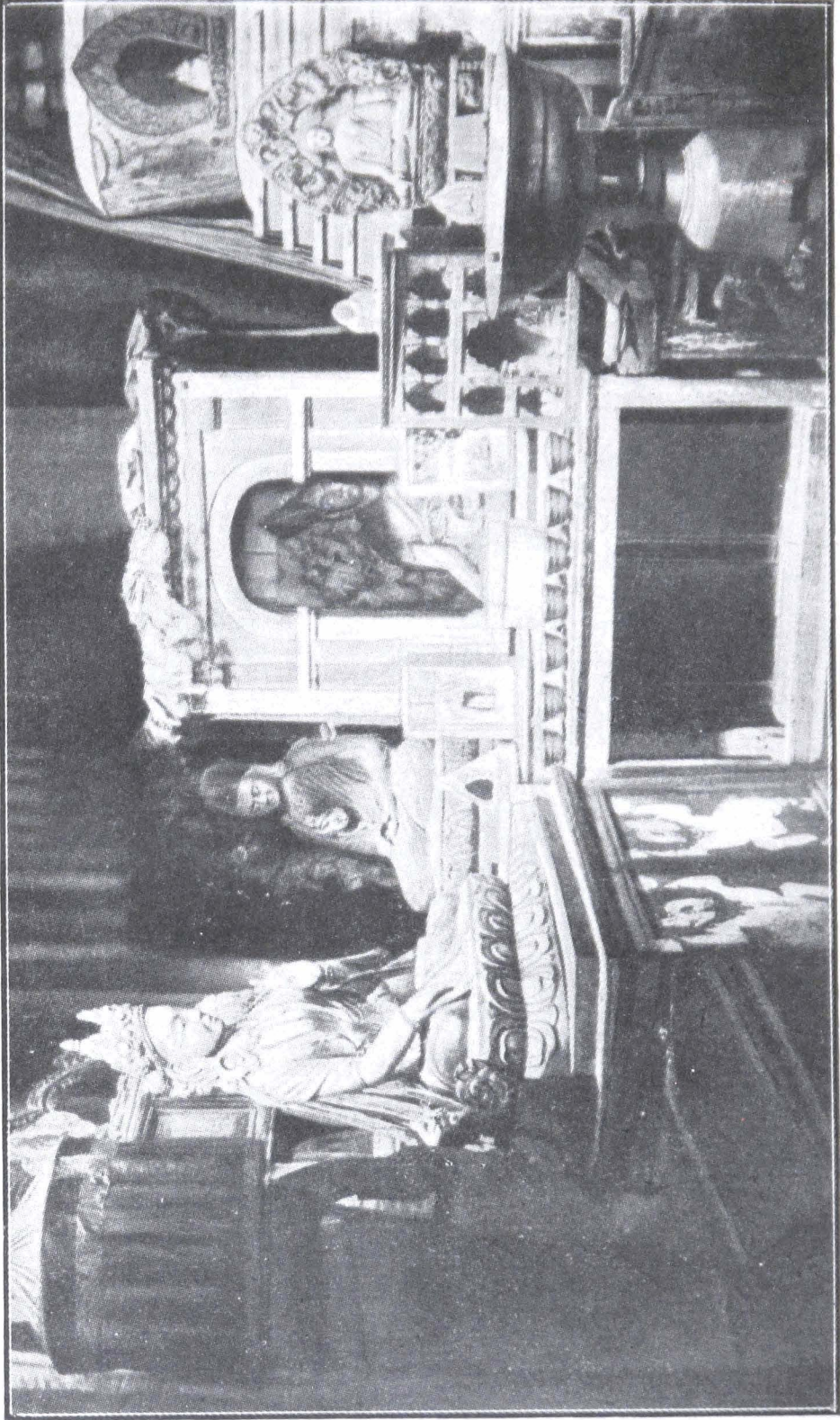
It rained rather heavily to-night.

Khalatse, 10th August, 1918.—There was no dust on the short march to Khalatse this morning. We camped in a lovely apricot grove attached to the Mission House. An old Tibetan woman, with a gorgeous *peyrak*, was in charge, and scolded and swore at our ponymen if they dared to so much as look at the fruit hanging in thousands from the boughs. A promise of *backsheesh* appeased her, and turned her howls into smiles.

Lamayuru, 11th August, 1918.—We were not sorry this morning to leave the Indus with its desert and turn up the narrow gorges to Lamayuru. I couldn't face the rest-house, which was dirtier than ever, so we camped down at the bottom of the hill in a very damp willow grove. If ever a place was haunted, this was !

We found afterwards that it had in the past been the sacrificial grove of the Bons.

Lamayuru of old was called Yungdrung, and given over to the Bon religion, which



Statue in Hemis Gompa.

included worship of water and other spirits. Yungdrung is Tibetan for *Svastika*, one of the symbols of the Bonchos and Buddhists, and now used as a fashionable charm in the West. Mr. Francke says that King Jopal's son Dugosgrub dealt the Bon religion its death-blow about 1300 A.D. He introduced the system of sending novices to Central Tibet to be trained; and Lhasa became not only the literary but also the religious centre.

Kharbu, 12th August, 1918.—We crossed the Foti La in glorious weather, the sky was of the true Tibetan blue, and the hills in their wonderful colours stood out miraculously clear in the pure air. It was deliciously cold on the pass, but before we got to Kharbu at midday the sun made itself felt.

One misses the scent of the pines and a hundred other things in a desert like this, and the monotony of barren mountains is very great.

To-day at Miskool we passed the last village in Ladakh, and, now, instead of the Tibetan *jooly*, the people, as often as not, greet you with the Mahomedan *salam*. There is a tiny mosque at Kharbu, and Mahomedanism has gradually pushed Buddhism out of Baltistan.

We crossed to-day from the slate formation into limestone, and the water is very hard here. Although there are any amount of crops, no vegetables are grown, as far as we can see, except a small pea. There is not a square inch of bare ground on which to camp, so we again go to the rather uncomfortable rest-house with the serai at the back.

We no longer come across the *mani* walls with endless Buddhist inscriptions. In a very curious way, one feels Mahomedanism in the country without being able exactly to explain how. But everything is changed.

Mulbeck, 13th August, 1918.—We crossed the Namika La, and were at the top of the pass

before 8 A.M. A most glorious view rewarded us. We stayed the day at the comfortable little rest-house that overlooks the polo ground. An authority tells us that polo is played as a form of "Begar," and that the players are exempted from any other form.

There is a very striking giant statue carved out of a rock in Mulbeck village, which is said to date from the 17th century.

Lotsan, 14th August, 1918.—It was with something like relief to-day, on our way to Karpil, that we left the country of the lamas behind, with its uncanny rocks and queer-shaped mountains. The thing that strikes you most is that there is no life. From one stage to the next you will see not so much as a single blade of grass or a bird. This dead-alive country begins to oppress you, and you long for something living.

But to-day we had birds, and even a few flowers, and there was a scent of wild thyme

again in the air. Our ponymen, whom we change at every stage, are now mostly Dards. The "manly Dards," as Knight calls them, with a pig-tailed Ladakhi only here and there. They are pleasant people, nice to deal with, and I always think more human than the Ladakhis. The Dards claim descent from Alexander the Great's armies, and are a good-looking race, and have always been noted for their love of sport.

We camped in a willow grove at Lotson, 14 miles from Mulbeck. The lambardar was peevish, and said he could not supply milk and wood, as it was not a regular *parao*. We overcame his objections, and he even produced a vegetable marrow as a peace offering. They grow strangely few vegetables in these villages. I cannot understand why, as they have the most perfect irrigation, and almost anything would grow, the soil is so fertile. They are now busy reaping and garnering the

barley, which is a splendid crop. Land revenue is on the average much higher than in India—from Rs. 2 to Rs. 3 per acre—the people told us.

Kargil, 15th August, 1918.—Nothing new on the way to Kargil, except that now we see no *manis* or *chortens*, and the people are nearly all Mahomedans. Islam has pushed Buddhism out of Purig. The people here are nice-looking and the women neatly dressed, with attractive ornaments.

There was nothing for it but to stay at the rest-house, which was a shade cleaner this time. If only they would have wooden floors, it wouldn't be so bad, but the mud floors crumble, and cover everything with dust and dirt. No European stores can be bought at Kargil, but at one shop we were shown whisky produced in Holland and sold at Rs. 7 per bottle. They say here that since the Russian Revolution, trade from Yarkand

has increased greatly, there being, they suppose, no outlet for it on the northern side. We succeeded in getting a few vegetables here. French beans, cucumbers, Indian corn, and turnips. Wood is cheaper than in Ladakh and is 8 annas per maund. Temperature in room 78°.

16th and 17th August, 1918.—We camped at the willow groves in Tashgam, 15 miles from Kargil, and Chanegund, 14 miles further on. The country is one vast desert, the irrigated and carefully tended groves the only green things. But they rather overdo the water and it is hard to find a dry spot for a tent.

We are now in Baltistan, and have left the polyandrous country behind, but one notices that whether polyandry, polygamy or monogamy prevails, the woman is always the beast of burden. You see them everywhere hard at work, carrying enormous loads of fuel and fodder.

It was heavenly to see green meadows again, as we neared Dras, and after the Tibetan Desert our eyes feasted on the wild flowers, which were in great profusion. The march to Dras was a fairly pleasant one, and it was not too hot, but no sooner had we got to the rest-house than the daily wind-strafe began and increased in violence till sunset. This horrible wind blows regularly every day up the valley of the Indus and its subsidiaries. It comes over the Zoji La, and is the greatest bore possible. How thankful we shall be to get out of its range. On the way to-day one noticed and admired for the hundredth time the marvellously built and engineered water-courses. Naturally, if they hadn't water no one could live in such a desert. Polyandry is excused in Tibet as a means of keeping down the population. Certainly they live on the razor edge of existence, and the country couldn't support another dozen of them.

To-day we got a sheep and drew flour, etc., for the last time from a kothiali, for these most useful granaries don't exist in Kashmir proper. Our servants will be sorry, as they pay a rupee for ten seers of wheaten flour at the kothiali, while they hear that it is selling at famine prices in Kashmir.

Matayan, 20th August, 1918.—We followed up the Gunbir torrent, which rushes furiously through fantastic rocks, and came at length to Matayan, a collection of a few houses. There is a little rest-house with double doors and windows, most necessary in such a wind-swept place. The rest-house is clean, and is about the only one on the road that is so. We saw several marmots on the way to-day, and they screamed at us and gave the dogs some fun. The dogs thoroughly appreciate having something to chase after forlorn Tibet. The only wild thing I saw in Tibet was a small animal that looked like a guinea-pig, and that



Statue in Hemis Gompa

ran behind a rock as I rode by. H. laughed at the idea of a guinea-pig, but the Moravian Missionary told us that there was a Tibetan tailless rat, and that this must have been one. We crossed the little plank bridge from which an Englishman, Mr. Cowie, fell in 1865 and was drowned. There are a great many of these plank bridges on this track, and as they have no railings, and do frequently have holes and gaps, one has to sit tight and hope for the best. We had several *zumbas* in our caravan to-day,—they are a cross between the yak and the cow, and are jet black, well-shaped, with short sturdy legs, rather pretty creatures. They are very sure footed and carry heavy loads, but are slow. One sees the snow quite close at Matayan, though it is only 11,000 feet.

Baltal, 21st August, 1918.—To-day, back again over the Zoji La into Kashmir. To appreciate the pass fully one should approach it from Tibet. The contrast is striking indeed. Behind

you are the bare solitary mountains with no living thing to be seen, while the Zoji almost all its length of six miles is one beautiful meadow carpeted with flowers. Flowers which for variety and beauty I have never seen equalled, anemones, forget-me-nots, red and yellow rattle, pansies, scabious, asters, columbines, monkshood, balsam, primulas, candytuft, and fields of asphodel. All the snow, or nearly all, had gone and we had only one ice-slope—a bad one—to cross. There were herds from the Punjab with flocks of magnificent goats, with hair touching the ground. Even our bull-terriers were struck with them, and left them alone.

Nearly at the top of the pass we saw a tent in a sheltered corner and were told there was a sahib from Calcutta, who was shooting marmots. But I hope that wasn't true. Down, down we went, 2,000 feet, and more, to Baltal. How our ponies revelled in the green grass



Riding out of Leh.

they had been so long without ! All fodder is worth its weight in gold in Tibet, whereas in Kashmir they simply turn the animals loose.

There was a joyous look on the faces of our Kashmiris. It is reluctantly and with misgivings they leave their beloved vale for Leh. One can understand it, and the enchanting loveliness of the country fascinated us anew on the ride from Baltal to Sonamarg. All the more after the desolation we had come from. But it was with regret we left behind the Ladakhis and the manly Dards. The "falsely smiling Kashmiris," in their womanish frocks, were repugnant ! We preferred the frankness and simple dealing of the people to the east.