

S. W. Kemp

KOMSING BRIDGE

FRONTIERS

by

GEORGE DUNBAR

AUTHOR OF

ABORS AND GALONGS

(Asiatic Society of Bengal)

IVOR NICHOLSON & WATSON LTD

44 ESSEX STREET

LONDON

1932

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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY R. & H. CLARK, LIMITED, EDINBURGH

DEC -7 1932

TO
MY SON

INTRODUCTION

ON only one line of frontier throughout the whole British Empire and Dominions is there a danger of invasion. "The time may soon come", the Assam Government pointed out to the Simon Commission, when the North-East Frontier of India "will become no less, if it is not more, important for the defence of India than the North-West Frontier".

These are two of the borders on which a good many years of my service have been spent. The first frontier I ever saw, our only European frontier, is the shortest to be found anywhere. Tactically, the North Front at Gibraltar has no importance whatever, but from every other point of view its value is enormous. And even there one was occasionally under fire on the North Front when the Spanish sentries at La Linea shot into the night at the smugglers' dogs trained to run contraband into Spain.

In striking contrast to the security of the Rock is the atmosphere of active service always in the air along the North-West Frontier. What the Highlander was to the Lowlander in Scotland centuries ago, so is the Pathan to the people in the administered districts of the North-West Frontier to-day. Nothing but the Frontier garrisons keep the trans-border tribes in their hills. The people over the

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border have always imposed the conditions of existence upon the troops stationed in that part of the world, almost as if it were trench warfare on a quiet sector of the line in France.

Only a hundred years ago Ranjit Singh created the North-West Frontier by sweeping the Afghans back across the Indus into their mountains. The Sikhs held the Frontier by force of arms, and since the second Sikh war we have held it in rather the same way. Between Afghanistan and British India there live, in small pleasant valleys (if they are lucky) among bare grim mountains, a number of fanatical clans, to whom fighting, raiding, and thieving are not merely second nature; it is the only nature they know. Neither Afghanistan nor the Government of India have ever been able to control them. The Frontier brigades, who make it possible for the people of the province to farm in comparative safety, are big movable columns, always on a war footing and ready to go out at any moment. This side of India has been in the public eye since Sir Colin Campbell (Lord Clyde) led one of the first British expeditions over the border in 1850; and a tale of nearly eighty expeditions has almost yearly thrown it into big headlines in the newspapers.

But there have been times during the past twenty years when Chinese troops, invading Tibet, and pressing down upon the tribes beyond the North-East Frontier, have given cause for anxiety. Beyond the North-East Frontier, when first I went there, lay the mystery of the Brahmaputra and its falls, as well as the disturbing activities of the Chinese troops under Chao-erh-Feng. It was

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my good fortune to explore this unknown country, and get to know intimately an intensely interesting primitive people. Some of these were said to be neckless cannibals, in whose country was a mountain of ruby guarded by yellow snakes.

The problem of Frontier defence has not been made any easier by present conditions in India, and the Indianization of the Services. The small extent to which I was concerned in the Round Table Conference gave me sufficient grounds to realise the difficulties that the future may have in store.

G. D.

3rd August 1932.

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CHAPTER I

FROM JOHN O' GROATS TO GIBRALTAR

An old frontier—Almost a sea adventure—"The noise the angry General makes"—Presentation of colours to the 2nd Camerons at Balmoral—An unofficial route march—Soldiering at Gib.—Monkeys and rock scorpions—Our shortest frontier—The Calpe Hounds—Death of Queen Victoria.

THE earliest thing I can remember is the low muttering of the sea below the windows of the house and, if I lay awake at night, the steady sound of feet along the passage above the nursery corridor. The footsteps, made by someone whom nobody ever saw, are another story, but the sea was visible enough. It was said, in the way these things are said, that one could fish from the windows when the tide was up. No one, to my knowledge, ever tried it, but once the Tower itself caught a fish in what were, to me, singularly aggravating circumstances.

I was at school at the time, and my people wrote and told me that a small flounder had just been blown up on to the battlements—almost a hundred feet above sea level—during a storm. My interest in this was turned to gall soon afterwards, when *Tit-Bits* awarded a prize to someone with a better flair for journalism, who had sent this in as the most curious event of the week. I could have done with that guinea myself.

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These northern storms can be tremendous and the house sometimes quivers, almost like a ship, when struck by a heavy sea. It is a grim, dangerous bit of coast in winter, and the bay, with a strong wind blowing from the north-east, can be a death-trap. One rough night a Norwegian sailing ship was driven by the gale up our narrow little harbour and smashed to pieces, with the loss of all hands, against the walls of the house.

The Tower stands on almost the last ledge of rock before the cliffs and reefs of the coast-line melt into a sweeping sandy bay backed by bent-covered dunes. To the north lies John o' Groats, and the eastern entrance to the Pentland Firth. The sloping sand beach made an ideal landing-place for the old Viking raiders, and on the edge of the rocks, just above tide level, there was a deep spring of fresh water. The north-eastern shore of Caithness was an uncommonly lively frontier in those days, for the Vikings constantly raided the local Picts in their wattled settlements.

Between the pirates and the Norwegian Earls of Orkney, the state of the country became so desperate, in the twelfth century, that William the Lion came up with an army and proceeded to add Caithness to the Kingdom of Scotland. When he went south again, he left behind him people who built castles, provided with the usual mediaeval inconveniences, all round the coast, to hold it. Many of these strongholds are now picturesque ruins, scheduled as ancient monuments, but some are still inhabited, except during the shooting-tenant season, by the descendants of the first Scottish adventurers.

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The spring in the rock by the sea that the Vikings used is now inside the twelve-foot walls of the house I was born in, under a slab in the low vaulted entrance hall. But it has not been our water-supply for about a hundred and fifty years—since, in fact, a negro servant, not realising that the well had been left open, fell into it, and was unfortunately drowned.

The people in the lowland parts of Caithness show distinct signs of their raider ancestry, and actually spoke Norse until the middle of the sixteenth century. But all that remains of the Vikings who once ran their long war-boats up the beach at Ackergill lies buried in the graves among the sand dunes.

This is not the place to embark on unnecessary description of the country about John o' Groats. Sir Walter Scott once came to Caithness to stay with the Traills of Ratter, and he has described the tremendous scenery of the Pentlands in *The Pirate*, incidentally bringing in one of his host's ancestors, Magnus Troyll. Another great Scottish writer, Robert Louis Stevenson, was in Wick in the early eighteen-seventies, when his father was trying to build a breakwater for the harbour that would stand up against our local storms. The engineer failed, but R. L. S. found the setting for the grimmest of his imperishable short stories.

But it isn't always grim. June, with its almost midnight sun, and the sea as blue as the Mediterranean, more than makes up for a winter in which the only mitigation is a very occasional display of Northern Lights.

One fine summer morning, out fishing by the

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eastern end of the Pentland Firth, I got within an ace of what might have been the most interesting event in my life. A small brig, heading north, passed so close that we could see the faces of the three men on deck, and just an hour later, by her skipper's report, they sighted the sea serpent. If only we had been those few miles farther out, to see for ourselves what that crew really sighted! Not that public opinion—outraged by American stories of sea serpents over 150 yards long—that had once pooh-poohed the statements of two naval officers, would have been likely to accept the testimony of a schoolboy.

Whatever hoax might come from the gunroom of a ship it is inconceivable that a Captain R.N., or the Commander of the Royal Yacht, would try to pull the august and sensitive legs of My Lords in an official despatch to the Admiralty. Nor, if Captain McQuhoc of H.M.S. *Daedalus* reported that between the Cape and St. Helena he, his navigating officer, and the midshipman of the watch had a near view of a sea serpent, showing a length of 60 feet out of water, could any argument persuade me that a mistake had been made over a sea lion.

If fishermen's reports are to be believed, the sea about the Pentlands is almost infested with sea serpents. One reported off Hoy in 1919 was said to be the last that had been seen for several years in succession. But there is one earlier appearance of something of the kind that could not have been due to an over-draught of the rum ration; it was too small, and had the additional advantage of being actually captured. In 1877 a curious, thin,

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flattened creature, about 14 feet in length, with a number of spikes 16 inches long down its back, came ashore alive in Dunnet Bay, close to Castlehill, the Caithness home of the Traills. Mr. Traill had it cut up, packed in ice, and sent down to Frank Buckland, the naturalist. His two sons were home from school at the time, and one of them, now the Rev. R. Traill, Catholic priest at Thame, described the fish to me. Frank Buckland wrote back to say that it was an oar fish, rarely enough seen round these islands for him to make a cast of it, and he believed it to be the origin of many of the sea-serpent stories. But it has been gathered that the present authorities at the Natural History Museum have a more open mind than Professor Owen had over the *Daedalus* case, and think it not impossible that enormous sea creatures may exist, that look like serpents but really are mammals.

Most people have an instinctive feeling that country at the back of beyond must be full of far greater interest than their own surroundings. This possibly explains the impression that the majority of Londoners know less about London than anyone else. Anyway, the wish to see, and not just imagine, what it is like on the other side of the hill, fills the Services that look after the frontiers of the British Empire.

In my own case some member of the family had usually joined one of the fighting Services, and having been duly brought up on Scott's novels and Aytoun's *Lays*, I became a soldier more or less as a matter of course. As a somewhat artless pursuit of the art of war gradually took a more definite aim, some hereditary instinct may have led me to the

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Indian Frontiers. For my people had lived, for the most part, on the English Border at a time when the key of the Marches could only be kept in the right pocket with the sword. The motto "*Sub Spe*", which goes with the family crest, makes it quite clear that a good deal of optimism is needed in this kind of situation.

Some people begin their military career with a leap into the blue. After showing themselves in their uniform to an admiring family at home, the next time they wear it may be in Peshawar. My own experience was more gradual. In 1898 the 2nd battalion of my father's regiment, the old 79th, was being raised at Fort George, the Seaforth depôt; and there I joined them. From the squat sandstone ramparts by the shore the Ord of Caithness stood out clearly, on a fine day, across the Moray Firth—an infinitely more friendly view for a raw subaltern than the inhospitable hills above the Khyber Pass. Officers and men were more or less among their own people; and Fort George was most conveniently situated for the Northern Meeting at Inverness.

The G.O.C. Scottish District at this time was an officer whose powers of invective became widely celebrated during the South African War. They were certainly unusual. When someone trod on his face during a night attack, the owner of the ammunition boot was startled to hear his column commander remark, "Don't mind me. It's only poor, bloody X——."

If thoroughly roused, the General coined expressions that left Cambronne's *mot* (which was far from original, anyway) absolutely flat; and it is

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deplorable that so much forceful imagery can be kept alive only in the smoking-room. It was the peace-time decorations of a volunteer colonel unable to control his charger during a pow-wow on manœuvres that produced the Shakespearean epithet spangle-bellied, but the General's entreaty to have the luckless officer taken away is too vivid to put on paper.

So outstanding a reputation must have given a Royal Duke every reason to expect something entirely new to him when, in the course of an inspection, the General's trumpeter sounded the call for a right wheel by mistake for left. The General rode furiously up to the orderly, shaking his fist. There was a moment of expressive silence—and then, quite quietly, "Oh, you naughty, naughty trumpeter".

While we were at Fort George, Queen Victoria presented the colours to the Battalion at Balmoral. The march up Deeside from Ballater, on an autumn morning, was a pleasant one; it was a good day to be on the road, with a big event in front of us.

The ceremony was simple and intimate, in spite of the indefinable atmosphere of the Court which impressed itself even in the Highlands. Our four companies, under our first C.O., Lt.-Col. J. Maitland Hunt, formed up on the lawn in front of the Castle. Behind the Royal enclosure were grouped a number of our relations and friends of the Regiment.

The Queen made a short speech, in her clear commanding voice, to her "own Camerons" when she presented the colours to representatives of both the old battalion and the new. Then we

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marched past, and the presentation was over. We heard afterwards that the Queen had not only asked the Colonel for particulars about each officer as the companies went past her, but she expressed her surprise that everybody's spats should have been so clean after marching over a muddy road. We had, of course, turned them up.

The men were marched down to the coach-houses for dinner when the Queen had gone back to the Castle. It was hardly the moment for an orderly officer to go round and ask if there were any complaints, but while the officers were standing about in the yard, watching the companies settling down, the Empress Frederick appeared to see that the men had everything they wanted. A group of us were standing close by, and the Empress Frederick turned to the senior subaltern, whom she knew, and asked him to present the officers, and graciously put out her hand. Most unfortunately I was nearest to her. What I would have done had I ever been on guard duty at Bal-later, and "joined the Royal Circle after Dinner", I tremble to think; the approach to the Queen's chair by the hearthrug was said by more than one subaltern to be a terrific ordeal. But what I did on this occasion was to shake the Empress Frederick warmly by the hand. Seeing this, and supposing that it was the correct thing to do, the other young subalterns followed suit, while the faces of the senior subaltern and the Court officials in the background became more and more a study in expressions. But I expect the Empress Frederick understood. After this we went off to lunch in the big dining-hall.

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As we were forming up along the avenue to march back, the Queen sent word that she wished to see the Battalion again; and presently she drove down the line. The Regimental Colour had been handed to me, for the journey back to Fort George, and it was a very great moment when the Queen bowed to the Colours as she passed.

When our eight companies were formed, we moved down to Aldershot, where Sir Redvers Buller was then in command, and anything more unlike Fort George could hardly be imagined. Military training as prescribed in 1898 wasn't anything to write about now. It didn't dawn upon the responsible authorities for another year, that charging a position (sometimes in a feather bonnet) in the formation then laid down, with the officers waving their claymores, was as obsolete as feudal tactics.

Before we left Aldershot in the autumn of 1899, I took part in rather an adventure. A party of subalterns had gone up to town for a farewell evening with some friends in the 2nd Black Watch, then under orders for South Africa. In those days the Trocadero was almost the only place for supper after the theatre; and four of us, who were for church parade next morning, left the restaurant in hansoms with under five minutes to catch the last train from Waterloo, which left at 12.15 A.M. However, we caught a train almost immediately to Kingston, asked a policeman our way, and set off briskly in the direction of Aldershot. Luckily it was a fine clear night.

Before we had gone very far we came to a market square with an equestrian statue in the

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middle of it. On seeing this, one of our number insisted on going round the plinth declaiming (rather rashly), "A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse".

It must have been somewhere about Shepperton that another member of the party became convinced that a distant street lamp was the light of a steam-launch, said that his pumps had made him foot-sore, and announced his intention of doing the next stage by water.

We went on walking between dim, interminable hedges for miles beyond all lamp-posts, with the milestones getting apparently farther and farther apart, until a growing suspicion that we had lost our way became a certainty; and nobody had any more matches for the occasional signposts. There was a house close by and, in desperation, we went up the drive and rang the bell. I have often wondered who our very charming host may have been. We apologised profusely for bringing him down at such a ghastly hour, and explained that we were hopelessly lost somewhere in the south of England. All he said was, "What you want is a whisky and soda. Come in and have one; and then I'll tell you how to get to Aldershot. You can't miss your way from here."

Nor did my fellow-subaltern and I (in full evening dress) miss our own Colonel and Adjutant as they came out for early church parade, just as we were trying to make an unobtrusive entry through a side door of the mess.

We embarked at Southampton for Gibraltar just at the time when reinforcements were being rushed to the Cape. Crowds were cheering any

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body of men they saw, and "Soldiers of the Queen" was being played as often as "Tipperary" was to be heard fifteen years later.

Our ship was the *Malta*, a small P. & O. that had been taken over for transport work. As a rule the only break in the monotony of a troopship is the duty of the orderly officer to make his rounds through the troop-decks at night. There seem to be acres of hammocks to creep under, the ship is probably rolling, and one may not be feeling particularly well oneself.

But we collected one small experience on the voyage, and it happened soon after we started. We had sailed late in the afternoon, and just as we were beginning dinner, there was a sudden and very decided bump. The engines clanged, reversed, and then stopped. Whoever may have been navigating the ship hadn't taken long to lose his way, for we were hard upon a shoal that, luckily for us, lay at the foot of the cliffs of the Isle of Wight. Before we got off, a destroyer came up and gave us the news of the battle of Talana Hill. Days when there was no wireless, and the gramophone was thought a marvellous production of science, seem queer and far away now.

We made our next approach to land without any fuss, and I woke up, one sunny morning, to find that we were no longer moving, and through my port-hole I could see Gib. rising sheer in front of me, with what then struck me as the odd foreign-looking houses of the town, jammed in between the grey harbour-works and the steep escarpment of the Rock.

There certainly was a good deal of rock to be

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seen, but my strongest impression of the place that was to be my home for nearly two years was the vivid green of the trees and gardens on the lower slopes. Shortly afterwards there descended upon me, as I stood in the hold on baggage duty, the long khaki-clad legs of my opposite number in the Guards Battalion we were relieving; they were off to the Cape. I hadn't seen him since we were together in the same House at Harrow. In due course we, and our belongings, were all landed; and we marched up to Buena Vista barracks, near Europa Point.

For the rank and file, who are unable to get away from the Rock, there cannot be many worse stations than Gibraltar; and as regards training (except for the 2000 garrison gunners) we found it was practically a wash-out. Two companies, one taking the high road and one the low road, could spend a desultory morning round Buena Vista, clicking empty rifles at each other from behind low walls, and anything else in the way of cover they could find. A battalion could drill on the Europa Flats, which is the plateau that the mail steamers round on their way in and out of the Mediterranean. It is only from a distance that it looks like a quarter-deck, and the ground is strewn with boulders in places, but the North Front is too far away, through the narrow main street, for the battalion at Buena Vista.

It was on one of these parades at Europa that I first saw the monkeys. The Battalion was in line, when a procession of them came across our front, along the top of a low grey wall skirting the cliff. Suddenly a young monkey slipped down from its

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mother's back and scampered out on to the parade ground, refusing to obey a sharp order to come back. Macpherson, the old grey monkey who was taking his harem for a walk, stopped and looked round, chattering with annoyance. The mother jumped off the wall, caught up her offspring, took it across her knee and, to the delight of everybody, gave it a sound spanking. The party then moved on again, and we continued our drill.

They are, of course, Barbary apes, but no one ever calls them anything but monkeys, just as the natives of the Rock are always known as Scorpions. By the way, it is a curious thing that a dead monkey is never believed to have been found. The various explanations for this ingeniously include a secret passage under the Straits. If this tunnel really existed, it would destroy a romance far older than the origin of the white cattle said to have been brought to Britain by the Romans. The colony is believed to be a survival from the times when Gib. was joined to Africa and the Straits ran across the neutral ground. Compared with this, the dragon tree in the Governor's garden at the Convent, which is reputed to be the oldest tree in Europe (and looks it), is a recent importation. Talking of animals, one of the strongest reminiscences of Gibraltar is goat—especially as preserved in the butter that the hotels provided thirty years ago.

We used to route-march up the Rock along the zigzag road slanting across the Catchment Area, above the trees and verandahed houses. Gib. is a place where water has a market price, and is an appreciable item in one's stable accounts. The rain is caught, chiefly on the big concrete surfaces of

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the Catchment Area, and stored in tanks. The only other supply is from condensers.

As we climbed the Rock, on one of these route-marches, a mule slipped off the narrow path on the top, leading past the emplacements of the old 12-inch howitzers, and must have broken its neck when it hit the boulders below. It came hurtling down the concrete face, bounced off the road above us and crashed—a horrible mess—between the Colonel and the Band, a very near thing. We happened, at the time, to be seeing more than enough of mules, as some of us were detailed to superintend the shipments then being made from Spain for the South African War; they seemed to be equally dangerous alive or dead.

If it had not been for the foresight of an earlier generation there would not even have been a North Front, where the Garrison could be reviewed, and troops work in extended order. The original arrangement was that the whole of the flat neck, between the foot of the Rock facing Spain and the village of La Linea de la Concepción, should be neutral ground. But the British authorities long ago absorbed our half, and turned it into a race-course and rifle range. The Spanish half remains No Man's Land.

Garrison guard duties, taken for two days in succession by each of the three battalions, were very heavy, and left hardly any men for anything else. Two out of the three officers' guards were on the North Front; and it took the commander of the Subaltern's guard just an hour to visit his sentries, as the farthest post was at the slaughter-houses on Catalan Bay. This entailed considerably

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more exercise for the N.C.O. who posted the sentries than for the guard commander, who only went round them twice by day and night. Apart from going over to the North Front mess for dinner, there was not much else to do except sit in a chair under the mosquito-net, for which officers in a Highland regiment were profoundly thankful. The Town guard, when the Fleet was in, was more lively, and it gave one a chance of entertaining the N.O. in charge of the naval piquets landed to patrol that murky bit of the town known as the Ramps.

Some artistic people had decorated the walls of the officers' room at the North Front guard with coloured sketches. Some were military subjects, but most of them were on the lines of the art galleries usual in dug-outs during the Great War. The North Front collection was a long way below the Bairnsfather level, and nothing like so famous as the frescoes in the guardroom at Malta, but some of the pictures were quite good enough for the glass protecting them.

The smuggler and his dog provided the one excitement on guard duty. Opposite our line of sentries the Spaniards had put up a wire fence, under which the inhabitants of Linea industriously and persistently made bolt-holes. Tobacco was dirt cheap in Gib., the Spanish duty was heavy, and dogs loaded up with tobacco were trained to run the contraband through at night.

This enterprise would have left us perfectly cold had it not been for the disagreeable habit of the Spanish sentries to loose off wildly across the neutral ground when they thought a dog was

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coming. I cannot remember that we ever had a casualty, but the first time I came under fire was when a bullet smacked a bit of plaster from the wall just over my head as I was standing outside the guardroom.

The firing was not always so innocuous, and some fifteen years earlier this had caused a small international incident. A sentry was wounded. The commander of the Captain's guard was neither meek in spirit nor orthodox in method. How unorthodox he was may be gathered, if rumour is true, that, under a Spanish name, he eventually became one of the most celebrated bull-fighters in Spain.

But what he did at the moment was to call in both guards, sentries, and all, and make a night attack upon the Spanish lines. Next morning, while the new guards were fruitlessly searching the North Front for someone to relieve, the Governor of Gibraltar received a telegram informing him that his troops were in possession of the Spanish barracks at Linea, from which they had ejected the usual occupants.

We were under the possibly mistaken impression that Linea, a place quite devoid of roads and all amenities except the almost inevitable bull-ring, was a sort of penal station for Spanish regiments; and the appearance of the local Governor's escort, when he paid his annual visit of ceremony to Gibraltar, rather strengthened this idea. There was a review of the Garrison, and afterwards the Spanish Governor and his personal staff attended an official lunch at the Convent. The escort meanwhile put in a busy time at the tobacconists', and

finally departed, obviously bulging all over with contraband.

I attended my first court-martial in Gib. as an officer under instruction, and instructive, in two different ways, it certainly was.

The first case was one in which the charge was sufficiently serious to make a plea of guilty inadmissible. But it was some time before the President of the Court could persuade the man to put in a plea of not guilty. The evidence, when called, was so meagre and inconclusive that the Court—that had heard the accused reiterate “I plead Guilty”—dismissed the case, an example of the fairness of court-martial trial proceedings which naturally impressed me.

What the second man was charged with has been wiped out of my mind by what happened after he was marched in. The President had got as far as “Do you object to be tried by me?” when the prisoner, with a shout of “Yes, I do, you —— pleader”, leapt from between his unsuspecting escort and kicked the court-martial table clean off its trestles. A shower of books and writing materials went up, and two bottles of red and blue ink cascaded all over the President’s red tunic.

I have never seen a more lively contempt of court. But a gesture of defiance made by a man on trial for a particularly brutal murder—it was one of the Alexandria Riot cases—was at least as expressive. A similar trick was impossible; the court were behind a huge parapet of a desk. But when, as President, I asked the accused if he pleaded guilty or not guilty, the man, with incredible swiftness, made a filthy mess of the white uniform of his

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police escort. Having shown us what he thought of the entire proceedings, the accused kept up a steady roar the whole time he was in court, in an attempt to drown the evidence and prove his own insanity.

Apart from the serious handicaps to military efficiency, life at Gib. was—for the officer—absolutely ideal. Barbs, bred in Morocco, were astonishingly cheap. A really good pony could be got at a figure that made all subsequent deals elsewhere seem a nightmare. The racket court (kept by Gray, brother of the old Rugby rackets professional) was, most conveniently, just below our mess ; and below that again lay Rosia Bay, which is one of the finest bathing-places in the world.

Montegriffo, the enormously fat confectioner, with his comfortable chuckle and sticky, semi-oriental sweets, ran the Opera House. My only recollection of its use as such was when the Milan Opera Company missed their steamer on the way back from Madrid, and sang for one week to crowded houses. As a rule the pieces were Spanish and, from the subaltern point of view, deadly; the dancing in particular, which was far more like an Indian nautch than anyone who had seen Otero, and other famous Spanish stars in London, could have expected.

Maurice Bandman used to appear at intervals, either with Pinero plays or his musical comedy company; and once or twice a year there was a Bal Masqué, crowded with Scorps and subalterns, for which everybody assumed a domino and a falsetto voice.

His corner shop and the theatre were not Monte-

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griffo's only activities. He was immense on lottery nights before the Races; and I was once taken into a room full of Scorps and cigar smoke, where Montegriffo was busily engaged in some kind of card game, played with an unrecognisable pack. It looked like Happy Families with the characters in *Don Quixote*. All I know about it is that I went away with £26, and without the faintest idea how I had done it. Like trying a pipe of *hashish*, this is the sort of thing that may be done once, if one is lucky, without any regrettable result.

There were race meetings on the North Front, and now and then a gymkhana, but we got most of our recreation over in Spain. The polo ground was in front of the eucalyptus grove at Campimento, where once we had to stop in the middle of a chukker because a curious yellow fog was making it difficult to see. We had started playing on a hot summer afternoon, but the air grew colder and colder, and we wound up in a total eclipse.

All through the hunting season the Calpe Hounds drew big fields from the Garrison, the Fleet when it was in, various nationalities in business on the Rock, and Spaniards within range of the different meets. Sometimes we boxed horses and hounds, and I can still remember how jolly it was, after a long day and a good run, jogging along the Governor's Beach into Gib. behind the hounds—after the Fortress gates were locked, and not over much time before mess. There were no fences and only an occasional cactus-topped bank or a stream, while overhanging branches in the Cork Woods could be awkward; but some parts of the country offered good stretches of grass for a gallop. A fear-

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some place, well named Rocky Caverns, was not one of these.

The most interesting meet, from a point of view thirty years on, was at the Duke of Kent's farm. The old Duke had owned the property when he was Governor of Gibraltar. Still living at the farm was a frail old lady, very small and dignified, whose likeness to Queen Victoria was remarkable. The relationship can hardly have been quite as close as rumour made out—even although she was a very old lady; because the Duke left Gib. in 1802, having lost his pay and allowances in the uproar that followed his attempt to make the place half sober by closing forty-five of the ninety wineshops.

A more dubious occupation than following the Calpe Hounds was to see one of the bullfights held on Sunday afternoons in Spain. But I am bound to say that the way a great bullfighter killed his bull, with the wretched horses eliminated as much as the crowd would allow, was something to remember. He had his reward, not only in the frenzied enthusiasm of the moment, with a hundred hats sailing into the arena, and the crowds outside his hotel. Men like Mazzantini and Bombita drew the income of Hollywood stars—and Spain is a poor country.

At the bullfight I saw, one of these experts sat down on a chair and went on waving his red cloak quite placidly as the bull charged him. There was a flurry of dust, the chair went high into the air, and the bullfighter was standing quietly by as the bull rushed past him. Another feat is to take the bull by the horns as he charges, and vault clean over his back.

What to the foreign, and ignorant, spectator

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seems a small matter may be an event of national interest—like a goal in a Cup Final at home, or a crab caught during the Varsity Boat Race. One of the celebrated bullfighters engaged dropped his cloak when playing the bull, and I was told that the news would be telegraphed all over Spain. Bullfighters apparently have their “signature” tunes, and when the toreador song from *Carmen* was started by the band for one of them, the bullfighter signalled to the conductor to stop it; he was not ready to end the duel. The moment comes when the bull stands, lowers his head, but doesn't charge, and the thrust of the long sword, curved at the point, flashes over his head; it needs absolute accuracy. The three bullfighters that day each killed two bulls, and there was no tailoring about it, but a quick, clean job every time.

There was one exciting—and entirely unexpected—incident that afternoon. Amidst the roars of the indignant spectators, a man climbed the palisade and made for the centre of the ring. Up to this moment the bull had taken no notice whatever of anyone who wasn't brandishing a red cloak. But the instant he caught sight of the intruder, he whisked round and went for him, regardless of everything else. The man only just managed to get over the palisade in time, as the bull jabbed his horn hard into the wood within an inch or so of an agitated leg.

Well, I had wanted to see what a bullfight was like. The amphitheatre packed with possibly the most picturesque and excitable crowd in the world—the horsemanship of the frock-coated rider taking the key from the President, and the quality of his

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mount, at the head of the glittering procession—the quick trotting entry of a magnificent black bull—the tense excitement of the final stage of the fight, and the cool skill that ended it—were an unforgettable experience. But it wasn't so pleasant to realise that one had paid to see men risk their lives (there are casualties, sometimes—but the bull never escapes), and sat through the revolting business with the horses. So far as the Spanish people are concerned, theirs is a backward country, and when one comes to think of it, some of our own sports a hundred and fifty years ago were hardly any better. The horses used by the picadors are now properly padded and protected; but better still is the growing Spanish enthusiasm for Association football, now sweeping the bullrings away.

Of the other memories that Gib. recalls, like turning over the pages of a vividly illustrated book, the view from the top of the Rock of two continents and two seas stands out most clearly. Over in Spain rises the grey mass of rock called the Queen of Spain's Chair, a reminder of a British general who beat the Spaniards in war, and could equal them in courtesy. Morocco is a mass of purple folds over the Straits. It is not always clear up by the Signal Station. When the Levanter is blowing the top of the Rock is blanketed in a cloud, without which one's recollection of Gibraltar does not seem complete.

Some way down from these heights are the Galleries, which—probably still—are solemnly unlocked for visitors to see the "defences". Of course the defensive arrangements upon which the Fortress actually relies are not on view; but it is all

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very thrilling for the privileged sightseer. The muzzle-loading guns overlooking the North Front might almost have been used by General Elliott's gunners more than a hundred years earlier. Not that this precluded the use of an almost identical weapon for the heavy-gun course that some of us took. That course has always struck me as a perfect illustration of *Tactics and Military Training*, by Maj.-Gen. George D'Ordell, for which the late Sir Mark Sykes was largely responsible. This priceless skit on that Drill Book which can hardly be said to have prepared the Army for the South African War, makes interesting and almost incredible reading in the light of 1914.

Garrison life is inevitably so humdrum that it was pleasant to break it by a run over to Tangier in a destroyer, or a trip by train from Algeciras, through hills looking like bits of Baluchistan, up to the citadel-like town of Ronda, with its Roman bridge and Moorish houses.

One outstanding event took place while we were at Gibraltar. The reassuring bulletins, customary in the case of a sovereign, that were being posted in the Garrison library, suddenly changed their tone. Queen Victoria lay dying at Osborne; there was no hope. It was almost impossible to realise it. Neither we, nor our fathers before us, had ever known the time when there was no Queen.

That night, at mess, as we drank the Queen's health for the last time, my thoughts went back to the day I first saw her, when I was a Sandhurst cadet on duty for the Diamond Jubilee procession. The morning was overcast, but just as the Queen drove through the archway of Buckingham Palace

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to receive the homage of her people—in her little bonnet and black-and-silver mantle—the one plainly dressed but only unforgettable figure in that splendid pageantry—the sun burst through the clouds. From our post by the Palace gates we could hear the continuous, full-throated roar of cheering, growing fainter as her carriage passed on through the crowded streets; the sudden hush for the ceremony at St. Paul's; and then the cheering again, swelling louder and louder, until the Queen, her eyes closed with weariness, but bowing still, passed back into the Palace.

CHAPTER II

THE PUNJAB AND THE N.W.F. PROVINCE

Simla hospitality—Lord Curzon, Sir Mackworth Young and the North-West Frontier—At Murree with the 60th Rifles—Mahseer fishing—Appointed to the 31st Punjabis at Rawal Pindi—Mess guests and messes—The Walker Hospital, Simla—Pindi to Bannu by road—A ghazi outrage—Dr. Pennell.

AT the beginning of May 1901 I sailed for Bombay in the Indian Marine troopship *Hardinge*. Of the couple of hundred young officers on board I may be said to have been one of the last to leave Southampton, as my cabin took up the rounded part of the stern immediately above the screw. It was roomy, and the shape didn't matter much. But the Militia officer who shared it with me was incredibly seasick—between mouthfuls of champagne—all the way to Malta, where he thankfully disembarked.

My intention to transfer to the Indian Army had not been particularly well received anywhere, but my application for the Punjab had gone through, and that was the first step towards the Indian frontier. It was a wrench, and a hard one, when the time came, leaving one's home in the Regiment and going East; and it was an adventure into the unknown. The Camerons had not been to India since the Mutiny, and there was no one who could tell me about the country. What had been the one

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unlinked battalion in the Army had seen its full share of active service elsewhere.

When I landed at Bombay, just before the Monsoon broke, it seemed to me that few places could have a more unpleasant climate. But every European I met, from my hospitable host at the Yacht Club over the prawn curry to the man in the Army and Navy Stores advising me about an ice-box, all warmly assured me that I had struck the one really bad week that year. After passing through Bombay once or twice at either end of the leave season, and being equally unlucky with the weather, it begins to dawn on the dweller up-country that the Bombay resident is distinctly sensitive about his climate.

Finding that ten days' joining leave could be had for the asking, I asked at once, and went up to Simla before reporting for duty. Whatever else the outfitters at home may have provided, they certainly did me proud in the way of a hat; for I made my appearance on the Mall at Simla in what is laid down by regulations for members of the Political Department. The amount of gold about the *pagri* was suspiciously like a brass-hat, and had given me distinct qualms before I went out and saw what other people were wearing; and my appearance was wrong in another way, because the calling hours in India are before, and not after, lunch.

Happily oblivious to all this, I dodged the rickshaws racing down the dip to Combermere bridge and finally climbed the path through the pine trees on the shoulder of Jakko, to call at Holly Lodge. There was a small box hanging by the gate with "Lady Rivaz Not At Home" on it, but as it was

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not possible to put a letter of introduction into this receptacle, I went on up to the house to leave it there. The red-and-gold *chaprassi* asked me to wait, and presently I was shaking hands with two of the best friends I was to make in India. Sir Charles, then a member of the Viceroy's Council, was known as one of the Five Rivaz of the Punjab, and he had married a member of an equally distinguished family. With the arrival of the Maharaja of Kapurthala, and an invitation to breakfast next morning at Holly Lodge, it felt like being in the middle of a Kipling story. And when the breakfast invitation expanded into my removal from the hotel for the rest of my leave, I began to realise the amazing kindness and hospitality to be met with throughout India.

But between Barnes Court, the summer residence of the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, Sir Mackworth Young, and Viceregal Lodge all feelings of kindness and hospitality had disappeared. Lord Curzon, who never took long to make up his mind about anything, had decided soon after he reached India to revive Lord Lytton's scheme of 1877 that had been killed by the Second Afghan War, and cut the North-West Frontier out of the Punjab, making it into a separate province. In fact he had mentioned this to Sir Mackworth at Lahore in 1899, when the Government of India was on its annual move from Calcutta to Simla.

Now the Punjab Government was exceedingly proud of its record, and the Frontier was the apple of its eye—a Frontier whose passes in earlier times had witnessed a long succession of Muhammadan invasions and which it now proudly and successfully

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controlled. From as far north as Peshawar Herbert Edwardes, and John Nicholson who led the Flying Column, had hurried every available man down to Delhi to stem the Mutiny; the Guides marching 580 miles in twenty-four days in the height of the hot weather. The Punjab had never forgotten that its troops and Frontier levies had done so much to save India in 1857. Sir Mackworth was a man with the very highest sense of duty; it was as obvious when one spoke to him as the big brown square-cut beard which he was the last of the Lieutenant-Governors to wear. He felt it was his trust to keep intact, from the Khyber to Delhi, the province that had been committed to him, after many years service in it, by the Queen. He held this most strongly and made it his reply to all Lord Curzon's arguments.

Lord Curzon was far from being an electroplated figure-head of a golden administration, as Kipling has described a very different type of viceroy. The "round and round" methods of the supreme Secretariat, which he was in a position to drive and control, frequently infuriated him. But the Punjab Government, with its Commissioner at Peshawar, pursued in normal times its own ways and policy on the North-West Frontier, without reference to the Government of India at all; while its attitude to that administration, when an abnormal crisis arose on the Frontier and the supreme Government stepped in, was one of rather lofty criticism. Lord Curzon would have no more of it, and in September 1900 he sent his scheme for the new province to the Secretary of State for India, without even informing the Punjab Government

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that he was doing so. The first Sir Mackworth Young heard about it was in a private note from the Viceroy, when the despatch was already on its way home.

The inevitable results were still rending the summer capital in two when I went up to Simla, just in time for a further development. The people I met were nearly all senior Punjab civilians, and their dinner-tables resounded with a strong rumour, that Lord Curzon was about to expel the Lieutenant-Governor from his Eden at Barnes Court, and banish him and his Secretariat to Murree; where the G.O.C. was already gloomily wondering what he would do when evicted from The Terrace, the only suitable residence. Sir Mackworth, a retiring, most unassuming man, and courtesy personified, suddenly and quite unexpectedly exploded at a Masonic banquet, and referred to the possibility of the move in an extremely biting speech. It was boiled down, on the lines of an inane type of riddle of the moment, into "What makes Sir Mackworth Young? Answer: Curzon the Viceroy", and so went all over India. Lord Curzon made no public reply, and the rumour of eviction faded into thin air. But Punjab opinion was, rather naturally, far too embittered to realise more than the brusque and unpalatable methods of the Viceroy. The recognition of a characteristically far-sighted act of statesmanship came later.

The 2nd King's Royal Rifles, to which I was attached for the regulation year's probation, were at Kuldannah in the Murree Hills for the hot weather. The huts forming the camp were dotted about under pine trees on a spur below Murree

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itself, which is the chief military hill station for the Punjab. I spent a very happy year with the 60th, nor am I likely to forget that their band struck up "The Cameron Men" as we started on the first route-march I attended. As it was the leave season, the subalterns were all rather junior, and there was some difficulty in finding any senior enough to introduce me in accordance with the Regulations to the various regimental duties I had incidentally been performing for some years.

The other attached officer, newly out from Sandhurst for the Indian Army, was a Scotsman too, the son of General Dalmahoy. He went to the 40th Pathans, and was killed leading his men soon after the Indian Expeditionary Force reached France. One Rifle subaltern had come out with me in the *Hardinge*. We had, in fact, spent a cheery afternoon racing donkeys through Port Said, and the only pity is that we had not killed some of the furtive merchants of vice who used in those days to infest the streets. "Sammy" was much perturbed about joining a regiment that had seen plenty of hard fighting against the Boers, with a South African medal forced upon him and his Militia battalion in Malta. But he soon settled down—in the saddle—and became well known throughout India on the turf, not only as an owner, but as a G.R. who could hold his own with any of the professional jockeys, until he retired, to live on his ancestral acres in the Shires.

There was nothing stirring at that time in the Punjab. The North-West Frontier was getting its breath again after the Tirah campaign, and internal unrest practically did not exist, for those were the

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days of the "pathetic contentment" that Mr. Montagu once deplored. The only form of upheaval I can remember was one night during the following hot weather at Rawal Pindi. Some of us were sleeping out, and I was woken up by what seemed to be a big dog under my camp bed. It actually was rather a larger form of disturbance—an earthquake. I had another experience of an earthquake in Pindi, in 1905. Driving down the Peshawar Road to a club dance, I thought my pony had got staggers, until I turned in to the club and found hundreds of agitated people standing about on the lawn waiting for the next shock. This was the earthquake that stripped Kangra of its tea gardens, and swept the military station of Dharmsala, with appalling loss of life, down the hill-side.

Amusements were few in Murree. We rode out to the Gali's along the white cliffs of the Pipe Line, played tennis and bridge, and put on a play, *Dandy Dick*, that ran for the inside of a week. The standard of amateur acting in India is high. In Simla it is very high indeed, and we had some good actors in the station. But the best part of Mr. Darby's performance must have been his violin solo, executed with a soaped bow, with a real musician producing "off" the sounds appropriate to Braga's "Serenade", because my violin was seriously included in a dinner invitation a few days later; while another lady in the audience let me know that the part had been played much more quietly in the original production at the Haymarket. This was more than likely, as on the last night I had been trying my best to make the "not trusting but con-

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fidings" daughter of the Vicarage, taken by Lady Muriel Gore-Browne, the C.O.'s wife, laugh at the wrong moments.

There were said to be pheasants on the slopes of the hill above Kohala on the Kashmir Road, and three of us took week-end leave and went off to have a couple of days among them. The slopes of the hill were there right enough—very steep and so slippery with pine needles that, had we put up any pheasants that sweltering afternoon, steady shooting would have been impossible. We made our bag later, when we settled down to sleep on the wooden bedsteads provided in a small hill village. It took us all night to de-bug those beds, my own bag being thirty-eight. Next morning we went straight back to Kuldannah, where one of the party concocted an alluring drink in which beer was only one of the ingredients, that soon put everything in a more favourable light. Before we marched down to Pindi for the cold weather training season, we went out by companies to camp, and this introduced me to an even more undesirable bed-fellow. Our first evening out I noticed what looked like a hermit crab sitting on my pillow, and realised my luck that a perfectly good scorpion had not gone down into the foot of my bed.

The trout hatcheries, now doing so well in Kashmir, had not been started then—nor when I went some years later, on leave to that country; and the best fishing to be had was at Tangrot, under the hills of Poonch. In some ways the place was not unlike a bit of the Highlands. There was an eighteen-mile ride from the tiny railway station; the dâk bungalow perched above the river might

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at a distance have been a shooting-lodge; and along the banks were piles of stones to mark the different beats. About the whole place was an air of sport turned into a business, as indeed it was. The small farmers living in the group of little houses were kept so well employed by the constant succession of fishermen throughout the season that they were practically gillies.

But here the resemblance ended. The ruined stronghold on the great red precipice guarding the way into the mountains looked like one of the smaller Rhine castles done in terra-cotta; and there were no fish, as the word is used in Scotland, in the river. But there were any amount of mahseer, the big carp to be found in the tanks of Southern India and the rivers of the North.

A Gunner subaltern, who had never done any fishing but said he would rather like to try, came with me. We got to Tangrot rather late in the afternoon of a fine December day, and a winter day in the Punjab takes some beating, after a dull ride over a dull plain. Our bearers had gone on ahead with our kit on hired camels that used to be kept at Bina railway station for the purpose. The dâk bungalow happened to be empty, as most people were saving their leave for Christmas week at Lahore, and a crowd of shikaris came out to meet us, like caddies on a golf course.

There was just time to get in some fishing before the light failed, so I set up my rod, a split cane eleven-foot Hardy, fitted my new silex reel (new, because my experience of mahseer was as blank as the Gunner's) and put on a small spoon. With about my second cast I hooked a mahseer. Unlike a

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salmon, the mahseer puts everything into his first run, and, helped by the fast water, this is a moment worth having. After that, he may sulk till you shift him or he cuts the line on a sharp edge of rock, but the real tussle is over. The Indian dealers in fishing tackle try to spoil it by urging people to buy enormous rods and lines like cable. You may never lose a mahseer (unless the thick wire cast kinks), but half the fun of playing him is lost.

The mahseer ran out a disturbing amount of my line, almost to the end of the backing, while I floundered over the large boulders in and out of the water in my Spanish rope-soled boots, giving him the butt as much as possible. Suddenly, away in the middle of the stream—and the Jhelum is a very wide river—he jumped clean out of the water, and the evening sun caught his big glistening scales of green and gold and purple. A splendid sight in a way, but I was much too afraid he would break me to admire it calmly. At that moment the Gunner, who had preferred to look on just at first and had been smoking a pipe on the bank, suddenly said in my ear, “That’s jolly smart, making him jump to see how big he is”.

That one run was all there was to it, and I reeled in steadily and landed him— $32\frac{1}{2}$ lb. I got two more about the same size, making a total of $98\frac{1}{2}$ lb. weight, and then we went up to the dâk bungalow. I was thoroughly pleased with myself until I went in to dinner and saw the walls of the room covered with the coloured outlines of what other people had caught. There were four in particular, each with over 100 lb. marked under it—one was 118 lb.—and they made mine look like tiddlers.

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Next day the Gunner began a most successful first effort as a fisherman, and between us we had a capital week's sport. We trolled once or twice in Jungoo Pool, where the Poonch flows below a high red cliff just before it joins the Jhelum. For this I used a twelve-foot greenheart with a stiff top joint—but half the joy of fishing is in casting—even if it isn't possible to use a fly. One afternoon we crossed the river, climbed the cliff, and looked down at the sight of a lifetime. The whole pool was simply alive with fish, some of them enormous. But when I was in Jhelum in 1919, the people of Poonch had dynamited Jungoo Pool, and the glory of Tangrot had departed.

We decided to go back by river and join the Punjab mail at Jhelum, so we hired a large rather clumsy boat, collected a small but equally clumsy crew, reclined on our bedding in the stern and watched the country, with its clusters of houses and clumps of trees, slip past us. This monotonous view was occasionally brightened by a village maiden bathing, who simply covered her head with a cloth and stood like that until the stream had taken us away. Every time this happened the Gunner, who was of a serious turn of mind, grew quite painfully embarrassed.

It was dark by the time we got close to Jhelum. The Punjab mail was almost due (I hate cutting trains fine), and the crew delayed their distinctly poor effort to make the right bank, on which the railway station is built, until far too late. As the captain of the vessel was lighting his hurricane lantern, presumably to see where the bank had got to, a swirl of the current swept us into mid-stream,

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and suddenly, and quite involuntarily, we shot the bridge, getting a bull's-eye on one of the middle piers. Luckily the boat was as strong as it was clumsy, and after much shoving and frantic rowing, to the accompaniment of incessant shouting in Punjabi, we scrambled up the opposite bank. Jhelum bridge, with its approaches, must be at least a mile long, and what with our kit and the mahseer we were taking home with us, it seemed a good fifty. But at last we staggered on to the platform, to learn from the stationmaster that the train was verree late, and would not be in for another hour and a half.

Shortly before my year with the 60th was up, General Sir Bindon Blood told me that he was having me posted to the 31st Punjabis, a regiment with a distinguished record, from its birth as Van Cortlandt's Levies in 1857 to its services, under Sir Bindon himself, in the Malakand. I had only to go up Pindi Mall a few hundred yards, turn to the right, and there was the mess.

The Indian Army, its British, or Indian, officers and men, doesn't require any defence from me; anything of the sort is unnecessary and would be an impertinence. But because of what I have noticed, not only in India among a certain class of people, but in an occasional book published at home, there are one or two things it may be as well to mention in passing.

There is unfortunately a type of man who prides himself on a lordly contempt for the people of India and anyone in authority over them. They are not numerous, but they do a great deal of harm; and when they refer contemptuously to "Quai

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Hai's", they ignore the fact that had not the Indian civilians and Indian Army officers made India their home and their interest, neither Padgett, M.P., nor the young man with far more money than is good for him would have seen India at all. The attitude is iniquitous as regards the Indian, and the act of a snob towards the European. There is, of course, a certain amount of snobbishness in any bureaucracy and its regulations, as, for example, when a Viceroy of India was unable to receive the head of an ancient Scottish family because of his grade as an official in the Salt Commission. That is a different matter, and, in any case, would be a bad second to the "Then you can call me 'My Lady'" story of the war-time chauffeur, which illustrates the same official spirit taking the air in Whitehall.

Long ago, when people went to India by the Cape, or took an omnibus from Port Said to the Gulf of Suez, India was a country in which white men settled down permanently for good (or bad). This accounts for what were known as the County Families in India, such as the Skinners, who are descended from the Scotsman Hercules Skinner and the Rajput girl he married; a great land-owning family, one of whom raised Skinner's Horse, the first Indian cavalry regiment in the Army List. But leave home nowadays, even without flying from Karachi, is easy enough, and English ladies can live under comfortable conditions in the country, and form in every way as good and cultivated a society as can be found elsewhere. It used to be called Anglo-Indian Society, and people of mixed descent were "Eurasians". But even

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before Sir Henry Gidney's spirited defence of the Eurasian at the Round Table Conference, the persistent claim of these hardly treated people to be called Anglo-Indian had been completely established. "Anglo-Indian" to-day means a British subject of mixed descent living in India. The non-Asiatic ancestor, of whom the down-and-out Anglo-Indian is so pathetically proud, may have come from Europe, the Dominions, or the United States, but the "Anglo" part of him must be in the male line.

This was not the case in 1902, and what was then known as Anglo-Indian Society consisted of absolutely British officials, Indian Army officers, and British business men, with their wives and families—the Indian Army people in particular forming a closely knit community. Everyone knew everyone else—like a small inner set in London with its Christian names and nicknames. In fact, if you didn't know, let us say, Tranter of the Bombay side, you were likely to feel distinctly out of it amongst people whose fathers and grandfathers, and a good many other relations as well, had served in India. The mess of an Indian regiment is bound to have a restricted horizon. In the first place, except on the Frontier, with its old Garrison messes established by the Piffers (Punjab Frontier Force), there would not be more than about a dozen officers in it, and considerably fewer in the leave season. Nor with an occasional Inspecting Officer as the only unusual occurrence could you expect the almost startling variety of mess guest that a British regiment might entertain in the course of its wanderings abroad.

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At the risk of wandering abroad myself, this reminds me of the oddest mess guests I ever helped to entertain, in an experience that includes a naval captain who added an entire bottle of old brandy to his full whack on a St. Andrew's night and then performed feats of strength and steadiness with a rifle that only our Gym. expert, who drank little but barley water, could get anywhere near. Not to speak of the General Officer—a famous soldier throughout more than India—who would lie down on his back and illustrate the strength of his stomach muscles by inviting the largest sub-alterns to jump upon his waistcoat.

The event that remains so vividly in my memory happened when I was with the Camerons at Gib. As a member of the Mess Committee it was my duty to leave cards on messes and so forth, as the usual courtesies require. So when a training-ship of the U.S. Navy, which was taking a cruise round the European ports, came in, two of us went out to pay our official call. There was apparently an early form of Prohibition in force, which contrasted most unfavourably with the hospitality to be met with on H.M.'s ships, for, after a few formal minutes in the ward-room, we were each of us led by every officer in turn to his cabin, except by the Owner, who had his wife and daughter on board with him. When we regained our boat we each contained a most injudicious blend of mixed drinks. This ought to have given us some inkling of what might be expected when the deputation from the training-ship came up, on a special Guest Night, to dine with the Regiment.

When the sound of cabs stopping outside the

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mess, and American voices coming down the steps from the road, heralded the approach of our guests, the Colonel went towards the door to receive them, while everybody else, supported by one or two naval men who had served on the Pacific Station, and the mess servants with short drinks, stood grouped about the ante-room.

The Colonel, a dignified and most imposing figure—he stood nearly 6 foot 4, without his feather bonnet—put out his hand as the first American entered, and kept it there. For that officer, with a movement that should have burst his braces, threw himself on all fours and crawled rapidly between the tartaned legs of the C.O., and was immediately followed by his three companions in turn. It was some time before any of us dared to catch the Colonel's eye, and still longer before a very lively evening came to an end with our guests on the roofs of their cabs, singing their way down to the Water Port.

All the same, leaving out a quadrupedal entry of regimental guests, an evening in a Frontier garrison mess could be lively enough. The enlivening would consist of piling the furniture across one corner of the ante-room—pandemonium on one side of the barricade, and four senior officers attempting bridge on the other—the band making loud and curious noises outside, under the conductorship of a subaltern—and a couple of rams engaged in a butting match in the long, narrow mess-room. This contrasts favourably, or unfavourably (according to one's length of service), with the ordinary evening in an Indian Infantry mess, where a game of bridge, a glance at the *Pioneer*, and perhaps a game

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of patience, chinaman for choice, filled up a blameless evening. Not that a rag, four parts exercise and one part liquid refreshment, ever did anyone any harm—even if one's share of the breakages did come to rather more than the loss of four no trumps redoubled at mess points.

It was distinctly ill luck to have a really bad go of dysentery one's first hot weather in the Plains, particularly as I added a dose of malaria to it. As soon as a train journey was allowed, I went up to Simla, where Sir Charles, now L.G. of the Punjab, and Lady Rivaz were established at Barnes Court. Going as gently as possible, all went well for the first few days, and then I tactlessly collapsed. Lady Rivaz, with extraordinary kindness, nursed me until the doctor insisted that I must go to the Walker Hospital, which had just been completed. There were, in fact, only three other people in it—an A.D.C. from the C.-in-C.'s staff at Snowden, another A.D.C. from Viceregal Lodge, and a patient of the opposite sex whom we never saw, but whose cubicle was between mine and Freddie Blackwood's. Though we never saw her, we heard her, because her treatment consisted of some sort of massage, sounding like rain pattering on a window, and punctuated with "Not so hard there, please", in a muffled voice.

My only informal meeting with Lord and Lady Curzon took place at the Walker Hospital when they mistook my cubicle for Blackwood's, and made a dignified entry as I was being washed. Far from blushing unseen, I had begun quite obviously to blush all over before they hurriedly left.

When I got better, the carriage sent by the

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Rivazs for my daily drive caused me embarrassment of a different kind. There are only three carriage folk in Simla—the Viceroy, the Commander-in-Chief, and what was then the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab. Everyone else rode, went in a rickshaw, or walked. Consequently, as the carriage drove round Jakko, a succession of hats were constantly being lifted to the confused subaltern inside the brougham. There was also some distinction in the L.G.'s stabling arrangements in the Plains. Guests for Government House were met at Lahore railway station by a carriage drawn by a pair of magnificent trotting camels, a most impressive arrival, especially to anyone straight out from England. Before the Simla season was over, a Medical Board sent me home on a year's sick leave.

I meant to return to India by the Trans-Siberian Railway, but a man at my club, who had reason to know, warned me that war between Russia and Japan—a very unlikely event at the moment to the man behind his newspaper—actually was certain. So my first attempt to see anything of Russia was knocked on the head, and I rejoined the 31st Punjabis at Rawal Pindi by a more direct route. By the time I landed in India, the single line to the Pacific was congested with the munitions and reinforcements that Prince Khilkoff, in charge of the line of communications, was hurrying forward to the Siberian field armies.

No one ever mentions Pindi without calling it the Aldershot of India, and I will leave it at that, and avoid all reference to the over-described life in a big Indian station. We had, however, one unusually important review, when Inayat Ullah, son

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of the Amir of Afghanistan, came through on his visit to India, and a concentration of troops was made to impress him. It can only have made a qualified impression, because after he had been present at two more reviews, in other parts of the country, nothing could dissuade him from the belief that he had seen the same troops each time.

Early in October 1905 the 31st Punjabis moved from Pindi to Bannu, marching, for the first stages of the 190 miles, along the Grand Trunk Road that stretches from Calcutta to Peshawar. The second camp out of Pindi is at Jani-ki-Sang, where the road cuts in between two ridges. On the left stands a high memorial to John Nicholson, who has given the place its name; although the people of the country, in their legends about him—such as still hearing the sound of his charger's hoofs on the stones of the Khyber—call him Nikkalseyn.

The country became distinctly uninviting as we got nearer the Frontier. There were, of course, practically no trees, only scrub, a thick cloud of mouth-filling dust, and more a track than a road, that wriggled in places between the red-and-yellow cliffs of one nullah after another. These water-courses were not always dry. At one half-way halt there was a stream of quite the clearest water I have ever seen. The march had been rather hotter than usual, and when the men fell out, some of the young soldiers and recruits made a bee-line for it, and were drinking hard before anyone could stop them. At that moment the agonised voice of the regimental doctor was heard shouting: "Don't let them do that. It's pure Epsom salts."

There is something uncommonly restful about a

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change of station by road. A movement by sea is never really pleasant, and watch duty in the small hours of the morning is not the way one would choose to spend the coldest part of the night. Railway journeys, in rather crowded carriages—this is without any reference to the leave train from Hazebrouck—with the hectic possibility of someone being left behind at a short halt, are not much better. But set against that “a regiment a-comin’ down the Grand Trunk Road”.

Apart from the chance of some shooting at the end of the march, this is how “another fine day” at the beginning of the cold weather would be spent on the move between the old station and the new one. A start in the freshness of the early morning; the halt for breakfast in the shade; the steady tramp of men on the march, and the lively tunes of the band; and then—the jobs in camp all done—a Roorki chair, a whisky and soda, one’s pipe and the arrival of the post, sum up the day. Few things in life can give as good a feeling of contentment and well-being. Of course the regiment may get a route that does nothing but fill one up with sand—the march through Lorelai to Fort Sandeman, for example, when a thousand furlongs of sea would be a welcome exchange. But this can hardly happen more than once in one’s service.

There was one feature, in the long column, that never ceased to fascinate me for those 190 miles. The 31st Punjabis—it is now the 2/16th Punjab Regiment and commanded by Lt.-Col. G. T. Dennys, nephew of the Colonel Dennys of 1905—was composed of Punjabi Mussulmans, Sikhs, and Dogras. We therefore had with us the Sikh sacred

Book. This was carried on its cushion in a sort of small palanquin with curtains, slung on a pole, and accompanied by the Sikh regimental priest, a splendid-looking old man with a big white beard. He was exactly my idea of a Levite of the Exodus, and the *Grandt Sahib* itself gave more than a passable impression of the Ark of the Covenant, especially when a following wind drove our cloud of dust ahead of the column.

The last eighty miles of our march, from Kohat to Bannu, took us between occasional stretches of trees, on a road that might have been laid out with a ruler. Like the more imposing poplars that line the Routes Nationales in the north of France, these trees were planted to give shade to troops on the march. But not all of them. The lines of date palms growing here and there, beyond the Indus, are said to come down from the date stones thrown away by Alexander's soldiers as they ate their rations marching down to the sea.

Just outside Bannu we were met by Colonel (afterwards General Sir Fenton) Aylmer, V.C., and his brigade-major, Captain Donaldson. The road narrowed at a culvert just short of the bazaar, and here Donaldson dropped back to let the Brigade Commander go on ahead with our C.O., and rode immediately in front of me. There was a crowd by the culvert watching the arrival of the new regiment, wilder-looking men than we had seen before; they were Mahsuds and Bannuchis. Suddenly a Mahsud youth sprang from the crowd, pulled out a pistol from the wide folds of his clothing, and fired point-blank at Donaldson. It all happened too quickly to stop the ghazi. But the leading sections

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of fours, headed by the Subadar Major, crumpled him up before he had bolted a dozen yards. He lived long enough to be tried and hanged that afternoon. Donaldson collapsed from his horse, mortally wounded, and Dr. Pennell, who came at once from his hospital, could do nothing.

These ghazi outrages are always liable to occur from time to time on a frontier where fanatical mullahs incite hot-headed youths to gain the delights of Paradise by killing an infidel. The fact that we, who worship one God, are not infidels within the proper reading of the Quran is conveniently overlooked—and drugs do the rest. Donaldson's murder was directly incited by the Mullah Powindah from the heart of the Mahsud Waziri country, transborder territory which was under long range, and rather shadowy, British control. The Mullah Powindah was an intriguing priest-leader with immense influence who made trouble on the Frontier and instigated murder from 1894 until his death, nineteen years later. As the immediate hopes of the Bannu Garrison for a punitive expedition died away under the Government policy of avoiding active measures at that particular time, the 17th Cavalry put up a scheme for a lightning raid on the mullah's home. Such things had come off on the Frontier before, where speed means success as well as security. But they were not allowed to try it. One of the Sikh officers in my Double Company, when we were talking about the outrage afterwards, told me how the Sikhs kept order when they ruled the Frontier. It was all perfectly simple. Immediately after a ghazi outrage, every mullah within five miles was seized

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and hanged, and when a sufficient number had been got rid of, there were no more ghazi outrages.

Dr. Pennell was one of the most striking personalities who have devoted themselves to a frontier where "men are nothing, the Man is everything". After a brilliant career in England, he came out to India in 1892 as a C.M.S. missionary, and settled down at Bannu, where he started a hospital and a school. In a country where wounds are frequent and the proper treatment of disease absolutely unknown, the hospital was at first the only institution that the tribesmen could be induced to trust at all. The school had opened to an announcement by the mullahs of Bannu that any parent who sent his son there would be excommunicated. But by the time we came to Bannu the school was flourishing, with both boarders and day scholars; and Dr. Pennell was justly proud of his boys, who represented every social grade on the Frontier. This was a fine achievement, in the face of every kind of difficulty at the start, but Dr. Pennell's influence was infinitely more far-reaching than his wards and class-rooms.

Confidence in him as a doctor, and admiration and respect for him as a man, had spread throughout the valleys over the Frontier in ever-widening circles. He spoke Pushtu perfectly, and he always appeared in native dress. He could, and did, go where he pleased through the hills over the Border, at a time when the officers of the Bannu garrison, armed with revolvers for a round of golf, had to play the short hole over the road—not three hundred yards from the mess—under the eye of an armed sentry. Time and again Dr. Pennell was able, by using, yet never abusing, the confidence that

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the tribesmen placed in him, to undertake alone delicate negotiations for the Government. To do this, he would wander off to places in the Hills where the appearance of less than the brigade Lord Roberts said he was worth would have been impossible. He had other adventures in India itself. With a native disciple he used to go about the country dressed as a *sadhu*, that is a priest, sometimes bicycling, sometimes on foot. Pennell took a begging-bowl with him, and used it all the way, for the two of them started off without two pice between them. They depended entirely on charity for tolls at the rivers and for their food. In this the doctor lived the Christianity of the old preaching Friars in England, and taught, and argued his religion with the mullahs and pandits wherever he went. The first time I saw him to speak to I was out riding with the General, who recognised a travel-stained mendicant priest striding along the road as the doctor. He was just back in Bannu from Bombay. We found we had mutual friends in Peshawar, and I saw a certain amount of him. A spare, alert man with a trimmed brown beard and closely cropped greyish hair, when you saw him in an Englishwoman's drawing-room in the semi-Westernised dress of a local Muhammadan gentleman, but with his *pagri* off; and the shrewdest blue eyes twinkling behind his steel-rimmed spectacles. That was Dr. Pennell, and when he died in Bannu from blood-poisoning in 1912, I was amazed to see that he was only forty-five. With all his wiriness and alert manner, although he joined vigorously in the school games, I thought he was an older man.

CHAPTER III

BANNU AND ARMY HEADQUARTERS

The Pathans—An inside view of a raid—Peshawar—Thieving a fine art—A contribution to the home Press—Hot weather varieties—A deck passage home—Concentration Section at Army Headquarters—An absconding banker—An Indian prince does a little shopping—Appointed to the Assam Frontier.

So far as our hours of ease were concerned, we had exchanged a small cosy mess of our own for a Garrison mess of all Arms. After our mess bungalow in Pindi, it was an immense building, belonging to the Punjab Frontier Force from the time when no one imagined that the united and self-contained Piffers could possibly lose their normal guardianship of the Frontier and become merged in the rest of the Indian Army. The Bannu Garrison then consisted of the 23rd Mountain Battery, the 17th Cavalry, the 59th Scinde Rifles F.F., and ourselves. Mechanisation has brought about a considerable change in the composition of the Brigade to-day. But the 59th Scinde Rifles F.F. under their present name, the 6th Royal Battalion (Scinde) 13th Frontier Force Rifles, now in process of Indianization, are back in Bannu when this is written. The mess was also our club; and the Pindi racket court, and the big library that I had looked after for about two years, were far below the flat horizon to the

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east. But against that we had left some rather dull quail-shooting for about the best snipe ground to be found anywhere. On the subject of shooting, we soon learned the wisdom of loudly replying "Friend" the moment the sentry shouted "Altoo-goes dar" as we went back to the Fort after mess, generally pretty late.

Apart from these differences, the change of scene provided us with much the same occupations as before. But the surroundings, the people amongst whom we lived, and the whole outlook on life in general, belonged to another world—a world in which life and death, peace and war were separated by nothing thicker than a razor blade.

Nevill in his *Frontier Campaigns*, Ganpat with the photographic accuracy of his tales of the Border, and a host of other writers have made it quite unnecessary for me to add to their descriptions of keeping order on the Frontier and the daily life of those who do it. To a Highlander like myself, the people across the Border are bound to have a strong fascination; and I can't get rid of an uneasy feeling that the Pathans of to-day must be rather like our own clans two or three centuries ago. That is if some of the stories of the Highlands are anything like true.

Exchange Rob Roy's claymore for a modern rifle—used with equal skill; take the kilt off the Highlander and put him into baggy trousers, a gaudy waistcoat, and a *pagri*; hand him a chanter instead of his set of pipes, with a narrow drum to beat; give him the characteristic nose of one of the Lost Tribes—and you more or less have the tribesman of the North-West Frontier. Some of them,

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by the way, have a complexion almost as fair as our own. Nor in their dealings with the world outside their native glens is there much to choose between the people beyond the Forth two or three hundred years back and the twentieth-century transborder Pathan. The Highlanders with "pedigrees as long as their swords, and swords as long as the village street" lived in desperately poor mountainous country overlooking prosperous plains that simply asked to be raided. So there cannot have been much difference between the view taken of most of the clans by the civil authorities in Edinburgh up to the middle of the eighteenth century and the opinion of the Frontier tribes held by Sir Harold Deane, Chief Commissioner in Peshawar when we were at Bannu.

The parallel, however, breaks down at one point. British justice on the Frontier has always been absolutely fair, and the Pathan knows it. The judicial farce that ended with the hanging—by a Campbell jury and a Campbell judge in a Campbell quarrel—of James Stewart of the Glens, for a murder he palpably did not commit, could never have happened on the North-West Frontier.

Finally, there are the blood feuds. No Highland clan would have been itself without them; and the old stories of MacNabs, Macdonalds, and all the rest are matched by the feuds among the Waziris and Mahsuds, Afridis, and Mohmands to-day. Fighting incessantly with each other, the tribesmen live in fortified villages and the strong towers that are such a nuisance on Frontier expeditions; and they have to be uncommonly careful when they take their walks abroad. A hidden enemy may so

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easily be lying up somewhere waiting with his rifle to equalise the score, or put his family one up in an endless feud.

When the Regiment had been about a year in Bannu, I was unexpectedly sent off to Peshawar—in the way these things happen in India—with just time to get some kit together. In those days there was no railway to Bannu, nor any motors either, so I started off by tonga, which is (or rather was) a low two-wheeled covered cart, with a pair of ponies. There are changes of ponies either waiting—or furiously shouted for—at intervals along the road. Going up to Simla before the Kalka-Simla railway was opened, stages with first-rate ponies came every few miles; but on the eighty miles between Bannu and Kohat the stages were far apart, and the ponies extremely bad. Consequently by the time I reached Kohat, it was getting dusk and lights were beginning to twinkle in houses and barracks. Between me and the end of my journey lay a ridge of hills—in tribal territory. There was, however, a good Government road (as roads went then) running across it that zigzagged up to the top of the pass, down the other side, and then went straight as a die, on the British side of the Border, to Peshawar.

The only train of the day had left Kohat hours before on its slow roundabout journey, and I badly wanted to get on; we had come two-thirds of the way as the road runs. My orders were urgent, so I did not want to delay. The Kohat Pass Afridis might misuse their time making rifles, but they had always been peaceable enough themselves, and there was something else. These roads, made by

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the Government of India over the Border, are in point of fact British territory. Those that form the trade routes, like the Khyber, are guarded on caravan days by piquets, found by the local people and paid by the Government of India. The tribesmen can, and frequently do, rob and kill each other to their hearts' content on either side of these roads. But if they forget themselves on, or even close to, the road itself, the Political officers, and something unpleasant in the way of British authority, step in. The road is sacred.

I may not have told my driver all this, but anyhow I persuaded him to go on. There were only eighteen miles of tribal country to go through, anyway. We had a clear, starlit night for it, and very pleasant it was driving up the hill, and leaving the lights of Kohat far below us. All went well until we topped the pass, and were rather more than half-way across the Adam Khel country. We had just passed a village, all dead asleep apparently, when suddenly, quietly, and as quick as lightning, a number of grey forms armed with rifles closed in on us, came into the light of our lamps, and stopped the ponies. For just a second or two the only talking was done by the tonga-driver's teeth. I could hear them chattering from where I was on the back seat, with my loaded revolver hidden under my sheepskin rug. It was winter and bitterly cold.

Two or three Afridis came round to me, rather like inspectors catching me out without a ticket. We had butted into a perfectly good raid. I felt none too comfortable, and wondered if these people from away back in the Hills looked upon this

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particular road as quite as sacred as I did. Anyhow, we had got beyond the village before it was surrounded, and any row now would only put the villagers on the guard they ought not to have neglected, and spoil the raid altogether. On the other hand, a live British officer is worth a lot as a hostage—far more than the assessment of a dead Pathan by one of their own tribal councils, which works out at £7 : 10s. at the present rate of exchange.

The raiders asked me who I was and what I was doing there at that time of night. I told them that I had been training some of their distant relatives who happened to be Reservists in the Indian Army at Bannu, and I was on my way to Peshawar to carry on the good work. But I suppressed the fact that the people whom I was going to help to train were their enemies of long standing—the Sikhs. After a whispered conversation among themselves, they let us go on. I heard afterwards that the raid had been most successful—from the point of view of the raiders; an opinion that a Hindu money-lender, discovered in the village, and held to ransom, can hardly have shared.

The rest of the drive was extraordinarily unpleasant, as the Kohat-Peshawar Road was then far from being the motor speedway it is now. Whenever we came near a dip into a dry water-course the driver lashed his ponies into a gallop, and the tonga bumped so violently over the boulders that I fully expected we would end up by having to walk miles into Peshawar. But we got in all right, and I drove straight to the G.O.C.'s house and told Sir Edmund Barrow what I had

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driven into, though of course there was nothing that could be done about it. The hillmen are an uncertain people because, having let the bird in the hand go that time, a party of Afridis came down some nights afterwards, took no end of trouble over their arrangements, kidnapped a British officer from his house in the middle of a military cantonment, and got away with him.

Peshawar is the most important city on the Frontier, of which it is the nerve-centre. The garrison live in a cantonment of wide roads and pleasant bungalows with gardens full of roses, and a striking contrast to the native city, which is a maze of mud tenements and narrow, crooked streets and alleyways, crammed full of the greatest ruffians in Asia. Strings of camels, the largest and woolliest I have ever seen, bring bales of rugs, silks, and furs from Central Asia, into its bazaars.

One of the best things about Peshawar is the P.V.H. The Peshawar Vale Hounds—and you have to go as far south as Ooty to find another pack—hunt jackal over the fields and banks, and the watercourses that make the valley so green. Another advantage of Peshawar lies in its hill station, the high Galis to the east, between Murree and Abbottabad; pine-clad hills, with big white lilies growing on the upper slopes. The local health resort for Bannu, on the other hand, a place called Sheikh Budin, is perched on a treeless ridge above a stretch of desert. It would be a bad imitation of Aden, complete with barren rocks and water tanks, if it were on the sea with a homeward bound P. & O. once a week. Few of us thought it worth while leaving the trees and grass of our

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oasis at Bannu for a couple of days at our hill station.

Peshawar is also the happy hunting-ground of Border thieves, and there never was a cleverer thief than the Afridi. He takes off all his clothes, smears himself with oil (making himself a more slippery customer than ever), and then takes off every single thing in your room that he fancies—even the sheets from under you—without waking you up.

Sometimes they get caught. There was once a colonel in Peshawar who had a very valuable pony, which was guarded at night by a sentry, who walked round and round the stable. One dark night an Afridi managed to dodge past the sentry and got himself into the stable, and the pony out of it, before the sentry spotted anything wrong. But the Afridi hadn't a decent start, rode straight into a patrol, and with the pony was brought back to the colonel.

The theft had been so clever that the colonel, before having him locked up, asked the Afridi to explain how he had done it. The Afridi asked to have his blanket given back to him for a minute. He then showed how he had made himself look like an animal in the shadows and uncertain light of the yard lantern; and how he timed the sentry on his beat while he was picking the lock and getting the pony out of the stable. Everybody who stood round, watching the reconstruction of the crime, said what a pretty bit of work it was.

“But”, said the Afridi, “the real job is with the bit. Let's have the bridle a sec.”; and in went the bit.

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“And then”, continued the Afridi, as he sprang on to the pony’s back, “I went off like this.” A wave of his hand, and this time he really was gone.

But most of their ingenuity is devoted to the theft of rifles, a profitable business should they get away with it, rifles being worth anything up to 700 rupees, and rounds, when prices are high, a rupee apiece. For anyone with a blood feud to settle, a modern weapon makes all the difference; and there is the additional asset of being able to snipe a British expeditionary force with ease and accuracy from a hill-top.

The authorities come down very heavily on the loss of a rifle, and troops throughout India look after their weapons with every precaution. One never knows how far afield Pathan gangs may not go to snap them up. On the Frontier the men may even sleep with their rifles chained to them. They are not often stolen, but a party of thieves once got off with a number of them that had been stored in a little-used magazine. They wrapped them up to look like the decently shrouded body in a Muhammadan funeral; put the “corpse” on a native bed, and slowly and sorrowfully went up the road past every police post and sentry, for something like eighty miles. When the procession got safely home some chief or other came down and, with gusts of laughter, told the joke to the Deputy Commissioner, and the Deputy Commissioner told me.

They are a people with a distinct sense of humour, generally of a pretty grim kind, for they are ruthlessly cruel. That is why we find it ab-

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solutely necessary to get our wounded away when fighting them. It is a difficult, anxious business very often, but anything is better than letting them fall into the tribesmen's hands. War, in their eyes, between man and man is an all-out affair, with no softening conventions about it. But, until the coming of the aeroplanes and the bombing of their homes, military operations left no bitterness behind them.

After a regiment that enlisted across the Border had put up a thoroughly efficient show against the transborder clans, that regiment had no difficulty in getting its recruits. Useful recruits they were, too, for their courage is beyond question, and they are fine natural shots brought up never to waste valuable rounds. They just have to learn the meaning of work and orders to become first-class soldiers, and quite possibly fight their own relations on some expedition.

In their own country they never dream of doing a stroke of work; they leave that to the women. The education of a boy of four is often taken over by his grandfather. It begins with a cross-bow and pellets, and goes on to a jezail with a reduced charge. The youth matriculates in due course with a rifle. No other form of education is worth anything across the Border. A young Pathan, in his gaudy waistcoat, with his black hair nicely combed and oiled, and a flower behind one ear, thinks no end of himself. He is far more inclined to listen to the mullahs urging the clan council to fight, than to the maliks and old men with long memories, who hope that everyone will be sensible and pay up the Government fine of rifles for the last raid

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over the Border. Therein lies the chief cause of trouble on the Frontier—for everybody all round.

When I got back to Bannu from Peshawar it was to find more than one member of the Garrison holding forth on the apathy and ignorance of the public at home about the Indian Army, and life on the Frontier in particular. When one came into the mess it would usually be to hear something like this:

“Here we are, on the outposts of the Empire, not only enduring every privation (*Khitmatgar*—*chhota* whisky-soda), but ruggedged about with that infernal inter-regimental competition, the Kitchener Test. It wouldn't be at all a bad thing to do something about it. Let's get people interested at home.”

And some of them did. A photograph was taken of an officer emerging from what was described as the new type of bivouac tent introduced by Lord Kitchener; and this was sent to a leading weekly illustrated paper in London, who produced it as a full-page picture. Unfortunately for the prospects of No. 2 of the series, “One of the travelling soup-kitchens for troops, recently designed by Army Headquarters”, several thousand people wrote at once to the editor, and pointed out that the ground area of the tent was obviously far too small to lie down in, and that it wasn't new either, as they had been perfectly familiar with the tent for years when serving in India. The authorities tried extremely hard, but with no success, to find out who had engineered the leg-pull. But the tent in question has been known as the Kitchener tent ever since.

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The mess was enlivened that cold weather by another event, and one which does not entail the same vague reference. Someone started an argument about the time it takes to cover distances in different ways, and this ended in Kenneth Barge of the 17th Cavalry backing himself to walk, run, ride, and bicycle a mile each way in twenty minutes, without any special training. The two milestones between which the attempt was to be made were chosen, and practically every officer in the station turned out to see the event. Barge did it with a comfortable margin of seconds, to my accompaniment as referee, on a bicycle. The *Pioneer* was so pleased with his performance that they brightened the usually rather pawky Notes on the front page with a leader on it.

One way and another there was plenty of variety in one's work at Bannu outside the usual run of soldiering on the Frontier. A new set of "temporary" lines for an Indian infantry battalion had to be built just outside the Fort, and as soon as this was known, the big contractors, seeing an extra good thing in profits, established a ring and put up their estimates in more ways than one. Feeling that my connection with Aberdeenshire ought to enable me to cope with this difficulty, the Cantonment Committee sent me off to the Punjab to find less grasping individuals. One or two were duly caught and brought back to Bannu, when, to my horror, I was led out, shown the ground, told that sepoys from the regiments would supply all the necessary labour, and requested to get on with it.

I had my Reservist Centre office which I used

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for the books, accounts, and correspondence, and its first-rate babu made an excellent Clerk of the Works; while luckily for me a Colonel Young had written an admirable treatise on Line Building, and there was a Sapper officer in Bannu who was always prepared to tell me how to calculate the cubical content of rounded bits of building and other things I did not know.

All went well until I found I had to cut water channels across parts of the 31st parade-ground. To this, as Acting Adjutant of the Regiment, I was bound to object, and a strong protest (to make things right regimentally) was sent to the officer in charge of Line Building. My reply to the Adjutant's office was calculated to reassure the Line Building Committee, composed of all the colonels in the station, that their interests as line builders by deputy were not being jeopardised. This created a deadlock, and the whole thing was put up to me as (Acting) Station Staff Officer and Cantonment Magistrate, for the orders of the Brigade Commander. There is a good deal of "acting" done in the Plains during the leave season.

It looked as if we were likely to have definite trouble up the Tochi in the early part of 1906, so I couldn't make certain of my leave to England, where I was wanted for urgent family reasons, until there wasn't a berth to be had in any steamer for weeks. Colonel Aylmer did everything he possibly could to help me, but in the end a subaltern in the Mountain Battery joined me in taking a deck passage with food on a Messageries boat, and down we went to Bombay with our camp beds,

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a table, and chairs. The accommodation was quite satisfactory, for we found a large recess, which we shut off with waterproof sheets, and were extremely comfortable. The food was A1. We had been justifiably pessimistic about the sanitary arrangements before we went on board, and a hurried inspection of one of the bath-rooms provided an equally unpleasant discovery of the same nature. So we paid a state call on the captain, who gave us the freedom of the first-class arrangements, provided we were not seen there after an ungodly hour in the morning.

It was very hot, coming into the Red Sea, in our rather stuffy retreat, and the first night after Aden I took my things up on deck when all was quiet and bedded down. Next morning at *déjeuner* our steward, a French Canadian, and as good a man as anyone could wish to tip, gave the assembled passengers a message from the captain. He had received a complaint from a Calcutta passenger travelling first class. It appeared that someone from the third class had been sleeping outside his deck cabin the night before, and as he was afraid his things might be stolen, the captain required this practice to cease.

When the meal was over, I went across to the first class and sent my card along to the aggrieved passenger by a deck steward. Presently he came hurrying up with: "Oh, how do you do. I don't think I've had the pleasure of seeing you on deck before." Whatever I may have meant to say deserted me. I simply had to take it straight off the bat. "Oh yes, you have," I said. "I'm the one you were afraid would steal your things last night. And

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by the way, I'm not a third-class passenger, I'm deck with food."

There were one or two people on board whom we knew which broke the monotony a bit, and we made friends with a party of French soldiers going back to France. As soon as we told them the branches of the service to which we belonged, they called us *Arti-boum* and *Piou-piou*, and we heard something of Army life in Tonkin as the lower ranks see it. We had suppressed what we felt would have been the awkward fact of our commissions, but when we found the party on the platform of Marseilles railway station, the *sous officer* in charge called them to attention and saluted. It was hardly a "usual compliment" to pay to two foreign sub-alterns in mufti, but we appreciated it none the less for that.

When I got back from leave, I found myself at rather a loose end. I was too junior to get a Double Company; and the C.O. said that as nobody in the Regiment had been up at Army Headquarters for some little time, I had better go to Simla, with an unofficial letter from him to the Chief of Staff, to see what I could get. It was an opening, and naturally I jumped at it. Yet I was sorry to leave Bannu, and although I came back to the Frontier more than once, I never saw the place again. The nearest I felt I got to it was one day last spring, in a L.M.S. dining-car, when I discovered the man opposite me to be a soldier on leave from Bannu.

I shall never forget its winter mornings. Away to the west, beyond Kurram Garhi, the hills lift in ridges of violet and red and brown with the glinting white of the Safed Koh away in the distance.

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Kurram Garhi and Gumatti, fort now in ruins, where a handful of outlaws, with a girl loading their rifles and singing to them, once defied an overwhelming force until everyone of them was dead. A Frontier Force regiment might be coming in from a routemarch, with the famous Border tune "Zakhmi Dil"—the Wounded Heart—sounding clear and sparkling on the pipes in the crisp morning air.

In due course I presented myself at Army Headquarters and was installed as an unpaid attaché in a balconied room of the rambling, chaletlike set of buildings overlooking the valley. The advantage over other professions in being an unpaid anything in the Army is that one's regimental pay and an adequate amount of allowances come along monthly all the same. It simply means one isn't drawing what are pleasantly called the emoluments of an appointment.

It was too early for ice-skating on the tennis courts, flooded for the purpose, so about my second evening I went over to the rink for some roller-skating. I didn't know a soul there, a disability that I intended, in one or two directions, to remedy as soon as possible. As I stood by a doorway watching the people going round, two ladies came up and stopped quite close to me. "My dear," said one of them, "do you know, there's a real live bart. come up to Army Headquarters?" "No, is there really," said the other one. "I wonder if he's here now." They both looked me up and down very carefully, transferred their gaze to the crowd of people on the rink, and then looked at me again. "No," said the first speaker, "there's no one here who looks like a baronet."

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After a while, I was put in charge of Concentration Section. It was an interesting time, because Lord Kitchener was then pressing forward the reorganisation of the Frontier Concentration schemes for the Army. Fortune was with me in another way, because, although D.A.Q.M.G. Concentration was written large outside my door, all the work that mattered was done by Major Cameron, R.E., of the Railway Board (presided over by Sir Trevredyn Wynne), who juggled with railway timings and other technicalities to such good effect that a thoroughly satisfactory reduction in the troop concentration period was made.

Lord Kitchener's schemes meant a certain amount of redistribution of troops; and a new cavalry cantonment had to be made about eight miles out of Nowshera. This place required a postal address, and the Government of India, in such cases, sometimes perpetuates the name of one of its eminent servants, as in Abbottabad and Lyallpur. Sir Bindon Blood was G.O.C. Northern Army at the time, and a cavalryman who went out to see the arid waste on which he was about to live, reported that Bloodibad was the only name for it. The official selection, however, was Risalpur.

The outstanding feature in the Government offices was the daily round of Files, collections of papers tied together with red tape. These manifestations of the labours of the Secretariats had frequently irritated Lord Curzon into vitriolic comment, but the output of office notes and memos. did not seem to get any less. I took the trouble to measure one "case" that appeared on my office table marked "Urgent". It was 1 foot

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9 inches in height, and had begun its rounds in 1860.

Concentration Section dealt with a variety of matters, including Internal Defence schemes, and what to do with decayed railway trucks at Quetta, but I was sorry that nothing to do with the Indian States could ever come my way. What I did hear about some of them—in what is a bygone generation now—was distinctly entertaining.

A Member of Council told me that, as part of the routine of their meetings, a considerable amount of Indian State correspondence had sometimes to be read. But once, when serious defalcations in the accounts of a certain State came up for scrutiny, the usually staid proceedings were rather upset. The financial crisis had arisen through the enterprise of a native banker, who succeeded in absconding with a great deal of money, and only just in time. I don't know what happened to the banker later on, but the telegram sent after him by an indignant prince, and read out to the Governor-General in Council, ran as follows: "What ho, bold *bunniah*, you might have waited until we could tie a kettle to your elegant behind".

Western ideas, and our conventions generally, were not then so familiar to the rulers of the Indian States as they are to-day. A man in the Political Department once told me that when an earlier Gaekwar of Baroda went to Calcutta he was so struck by the coloured plates of full-dress uniforms of the British Army displayed in Rankin's shop, that he ordered that eminent tailor to send him two sets complete of every regiment in the British Service. Soon afterwards the Viceroy paid a State

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visit to Baroda, to be received at the Palace by a guard of honour arrayed to represent every British unit, from the Household troops to the Guernsey Militia, with the representatives of the Highland regiments easily the most striking figures. But what really annoyed the Viceroy was the outrageous waste of money, one of the things that British Agents were supposed to prevent. A waste of money emulated by another ruler who bought an enormous luncheon outfit, with gold fittings and everything else that was expensive, to go on a camel. When the box arrived, the Raja decided that he had to order an exact duplicate to balance the weight on the other side of the animal.

For a considerable part of my time in Simla I stayed at the U.S. Club, which would be a good club anywhere. It was pretty quiet in the winter when the great ones were touring the Plains, with the Government at Calcutta, while we were tobogganing out of office hours down the deserted roads. But the Simla season found us fully employed on our office stools by day, and expected to show up at the more important functions at night. Colonel Jack Cowans (as Sir John was then) was giving those dinners at the Chalet to which everyone hoped they might be asked; while at the other end of the scale I tried to return an endless amount of hospitality with tea and tennis parties on the courts just above the Club secretary's old quarters, in which I was then living. The Chalet, which was an annexe to the Club, was more than a trifle beyond my means. Some people were able to take their exercise playing polo down at Annandale. But I usually got mine at Canadian tennis in

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the Club Court. The chief differences between this game and "Royal" tennis are the absence of chases and openings, a court without a tambour and a resounding gong instead of a grille. There, is of course, a pent-house. We used lawn-tennis balls and rackets, and a capital game it was. There was another court at Viceregal Lodge, on which the U.S. Club court had been modelled. Apart from two private Canadian tennis courts in England, there is one at Welwyn Garden City, but I have never seen the game since I left Simla.

Towards the end of the summer of 1909, a sapper captain came out from home to take over my job. During my last year at Simla I had got to know some of the Survey and Intelligence people, and what they told me had interested me enormously in the unknown country north of Assam, where the Tsangpo might—or might not—turn into the Brahmaputra of India, and where the Chinese were, without any doubt, trying to turn Eastern Tibet into a bit of China. A golden opportunity to explore the Tsangpo had been lost in 1904, when Sir Francis Younghusband's proposal to send a party from Lhasa, during the Tibet Mission, had been turned down by the home Government. I met one of the thwarted explorers in Simla, and very disappointed he was about it. It seemed impossible that I should ever get the chance to see that part of the world. The country was strictly out of bounds, and I was in a Punjab regiment with its horizon on the other side of India altogether. Yet the seemingly impossible happened. Shortly before my successor Charteris appeared on the scene, I was told that the Viceroy

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was then considering the appointment of a new commandant for the Military Police battalion responsible for that particular bit of the Frontier; and the powers that be were prepared to send my name in, to be added to the list. My C.O. telegraphed his permission; and away I went to see the secretary at Viceregal Lodge. He told me that there was a longish list, and that the appointment almost invariably went to majors of Gurkha regiments, the battalion being recruited in Nepal. "Did I speak Khas?" "No"—not a word, and I had only just got my captaincy. Then I went down the hill to my regiment at Nowshera feeling about 25 to 1 (o.) in the betting. But a fortnight later a wire came from Simla to say that I had been appointed Commandant of the Lakhimpur Battalion of Military Police, with headquarters at Dibrugarh. The country beyond their outposts might be forbidden, but the first step towards it had been taken.

CHAPTER IV

THE ASSAM BORDER

To the North-East Frontier—The outposts—The world's record rainfall—A hamadryad—Christmas at Beni—"Fire and Water"—Revolver shots and rain—A small punitive expedition—The tale of a rhino.

To leave the North-West Frontier and life in a Punjab regiment for the north-east corner of Assam is to give oneself a surprise item far beyond even the resources of the B.B.C. The treeless wastes of the Frontier—with a summer heat so tremendous that to sit down on a rock means going to hospital badly burnt, and a winter so cold that I have seen a man die from exposure on outpost duty—is only one side of India. Even the rich plains about Amritsar, where the Sikhs come from, in no way prepares one for the conditions of life in Assam. I left a country where a great river comes down through the high mountains of the Border for another that looks much the same on the map, to find myself, on the long train journey eastwards, getting into a completely different world.

There are no steamers on the Indus, and when I reached Dhubri, after four days' railway travelling, I thankfully got on board one of the flat-bottomed Brahmaputra paddle-boats that bring the tea from as far up as Dibrugarh to its market in Calcutta.

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These are comfortable steamers with pleasant deck cabins, and very popular with tea planters wanting a breath of fresh air during the muggy heat of summer. There was only one other white man on board. He came up and spoke to me while I was getting my mare shipped, and was the most delightful company on the river trip. But he was in one sense quite the most curious fellow-passenger I had ever met. I, on the contrary, still retained something of the portentous secrecy so much to be deplored in the lower grades of brass-hats—and became more secretive than ever. The laugh came when I met him again at Dibrugarh as my Inspector-General, and he told me that when he saw me on the steamer no one in Assam knew who had been appointed to the vacant battalion. Although he rather suspected, he hardly liked to ask me point-blank.

The last stage of the journey was by rail again; through wide expanses of high grass plain, or chunks of thick forest, with here and there stretches of the low, thick, flat-topped green bushes of the tea gardens. I had never seen so much green stuff, one way or another, in my life. As we came closer to Dibrugarh, the tea gardens by the sides of the line became almost continuous, and Englishmen, obviously tea planters, got in at every station. Feeling that these were certain to be people I would meet again fairly often during the next five years, I became more communicative, and learnt that they were all going in to Dibrugarh for a farewell dinner at the Club to the departing Commandant. I was in fact just in time to be the skeleton at the feast. But the man I was relieving

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could not possibly have made things more pleasant for me, and the Deputy Commissioner, in whom I found an old school-fellow, made one of the very best after-dinner speeches I have ever heard. As far as the programme was concerned I didn't exist, and thoroughly enjoyed an evening that was not sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought about what I was going to say myself.

To a soldier the difference in atmosphere on the two sides of India is most marked. The outstanding feature of the Punjab and the North-West Frontier is the warlike character of the people. Everyone is perfectly ready to fight if need be and, across the Border, frequently when they need not. In the North-West Frontier Province the people on both sides of the Border are Muhammadan, and in many ways alike. The recent Red Shirt Movement with the crest of the hammer and sickle, led by the Haji Abdul Ghaffar Khan (until he was deported in December 1931, and the Movement declared illegal), was an attempt to unite them in one independent nation.

When the North-West Frontier Province became a Governor's Province, in the spring of 1932, it was raised to the same level as the Punjab. This took from the Red Shirt Movement much of its appeal to a people who hotly resent anything they think is a slight.

In order to get a clear view of the north-western and north-eastern parts of the Indian Frontier it is necessary to see how things were before British rule.

A little more than a hundred years ago the Sikhs, rising to the height of their military power

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under Ranjit Singh, the Lion of the Punjab, drove the Afghans from Lahore and Multan back into their own mountains, and definitely established what is now the North-West Frontier, holding it in the only way it could be held, with the sword. In those days Europeans were to be found in more than one highly responsible post under the Sikh Durbar. Two French Generals had gone with the Sikh army to Peshawar; and the first great English Frontier administrator—Herbert Edwardes—went to Bannu in 1847 in the Sikh service. Another European on the Frontier was the Italian General Avitabile, governor of Peshawar for the Sikhs from 1838 to 1842, who left behind him the sinister memory of his portable gallows. Then in 1849 the Second Sikh War broke out, and with our annexation of the Punjab came British responsibility for holding the Border. Whatever the future may hold, this border is to-day the one obviously dangerous frontier of the whole British Empire and Dominions, and on its security the Commonwealth may be said to depend. This makes it the direct concern of the Committee of Imperial Defence.

Given a sufficient proportion of British troops, the north-western part of India to-day is quite capable of finding the men for its defence, and British officers of the right stamp still supply the leaders. There are under twenty-one million people all told in the Punjab, Muhammadans, Hindus, and Sikhs, practically all of whom are on the land; and although someone had to look after the farm, the Punjab raised 350,000 recruits for the combatant services alone during the Great War.

Assam was within the Bengal Presidency until

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it was made a separate province in 1874. Then in 1905 came the partition of Bengal, and that unpopular foundling Eastern Bengal and Assam appeared upon the scene. Since 1912 Assam has been itself again and is now a Governor's Province. In the fact that the North-West Frontier has also been cut from a more progressive province behind it, all present resemblance between the two provinces ends. Assam has to-day all the appearance of a permanent backwater, saved from stagnation and infused with prosperity by the tea industry; but this air of profound peace is due entirely to British rule. For Assamese history really begins with invasion; the invasion of the country in the thirteenth century by the Ahoms from the Shan kingdom of Pông. The Ahoms gradually extended their territory, until by the year 1500 they held the whole of Assam proper. At this point there is a passing resemblance to the North-West Frontier. The history of that border had been marked by a succession of Muhammadan invasions that poured for centuries through the passes; and this was echoed in Assam by three invasions between 1500 and 1660. The results, however, were different. The disciplined Muhammadan armies were successful only until the bad climate began to tell on bodies of men who had been thrown into an unknown country without lines of communication or any hope of reinforcements. Then the invaders melted away, and the Ahoms, who were now Hindus, continued to hold the country.

A hundred and forty years ago the Government of the Ahoms in Upper Assam had broken into four pieces—all fighting each other, and chaos and

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misery spread over the country. On the top of this effort towards "self-determination" came the Burmese invasion and occupation, which went on spasmodically from 1819 to 1824. The East India Company had taken over Lower Assam with Bengal in 1765; and after our war with Burma, which lasted from 1824 to 1826, Upper Assam was ceded to the East India Company. In 1838 the Company's troops went right up the country, occupied Sadiya, the Khampti capital, in 1842, and have given the land peace and prosperity ever since.

To come to recent times, it was our occupation and protection of Assam that kept all menace of Chinese activity a hundred and eighty miles from the Inner Line of the Frontier twenty years ago. The Burma Round Table Conference did not think that there is any menace hanging at the moment over the North-East Frontier. But as the Assam Government pointed out to the Simon Commission in 1928, "the time may soon come when that Frontier will become no less, if it is not more, important for the defence of India than the North-West Frontier". But neither Bengal nor Assam show any enthusiasm to do anything in their own defence. This is not said to belittle this part of India in any way, it is simply stating a fact; a fact that, in their own interests, those most concerned ought to face. Bengal has a population of forty-five millions, out of whom only 7117 recruits for fighting units were enlisted between 1914 and 1918. Of these, one unit, the 49th Bengalis, went so far as to land at Basra for duty on the lines of communication. During the War Assam raised

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942 combatant recruits, but in normal times neither Bengal nor Assam find any recruits at all for the regular Indian Army.

Assam has a population of about eight million people, including such hill tracts as a census officer can visit. Considerably more than four million people in Assam are Hindus, and a million and a quarter are Animists; but it is surprising to find about two and a quarter million Muhammadans of the Sunni sect. The people of Assam are not by nature conspicuously hard-working. Eighty per cent of the entire wage-earning population are imported tea-garden coolies. A large proportion of the rest of the inhabitants find enough rice for their support easy to grow. Sugar-cane and buffalo herds need very little watching, and are, therefore, seen everywhere.

As long as British rule gives security to India, women and private property in Bengal are perfectly safe. But Assam has hill tribes on its border, and although these people cannot be called warlike or particularly enterprising, the border tracts have always needed protection from what might otherwise be frequent petty raids. This protection is given by military police battalions, now the Assam Rifles, with British commanding officers and assistant commandants. The greater proportion of the men are Gurkhas. When I was in Assam, the military police battalions were chiefly enlisted from a foreign and independent country—Nepal—in the same way as the regular Gurkha battalions are still recruited. These battalions took hardly any sons of pensioners who have settled down in Assam, as they run rather badly to seed away from their

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hills. But commandants were not much worried by difficulties about enlistment in 1909.

There always is a good deal to do when taking over a new job, but I had never come across anything so absolutely strange, over and above the office differences between civil and military administration. Mules I was accustomed to, and I had suffered from camels for some years in the way of transport, but when I went round the Battalion lines for the first time, I found the regimental transport drawn up in the shape of six elephants, who promptly saluted on the word of command. Where elephants could not be used we collected carriers, and for movements by water dug-out canoes.

The Lakhimpur Battalion guarded four hundred miles of Frontier, with a string of about twenty posts and detachments on the edge of the Plains—from the lower Patkai Hills on the Burma side, round the Northern Border, to Bhutan. The Ahom Government had established this system in the early years of the seventeenth century, and it had been kept on ever since.

Outposts are absolutely necessary on a frontier, but to find that four hundred men were locked up in these posts, and that Headquarter duties, employed men, and other causes made the parade states almost nil returns, meant a completely immobilised Battalion should anything unexpected crop up. Purely passive defence is always unsound, and in these small detachments, some of them positively microscopic, discipline and training were bound to suffer. The fault lay entirely in the system, but nothing could be done to alter it until

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a detailed scheme could be drawn up, based on knowledge of conditions ranging from the hill tribes to the local tea estate interests.

For my first inspection I took the Quartermaster, Subadar Dorward, with me. He was a Forfarshire man, and how a pensioned gunner N.C.O. got a Viceroy's commission as a subadar I never fathomed. Dorward was getting on in years, but his chubby, cheerful appearance in shorts had earned him the name of the Boy Scout. He knew the country well, and anything to do with the Battalion even better. My own contribution to any conversation with the people we would meet was limited to what I could do in Urdu, Punjabi, Pushtu, and Persian, and none too much of some of them. This was hardly more useful than Gaelic or French, so Dorward's fluent Assamese and Khas were an additional asset.

We got out of our train at a place unexpectedly called Margherita. A number of Italians had come up when the line was being built, and named it after the Queen of Italy. This part of the country is fairly rich in minerals. Oil is found there, and a really remarkable coal mine. When I was a boy I had gone down Cannock and seen, some 2000 feet underground, the workings at the end of a gallery. But this coal mine was the other way up. The shaft went horizontally into a round green hill, and worked upwards. Actually it was a sort of coal quarry.

Next morning we went up the hill to the outpost. It was easy going, and pleasantly cool through the trees in jungle that was not particularly thick, and long before I thought we had got anywhere,

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Dorward pointed with his stick to a high square crow's-nest standing up on the next spur—the sentry-box of the outpost. The military police posts are all built more or less on the same plan, and singularly flimsy they looked to anyone accustomed to the thick mud-and-stone walls and square keeps of the North-West Frontier. But they were exactly right where they were. Logs for the stockade and the barrack-room, and the supports for the lookout post, and split bamboo for almost everything else, could be cut in any quantity all round the site. The one weak point seemed to be the danger of fire, and the inadequacy of the lengths of hollow bamboo used as water-buckets. But I cannot remember a single outbreak of fire.

A dozen men formed the garrison of this outpost, and after the inspection, with a fine day still before us, we went on to a ridge from which we could see the country in which the Battalion had made its last expedition. A small Naga village had been built on the clearing, and the thatched bamboo houses strutted up on poles were the first of the kind I had seen. We were evidently in elephant country, for one or two of the Naga men wore thick armlets made of a section of an elephant's tusk, and almost all of them wore ear-rings of an elephant's tooth shaped like a small toadstool.

I found out through Dorward, who never failed as long as I knew him to get things done in any dialect anywhere, that the headman would be quite pleased if I ate my lunch in his house. Dorward himself preferred to eat his outside, making a remark to me about something that I didn't catch—

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till afterwards, when I caught several of them. The way into the house was up a notched log to a split bamboo platform, through a low doorway, and into a fair-sized room. The entrance was door and window combined, and the place rather dark and remarkably bare, so I sat down on the floor, leant back against the wall and started on my sandwiches. Presently I noticed one or two curious objects hanging on the opposite wall, and there were some more of them just over my head. They looked rather like melons cut in half and stained red. Getting up to have a look at these objects, I found I had been lunching under a head hunter's scoring-board. In the wild parts of the Naga Hills, where it had not—in those days at any rate—been possible to stop the practice, the heads are hung on poles like enormous fishing-rods round the village; but this house was within strolling distance of a hockey ground on which we, the members of the Dibrugarh District team, had an annual fixture.

There we were, in the Assam Valley, living in the comfort of civilisation that the tea industry had brought to the country, while this sort of heirloom could be found a few miles away—in a world that did not affect us at all. From the Residential Club at Dibrugarh with its tennis courts and two regimental bands, we could see the Abor Hills across the river; unexplored hills that for hundreds of years had been the focus of a variety of startling rumours. The Abors, some of whom at times visited the Plains, were then supposed to be ferocious savages, but their weapons were primitive, their raids spasmodic, and they never com-

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bined and came down in force. The North-West Frontier had been very different. The conditions across that border thrust themselves forcibly into our daily lives. Assam, except for an occasional raid, might have been a placid green island.

It seemed possible, however, that this peaceful prospect might be disturbed. Chinese troops were giving the Burmese Frontier authorities a certain amount of trouble, and were even more active further west, where Tibet was being invaded, while claims of suzerainty over Nepal and Bhutan had been revived. Moreover, it was hardly likely that the one outstanding geographical problem would be allowed to remain permanently unsolved—a few miles inside those hills to the north. It was not known definitely then whether the Tibetan Tsangpo and the Dihang of Assam were the same river; and what was far more spectacular, there was the long-established belief that there were great falls on that river—and within about fifty miles of the plains of Assam. In 1853 a Catholic missionary, Father Krick, on a visit to Meybo, went some miles up the Gorge into the Abor country; and in the eighteenthies a member of the Survey of India called Kinthup had explored from the Tibetan side, but his reports were not at this time given much outside credit. Several expeditions had gone so far as to enter the foot-hills, but these had unfortunately added nothing to our reputation among the Abors, or increased our knowledge of the country.

In 1901 two Gurkha surveyors had reached Kembang and reported Gyala Sindang in Tibet to be ten marches away from there; and in the spring

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of 1909 the assistant political officer had also got to Kebang, which is the dominating village of the Minyong Abors. That was all. The country remained practically unexplored.

All this made it obviously necessary to have an organised movable column, equipped and trained for trans-border work, available in the Battalion at a moment's notice. The Frontier to be seen before this could even be proposed was a long one, and the weather in Assam is not that of the Punjab and the North-West Frontier. Once the rains start, a considerable amount of the country goes under water. The Brahmaputra, instead of being anything up to a mile or so wide, extends for miles beyond its winter banks, with the Assamese villages appearing here and there on their little hill-tops like islands. As the world's record for rainfall is held for Assam by a place called Cherrapunji with 905 inches for the year, 366 inches for one month (July), and 41 inches in 24 hours, this is not altogether surprising. Consequently any time available from Headquarters while the dry season lasted had to be spent on inspection.

To be of any real value, one's arrival had to be unexpected, and apart from the preliminary stage by rail or steamer, the outposts were reached by pony, bicycle, buggy, elephant, or dug-out—ways of getting to one's work that I look back on with regret when business in town plunges me into the rush hours on the London Tube.

One of the posts on the Mishmi side, out from Sadiya, could be most conveniently reached by bicycle, and an Assistant Commandant once came back and told us that, on the rather rough path

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through the jungle, he accidentally ran over a hamadryad. This is a singularly vindictive snake at the best of times—and about the only one that goes for you without being cornered or hurt; and on this occasion the infuriated reptile appears to have followed the unlucky bicyclist, who dared not spurt and risk a toss, for several rather hectic miles.

An elephant was extremely slow, unless one were on her back when she got frightened by something and bolted. This was an experience I am thankful to say I only had once. Usually I walked along, until we came to a lagoon or something equally unpleasant, with my kit on the elephant following behind. Elephants are most interesting animals to watch. If we had to ferry or take a raft across the Brahmaputra, the elephant's gear, pad, and kit came with me, and the elephant swam over, with only the tip of her trunk showing, and the mahout, looking rather like a beetle, squatting on an unseen back. An elephant drinks in the proverb "safety first" with its mother's milk—which is the reason why elephants were discarded for Heavy Artillery batteries—in non-mechanised days—in favour of bullocks. Consequently they were inclined to fuss a good deal when asked to cross a P.W.D. bridge. The mahout's elephant vocabulary is not extensive enough to translate the Public Works notice, that the bridge is safe for animals weighing between three and four tons, into elephant language; and the leading elephant would insist on testing the bridge most carefully before crossing it. She did this by stamping hard on the bridge with one foot, and feeling the vibrations with her trunk. Until she was satisfied by this experiment, nothing would

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induce her, or any other elephants with her, to cross. But to do the animal justice, there is hardly any natural country, barring precipices, that an elephant will not climb or slide down, or trample and force its way through. I liked having them out with me, if it were only to see them put their trunks into their grain-bags and apparently melt the contents; or prepare their dessert of sugarcane. One day I got a fresh light on the elephant's character. I was inspecting on the north bank, and we had been through pretty deep mud on the way to our rest-house for the night. When I went out to see the elephants fed, one of them had got hold of a short thick stick and was scraping off the mud with it, much to the amusement of a small boy looking on. The elephant rolled an exasperated eye at him, raised her trunk and threw the stick at him with deadly aim and hard enough to hurt him. I had no idea an elephant could throw at all, let alone so far.

The other, to me unusual, way of getting about was by dug-out. These are tree-trunks, burnt out and cut into the shape of a big canoe; and hold any number from three up to a dozen people. The Assamese fisherfolk in particular use them extensively. A dug-out upsets very easily, but, on the other hand, nothing can knock a hole in it. This is at least some comfort when going down a river at night, with one man in the stern keeping the boat's head straight with a paddle, and the other in the bows with a lantern looking out for snags. But it is rather dreary work poling all day upstream, with the sun making the water look like an endless heliograph.

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Just before Christmas I got an invitation from a young I.C.S. officer, the Sub-Divisional officer of North Lakhimpur, a place I had visited in November, about half-way down the Frontier. He wrote and asked me if I would care to go up with him into the Hill Miri country across the border during Christmas week. Apparently there had been some trouble over the *posa*. This is the yearly subsidy which the Provincial Government pays to certain of the hill tribes, a practice that had once been followed by the old Ahom rulers of Assam. I never discovered what Government service the Hill Miris did for this gratuity. The country had been visited, and explored rather further than we would be able to go, by Colonel Woodthorpe twenty-five years earlier. But no one had been into the country since. Nothing could have been better, or luckier, from any point of view.

The Authorities raised no difficulties, and on the appointed day I met the S.D.O. at the Gorge, where the Subansiri River comes out into the Plains. It was, of course, an entirely peaceful expedition. The S.D.O. had the usual *chaprassis* and servants, and these with my two orderlies made us a party of eight. We were joined by some pleasant-looking Hill Miris in loin-cloths and cane waistbelts, with blankets about their shoulders, who had come down to carry our kit and show us the way. The Subansiri, which we followed for a short distance, looked like a Highland river in spate seen under a huge magnifying-glass. Once through the Gorge, we turned up into forest-clad hills as steep as anything I had yet seen. They rose

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to about 4500 feet, and were covered with thick forest, choked with creepers and undergrowth, with a narrow path wriggling up through the jungle. That night we camped on and about the path at a place where a mountain spring bubbled out of a bank covered with tiny pink begonias.

We saw very few people on the road, as there were neither villages nor fields until we had climbed Moi-a Hill, which rose between us and the village of Beni. An occasional party of men were bringing dried buffalo meat up from the Plains. It had a powerfully unpleasant smell. We also met a few women clad exclusively in cane crinolines, except one who wore an abbreviated skirt made of leaves. The S.D.O. knew a word or two of the hill dialect, and spoke Assamese. He had an interpreter with him too, as dictionary and messenger boy combined. But my Assamese was in its childish stage, and my knowledge of any hill dialect in no stage at all. So the S.D.O. used to stop any interesting conversation that might be taking place as we went along in single file, and gave it to me in instalments. As we went up Moi-a, he told me that the Hill Miris were anxious that I should know that nearly two hundred years earlier they had fought the people of Assam. The king of that country had sent an expedition up to Beni along the road we were on. Then, they added with evident satisfaction, although many of their people died in the jungle, their Ahom enemies never saw them; which made me wonder more than ever why they got their yearly allowance.

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Early in the afternoon of our second day we came to Beni, which for its age and local importance looked disappointingly small, perched along the flat top of a narrow grassy spur. There were only about a dozen houses in it, but surprisingly long ones, all built on poles, with low thatched roofs and little platforms at the doors. We soon discovered that the smallest of the houses held about twenty people, and the larger ones a good many more. They were in fact flats, for a number of families. There was a biggish room in each house, about twelve feet each way, that one went into; beyond that ran a passage, and bamboo partitions and hangings of sorts made the family quarters. The headman offered us the hospitality of his house, but as this entailed one or two obvious drawbacks, we said we would put up our 40 lb. tents under some trees just outside the village.

I had celebrated my first visit to the Hills by getting a really bad headache, and the S.D.O. happened to mention this to the headman. "Oh," said he, "that's easily put right. Would I let them cure it?" I hadn't the slightest idea what was coming, but on the principle of trying anything once, I asked the S.D.O. to thank him and bring along his remedy. Had I known then what I got to know later about local prescriptions, I might not have been so airy about it. Presently an old lady appeared, the headman's mother, and, as it turned out, the real ruler of the village—if the fact that she collected and pouched the Government subsidy was any indication. She stood behind me, massaged my head with the tips of her fingers, and by the time my headache had completely dis-

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appeared, I felt that the *posa* was not such a bad investment after all.

That evening, as it grew dark, we lighted the hurricane lamp, and the entire village, who were standing round by this time gazing at the wonders of our camp equipment, at once wanted to worship it. They were convinced that the lantern had a spirit inside it, which they would be wise to keep contented while it remained at Beni.

All the hill tribes are Animist. Nature, as they see it in their forests and rivers, their mountains and storms, is all on a tremendous scale; and the hillmen have peopled the world around them with angry spirits of whom they are genuinely afraid. So they try to propitiate them with almost endless ceremonies. It was some time before I got to realise these things, and even longer before I found out their belief in a supreme Spirit of Good. This was difficult to discover, because their religious exercises are entirely directed towards pacifying the spirits they believe can harm them—not unlike Caliban.

The headman came down that evening and sat with us as we smoked our pipes beside our little camp fire. Presently he got out his own corn-cob pipe and filled it from a deerskin pouch, refusing the S.D.O.'s offer to try some of his mixture. All the hill people, men, women, and children, smoke an extraordinarily foul tobacco that they grow themselves. Instead of lighting a splinter of wood at the fire, he took a crystal and some tinder out of a pouch fitted with an iron striker underneath. But he didn't light his pipe immediately. He moved round a bit on his hunkers towards us and

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told us this story, which the S.D.O. interrupted now and again to translate.

Ages ago Fire fought Water. And all that grew in the forest, green things to whom Water was life, helped Water. So Fire got the worst of it, and ran away, while Water rose steadily out of its bed in the valley and followed Fire all the time steadily up the mountain-side. Presently Fire reached the top of the mountain and flickered there, for it could go no further: because Water had risen and risen, and covered all the low hills and filled all the glens, and now it was lapping against the topmost peak, where Fire had taken refuge. Then, just as Water began to break over the very top of the mountain, and it seemed as if Fire must be drowned and die, it darted as a last refuge into a stone.

As he said this the headman struck his crystal and iron sharply together, and a spark flashed out. "There", he said, "it is—in the stone for ever—the servant of man."

Next morning, while the S.D.O. transacted affairs of state, I said I'd go down to a suitable place below the village and have some revolver practice. The preparations at once drew a crowd who were considerably frightened by the noise; and this turned to horrified incredulity when they were allowed to go up to the tree and see for themselves what a Service Webley can do in the way of penetration. Some of the people hurried off to the houses and came back with the headman and a highly amused S.D.O. It was then explained to me that the village had two petitions they wanted to make about this dreadful devil I had with me.

The first was that I would stop the spirit at once,

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as his behaviour was bound to make it rain. This, I thought, was just a tactful effort by the villagers to end an exhibition that made them distinctly nervous. But it certainly was an odd coincidence that the sky began to cloud over some hours later, followed by rain that evening and a pouring wet day all the way back to the Plains. None of these hill tribes seem to make any effort through their medicine men to prevent rain. At least I never heard or saw anything of the anti-rain ceremonies given by Frazer in *The Golden Bough* as commonly used elsewhere. It would have been a useful sort of effort, but perhaps 800 inches or so of rain in the year was too much for their medicine men.

The other request was for me to bring my devil along and get him to say a few words to some disagreeable people living some miles off. This, unfortunately, was impossible, and a golden opportunity of studying local tactics had to be let slip.

The reorganisation of the Frontier defence arrangements and the establishment of a movable column soon reached the paper stage. Reams of foolscap were covered with arguments showing how necessary a measure it was (by me), and about an equal amount of paper was used to demonstrate that the cost would be prohibitive (by the financial authorities). The course of the argument finally led me to see the Local Government people myself, in as pleasant a hill station as one could wish to visit. There are none of the views of perpetual snow that Darjeeling can offer, nor a lake like the one at Naini Tal. The only outside attraction is, in fact, a drive to the dâk bungalow and old cemetery at Cherrapunji, the place where the rain makes its

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record. But a prettier spot or one more trimly kept than Shillong among its pine trees, when the blue hydrangeas are out, on the banks of grass by the sides of the roads, would be hard to find. Thanks to the effective backing of the I.G. Police, I went back to Headquarters with the scheme sanctioned.

But my good fortune was not to end there. We were short of an Assistant Commandant, and one evening there descended upon the Dibru station platform, with the usual avalanche of tin boxes, leather-topped basin, and roll of bedding, a white bull terrier bitch, followed out of the carriage by a short, extremely broad, clean-shaven, sandy-haired subaltern—with the most disarming smile. The only deceptive thing about Bill Hutch was his slow, quiet manner. I had a charger once that could bolt from a slow trot, and at times one sees something pretty quick in the ring, but for sheer quickness of body and brain, at any given moment, I have never met anyone like A. M. Hutchins, 3rd Gurkha Rifles; any more than I have ever known his equal as a regimental officer and a friend.

Before we had time to start even preliminary training, and months before the new equipment and other essentials could possibly arrive, we were ordered on a small punitive expedition into the Dafla Hills with Noël Williamson, A.P.O. Sadiya, as political officer. The relations between the political officer and the military commander on any save a major expedition are always a trifle difficult. The political officer may want to take risks (with men who are not his), and the commanding officer usually inclines to be touchy about “the military point of view”.

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Williamson was a brilliant member of the Indian Police, absolutely fearless, and entirely bent on his own way of doing things. As a matter of fact this particular show was altogether devoid of incident, and attended by no actual risks whatever. In such minor differences of opinion that may have arisen between a political officer with uncommonly wide experience, and a C.O. on an expedition in conditions entirely new to him, I have not much doubt as to who must have been right. But I have known a case, somewhere else between Bhutan and Burma, where a colonel commanding a column met with a serious reverse and heavy loss of life through giving way to his political officer against his professional judgment. That could certainly not have happened with any of the experienced political officers with whom I have served.

Our enemy, on this occasion, were distant connections of my friends in Beni, whom we call Hill Miris, but who really are Daflas. For the first three marches we waded up a shallow river, with the water about our knees, between thick walls of jungle. At night we hacked out a clearing by the water's edge for our camp. Gurkhas are experts with their *kukris*, and there were plenty of wild plantains about to make shelters with their big leaves. One early morning, on the way up the mountain stream, the column was led by a wild elephant that trudged stolidly along, quite close to the point of the A.G. for some way, before he scrambled up the bank and crashed noisily into the forest. The column finally made its surprise appearance above the village, fired a few rounds, captured the required hostages, and went back home the

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way it had come. The show, as a show, may not have been interesting, but it gave me an insight into trans-border operations, and what could be done to improve column work, camping methods in particular. Until our small column went up into the Tagen Dafla country, the tribe had given no trouble since 1875, and a number of them had settled in the plains of Darrang and Lakhimpur below their foot-hills. But, like other hill tribes on the Assam border, they started raiding again in 1918.

To the west of the Daflas live the Akas, and an outpost on their border ended our responsibilities on the Frontier. For many years British relations with the Akas were of the same nature as our dealings with the Abors, only more fortunate in their results. The Akas have been entirely peaceful since 1888, and I never saw more than the fringe of their country.

The Battalion had a large detachment at Sadiya during the rainy season, and Bill went up to see about their training, while I took on the training at Headquarters. The complete reorganisation was now in full swing—to establish a total force of 250 rifles, specially trained in trans-border warfare (Assam type), able to move out at a few hours' notice, and move quickly wherever they went. The difficulty was that one could not foresee the number of men who might be required to act independently—this ranged from about a dozen rifles upwards. So the force was organised, both as regards its aluminium cooking arrangements and so on as well as for its training, into squads of twelve as the unit—with twenty of them in all in the movable column.

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Our one blow was over the wireless. Transport carriers cannot be expected to take a greater weight than 60 lb., and the only portable wireless receiver and transmitter sets that could be made up into these loads at the beginning of 1911 were Australian. We ordered them, but legal injunctions from another quarter killed the scheme. This was a disappointment, because it had been a distinct triumph getting the grant out of the Finance people. The movable column when it eventually went on service had to rely on helios like any other unit, and in so rainy a country the sun is not always shining.

The whole Assam valley swarms with game, and nothing was easier than to get as much shooting as one wanted in the course of one's work away from Headquarters. But I was extremely anxious to shoot a rhino. There were not many of them anywhere in Assam, and none on the north bank, where my duties chiefly took me. I took a fortnight's leave, got Government permission to take out the six Battalion elephants on hire, and went down the valley into the rhino country—the huge flat plains of high grass to be found in Assam. A tea planter, one of the best shikari in that part of India, who had shot two rhinos himself, came too, to give me all the help he could.

We pitched our camp in a central place, and rode out on elephants every morning to the most likely spots. Then we got down and followed up any promising track. The rhino likes wallowing in mud, and he is a creature of regular habits, going the same way exactly through the long grass to and from his mud bath. After he has done

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this for some time, his track gets to look rather like the tube part of the Bakerloo railway. It has hard wattled walls, from the mud rubbed off his flanks on to the thick grass stems on either side—and this run, of course, exactly fits him.

It was very hot going along inside the run, speculating as to whether it would be heads or tails should a rhino appear. Tails only presented the difficulty of getting him in a vital spot. Heads meant something like a ton shell in the barrel of its gun—and about as much hope of stopping it with the luckiest possible right and left. I thought rather longingly of the little recesses in a coal mine, where one stands while the trucks rattle past. I need not have troubled. I never came up to my rhino. The nearest I got to one was at an open space, with a tree-stump in the middle. The rhino had trodden down the grass in a circle by going round the stump as if he were the hand of a clock, sharpening his horn on the wood. The grass and the stump looked as if he had been stopping himself every day for years; and his droppings, on the outer edge of the clearing, showed that he had been there not so long before. Full of hope, we tracked him all that day, but never got a sight of him. I was lucky enough to get an exceedingly good swamp deer head that evening, but I never saw a rhino from first to last.

The only excitement of the whole trip was one day, far afield, when we met a grass fire. It came roaring down between us and our camp, a great high wall of orange flame with a black smoke-cloud above it. Someone from the little villages on the distant edge of the plain must have set

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light to the dry grass, and the wind was busy doing the rest. The elephants objected to the approaching blaze every bit as much as we did. Nor is it too easy sticking on to the pad of an elephant by the binding ropes, with a cartridge bag, haversack, glasses, and a rifle to look after, when the animal is swaying from side to side till its shoulders look as if they would touch the ground next time. It was all right for the mahout astride her neck, using the most wonderful language, and jabbing ineffectively with his goad. Then the elephants bolted. But they had the sense to make for a narrow strip of marsh—and unpleasantly narrow it was, too—that broke the wall of flame, and up this we splashed to safety.

The country round our camp was apparently full of wild elephant. We could hear them quite close to us at night, but thought no more about it. Some little time later it was reported to me that one of the elephants was without any doubt whatever going to add to the establishment, and sure enough in just under two years after that shooting trip an elephant was born on the strength. We had experienced no (Official) difficulty when one of the Battalion elephants went mad, and was shot by Bill. The execution took place near a big old disused well, into which the elephant fell backwards, doing about the most astounding disappearing act on record. But the addition of one unauthorised elephant to the establishment, and by means quite unprovided for by any regulation, gave me an extraordinary amount of trouble.

The elephant's child was the jolliest little beast imaginable, and looked as if he had been cut out

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of the best black india-rubber. He used to be brought up to my bungalow, and it was great fun playing with him. The only thing he didn't like was my tiger cub Fifi, who had to be shut up while he was ambling about on the lawn. Fifi was a great joy. I had brought her up from the day I got her, a helpless little orphan, who had to be fed from a bottle and live in a basket. Later on we had to be careful about Bill's bull terrier, and the ponies and elephants were terrified of her. As she grew bigger, people who came to the house were noticeably uneasy, and showed a strong desire to get their legs up somewhere. Occasionally when I exercised her up the road past the Club and our only shop, the Planter's Stores, Bill used to bring the bull terrier too; and we went along the grass on either side of the Red Road with our respective animals bounding at the ends of their chains. When Fifi was over six months old I felt I had to let her go to one of those huge super-Whipsnade enclosures where Indian princes and rich men of the country give wild animals so good a time.

The baby elephant was the future result of the shooting trip, but at the time, my leave being nearly over, we packed up the camp kit and went to stay the night with an old school friend of mine, the manager of the nearest tea garden. At dinner that night our host said he had rather a remarkable adventure the day before. As he was finishing his breakfast, with his buggy waiting for him at the door, a man came in and said there was a large rhino in a pond barely half a mile down the road. My friend rushed for his rifle, got into his buggy and drove to a convenient distance from the pond,

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where the rhino was standing broadside on, looking about as big as a crofter's cottage. Getting out of the buggy, he sank into the kneeling position, and bowled the rhino over. The whole thing had taken less than five minutes.

CHAPTER V

THE ABORS AND A MOVABLE COLUMN

An unfriendly hill tribe—Expeditions against the Abors—Mediaeval tales about their unexplored country—Reported murder of A.P.O. Sadiya and his party in the Abor Hills—The movable column goes up—The story of the massacre.

BETWEEN the Mishmi territory above Sadiya and the Dafla country in the Subansiri watershed are the Abor Hills, but along this bit of Frontier we had no outposts away on the edge of the Plains. The great stretches of grass and belts of forest on this part of the north bank were shunned by the Assamese; and only down on the main river-bank at the saw-mills, with its English manager and his assistants, was there any sign of the British enterprise that has opened up the Assam Valley. Here a small outpost had been established in 1904, as the Abors frequently came down as far as this, and as frequently gave trouble, levying what amounted to blackmail on the native community. This outpost consequently escaped the axe that had cut down a number of the outlying detachments by the spring of 1911, and removed them from their cabbage patches to a more active life.

Harrison, the manager of the Mekla Nadi saw-mills, felled his trees in the neighbouring forest, hauling them in with his elephants, or with his

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little steamer caught the great logs that floated down the river the Assamese call the Dihang, the Abors the Si-ang, and we now know to be the main stream of the Brahmaputra. But I like the old names better; when Assam was called Uttar Gol, and the Brahmaputra the Hradya. These big logs interested me very much. Some of them must have come a great distance, and Harrison once found a cypress trunk seven feet in diameter. This of course was no proof that the Dihang crossed the Main Snowy Range, then believed to be much nearer the Plains than it turned out to be. But wherever the pines and cypresses came from, they had been torn from an unexplored hill-side, and had perhaps been hurled down one of the greatest falls in the world.

People were not encouraged to wander about on this bit of the north bank beyond the immediate neighbourhood of Harrison's hospitable bungalow. Passes had to be obtained from the A.P.O. Sadiya and, as the Abors were considered dangerous and uncertain, these were not easy to get. "Abor", by the way, means "unfriendly one" in Assamese, and was not the tribesmen's own name for themselves. Their own name is Abuit, or sometimes *adi-ami* (hill-men), but they always call themselves men of whatever village they live in, when asked.

The Abors had earned their name in Ahom times by consistently giving trouble, and on a frontier where the tribesmen are not really warlike, merely naughty children as compared with the Pathan, they had certainly made their Dafla and Mishmi neighbours afraid of them. Reputations for ferocity and fighting qualities had been easy to

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get, as the Ahom Government had never been particularly enterprising in their dealings with any of the hill-men in the northern part of the valley, except in their way of "Limoge-ing" unsuccessful commanders of their own. There was, for instance, the case of two generals who had retired, in accordance with no plan whatever, before the Dafla bowmen in 1646. These commanders were retired altogether and sentenced to wear women's clothes in public. The hill people on the north bank were all grouped as Daflas in the old Assamese records. The earliest mention of Abors is in 1798, when the then expiring Ahom Government succeeded in defeating a body of them and their Singpho allies near Sadiya. As to the hill tribes in general, Lieutenant MacGregor, the first British officer who ever appeared on this frontier, had reported upon them in 1788 as "men of excellent understanding and pleasant manners". I have often wondered what tribe it was he saw. But it is a fair set-off against the opinion of the same people given by an early writer, one Mahomed Qazim, who said: "This evil-disposed race of mountaineers are many degrees removed from the line of humanity and are destitute of the characteristic properties of a man". The next British officer to come on the scene was Captain Bedford, in 1826, some years before we took over Upper Assam. He undoubtedly saw the Abors and found them difficult to deal with and distinctly truculent.

British official relations with the tribe began early—in 1847. The Abors were in the habit of kidnapping local border people called Miris, who used to wash for gold in the rivers, refused to stop

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this practice, and forbade the establishment of trading-posts on the Dihang. The British Government replied to this by sending up an expedition the following year, with a detachment drawn from the local defence corps of Lower Assam. The column consisted of 100 rifles of the 1st Assam Light Infantry, 150 native carriers, and what for hill warfare was the cumbersome addition of six elephants. The force entered the gorge at Pasighat, burnt the nearest village, and were back in Dibrugarh three weeks after they left it. In 1858 the Minyong Abors came raiding almost as far down the left bank as Dibrugarh, and a few weeks later an expedition was sent against them. It was a small mixed force of Naval Brigade local artillery and 100 rifles of the Assam Light Infantry, and had orders to burn Kebang. All it did was to show how an expedition should not be conducted, and another force had to be sent up the following year. The 1859 expedition did not get as far as Kebang, a distance of under thirty miles from the Plains. But it carried several stockades, with a loss of 1 killed and 44 wounded out of a force of 70 British and 300 Indian ranks, and burned one or two villages. It then retired.

In 1862 the Local Government adopted the system of trans-border control that was established on the North-West Frontier by the Durand Line in 1893; and representatives of a number of the trans-frontier clans came down to Sadiya and agreed to it. An Outer and an Inner Line were set up; and British territory was defined as extending to the foot of the Hills. To deal with the tribes of the Lohit, Dibang, and Dihang valleys in particular,

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an assistant political officer, with his headquarters at Sadiya, was appointed to keep an eye on any tribesmen coming down to trade in Assam. All definite control of the tribes could only take the form of occasional punitive expeditions or blockades. At the same time the Ahom practice of giving an annual subsidy called *posa* was revived. This was to be distributed annually to all the hill tribes except the Mishmis in the form of iron hoes, salt, tobacco, and the more questionable shape of rum and opium. Fifteen years later this collection of tools and groceries was changed into a money payment of roughly 3300 rupees a year.

The condition under which *posa* was given was that the recipients did not raid the Plains; and I have always thought myself that this form of danegelt could not fail to put mistaken ideas into the heads of a primitive people. Paying *khassadars* to piquet heights above the British roads in N.W. Frontier tribal territory is a different matter. The cash payments may make the Pathan more friendly, but the money is given for definite services rendered weekly.

The Abors continued to give trouble, and in 1894 an expedition under the command of Captain Maxwell, with Mr. Needham, then A.P.O. Sadiya, as political officer, was sent against the Padam clan on the left bank of the Dihang. The force consisted of 100 men of the 44th Gurkha Rifles (now 1/8th Gurkhas), 300 of the Lakhimpur Battalion of Military Police, and 1500 carriers. Approaching the gorge from the Sadiya direction, they found that the Abors had stockaded a Plains settlement they occupied at Bomjur, on the Sisseri

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River. This was taken, and two more stockades were carried at the entrance to the Hills. There were by this time a certain number of casualties, and before the column advanced upon the principal Padam village of Damro, a small base camp was made close to the river at a place called Budak, inside the gorge. A small garrison, the sick and wounded, and a few camp followers and carriers not required on the forward movement were left there, and the main body continued its advance into the higher Hills. But before they reached Damro, disaster overtook the camp at Budak.

About a day after the column left, a large party of Abors came to the camp, and said that they had been engaged as carriers to take a quantity of supplies that had been dumped at Budak up to the main body. They seemed to be friendly, and by a fatal neglect not only of duty but of common sense, the guard let them into the camp without taking away their weapons. Once inside the perimeter, the Abors began to use them, and killed every soul in the camp, except one man who managed to escape to give this account of what had happened. Forty-five men were killed, and the whole place, of course, completely looted. The column got news of this before reaching Damro, and at once retired into the Plains. The Assam Government set up a blockade of the Abors which lasted till 1900, and that closed the incident.

When Noël Williamson became A.P.O. Sadiya in 1906, he at once got into active touch with the hill tribesmen in his district, both Mishmis and Abors. He had not the great height of Sir George Roos Keppell, but, like the Chief Commissioner

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at Peshawar, he was a man of splendid physique and endowed with the greatest courage, energy, and determination, all of which are the most valuable of assets in a Frontier administrator.

In the spring of 1909 Williamson, when out on one of the usual political tours along the edge of the Inner Line, turned into the hills at Pasighat and made his way nearly thirty miles up-river to the chief Minyong Abor village of Kembang on the right bank. He had two white men with him. One was Lumsden, who was not only colonel of the local volunteers, the Assam Valley Light Horse, but had raised and led Lumsden's Horse in the South African War, a fine old man and a tea planter of the very best type, which is saying a good deal. The other was the Rev. L. W. Jackman, the American missionary at Sadiya, a man who had learned a great deal about the Abors on their visits to the Plains. Williamson had no escort with him, but took his gramophone and a magic lantern—these always made an enormous impression. In mentioning this, I may perhaps give my personal experience later on, when getting in touch with remote and unvisited hill villages that were not reported to be hostile—an attitude one always got to hear of beforehand. It made things far easier and more friendly to go on by oneself and talk to the people for a little, leaving whatever force there might be posted in a suitable position behind. I found it had every advantage, and there was not, of course, any personal risk about it.

The people of Kembang told Williamson that they were at war with the men higher up the valley, and that his party could not go on any farther.

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But the A.P.O. met and made friends with Madu, the headman of Riu, a big Minyong village on the other side of the Dihang and considerably higher up. Madu said that if Williamson were able to visit his village some other time, he would be glad to help him. Now if an Abor asks you into his village, you can go there in perfect safety. It is only when you say you want to pay a visit and he scrabbles with his toes in the mud and makes excuses (he never says "No" outright) that it is necessary to be careful. Williamson accordingly went back to Sadiya with, as he hoped, his arrangements to get up to the falls well in train. So much for the previous history of this part of the North-East Frontier.

By the beginning of April 1911 the movable column, which had been training through the past cold weather, was broken up, and the leave season opened. Half the available members of the column remained at Headquarters, and the rest, about 75 strong, went off to be under Bill at Sadiya. We were not exactly complete to the last gaiter button, not only because we wore puttees, but because our special pattern of rucksack had not arrived, and we were still negotiating for a couple of automatic rifles that the Finance people, in a surprisingly weak moment, had said we might get. But we were ready enough.

It was amazing to look from the verandah of my house by the river at the hills that seemed so close across the plain, and to think that, behind the fringe which alone had been penetrated, there were falls to find, and all the wonders that rumour had given an unknown country in the course of six

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hundred and fifty years. These astounding features might not exist, but they added a lot of interest to one's speculations. The oldest of these rumours went back to the days of the thirteenth century Franciscan missions in Central Asia, when the preaching friars were told that the people in those mountains were cannibals. Later travellers had embellished this report until the cannibals were improved into dwellers in bleak wind-swept caves, horrible-looking people with no necks, and heads that grew straight out from their shoulders. To strengthen this unconvincing narrative, it was added that the cannibals were in the habit of eating the bride's mother at wedding feasts, if no wild men were procurable. Even in the East, where jokes about mothers-in-law would not be thought funny, this seemed rather too much. One traveller, of unknown nationality, was reported to have lost his way and come upon these neckless people. He said that they hunted him, but he escaped by climbing a tree. As they had no necks, they could not look up, and presently went away, having lost him altogether. This enabled the traveller to get back safely home again and tell the tale. But it seems odd that none of the anthropophagi thought of lying down on their backs to look up any likely tree.

In one place there were said to be giants of fabulous strength, in another a city of Amazons, and a mountain made of solid ruby was rumoured to be guarded by an army of yellow snakes. I took the trouble to make a careful note of a number of these travellers' tales, however absurd, and there were a good many of them. The interesting thing

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is that in every case it became possible to investigate on the spot, there was a grain of fact from which the harvest of fancy had grown—neckless men and all. It was the oar-fish and the sea serpent over again, and accounts for the wonderful creatures drawn in upon the wide open spaces on mediaeval maps.

We had not long to wait before taking the first step towards this unknown country. As I was sitting down to my nine o'clock breakfast after morning parade on the 5th of April, a telegram came in from Sadiya with the news that Noël Williamson, Gregorson a tea-garden doctor, and about forty Nepalese carriers were reported to have been killed in the Abor Hills. I went straight back to the lines to give the necessary orders, sent a telegram to the Sadiya detachment for the concentration of the movable column, and then rode on to the railway station to arrange for a special train. On my way back I reported what I had done to the Deputy Commissioner. He was, as usual, deep in the never-ending work of his office. Having got through a mountain of files before breakfast, he was now dealing in turn with a crowd of people, some of whom particularly wanted to see him, while the remainder, under civil police escort, did not appear anxious to see him at all. All the Deputy Commissioner said was: "When do you start?" I told him the train would leave at two o'clock. "Right," said the Deputy Commissioner, "I'll come with you. Orderly, bring in the next case."

Before we left Dibrugarh, I wired to the Provincial Government that in view of the disturbances on the Frontier my telegraphic address would be

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Sadiya. This precaution relieved the Battalion office of awkward problems later on, and ensured the immediate start that was absolutely necessary for any hope of rescue, should the rumour be false or exaggerated.

The train, thanks to the arrangements and personal instructions of the chief railway officials, made a record run as far as Talap, where the tea gardens end about thirty miles from Dibru. From there, north to railhead on the river-bank, the line runs through thick forest, with something like a bi-weekly train service. At Talap the engine-driver pulled up, said he was afraid of the Abors and did not intend to go any farther. As there were thirty miles of plain, on the far side of a broad river that was still ten miles away, between him and the Abors, his fears seemed rather unnecessary. So I got on to the foot-plate to encourage him, and we soon reached the big shed and pair of buffers among the trees at railhead.

We were anxious to get on as far as we could while the light lasted, and leaving a fatigue party at the train to bring the kits, rations, ammunition, and hospital stores down to the river, I streaked off with some men to Saikhwa village to see about transport. The Deputy Commissioner disappeared into the rest-house; he said afterwards he thought he might have been rather in the way. We were, of course, quite unprovided with dug-outs or boatmen; and we needed a good many boats, and wanted them at once. We could have worked the boats ourselves, but it was absolutely necessary to have some carriers with us. We were lightly equipped, but the most mobile force, if it has any distance to go,

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needs some transport. We should have to carry extra M.H. ammunition (weighing twice as much as .303), hospital stores, and reserve rations; and we had no idea of the problem before us—it might be short and easy, or a long one. Later on, unarmed men of the Battalion were used as carriers on small raids, but, as the men not included in the actual rescue party would have a base camp to make and defend, there would be no spare men at all. Nor, up in the Abor Hills, would we be in a position to adopt the usual official expedient of “hiring transport locally”. The dug-outs gave us hardly any trouble, and we were able to persuade enough men in Saikhwa village to come with us. A local washerman, by far the best and cheeriest boatman of the whole crowd, was appointed boatswain; and a man who subsequently turned out to be a dispenser visiting his home from a tea-garden hospital, though a poor performer with a paddle, did useful work with a pestle later on. The people who caused most correspondence afterwards were two men who had said they were civil policemen on leave.

While we were loading up the dug-outs, I was relieved to see a flotilla of heavily laden boats coming down-stream from the direction of Sadiya. It was the rest of the movable column, and our concentration was completed. Bill, who had only left Dibru the day before, told me that his elephant had stuck damnably in the mud on the way up from Talap to Saikhwa early that morning, so he must have had rather a hectic time after he got my telegram at Sadiya.

The fleet then pushed off. It was not quite four o'clock. For the first three or four miles we spun

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down the Lohit, then shown on the maps as the Brahmaputra. It looked a far more imposing river in width than the real Brahmaputra when we came to it. The left bank of the river was covered with forest, and on the much more interesting opposite side a great expanse of thick high grass was shining in the sun. Far across it, to the north, was a tiny nick in the hills, the gorge at Pasighat for which we were making. Where the Dibang flowed in, we shot our first rapids. They were quite mild ones really, but some of the boats shipped a lot of water. We had been obliged to load up nearer the Plimsoll mark than was helpful for a decent pace against the current, but we could hardly have left the people of Saikhwa entirely without dug-outs.

Soon after passing the mouth of the Dibang, we turned up a narrow sandy channel through the high grass, and made a short-cut into the Dihang River. It was slow work now, poling along the bank against the stream. But our luck was in, because the river had risen a little after some recent heavy rain, which made all the difference at the long runs of shallow water. With the river at its normal level for the time of year, we might have had to carry the boats pretty well for miles. As it was, we had to get out occasionally and shove them over the worst places. The water came uncommonly fast down these pebbly inclines, and made a high, busy noise like large shot being shaken violently in a sieve.

We scored over the camping arrangements; for we were saved the hour and a half to two hours it may take to clear the jungle for camp, make shelters, and put up a thick brushwood perimeter.

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There were only the tall thin canes of the grass on the banks, no likelihood of Abors about, a clear night, and warm sand on which to sleep. So we were able to push on to the end of the daylight. Then we tied up by the bank, sticking the long poles deep into the sand and mooring the boats to them. We put out sentries, had some food, and the column was soon asleep. The Deputy Commissioner and I played piquet for a little, while we smoked our pipes; and Bill thought out how many quotations from *Burke's Speeches* he could possibly work into his impending devastating reply to the Provincial Accounts Department in a lengthy dispute over some allowances. Then we all followed the men's example and went to sleep ourselves. Civilised houses, even the native fishermen's villages, were all behind us. We were fairly launched.

As soon as it was grey enough to see, we started off again. The water was heavier now, and our pace up-stream got slower and slower. The only thing we had to do was to shove steadily along, with the water piling up and bubbling against the bows of the dug-outs, hoping that we would find the report to be untrue, and that the party were safe and sound. The hill-men go in for kidnapping tea-garden coolies if they get the chance, so it was possible that Williamson and his people were prisoners in some Abor village, and we might be in time to free them.

When we had to stop the second night, the foothills were almost above us. We could see how thickly they were wooded; and the nick in the hills that we could only just make out when we started was now a great gorge between high cliffs. It

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seemed time to be wary, so we slept on a little sandy island about 250 yards from the nearer bank. In the morning we found some arrows sticking in the sand close to where we were sleeping. No boat could have come down that river at night, and the Abors do not use boats anyway. It was a disagreeable surprise to find that the hill-men could shoot their arrows so far; and quite as unpleasant to notice that the points were smeared with some greenish-brown stuff which we were right in supposing to be poison.

From this last halting-place it didn't take us long to reach the gorge, or rather, a sandy spit about a mile below it that ran out from the bank, where the foot-hills began to close in. The spit was almost an island, clearly above flood level, and might have been made specially for a base camp. The river part of the show was over. It was impossible to attempt pushing heavily laden boats up the tremendous rapids just ahead of us; and inside the gorge the river boiled and foamed in its narrow passage under the high cliffs. Part of the column stayed by the boats to make a defensible camp on the spit. The rest of us, the rescue party that was going on into the Hills, felt it might be as well to have a strong, comfortable home base to get back to later on.

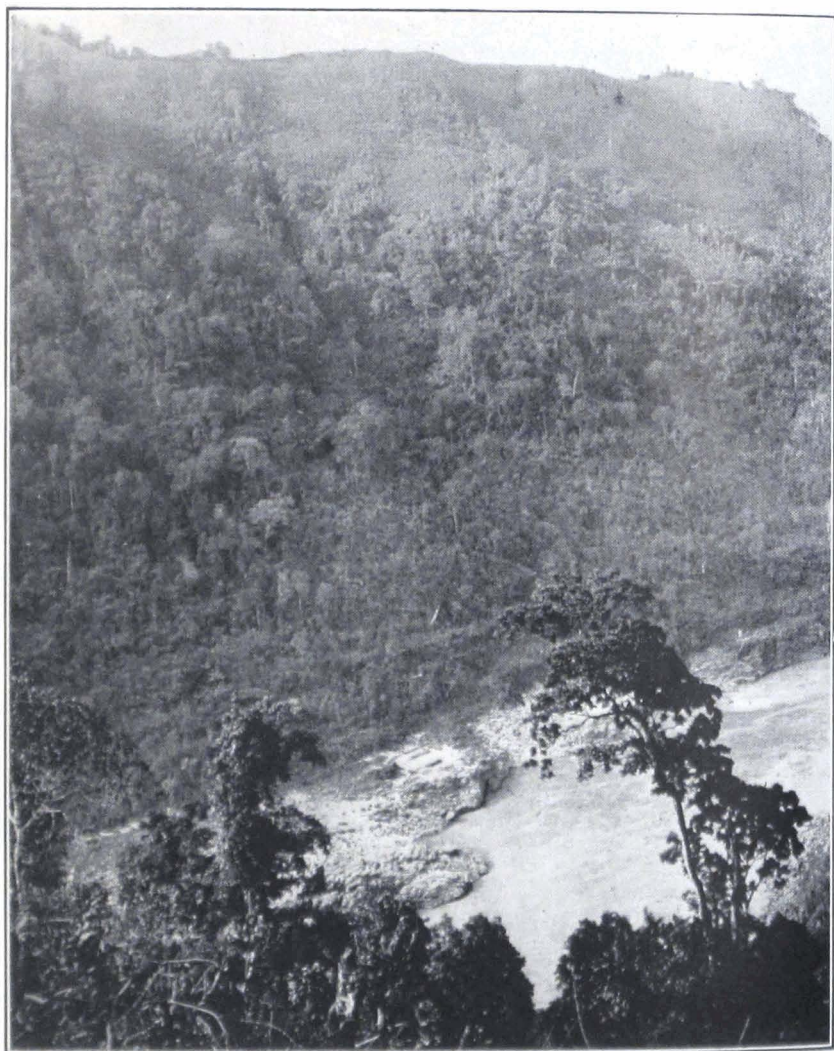
We had with us a Gurkha officer, Jemadar Sarbajit Thapa, a man with a face like a bulldog rather badly carved in light brown wood, who could be completely trusted with anything whatever, in any circumstances, when he once got hold of it; so he was left in charge of the camp and its garrison. With this settled, the rest of us, about

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a hundred in all, set out to try to rescue Noël Williamson's party. For about a couple of miles we scrambled over the large rocks and boulders by the water's edge. It was like going up the Great Pyramid, as far as the rock-climbing went, weighted with equipment, and with no Arab guide to boost one up. I wasn't at all surprised that an elephant on an early expedition slipped and fell into the water, ruining a deplorable number of rations.

If there was a path anywhere leading up the valley, we had still to find it; for where we were crawling along would obviously be under water as soon as the melting snow and the rain flooded the river. At last we saw a narrow forest path running into a little clearing on the bank high above us. So we climbed up to it, and plunged in among the trees in single file, like a long khaki snake. This lower end of the gorge had, of course, been visited more than once, but it gave one a queer feeling, heading for such a talked-about unknown country. The Dafla expedition of 1910 had been into unvisited country, but there had been no question of falls and cannibals at the other end; merely the routine job of surprising a village, letting off a few rounds on the hill-side at short and long range, and burning the houses before we went down again. But now, far stronger in our thoughts than anything else, there was the hope surging up at every turn of the path that we might meet the party coming back safe and sound.

I had a map—I've got it still—that appeared to have been made almost entirely by guess-work, all dotted lines and names with question marks after



BRAHMAPUTRA RIVER, NR. BUDAK
(Taken in rain)

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them. It was hopeless trying to judge from it how far ahead the nearest village we would stumble across might be. In all my life I had never seen anything like the gloom of that forest. It was quite impossible to see a couple of yards into it on either side of the narrow winding path. The trees that jammed into each other overhead, the big creepers clinging to them, the ferns and sometimes the orchids that grew on the trunks and branches, the undergrowth of bushes and ropes of thin spiky cane, were one thick, almost black, mass of green. Through all this the path rose and fell in a series of endless W's. We had about twelve miles of it, as we found out afterwards. Those of us who were leading crept cautiously round every turn of the path, to see nothing in front of us except the wall of dark green on either side, and then pelted on again as fast as the men in rear could keep closed up.

We could not tell how far we would have to go; our destination was Williamson's party, or what remained of it. Nor could we tell if we were surprising the Abors by coming in like this. It seemed doubtful to me after those arrows, even though they were obviously loosed off from the other side of the river. We could only hope that Abor clans and villages kept very much to themselves, and were not in the habit of sending any interesting bits of news through the valley. But in case we were rushed, all the men had their bayonets fixed. What with the fairly stiff climbing up and down a wet clay path, and the way the branches whipped back from the man in front smack across the face of the man immediately behind, if he didn't look

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out, it wasn't altogether a pleasant walk. But what I remember most vividly is the deathly stillness of that forest. No one spoke, of course, and we tried to avoid stepping on crackling bits of old branches. The only sounds were the crash of monkeys, now and again, swinging high in the trees, and the ceaseless echoing roar of the great river far below, that made a queer contrast to the silence of the jungle about us.

After one rather stiff ascent, we came suddenly upon a little clearing, and found we were on a bluff about 1500 feet above the river that twisted about below, a ribbon of jade flecked with silver between enormous grey rocks. Looking up the valley, we could see great spurs, some wooded and others cleared of trees, coming down on either bank, looking like huge interlaced fingers. We tried not to advertise our presence to any Abors who might be watching, and went on again. There was one satisfactory thing about that path: it may have been horribly slippery, but it was solid ground all the way. The Abors hadn't dug deep pits on the path with pointed stakes at the bottom, and then covered them up to look as if there were no unpleasant surprise underneath. There would not have been time for the almost incredible depth of road-blocking they are so fond of, but the absence of all booby-traps looked as if we were not expected.

At last we caught sight of the thatched roofs of a village showing up on a spur in front of us. Bill went off with part of the column to get astride the spur, above the village, while the rest of us waited until we judged they were in position. When we did get a move on, it was easy enough. The Abors

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were obviously surprised, and taking the village meant nothing more than firing a few rounds and then walking into it. This was just as well, because the Deputy Commissioner would remain in the forefront during the whole proceedings, and went striding along as coolly as he used to go out to bat for Harrow at Lords; and I felt I had enough explanations to make as it was. The Abors bolted into the jungle, and left the village to us. It was after three o'clock by this time, and the sun had gone from the deep narrow valley. We had been on the move since daybreak, and we were quite ready, after the sentries had been posted, to sit down and eat our food. On these shows I used to have a slice of cold meat (if I could get it) and one of those thick, tough, greyish-brown pancakes rolled out flat, called *chupattis*. The men ate *chupattis* and rice.

Suddenly one of the sentries called out, and from among the trees came first one and then another of the Nepalese carriers who had been with the exploration party. We rescued three altogether. We learned later that Harrison, hearing the news before it reached us at Dibru., had very gallantly gone up the river in his steamer as far as he could get, and rescued two more. It was not his job to take considerable risk, and for this and all the help he gave us that summer, he thoroughly deserved his C.I.E.

The carriers told us that the party had been surprised and cut to pieces at Komsing village on the opposite bank, and that Williamson and the doctor were beyond all doubt dead. About half a dozen of the carriers had escaped into the jungle,

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but they did not know what had happened to the others. They themselves with another man had been hunted for several days by the Abors with dogs, and had kept themselves alive on roots, and anything they could find to eat in the jungle. The Abors on both banks were concerned in the massacre, but the only possible way down to the Plains lay across the river; and one night they succeeded in crossing on an Abor raft—a most unpleasant business even in daylight. The other man had fallen off the raft and got drowned. They had happened to be hiding close by when the firing began, and they made for the sound at once.

Even after they had been given food, and a good mouthful of “hospital comforts” in the shape of rum, they were pretty well done up, and with a man who had got a cut on his leg getting into the village, and another very minor casualty, it was slow work going back again. We had blazed the trees on our way up where the few other paths came in, and we were lucky enough to find that we could keep along the top and avoid most of the boulders near the entrance to the gorge. It was dark long before we got there, and we were not sorry, at about eleven o'clock that night, to see the swaying lights come out from our camp to guide us in.

When we were able to get a coherent account from the survivors and piece it together, we found out more clearly what had happened.

Williamson and Gregorson, a Military Police orderly, with the A.P.O.'s two servants, the gramophone, magic lantern, and thirty-five carriers had come along the Inner Line from Sadiya, crossed

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the river below the gorge at Pasighat, and reached Rengging—the place where we found the carriers—on the 19th of March. The A.P.O. had previously applied, as it appeared from other sources, to Government for permission to make an extended tour, and no refusal had reached him. Up to Rengging all had gone well. The Pasi Abor villages just above the gorge had been friendly, as indeed we found them to be when we discovered their existence and got to know them in the next few days. By easy stages Williamson went another eighteen miles, which brought him near the principal Minyong village of Kebang. By this time he had got comfortably through several Minyong villages. But at a stream before reaching Kebang, the party were met by four Abor youths who stood with their arms stretched out, and said they had a message from Takat, headman of Kebang. The headman refused to let Williamson come any further. There was smallpox in Kebang, and he must turn back. Williamson then crossed the river and halted for about five days at a place called Sissin, while presumably he tried to get in touch with Madu, headman of Riu, the most northern Minyong village, his friend, and incidentally ours throughout the entire business. It is not known if any message got through or not. Madu told me afterwards he had no time to come down and help. But by the 30th, Williamson had moved up to Komsing, leaving Gregorson down at Sissin with one or two men and a few sick carriers.

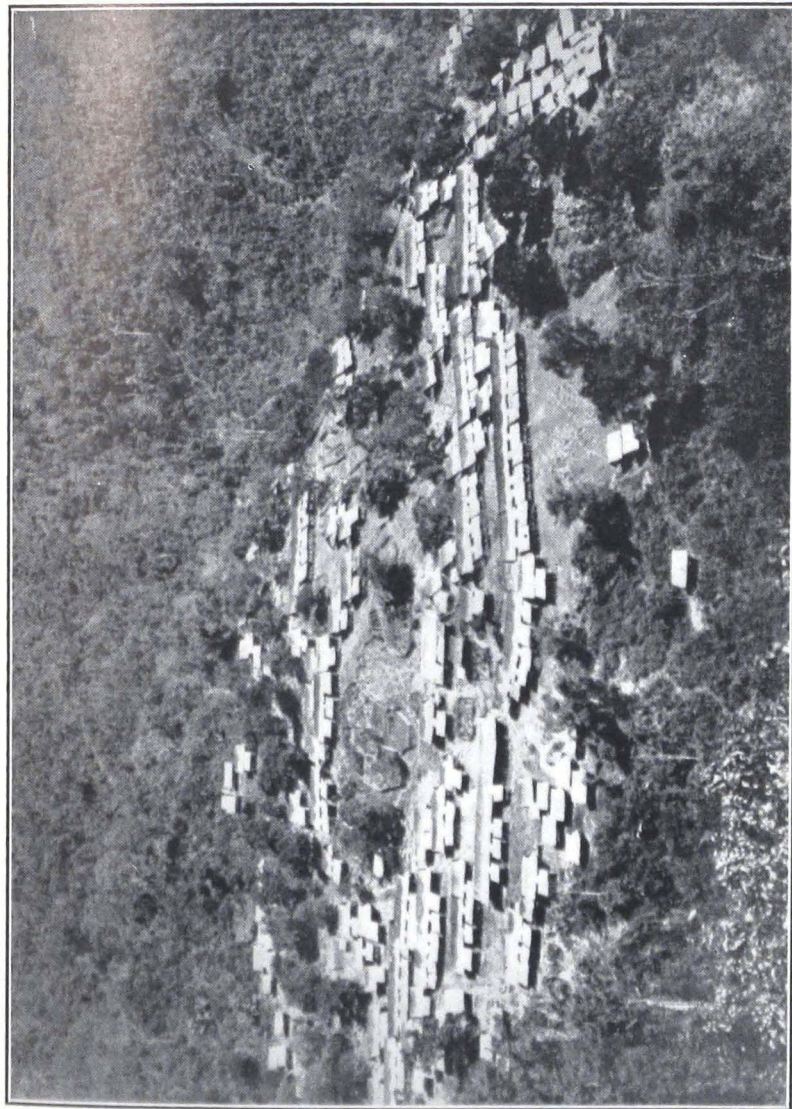
Komsing is a big village, built among the trees on the cleared boss of a spur running down to the river, with a high range, thickly wooded as all of

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them are, rising steeply behind it. The river makes a great turn just at this point, and from the high ground just above the last row of houses there is a splendid view up the valley.

The party reached Komsing early in the day. The village seemed to be crowded with men. One of the carriers thought there were about a thousand of them, but there were anyway far more than the male inhabitants of the place. Williamson told his servants where he wanted his tent pitched, under the jack fruit trees, by the little fenced sugar-cane garden in the middle of the village; and was then invited by the Abors "to see the falls" from the high ground above. Williamson went up, followed by a crowd of Abors, leaving all his party below. Meanwhile the villagers brought out gourds of *apong*, their native beer, for the carriers. Suddenly there came a shout from above the village, and a wildly excited crowd of Abors rushed down the hill, waving their swords and calling out that the white man had been killed. Having killed Williamson, the Abors turned upon the unfortunate carriers and butchered them. Some got clear of the village, most of them only to be shot down with arrows, or hunted down with dogs.

That same morning a band of Abors attacked Gregorson and his party down the hill at Sissin, and murdered almost all of them. We never heard how the Military Police sepoy died; one can only hope he had time to give a good account of himself first. Of a party of forty-three all told, only half a dozen got away. One carrier, captured by the Panggi Abors, was kept a prisoner and released during the Abor expedition.



S. W. Kemp

KOMSING VILLAGE

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In the rather confused story made up of what the survivors could tell us, and the Abors let out afterwards, it seems that Vichi, Williamson's faithful Naga servant who had come with him from the Naga Hills, and his cook, Bhudiman, were opening their master's kit when the killing began. They pulled out Williamson's two rifles and some ammunition from his bedding, and fought their way from the middle of the houses into the open. Bhudiman's fate is unknown, but at least he must have died with a weapon in his hands. Vichi, according to the most probable account, was killed at last, while he was reloading his rifle.

A little later we found the body of one of the carriers by the edge of the river, but no trace of Williamson and Gregorson was ever discovered. The Abors would, by their custom in war, have thrown their bodies into the Dihang, and that great river, whose problem Williamson and his friend had made so fine an effort to solve, must have been their grave.

CHAPTER VI

AT PASIGHAT

Orders reach the column—Abors, their clothes and money—The policy of the village pump—Poisoned arrows and other weapons—Another excursion—A river trip—The bridge—Abor messages.

OUR day up the valley had given us some idea of the distances in these Hills. There was no question of following contours, as the only paths went up and down like a bad enteric fever chart, and what might be eight miles in an air line, and would have measured that distance on a map, could easily extend to a march of twelve or more. The villages, too, were farther away from the Plains than we had supposed when we first set out. The idea now was to go for Kebang first, if possible coming down on it from the west, which would certainly surprise them. Then, if everything went well, we might see if anything could be done about Kom-sing across the river. Kebang would mean an absence of about a week from the base at Pasighat, and with only a small detachment left to hold it, the camp would have to be put in the strongest possible state of defence before we started. We had left Dibru. with three weeks' rations, so that part of the business was all right, and we could to some extent live on the country, or rather on the Abor herds and the contents of their granaries.

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So the morning after our return from Rengging all hands set to work strengthening the perimeter, clearing the field of fire on the land side, and cutting up bamboos into sharp little stakes and sticking them thickly into the ground in a belt round the outside of the camp. These are known as *panjis*, and are a normal Abor obstacle; we had come across some of them already.

That evening, with everything prepared for the move early next day, the Deputy Commissioner, Bill, and I stood smoking our pipes by the edge of the water, watching the distant reaches downstream fading in the dusk, when suddenly two small boats appeared round a bend. They poled wearily up to where we were standing, and out got Harrison and Captain Hore of the 114th Maharrattas, the Indian infantry battalion at Dibrugarh. Hore had a letter and a telegram for me, and said he was what Mr. Weller, Senior, would have called "a bear of ill news". The report from the political clerk at Sadiya, followed up by my telegram to Shillong, had given the local Government a considerable shock. This was not lessened when no replies came to their urgent messages to me at Sadiya, and it transpired that I had not reached that place at all. After an agitated night, and handicapped by the sudden absence of the Deputy Commissioner from his headquarters, the provincial authorities sent Hore and Harrison to make every effort to run us to ground and stop the column from plunging into the Hills. A justly incensed secretariat had accordingly written post-haste to prevent any forward movement at the moment, and to inform me officially that I would

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be held responsible both financially for the action I had taken, and for any political consequences that might follow. It is almost unnecessary to say that nothing more was ever said about this; and a private note from the Inspector-General put a better complexion on the matter. The telegram was from the Commander of the Northern Army, Sir James Willcocks, who had been staying with me in Dibru, only a week before, wishing he were with me.

There was nothing for it but to find shelters for our two guests, give them a drink of tea and rum before dinner—and countermand the orders for the next day. It was a great disappointment to all of us, but even if our raid had been entirely successful, we could not possibly have produced a fraction of the effect of the powerful expedition that General Bower led, without the slightest hitch or unfortunate incident, into the Abor Hills six months later. This, for the first time, taught the Abor people that the Government of India could undertake strong action against which they could not stand for a moment.

Next morning a deputation of Pasi Abors came down from the group of villages on the hill above our camp, and about three miles off. They seemed to be most friendly, and with the help of Harrison and one or two of his men acting as interpreters, we began to collect information about the people and country up the river. This, in fact, became our job until the expeditionary force was concentrated.

These Abors were not, in a general way, different from the people we got to know later in more distant parts of the valley. They wore loin-cloths

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and sleeveless cotton coats that looked like white (in their case rather dingy) astrachan. Very few of the men, but most of the women, were tattooed about the face and the calves of their legs. Men and women alike had their straight black hair cut pudding-basin fashion to a line just above their ears, and shaved their heads below it. A perfectly hideous fashion, but one that hardly mattered to people without looking-glasses. The women wore two-piece costumes of thick, beautifully woven cloth that they made themselves, with most attractive patterns worked in different colours. We found that villages stuck to distinctive colours of their own, as if they were clan tartans worn exclusively by women. The Pasi Abor women living up in Balek, and two smaller villages that really were its suburbs, wound round themselves skirts and upper garments striped black and yellow, which made them look rather like extremely big hornets. In very rainy weather the women wound a smaller cloth in the same colours round their heads, like a turban. Unless they were wearing their war helmets, Abor men went bare-headed. When it was raining they wore nothing but a fibre sporran, cut a plantain leaf and used it as an umbrella.

We found many small differences later between the Pasis and other clans, but it was not long before we realised that the Balek villagers knew all about money—rupees at least. Living so near the Plains, some of them were accustomed to come into Assam to trade and shop. They had, however, to be educated to the less lordly values of smaller pieces of money when it came to paying them for

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doing odd jobs of work. The usual currency in the Hills is extraordinarily cumbersome, being either cattle, that have to be driven possibly miles, or heavy metal bowls so large that a man can only carry one on his back at a time. These are the gilt-edged securities of the well-to-do. Poorer people pay for things by the slow process of so many days' work on the other man's allotment.

It took me a long time to discover how the Abors came to have these *dankis* in such numbers. The Abors and the wilder clans of Mishmis are quite the most inartistic primitive people I have ever read about or seen, the Daflas being only the shadow of a shade better. Round the inside of the bowl there are always a number of Tibetan symbols, usually eight, sometimes seven, and occasionally four: wheel of life, white umbrella, fish, pot of treasure, lotus, conch shell, the so-called noose of love, and the armorial flag of victory. These are sometimes quite elaborate, and there is other ornamentation as well. The Abors could not possibly have copied these from Tibetan models in their village moulds, because the *dankis* usually measured $17\frac{1}{2}$ inches across and were $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches in depth. No minerals are worked in the Abor hills; old metal imported from elsewhere is worked up into other forms, and that is all. *Dankis* are made of a brittle grey alloy containing a high proportion of antimony. Later on we realised that there is a brisk trade through the Boris from Tibet, and that *dankis* are one of the chief imports. They also come through the Mishmi country to the east. I gathered from reading only, that the bowls are models of the copper cauldrons, nine feet across, that are used

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in the great square at Lhasa for making tea on the Tibetan festivals.

We learned that the Abor people, living in widely separated villages, hardly ever acted together even as a clan, still less as a tribe. The villages, in this respect like the old Greek cities, usually kept on their own independent way. The Pasi Abors said they had nothing to do with the actions of the Kebang people, and were anxious to be friends with us. This aloofness between villages accounted for what we had been told of Madu and his Min-yong village of Riu.

It seemed just as well to find out something about the enemy's armament, so we produced some of the arrows that had been used against us. The Abors said they had never heard of cross-bows, their chief weapon being a bamboo long-bow, shod with iron, and fitted with a cane string—usually effective, with light bamboo arrows, up to about 180 yards. Iron-headed arrows have less range. The arrows we showed the headman of Balek were not, he told us, made of a poisonous bamboo, as some of them are, but had been dipped in a poison they get chiefly from the Galong people just over the hills to the west. Analysis in Calcutta found the poison to have been made from the croton plant (*croton tiglium*). The Balek people were good enough to tell us their own antidote for this poison, which is to wash the wound and then put on a mixture of fowls' droppings and opium. But as they added that the poison was almost instantaneous in its effect, the knowledge of a cure one would not be likely to have about one hardly seemed helpful. Poisoned arrows bring

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on convulsions, followed by tetanus—a cheerful prospect. The official remedy, adopted for the Abor expedition under General Bower, was to push the arrow out, swab its track with neat carbolic acid, and then syringe the wound with permanganate of potash. In the course of the next two years we sent a variety of poisoned arrows down to Calcutta for examination, but we never came across a poison the Abors said they made by sticking the arrows into decomposing carcasses—an unpleasant idea. The Akas use aconite, so do the Simong Abors. The Simong people said they got their's from the snow mountains to the north. The Daflas, who use aconite for hunting and a mixture of aconite and croton on their war arrows, had a much better story than the sacrifices that the Simong Abors said they make before going to get it. For the Daflas told me they got their aconite from a high mountain away to the north which crawls with black and yellow snakes.

Almost every Abor had a sword having a straight single-edged blade with no point, generally about 2 feet 3 inches long, with a wooden handle ornamented with cane-work. Some villages higher up the valley were noted for their work as sword-makers, but the best—and longest—swords came from Tibet. As protection against this weapon, the hill-men wore a sort of brimless bowler hat—rather the colour of the tin hats we had later on in France. These were exceedingly strong, and made of cane so closely woven as to be practically water-tight. They had long spears, with a red tuft tied below the small iron heads, but they used these actually as alpen stocks. Rect-

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angular shields, deerskin coats, and rucksacks covered with bearskin or fibre dyed black (making a retreating Abor look rather like a large black-beetle on its hind legs) completed their equipment, or rather what we were told about it. The Pasis left us to find out from the Minyong Abors that a very few hill-men had guns.

Hore, on his rapid journey up to Pasighat, had left a party of regimental signallers at Saikhwa, so we established first a daily signalling station, and later on a stockaded post, close to Balek, and got into regular touch with the outer world again. The Deputy Commissioner came up the hill when I went with the signallers to call up Saikhwa, and the first message that was helioed through to us was to his address. The Deputy Commissioner read it, and then handed it to me with the remark that I could probably answer it better than he could. I found it was a telegram from Whitehall, transmitted by the Government of India, asking the Deputy Commissioner, as chief political officer of the District, to give his opinion of the military police commandant, stating particularly whether that officer, who had been described (at home) as rash and impetuous, could be relied on. The reply was required immediately, to answer a question in the House of Commons. I hope they were satisfied with what they got.

No order had been received forbidding day excursions into the Hills, so a couple of days after Hore's arrival the Deputy Commissioner and I went on the first of these outings to see what ways there might be into the interior along the higher slopes. The only people who had ever gone up

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from Assam had taken the lower path we knew already, and we wanted to know if there were any more villages hidden away anywhere. After rather a trying morning scrambling about the hill-side, we came to one of the nastiest places I have ever seen. Nor was it a question of a sheer drop of a couple of thousand feet—the sort of thing the paths sometimes led to in the upper valley, and they could be bad enough. We came upon the place out of thick jungle, and saw before us a rounded hill-side covered with short grass, at a considerable slope, which ended in crumbly shale at the edge of a cliff, with a stream about three or four hundred feet below. Some people naturally loathe a height and have even to be restrained from throwing themselves down it, but the Deputy Commissioner didn't give away his dislike of high places until we had thankfully put that slope behind us. Apart from the height, it had been rather worse than it looked, for the sun had made the grass unpleasantly slippery.

An hour or two later the Deputy Commissioner got his own back on me, with interest. Down by the Dihang to which our path had turned down, we found, at the water's edge, the body of one of Williamson's ill-starred carriers. He had been dead some time, and apart from everything else, was in the horribly mottled state that death from a poisoned arrow apparently produces. The broken shaft was still in his body, and the Deputy Commissioner made a great point of my helping him to make a close examination. It was then that we discovered that the Abors notch their heavy war arrows near the iron point, so that the shaft is

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practically bound to break off when the wounded man tries to pull it out. I had to go away in the middle of the investigation to be violently sick. As we were getting back to camp again, the Deputy Commissioner suddenly said: "You know, when I was a boy, I took rather a nasty toss off my pony, and had to have an operation on my nose. I've never been able to smell anything since."

In the meanwhile Dorward, down in Dibrugarh, was busy fixing up the system of supply that was to keep the column fed through the hot weather; and boats now began to reach us with reinforcements, rations, canteen extras for the men, and beer, papers, and the English mail and other letters for ourselves. One of the first of my letters was an official envelope from Simla, on which the office clerk had addressed me as "Major-General", and so missed me with both barrels. Inside I found a note from a man I knew in the Intelligence Branch, asking me for all possible information about the Abor country, and particularly how far dug-outs could be taken up the Dihang.

The more I had seen of the river above our camp, the less I liked the look of it, but this unquestionably called for a special effort. The Deputy Commissioner said he would like to come with me, so next morning he and I and four men as escort got into one of the smaller boats, and half a dozen more military police got into another. Harrison gave us four of his Miri boatmen to work the dug-outs, and off we started. It wasn't exactly easy going anywhere, but there was slacker water on the far side of the river; so we crossed to the Padam bank, avoiding the long rapid above our camp, and

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crawled along into the gorge. Seen from the water, the view was magnificent; high red cliffs towered above us, between them the river came foaming round a bend, and the great wooded hill-sides were a wonderful sight in the sun. The middle of the river, here not much more than 150 yards wide, was a boiling mass of foam, but under the great ledges of rock at the foot of the cliff on our side we got the boats along by shoving against the rocks through a succession of pools. Once or twice a rapid extended to our bank, and here we had to get out and carry the dug-outs over large slabs of rock. Just before we decided that we had done quite enough of this, we passed what we identified as Budak, where the camp was wiped out in the 1894 expedition.

Keeping carefully to the left bank of the river until we had passed the worst of the rapids inside the lower part of the gorge, we made excellent time coming back, and a party of Abors who spotted us hadn't a hope of worrying us with their arrows. It didn't look particularly promising, but the river could certainly be reported as (more or less) navigable for possibly five and a half miles inside the Hills, which didn't seem particularly useful information to send to Simla. Once through the gorge, we came down mid-stream at the rate of knots, and all went well until we reached the long rapid above our camp. As we shot into the broken water, the two boats came much too close together to be pleasant. To avoid a collision, our steersman turned our boat sharply with his paddle, and we went down the rapid broadside on. The dug-out at once began to fill, and when the water was almost

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up to our waists, the Deputy Commissioner, who had responded to a futile shout of "Bail" from the boatmen by negligently splashing the water with one hand, got up with the remark, "I think this is where we get off", and stepped over the gunwale. Getting into a repulsive, ice-cold rapid is not my idea of a pleasant bathe. Seen from the middle of them, the waves looked enormous, nor did I much like the loud rumbling noise of the boulders rolling about in the bed of the river; they seemed disagreeably close. The Deputy Commissioner and I got on to a convenient sand-bank. The rest of the boat-load, sticking to their rifles like good 'uns, got astride the dug-out, which was now bobbing about bottom upwards, and following the other boat down-stream, disappeared from view round a bend of the river. They landed all right at the camp, and a rescue party came up and took us off.

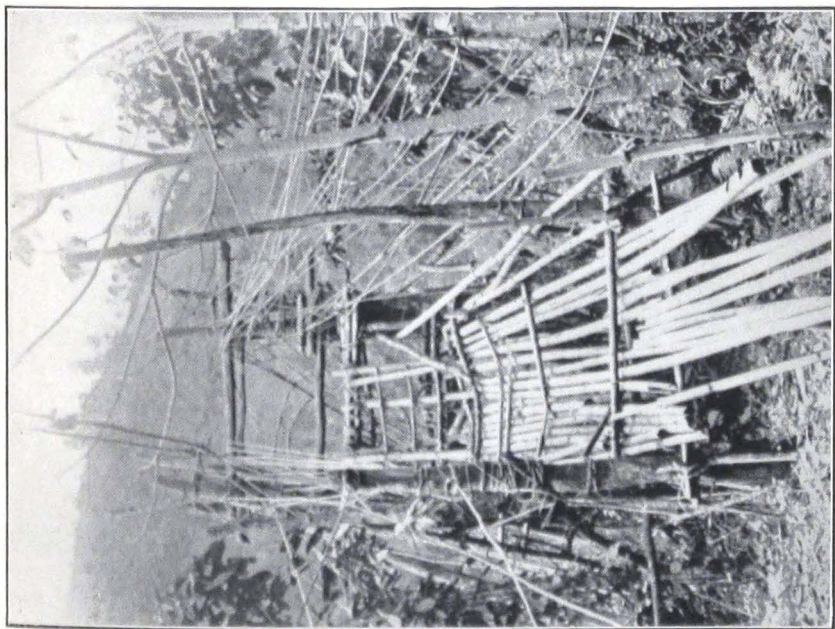
As a matter of fact, crossing the river in an Abor raft can make one quite as wet. The Abors tie a few bamboos or plantain stalks together, and any number up to eight people squat on it up to their waists in water, unless the raft is provided with a platform. The raft is pushed off, head up-stream, and the men with poles work them frantically as paddles. They always get carried a good way down-stream, but the raft eventually lands on the other side all right. Some of our surveyors, crossing the river up the valley nearly two years later, had trouble in reaching the other side on one of these rafts, and were carried a couple of miles down, shooting a really bad rapid in the process before they made their landing. The only mishap I had with a raft was once on an easy-looking stretch of

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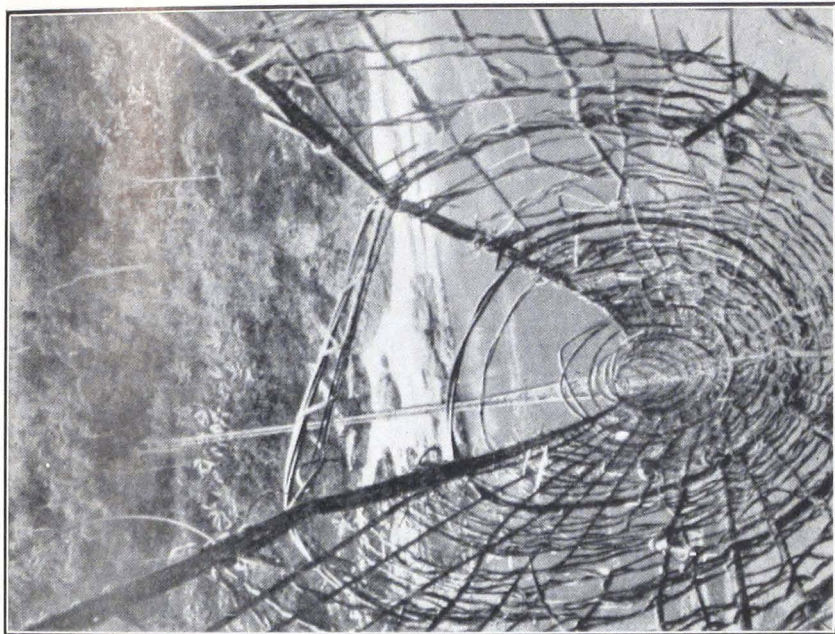
water, when it slowly and steadily rose up on one side and turned over, like the page of a book; we must have been badly balanced, and caught an undercurrent. All we had to do was to scramble round and sit down on what had been the under-side of the raft.

We had still to find alternative routes to the path straight up the valley, and one day I went out on a path-finding expedition with about thirty men. Our way took us across a number of fields, and I was interested to see the local bird-scaring arrangements. They put up bamboo poles, fasten a long fibre string to the top, and tie a bunch of leaves to the other end of the string to blow about in the wind. All round the edge of the field, where the clearing ends and the trees begin, they keep a line of fresh plantain leaves to frighten away the jungle fowl. These birds are our game bantams, and I brought down several sets, of a cock and two hens, to give to friends in Assam. To prevent their cattle from getting into the fields, the Abors put up solid fences all round, and where the path runs into the jungle again, there is a very wide, strongly built ladder sloping up to the top of the fence and down the other side.

A man from Balek, brought along to show the way and incidentally give me a lesson in Abor, followed immediately behind me. At the end of one of these fields we came to what looked like the usual stile. Imagine my horror, on mounting the rungs of the ladder, to find myself on the sheer edge of a cliff, more than a hundred feet above a rapid, gazing at the round mouth of a contraption of twigs and cane ropes—like an open-work tunnel



ENTRANCE TO KOMSING BRIDGE



ON THE BRIDGE

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—festooned across the river. The thing sagged down in the middle till it looked as if it almost touched the water, though as a matter of fact it cleared it by yards. Some of them don't, and I've had to cross a bridge blinded by the spray from a rapid immediately underneath.

But this bridge seemed too bad to be true; and my guide kindly added his little word of encouragement by saying "old", and making unmistakable signs that only one man could go over at a time. I would have given a lot to say, or sign, "After you", but my men were immediately behind us, so I stepped miserably on to it; and my worst fears were at once more than realised. When the footway didn't give at least nine inches as one stepped on it, it gave way altogether. Luckily the two overhead cane cables were absolutely trustworthy, and I clung desperately to these, as well as I could without dropping my stick, all the way across. I was thankful to find, about every six yards, a strong cane hoop through which one went, or stood to take breath (feeling like a parrot on its ring as one did it) until the bridge stopped swaying more than about three feet each way. In anything of a wind, these bridges swing yards to either side, in the middle; and the new strong bridges that will take several men at a time wriggle up and down like an agitated eel. On the other hand, if the hoops are groggy with age, the sides of the bridge close in and hug the passenger.

These cane bridges that cross the Dihang and its larger tributaries right up the valley to Tibet, are naturally made where the river narrows. The longest I have been over, in the extreme north of

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the Abor country, measured 780 feet of footway from entrance to entrance. Circumstances at the time prevented me from taking detailed measurements of this bridge, but Captain O'Neil, I.M.S., who was with the Abor Expeditionary Force, gave me the details of the one we all knew near Komsing. These bridges are so fine an exhibition of engineering skill in a primitive people that the full measurements seem worth giving.

The length of the bridge-work, measured along the footway from entrance to entrance, was 717 feet, and the approaches (of the field-stile pattern) 34 feet; a total of 786 feet. The supports on each bank were eight and ten stout logs, which were about 21 feet long. The bridge was anchored on either side by thirty strands of split canes fastened to growing trees, live bamboos, and rocks. The open tube of the bridge itself was a framework of thirty ropes of split cane, varying from 20 to 50 feet in length, and from $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 inch in diameter. These cane ropes, which were tied with an ordinary knot, ran longitudinally from $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches to 1 foot apart. There were fifty-nine hoops, made of four strands of whole cane, and these were put on at intervals varying from 3 to 23 feet. The suspension cables consisted of six strands of split cane twisted together. These were never less than 4 foot 6 inches, or more than 6 foot 6 inches from the footway. Ten struts of bamboo at varying intervals were placed transversely to separate the two suspension cables. The height of the Komsing bridge above winter river level was found to be 50 feet at the centre and 130 feet at the entrances.

A new bridge, glistening yellow in the sun, is

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a fine sight. I like to imagine the feelings of the first man who thought of it, and floated the two main cables over to the opposite bank, for the rather incredulous people of his village to fasten taut to their trees and then see the bridge grow as the hoops and twig-work were tied on to them. When I got to know the Abors better, they told me that about two hundred men come to build a bridge, drawn from all the villages that will use it. For one important bridge they said that men came from a dozen villages. The bridge is made in winter, when the river is not swollen with snow water. The Abors would have it that they only took three weeks to build Komsing bridge. They certainly are hard workers, but even if they had collected and cut all the canes beforehand, it was impossible to look at this stupendous piece of work and believe them. A bridge has to be practically remade every ten years, and the Abors never dream of cutting one down.

I found out later how a bridge is defended, and its crossing prevented, when a village is at war with people on the opposite bank. We came, one day in new country, to a bridge over the Dihang that I wanted to cross. A little reconnoitring is always as well on these occasions, and a covering party to open fire at a moment's notice; but this time the intentions of the Abors were clear enough. Several stout fibre ropes were tied to the middle of the bridge, a distance of about a hundred and twenty yards from the opposite bank, and these ropes led into the jungle on the far side a bit downstream. The idea obviously was to wait until some of us were well on to the bridge and then jerk us

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off into the river, or at least make the crossing impossible. This dodge must have been quite effective when fighting among themselves, for no Abor bowman could send an arrow across the river. But it was useless against men armed with rifles. I could see with my glasses where the ropes disappeared into the jungle, and a couple of volleys on that point and a little searching fire of the jungle on either side by the covering party enabled the rest of us to cross in far greater safety than I have frequently had to cross Whitehall. Of course we cut the ropes away as soon as we reached them.

The first time one has to face it a long twig bridge certainly looks distinctly unpleasant, but one soon gets quite used to them. The Abors, who are a very cheery race when you get to know them at home, cross their bridges singing as they go; it sounds like a chanty. If it is a short bridge, or a new one, they go over in step. They told me this saves strain on the bridge, but it makes it swing like the devil.

The weather, which had been unusually fine for the time of year when we first got up to Pasighat, now broke. Clouds came low down the hill-sides, and it began to rain hard and steadily every day. This brought out clouds of small poisonous flies called *damdims*, that bit one persistently. But the really bad pest was the leech, and whole armies of them waved hopefully at one from every bush along the path. The grass, of course, swarmed with them. But the leech can be really dangerous. Two of our men went out one day down on the Plains to shoot, and lost their way. The search-

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party we sent out to look for them found their dead bodies. Wandering despairingly through the grass, firing their rifles in the hope of being heard, they had gone on covered with leeches from the wet grass until they fell exhausted from loss of blood, and died there.

We had been reinforced by two detachments, bringing the column up to 250 men, during our first fortnight at Pasighat, and before the end of April, Bill got started with a stockaded post up at Balek, which he made quite the best, as well as the most comfortable, outpost I have ever seen. Apart from anything else, his plumbing arrangements in the officer's quarters, made entirely of bamboo, were marvels of ingenuity.

The news soon spread through the Hills that we showed every sign of settling down by the gorge, and messages began to come in from villages wanting to be friendly. None of these primitive hill tribes have a written language, and they send all really important messages in the form of a collection of tokens, generally in a little basket. I was not at Balek when Madu of Riu turned up with a friend, but Bill told me about the embassy afterwards. There had not been time to learn very much of the language from the Balek people, but Harrison had lent us one of his men who spoke Assamese and Abor with equal fluency, so the interview went off quite successfully. Madu produced a bag, and drew from it a sword-blade bent double. "This," he said, "is the feeling I have towards the Government, and this (bringing out a spear-head with a broken point) is the feeling of my kinsman; who is head of the village with me.

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Here," he went on, showing Bill a round pebble tied up in cane-work, "is the heart of us two, which we bring you clean of reproach." He then brought out two old metal charms and ended up with: "These being made from an element of the earth, bear witness to the straightness and truth of our minds". At that time we were not at all certain about Madu, but he turned out to be everything that he had said. I always found the Abors to be both truthful and honest. I never knew them to steal my belongings, or pilfer bags of rations when carrying them for us, which, considering their own poverty and shortness of food just before harvest, was striking. In their dealings with us what we might well call treachery was, by their code, a carefully thought-out stratagem.

They send all sorts of things as peace messages, or declarations of war, to each other. Broken weapons or a sword bent practically into a pruning-hook are, of course, peaceful signs, as are rice and salt. Chillies and charcoal are messages of defiance, and the stone accompanying them then means determination to see it through. There can be no more mistake about their meaning than there was about the tennis balls that the Dauphin sent to Henry the Fifth of England. We got no defiant messages from the Minyongs. They may have been doubtful about their heralds' reception, but were probably far too busy making stockades up the valley.

Jackman, the American Baptist missionary whom I met at Sadiya, told me the explanation given by the Padam Abors for their ignorance of reading and writing. Long ago, the Supreme Being

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gave the alphabet to man. To the dwellers in the Plains he gave slabs of stone on which the letters were cut. Then he sent for a man out of the Hills and handed him a skin of parchment, with the writing on it. But the hill-man lost his way going home, and to save himself from dying of hunger, ate the skin; so the not altogether unmixed blessing of reading and writing has been lost to them ever since.

Yet, without post or telegraph, the Abors surprised me by the speed with which news could spread through the Hills. While I was in their country a column got cut up in the Naga Hills, the whole breadth of Assam away. It was a bad business and they lost about fifty men in the first few minutes. Three days later the Abors told me all about it, and long before I heard the news from Assam. This was the most impressive instance of several, although not the quickest. The news had run round the border through the Singphos, Khamtis, and Mishmis; and the Mishmi country is wild and particularly thinly populated. This meant several hundred miles of country, and five different languages, not to mention dialects. News is, of course, shouted from hill-top to hill-top—like so many old Savoy Hills; and some of the announcers must have been pretty good linguists.

By the middle of May, we were pretty sure that the Government of India would sanction an expedition against the Abors in the autumn, although no announcement was made until three months later. The Deputy Commissioner had gone back to his routine work in the Plains, and as 400 men of the Lakhimpur Battalion were to be included in

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the brigade, there was a certain amount for me to do at Headquarters. Bill stayed up at Balek for a little longer, before he could be relieved by the Assistant Commandant, by this time on his way out from home. He then got the spot of leave he badly needed himself. But while he was up there, he made a raid that was the best possible example of how these things should be done.

Leaving Balek in the evening with about fifty rifles and some unarmed men of the Battalion as his transport, he made his way along the foot of the Hills to a point just short of the Abor settlement of Ledum, which is practically on the Plains. He had come about sixteen miles, and now turned into the Hills. About two miles up a long ridge lay Mishing, a large and hostile Minyong village. He rested his men, had some food, and then made a most successful attack on Mishing, which he burnt, and then after some most useful reconnaissance work, went leisurely back to Balek. If he had any casualties, they were too slight to be worth reporting. No better operation was ever put through in the Abor Hills.

When Bill eventually passed through Dibru, he found us engaged in bombing practice, with a jant-in pattern of bomb designed by the sappers. We had put up a bamboo palisade about ten feet high to represent an Abor stockade, and were throwing dummy bombs over the top from various distances when Bill appeared. "What you really want," he said, "is to hand them over bottles of whisky." With a view to getting the Abors to stand behind their stockades when the advance took place, he was undoubtedly right. They were not made of the

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stuff that delights in war against an efficient and formidable enemy. Their long-established reputation as a fighting race had been founded on bluff and fostered by other people's mistakes; it was soon to be blown to pieces.

CHAPTER VII

THE ABOR EXPEDITION, 1911-12

The Abor Field Force and its explorer commander—With the Western Column—Alarums and excursions—Stone shoots and stockades—The Nagas take a trick—Main column operations—The Abors sue for peace—Abor treaty-making and declarations of war—Trying to back a certainty—To an unexplored valley by a waterless march—Yango.

THE Abor Expeditionary Force concentrated at Kobo during the first fortnight of October 1911. Until we were obliged, by the state of the river, to use elephants instead of boats to ration our men at Balek, no such place as Kobo existed. But it was a convenient landing from which to start our convoys by road. Kobo had been a strip of high grass backed by thick forest until the summer rise of the Dihang became too much for our boat convoys. The force at Balek had still to be fed, so the elephants were sent over to the north bank and a small advanced base made on the main river. The convoys took two and a half days, through the thirty miles of forest and grass plain, to reach Pasighat. Towards the end of the summer an advance party of sappers and miners, and pioneers, with a number of carriers, came to Kobo to clear the ground for a brigade base camp and make landing-stages. The military police put up a stockade round the camp site with crow's-nest

sentry-posts; and one of the assistant commandants erected what can best be described as a king crow's-nest—150 feet high—in the middle of the clearing.

Before concentration began in mid-September, an acting commandant had been appointed to take over my normal duties at Headquarters and the outposts while I was away on the Abor expedition. To my pleasant surprise this turned out to be Captain Stoddart, who had got his commission through the ranks in the Camerons and had been with us at Gib. Three additional assistant commandants were also sent up to the Battalion, for service with the Abor Field Force.

The Force consisted of a section—two 7-pr.R.M.L. guns; No. 1 Company Sappers and Miners; 32nd Sikh Pioneers; 1/2nd Gurkha Rifles; 1/8th Gurkhas (from Shillong); Lakhimpur Military Police (half battalion); and a small contingent of that fine body of tea planter Volunteers, the Assam Valley Light Horse (the only European troops), with the usual Signal, Medical, and Supply services. There were 4000 Naga coolies to take on the transport from the mules and boats at Pasighat, and about twenty elephants for use on the road from Kobo. The commander of the expedition was Major-General (afterwards Sir Hamilton) Bower. The force had two objects before it. The first was to punish the guilty villages; the other, as both Simla and Whitehall agreed, to settle once for all the question of the Brahmaputra Falls.

General Bower was known throughout the bazaars of Central Asia as the Avenger, a reputation won by his astounding feat, when a young

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subaltern in the 17th Cavalry, of tracking down the Pathan murderer of the British explorer Dalgleish in the passes of the Karakorum. Bower was shooting in the neighbourhood of Yarkand, some eighteen months after Dalgleish's death, when orders reached him from the Government of India to find the murderer, Dad Mohamed. He sent men into Afghan Turkestan to search that district, while he himself went eastward along the line that had once been taken by Marco Polo, and was later to be followed by Sven Hedin. He made for the Thian Shan mountains and, as a by-product, explored the buried city of Mingoi, and found the collection of ancient manuscripts now called after him. The hunt continued, and Bower "on information received" turned west again six months after his adventure began, and came to Kashgar. By now his agents had trailed Dad Mohamed to Balkh, and so to Samarkand, where the murderer was arrested, and defeated the ends of justice by committing suicide in a Russian prison. This did not end the General's exploits. A year later he made a wonderful journey from west to east of Tibet, and finally gained the name of "Chinese" Bower by his experiences during the Boxer outbreak of 1900, his work as colonel of the Chinese Wei-Hai-Wei Regiment, and his five years' command of the Legation Guard at Peking. The Force had, therefore, a man who was both soldier and explorer to command it. Previous Abor expeditions had not always been so fortunate.

The Deputy Commissioner (who had been appointed assistant political officer under General Bower) and I dropped down from Saikhwa to

THE ABOR EXPEDITION, 1911-12

Kobo by dug-out early in the second week in October. Bill had taken the men up from Headquarters by river the day before; his bull terrier did not accompany the expedition. There was the climate for one thing, which seemed likely to be our most deadly enemy; and there were 4000 Naga carriers, all of whom looked upon dog much as a City alderman is supposed to regard turtle. If Jess was not with us, there were quite a number of dogs at Kobo, specially sent out from a well-known kennel at home. These were to be used as supplementary sentries, and had been trained for the purpose. But as far as my own Battalion was concerned, I was not anxious to have them. Sentries are only human, and if they know there are scouts out in front of them, there is the temptation to relax their own watchfulness on duty. The "war dogs" went with the main column, and on one occasion at least did admirable work, when the force came upon a strong Abor position in the jungle. We found the whole place a perfect morass from the rain which had been falling for some time—and went on falling for the next ten days without stopping.

The main line of advance, under the General himself, was to be straight up the Dihang, while a subsidiary column, under Lt.-Colonel Fisher, 2nd Gurkhas, was to act on the western side of the Abor country. On the 20th October, Colonel Fisher's column—1/2 Batt. 2nd Gurkhas and 1/2 Batt. Lakhimpur Military Police—set out for Ledum. On our fourth day, as we marched through the high grass and occasional belts of trees at the bottom of the foot-hills, we had a short, sharp

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skirmish with Abor bowmen. On the fifth day we were close to Ledum, a village surrounded with lemon and orange trees on a spur just above the plain. The main force arrived at Pasighat on the same day. Here operations actually began, for the gorge had been kept quiet by the Military Police garrison of 150 men at Balek, now reinforced with two 7-pr. R.M.L. guns. We took those guns out on one occasion later on, more to please Dorward than anything else and let him be a gunner once more. They were a dreadful encumbrance with an otherwise mobile column. After the Abor expedition was over, the guns were permanently handed over to us, and when we moved Battalion Headquarters to Sadiya, I put them outside the guardroom, where they looked very imposing.

Colonel Fisher's detachment had been called the Ledum column, but after two days' halt just below the village, and a little desultory scrapping with bodies of Abors, the force went on to Mishing spur. This remained our actual headquarters for about three months, and it soon became a comfortable hutted camp, with high look-out posts and a strong bamboo and brushwood perimeter. Water was laid on in bamboo piping; and a supply column came up weekly to re-ration us. Just outside the camp we had a signalling station, to send messages by helio to the base. The site of Mishing camp reminded me, in a way, of the Europa Flats at Gib. Of course the hill above us was thickly wooded at Mishing, but the general shape was like the Rock, and from the edge of the spur, although the colour was rather different, the plain to the south stretched away into the distance as flat as the Mediterranean.

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Bill had settled Mishing, and we had just dealt with Ledum, consequently the only Abors within our sphere of operations were bands of men who had lost their villages and were now, so far as we were concerned, lost in the jungle; they were most elusive. The business of the column was to occupy the attention of these people, and hinder them from getting round the unavoidably narrow front of the main force moving up the valley upon Kebang, and interfering with the line of communications.

The 2nd Gurkhas and the Lakhimpur Battalion took it in turns to go out and try to stir up strife and get some sort of a show within the radius of a lightly equipped column. Bill and I, in our turn, used to go out alternately. It meant a vast amount of climbing, with very little visible result. The only point about these operations was that the Abors, when they came to submit to General Bower, persisted in saying that the chief leaders of the massacre of Williamson's party were killed fighting the Mishing column. But this may easily have been quite untrue.

The sort of thing one may expect on these shows may be gathered from the experiences of one of these columns. We started off, early one November morning, with forty-eight rifles, four squads, which I found to be the handiest size of force, and a few Naga carriers. The doctor who had been attached to the column for duty and was one of the A.V.L.H. contingent, invariably came out on these trips, and if I had been wise enough to listen to him when racing up the hill-sides, I should not have had the bother with my heart that plagued me later on.

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Falkner was a keen ornithologist, which gave interest to many an uneventful march. He told me that he noticed the birds up in the Abor country were similar to those he had seen in the Malay States, and quite unlike the birds in India.

Our path that day ran eastwards over the Mishing fields, where women were sowing as we went across them. The Abors had already learned that their families were quite safe from any interference. In fact, some time before their men folk asked to make peace, the women used to come in to be doctored by Falkner, and I generally had some pear-drops for the children they brought in with them. No one would be a farmer in the Abor country unless driven to it by the threat of sheer starvation. The system followed is not one of rotation of crops, but of forest. Every village has its definite area for hunting and fields, hill-sides covered with a tangle of trees and undergrowth. The headman of the village decides on the bit of forest below a height of 5500 feet to turn into fields. It is then cleared by burning and hacking down the forest, with large knives chiefly; axes are scarce. The charred logs fence off the family holdings. The ground is then scratched a few inches deep with a long knife or pointed stick, and the rice is sown with the millet from which they brew their *apong*, either in January and February, or in April and May. After about three years, grasses begin to choke the crops, and the fields are abandoned for another bit of thick forest near the village. So it goes on, round and round, coming back to the old, now wooded *jhums* after anything up to twenty years. These are the conditions that

keep Abor villages so far apart, and kill all idea of clan, let alone tribal spirit, among the people.

To get back to the Military Police column, we dropped down from the fields, through the forest to a wide shallow stream, which we crossed, and our guide, Yango, a Galong man from the west, then led us through rather a remarkable place. It was a rock passage, three-quarters of a mile long, nowhere more than twenty feet across, and narrowing here and there to four feet, with a little stream strongly impregnated with iron running down it. The walls rose to a height of 100 to 150 feet, and the branches of the trees on either side met far above our heads.

We came out into an unusually thick belt of jungle, with the path wriggling through it as best it could. Those of us in the advanced guard had to use our *kukris* to cut our way in places. Just as we were getting towards the end of this tangle into clearer forest, but still couldn't see a yard on either side, a musket was suddenly fired from the jungle immediately behind me, and completely blew the head of the man following me to pieces. We replied by searching the jungle with fire, and then went on again; there was nothing else to do.

Next morning we left our little camp in the forest as soon as the light made it possible to see, and climbed up towards the high table-land on the western edge of the Abor country. The path mounted steadily. On our right the spur rose up almost like a cliff, with bushes growing wherever they could anchor, and the thick jungle made a fringe on top. A mountain stream fussed over big boulders at an ever-increasing depth below—just

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the sort of place for stone shoots. The business of the point of the advanced guard at places like this was to watch the path in front for Abors or pit-traps, while mine was to look out for any sign of an unpleasant surprise overhead.

If one knows what to look out for, stone shoots are not hard to spot. The ground must be suitable, and that makes one wary. The platforms holding the stones are bound to jut out somewhere, and if the jungle is at all likely to stop the stones, the Abors cut runs down the hill-side through the jungle. Sure enough, as we climbed the path, there were the tell-tale bamboo traps perched nearly 100 feet above us. Now stone shoots are a bother to make, and an Abor won't cut the cane ropes and let them go just for one man. So about a dozen of us ran underneath them, one by one, and got over the danger zone. Some of the advanced guard then climbed the hill-side, while others farther down the column searched the jungle above with rifle fire to drive off the Abors moving about on top. There was no fighting. Our elusive enemy melted away. The column stood clear; the shoots were cut, and the stones crashed harmlessly down the hill-side and bounded into the stream below. Stone shoots from 40 to about 100 feet above the path are the most likely to do damage. For although a shower of rocks coming down a steep place from nearly 1000 feet up looks pretty formidable, the stones are almost certain to miss the path altogether. But the high shoots take an unconscionable time to clear.

After settling the booby-traps, we soon reached the end of our climb. Just at the top we found a

small stockade built across the path. Some Abors were behind it, but they did not stand, and bolted before the head of the advanced guard had been boosted over the top. We followed them on to a wide stretch of open country, with a clump of trees within about 800 yards of the stockade. As we advanced in lines in extended order—a most unusual formation in jungle work—a volley of arrows came out of the trees. This gave us rather a simple job, which was soon over, and we got the gun that had given us the casualty the day before. It was an old Tower musket, and we found the late owner's ammunition to be chopped up telephone wire, looted from the main column, who were using it between posts in the Dihang valley. Nothing more happened of any interest, and we got back to Mishing the following evening.

But we came across something quite unusual on one of these outings. We had a rather big column, 200 men and a number of Naga coolies, some of whom were spare, for any casualties we might have. The Naga is a fine upstanding savage, a real fighting man, and a remarkably good shot with the javelin he always carries. I've known them send the head clean through an Abor at a surprisingly long range for the weapon. We were on a rather important bit of reconnaissance, so I took Bill and another of the assistant commandants with me. I was with the advanced guard, and Bill with the rear guard. The Abors, following their usual tactics when fighting amongst themselves, had blocked the path in one place for about eighty yards. It took us some time to clear this, and when we finally emerged we caught sight of

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some Abors on the path ahead of us. In a short exchange of bullets and arrows we dropped one of them, and left him by the edge of the jungle. At the next ten minutes' halt, I walked down the column to see that everything was all right. The assistant commandant with the main body made his report, and ended up with: "About that Abor you shot, do you know he hadn't any ears?" Now he had been quite complete when we left him; of that I was positive. Then Bill came up, said that his own morning had been extremely boring, but that we seemed to have been busy. Then he added: "Somebody must have got a brevet out of this; that Abor you scuppered hadn't got a head on him when I saw him". When we got to our halt for the night, I had the closest possible search made for that head—and one or two surprise hunts for it later on. I never found a sign of it—not of any kind, and the weather was distinctly muggy. But some time after the Abor expedition was over, it got round to me that the head had safely reached a distant village in the Naga Hills.

Orders eventually reached Colonel Fisher restricting our activities to a return each night to Mishing. General Bower was anxious to get the Minyongs to stand behind the last of their immense stockades, and so finally settle the business; and widely extended raids by our columns could only spoil his plans. Looking back on it, I feel we must still have gone rather far afield, because we got into the habit of coming back extremely late at night. But, once night has fallen, troops marching along a rough switchback path through dense forest move about as slowly and cautiously as a

chameleon on the branch of a tree, and this had to be allowed for in the distance we could cover.

By the 9th of November the main column had reached Rengging, and here, hidden in the jungle, they found a gun case, personal papers, and other odds and ends that Williamson had sent back by Nepalese carriers before the disaster took place. It seems that Williamson had sent a Miri runner back with them, to take some letters down to post in Assam. One of these was in a red telegraph envelope and another was black-edged. The runner, to show his own importance, had let the Abors see these letters, and with inconceivable folly said that they meant war. To explain to a primitive people who know nothing of postal arrangements, but habitually use sign messages, that the red and black-edged envelopes meant that Williamson was asking for troops, could have only one result. Neither letters nor messenger ever reached the Plains, and the Abors resolved to wipe out the whole party. This is believed to have been the direct cause of the massacre.

A little less than a fortnight later, Colonel Fisher and his two companies of the 2nd Gurkha Rifles left Mishing to join the main column, and I went out with them for the first march to pioneer the way for them. There was some jungle-cutting to be done, and shale slopes to be made easier for their 2nd Line Transport coolies. They had been a very cheery crowd, and delightful to work with, so I was sorry to say "good-bye" to them. While we were together it had rained—for most of the time—as hard as I have ever known it to rain anywhere, and this brought out every variety of pro-

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tection against the weather. The ordinary mackintosh was soon discarded. Our dodge of fastening two eyelet-holes of a water-proof sheet, making a cape of it, was easier to scramble about in than that. Some people wore light-green or yellow transparent capes, but they got torn to shreds in the jungle, or water-proof shirts, which in that climate made the wearer almost as wet with perspiration as he could have got with the rain. The two really sensible people were Falkner, who wore a woolly sweater, and the commander of the column, who followed the example of the old Duke of Cambridge and always took an umbrella with him.

The main column was by this time in the centre of the Minyong country, and operations became more lively. On the 3rd of December a column of 2nd Gurkhas, 8th Gurkhas, and the A.V.L.H., about 400 in all, crossed the Dihang on rafts and attacked the Abors on Sissin Hill. The position was naturally strong, and made much stronger by big stockades and a formidable line of stone shoots; but the force under Captain Giffard carried it successfully, inflicting heavy losses on the Abors.

The next move was made four days later by the Abors themselves, who delivered a half-hearted night attack upon the main camp on the other bank. The idea was a good one. They brought up a number of cattle and drove them at the thorn perimeter of the camp, but they did not attempt to press home under a heavy fire what might have been an advantage.

Almost immediately after the 2nd Gurkhas left

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Mishing, I had to go out to clear up some difficulty on our line of communications, leaving Bill, who was far from well, in charge. As I came up the hill from Ledum on my way back, I saw a small party coming down the path with a stretcher, and the doctor walking beside it. The fear I had, the moment I saw it, was realised when we met. It was Bill. While I was away, a party had to go out to settle some raiding Abors, and Bill, who had never spared himself from first to last, though far too unfit for the business, had gone out with them. He came back with pneumonia. I said something to him about a safe journey and a quick return, and he flashed back, in the way that always reminded me of Mercutio, that what he really wanted was a quick journey; and the party went on down the hill. They took him to the house of the Adjutant of the A.V.L.H., where Hutchison himself was recovering from an arrow wound in the thigh. A week later, on the 3rd of December, as the officers of the ration column up from the base were coming into the mess for lunch, I went out to get my daily bulletin that was signalled through from Dibrugarh. The signaller handed me the message. Bill was dead. The Dihang had killed the two finest men who ever came to serve the Assam Government, upon its border.

Just before New Year's Day, 1912, the Abors on the Mishing side got tired of incessant harrying. The Minyong communities in the Dihang Valley were all surrendering to General Bower, who had found Kebang deserted when he occupied it on the 9th of December. There was no object in continuing to hold out. The Mishing people felt they

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would be far better employed on their fields. So the headmen came in to make peace. It was not in any way a formal ceremony. The headmen were brought in, squatted down in front of me, and said the whole thing had been a sad business. Then they stood up and, stamping on the ground and pointing in the direction of the sun, swore to be friends. I told them we would go out together next day and select the site for their new village. This was a pleasant picnic and we all got on very well together.

It was interesting to see the Abors cook their food. Bits of meat, or a bird, were put on skewers and held in the fire until they were burnt. But they could cook rice. Lengths of big bamboo, called by the Abors *di-bange-tung* (known throughout Assam as *chungas*), were filled with water. The rice was done up securely in neat plantain leaf packets and put into the *chungas*, which were then leant over the fire. The *chungas* were frequently turned, and when they were charred all round the rice was taken out. Better cooked rice I have never eaten anywhere. The Abors collect all kinds of *fungi*, some of which I have good authority for believing to be poisonous, and eat them after boiling them several times in water. Apparently there are no after-effects, but I never tried this substitute for mushrooms.

The way the Abors make peace among themselves is most convivial, and they could hardly have expected us to conform to it. When time had made the subject less delicate, they told me how two villages come to terms. A sapling is planted on the path half-way between the two villages as a

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meeting-place, and a party of men from each side come out carrying *dankis*, and driving cattle with them. At the meeting-place the peace delegates from each village exchange *dankis* and cattle. Then they sit down facing each other with the tree between them and talk for a bit. Abors are great talkers. Presently someone suggests that they might have a meal together. The cattle are killed, fires are made and lit, and the meat is cooked in the *dankis*, which is not the usual way of preparing it. A huge feast follows, washed down with gallons of *apong*. At the end there's a lot of "he's a jolly good fellowing" done in Abor, and everyone swears eternal friendship. The interesting thing is they seem to stick to it.

A declaration of war is a much longer business. When the people of one village get thoroughly annoyed with their neighbours, there are one or two things to do before any messages of defiance are sent. The village headmen—there is often more than one—call a meeting of the men, either in the *moshap* (the bachelors' barrack) or just outside it. Everyone else squats down while the headman makes the first speech. He harangues them for hours, and the only one of the kind I ever heard reminded me of what one gets in Hyde Park. There is no voting. If the audience don't agree with the speaker, they howl him down, as our ancestors used to do in the Anglo-Saxon moot. The shouts of the largest crowd take the place of a division of the House.

But before war is actually declared, some of the fighting men go out from the village and take omens. A civilised general staff calculate the chances of success by the probable effectiveness of

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their plans and the efficiency and speed of their concentration arrangements: the hill-man by the post-mortem behaviour of a fowl. Both like to feel they are backing a certainty, but have different ways of reaching a reassuring conclusion.

This is almost the only ceremony in which the medicine-man does not take part. He functions later, in the Galong tribe at all events, by building a platform in a tree, on which he sits and curses the enemy. Known persons who are particularly disliked are selected for this long-range offensive, and I was given instances of its success when they saw I didn't believe them. They gave me one example—not of an enemy—but of an Assamese trader in the Plains who had apparently cheated them. The Galongs said they turned a medicine-man on to him, and he certainly died suddenly, which satisfied them anyway. I never, of course, saw the war augury taken, but more than one man, in widely separated villages, told me about it. The party go out a short way from the village and put their spears on a stand pointing in the direction of the enemy. Just in front of this they put up two fences in the form of a "V", leading to a long basket with a very wide opening. The open end of the "V" is towards the enemy. A red cock is produced, and one man holds it by the head, and another by the tail. A third man beheads it with the words, "O Piang (the god of war), if we are to win, may the cock go into the basket". The headless body is at once put down on the ground between the fences, and sprinkled with powdered maize and roasted grains of rice. If the cock runs into the basket, and the subsequent operations are successful, pigs,

fowls, and other animals are sacrificed to Piang. Nothing, of course, was said to me about what happened supposing the war went the wrong way. But it occurred to me that the shrewdness of medicine-men as a class accounts for their absence from this particular ceremony.

If the cock does not flutter into the basket, the men taking the omen walk a little way in the direction of the enemy's village and then go home again, without speaking a word, and spend that night in the *moshap*. Everyone else in the village avoids catching their eye, for the hill-men believe that "if four eyes are together" after an unsuccessful omen, the two who looked at each other will die of a discharge of blood from the mouth. Next day everybody behaves again as usual. But another augury cannot be taken for a year.

Newspaper accounts published during the Abor show stated that human sacrifices were made to Piang and his fellow war-gods. I read these before I left Mishing, so I was able to look into this statement among the Galongs, who always were friendly, as well as among the Minyongs, with whom we ended up on very good terms. Later on I pursued the same subject throughout the entire length of the Abor country. It is, of course, quite possible that human sacrifices were once made to bring success in war, but about three years' enquiry never gave me a trace of it. Only slaves or prisoners of war (who become slaves themselves) could possibly have been sacrificed; and as several Abors and Galongs said to me, "Why waste anything so valuable, when something else has always done as well?" The only thing that did

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emerge was the right of the master of the house to hang an incorrigibly idle slave. Even as to this, I gathered that the bad bargain was practically always got off on to somebody else.

By the third week in January 1912 survey parties and columns on peaceful missions were out in different directions from the main column. One of the most important of these, with a great friend of mine, Major A. B. Lindsay, 2nd Gurkha Rifles, as Intelligence officer, had gone east to Damro in the Padam country. Bentinck, the political officer with the Abor expedition, had gone north on the most important Mission of all with Survey officers and an escort to try to find the falls, directly after Christmas. Nothing particularly dashing was possible for us. But there was, some little way to the north of Mishing, a powerful clan living in a prosperous valley with whom no one had got in touch at all. My guide, Yango, told me that the people at the higher end of the valley were Galongs, with Minyong villages nearer the Dihang, farther east. The valley was not thirty miles from Mishing, so it seemed a pity not to go and see it.

Yango told me that there was a waterless climb before we reached the valley, and as we couldn't be certain of our reception, we went out a hundred strong. This enabled us to leave fifty men at an advanced base camp on our side of the waterless ridge, to act as a support should we want it.

Dorward came, to take charge of the supporting party; and Falkner came because, as he said, he was our medical officer—and also because it was quite impossible to keep him out of any and every

chance of an adventure. He went everywhere with us, exploring or scrapping, and he never parted from the little bag that he obviously used for midwifery cases. In his ordinary practice it held, however, rather different contents than it did with us. Falkner had grown a small, rather professional black beard, reminiscent of some of Jules Verne's characters, and I was in the surprising disguise, for a sandy-haired man, of a large, all-round, red beard. I took this off before I got back to civilisation, but not before someone took a snapshot and sent it to my Inspector-General, Hughes Buller. He at once called it "The Man Who Was", and before I knew where I was myself, a distinctly poor edition of a comic Scotsman on the music-hall stage had been spread abroad on a picture post-card.

We left Mishing about the 16th of January. The first march was easy—we had been over it often enough—and put in log steps at awkward places. Some of the Mishing men were very pleased to come with us in the unusual rôle of "hired transport" as far as Dorward's camp, at the end of the first day out. A good road, and the camp site cleared already, made the fourteen miles, generally speaking a hard march in the Hills, quite a simple affair.

Early next morning Falkner and I went on with fifty men, up the side of the mountain range that rose between us and the Galong villages to the north. The path was obviously hardly ever used, and it soon got distinctly difficult. We were travelling as light as we dared, but, apart from rations and ammunition, we had thought it as

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well to have an extra water-bottle apiece. It is extraordinary if one knows one is carrying an extra two and a half pounds how one feels it. At the end of a scramble up through thick forest which brought us to a height of about 5000 feet, the hill-side abruptly disappeared and the path ran on to a narrow ridge. I have never seen anything quite like it. The whole ridge was never more than nine or ten feet across, and usually very much less, and went up and down like the teeth of an enormous and very irregular saw. On both sides there was an almost sheer drop of hundreds of feet. There was, of course, not a trickle of water anywhere, and I looked in vain for the rough cork-like bark of the water creeper. The Pasi Abors had shown me this creeper one day and cut it into lengths, when it gave us a surprising amount of drinkable water. When we had to halt, just before nightfall, we were still on the razor edge. So we just put out a couple of sentries at the front and rear of the column, sat down and had some food, and then lay down and got some sleep. Whatever else we might be in for, we were in an impregnable position for the night on Dupe ridge.

The light had hardly begun to spread across the sky before we were on the move again. I had my sketching things with me, as well as my compass, to map the country, and unless I was badly out in what had been most carefully plotted, and Yango had slipped up for the first time in his usually accurate information, we ought to have been camping not much more than a couple of miles from the large village of Kombong, for which we were making. Not knowing whether the villagers

would take us to their arms, or take at once to their own, it was just as well to pay them a surprise visit, and as early in the morning as we could get there. Sure enough, another mile took us off the ridge, and about three-quarters of a mile down a sloping hill-side brought us to the end of the trees. Below us stretched a great valley, and through the heavy morning mist the thatched roofs of a large village peaked out almost at our feet. We had come fourteen miles from Dorward's camp, and the crest of the ridge had been nine miles long. Thanks to Yango, our meeting with the headmen went off very well, but when it dawned on them I had a strongish force behind me, they needed a certain amount of reassuring. Most of the Kombong men wore white or reddish Tibetan cloth coats that Bori traders bring down from the north and exchange for skins and the deers' horns that the Tibetans powder for their doctors' prescriptions. But as soon as the chief headman of the village felt that we were not bent on immediate mischief, he retired to his house, and presently returned in a red tunic that had once belonged to a private in the West Kent regiment. The buttons had gone the usual way of souvenirs, and we saw some of them being used as neck ornaments in the village. But he looked very martial in his red coat and loin-cloth, and put our weather-worn khaki completely in the shade.

We spent a couple of days at Kombong, with our camp by the path from Mishing, while we had a look at the country and learned, through Yango, as much about the people as we could in so short a visit. Galong was Yango's native tongue, and he

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used it for any word he didn't know in Assamese. So we knew some Galong. The only trouble was that he lisped, and this made it almost impossible—for me at any rate—to understand the Kombong people. A fair number of common words are the same in Galong and Abor, and others are only pronounced a little differently, although the Galongs do not intermarry with their Minyong Abor neighbours. On the other hand, anyone who could speak Galong would be more or less at home in the Dafla country. The hill tribes on the Assam Border are unlike the Pathans along the North-West Frontier, who all, with the exception of one community, speak either hard or soft Pushtu.

A big tributary of the Dihang, the Siyom River, flowed rather lazily down the middle of the valley, between fields under permanent cultivation, divided off by strong wooden fences. Big villages were dotted about, with a number of clumps of bamboo, and an occasional orange or lemon grove. It looked rather like a bit of Assam.

The migrations of the Abor people were not so very difficult to trace when I got the opportunity to go into them; but although Yango was with me nearly three months, I never ran the origin of the Galongs to ground. Long ago most of them settled on what in the Hills is rich country, and there they have stayed. But it seems as if the Galongs and Subansiri Daflas once lived about Damro, and migrated from there by way of Pasighat along the foot of the Hills, and then went up the Siemen Valley. The Rotung Abors told me that once upon a time their neighbours east and west lived with them in the Dihang Valley. "But sud-

denly the Minyongs drew their swords and frightened the Mili to the Mishmi country and the Mikon to the Galong country."

A round trip, down the Siyom through new country into the Dihang Valley, and back to Mishing by Kebang, was a more attractive prospect than another night on the Dupe ridge. So the afternoon of our arrival at Kombong I sent a message through to Dorward to wait two clear days at his camp, and then take his party back to Mishing. As soon as I got his acknowledgment of the message, we left Kombong; but before we cut adrift from our supports, we made a great show with our helios in the direction of the high ridge we had crossed. Yango was told to let the villagers know, casually, that we were talking to the army we had in the valley just over the hill.

A flat road corduroyed at any bad place, and decently bridged wherever there was a stream, took us in two easy marches to Kebang, where I reported at Headquarters. They were surprised to see us. We had asked permission to visit the Galong villages to the west, and then appeared at Kebang itself, from the north. But General Bower received me very kindly, and next day we went down the pioneered road above the Dihang, and so back to Mishing. The Minyong Abor country on both banks of the Dihang, south of the junction of the Siyom River, was by this time completely under control. Instead of mobile columns out to shoot at sight any Abors they came across, the active people were the scientists, who wanted the Abors alive and in sufficient numbers for an anthropometrical series, or went out bug-hunting with a small escort.

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The zoologist came up to our camp, and made a very pleasant addition to our mess.

Now and again some of the Mishing Abors came out for a walk with me, and one day they showed me a new way of catching prawns. The streams were full of them. As in nearly all the pursuits of a primitive people, the necessary outfit was found in the jungle. The Abors began by cutting up the stems of fallen plantains, and collecting a number of fat white grubs. Then we went down to a stream with bushes that the Abors called *ko-i* growing on its banks. This was a most convenient shrub, because one of its broad leaves made a landing-net, and the stalk and fibres of another leaf made the rod, line, and casts. The correct thing is to use several casts, and to the end of each long, tough fibre they tied a grub with a slip-knot.

I was shown a likely pool, sank the grubs gently to the bottom, and, after a little, a large prawn came jerkily out of its lair and fastened on to a grub. It was rather tricky work getting him into the landing-leaf, which I held in my left hand. I soon found that the prawns had to be raised up through the water and into the air as carefully as if one were engaged in the now defunct game of spillikins. Otherwise the prawns let go before the landing-leaf could be slipped under them. It was good fun, and not at all a bad substitute for fly-fishing, which was impossible in the mountain streams, and rather disappointing in the Dihang.

At the end of the morning I came back to camp with a good enough catch for a prawn curry—a pleasant change from the eternal bully beef. The zoologist had been out somewhere and was rather

late for lunch. When he found out what we were eating, he said rather stuffily that we were probably putting an entirely new species of prawn to the worst possible use. I don't think he ever forgave me, because later on, when I sent him a number of creatures from the Tibet border, hoping to get some attractive-looking lizard or brilliantly coloured beetle named after myself, the only specimen, he said, that was new to science was an insect not as a rule referred to in public.

I had no better luck with my orchids. The Fitzgeralds had said they would grow any orchids I sent them in the houses at Carton, and sell half of them later on as my share in the business. So the forests were ransacked all the way up to Tibet, and a number of large boxes, most carefully packed by an expert, eventually arrived in Dublin. But they got no farther. Larkinism was rampant at the time, and the entire collection, as I found out afterwards, was thrown into the Liffey. I had built a good deal on those orchids, especially what I believed to be the red Vanda, a rediscovery after fifty years.

Yango had talked a lot about his friends at Basar, a Galong village about thirty miles due west of us. Not only was it quite unexplored country, but the village led by easy stages to one of the trade routes into Tibet. Soon after we got back from Kombong, we thought we might try our luck in a new direction, so we sent friendly messages to Basar and the other big villages on the line we would take. But before anything could come of this, I got orders to break camp at Mishing, and come over the hill to garrison the

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line of communications and take charge at Balek. The Abor expedition was closing down, and the regular troops were being withdrawn.

I was uncommonly sorry to say good-bye to Yango. He was an excellent guide, and nothing could wipe his rather deprecating smile off his face. He had told me a great deal about his own people, the Galongs, especially their worship of the evil spirits they believe to be everywhere around them. This was an immense help to me when I came to study the almost similar religion of the Abors. It taught me what to look out for, and the sort of questions to ask. Yango had liked being with us, too; his only trouble had been that a number of our excursions had taken him near his own village, and Yango lived in terror of his wife. Whenever we got within range of his home, Mrs. Yango used to come out and tell Yango what she thought of his desertion of his family and his neglect of his allotment. She could be heard using all the Galong language there is, the whole length of the column, for several miles.

When the time came to settle up with Yango, I offered him, as a parting present, the electric torch that had often helped to guide a benighted column into Mishing. I had a number of refills, and said I would show him how to put them in. He refused the torch with horror. "No, no," he said, "I've got one devil in my house already."

CHAPTER VIII

EXPLORATION PARTIES AND KINTHUP

Back to the Dihang Valley—A fishy story—An Abor priestess gives a song and dance—Punishment for the murders—Exploration up the river by the political officer—Missions in other directions—The Abor bogy man—The Abor as the Tibetan sees him—Kinthup, "one of the romances of the Survey of India".

ROTUNG, after the open spur at Mishing, was as near being in a well as the bottom of a wet dark valley could make it. The trees, dripping with rain when we marched in, grew closer to the camp than we were accustomed to; and the spur on which it had been made was not particularly high above the river. There were other drawbacks of a more domestic nature, that had not been present at Mishing, which Falkner at once took in hand.

Below us, on the Dihang, the Abors had a number of fish-traps. At Balek, and in the Abor Plains settlements, casting-nets are popular, but in the Hills fish are always trapped. At the mouth of almost all the smaller tributaries of the Dihang one would see dams, either of plantain stems or hurdle work, built across the stream. They are in every way the reverse of a salmon-ladder. Large conical baskets, anything from two feet six inches to four feet across at the mouth, are fixed in these dams, mouths up-stream, of course; and the fish are driven into

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the traps and kept there by the rush of water. In these lower reaches the fish are mostly mahseer. There is generally a ramshackle hut somewhere near the traps, for the fishing parties. On the Siemen River in the Galong country not far from Mishing, where villages are mostly close together, the different beats were marked off by piles of stones.

A Minyong, one Joter of Rotung village—about the dirtiest Abor I ever met (which is saying something), and rather a scoundrel into the bargain—used to come into camp, not so much to see me as to cadge a drink of rum. One day he told me a story about fish-traps. Joter was well known for his knowledge of folklore, and I don't believe he invented this one. I heard a story like it somewhere else, for every imaginable sort of thing is explained in this way. Where our scientists sit down and write a text-book, or stand up and deliver a lecture, the hill-man settles down on his little log seat by the fireside and gives his children fascinating explanations of what they see about them, from the stars overhead to the river in its bed far below the house. I had the luck to hear a good many of these tales, and the satisfaction of having the same story told me often enough in different places to be sure of it.

This is what Joter told me. "There were two stars in the sky, a brother and sister. The brother was called Dupuir, and his sister Dudengu. They had a son whom they called Puirshem. Puirshem died, and tumbling out of the sky—as a shooting star—fell into the water and was carried down by the stream. Now Tapu Talar, one of the water-spirits, had set a trap for fish, and Puirshem got

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caught in it. Tapu Talar found the star, took it out and ate it. Then the bat (who is always the tale-bearer in Galong and Abor stories) told the stars what had happened to Puirshem. So there was war between the stars and the dwellers in the water. The fishes and frogs came out of the water and began to climb up the rocks towards the stars: very slowly, for they kept sliding and falling back into the river. Presently the stars began to shoot their arrows at them; and the frogs and the fishes tried to shelter behind rocks and stones as the arrows went by. But they could not cover themselves altogether, and the arrows flying past them gashed and grazed them on either side, giving to the fish the gills they have to this day."

I felt that story was really worth a drink.

Sitting still at Rotung, with nothing better to do than to walk along the mule-road made by the pioneers, was almost insufferably boring. Any diversion was welcomed. One day, when I was outside my hut enjoying a spell of sunshine and waiting for lunch, a pheasant flew over from the opposite bank and landed, to our mutual surprise, quite close to me. He was a magnificent bird, all blue and green, and looked as if he had been enamelled all over. There was a tremendous hurroosh after him—headed by my orderly—but I wasn't sorry when the pheasant sensibly stopped running round the camp and flew off into the trees before anyone got him. This was the only time I saw the river crossed with any comfort.

The monotony was varied another day by the arrival of a *mirü*. This is an Abor medicine-man or woman. The *mirü* and party had come from Jaru,

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a Panggi-Abor village across the river, and were on a professional visit to Rotung, which was suffering from dysentery, and had at that time no *mirü* of its own. All Abor parties coming along the road had to report at the quarter guard. If they were brought into the camp, they left their weapons with the guard. I usually interviewed them. There was no disarmament on this occasion, because the party consisted of four girls. The *mirü* was a child of twelve, and had only been passed as one of themselves by the local medicine-men a couple of months earlier, after what must have been an epileptic fit. The Abors look upon that as a sort of religious trance, and a proof of possession by the spirits. She had the further, and necessary, qualification of what the Abors call "deer's eyes". She wore a skirt, but no upper garment. It was hardly necessary, as she was largely covered with necklaces and little bells, and the big, fluffy, pink tassels of her earrings.

By a stroke of luck the anthropologist was in Rotung. He came along to see her, and took a better photograph of her than I did. An aspirant is told a good deal about religious matters and folklore before becoming a *mirü*, but a girl of her age, who had been in practice so short a time, was unable to tell us much about their ceremonies, though she was quite willing to answer questions. For a girl of twelve she had considerable ideas of her own importance, and it needed much persuasion, coupled with the promise of a good meal for the four of them, to get her to dance.

Her three companions stood in a row to one side, and the *mirü* began by shuffling round in a circle, with her knees and feet close together, waving her



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arms. She danced for a little, and then sang an invocation to "Roi-kang and Kamin, Spirits of the Delu River", that is the Dihang. The girls with her gave the chorus, taking parts, and sang quite beautifully. The *mirü* then shuffled round again, stopped, and sang another verse, with the chorus as before. She went on until she felt she had done enough for her dinner.

It was a cool bright day, the sun was throwing dappled shadows on the grass under the trees outside the camp, and I couldn't help feeling that I might have been back two thousand years or more, watching the dancing in some Greek village, and listening to the choruses that may perhaps be lost, or still survive in Gregorian music. We came across all sorts of rather elaborate ritual later on, but from what I saw of the young lady of Jaru, I doubt if her ministrations got much farther than a three days' dance by the people of the village, with everybody waving boughs. The usual fee on these occasions is paid in necklaces, apart, of course, from board and lodging. The more prosaic cure for dysentery is the small wild orange.

If a village gets a really bad attack of smallpox or dysentery, the neighbouring villages segregate it by putting miniature stockades, with arrows pointing in the direction of the stricken community, on the paths leading to it. We found this a useful warning more than once. If neither orange juice nor the *mirü* seem to do any good, some of the few remaining rubber trees in the country may be cut down. If that fails, the village moves to another spur; and I have heard more than one Abor say that dysentery was brought on by bad water.

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While I had been occupied with nothing particularly useful, Masters, one of the assistant commandants, had brought off a very fine bit of work. He was stationed at Balek, and as he was liked and trusted by the local Pasi Abors, they were quite open in talking to him. It came out one day that they were not at all happy that a Minyong Abor, who had been one of the actual murderers of Williamson, was hiding in a neighbouring village on the edge of the Plains. In order that Balek should not be mixed up in the business in any way, they told Masters exactly where the man was to be found. Masters lost no time. He took a small party of men with him, got into the village in the middle of the night, and burst into the house where the Minyong was staying before the Abors knew he was there. There was a bit of a tussle, which ended in Masters dragging the man out himself. The Minyong was taken to Pasighat, and was one of the three men eventually tried by the political officer.

These trials, and the fining of the villages implicated in the massacre of Williamson's party, ended the punitive part of the expedition. Early in January 1912 memorial stones were set up on cairns, built by the villagers, to mark the places where Williamson and Gregorson had been murdered. My personal feelings would have led me to burn those villages first, but someone with infinitely more experience was at the head of affairs, and an impressive ceremony was held at the unveiling of these monuments.

At the end of March, Bentinck and his little party of survey officer, geologist, and forest officer,

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with an escort of 100 men of the 8th Gurkhas under Giffard, rejoined the expeditionary force. They had been exploring for three months. By going on short rations and pushing on through desperately difficult country, with the survey parties on the hills above, sometimes in heavy snow, they had reached Singging on the 3rd of February. This was about fifty miles by map (but not by path) from Kebang. Apart from all difficulty of country and weather, a body of men cutting loose from the meeting-convoy arrangements on a line of communications in the Hills are greatly restricted in the distance they can go. A full Indian ration is $2\frac{1}{4}$ lb. a day, and even picked carriers cannot be asked to carry more than 60 lb. over a bad path. They have, of course, to carry the rations for themselves as well as for the column; which means that in twenty-seven days each ration carrier, on full allowance, would eat his own load of rations. That was Bentinck's great difficulty when he launched out into the blue. For a convoy which came up to him at Puing, forty miles in an air line due north of Kebang, was the only re-rationing arrangement that could be made. By getting Abors at times to carry for him, making an advanced base at Simong, and putting his party on half rations for the dash up-river, he was able to perform something like a miracle. Not only was a considerable time devoted to determined efforts at survey in almost hopeless mist and rain, but Bentinck went twenty-four marches up the valley from Kebang.

I met the geologist soon after the party got back, and asked him at once about the falls and the cannibals. Although Bentinck's explorations, with

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their fixed time limit, had gone at least twice as far up-river as the falls were supposed to be, there had been no sign of them. In fact, the farther they went north, the less they heard about them. On the other hand, they heard more and more about the cannibals. The Abors called them Mimats, or Loma-mani-Trunshar, which means "neckless savages", and they came in the summer to Singing. The exploration party were told that these Mimats were cannibals, wearing skins, who lived in caves just below the snow-line. They brought down salt and metal bowls, and wanted dead bodies in exchange for them. The Abors professed the deepest contempt for these people.

While the Abor expedition was making its way into the Hills, and sending out its columns in different directions, explorations were being made among the hill tribes to west and east. The smaller of these missions was into, and beyond, the country where the Subdivisional Officer of North Lakhimpur and I had once spent Christmas. This time Kerwood went as political officer in what was called the Miri mission with an escort of 150 of the Lushai Hills Military Police. The tribe is not really Miri, but Dafla, and the people, to give them their proper description, are Subansiri Daflas. A start was made from the gorge of the Subansiri early in November. Their object was to survey the Kamla River, whose valley Kerwood and I had gone to see when visiting Beni, explore trade routes towards Tibet, and then move west into the Apatanang country.

As far up as Beni the people were quite friendly, but what they had said to me about my revolver

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as a way of settling their differences with a village on the opposite bank of the Kamla might perhaps have been taken as an indication that these unvisited people might prove unfriendly. The Assam Government, however, were of opinion that these hill-men would not prove hostile, and the mission was sent with an escort of 150 rifles. An available striking force of fifty fit, well-trained men always seemed to me enough for an independent raid. But the force allotted by the Local Government had to find detachments for the advanced base, subsidiary camps, convoy escorts, and the troops necessary for the survey parties and the political officer himself. As things turned out, the line of communications was never more than forty miles in length, but on the proposed scope of the survey it might have been nearer a hundred. If it is necessary to use troops at all, there must be enough of them for the normal duties of camp protection and convoy escort, as well as to provide the political officer with a force large enough to impress, and if necessary deal with, all the communities he visits.

All went well until the mission crossed the Kamla with an escort of fifty rifles, and found the villages on the left bank to be openly hostile. For the first fortnight in February the mission was in a tight place. The column was sniped with arrows more than once on the march, and finally determined attacks were made on the same day upon the camps of the two detachments into which the little force was divided at the time. The attack on the political officer's camp was a surprise rush soon after dawn, and was very nearly successful. The two detach-

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ments then united, and the villages concerned were attacked and burned. Instant and determined action gave a satisfactory turn to the military operations, but any further advance, and all hope of survey work, had to be abandoned. The column then made its way back to Assam through the friendly Apatanang country.

The Mishmi mission was a great contrast to the unlucky affair up the Subansiri. Dundas, the political officer, had gained a wide experience among the Nagas, and possessed the advantage that great height and strength give to anyone dealing with primitive people. The escort of 750 military police was commanded by a first-rate officer in Major Charles Bliss; and the political officer had seen to it that the medical arrangements and transport were all that could be wanted.

Although the Lohit Valley had never been exactly overrun with tourists, it had been more often visited than the Abor and Dafla Hills. Captain Bedford had made an early start in 1826. Father Krick and another French Catholic priest had begun missionary work there in the early fifties. Both priests were murdered later near the Mishmi-Tibetan border. Needham, when A.P.O. Sadiya, had gone with Molesworth to Rima, ten miles into Tibet, and about 190 miles from Sadiya, in 1886, and there had been one or two less important visits as well.

When Dundas started off on his mission, the question he had to solve was not geographical. Chinese troops had for some little time been filtering into Tibet; and the Government of India were anxious to know if their activities had brought them

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into the Mishmi country, as this was within our sphere of influence.

The past history of Tibet undoubtedly admitted Chinese suzerainty. Lhasa had appealed to China in 1792, when overrun by Nepal, and again in 1841 when the Dogras invaded the country from Jammu. On each occasion China sent troops, as many as 70,000, to fight the Gurkhas, and freed Tibet from invasion. Moreover, the Central Government of Tibet sent a yearly mission, with tribute money, to Peking. But this hardly justified the activities of the Chinese general Chao-erh-Feng. A genius in war, of tireless energy, and a man who shared all the hardships of his men, Chao-erh-Feng took Lhasa in February 1910, having brought his army, guns, and all, over the 16,000-foot passes in midwinter. He replaced Tibetans by Chinese wherever possible and put down revolts with relentless cruelty. But he kept his troops in hand, and the generals of the new Chinese Republic who followed him (after Chao-erh-Feng had been murdered in 1911 at Chengtu) were far more hated. The gross incompetence of his successors eventually lost Tibet for China, and by 1919 the old boundaries between the two countries were restored.

One of the survey parties of the Dundas mission pushed forward to Sama (a point about ten miles south of Rima) and found traces of Chinese occupation in the shape of flags, but they saw no Chinese. The Dundas mission, in its turn, set up piles of stones to indicate the boundary of Mishmi territory.

When trying to get information about the country up the Dihang, I found that few Galongs and

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hardly any Abors ever went far from their villages. Yango was an exceptional man. The Abor expedition gave them in every way an unusual experience, as normally an Abor never sees more than two or three thousand human beings in all his life. He stays as much as possible among his own people, and a visit to a village any distance off is something of an event. They think in terms of villages, and looked on us as members of a tribe living in the large village of Dibrugarh and the much smaller one of Sadiya. Their own villages seldom have more than a couple of hundred houses in them, near the Plains more usually twenty to fifty. The Balek group when I knew it had a hundred and sixty houses. Among the Abors, one family to a house is the rule, which means about two able-bodied men in each.

Visitors are rare enough for the Abors to believe a story that always struck me as remarkable, even for them. The hill tribes on the northern border are all akin, and the Abors are as certain as the people I met at Beni that a spirit lives in the *holok* tree. The Abors call him Pom-ti-are. I heard all about him in different villages, two of them the length of the Minyong country apart, which is about thirty-five miles in an air line. Pom-ti-are now and then wants someone to talk to, for he has a lonely life in his tree. So he goes to a village looking like somebody's kinsman from a distance with a pressing invitation for the native to come and stay with his "in-laws". Abors do not marry what may shortly be described as "cousins", so they may have to go abroad for a wife. Pom-ti-are gets the unfortunate man away with him, and he doesn't come back. So if anyone is missing and cannot be

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accounted for, the villagers go out into the jungle with their swords, bows, and arrows to look for him. They go to the *holok* tree and say to it, "Give us back our brother, Holok Tree, and we will make a sacrifice to you", and further persuade it, or rather the spirit within, by hacking at the trunk with their swords and shooting arrows at the branches. Then they go home and wait for the wanderer to return. They do not give up hope for about two months. If the prodigal returns, a *mithan* or a pig is killed and eaten at what they told me was a religious feast. But I never heard that the *holok* got a share in it.

Outsiders are not welcomed in an Abor village. The bare possibility of seeing Pom-ti-are may perhaps have something to do with the feeling, but the strongest reason is that strangers are believed to bring the spirits of disease in with them. We found a commercial reason for discouraging travellers, later on, when we went up the valley. But the general feeling is against wandering about the country, and Abors are nearly always quite vague about places any distance beyond their homes.

I had been brought up against this brick wall when quite unexpectedly there came a bit of luck. On the 20th of April, when the expeditionary force and its transport were rapidly ebbing down to the steamers at Kobo, I came in to Pasighat to find a number of Tibetan carriers in camp. Whatever opportunity might offer in the future was on the knees of the gods, but I was anxious to pick up any information I could get about the still unknown country to the north. A large party of Tibetans and Khambas gave me a wonderful chance, but one

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that would have been entirely wasted had there not been in Pasighat a medical officer, Captain R. S. Kennedy, I.M.S., who knew Tibetan extremely well. With a kindness I have been grateful for ever since, he spent hours of his spare time sitting beside me to translate the statements of a long succession of these carriers. Some had never been near the country we were asking about, others had forgotten everything worth remembering, or were found under cross-examination to be hopelessly untruthful. Every one of the Tibetans was questioned, and two of them, a man from Lhasa called Tugden, and Rindze, a Khamba whose home was almost in the right place, gave us statements of the greatest interest. It was possible to check their statements on several points, from the reports made to Simla by A. K. (Krishen) and K. P. (Kinthup).

A lot of what they said referred to trade and the way it went, and the stages taken by a traveller on the Tibetan border. This is still far beyond our Frontier, and would merely be boring here and now. But what a Tibetan thought of the people he met when he came south, over his own border, was another matter. First there was Tugden, the man from Lhasa. He said he was an ex-monk of Sera monastery, and had come down to a place called Tsari, seven years back, to make a pilgrimage to a sacred lake. Tsari made me cock my ears rather, as it was the place from which trade came down to Basar. We had been told about populous valleys twelve marches from there, leading to the Bori country. Beyond a certain point, everyone seemed to have different names for the same people, which made it most confusing. The only thing to do in

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these cases is to go and see for oneself. Tugden said there was a splendid view from Tsari down a valley. In this valley lived people who certainly were not Tibetans. He called them Loteus, a clan of the Loba tribe. They cut their hair like Abors, wore short woolly coats, and had bows and arrows poisoned with aconite. He was quite sure these people lived in flimsy leaf huts, with no cultivation anywhere about them. They led, in fact, a most precarious existence, for he had seen them collecting earth-worms and cooking them in sections of bamboo. The Loteus brought skins and deers' horns to his party, and exchanged them for salt, iron, cloth, and other things. Tugden seemed to have been rather afraid of them. He added that he met some other Tibetans at Tsari, who said they had seen some cannibals further south, whom they called Mishu Ting Ba, actually enjoying their repulsive meal. These were evidently the Loman-trunshar of Bentinck's exploration party.

Rindze, whose home was near Chiamdo, gave us out and away the clearest and most reliable information. He went westward along the Tibetan border from Gyala Sindang to Tsari, so he must have passed due north of where the falls were believed to be. He hadn't heard of them. On the contrary, he said that the people of Kongbo told him that the Tsangpo ran under a mountain, and where it came out again was a place of pilgrimage, in the Lo country. The people of Beni had told us that the Subansiri flowed out of the Dihang, north of the Main Snowy Range, and tunnelled under the mountains to come down through their own hills towards the Plains. So if we believed in falls, the

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Tibetans and hill-men accounted for two rivers crossing the great ranges by going under them. Wherever the Dihang might rise, no one in India then dreamed that the Subansiri, big river though it is, rose in Tibet.

Now Kinthup called the Abors the Lho people, and there are references to the Lho-pa and Lho-ka-ptra by very early writers such as Father Horace Della Penna. More important still, in the pursuit of cannibals through hearsay evidence instead of on the ground, was the report of Sarat Chandra Das. This Bengali schoolmaster from Darjeeling, turned explorer for the Government of India, did valuable work in Tibet in the eighteen-seventies. In one of his reports he said he had been told by a Tibetan Lama, one Sarap-Gyatso, that one of the Lho tribes, the Lho-tawas, "a mottled people and quite barbarous", certainly were cannibals. With Tibetans telling us of cannibals south of them, and the Dihang exploration party bringing back word of cannibals further north, it looked as if they really did exist somewhere along the Tibetan border.

Rindze had seen no cannibalism himself. The reason for his strong dislike of the Lo people was more personal. The pilgrimage party he was with numbered about two hundred, and when they were going round the south side of the mountain at Tsari, a two days' journey, they were attacked by a band of Loba robbers, who had bows and arrows and long swords. They threw down volleys of stones on the pilgrims from a high place, and seven Tibetans were killed outright; others dying afterwards from their injuries. The Lobas then robbed the pilgrims of everything of value they had about

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them. Tugden, cautious man, when he made the pilgrimage, had avoided going round the mountain; he enjoyed an enchanting view instead.

There was still another source of information about the unexplored country up the Dihang, in the questionable shape of Kinthup. This was the surveyor who had come back from Tibet with an account, complete with falls, of the Tsangpo River and the northern part of the Abor country. Unfortunately one member at least of the party that went to Singging came back convinced that Kinthup must have indulged in long-range exploring—in fact that, so far as the Dihang valley went, he climbed some Pisgah, and was told by obliging natives what the country was like to the south. This did not seem encouraging to the seeker after truth, but as Kinthup was the only man who had even said he had visited the country from Gyala to Singging, I studied his narrative carefully, and took it with me when we went up the river.

His story really begins in June 1878, incidentally a month after I was born, when Lieutenant Harman, R.E., of the Survey of India, engaged a lama of a Sikhim monastery to teach him Tibetan. This lama was Nem Singh, the future G.M.N. of the reports on Tibetan exploration. Nem Singh was a well-read man of great industry and ability; he knew Hindustani well, and could speak a little English. So Harman taught him how to traverse with a prismatic compass and plot his work, to read a sextant, as well as to read a map, and how to use a boiling-point thermometer; in fact the stock-in-trade of a surveyor and explorer. Nem Singh was an apt pupil, and although he can hardly have

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reached the stage of accurate work, Harman sent him off in August of the same year to trace the Tsangpo River as far as he could go. Nem Singh went to Gyala, made a map of a great bend he apparently found in the river, and heard from the local people that the Tsangpo was believed to flow through the Gimuchen country into a land ruled by the British. He was back in Darjeeling in January 1879. With Nem Singh was a man called Kinthup.

Kinthup was by trade a tailor, with a little shop in Darjeeling, and like Nem Singh, a native of Sikkim. His work on the 1878-79 exploration to Gyala had been good enough for Harman to send him off again in 1880 on another attempt to trace the course of the Tsangpo. This time he went as assistant to a Chinese lama of Giardong. Their orders were to explore the country south of Gyala and follow the Tsangpo down into India. If this was not possible, a number of marked logs were to be thrown into the river at an arranged time, and watched for somewhere below Pasighat. Disguised as a Tibetan pilgrim, and carrying cradles for packs as pilgrims do, Kinthup got to Lhasa with the lama at the beginning of September 1880, and a week later they set out for Gyala. The lama turned out to be a most undesirable companion, treating Kinthup from the start as a very inferior servant. At Thun-Tsung, a place 132 miles beyond Chetang (by Kinthup's estimate), they were put up by a man in the village, and the lama at once started an intrigue with his host's wife. It was four months before the husband found this out. When he did, it took Kinthup twenty-five rupees and a great deal

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of difficulty to smooth things over. Eighty-four miles farther on they came to Gyala, and another twenty-five miles, a distance of 241 miles from Chetang, brought them to Pemakoi-chung.

This is the only place in Kinthup's narrative where he mentions falls on the Tsangpo. "The Tsangpo is two chains distant from the monastery, and about two miles off it falls over a cliff called Sinji-Chogyal, from a height of about 150 feet. There is a lake at the foot of the falls where rainbows are always observable." This was the statement Kinthup made to Lama Ugyen Gyatsho Rai Bahadur, who is responsible for the translation of the whole narrative.

The lama and Kinthup, passing back to Gyala, then continued their wanderings until the middle of May 1881, when the lama sold Kinthup as a slave to the *dzong-pön* of Tong-juk, and decamped altogether. Kinthup suspected trouble of some sort when they reached the place, and successfully hid two of the compasses, but his pistol and the other compass were taken from him. It was not until the 7th of March of the following year that Kinthup succeeded in escaping from Tong-juk. He had been betrayed, and he was a fugitive slave in the wildest part of Tibet; but he stuck to his orders to follow the Tsangpo, and eventually reached a place called Marpung, where there was a monastery with thirty priests and fifteen persons of the opposite sex (whom Kinthup describes as "nuns") living together. Here Kinthup found that a party of men sent by the *dzong-pön* had come into the village to arrest him. Kinthup bolted to the monastery and begged "the great Lama" to protect him. When

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his pursuers came to the monastery, the abbot gave them a letter to the *dzong-pön* offering him fifty rupees as the price of Kinthup's life. This the *dzong-pön* accepted, and until the beginning of 1884 Kinthup worked for the abbot, with two intervals of leave. On one of these he made his logs and hid them "in a deep cave where no human foot had yet trodden". On his second leave he went to Lhasa, where he wrote to the Survey Department reporting the loss of Government property in his charge, and stating when he would throw his five hundred marked logs into the river, fifty logs a day. Kinthup then went back to Marpung, and after nine months the abbot set him free. Kinthup said he "bowed thrice before the Great Lama, and said good-bye thankfully". From Marpung he went to Giling where his logs were hidden, and threw them into the Tsangpo. But no one ever found them. Harman was dead, and perhaps even if the watchers had been sent up, the logs may have stranded in the tangle of driftwood about flood-level up in the Hills, or come unnoticed through the rapids and down to the Bay of Bengal.

After throwing in his logs, Kinthup made his controversial journey south. Bentinck's party could compare Kinthup's report of the country from Singging to Olon with what they saw themselves. The conclusion at least some of them reached was that Kinthup had probably got no further than Jido, and that distant peaks, and the general direction of villages, were pointed out to him from there. The Abors told the exploration party that Jido was six marches above Singging.¹ If Kinthup were

¹ It was eventually found to be two.

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right, the Tibetan boundary was just under thirty miles by path above Singging and the Abor country immediately below it. The Survey of India, when they published Kinthup's narrative in 1911, called it a succinct account of the information he brought back. But the most succinct account would have mentioned the cannibals, had Kinthup seen any, and there was not a word about them.

I had not been far enough up the river to form any opinion on the reliability of Kinthup's report, but some of the criticism on it seemed unfair. Imagine seeing the number of villages Kinthup visited in three years, and instead of writing up a diary every evening, being obliged to rely on one's memory until one came out of the country; and then to be told one hasn't got some of the village names right. His comment "many beavers here" only proved him to be a poor zoologist, or more likely meant that the translator of his account into English did not know the word for marmot. This was too small a matter to make the judicious grieve, but whether his main facts were right or not had still to be settled. The members of the Survey of India stood by Kinthup; and his courage and determination in the face of almost hopeless odds had led his travels to be called "one of the romances of the Survey of India". Survey officers were considerably annoyed when someone on an important occasion, after dissecting Kinthup's statements, quoted this description and said that personally he was prepared to let it go at that.

The most distinguished members of the Royal Geographical Society were not unanimous, in 1911, as to the existence of the falls; and there still were

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people who thought that the Tsangpo and the Brahmaputra might not be the same river. It seemed to me they under-estimated its volume in holding that the Dihang rose on the south side of the Main Snowy Range.

The Abor expedition, and the explorations of 1911-12, had pushed the unknown country nearly a hundred miles to the north. At the same time the problems it held had been pushed northwards as well. It was now quite certain that the two Gurkha surveyors from the Survey of India, who got to Kebang in 1901, were wrong in saying that Gyala Sindang was then only ten marches away, and could be seen on a clear day. But the questions of the falls of the Brahmaputra and the course of the Tsangpo River had still to be answered.

CHAPTER IX

THE BRAHMAPUTRA SURVEY, 1912-13

Survey 1912-13—Village headmen and mental arithmetic—Medicine-men—Hunting for totems—Abor origins—The Dihang survey parties start—Abor geography—Visiting a village—Abor laws—Riga village, a night piece—Where the blue necklaces are made—The pig boys.

THE Dihang Valley had been rather densely populated with strangers during the Abor expedition. It now returned to its natural silence. When the regular units left the country, we stayed on with a force of 200 men, most of whom were stationed at Balek. It merely meant for us another and very strong outpost. But a big change had been made in the political administration of the Frontier. Until the Abor expedition of 1911, the supervision of the hill tribes cannot be said to have been organised; it had just grown. There was an assistant political officer at Sadiya, an officer of the Indian Police, who was more or less under the Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur District, to look after the Mishmis, Abors, and Daflas. West of the Subansiri, the local district officers had the hill tribes tacked on to their other duties. The Frontier was now given definite political officers to look after the different sections into which the border was divided. Dundas went to Sadiya as chief political officer, and an A.P.O. came up to

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Pasighat to take charge of the Abor section. These officers were all members of the Indian Police, and a better crowd could not be met anywhere. The general rule in India is that political officers are either members of the I.C.S. or are taken from the Indian Army, for permanent civil employ. Central India and the North-West Frontier are the provinces where military politicals are most numerous. The North-East Frontier may be said to have struck a mean between the civilian and military elements, by drawing on the Indian Police Service.

It was not long before the Government of India decided that the whole Dihang Valley should be mapped and brought into the triangulation of the Indian Survey, and that no better opportunity could ever be found than the following cold weather. The columns of General Bower's troops were fresh in the memories of the hill-men, and the camps were still more or less in being along that remarkable piece of engineering, the mule road from Pasighat to Yambung just below Kebang. Dundas was appointed political officer, survey parties were detailed, and 1200 military police were to form the escort troops. The Lakhimpur Battalion was to be sent about 400 men from other military police battalions, and our outposts relieved, to bring us up to the required strength for this duty. It was hoped that we really would find the falls this time. The expedition had taught the truculent Minyong clan a lesson, and Bentinck's party had found the people higher up the valley friendly enough.

Nothing could be done until about October in

the way of a forward movement, although Naga carriers had to be enlisted, rations brought up, and all sorts of minor arrangements made in the meantime. We pottered about, trying to speak Abor, and getting to know the people. Up to now, most of what I had learned of the hill-men had been among the Galongs, as far as the arts of peace were concerned. The friendly Pasi clan, the Minyongs whom we had been fighting and the Panggi, who were unspeakably dirty (even their women never seemed to wash), were the only Abors I had seen, and they didn't compare at all well in appearance with the Galongs further west; while their fields were wretchedly poor after the Siemen Valley, let alone the fertile country about Kombong. We were, of course, among the Abors who had dealings with the Plains. Nor do I think that the contact a primitive savage makes with the outside world does him much good. It is not the civilisation he comes across at all, but local traders who are out to exploit him. I never drank enough *apong* to have any effect on me, though various Abors of my acquaintance managed to do it, and I'm sure it never did them any harm; but this could not be said for the stuff the Abors might get in the Plains. There was one rather terrible difference between the foot-hill villages and those further up the country. Our doctor was perfectly certain that venereal disease was to be found only where it had been introduced from the Plains. Apart from that, the country was free from it.

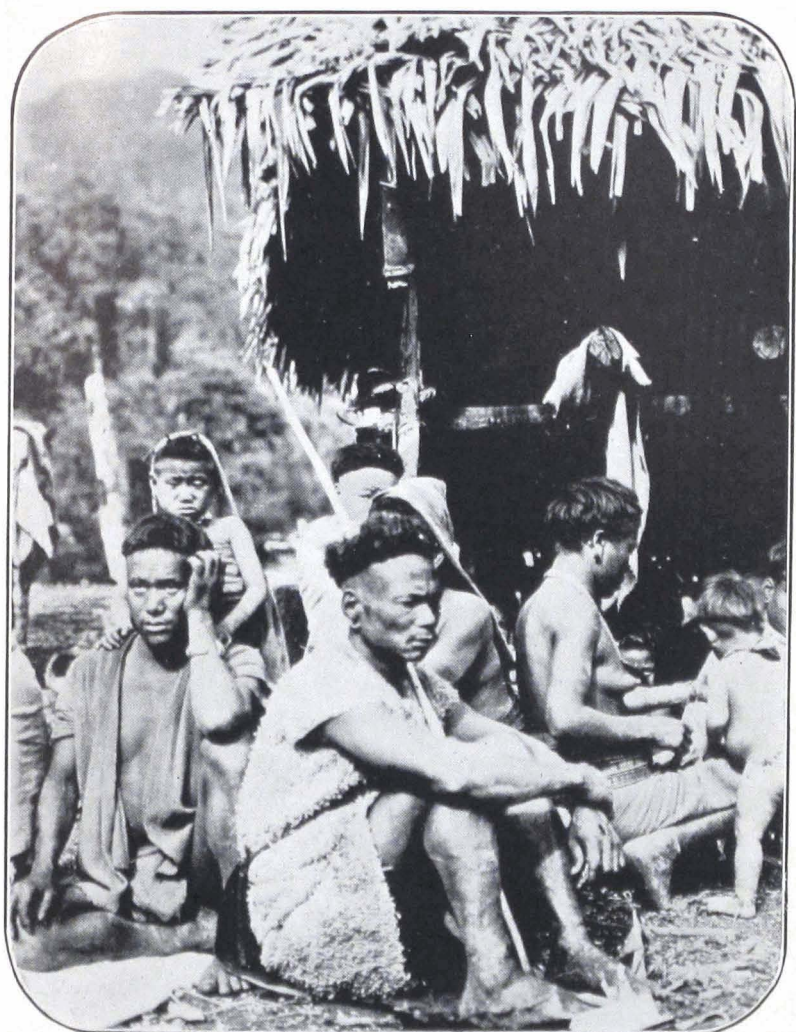
The man one sees most of in any hill community is naturally the headman of the village. He does all the talking, and takes one about. When we

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made our appearance after Williamson's murder, the Balek headmen were not long in coming down to see us, with presents of eggs. The eggs were done up in threes, or occasionally fives, one above the other, in basket-work. It seemed a kindly attention until I found out that this is the most ordinary (and cheapest) offering to evil spirits. But, fresh or doubtful, we were glad of those eggs. It was some time before they trusted us sufficiently to talk freely, or we could understand their Abor, or they ours.

Between the headmen of Ledum and Balek, I found out how a hill village governs itself. The tribes on the northern border are quite unlike the people in the Hills between Assam and Burma. There the Nagas and Lushais have, I believe, rather a complicated succession. The elder sons of the chief found a new village and the youngest succeeds his father. But the Abors do not hold with hereditary succession. The headman is elected by the shouts of his fellow villagers, men only. There are no votes for women in Aborland, nor for that matter is there any voting at all. Anything doubtful is settled by casting lots; everything else by shouting. There is nothing against there being more than one headman, but a village without one at all is looked on as hardly human. A community has even been known to get a headman from another place altogether. Kebang did this, as a matter of policy, after the massacre of Williamson's party, electing a man from Komsing.

I asked Dutem how it was that some villages had more than one headman. He gave me a slow smile, and said he didn't think I'd noticed it in



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his village. Nor had I. Dutem was a man of outstanding ability and character; he would have got to the top, if he had begun life with nothing at all, instead of the start given him by a well-to-do father. He said that when a man wanted to get a voice in village affairs, he began what we call "nursing a constituency" by giving a feast, with endless supplies of *apong* and any amount of *mithan* meat. This makes everybody talk about their host's wealth and generosity. About a year later he gives another feast, and this time someone is put up to make the right sort of speech for the occasion. This form of canvas is generally successful. After the election the new headman gives a third feast—if he has any cattle left. It was quite a usual thing to happen, but Dutem had never allowed his people to waste their substance that way in Ledum.

The headman's most important functions are to guide the people in matters of policy (often a long and noisy business), decide when it is time to clear another bit of forest for the fields, and then divide the land among the different families. He also entertains any strangers who may come into the village. If we took Balek villagers, as we sometimes did, to carry for us, one or more of the headmen used to come along, when the trip was over, to get the money. It was rather a lengthy affair. They would squat down and bring out bundles of short sticks from a satchel to work out any sum that meant counting more than forty. For small sums they hold up a hand and count on each finger in fours, with the thumb, top of the fingers, and then the three joints. A headman in

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the agonies of mental arithmetic would show twenty by spreading out his hands palms downwards, and lowering them towards his feet. No Abor has any real idea of the higher numbers. He can count all right up to ten, and then ten and one and so on. He gets very uncertain after forty, although there are Abor words for the higher numerals. There is actually a word for any number from 100 to 1000, that is to say, beyond the grasp of their mental arithmetic; and before I tumbled to it that this meant anything above a hundred, I was flabbergasted to hear that there were *li-yin-ko* (a thousand houses) in the next village.

If we bothered them with our numbers, they bothered us with theirs. No language ought to be allowed to vary its numerals according to the shape of the noun with which it is used. But the Abor puts different numerical particles with his numbers. If he is talking about houses, he says *ko(ng)*; so many bamboos or anything else with length have *so(ng)* in front of the number; flat things, a leaf for instance, have *bor*, and anything round like an egg has *pui*, and so on. To make it still more difficult, the numerical particles never seemed to be used with 7, 8, or 9; and the number comes after the noun it qualifies. This is quite enough, I think, of the Abor grammar. Galong is, of course, very like it, and the other dialects are probably just as bad.

A far more retiring individual than the headman is the *mirü*. We had been some time in the country before I knew of his existence; and he only emerged then because one day in Ledum I saw a man go by wearing a remarkable number of neck-

laces, and asked about him. A medicine-man was one of the people I really wanted to talk to, and I made up my mind to get to know as many more of his calling as possible. The *mirü* is by far the most interesting man in the village. He keeps their legends and history alive, makes nearly all the important sacrifices, takes omens, and arranges the dances when anyone is ill. No village would willingly be without at least one.

There are probably as many ways of taking omens in these Hills as there are, according to O. Henry, recipes for cooking rice in Charleston, S.C. But I did not come across more than about a dozen. Those used in hunting and war are appealed to by the parties going out; but the *mirü* takes charge of divination in sickness. The simplest way is with an egg. The *mirü* holds one in his hand while he calls to the spirit supposed to be responsible for the illness, "If you want an egg (or fowl or *mithan*) in sacrifice, give a sign in the egg". The *mirü* then breaks the shell, and either divines from the yolk or chews the egg in his mouth, spits it out, and sees whether the bits are odd or even. It struck me that a sort of spiritual auction takes place, going up in value from an egg to a *mithan*, according to the ability of the invalid to pay.

Without going so far as to say that the office is hereditary, it undoubtedly goes by favour and stays in the family. The Galongs, whose *mirüs* are all men, said that the person chosen had, of course, to be well up in all a *mirü* has to do, and know the stories of the tribe. No more need be said. The position is one of great prestige and influence, and

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the old Whig families are not the only people who have seen the advantages of nepotism.

Dutem told me that among the Minyongs the new *mirü* is generally the nearest male relation of the late medicine-man, if he has any aptitude for it. When I asked, rather casually, who was the nearest relative, Dutem said, "First his son, and then his sister's son". I got nothing about the *mirü* entail out of any other Abor, but Dutem was reliable in everything else he told me.

During the expedition of 1911-12, one or two journalists gave their imaginations rather a good run over the "totemism and fetish" of the hill tribes. Where there is totemism there are always rules tabooing certain things, and these naturally vary among different tribes. The creature from whom the tribe believe they are descended is ancestor and protector combined. It is their totem, and the tribe must not eat it. There certainly seemed to be as much *tabu* among the hill-men as you would find in the rules about privileges and side at a public school; only, of course, in quite a different way. Abor *tabu* deals with things to eat, and the people it is forbidden to marry. It is possible, of course, for a tribe to be completely *tabu*-ridden without having a totem to its name. But the question was well worth looking into during the wait before we could start up the Dihang. The first fact discovered, that it is thought unlucky if *apong* is brewed, or meat cooked, while the men of the household are away hunting or fighting, was not helpful. That might have been an ingenious form of economy, or just ordinary superstition.

But one day Joter told me something that looked much more promising. I was asking him about the sacrifices made to the Frog spirit by the Abors, to keep off madness, and was given details that were afterwards confirmed elsewhere. Then he said, "You know there is a group of people descended from Tatic Uyu". *Tatic* is "frog" and *uyu* "a spirit" in Abor. These people, according to Joter, were forbidden to eat the edible frog that other Abors greatly enjoy. They married, of course, out of their group of families. He added that both men and women of this sept always had "Tig" in front of their names. It sounded like our own Fitz or Mac, but was odd because Minyong women always seemed to have names beginning with "Ya". Both sexes, by the way, appear to have two names, a birth name, and the one they were usually called; for instance, Taring, the son of Derang, had a second name—Dering. I asked Joter for the names of any of the Frog people he happened to know, and he at once gave me several. One of these was Tigshor, the father of Tigior, who has a son Tigjir. Quite by chance I knew about Tigior, the son of Tigshor. He was a Riu man; and a little later I got hold of Madu, the headman of the village. He didn't like Joter much, so I suppressed that part of it, and got round to the Tig family. Madu knew all about them, but unfortunately he had never heard of any restrictions as to what they ate, nor anything at all about their descent from a frog. More than this, the marriage *tabus* that he and other Abors explained to me could have nothing to do with totemism; and their own names are

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meaningless. Madu was absolutely straight and always anxious to help one, but I have often wondered what gave Joter the idea. He wouldn't have understood a word of Frazer's *Golden Bough*, even if it had been read out to him in good Abor, and I had not given him the slightest hint. There must have been some shadowy basis on which to invent the story. Perhaps it came from the early home of the tribe, away in Central Asia, where people like the Yakuts still wander about with their Raven and other totems. But I never heard the Frog story anywhere else.

The nearest I got to it was in a Galong village, while we were still at Mishing. Yango persuaded someone to tell me this story. "At the beginning of time, the gods lived alone on the earth for seven generations; one in each generation, and then two in the eighth. They came in the following order, as the first seven are named by the *mirü* in his incantations." The only interesting ones are the first and the eighth. The list begins with Jimi, their nearest approach to an all-loving God. Jimi is believed to have a dual personality, male and female. The eighth generation was represented by Taki and Tani. The Dobang man went on: "Taki, like all the gods, ate flesh raw, but Tani burnt the flesh before he ate it". This, incidentally, is an exact description of how I've always seen the hill-men cook meat. "Now the time came when Tani wanted a wife, but there was no woman anywhere in the world. So he made a figure of leaves on a bamboo frame, as the likeness of the spirits are made to this day. From this image was born the leech. All it did was to fasten on to Tani and

suck his blood. And still Tani had no wife. He tried to find a mate among the creatures of the forest, but there was none whom he could marry, to give him children. He even tamed a bird to stay with him, but one day while the food was being got ready the bird fouled it. Tani got angry, and the bird flew away. So at last Tani went to the Sun, who gave him a woman to be his wife." *Tani*, the Abors told me, is their word for a human being; a man is *ami*—not unlike the Hindustani *admi*.

The only other way in which even extinct totemism could be traced was through place-names. One of the officers attached to the Battalion for duty with the escorts helped me to go through almost every name the Survey people eventually put on the map of the Abor country. But we found nothing helpful. The nearest approach was Locust Crossing (Komling). But no Abor would ever refuse a meal of such a delicacy.

Fetishism gave no trouble. There obviously was none. Metal charms are put in water that sick people drink, but there was no idea of any spirit living in the charm itself. That was the beginning and end of the matter.

The headman is certainly the most noticeable human being in and about an Abor village, but he isn't the first living creature to be seen or heard. You always hear the dogs barking before reaching a village, and out in the jungle a dog trotting along the path is a sure sign that his master isn't far behind him. Abor dogs are rather like smooth-haired fox terriers, with black heads. In other parts of the lower Hills the breed is much nearer

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the wild yellow dog that I have seen hunting in packs down in the Plains. The hill-man has many good points, and his care for animals, so far as I could judge, is one of them. I was told that it is the correct thing to offer a lick of salt to a *mithan* if you happen to meet one out, and salt is not particularly cheap or plentiful in these Hills. A dog is an Abor's constant companion, who goes with him out hunting and everywhere else, and is possibly carried by his master over a mountain stream to save him from getting wet. There is a saying in the Hills that after three years a dog becomes like a man, and they are very proud of their dogs' intelligence. The survey doctor's Irish terrier (who came exploring too) had some very good tricks, and showed these off to most appreciative audiences in the villages.

Before we started on the survey, I tried hard to find out where the Abors believed they originally came from, but without much success. Their folklore went back far enough, but, according to them, the Creation took place high up the Dihang Valley, some people saying rather vaguely that it was in the Bori country. But what all the hill tribes believe is that an enormous hollow rock came down from the sky and fell into the Dihang Valley. Out of the cave in this rock came the Rain, then all the different sorts of animals, and after them the first men, women, and children. The Stone was soft when it came down, although it is now hard rock, and I was told by the Pasis that the footprints of the animals and people, and even the tiny finger-marks of the children, could be seen on it. The Pasi people said I was bound to see the Stone. It was

just beyond Koku (Karko) on the right bank. This place turned out to be eighty miles in an air line from Balek, but owing to the turns of the river, its distance, even in an air line above the path, was about double. The Abors called the first man Nibo Yasi. He was a grandson of the Rain; and Children of the Rain wouldn't be a bad name for people who get about 800 inches of it in the year. Nibo Yasi was the first of all singers and dancers, which was as it should be in the ancestor of so cheery a people as the Abors. Nibo's younger brother invented cloth-weaving, and went away north to become the first Tibetan. The Abor people, so they said, gradually drifted down the valley to their present villages.

A far better pointer to the country they actually had come from came out in another story. Long ago, when spirits and men were living peacefully together, there was a great drought. Everyone suffered and got terribly thin and ill. But it was noticed that the rat was always very sleek and fat. So one day a man followed the rat, and tracked it to a big stone, in which it found water. Everybody came along to the stone and tried to break it, but the rock was too hard, and broke their tools instead. Then Debo-Kombu, one of the spirits, took his bow and shot an arrow at the stone, and out came a stream of water. That is why Debo-Kombu is worshipped in the sky to this day. In this country we call it Orion's Belt, but to the Abor it is Debo-Kombu's bow and arrow. The plains of Central Asia to the north of the Main Snowy Range are dry, and the Abors now live in what is probably the wettest country on earth.

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Places like Dupe ridge are exceptional, though once we had two marches over a ridge unpleasantly like it. On that occasion the rain came down so heavily that we actually collected enough water to make up what we needed in the water-proof sheets each of us carried. Quite a lot of water can be caught in a part of the world where 41 inches of rain have been measured in twenty-four hours.

The scheme for the survey was a simple one. I went up the right bank of the river with an advance party. At each stage where we camped we made a defensive post for the convoy carriers and a small garrison. When there were enough of these stages to make a convenient unit of command, I handed over the section to one of my more senior officers and gave him extra troops, in the shape of a striking force, to form headquarters at the top camp of his section. With this force he could deal with any local disturbance and provide escorts for special survey and exploration up the side valleys. All survey parties had escorts, of course. The whole thing was set up like a fishing-rod, with the S. & T. officer at the lower end sending supplies up the line with regularity and despatch. In control of all this, the political officer moved up the valley, interviewing the headmen as he came along. The villages gave no trouble anywhere, barring a hint of unpleasantness in one side valley, and there were none of those affairs usually described as "incidents".

There is one problem when going through new country that has nothing to do with the friendliness (or the reverse) of the inhabitants. As the afternoon wears on, one gets the daily gamble over

the camping-ground. Can we get a bit further on, or is this the last comparatively flat place, with a stream, for miles? When laying out a line of communications, it was necessary to make the stages suitable for men carrying about 60 lb. to and from the meeting-place between each stage. The stages had to be of reasonable length and, more often than not, the road had to be made easier. In the lower part of the valley, stretches of steep clay hill-side path had to be stepped. Up the Sipu Valley we had found that the Galongs improved their paths too by stepping them with logs, but the Abors did not bother to do it. Later on, the commanders of the sections made the paths still better and lessened the gradients by zigzags.

On about our last evening at the base we were all sitting in the old Expeditionary Force mess-hut, about twenty of us, having a spot of something before dinner, when suddenly from the transport camp there arose the loud and unmistakable sounds of an evening hymn. I hadn't realised that we had a band of Christians among the thousands of more or less naked Nagas. My limited experience of Nagas had given me a very different impression. Dundas, who had served for years in the Naga Hills, knew exactly how to manage them, and say what he thought in their different dialects; and we had no head-hunting this journey. Some of the Indian ranks of the Sapper surveyors from Southern India were Christians too. Long, spindle-shanked, dusky creatures they looked, but there was nowhere they couldn't go, or hardship in the snow that they would not cheerfully face.

The Abor expedition had concentrated in 1911

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before the rainy season was over, but from about the middle of November we had the prospect of nearly three fine months, with the inevitable rain that so much of India gets at Christmas. So we started off in delightful weather, bright sunny days, and not more than pleasantly cool starry nights. Up to now, it hadn't been possible to combine a clear view of the sky at night with a hill-man who knew anything about the stars. But I managed this in camp beyond Yambung, where the Siyom river runs noisily into the Dihang. This was where we came out after our visit to Kombong. In the list collected as we went along, I found the same names were nearly always used for the stars and constellations. Apart from Orion's Belt, the only name that seemed to mean anything was what they called the Milky Way. Literally translated, it meant the Meeting of the Rain and the Cold Weather. The Milky Way is straight overhead in the Abor country in September. The interesting part of Abor astronomy came out when I dug a little deeper. We have our nebular hypothesis, and they have their own explanation for the heavenly bodies. A very long time ago there were two Suns, brothers, and each of them shone for twelve hours, so there was day all the time. The heat apparently annoyed the Frog, who shot one of the Suns with an arrow and killed it. When the Sun died, it got cold, and now it shines as the Moon at night. The splinters made by the arrow became the stars. In revenge for this, the two Suns have shot their arrows at the earth ever since (sun-stroke and moon-stroke). To escape trouble, the Frog now hides in the water. While this accounted for the stars in the Abor

mind, it explained to me why a fowl's head is tied to a stick and put in the ground near running water as a sacrifice to the Frog spirit to prevent madness.

The people of these Hills are certain that the earth is a flat plate with mountains on it, and that the sun and moon dive under it in turn and come up the other side; while all round the earth flows the big main stream of the Si-ang (Brahmaputra River), like Oceanus. I never attempted to tell them anything different; it would have been quite futile, and they might have stopped telling things to a man so obviously weak in the head. His geography might be bad in general, but an Abor explaining how to get to a place would make a reliable sketch-map on the ground with a sharpened stick, or show the gradients of the path by breaking a twig into an irregular saw-like outline. The Daflas cut bits out of a leaf to show the ups and downs of a path. The hill-men say that a place is a day's journey off, or if it is nearer, point to where the sun will be in the sky when you get there. Two other ways of explaining distance that I never came across myself are said to be by the number of torches you would use by night, or the number of quids of tobacco a man would chew on the journey. Years are reckoned in several ways. One is to say "when So-and-so was headman", as a racing man might fix the year by a Derby winner, or a Roman used to say "in the Consulship of someone". Other ways are by the number of years since the village was founded, A.U.C. in fact, or from the time a certain set of fields were cleared.

It always seemed to me rather remarkable how

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the Hill myths dove-tailed into each other, even when I seemed to have got hold of two contradictory stories. I mean in this way. The legend might be told with variations, but all the hill tribes appeared to believe the story of the Stone of Creation in the Dihang Valley. From what they knew of their past history, they came south, east, and west from the river, on the south side of the Main Snowy Range. They had always lived, by their own showing, more or less in the mountains where they are now. Yet I came across a popular story, telling how the tribesmen won the rich, fertile plains from the gods, who then had to go and live in the high country above. Put shortly, spirits and men long ago lived together on a fine plain, where everyone had enough to eat all the year round. One day the spirits came and said all the land was theirs. The men disputed this, and finally it was agreed that the question should be decided by a sign. The plain should belong to the party, spirits or men, who could cook a stone. The spirits tried first, putting clay round the stones, and then baking them in the fire. They had no luck; the stones remained stones still. Then the spirits gave up, and the men had a try. One of the men, who must have been the originator of Maskelyne & Cook, managed to hide an egg in the clay, without the spirits noticing it, and roasted it in the fire. In this way, the tribesmen won the plain to live in themselves. No country in the world is less like a fine plain than the land they live in, even allowing for an occasional wide valley here and there.

The explanation came a long time after I first

heard this story, and in another village. The topic of conversation was the difficulty of farming on some unusually steep hill-side, and I asked why on earth they lived in such country. "Oh," said the Abor, "it wasn't always like this. Long ago it was a flat plain with the Si-ang running through the middle of it. But one day it began to rain very hard indeed, and wouldn't leave off; and the Si-ang River kept on rising till it covered all the country, and the Abors and animals that were not drowned drifted about on anything that would float. At last it stopped raining, the water drained away, and there was dry land again. But the water had gone so quickly that the fish from the river were all stranded on the dry ground. Then the great good Spirit took the land on either side of the river in his two hands, and pulled it up as you might pick up a rug lying on the ground. In this way he made the high mountains on either side of the river, to shut it in for all time, so that there could never be another flood like it. When the land was made steep, the fish all fell back again into the water, and came to life again."

As we got into the heart of the Abor country, the valley widened, the spurs became easier, and we walked across more open country and through less jungle. The second rice crop had been cut, and the millet was just ripening in the fields. Until we came to Riga, we were not in new country. Bentinck's party had come up the right bank to Yekshing above the Siyom River, and then crossed the Dihang in rafts. From the far bank, they could see the country we were going through rather more easily than we could see it ourselves. They

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crossed again to our bank on rafts provided by Madu of Riu, and saw the big village of Riga; while Trenchard, who was now with us as chief surveying officer, climbed Arte Hill to map the country. Arte is about 8780 feet high, and he found the conditions at the top to be thick jungle, impenetrable mist, and three feet of snow. So they all returned to the other bank, and went on towards Singging. Bentinck had come down from Riga by the right bank, on his way back to the Plains; and the survey party climbed a 10,000-foot peak west of Arte, only to find ten feet of snow on the top, and the summit blanketed with thick cloud.

We were now getting among the villages where everything that could not be made locally was Tibetan stuff, brought down by traders. Behind us was the belt of country where trade comes almost equally from north and south. Along the foot-hills, of course, the Abors get all they need to buy from shopkeepers in the Plains.

The political officer wished to visit a village on the left bank, and some of us crossed the river with him, in a Berthon boat, with the escort on rafts. During the expedition, formal calls had been waived in favour of surprise visits. But a visit of ceremony arranged with due notice is quite a function. The procedure never varies, and the first visit of the kind I made was the same as the last.

We went along the usual jungle path to the turn up to the village, and I cannot remember one that wasn't on a spur. As we went up, we noticed a tree bristling with arrows, and our guide told us that at least one man in every hunting party shoots an arrow at the branches for luck. Nearer the village,

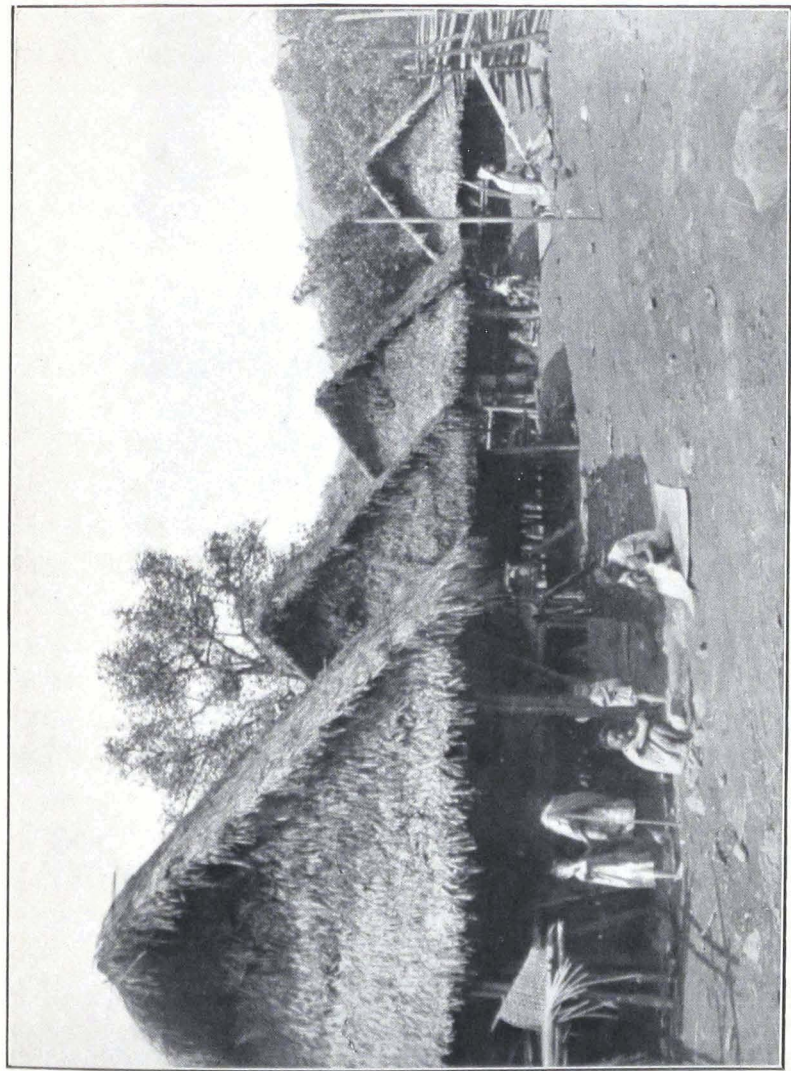
we came to the usual closely set rows of pointed stakes, on which the bag is laid out when the party come home again. As we climbed up the hill we heard the dogs beginning to bark, and presently, round a corner, we came to what looked like a triumphal arch made of freshly cut branches of plantain stalks. As we filed through the archway, we saw there were bits of meat and an old fowl stuck about it, and it dawned on us that the *mirü*, and not the entertainment committee, had put the thing up. Far from being the Abor equivalent to "Welcome", the idea was to keep out the spirits of disease we were sure to bring in with us.

Just beyond the arch, a group of Abors were waiting to receive us. A village community of any size is made up of headmen, *mirü*, craftsmen in metal and pottery, the groups of families, the young men, and the slaves. It is not always easy to spot the slaves. They "live in", although, of course, they have to marry among themselves. I remember in one village the man who wore most brass bracelets and did practically all the talking, turned out eventually to be a slave. But on this visit the two prominent people were the chief headman, who came forward with two sets of eggs, and an old woman who shuffled up with a large gourd under her arm, and a ladle, made of a small round gourd and a stick, in her hand. The large gourd was full of a dirty grey liquid. The headman dipped the ladle into the gourd, had a drink himself, refilled the ladle and offered it to me, murmuring the word *apong*. The stuff didn't look inviting, and it actually was perfectly repulsive; which is only what one would expect of a drink fermented from millet

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seed, strained through charcoal in a filthy basket, and then administered warm. And yet I have had *apong* clear, yellow, and cool, that tasted on a hot day after a stiff climb like a good light hock. I got some of that brew, bottled it, and sent it down the line to await me at Dibrugarh. But, like the golden wine one drinks in the Alban Hills, it couldn't stand a journey. To get back to the inferior vintage, when I had drunk my *apong*, and the headman had turned the ladle over to see there were no heel-taps, we had drinks all round. Not until the *apong* was finished were we taken into the village, past the granaries stuck on poles and looking like thatched pigeon-houses, and under the big jack-fruit trees. The Abors are very fond of growing jack fruit in and about the village, and fence it off carefully from cattle. It is the first thing they plant when they start a new village. But the inside of the large thick-skinned apple seemed to me like chewing soft wet wood.

The most noticeable building in all Abor villages is the *moshap*, where the young men live, and which is used as the village hall. It always has a large number of doors—unlike an ordinary house, which only has two, the front and back doors. Some villages also have a girls' dormitory, called the *rasheng*, where a good deal of the courting goes on that is strictly forbidden in the *moshap*. We were taken past the *moshap* and the little garden in the middle of the village, where maize, sugar cane, and opium poppies were growing, and shown the water supply. This is laid on, in bamboo pipes, from the nearest spring, which may be some distance off. The Abor is rather particular about his water. I



S. W. Kemp

SCENE IN ABOR VILLAGE

noticed that the burial-grounds are made below the village. Another precaution against contamination of the water is also effective. There is a passage running the length of the house over the pig-sties, with latrine seats fixed in it, and this solves the question of sanitation.

Outside the houses, women were busy cleaning and spinning cotton, or weaving, and several were making mats with the flat leaves of the screw-pine. The village smith came out, extremely grimy, from his house where he was at work, to pass the time of day. There were quite a number of old men sitting about in their fluffy cotton coats, smoking and grumbling, as they do in other places.

Before we left the village, we were taken up to an open space above it, and shown where they hold their ordeals. This is not at all an uncommon way for the Abors to settle a case. Of course I never saw one. In fact, without actually being held *in camera*, if that can be said of the open air, it is not at all necessary for the village to turn up for it in force. But the accuser must be there. The defendant is brought up to a fire on which water is boiling in a big section of bamboo. In the water is an egg. The defendant is given a leaf screen to shield his face, and told to get the egg out of the water into his hand. If his hand is scalded, he is declared guilty.

The ordinary way an Abor declares that he is speaking the truth is to point to the sky and stamp on the ground, to call both elements to witness. To eat some earth, point to the sun and say, "May the earth swallow me and the sun burn me if I lie", is made the most binding oath of all, by

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finishing up with a hand on a *mithan's* horn and adding, "May this horn pierce me if I am false". Only a slave can be put to death judicially. The punishment for murder is a fine in cattle, and for cattle-thieving, what looked to me like imprisonment with hard labour. I saw a man in Kombong who had a log fastened to his ankle, and was told he was a cattle thief from elsewhere serving his sentence. It was likely to last until his relatives paid up. Adultery is very rare. The punishment—slavery; and for a slave intriguing with a free woman it could be death. Once married, the hillmen live remarkably straight lives, generally with one wife; for, as someone said to me, "Who can possibly afford two of them?" There is a word in Abor for "second wife", but no word for a third one.

The law of inheritance is simple, so far as I could gather. The eldest son gets two-thirds of everything, the youngest one-third, and the others nothing. They live upon the eldest. This reminded me of the old Scots saying that the elder son got the property and the younger son went to Edinburgh, became a W.S., and what was in those days rather significantly called "doer" to his brother. The Abor widow is taken over by the eldest son, and becomes, as a rule, a drudge in the family.

I did not learn all this, or anything like it, in the first village I visited, and it meant questioning a good many Abors before I felt at all sure of the facts. But I learnt one thing, for which I wanted no corroboration, as we were leaving the village. The headman and some of the young men had seen us almost to the archway. I had made my little bow

to our hosts and was going down the path, when suddenly the Abors began pelting us with plantain stalks. The very influential headman from another village who had taken us up, sprang to me and explained that it was quite all right and entirely usual. No harm was meant to us, but the villagers had to drive out any evil spirits who might have got in when we came up through the archway. It was, in fact, the way they dealt with devil gate-crashers.

Riga was a large village, and although apparently entirely Minyong, had fought the Kebang people three generations earlier. Kebang was said to have migrated from Riu sufficiently far back to have been a powerful village a hundred years ago. It seemed as well to have a strongish garrison and the headquarters of a section at Riga, so I pushed on ahead of the main party, to make a good camp, arriving at Riga at the beginning of January 1913. Riga stood on a spur well back from the river, with about fifteen square miles of fields round it, and we made our camp on another spur, with a valley between us and the village. The second night we were there, the whole of Riga suddenly lit up with little points of light, and a crowd of people with torches came down the spur towards the stream below. The shouts in the darkness, and the twinkling lights, clustering and separating on the hill-side, made a most striking scene. The Riga people told me next day that a man had been crushed under a tree they were felling to make a bridge over the stream; and that the village had come out to drive away the evil spirits who had killed him. This attack on the spirits was a risky

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business. Everybody had sticks, and threw earth and ashes into the air to protect themselves. Then the dead man was taken down to the water's edge and buried. The Abors pronounce their word for spirit "oo-you", and you can almost hear the beating of his wings.

One of the Riga men, when talking about the accident afterwards, asked me if I knew why there was such a thing as death, and told me the following story. Long ago, the sun hid under the earth. He wouldn't come up, and refused to shine. Everyone got very frightened, because it was always dark. So a party of men went off to the edge of the world and asked the sun to come up again. But he was angry (why he was angry was another, and rather involved, story) and he would not rise. There was a bird with a long tail perching on the sun as he lay sulking, and the bird began talking to the men. The sun called out, "Who is talking?" and rose to see. He saw the men sitting round on the ground, and they at once tried hard to get him to shine as he used to do. The sun thought for a little, and then he said, "Give me a daughter of the spirits to eat, and I will shine as I used to do". The men went off wondering how they could do this; but the bat came after them and said, "It is one of your own daughters the sun really wants". So the men cast lots, and took one of their daughters and gave her to the sun, who ate her up. Then he arose, and has given light and warmth ever since. But from that day death came into the world to destroy the Abors, for before that they, like the gods, were immortal.

Going up the valley, necklaces of square blue

porcelain beads became more and more common. So I got one, by exchange, as we were among villages where an Abor would take a rupee in his hand, turn it over, and ask what it was. Many of the beads were cut to look rather like the Tibetan wheel of life, and I was told that Bori traders brought them down from Tibet. The version given by the Tibetan carriers at Pasighat had been a little different. They said that the pilgrims handed them over to the Loteus (Abors) to avoid unpleasantness. When I got back to civilisation, an expert in Calcutta had a look at it, and said: "Ah, yes. Old necklaces of this type are made of chips of good Chinese porcelain. But the newer beads are made in Birmingham and Germany, exported to India, and get to Lhasa through Darjeeling. These look like German beads to me." He told me that the big grey pebble necklaces the Nagas wear (and precious little else) are also made in Germany, and I was thankful I hadn't collected one of them as well.

The next village up-river was Pankang, the last of the Minyong settlements. This place presented us with the oddest sight of the whole trip. The Pankang pigs were suffering from swine fever, and apparently the village had decided to take appropriate action the day we got there. We arrived to find a procession of about half a dozen young men going through the village streets. The three lads in front each held a stick in his hand, to which were tied an egg, a little bag of millet seed, and some ginger, and all three were solemnly grunting and squeaking like a whole herd of swine. Behind them were the usual village criers.

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The procession stopped beside every house, went to the pig trough and, grunting and squeaking if possible louder than ever, for they were earnest young men and very proud of the part they had been given, ate some ginger and rice, and drank some *apong* they found there. Then they disappeared indoors, had (so I was told) some more refreshment, and then came out and went on to the next house. They don't stay long at each, because every house has to be visited before night-fall. At the end of the day, the pig boys would go down to a stream below the village, and throw their sticks into it. The next three days would be spent in what they call *agam*, a sort of fast, when the fields are deserted, and no one may husk rice.

I saw another bit of suggestive magic elsewhere, when the villagers were putting up big solid cattle fences. Abor fences, by the way, are built to keep their cattle out of the fields, not in them. The people were making far more *mithan* ropes than they could ever hope to use, to encourage their herds to increase. The whole festival takes six days, with *agam* as before. Should a woman go into the fields during the *agam*, it is believed that all the household cattle will die. On the seventh day the calves are marked, by cutting patterns in their ears. Each sept of a clan has a different mark—round hole, oblong, and so on in every combination. I must have drawn forty of them in my notebook.

We were still some way from Singging, but at least we were walking where no white man had ever walked before.

CHAPTER X

HILL-MEN RUMOURS AND CANNIBALS

Beyops—Abor engagement rings—The family fireside—The origin of sacrifices—Tattooing—The Stone of Creation—An Abor grave—Up a hill beyond Singging—"The army of yellow snakes"—The cannibals.

THE Karko Abors had much fairer skins than the Minyongs, and they looked healthy and contented. Their country was higher, but it was still open; cultivation was good, and there were no more opium poppies. The people pronounced their words rather differently, and they used a few new expressions. But they were as much Abors as the Pasis in Balek. The men wore the usual short coat, but it was made of Tibetan cloth, and they did not seem to fancy blue bead necklaces, for they wore bits of brass, like small piping, strung round their necks.

Practically every Abor village has some sort of defences in the way of obstacles and a defensible gate, sometimes even a stout log and stone stockade; but these works are never very long. Karko had the strongest village defences I ever saw—three lines of ditch and wall extending along the whole of the south side. The Minyongs were evidently highly respected, and it was equally obvious that no Abor had any idea of turning a position.

Karko is one of the great places for rather an

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interesting industry, the *beyop*. Down south, if an Abor girl passes you, there is a slight clanking sound very often, but one does not see the *beyop* girdle that causes it; though a child may go about with a couple as her entire costume. The *beyop* is an article of female attire made of metal plates slung on string and worn as a girdle until the first child is born. The Minyong fashion is seven, eight, or even nine discs worn under the skirt. The number of discs worn on the girdle get fewer up the valley. At Karko and beyond (where two were considered sufficient) girls and young women were to be seen strolling about in a *beyop*, and nothing else. There is rather a Rabelaisian Abor story, by the way, accounting for the number of discs on the girdles. When we saw Karko again, the rainy season was in full flood, and the small biting *damdim* flies were rampant. To keep them away, the women made rather an ingenious addition to their underwear, in the shape of a small basket hanging from their waists under their skirts (when they wore them) filled with smouldering rice husks. This they said kept the *damdims* away. We had found at Pasighat that smoking was no use, and just smacked at the flies when they settled. The Abor men did the same.

From our point of view an Abor girl has rather a thin time, but I doubt if they think so; and for the matter of that, I don't see myself going along singing choruses for the joy of life if I were an Abor man. A woman cannot inherit property, but she can marry whom she likes, even if her young man has to buy her from her father. Before Abor young people settle down, they certainly are a bit

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promiscuous in their own family as well as other people's. This to them is no offence. As a wife it would be unutterable, and punished in an unprintable way.

What got me on the subject of "walking out" and marriage was noticing an oval cane loop hanging at a girl's neck. That, I was told, had been given to her by the man she intended to marry. Sometimes the couple break a bead, and each keep half, instead of the girl wearing an engagement ring. A boy and girl may keep company for five years before they settle down, which they cannot do until the suitor has cashed up the price demanded, in squirrel skins, *dankis*, cattle, and by working in his future father-in-law's fields. The engagement can be broken off—by the man—without any sort of action for breach, whatever the circumstances; but when a girl has agreed to marry she has to stick to it. After he is married, the bridegroom is under the obligation to find a wife from among his own people for a member of his bride's family. This arrangement, in a country where women are fewer than men, is better than the group of men to one wife that may be seen in other Hill countries. When the couple settle down as man and wife, they go into a house that has been built for them by the villagers—quite a nice wedding present; and if the bridegroom can afford it he gives a house-warming.

Before a child is born, a number of things are forbidden to the future mother. If she drinks water from the leaves of the wild potato, the child will have bad eyesight; if she eats Doric pheasant, it will be born spotted; if she kills a snake or a frog, her baby will have a darting, snake-like tongue or

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crooked arms and legs. There are quite a number of these regulations, and a woman may never eat the head of a creature at any time. Birth customs are most complicated, but they look better buried in the pages of an anthropological work that nobody ever reads than they would here.

The family affection in an Abor home greatly struck me. The father, if he is out on the hill or in the village, always seemed ready to mind the baby, and loved doing it; and of course small girls would be seen ordering their younger brothers and sisters about in the usual manner. When a boy is nine or ten, his father begins to tell him some of the stories it gave me such an interest to collect. Everything is repeated and repeated until the boy is word-perfect.

Children are pretty well the same all the world over in the way they play. Little Abor boys play at soldiers with toy swords and shields, and have the regular set-to's that their grown-up relations seem rather anxious to avoid. The boys also have peashooters, with berries for peas. And when there is sickness in the village, the children play at doctors with enormous zest. They make little *merangs* and bamboo figures like the big ones that the grown-up people use. A *merang* is a flat copper disc with a short handle, like the Roman specula. It is a much prized heirloom, which some Abors told me fell from the sky, and others more sensibly believe was brought from a far country by their remote ancestors. The family *merang* is dug up from its hiding-place for use at funerals.

I like to think of an Abor family round the hearth-stone in the evening, with the head of the

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household on his chunk of wood in his usual place nearest the door. His wife has put away her loom for the night, and the fire-light flickers on the faces of the children, the hunting trophies on the bamboo walls, and the hanging shelf where everything is kept. The entire family are smoking. As likely as not the children are listening to a story told them by their father. The Abors generally know a number of what Kipling calls "Just-so Stories", such as "Why the Monkeys have black faces and no clothes", and "How the Elephant came to look like an Elephant". This one interested me particularly, because there are no elephants in the country to-day. They are fairly common in exactly the same sort of hills on the western side of the Subansiri, and are plentiful in the Mishmi country and south of the Lohit river. Some elephants' teeth were dug up at Rotung in 1912; I saw a couple of wild elephants when first we went to Pasighat, and W. C. Morris, one of the most experienced elephant-catchers in Assam, told me that he had only twice seen a herd of elephants, or even a trace of any, between the Dibang and the Subansiri.

The elephant story runs something like this. There was once a stupid young elephant who so annoyed his mother that one day she hit him in the face with an axe. She tried all she could to get it out, but it stuck there and she had to leave it. The axe didn't seem to hurt the elephant, and after a time the handle grew and grew until it became the trunk he now finds so handy. But the young elephant remained as stupid and clumsy as ever, and once when they were winnowing rice

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together, Mother Elephant picked up the two winnowing fans, one in each hand, and smacked him hard over the head with them, so hard that they stuck there too, and became the great flapping ears he has had ever since. But it didn't seem to improve the young elephant's character much, and when he had been unusually provoking his mother threw the tongs at him. They stuck also, and presently became his tusks. By this time the elephant was absolutely fed-up, and went away to live by himself. And he walked so far that his feet and what had been his hands (until he found he had to walk on all fours) grew simply enormous, and podgy—like wooden rice pounders. Then the Abor father would wind up with, "Now if you are all very good and not stupid and clumsy like that young elephant, I'll take you some day to see the enormous marks of the elephant's enormous feet".

If a girl or woman gets ill, she is supposed to have been attacked by Nipong, the evil spirit of hunters and women. Nipong lives in the wild plantain trees in the forest, and feeds on the big stinging nettles that grow there, which prevents women from gathering these nettles in deserted fields for food. As a matter of fact, plantain tops and nettles were our chief vegetables in the Abor country, the nettles coming in as spinach. I've loathed spinach ever since. The ceremonies when a woman is ill are rather long, but the main feature is taking a black hen into the forest, tying threads of different colours and a bit of *koi* leaf to its legs, and then letting it go at the place where they are making the inevitable sacrifice. As the fowl is set free, the *mirii* asks Nipong to cure the sick person.

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If the hen does not come back to the village, the omens are favourable. The interesting thing about this ceremony is to look up Leviticus xiv. verses 7 and 52 (verse 53 in the Douay Version).

Sacrifices play so great a part in the Hill religion that I asked the Abors why they killed their animals in this way. The explanation was always the same. Sacrificing animals started from the time when men and spirits no longer lived together. It was when the spirits were in the hills and the men down in the plain below that the spirits first seized a man and made a prisoner of him. The men went up and wanted to ransom him, offering the spirits fowls, pigs, and cattle to let him go. The spirits agreed, and the men left the live stock, with the promise that the prisoner would be released that evening. But instead of the man coming back, all the animals that had been left on the mountain came wandering into the village. The men went up again to see the spirits, and again the same thing happened. When the party went up for the third time, the spirits were very angry and said the men were trying to cheat them. The men answered: "Twice we have given what you asked, and twice you have driven them back to us and kept our brother". The spirits said: "How can we set the man free? Your animals go straight home again." Then one of the men said: "If we give you living things, they certainly come back to us; so we will kill them, and their spirits will stay with you". So the first sacrifices were made; and the spirits of animals have been offered ever since.

From Balek up to Karko tattooing is in fashion—a dwindling fashion in the villages along the

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foot-hills, but it is still popular higher up the country. Both sexes adorn themselves with in-artistic designs, but this at any rate is better than gashing themselves with knives like African and other savages. Originally the Abors are said to have had distinctive patterns for the different clans, but that custom went out long ago. Straight lines, sometimes crossing each other, are about all the tattoo artist can rise to for a man; and a circle round the mouth, and what looks like the Egyptian hieroglyph for the Nile on the calf of the leg, for a woman. Two designs frequently seen on a tattooed face looked like Tibetan symbols. One of these is an "X", and Father Krick, who visited Membu in 1854, considered the "X" and the chevron mark to be of Christian origin, possibly from the days of the Franciscan missions in Central Asia.

The Abors have no special tattooist, but there is usually someone in the village who can do all that is required. Tattooing is a protracted business of sittings on five days for three years in succession. A person is allowed no *apong* while being tattooed, and is kept on a diet of rice and fish. The tattooist uses charcoal powder, which leaves a permanent blue mark, and puts it in with a thorn left on the end of a cane, tapping it with a stick. Abors pay their artists in rice, and girls give him a day's work in his field. Taking the purchasing power of a four-anna piece in Balek with the present rate of exchange for the rupee, a sitting works out at fourpence halfpenny.

On a level with Karko, but away up the Yamne river to the east, there is a small group of very

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remarkable people. Two parties went to see them, and I wished I had been with them, but a trip to an occasional village on the opposite bank of the Dihang was the most I was able to do. These people, who were called Milang, used to live in three villages, but two had been completely swallowed up by the Padam and Panggi Abors around them. Only the isolated village of Modi has held out like a little island, speaking a language quite unlike Abor. Up the Dihang Valley I came across a Padam man with relations in Milang, who could speak the language, and I got as many words out of him as was possible in one day. It was interesting and unsatisfactory. The words I listed were said, by people who knew, to be more like Tibetan and Bhotian than anything else. But where the Milang people originally came from it was impossible to find out. There is another colony of the same kind in the Aka country; and away on the North-West Frontier is the town of Kani-guram, where the people speak a language which certainly isn't Pushtu, and say they are descended from the Greeks of Alexander's army. It is queer that there should be these outliers of almost extinct peoples dotted along the border.

Before we moved on from Karko, I asked about the Stone of Creation, as the Pasis had said it was in this neighbourhood. The Karko Abors knew all about it; had the story of creation pat, and said that I had only to keep on up the Dihang Valley and I'd find it on my left. I couldn't miss it. The carriers had told us in Pasighat of a place of pilgrimage, where the imprint of a mule's hoof is shown on a rock, and one reads of other rock prints

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through Tibet. As we were getting up towards the country where these things are to be seen, I left Karko full of hope and hot on the trail. To cut the story of my incessant enquiries short, as we went north the Stone moved up in front of me, till we came to a large slab close to the Dihang with an inscription cut on it. The characters were Tibetan, and it dawned upon me later that the stone may have been the Pemako district boundary pillar. But it wasn't the stone I wanted to find. There was an Abor village near by, and I asked them if they knew anything at all about a Stone of Creation in the country, as I seemed to have lost it. They said: "Oh, yes. But if you have come up-river, you passed it down below." And there, so far as I am concerned, the matter rests. But this has taken me some way ahead of the point of the advanced guard.

After leaving Karko village, the path on our side of the river became less easy. But the road was still what one expected to find. The spurs all naturally ran towards the river, so these had always to be crossed, not walked along. It was just one spur after another. Sometimes one was admiring the view (in other words, having a breather) two or three thousand feet above the river, and sometimes the party might be down not far from the water's edge; and this made up the day's march. The going looked better on the other bank, about the big village of Simong—the chief place of the Simong Abor clan. It was said to be exceedingly powerful, and its people acted as middlemen for trade between Tibet and the Abors lower down, and let no one through from the north.

We found the Siring river to be the boundary

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between the Karko and Bomo-Janbo clans, and we crossed it by quite the best cane bridge in the whole country. It was 180 feet long, absolutely taut, and it had been thoughtfully provided with a closely woven cane foot-way. Thirty feet below it the Siring foamed down in rapids to the Dihang; and the junction was an excellent place for mahseer and boka. The main body, with the political officer, were now usually with the advance party, and never more than one march behind. Bentinck's party had been told that the path on the right bank was very bad about here, and it certainly was no speedway. The ledge of path might break off at any moment on a rock-face and offer one the doubtful facilities of a gallery. This misleading word means lengths of wood that one can only hope are not rotten, tied with fibre to bits of rock and hanging over a river roaring about two thousand feet below. A hand rope made of creepers (when provided) was most comforting. At other times we might be scrambling over rocks at the foot of a bluff and close to the water's edge. It was not possible to overload one's rucksack with kit, but I stuck to two books, my Shakespeare and Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*, which is a perfect handbook on the ways of a primitive people. While we were going through this rather difficult country I was reading *King Lear*, and after one march I happened to say that if any cliffs beetled anywhere, we had certainly been over them that morning. I never heard the last of this expression, and everybody beetled at a bad place afterwards.

The Bomdo people came out to meet us in their bowler hats and coats of remarkably nice dark blue

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serge. I got a couple of them on the way back. Their coats, and the fact that they do not tattoo, were the only differences between them and the people further south. The Bomo-Janbo are a clan of Angong Abors, and Bomdo, and Janbo which is about twelve miles up-river, are the oldest villages. The clan seems to have come down the Sirapating river originally, and spread north and south in the main valley. What they told me was the nearest indication I found that the Abors had come over the Main Snowy Range from Central Asia.

Just below the village, a cane bridge over the Dihang made it possible for friends from Simong to come across for a chat. Oddly enough, the people who came over while we were there were not Abors going to Bomdo, but one of the higher officials from the Po Province to the east, to see Dundas. It was all very formal, with the respective staffs in semicircles, and that camp scene oddly enough flashed into my mind as some of us stood round the head of the big marble staircase in the War Office while Lord Kitchener received Marshal Joffre. The governor sat down, in his brocaded coat and beautiful boots, and suddenly said (at least so it was passed on to me), "I do not think much of your rifles". There was no reason why he should have been struck with a Martini-Henry. I picked up a couple of clips of Mauser ammunition further up-country. The governor was unspeakably bored at the prospect of another year in such barbarous country. If he meant the spot on which he was fluttering his fan like Rutland Barrington as Yen-How, he ought not, I imagined, to have been within range of it.

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Hill villages on this frontier are all much the same, however unlike may be the languages spoken inside them. A Mishmi house may be three hundred feet long, an Abor house not more than thirty, and the Galong houses are sometimes perched nearly eighteen feet up in the air. But as a rule there is nothing striking in a whole succession of new villages. Outside Janbo, however, I came across something beyond the ordinary. The Abors bury their dead, and this was the hut built over the grave of a dead Janbo headman. There are generally one or two trophies to be seen at any burial-place, but close to this grave the Abors had put up a screen eight feet high and eighteen feet long, and covered it with wild boar and monkey skulls, the heads of *mithan* and *takin*, and a whole armoury of weapons, swords, knives, bows, arrows in their cases, a helmet, and a bearskin rucksack. It made a most impressive memorial, but the most interesting things in the whole display were two gourds, with three holes cut in them, unmistakably representing heads. One of the Janbo men told me that they were there because the headman had killed two Simong men in a fight. I am certain that head-hunting is quite unknown among these tribes, and the display was, to the Janbo chief, what "three bears' heads, coupé" are to a great Scottish family.

Abors are most careful to follow a lengthy ritual at a burial. The grave is lined with leaves and branches and the body placed in a particular position on flooring, with a necklace and a brass pot beside it. Then planks are put in to make a sort of penthouse, and the grave filled up with earth.

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The hut is built, and his family bring *apong* and rice, fresh every day for nearly a week, and then leave rice there for a year. The dead man's people light a fire near the hut, and keep it going for any time up to fifty-five weeks; and for a child three months. While the fire is burning the hut is kept in good order. The man or woman's immediate family abstain from meat and certain vegetables for ten days' *agam*. The heir has to give a ceremonial meal to the chief mourners, when some animal is killed and eaten, and the spirit of the *mithan* or pig is told to go to the dead man.

Abors not only believe firmly in a future life for human beings, but they take it absolutely for granted that a man can take his most treasured belongings with him to the spirit world, to use as he did on earth. Other races from Magdalenian Man to the Red Indians have held this too, but this belief of theirs interested me more than anything else in the whole country. Every living thing that dies goes to some spirit, and human souls are believed to go from one spirit to another, but whether they are supposed to come in the end to the protection of the great Spirit of Good I never discovered. One thing is quite certain—there is no belief in reincarnation; animism does not go that way.

The Dihang river, just above Janbo, succeeds in flowing to every point of the compass, west, east, south, and north, all within a direct air line of under eight miles; and it performs this feat between what are very nearly sheer precipices, generally from two to three thousand feet high. At the far end of this we crossed the Sirapating

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river, and then came level with Singging, on the opposite bank. Once we had left the Karko country, open cultivated spurs rapidly got fewer, and finally disappeared. Not even an Abor, driven by semi-starvation, can make a field out of forest canted almost straight up and down. Where a comparatively gentle slope could be found, the Angongs cleared it and scratched up something in the way of cultivation. It is impossible to call rice their staple food, for the Angong Abors live for about half the year on anything they can get. There is a sort of tree fern growing in the country with a red pith, which they pound up and strain a number of times in water. This turns it into meal of a very poor kind that is made into bread. Apart from that, they are like the luckless inmates of King's Bench Prison in the days of the Tudors, and "burnish bouns like doggs, and wysh to fyll thyr gutts with cattts ratts myse or froggs". It is not surprising that they are poor, miserable-looking creatures.

Mapping parties were continually going into side valleys, or climbing hills to get a wide view, and as a survey officer wanted to go up Dino, a 10,000-foot peak standing by itself north of the Sirapating river, he and I went up together. He was the survey party, I was the escort. It was the end of May by this time, and I spent my thirty-fifth birthday on the top of the hill. As we started from a height of about 3000 feet above sea-level, the climb was not a very serious undertaking, but the marked changes in the trees and shrubs were so interesting that I noted them down, with the sapper's barometric readings, as we went.

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For the first thousand feet we were in the usual Abor forest of trees choked with parasitic creepers and thick bushes. But at 4000 feet the creepers had gone, and we found flowering shrubs and clumps of thin bamboo growing under the trees. Another two thousand feet, and we were walking on crystalline limestone through sheets of ferns. The trees were azaleas. Above their tall, bare, brown, almost rust-red trunks masses of great white blossoms were in bloom. A breeze was blowing, the air was scented with flowers, the sun was shining, and the sapper thought of the view he would get from the top, while I hoped for a shot at a *takin*. What more could anyone want? Above the azaleas we came into a belt of rhododendron trees. The flowers were pink at first, and as we climbed they changed to yellow, red, and finally purple. I'm a poor botanist, and the Latin name for a plant was not the sapper's strong suit either, but when we left the rhododendron trees below us, we came across trees with blossoms like large white Canterbury bells, and their thick trunks overgrown with moss. We were more than 8000 feet up. Cypresses began at 8400 feet; and as we were scrambling over large square blocks of limestone at 9000 feet, I saw the first holly bush. After the path we had just been following along the river, the last bit to the summit seemed almost flat. The top of Dino was a narrow heath-grown ridge, strewn with limestone slabs, and among them one or two scrubby purple rhododendrons and pink azaleas. The heath was out, in a small yellow flower, and two dwarf cypresses were growing among the rocks, with torn branches and flat-

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topped, as if cut by the tremendous wind. At 10,295 feet, on the highest pinnacle of rock, we found an orchid, *Coelogene*, bravely showing a little white and purple flower. There is a wealth of orchids in the valleys, but this one must spend more than half its life under snow.

We did not find a drop of water the whole way up the hill, and I hadn't seen a single four-legged creature. *Takin* were off, and we had barely time to say, "Well, that's that", and no time whatever to admire the view, before a thick cloud rolled against Dino and blotted out the entire landscape. Clouds are not desirable company. They make everything wet without supplying one with water, and the sapper would have had a better view sitting under a ledge of rock at the bottom of the valley. We stayed there for a bit, buoyed up with the "next day is sure to be clear" feeling, eating our rations, and melting snow for our water.

While we were up Dino, three very stout fellows, Hore, a sapper surveying officer, and one of the escort section commanders, were starting off to map and explore the Sirapating river to its source at the foot of the Lulung-la, leading into Tibet. The trip was successful in what it set out to do, and reached the path that the Tibetans remake every year to bring over their yaks to feed on the south side of the Main Snowy Range. Hore and the sapper each got a *takin*, which was, I believe, only the second time that the animal had been shot by a European. Bailey had got one the year before in the Mishmi country. The first Abor *takin* was shot on the 7th of June by a sepoy of the Battalion who was on survey escort duty on a hill

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above Tuting. It was one of a herd of between thirty and forty found in the snow, at a height of about 14,000 feet. The skin was brownish-black, not reddish like those we usually saw made up into coats; and the haunch I helped to eat made a treat I still remember.

They should have come across the Basin, the giants of fabulous strength if rumour was right. But apparently nobody they saw was much taller than their Gurkha escort. Up the Sirapating, they met some Boris, the tribe who do nearly all the trading between Tibet and the hill tribes. I gathered there was a little trouble on the way up, with which the escort was quite able to deal. The trip had not been made any more pleasant by the extraordinary number of yellow snakes that infested the narrow little valley. Eventually they reached a village, and began bargaining with the headman for carriers. As a rule we found the hill-men cheerful and obliging, but he seems to have been remarkably disagreeable. Our party had nothing he wanted, and he apparently had nothing for them. At this point the escort commander had a brilliant idea. Porter was not only one of those people who seem to begin talking any new language before he has got his other foot into the country, but he was on the professional level as a conjurer. He at once stepped forward and offered the headman a rupee. The unsuspecting hill-man said he had never seen a rupee, and wouldn't have any use for it if he had. "Then," retorted the escort commander, "what are you doing with this one?" and took a coin from behind the man's ear, following it up with as many rupees as he had handy, and produced from all over the

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headman, while the villagers looked on yelling with laughter. I understand that they all volunteered to carry, as one man. So that little matter was settled to the satisfaction of all concerned except the headman. Everyone got out his pipe and started smoking, and one of the villagers pulled open his tinder outfit. Instead of the usual quartz, he brought out a large red crystal. Yellow snakes and ruby mountains—the fortunes of the entire Ruby Mountain Syndicate Limited were made. The escort commander got to the owner of the crystals first, and that tinder case is before me as I write. The whole village was found to have the stones, and the party got away with a most satisfactory haul. We had no geologist with the Dihang surveys, so I sent a specimen stone down the line by special messenger to be posted to Calcutta. The reply was awaiting me when we came down ourselves. All the Government geologist wrote was : “This is a very good garnet, as garnets go”. Unfortunately garnets do not go very far towards a flat in Park Lane.

By the time we had reached the northern part of the Angong country, we were at the end of our line of communications. Anything further would have to be done by less official travellers. The 1200 men had been used up. We could not have fed an escort worth taking anyhow; and with the idea of pushing on into Tibet, a body of armed men would have been distinctly out of place. From a village pronounced Tooting by its inhabitants, I pushed on for a march in front of the political officer, three survey officers and the doctor, taking with me Subadar Sarbajit Thapa and a Tibetan interpreter. At the end of the day we found a little knoll by the

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side of the path on the downward slope of a hill. There was a little spring there, and a tree or two for shelter. The Dihang was far below us in its deep-cut bed; and there was not a village in sight.

Sarbajit was making a bivouac, the interpreter boiling water for tea, and I was arranging my little silk shelter when a party of men came along the path towards us. They were very excited about something, and were all wearing swords over what looked like maroon dressing-gowns. They came up to our camp, and called out something loudly. The interpreter, who understood them all right, turned to me and translated: "These men say they live here, next to the Abors. They ask why you have come. They do not want you." The possibilities and chances of the situation ran through my mind, and I didn't much like the start I was making in a new country. These were obviously the people who went down to Singging, and were by all accounts cannibals, even though they had necks. But whatever they were, the first thing to do was to show we were friendly, and the way to do that was to ask them to have tea with us. I did. The effect was the very opposite of what I hoped. The men edged away, far more annoyed than ever, their hands on their sword-hilts, and one of them said something very angrily indeed. It seemed, however, to amuse the interpreter, who turned to me and said that the people didn't want us in the country because they were afraid we would eat them. Word had come from the Abors three months earlier that we were cannibals, and asking them to tea was the last straw. He went on to say that they were just ordinary Tibetans. This was an inaccurate descrip-

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tion, as true Tibetans do not live at an altitude of less than 10,000 feet, but from his point of view near enough. Their reputation as cannibals, under at least three different names, was gone. It only remained for me to get rid of mine. I said they were to be told that they had thought us cannibals for three months. But that there was a great world outside their mountains—full of people—all of whom, if they had heard of my visitors at all, believed them to be cannibals: and had done so for over six hundred years. The interpreter got very voluble, and at the end of it we all sat down together round the camp fire; and I got out some of the tea tablets that had been compressed for us in a quinine tablet-making machine on a tea garden. They were used to tea—brick tea from China—themselves, and got out their little wooden cups to have some of mine.

During tea, another cherished rumour went west. The question of salt had come up. They put it in their tea, with dollops of butter; not that I had any butter, or milk either, to give them. Apparently their salt reached them by caravans of carriers over passes so dangerous that at least one man was sure to fall down a precipice coming over. There were one or two Abor villages in the south and north of their country, and these Abors carried the salt. This accounted for the common belief of the southern Abors that human sacrifices were always made in the far north to get salt. The local Abors called the people of this new country we had reached Membas. They call themselves Mönbas.

When tea was over, our visitors went back the

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way they came, our respective rumours about cannibals well and truly torpedoed; and we got into our shelters and went to sleep. But there still remained the falls, and anyhow, we were surrounded to east, north, west, and at long last south, by peaks of perpetual snow.

CHAPTER XI

FINDING A NEW COUNTRY

A new country—Cantilever bridges—Grass downs, peach orchards, and wild raspberries—A matter of money—Exploration by survey officers—A formal call on a *dzong-pön*—The vindication of Kintgup—Marpung monastery—Bailey and Morshead and the falls of the Brahmaputra—Pasighat and cholera camp.

To take a cross-Channel boat, and struggle with a suitcase, landing-ticket, and passport down a crowded gangway into the French Customs, unmistakably lands one in another country. To ooze, as we did, through a mixture of Angong Abors and Mönbas brought us into the Pemako district before we realised what had happened. We expected Mimats, far wilder than the Abors, and we found Tibetan civilisation. Kopu, a march beyond the camp where the cannibals met each other, was the first Mönba village, but I only found this out when I began to ask questions. It looked exactly like any of the villages we had recently seen, with its Abor houses and cultivation. There were streamers on the masts at the entrance to Kopu, instead of the fibre ropes that the northern Abors tie from pole-top to pole-top, and there were one or two cairns of stones just outside the village. The people who came out to have a look at us certainly wore Tibetan clothes, and one or two had rosaries and

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prayer-wheels, as well as the wooden drinking-cups we had noticed in the Angong country. But I did not realise that we were in Pemako because the Mönbas living in the south of the district had every appearance of having been dragged down towards the Angong level, while the northern Abors had been influenced a small way up towards Tibetan civilisation.

We got to Geling in six hours from Kopu, along a path high above the river. The Tsangpo had narrowed, almost incredibly, and rushed noisily, several thousand feet below us, through a succession of cañons. One of them was so full of spray, and the river thundered so loudly, that I thought it must be the falls, and that I had discovered them, so to speak, by the twenty minutes or so that separated me from the rest of the party. But it was only another rapid.

Geling looked much more like what I had read and heard of Tibet. Before we came to the houses, we passed a tiny stone building with a stream running through it. There was a long stick lying on the grass so that passers-by might give the big water-driven prayer-wheel within a friendly prod if it had stuck. We spent the night on a bluff overlooking the Tsangpo. On the opposite bank the Sipu river flung itself over a cliff about 1500 feet high, in a magnificent waterfall. But before the huge jet of water had reached the Tsangpo below, it was just a drifting cloud of spray. The light-green trees growing almost at the foot of the cliff looked, from our camp, like a mass of maidenhair fern.

The weather had been simply gorgeous all day;

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for there was a cool breeze wherever the path was clear of the trees, and a bright sun at mid-day that brightened the green of the forest, and set the great snow ranges above us shimmering against the blue of the sky. To the south, one of the big peaks had a long grey cloud about its summit, like a scarf. This was the Indian monsoon, trying in vain to reach our valley, and deluging Assam and the lower hills with torrents of rain.

Sunset in Pemako was something to remember. As the afternoon drew in, the shadows crept up the mountains on the opposite side of the valley. Then just before sunset came what I always felt to be the event of the day. The great white peaks gradually turned rose-pink, changing as the sun set to a metallic blue, and a moment after, the heights of the 25,000-foot peak above us had turned to the relentless green of ice. A chill wind sprang up; night had fallen on the valley.

We took some time over our next day's march considering the distance due north that we made. The ups and downs must have at least doubled the air-line length of the path, and the path had to follow the course of the Tsangpo. The river that day made the biggest loop on record. Geling on the south side was just three miles from Shirang, which we did not reach by nearly two miles. But our march, as measured on the map, was over seven miles. We began with a climb of 1000 feet, and a stiffish descent of 3000 feet. This was better than the other way round perhaps, though in difficult country a bad descent can be more troublesome than a climb up-hill. As we came out from the trees at the bottom of the valley, we had a pleasant

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surprise. Instead of a bare and slippery tree-trunk, or a flimsy cane bridge, we found a fine, solid cantilever suspension bridge literally planked down (for it was made of wood) right in the middle of the wilds. It had a span of a hundred feet, and the Nugong river foamed thirty-five feet below it. At the entrances to the bridge there were a number of high poles with banners on them, and we found the bridge itself fairly plastered with rice-paper tracts. There were sentences printed on all of them, and some (including the one I took away with me) had a spirited drawing of a horse on it, the Tibetan *Lung* horse. This was the only horse I saw in the country.

From the bridge the path followed the rocky shore of the Tsangpo, and only a little above high-water level. We were practically at the bottom of a cañon. Anything of a gap between the big boulders had been filled in with logs and chunks of wood, which was a much-appreciated improvement. Whoever lived in these parts liked easy going, for presently we came to a stone rest-house with a wooden roof and open sides. From here the path went across a stretch of silver sand, along the edge of a wide sweeping bay, choked with magnificent pine lumber; and under the great cliffs the Tsangpo broke along the shore in brisk little waves that sparkled in the sun.

I missed the corpse myself, but the doctor coming along close behind appropriately discovered rather a disagreeable one half out of water, and I came back to have a look. It was a man with long hair, and stark naked except for a brand-new wooden carrying-cradle and strap. There was no sign of a

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wound on him, and the body, as the newspaper reports put it, was well nourished. He must have been an Abor, because the Mönbas cut their hair short.

My own experiences in the country gave me two memorable days, and the march from our halting-place below Shirang next day—June the 25th—was one of them. We had a cloudy day for once, and pleasantly cool. The path went straight up-hill, and it took us nearly an hour and a half to do the couple of miles to Shirang. We came out from the trees at the end of the climb on to a wide open plateau. In front of us lay a village of between thirty and forty solid-looking houses, their thatched roofs showing through the orchards about them. The oranges and hill-limes were just turning from flower to fruit, and the peach trees were laden with ripe peaches. Never again will I be able to buy every peach on a well-laden tree for eighteenpence. At the far end of the village, plantains and a clump of bamboos were growing. Between us and the river, which here flowed due west, rose a grassy knoll with a cluster of houses on it surrounded by a high stone wall. These houses had wooden roofs. More than a thousand feet below, the river ran through a gorge like a half-open door, and on the opposite side, standing on a sheer granite bluff, was the village of Monku, backed by two 11,000-foot peaks, wooded to the top. Just above the gorge a bright yellow, and obviously new, cane bridge spanned the Tsangpo. Our path into Shirang ran close to the knoll, and on getting round to the north side of the wall we saw it had a picturesque Chinese-looking gate. Behind the gate were three buildings and an Abor granary. The

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principal house, which proved to be a small Buddhist temple, was quite imposing. The ground floor was of good stone masonry and the upper storey of wood, with a balcony like those that hang from the houses over the Jhelum at Srinagar. The houses in Shirang were built of wood, with stone plinths. Everyone grew marigolds in their gardens, and in the vegetable plots beans, cucumbers, and marrows seemed to be doing well. There were plenty of fowls scratching about; some were black, but most of them Plymouth Rocks. Practically none of the men—and most of the inhabitants must have come out to see us—could speak Abor, and none of the women. In the fields round the village men were busy ploughing with what looked like Hereford cattle, and from the water channels it was clear that the Mönbas understood wet rice cultivation.

After Shirang our way ran up and down one or two spurs, but the path was carefully graded and the going was good. Finally we came right down to the Tsangpo. After crossing a cantilever bridge, we walked straight on to a grass lawn beside a clear stream, with a prayer-wheel house built over it. We camped here for the night, almost under a cane tubular bridge across the main river, the third since Monku gorge. Up and down river we could see and hear a number of waterfalls tumbling down the steep rock-faces, hundreds and hundreds of feet. We hadn't been as low as this for some time, and Trenchard took advantage of it to get a hypsometric reading, and found the Tsangpo to be 2200 feet above sea-level.

For the next five days we strolled over wide open downs, with only an occasional dip into a wooded

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valley. The short grass was starred with flowers, and red and yellow raspberries were plentiful and ripe. Bracken grew on some of the slopes, and maidenhair fern by the little streams. In the spring the irises must have been as fine a sight as they are in Kashmir, but now, of course, they were in seed. The butterflies made me wish I had a net, for I saw numbers of swallow-tails and skippers, and large blues settled in clouds along the path. There were hardly any birds about except the eagles far up in the sky. It seemed almost incredible that this pleasant land could be set down in the middle of about the wildest country in the world.

The valley was full of small villages, groups of stone houses with black wooden roofs among the orchards. Some of them nestled against a little rounded hill on which the white walls of a squat, solidly built *dzong* showed through the trees. At one village, Janyur, we got a bit of a surprise. We naturally took it for granted that the people could not possibly have seen a white man before in their lives. But a man in this village told us, in rather halting Assamese, that he had been down to Tezpur four times, and once to Gauhati in a river steamer—but not through the Abor country. The Simong and apparently the Bomo-Janbo people let nobody through, and keep the profits of the Tibetan trade in their own hands. But he had heard about Calcutta, and had enlarged his mind by travelling on the Tezpur Light Railway. That man really was an explorer. As a matter of fact, this paled before the experience of Bailey and Morshead on their wonderful exploration through the Mishmi Hills and away to the north, far beyond

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anywhere that our party succeeded in reaching. They found that the *dzong-pön* of Tsela, in the heart of the wilds west of Gyala, had a son at Rugby who was turning out quite a good cricketer. My only off-set to this, and a poor one at that, was meeting a man farther up the valley who had been a guide to Sven Hedin.

We had no real difficulty about money. The Mönbas had Yunnanese rupees and eight-anna pieces, but these were used as ornaments; so were Chinese cash, which were strung together and worn as necklaces. The coinage of the country is the Tibetan *tangka*—a thin silver coin about the size of a shilling. I made a collection of different coins, but I never came across any of them cut in half, when they are worth about threepence of our money. The rate of exchange given us in Pemako was three *tangkas* to an Indian rupee. The first time I had to change any money was when I wanted to buy some eggs and vegetables from a villager. I handed over two rupees and got my three *tangkas* for the first one. The Mönba looked at the other rupee for a bit and then held it out in the palm of his hand. The conversation, as the Tibetan part of it came to me through the interpreter, went on something like this:

MÖNBA. Here, what do you call this?

ME. I call that a rupee.

MÖNBA. Oh no, you don't. We all know you are governed by a great Queen, and here is her head on this other coin. But you can't palm this thing off on me.

It wasn't likely that any of us had many Queen

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Victoria rupees, so that Mönba had to be persuaded that we were not in his country to try to pass snide money on the inhabitants. But it took some doing.

Eight days after we got into Pemako, we reached Yortong, where the party divided. Trenchard and Pemberton, two of the survey officers, went up the Pemasiri river to cross the Doshung-la, a 13,500-foot pass across the Main Snowy Range. This pass is only open in the height of summer. I had a look at the first stage of their road, and have never seen more desperate country. On either side of the narrow gorge rose peaks that looked like immense ant-hills pointing 12,000 feet into the sky. Huge faces of rock, across which the path was cut, overhung the river below; and pine trees grew wherever they could anchor. The explorers had a very hard time on the pass, and spent each night in the caves the Tibetans use as rest-houses above Gyala. The Pemberton who came with us was not the first of his name as an explorer on this frontier. There had been a Pemberton before him in 1835.

These rest-houses up the Doshung-la must have been the wind-swept caves we had heard about below. The cannibals did not exist. Their habitations had been explained, and it wasn't long before the sight of some Tangam Abors from just below the great gorges gave away the neckless savages. They were wretched-looking people with such shocking goitre that the description was fair enough. But it seemed a pity to have come all that way into one of the few remaining unvisited parts of the world to kill so good a rumour. I would much rather have gone on playing with the idea of anthropophagi that each other eat, and men

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whose heads grow beneath their shoulders (or very nearly that), than meet the unromantic facts.

The political officer, the doctor, and the third survey officer who had come right up, went on for a couple of days along the path up the valley, here running almost due north. The country became wild again, and the party just got as far as the villages of the goitrous Tangam people. There is a certain amount of mild goitre among the more southern Abors, enough anyhow for the medical officer to hold occasional goitre parades of the escort troops, and I might have guessed the neckless people from that. The political officer said that the rapids were pretty bad, but that there was neither word nor sign of any falls.

I remained at, or about, Yortong as a meeting-point for the two little parties when they got back again, and had just under a week of sight-seeing. The first thing to do was to make friends with the *dzong-pön*, which was not difficult, as he came down to see me and was most friendly. So for that matter were all the people one met upon the road. A Mönba, before passing one, took off his felt hat, and as one came up, made a jerky movement with his hands to his head, and flipped his left ear. He also put out his tongue. I am a great believer in doing in Rome as Rome does, but I drew the line at showing my tongue and flipping my ear, especially as I happened to have read how the ear salutation originated. I cannot vouch for it, but the practice is said to be a memento of the old Chinese custom of cutting off the left ear of prisoners of war, and giving them to the victorious general. I stuck to our own custom, handed down from the

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days of helmets and vizors. On a wet day the Mönbas wore what I can best describe as an umbrella hat. It had an immense brim of plaited straw and a crown covered with bits of mica that shone brightly when the sun came out again.

Dopo, the *dzong-pön* of Yortong, arranged for my supply of eggs and vegetables. He seemed quite pleased when I asked if I might come and see him. The way to his home led past a small temple, which I went to see later on, and was greatly struck by the masks of the devil dancers—hideous painted faces with a circle of miniature skulls as tiaras—hanging on the walls. Dopo lived in a square two-storeyed house, with a wooden balcony, built on a knoll, and a fine view of the river. There were flower-beds along the front of the house, and the pink hollyhocks, marigolds, and wallflowers looked well against the grey stone walls. A wooden lantern painted blue hung above the door, which was open. On the door were painted white designs like full and crescent moons, which my interpreter told me were to ward off ill-luck. As I went up the steps to the front door, Dopo came out, rather like a cuckoo from its clock, nodded his head and put out his tongue. In other words, he made a face at me, and I took off my hat. Then we went into the entrance hall. Unlike ours, this stretched to right and left across the house like a narrow passage. The windows in it were of carved wood, partly pasted over with rice paper. I got on visiting terms with other Mönbas later on, and I never saw any other sort of window. Glass is very rare, I believe, even in the richest parts of Tibet. Dopo led me into a room on the left, where half a dozen of his friends were

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waiting to receive me. There were a number of square black stools, with a rug behind each, ranged round three sides of the room, and we all sat down. I was in the middle facing the fireplace, which was filled with a big stove on flagstones with a square curb round it. A pot was simmering over the fire, and pots and pans, all beautifully kept, hung above the fireplace. Round it stood a group of young women in most becoming mulberry *chogas*, like those the men all wore, but instead of plain leather belts they had ornamented girdles. One of these was a real beauty—large plaques showing hunting scenes in open-work, joined by heavy rings, all of silver and silver-gilt. This had come from Chiamdo, and just before I left Yortong I was able to buy it. But most of the belts were of far rougher finish, and generally made of brass. These came from Lhasa or Khong-bo. All the women had rather pretty neck ornaments of silver set with coral. Some houses I saw had wall paintings, but Dupo's were discoloured in pale blue. He told me that he got his furniture from Chiamdo, delivered apparently on plain yaks over one of the easier passes.

It was rather difficult to think of anything to say, but my remarks on the beauty of the country and Dupo's polite welcome to the first white stranger to come to his house were (I hope correctly) translated into our respective languages by my interpreter. While these courtesies were being exchanged, one of the young women by the fireplace came round with a brass toddy ladle. She was followed about by a very taking short-haired blue cat. We all produced our cups, and had them filled with a clear syrupy liqueur that tasted not unlike

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kümmel. I didn't realise how strong it was until I got out into the cold air again, and was thankful I hadn't had a third one. Presently Dupo produced his horn snuff-box from the folds of his *choga* and offered it to me, as men in my own part of the Highlands would do. It must have been pure mustard powder, and I thought I would never stop sneezing.

When I had recovered, Dupo took me to his shelves and let me see his store of tea, all compressed in bricks. This was the genuine caravan tea, and it was far too coarse to have passed through the sieves in the factories down in Assam. It seems that while our cheapest tea is more like dust, their cheapest tea is all large stalks and big leaves. In another house I visited they gave me tea, and I never hope to swallow anything more repulsive. They milk their cattle, of course, which the Abors do not. In fact, I got my milk from Dupo. But they put butter in their tea, and salt instead of sugar.

The interpreter waited until we were outside the house to tell me that Dupo's real name was Tashi Pezong; I never found out why he was introduced to me as Dupo. We went in to see the village temple on the way back, and passed a young man and woman who had come from Khong-bo. The girl was wearing a saucy pork-pie hat bound with silk ribbon, that matched her maroon dress, on her neatly braided black hair.

Dupo came down late in the afternoon and told me many interesting things about the country over a cup of tea. The Mönbas are apparently a mixture of Khambas and Bhotias, and have been living in

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what is now Pemako for well over a hundred years. They found the Tangam Abors in possession, and turned them out of the best parts of the valley. I asked him about places of interest to visit, and he said that I ought to see Marpung monastery. As this was where Kinthup had served as a sort of lay brother for some time, I was particularly anxious to see it, and Dopo said he would let the abbot know, and take me over himself. It could easily be done in a day.

As soon as we reached Yortong, I had carefully compared Kinthup's narrative with what I had seen coming up-country. As far as the manners and customs of the Mönbas went, my impressions were simply those of a globe-trotter. Beyond what I saw, and possibly misunderstood, or got entirely through an interpreter, I could learn nothing. I had a small Goerz camera with me and took a number of photographs. But the carrier who went down with them had the ill-luck to fall over a precipice into the river. Consequently I came out of the country with nothing but the diary I wrote up every night I spent in the Hills, and no photographs to illustrate this part of the trip. Kinthup's narrative was a different matter. We went through the country he wrote about, and I was able to put down at the time the names of villages, number of houses, and other details that he, an entirely illiterate man, had to carry for so long in his head. What surprised me was his accuracy; he was more often than not the complete Baedeker, endowed with the greatest determination and courage.

Beginning as far north as I could personally check, Kinthup crossed the cane bridge at Tambu.

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That bridge is there yet. At Marpung there was a monastery with thirty lamas and fifteen nuns living together. I had still to visit Marpung, but the monastery was there all right. Then he came to Yortong, which Kinthup (probably more correctly) called Yordong, where there were then thirty houses and a monastery. I counted nineteen houses, excluding the group of buildings about the temple. So it goes on down the valley, when the question arises, how far south did he get? The number of houses may be fewer than Kinthup fished up out of his memory, but his description of the Angong country was correct. Simong seems always to have barred the trade route from the north, and travellers from Tibet are few and far between. One of our survey parties visited Dalbuing, which Kinthup correctly places between Mobuk and Olon, but calls Tarpin. At Dalbuing the people talked about a traveller who had come down from Tibet thirty years earlier, which is the time when Kinthup said he was there. He has been criticised because he did not mention Jido and Ngamyang, but they did not happen to be built in 1884. It was a great personal pleasure to have been one of those who proved Kinthup to have been right, and to have vindicated one of the greatest explorers in the whole Survey of India during his lifetime. When we got back to India, steps were taken to get the old man a pension, so that he could end his days in comfort. He was found in very poor circumstances in Darjeeling, trying to make a living at his old trade as a tailor, and everyone who knows his story must be glad that this "romance" had, at long last, a happy ending.

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The day Dopo, the interpreter, and I went to Marpung was misty in the early morning; but apart from a short summer shower while I was photographing the monastery from the road, we had a perfect day, with lots of sun and a cool breeze up the valley. Dopo for once had come down without his dog, which looked like a small black Alsatian. He said he didn't much like the monastery dogs, and they might be loose. We began with a fair pull uphill to a plateau right back from the Tsangpo, and went through a small village of about half a dozen houses. In the fields behind the hedges and fences the villagers were busy with their mattocks. As we passed a herd of about thirty cattle, Dopo pointed out two fine bulls which he said were used for ploughing. I hadn't seen a *mithan* in the country; and the nearest thing to a yak had been an occasional pack-saddle in the houses. Dopo told me that yak came across the high passes and went down the valley, over a path called the yak road, avoiding the galleries. But they never stayed in the country. Some of the cattle, however, I thought were crossed with yak. Half an hour's steady ascent took us to the level we never left until we reached the hill on which Marpung is built. The Tsangpo writhed, snake-like and grey, in its gorge more than 3000 feet below us. High above it, on both sides of the valley, rolled light-green downs, all grass, or the fields of the little villages that dotted the valley as far as one could see. Pine trees clung to the high, steep spurs, towering above us into the clouds that hung about the mountain-tops. The path in places was, without any exaggeration, bright with butterflies;

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and it ran for some way between blackberry and raspberry bushes, between the bracken. Before we reached Marpung, we came out on a grassy hill-side where a number of sheep were grazing. I had the long white-thorn stick that Sarbajit had cut for me on a hill-side just below the 12,000-foot snow-line—it is one of my most valued possessions to-day—and Dopo cut a stout stick for himself as we went through a thicket. He said it was just as well, because those dogs at the monastery were very savage. Just after this, as we came round a spur, we saw the gilded pinnacle of the monastery shining through the trees, and the houses of Marpung village clustering below it. We reached the monastery by a dirty lane twisting through a group of houses, came to a big gate, and went through into a large courtyard. Two big grey stone buildings on our right, joined together, formed two sides of the square. As at Yortong, the outside walls had been decorated with bands of bright colour, blue, light green, and chocolate, in diamond patterns half-way up the building, and just under the eaves. While I was in Pemako, I saw the black-and-blue wall decoration that Sarat Chandra Das says distinguishes buildings of the Nyingma sect in other places, but this colour scheme was not followed at Yortong and Marpung. The building nearest the gate had two storeys, and a balcony from which a number of youngish women peeped out at us. I felt sure these were the Buddhist nuns, but I thought that any friendly demonstration on my part, in return for their obvious interest, would have been distinctly out of place. After all, I was the first European who had ever

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been there. The centre of the courtyard was all grass, rather muddy, and badly kept, with a mast in the centre flying a banner inscribed in red and black in alternate lines. To the left of the gateway, the whole wall was taken up by an open shed with a disused altar and all sorts of lumber in it. There was a fair-sized grey animal feeding out of a brass-bound bucket in the semi-darkness at the far end of the shed; but it turned out to be a calf—and not one of the dogs. As a matter of fact, they were all tied up somewhere, and we never saw them. But I saw the breed elsewhere, and they reminded me of large old English sheep-dogs in everything but their tempers. The wall opposite the gate was bare, except for a rather beautiful shrine in the middle.

We turned towards the main building, where the abbot was waiting to receive us on the steps of the main entrance. He was a small, alert-looking man, with a remarkably dignified manner; and he made a striking figure, in his purple silk-lined robe, as he stood framed in the deep faceted wooden carving above the great doors of the temple. The abbot came down the steps, and I went up and met him. He had two large silver keys like flattened lobsters in one hand, and in the other a skein of cotton which he presented to me. The doors were opened. I took off my hat and went into the temple. After the bright sunlight outside, the subdued light made it difficult, for a while, to distinguish things clearly. The interior was square, and divided, like the other temples, into three divisions by two rows of wooden pillars with conventional lotus designs in pink and green. Judging from the obviously new painting about the temple, they must have been crude

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enough once, but time had softened them to the colouring of Walter Crane. These pillars supported heavy, beautifully carved beams, and the ceiling was entirely canopied with brilliantly coloured silk. The walls were distempered a reddish chocolate, relieved with patches of broad blue-and-white lines in places; and the flooring was of wood, black with age. The whole of the end of the temple facing us as we came in was taken up by a raised platform with a number of shrines on it. On thing struck me at once. At Yortong the feeling I had was of being in a place of devil worship, for the big Buddha in the centre had the face of a demon, and so had his red and blue satellites. There were devils and devil-masks at Marpung, but the shining golden Buddha, with his calm, peaceful face, sitting in contemplation opposite the doors, made the place a sanctuary.

The big Buddha sat on his gilded lotus in his golden shrine with a light blue nimbus behind his head, and in his hands an orb and sceptre. The monks called him Guru Tsoke Dorje; and from what I could find out afterwards in India, this was probably Vajrasam Muni, another form of Sakya's image. There were two tutelary deities on each side of him. I had seen the two on the left of the Buddha before, at Yortong. The nearer one they called Guru Tansi. He was a red devil, apparently waiting to pounce on someone. Next to the wall stood the little dancing blue devil, with a light-green head, that the Yortong monk had called Sindong. After hunting through various books on Buddhism later on in Calcutta, I think this must have been Yama-g Sin-rje, the death-god and *lokpāl* of the south. The

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abbot of Marpung called him King-thoup, which in the light of Kintup's stay at the monastery seemed rather unfortunate. In front of the figures there were ranged a long line of drinking-cups and flowers.

On the floor, just in front of King-thoup, stood a beautiful casket, about five feet high, shaped like a minaret, on six diminishing steps. On the top of the globe of the minaret was a tapering spire surmounted by a gilt crescent with a ball above it, which was just like the design in white painted on the doors of the houses in the villages. The casket was made of silver, and about it was some very beautiful gold-work set with coral, turquoise, and porcelain. This casket contained the bones of Abbot Teletsinge, the "great Lama" who befriended Kintup. After living for sixty years in the monastery, he had died, so the present abbot told me, in 1903. From what they told me, Teletsinge was a man of strong personality, who had endowed many of the temples in the district. By the memorial casket was a table with the dead abbot's brass thunderbolt and bell upon it.

One of the walls of the temple was taken up with big pigeon-holes full of books under metal presses. I saw no books anywhere else, but the *dzong-pön* and one or two of the householders in every village seemed able to read and write. Apart from Teletsinge's casket, the metal-work was most of it rather crude white metal or roughly cut brass. But near the door, hanging beside three large drums, I saw two long and beautifully chased trumpets in bronze and brass.

The abbot took us up a flight of wooden steps

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to an upper chapel, which was much smaller and surrounded on three sides by a wide passage. It was a low, square, heavily timbered room broken up by two rows of painted wooden pillars. Here, in a gilded shrine, was a golden figure which they called Ye Bamé, sitting like the Buddha in contemplation. On either side were ranged a row of smaller figures in pillared niches of light, plainly carved wood. They were, of course, absolutely Oriental, but they reminded me strongly of early illuminated manuscripts.

From here we went up a ladder to a tiny room under the roof. It held one gilt figure wearing a diadem, and another exactly like it, in plain stone, stood on a slab beside it. I was not then a Catholic, and the idea of becoming one had never entered my head, but Tso, as the statue was called, irresistibly reminded me of figures and paintings of Our Lady. Just as Buddhist sculpture found on the North-West Frontier bears the impress of Greek art, so it seemed to me this lamaistic image was due to the Christian influence of the Franciscans in Central Asia more than six hundred years ago. Subadar Sarbajit Thapa, a Buddhist himself, was of the greatest help to me as I puzzled my way round the first temple of that religion I had ever seen.

The abbot took us down the ladders, across the big temple, and through a passage into the building occupied by the thirty monks and the fifteen nuns, the number, by the way, given by Kinthup. This part of the monastery with its big black beams and floors reminded me rather of St. Thomas à Becket's house at Canterbury. As I stopped to look at

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rather a nice table, with a *danki* on it, the abbot disappeared through a curtained doorway opposite, and after a moment's hesitation I followed him. The abbot sat down at his writing-table, put on his spectacles, and motioned us to chairs. There were, of course, no book-cases, as we understand them, to be seen; only a rather untidy pile of books and papers on the writing-table, with a beautifully carved brass bell and a prayer-wheel set with turquoises and coral being used as a paper-weight. The heavy beam across the ceiling was supported by two wooden pillars, and the carved wood-work in the windows was not unlike the *mushrabieh* of Egypt. Between the windows there was a most beautiful little shrine holding an image of Buddha. I wondered, while my stilted conversation was being done into Tibetan by the interpreter, if this was the room in which Kinthup had begged for his life. Presently a servant came in and handed round something that looked and tasted like a light still hock. I had recently exchanged my silver collapsible cup with Dupo for his wooden drinking-cup, but I noticed that he got out an ordinary Tibetan cup in the abbot's study. Then we rose to go, and I gave the abbot a little bag of fifty rupees, telling the interpreter to say that I hoped that he would accept this gift for the use of the monastery from strangers who had enjoyed its hospitality and the first white man who had ever visited it. The abbot had been kind and hospitable to us, but I had in mind the kindness done to a stranger thirty years before.

The abbot came out to the temple steps to see us off; and he made so striking a picture, framed

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in the great carved doorway, that I got him to let me take his photograph. It should have been a good one, but, with the rest, the film never reached India.

Dopo seemed very pleased with the way the visit had gone off and became quite communicative on the way back to Yortong. He said that the monasteries sent monks round the villages to collect money, food, and clothing once a year for the support of the religious communities. Dopo seemed to jib rather at having to give the food, as he said the monasteries usually owned the best land. They also ran the caravans, and so got the middleman's profits. It was usual, he said, to bequeath money and ornaments to the monasteries for the shrines; and sometimes a family would give money to build a prayer-wheel over a stream. The people of the village built the walls and roof and put in the wood-work, and the monastery printed the prayers and put them into the drum. From what Dopo and others told me, I gathered that the lamaistic sects in Pemako are the Nyingma and the Gelugpa, Marpung and nearly all the monasteries being Nyingma. When I made some remark about the women I had seen at Marpung, I was told that the monks were allowed to marry because they were living in such an outlandish part of the world. Kinthup had seen monks and nuns in two other monasteries besides Marpung; and S. C. D. (Sarat Chandra Das) in his *Journey to Lhasa* says that he found a monastery where monks and nuns, also of the Nyingma sect, lived together. But at Yaslung Shetag monastery the forty monks were living with forty nuns.

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Going about Pemako, the monks I saw had, some of them, extremely nice rosaries of crystal, coral, red wax, or amber beads, with leather tags at intervals, to which four-leafed shamrocks of silver or brass are fastened. I managed to buy two, one with 109 beads and the other with 112; as well as the only skull-bone rosary I saw. It had 109 little bone discs strung on it. Rosaries have played a considerable part in the explorations made by Indian members of the Survey. For, dressed as pilgrims in Tibet, they have used their rosaries to count their paces in the day's journey.

All I learned about the local government was that, where there is a monastery, the abbot and the *dzong-pön* run the village between them. Dupo added the interesting information that a certain number of the people came from Dharma (Bhutan), and that they still thought it due to the Tsong-tsa-Penlop of Dharma to go across once in their lives and pay their respects to him.

The whole political state of this part of the world is most confused. Half the Tangam Abors may be said to be theoretically under the indefinite control of the Political Officer, Sadiya. The remainder of the Tangams live in the country about the great gorges, where Mönbas Pobas and Khambas hunt the wandering herds of *takin*. Pemako, wedged between the Tangam Abor settlements, appears to be connected with Po-me. Po-me is a feudatory of Lhasa, with a semi-independent ruler, and was invaded in 1911 by the Chinese, who destroyed its capital, Showa. By 1913 the Chinese forces had retired, but before they left they seem to have sent a detachment into the northern part

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of Pemako. In 1913 the people of Po-me and Pemako were still very nervous about the Chinese, and this possibly induced Dupo to ask me quite seriously if I would stay in the country and not go down with the others, so as to keep anything unpleasant from happening to them. He casually explained that we had only been shown prong guns, but that they had some modern rifles. He went on to make it quite clear that I would be provided with everything a man could possibly want. For one ridiculous moment I saw myself training a Pemako Territorial Force. I hardly liked to ask Dupo if this was entirely his own idea. But there was I, a Government servant, with every sort of responsibility and claim upon me elsewhere. Four days later I left Yortong, and turned my face towards India and the ordinary routine of everyday life.

While members of the Abor surveys were exploring northwards towards the great gorges, and striking across the Main Snowy Range to reach the Tsangpo again at Pe, Captain F. M. Bailey of the Political Department, and Captain Morshead, R.E., of the Survey of India, were engaged in their magnificent work of exploration along the course of the Tsangpo as far as Tsetang.

Bailey and Morshead began their exploration where the Mishmi surveys had stopped in the early part of 1912, at Mipi, up the main stream of the Dihang, and on about the same parallel as Jido. Leaving Mipi on the 16th of May 1913, they crossed the 13,000-foot pass from the Mishmi country into the Tsangpo Valley, and came as far south as Rinchenpung. After exchanging greetings

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by messenger with our party, they went up the left bank of the Tsangpo until the country became impossible even for them. They skirted this labyrinth of tremendous precipices and got back to the Tsangpo at Pe after Trenchard and Pemberton had returned over the Doshung-la. Bailey and Morshead then made another attack on the unknown section of the river, and got some way along the right bank beyond Pemakochung, where Kinthup had said the falls were to be seen. These explorations on both sides of the Tsangpo to Pe definitely proved that the Tsangpo and the Brahmaputra are the same river. Regarding the falls, Kinthup must either have confused the 150-foot fall of a tributary of the Tsangpo near Gyala, or been mistranslated. The translation of Kinthup's narrative states: "The Tsangpo is two chains distant from the monastery (of Pema-koi-chung), and about two miles off it falls over a cliff called Sinji-Chogyal from a height of about 150 feet. There is a big lake at the foot of the falls where rainbows are always observable."

Bailey, lecturing before the Royal Geographical Society, said: "Opposite Gyala, a small stream flows through cliffs and drops into this smooth part of the river. This is what Kinthup described as a lake, and it is in this waterfall that the god Shingche Chogye is carved or painted on the rock behind the waterfall. We did not see him, as he is only visible in winter, when there is little rain in the fall." Actually the Tsangpo cuts through the Main Snowy Range between two peaks, Namcha Barwa (25,445) and Gyala Peri (23,460), in terrific rapids, through colossal gorges. Bailey found the river-

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level to be 7480 feet at the last point on the Tibetan side where he could reach the water; and forty-five miles lower down-stream, by the Chimdru River, the level was 2610 feet, a fall of 108 feet per mile. Bailey had already measured a drop of 97 feet per mile higher up the Tsangpo, and it does not require any falls, in a river that is a succession of tremendous rapids, to explain this difference in height. None of the local hunters whom Bailey and Morshead questioned believed that any true falls existed; and they had seen the river descending in rapids at various points, in the trackless country that Bailey and Morshead were not able to explore. The most spectacular descent Bailey and Morshead found was an almost vertical rapid of thirty feet, at a point near Pemakochung where the river is only fifty yards wide in its gorge. Bailey mentioned in the lecture which is quoted above that when he came back from his explorations he questioned Kinthup, who said that he thought the Tsangpo falls were fifty feet in height. The outside estimate of the height of the falls, as attributed to Kinthup, was a hundred and fifty feet, but everyone ignored this. Our imaginations were gripped, and both in India and in England people had been sure that there must be a magnificent fall of water where the river crossed the Main Range.

Bailey and Morshead, after exploring the Tsangpo gorges, followed the course of the river up westward to Tsetang, and then struck south into the pilgrimage district of Tsari, crossing the passes into the Subansiri watershed. What he saw there largely bore out what Rindze and Tugden had told me at Pasighat. Bailey has given the name of the

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holy mountain as Takpashiri, and said that the road to it had been closed. There were then thousands of small white maggots over the road, and to kill one would have cancelled the merit acquired by the pilgrimage. It was here, to quote Bailey's lecture again, while Morshead was getting a trigonometrical fixing on some snow peaks which had been triangulated from India, that he climbed a hill upon which corpses are cut up and given to the vultures in the Tibetan custom. This custom may have originally started the cannibal myth. An incongruous note was struck when the explorers' host that evening asked them awkward questions about passports, over which Tibetans can be most persistent and obstructive. Bailey and Morshead came back to India through Bhutan, reaching Rangia railway station on the 15th of November, six months after they left Mipi, having walked 1680 miles.

The work of the Dihang survey parties, and the results of the explorations made by Bailey and Morshead, clearly proved that the Dihang is the Tsangpo. Bailey and Morshead had reached Pe, a village above the gorges, by keeping to the left bank of the river, and Trenchard and Pemberton had got to the same place by the right bank. The break through the Main Snowy Range is made in a series of tremendous rapids; but there are no real falls. The whole of the Dihang Valley was mapped by the survey parties and joined up with the Indian triangulation; while Bailey and Morshead mapped 380 miles of the Tsangpo that had been only inaccurately surveyed before. Bailey and Morshead in this subsequent exploration found that the upper water of several branches of the Subansiri rise in

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Tibet and break through the Main Snowy Range, a most unexpected discovery.

In contrast to this wonderful journey, the survey parties that had come up the Dihang Valley went back the way they came. We left Yortong on the 9th of July, and reached Pasighat in twenty-five marches on the 9th of August without adventure. The rivers were, of course, in flood, and what had been tiny streams in the lower hills as we went up were now, some of them, well over our waists. I had gone up the valley singing school songs to myself as I walked along. I came down with nothing but the chorus "One more river to cross" in my head all the way.

When we reached Pasighat, I found that the local government had agreed to moving Battalion Headquarters from Dibrugarh to Sadiya; and as soon as the escort troops demobilised, I went down to Dibrugarh to see about it. I promptly got a bad dose of malaria. As a matter of fact, I was none too fit in other ways. While still in bed, a telegram arrived saying that cholera had broken out in the Balek garrison. I had once been in a station with cholera, when three men of the 31st Punjabis died at Bannu, one of them about the most promising N.C.O. in my double company. But there had already been more than ten deaths at Balek. Collecting my gramophone and some footballs, together with a saline injection outfit from the civil surgeon to supplement the one we already had, I was soon at Kobo; and the walk from there through the high grass in the muggy heat sweated the fever out of me. Two of my best officers, Subadar Jangbir Lama—the Quartermaster—and Sarbajit Thapa,

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came out some miles from Pasighat to meet me, and I was uncommonly glad to see them looking as fit and as brisk as ever. They told me that there were nineteen deaths up to that morning. But the pink drinks with which the doctor persistently made us disinfect our insides, and the boot-rubbing precautions every time anyone went into the hospital, together with Macdonald's ceaseless work among the sick, with the saline injections, soon got rid of the cholera. We had twenty-three deaths in all.

CHAPTER XII

THE ASSAM FRONTIER PROBLEM

Abor dwarfs—How a village gets its water—A Mishmi expedition—The worst bridge in Asia—Lightning effects—An Abor village dance—Present situation on the North-East Frontier.

EARLY in January 1914 the assistant political officer in charge of the Abor section visited Meybo, a Padam Abor village on the foot-hills across the Dihang. Having never been inside a Padam village, I went with him. We crossed the river in dug-outs and soon walked the half-dozen miles over the flat to the short, sharp rise to Meybo. Our reception was much as usual, except that the *apong* would have been quite undrinkable if it had not been presented to us in full view of almost everyone in the village. Meybo had two features that I should have been sorry not to have seen. The Padams are fine up-standing people, of better physique than the Min-yong Abors, but curiously enough the only dwarfs I ever saw in the Hills were a couple of tiny, well-developed, cheerful, and healthy young women we met that day. On the subject of general appearance, although the hill-men are not a hairy race, and hardly ever grow even straggling moustaches and skimpy beards, there was not a bald head among the thousands of hill people I must have seen from first to last. The only approach to a deformity I

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saw was a headman with six toes, which must have added to his troubles when he had an addition sum to do. This is in a way remarkable because, unless every Abor questioned on the subject immediately lied, infanticide is unknown. There seems to be no such thing as an unwanted child. If to a couple who are merely associating together in the *rasheng* (the girl's dormitory seen in many villages) without intending to settle down permanently, a child is born, it brings no disgrace to either of them. There is no necessity to "make an honest woman" of the mother, who may marry someone else. In fact, where there is no *rasheng* the couple keep company in the girl's home. If the girl is pleased to see the young man, she sits quietly where she is. If he is unwelcome, she makes up the fire, gives him a drink of *apong*, and sends him off with the Abor equivalent to the "Can't you go? Must you stay?" attributed to a famous headmaster when the boys he asked to breakfast were too shy to make a move.

The hill people take a lot of trouble over their water supply. When a new village is being built, the first settlers prospect for a suitable spur in early December, when the harvest has been cut and the springs are at their lowest. Provided that the water supply is certain, the Abors do not seem to mind if the spring is some distance away; but it has to be above the village, just as the burial-ground is below the houses. The water is brought to the village through bamboo piping, and along wooden ducts, supported on trestles. Two or three hundred yards of pipe line is quite an ordinary length; in fact, we had one over three hundred yards long ourselves, to supply Mishing camp. But Meybo

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had by far the longest aqueduct I ever saw in the Hills. It gave a plentiful supply in the middle of the village, from two big ducts, and I followed these up to the spring that fed them, a distance of over a thousand yards. The spring was some way up the face of a red cliff, and the water was brought down to the level in bamboos that were as nearly spiral as straight, unbendable lengths of tubing could be arranged. We had found at Mishing that the levelling necessary to get a flow of water along 340 yards of pipe line was not an easy job. We had to cut into the hill-side, as well as raise the pipes on trestles. So we could appreciate the engineering skill of the Meybo villagers in successfully tackling a much more difficult job. Their long and solid stockades are useless, because they do not stand behind them after they are up, but their twig bridges and water-pipes are wonderful and successful efforts to conquer two of their problems with a long knife, the products of the jungle, and their native wits.

Up to the beginning of 1914 all I knew of the Mishmi country and its inhabitants was the lower part of the Lohit Valley, occupied by the Digaru and Meju clans. These people are, comparatively speaking, well-to-do, and their women loaded with silver ornaments. Some wear really beautiful Tibetan charm-boxes of silver, and others plain neck-rings made in their own country from Chinese and Indian silver coins. To the north of these people, up the Dihang River and its tributaries, live the Midu Mishmis. Their country is a mass of steep mountains. Farming is extremely difficult, and the people about as wild as the Tangam Abors

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at the northern extremity of the Dihang Valley. Unlike the Abors, the Midu clans engage in blood-feuds with the persistence, if not the deadly efficiency of the Pathan. No compounding for a death by a fine of *mithan* for them; a life for a life is their rule. The only thing approaching it that I came across in the Abor country was when a village took up the cause of a murdered inhabitant and went to war with the murderer's village.

It is as well to see a thing for oneself, and only trust what one hears in an unknown part of the world after it has been affirmed by two or more witnesses in places as widely separated as possible. But the statement that the wilder and poorer Mishmis kill people when they become old and infirm, and consequently would have to be supported by the rest of the village, comes, I believe, from a reliable source. From the little I have seen of the Midu Mishmis, they seem to be an inferior people to most of the Abor clans; in fact, the Padam have some of them as slaves. But the Abors have never succeeded in getting hold of any of the country on the left bank of the Dihang.

Owing to the misbehaviour of the small Midu village of Apolin, about forty miles due north of Sadiya and, not as the crow flies, any distance inside the Hills, it was decided to punish it. Accordingly, towards the end of March we went up, about 100 strong, with a political officer to settle the matter. As soon as we left the Plains we found ourselves in surprisingly difficult country. It was as if a chunk of the moderately steep northern Abor country had been put down within a few miles of Assam. There were no big ascents or

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precipices, and of course no galleries, but on the abrupt hill-sides we found white azalea and pink rhododendron trees in full bloom, at a height of just over 6000 feet. These trees had been in flower, at about the same altitude on Dino, about thirty-five miles farther north, and to the east, at the end of May the year before. Pine trees, too, grew much lower down.

The column went through one Government-fearing Mishmi village just inside the foot-hills. It had defences on the Padam Abor side, and amazingly few houses in it. But what there were probably held about twenty people apiece. The houses looked enormous after seeing nothing but Abor villages for some time. One or two of them must have been at least sixty yards long; and I am told that a headman's house is sometimes as much as a hundred yards in length, with all his relatives, near and far, under the same roof. They are all family houses, as the Mishmis have neither *moshup* nor *rasheng*. The men's dress is a *takin* coat, like those the Mönbas wear in wet weather, and a dark loin-cloth, generally blue with a red or yellow line running through it. This cloth is woven by the Mishmi women for their skirts, and is, I was told, copied from the Tibetan military uniform. There were one or two graves outside the village, but I gather that people of importance are burned, and dead slaves thrown into the river. I am glad to say that all we saw in the rivers we passed were Abor-pattern fish-traps.

Although the distance to Apolin was about one longish march—measured on the map—from the foot of the Hills, it meant two nights on the way

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when we came to walk it, and there was not a drop of water anywhere along the ridge. The end of March is warm enough, even in the Hills, to make a short water ration more noticeable than it had been on Dupe ridge, but with our usual luck a tremendous storm of rain came down just as we were halting on the second night, and we caught a welcome supply of water in our ground-sheets.

When we reached Apolin we found it deserted, and our trouble in taking an unexpected path had been for nothing. When that happens, all the political officer can do is to order the village to be burned, as it gives the owners a good deal of trouble to rebuild their houses. Then the column goes back to the Plains after what amounts to a week of company training. Apolin was built on the edge of a ravine, with a small river at the bottom of it. This was spanned by what can honestly be described as the worst bridge in Asia, and I have seen quite good efforts in that direction in Kashmir as well as in the Abor country. Three cane ropes ran across the chasm. On these were two loops—a large one for the passenger to sit in, and a small one for use as a neck-rest. All one had to do was to stand on the little platform, hang one's luggage on the big loop, get into it, and slide rapidly down to that point in the middle where the bridge begins to slope sharply up to the other side. This climb up is quite a bit of exercise when crossing an Abor bridge, but that is nothing to the gymnastic performance on a rope bridge. The passenger has to throw his legs over the canes and use them to work his way across. An assistant commandant of the Battalion, when in the Mishmi Hills, found he had to use one. He told

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me that its only redeeming feature was the impossibility of looking down into the gulf below. Fortunately there was no reason for us to cross that rope bridge and, judging by my own feelings, every reason why we should avoid it. Kinthup called them *brings*, and said they were used in Eastern Tibet, where, it seems, a rope and pulley is provided so that the traveller can haul himself across. These rope bridges, on the principle of shutting the doors of an automatic lift, have light ropes tied to the loops in case the next man to come to it finds them on the far side.

Although I had no opportunity of testing the statement, I was told rather an interesting thing about the Mishmi people. It seems they believe that the evil spirit of adultery can be taken out, in the form of a small bird, from the armpit of a woman accused of this offence against tribal morality. The only thing to be said, and that does not actually disprove it, is that neither Daflas, Galongs, nor Abors were found to believe anything of the kind.

The Mishmis, like every other hill people, have their dances, and I was as sorry not to see theirs as I was to miss a devil dance in Pemako. The assistant commandant who looped the *bring* saw one, and he gave me a description of it. The dance was run by the headman of the village, not by the medicine-man, whom they call *igu*, and who is invariably a man, never a woman. The headman wore a tiara of shells, about four inches broad, and a magnificent cross-belt of boars' tusks sewn close together. At his buttocks he had a Tibetan drum, about eight inches long, with tiny rattles and small

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brass plates tied to it. He had another drum in one hand, and a short piece of bamboo in the other. Two men danced with him, one had a "tom-tom" and the other a Tibetan drum. The dance, like the Khattak sword-dances I have seen on the North-West Frontier, took place at night, by a bonfire, round which the rest of the village made a wide circle. The headman began by singing two verses of a song, and the people standing round took up the end of each verse as a chorus, with strongly marked rhythm. Suddenly the three performers broke into a dance. First, all three kept in line backwards and forwards, and then in procession in front of the fire. The steps were simply a matter of springing and prancing about, with knees bent, in time to the music. But as I was told that this went on for an hour and a half, it must be pretty good exercise.

We had experienced some rather bad thunderstorms in the Abor Hills, when quantities of explosives stacked in the quarter guard had added to the uncertainty of our prospects. But, coming back from Apolin, our camp was struck by lightning. Bivouacs made of green stuff do not burn, but a couple of bayonets fixed on rifles on their rack were badly marked, and what was much more serious, one of the men was struck. I cannot understand how he escaped being killed. From his shoulders to his buttocks he was scored down the back with broad angry burns; but he was a fat, stolid lad, and otherwise was none the worse for it.

Two great family friends, the manager of Halem tea estate and his wife, had for some time past done all that was possible, at intervals, to keep me going,

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but the various disabilities I had been collecting for some years had by now got the better of me. I was just able to see the column march into barracks from the Apolin trip before I collapsed; and the Medical Board that ordered me to England on the maximum amount of sick leave did not seem to think much of me. In due course I was carried past the Battalion lines on a stretcher, which was not at all the position I cared to be in when the guard turned out to me for the last time. But war had been declared in Europe. A friend at the War Office had been writing for about a year, telling me to come out of the Hills and get back to Europe if I could. The 31st Punjabis were at Fort Sandeman, in the wilds of Baluchistan, and however much I had been invalided from service on the North-East Frontier, I was at least going to "a better 'ole".

My last visit to Pasighat was made just before we went up to Apolin. There seemed to be some excitement in the Balek villages, although it was never discovered what it was all about. But the Pasis decided to have a dance, and the A.P.O. and I went up to see it. We left Pasighat late in the evening, and took the familiar path that wound first through the high grass and then up among the trees, till the insistent roar of the rapids below grew quite faint, and we lost the evening wind that blows strongly through the gorge. At Balek it looked as if the entire population of all three villages—men, women, and children—were out on the clearing by the granaries. We were given eggs, and an old fowl with its legs tied together was laid on the ground as a special present, and *apong* was

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handed round. The headman then led us to the dancing-ground.

It had been dusk when we reached Balek, and now it was dark, with no moon, and just a faint light from the stars. The villagers had made a big bonfire which lit up the clearing, and some of the men had torches. There was light enough to see the crowd—children squatting in front snuggled up in fluffy little blankets, and behind them rows of men and women. Most of the men were in their blanket coats, and the women in their black-and-yellow skirts and body-cloths.

A *mirü*, followed by about forty girls, came into the ring. They were wearing their usual clothes, but the *mirü* had on all his necklaces of large blue porcelain beads with the little bells on them, and he had a bell in one hand and a sword in the other. The girls all had their cheeks covered with the white lime I have only seen on the faces of girls of marriageable age. The *mirü* walked into the middle of the ground, and the girls made a ring round him, facing inwards. Each girl held her arms straight out from the shoulder and gripped the left arm of the dancer on her right. Then the circle began to sway round clockwise, using what was practically the "lady's step" in our Highland reels; and the *mirü* started to sing to the spirits of the Water. It was chanting really, with excellent rhythm, to which the girls kept time, their *beyops* clanking as they swung past us. The *mirü* stopped singing as abruptly as he had begun, and the dancers took up the chorus in their clear young voices. As they sang, their voices rose and fell in an air that was sad and haunting, but went with

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a wonderful swing. The *mirü* sang again three times, to the different spirits, and each time was followed by the chorus that echoed in the darkness of the trees. The dancing circle went round all the time, and when one girl got tired, another came out from the crowd and took her place. The dance lasted for about an hour. But the hundreds of faces lit up by the flickering light, the insistent sound of the dancing feet, and those clear ringing voices are something I shall never forget, any more than I can ever forget that nick in the hills, my first sight of the Abor country, where the Brahmaputra comes rushing out into the Plains.

So I came down the steep track among the trees for the last time, and on the following morning got into the dug-out waiting by the bank to take me down-stream. The roar of the long rapid outside the gorge grew fainter and fainter, the Hills lost their sharpness and became just a wall in the distance, and the whole country and its people had gone out of my life, but they can never go from my memory.

The year I left Assam saw further changes in the administration of its Frontier. Two Frontier Tracts were constituted. The Political Officer of the Balipara Tract, which extended westwards from the Subansiri to Bhutan, was given control of the Akas, Apatanang, and Dafia tribes. To protect this section of the Frontier a battalion of military police, the 5th (Lokra) Battalion, was stationed at Lokra, under the Hills. The Political Officer, Sadiya Frontier Tract, remained in control of the Singpho, Khamti, and Mishmi tribes of the Lohit and Dibang watersheds, together with the

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Abors and Galongs. What is now the 2nd (Lakhimpur) Assam Rifles had moved to Sadiya before these new arrangements were made. The Deputy Commissioners of Darrang and Lakhimpur no longer had even an indefinite control of what had been the frontiers of their districts. In fact, the Sadiya Frontier Tract now extends, for some distance, along the left bank of the Brahmaputra, and farther down river than Kobo. Only the Frontier Tract facing the Burma side beyond Margherita is left in the Lakhimpur District. When I was in Assam there were two regular Indian infantry battalions in the province. But the battalion stationed at Dibrugarh, with detachments at Sadiya and on the western end of the Assam border, has been taken away from the province. This battalion, however, was not used for minor expeditions, nor was it included in the Abor Field Force.

It undoubtedly looks well to see two Frontier battalions on the northern border, to control the hill tribes, where there was only one before, but the Provincial Government and the battalion commandants have future and present troubles to face. The Assam Government feel that the Frontier Tracts and backward districts should be excluded from Assam proper, and be administered by the Provincial Governor in Council as Agent for the Governor-General, and that India as a whole should foot the bill. As it is, the Central Government pays four-fifths of the cost of defence, that is to say, of the upkeep of the Assam Rifles. For the local authorities lay great stress on the fact that these districts are held to protect all India, as well as the

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province, from invasion. In the second place, the hill tribes, and their settlements in the Plains, are now being dealt with by British officers, and if Indians should be appointed in place of them, the Provincial Government hold it would be looked on as a breach of faith that the tribes would resent. This would lead to endless trouble and disturbance. But the Indianization of the Services is bound in time to make it impossible for the Local Government to post British officers to these Tracts.

Administration, even of a frontier that seems too quiet for headlines in the daily papers, has its difficulties apart from disturbances such as the Dafla raid of 1918, when fifty-nine people were carried off into the Hills. Within the last few years the Aka tribe, a people of higher culture than any of the hill-men to the east of their country, were greatly weakened by an influenza epidemic, and the Daflas began to attack them. The Akas represented to the Political Officer, Balipara, that he should protect them, or they would be obliged to come down and settle in the Plains. The Government of India consequently agreed to the establishment of an outpost in the Aka country. The alternative would have meant the occupation of the Aka Hills by the Daflas, a serious threat to the trade from Tibet, which might easily have led to trouble with that country.

Control of the Abor country, within the foothills, is now exercised by small "promenades" of an assistant political officer, with an escort of the Lakhimpur Assam Rifles from Pasighat.

While the troubles of the Provincial Government largely consist of the difficulties anticipated

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from Indianization, those of the commandants of the Assam Rifles are immediate. The strength of the Lakhimpur Battalion was originally 1 commandant, 2 assistant commandants, 16 Gurkha and Indian officers, and 800 N.C.O.'s and men. We had to enlist a proportion of Gurkhas settled in Assam, but few recruits from this source were satisfactory. The deterioration from the home-grown stock was most marked, and it was not possible to use such men, although, of course, there were exceptions, on any difficult and important column work. They did very well as "employed men", and arrangements were made accordingly. The same remark applies to the Jharuas (local Assamese Plains people), whom we also enlisted in small numbers. The Assam Rifles are now in a different position. The establishment of the 2nd (Lakhimpur) and 5th (Lokra) Battalions is to-day 4 British officers (of whom one of the assistant commandants is not acutally posted), 14 Indian officers, and 700 other ranks. The two battalions total 1400 men to protect a frontier we guarded with less than two-thirds the force, although to set against this there is now only one regular Indian Army battalion in the province, stationed at Shillong. But the difficulty facing the commandants comes from the present method of recruitment. The 2nd (Lakhimpur) Battalion has now to enlist 62½ per cent Gurkhas, and the remainder natives of the province, and the 5th (Lokra) Battalion 50 per cent Gurkhas and 50 per cent natives of the province. Nor is this all. Since 1920 the Government of India has stopped the old method which gave us recruits, Limbus and Rais chiefly, direct from Nepal, as the Gurkha regi-

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ments of the Indian Army are recruited. It is now laid down that the Gurkhas enlisted in the Assam Rifles must be recruited in Assam itself. All outside recruiting has been closed down, and, apart from the 1st Battalion who enlist a proportion of Lushais, and the 4th Battalion who enlist Kukis (both being on the Burma side of Assam), the commandants have to rely on Jharuas, who show a greater disinclination to enlist every year, and on recruits from among the hundred thousand Gurkha settlers, who mostly become graziers and rapidly degenerate. The standard of the recruits has been lowered, but the battalions are not up to full strength. This is not a pleasant outlook for the future, and as regards the past, a matter for regret. The Military Police have always shown a high standard of efficiency, and during the Great War they trained a number of drafts for service with regular battalions. To quote the Memorandum of the Government of Assam to the Indian Statutory Commission, "It will be a serious loss to the Province and to the Empire if the Assam Rifles, owing to recruiting difficulties, cease to be an effective force for frontier defence".

CHAPTER XIII

1914 TO THE ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

The War Office, 1915-16—Interviews and a German spy—In France—Submarine, aeroplane, and tank—The U-boat—Fort Sandeman and a Waziri raid—The School of Mountain Warfare—Jhansi—Conditions on the North-West Frontier to 1932—A voyage to England—Egypt, after the War—The Round Table Conference.

WHEN I reached Calcutta the *Emden* was at large in the Bay of Bengal, and was busy letting India know it by shelling Fort St. George. The Hugli was full of steamers, all of them non-starters; so after a few days pleasantly spent with the civil surgeon, I went to Bombay, where ships were sailing. The steamer that took me home was crowded with rubber planters from the F.M.S. going home to join up, and soldiers of every branch and rank with Government passages. The remainder were scientists of the British Association on their way back from Australia. As the *Emden* had vanished as suddenly as she had appeared off Madras, none of us were sorry when the battleship *Ocean* came up and escorted us the rest of the way to Aden. I had last seen *Ocean* at Gibraltar when she was one of the eight best ships in the British Fleet. Port Said gave us further evidence that there was a war on. A battle-cruiser, I think *Indomitable*, was evicting a number of German ships that had overstayed

their time in the sanctuary of the Canal, and an escort was waiting outside in the three-mile limit to take them to Alexandria. As she passed a French steamer astern of us, the cruiser's band played the "Marseillaise", and then struck up "Hearts of Oak", while we cheered the big cruiser slipping along below us for all we were worth. I had never before realised how low a battle-cruiser sits in the water.

We got to Malta at night, and the darkness was pencilled with searchlights, raking the sea in all directions. The harbour of Marseilles, when we touched there, was full of transports, and the town full of rumours. No one, of course, could get to London overland, and the ship with all its passengers went on to Plymouth, where nearly everybody landed. I thought the Channel might be interesting, so I stayed on board; but unless some booms and a couple of destroyers off Dover can be called exciting, I had a dull time to Tilbury.

After various disagreeable medical things had happened to me, Lady Dudley sent me to some kindly and hospitable people near Crowborough, who had turned their house into a nursing home. From there I was sent up to London twice a week by car for surgical treatment. One evening, when I was returning with my host and we were passing through Mitcham, the excessively drunken driver—of a hearse of all things—drove the pole of his ominous vehicle clean through the window on my side. The car and I were both rather badly damaged, and it was nearly one in the morning when a perturbed matron took me up to my room.

The doctors finally decided, very sensibly, that my best tonic would be a spot of work, so I went

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up to the War Office and saw the D.A.A.G. and Staff Captain of the Indian Section, Military Secretary's Department. I had last met the D.A.A.G. at the Harrow dinner Lord Hardinge gave at Viceregal Lodge the year before, when I was up in Simla after the Dihang Surveys. There was talk of the Indian Depôt at Milford, but in the end I was taken into the War Office, and attached to M.S.1, India, as an officer clerk.

The D.A.A.G. lived downstairs, on the first floor, in the passage-like slip of a room leading into Lord Kitchener's office, where Colonel Fitzgerald worked at the table near the door. The Staff Captain and I at first shared a large room with the M.S. (Cavalry), and one of the first events of my first day at work was an exclamation from that officer, "Good Lord, I've just given a cavalry commission to a man with a wooden leg!" Our work in M.S.1, India, had the interest of great variety. One paper, I remember, was an early list of British prisoners interned by the Germans. The list gave the usual details—age, religion, and so on. One is used to fancy religions in the Service, but two of the recorded faiths were quite new to me—as such. One undefeated sportsman had given his religion as "Stockbroker" and the other as "Scotsman". The D.A.A.G. frequently brought up special work to be done with the utmost rapidity for the Secretary of State. As the Gallipoli operations had begun, and Lord Kitchener was dealing with the details himself, some of the telegrams to and from the Mediterranean were intensely interesting, and I soon got accustomed to the butterfly-like initial of the Secretary of State.

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Things of a lighter nature came up too. There was the Inventor's File, in which obviously idiotic ideas, of the Sea Lion order, were caricatured; and it was quite by an oversight that the collection appeared one morning on Lord Kitchener's desk, to his great amusement. I wonder who has that File now. Speaking of illustrations, whenever Sir Mark Sykes came to the War Office to explain something to somebody, there was a desperate scrimmage to get hold of the bit of paper, or even blotting paper, on which he drew and scribbled while he talked. The winners used to frame their trophies and hang them up in their rooms. Now and again typewritten bits of prose and verse were sent round. Some of them were intensely clever, particularly the new Athanasian Creed (on the three Mediterranean commands), and the ingeniously rhymed limerick beginning "There was a young man of the War Office", which, it is understood, was written by a most distinguished officer. Sitting in an office in a sort of rabbit-hutch containing a thousand officers and ten thousand clerks was not what any of us felt we should be doing, and these things helped to lighten the day. So did the announcement of one of the messengers—a man named Dolphin, who should, of course, have been across the way at the Admiralty. Dolphin brought in the pink slip of one of the forty or fifty people whom we interviewed daily, and who were quite certain, in the spring of 1915, that they would not get out before the war was over. I had that feeling myself. The Staff Captain said: "Show the officer in". To which Dolphin replied, as someone in mufti appeared at the door, "It isn't an officer, it's a gentleman".

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In the early summer of 1915, the Staff Captain went to France, and I was given two red tabs, in his place. This opened out my work to many other rooms, from the actresses deciphering obscure German letters behind sentries at the top of the building, to the even grimmer portals of the Finance people in the depths beneath. I once took down some correspondence that failed to strike them in the way it did me. An officer, in the course of his unconscious journey on a stretcher from the front line towards the casualty clearing station, had his set of false teeth "conveyed" in another way. He applied for compensation. Finance asked how long he had possessed these dentures. The officer replied so many years. "Then", retorted Finance, "you are only entitled to £5 : 10s., as a fixed percentage (which they named) is deducted for each year for wear and tear." In his reply, the officer congratulated himself that he had not worn his dentures longer, as in that event he would apparently owe the War Office money for having had them stolen.

The D.A.A.G. asked me one day if I would care to take a trip across the water as King's Messenger. I was hardly fit enough to chance a medical board, but this was at least an opportunity to see for myself if I couldn't replace some sort of casualty over there. My actual duty was performed in due course, and received that gracious recognition Royalty never fails to bestow on the most insignificant of services done. But as an endeavour to get to France, it was rather unfortunate. In fact, I was carpeted before the Adjutant-General at

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G.H.Q. before I left the country, and returned to the War Office.

When Lord Kitchener went to Gallipoli to decide if the Peninsula should be evacuated, the D.A.A.G. went with him, and I got a closer insight into higher things. "It would serve no useful purpose", to use the official *cliché*, to rake afresh among dead embers. But "A Tale of Two Interpretations, being the true and inward account of the stupendous events which occurred in the week ending Saturday, 6th November 1915", shortly called "The Goat", may be taken as a fair and true summary of what happened in London.

Early in 1916 the D.A.A.G. became Assistant Secretary to Colonel Hankey, and I became D.A.A.G., M.S.1, India. My work now ranged from questions to be answered in Parliament to trotting round representatives of a Power who had not as yet joined the Allies, and all kinds of interviews were sandwiched in between the dictation of innumerable letters.

The interviews with people who wanted to see Lord Kitchener and had to be content with a masquerader in Staff uniform, and a junior one at that, gave me plenty to do, and sometimes still more to think about. A man running a large munitions factory told me a story on his return from Russia that seems worth repeating. He went over to arrange supplies of ammunition for the Russian armies. He was sent to see a certain Grand Duke, and was shown into a room whose walls were crowded with paintings, chiefly old masters, and all but one obviously of great value. The Grand Duke came in, and said: "Ah, I see you are looking at my

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pictures; quite a nice collection, are they not?" The munitions man agreed, and added, "But what is that hideous-looking oleograph doing in the middle of them?" "That", said the Grand Duke, "is the most valuable picture in the room, and you are going to buy it for two hundred thousand roubles before we begin to talk business."

One interview was more like a chapter from the works of E. Phillips Oppenheim than the even tenor of a secretary's life in Whitehall. The name of a senior captain, Indian Army, was brought in, while we were engaged with an official from the India Office. The India Office man considerably said that the rest of his business could wait, as the other fellow probably only wanted an extension of leave; and when the officer came in, this was precisely what he wished to get. As he had just been put in charge of a detachment guarding an important cable station, the applicant was told to come back next day. There were naturally people to be consulted first. As soon as the door closed behind the officer and his attendant messenger, the India Office man said: "I know that man. He was mixed up in a scandal out in India some years ago, and he's no more a British officer than my boot. He's a German. There is someone in the India Office who can identify him with certainty." It was arranged that this identification should take place when the applicant came back next day for his leave. In the meantime we got busy in other directions. But how that German originally got taken on for employment as "fit for duty in this country" beat me. The German arrived, and the identifier at a desk in the far corner made the agreed signal. As soon as

the leave papers were handed over to him—and I never felt so incredibly mean as I did at that moment—the German left the room. A telephone message to the small party waiting by the door downstairs finished the business as far as M.S.1, India, went.

It was during the last fortnight of my time at the War Office that two of the outstanding events of the war happened. I heard the news of the battle of Jutland in a curiously direct way. Some business or other took me to the Censor's room, and I found him in the act of answering the telephone. The moment he began to listen, his face changed expression, and he beckoned to me to take the other receiver. I then heard an Admiralty official give the War Office the account of Jutland that was to be communicated to the Press. It amounted to our losses, chiefly, although the voice at the other end of the wire added some less gloomy details, that were not put into the first announcement. That evening Lord Ernest Hamilton gave me a lift home from a house where we had both been dining, and told me that the Admiralty communiqué took that form in order to deal with the serious industrial unrest on the Clyde. To me the news, as I heard it over the telephone, had sounded like a defeat of the Grand Fleet, which in point of fact still held the sea, with the German Navy back in its harbours.

The second event was the loss of Lord Kitchener, Colonel Fitzgerald, O'Beirne of the Foreign Office, and almost the entire ship's company of the *Hampshire*. During the last year of Lord Kitchener's life, he and Fitzgerald had been more than ever insepar-

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able, and the end that Lord Kitchener believed would be his, on the water, came to them together. It had been understood that Mr. Lloyd George was accompanying the party to Russia, but the country was spared that further disaster. Nothing could possibly have been more impressive than the memorial service at St. Paul's, when the silver trumpets of the Household Troops sounded the Last Post, and the call echoed and died away high up in the great dome.

If I was to get to France, it had to be done without an appearance before a medical board, and when I was sent, towards the end of June, to the 2nd London Scottish, in the 179th Brigade commanded by a neighbour in Caithness, Brigadier-General Baird, I hoped to stay with them. The battalion was in the line, about Neuville St. Vaast by the Vimy Ridge. But an unfortunate habit of falling down suddenly, as if pole-axed, which hadn't mattered particularly in the War Office, did not add to my usefulness in the trenches. I had my chance of an instructorship at the Army School started by General Kentish, where Betts showed his pupils how the bayonet should be used. But with so many people who had been through the mill to earn the job, and were really far better qualified, I had not the neck to take it. There remained a choice between going back to the Staff, or withdrawing even farther behind the line, to England. I chose the better of these alternatives, and, after an acting appointment with the XVIIth Corps, went up to Ypres as D.A.A. and Q.M.G. of the 38th (Welsh) Division. In the end, the India Office ran me to earth, and sent me back to India

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early in 1917. I am, therefore, in no way qualified to join the company of those who have written with full knowledge and experience about the war. Nor have I any intention of talking, as others have done, through a brass hat.

My experiences, therefore, of the war in Europe are soon told. When still in the War Office, two of us went down to Harwich to take a trip through the North Sea in a submarine of the E Class. We reached the Harwich barrier after dark, and the N.C.O. commanding the guard on the approaches nearly dropped his lantern when he asked whose car it was, and was told Lord Kitchener's. Flotilla leaders and destroyers came out as well as submarines, and we had an interesting time on the surface. Getting below on the "prepare to dive" was a bit hectic; in fact, jumping on to the deck of a bobbing launch after lunch on a big cruiser, with an impatient admiral in a hurry to land at Gibraltar, was nothing to it. I returned to Harwich with two bits of information I had not known before. There was a fair lop on the sea, and while the destroyers twisted like corkscrews on the top of it, we, who were clinging to the platform rail of the submarine, simply went straight through the waves. It was an exhilarating, but rather breathless, experience. Later on we sat on the bottom of the North Sea. I then made the discovery, in a place offering nothing but machinery and gadgets for a seasick landsman, that a shallow sea is rough all the way down. We bounced up and down like a tennis ball, while I fervently hoped that there were no sharp rocks carelessly lying about.

In France it was possible, while I was in the

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60th Division, to get taken up to see behind the German lines from the air, and this was quite my best experience. As a set-off to this, a ride in the earliest type of tank was like being shaken rather violently in a large saucepan filled with spanners over a good fire.

When I was still at Maison Blanche, I managed to get short leave to Paris, and reached the railway near Amiens through the kindness of a carful of stockbrokers turned pay officers, and by some lucky lorry-hopping. It had been queer enough to go from the Abor country, where one frankly picnicked all the time, to lunches at Viceregal Lodge and Snowdon up in Simla. But to take one's tea in the morning off an old Continental *Daily Mail* in a dug-out and find oneself at a dinner party in Paris the same evening was a more sudden contrast. All I wanted to do really was to go to sleep, and I'm not sure that I didn't after dinner. But I remember Boni de Castellane telling me that he had built his house, by the Bois, of that beautiful marble because it would make such a lovely ruin in fifty years' time.

The Indian Mail from Victoria, for Marseilles, carried about twenty-five passengers, two of whom were ladies, when I went back to India. At Marseilles we embarked on one of the smallest steamers, Channel boats and river steamers excepted, that I have seen; and we set out accompanied by a still smaller French sloop that kept on losing us. We put in at Malta, and picked up about thirty dagoes off a torpedoed ship, bound for Port Said. We must have seen almost every island in the Mediterranean before we reached the Canal, but our one adventure

overtook us somewhere off Cape Bon. A U-boat appeared, of course while our escorting sloop was nowhere about. At the first innocuous round from the gun in our bows, the dagoes made for the two largest boats as one man, and simultaneously over the screen of the bridge appeared the furious face of our captain, looking more like Captain Owen Kettle than ever. The likeness was heightened by the large revolver which he immediately fired over the heads of the dagoes struggling into the boats. Like a scene in a pantomime, punctuated by the reports of our gun, they all scrambled out and fled before the captain had time to carry out his threat to fire into the middle of them. The U-boat also disappeared. We must have been too small to hit with a torpedo. Then the sloop turned up from quite an unexpected direction, the King's Messenger took his bags down below again, and we continued our zigzag voyage to Port Said in peace. One of the lady passengers whom we had put down as going out to be married, had been running a laboratory in England, and was now joining her equally scientific husband at a cordite factory in Southern India. The other lady, Miss Maggie May, was going out to marry a man in Calcutta. With a good pianist on board, we had many opportunities of enjoying the songs from the musical comedies in which Maggie May had delighted the audiences of Daly's.

My first station, after I landed, was Hyderabad Sind, one of the hottest and sandiest places in India, and an abrupt change from the Salient, which had been under snow when I left it. My new regiment was the 2/19th Punjabis, then being

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raised by Lieutenant-Colonel Churchill, who was killed later on in Palestine during Lord Allenby's advance on Jerusalem. We had not done much more than collect enough recruits to bring the battalion almost up to strength, on paper, when we got our route for Fort Sandeman. The place was, of course, named after the great Baluchistan administrator, Sir Robert Sandeman, but the first two syllables of the name entirely describe the march up to it.

Fort Sandeman lay on the edge of a barren, rocky plain. The mess was on one little red hill, and the political officer's house was on another just beyond the lines of the Zhob Levies. There was a hard bit of flat on which we could play polo, on Levy ponies (whose legs apparently can stand anything) hired out at eight annas an afternoon; and there was a station library with a lawn and some trees about it.

Churchill and I shared a bungalow, and one evening as I was having a leisurely tub he strolled in, as we did upon one another, looked at my mess kit laid out by my bearer, and said, "Well, you won't be wearing that, anyway". The Waziris had invested an outpost fort about eighteen miles away, and Churchill had come along to break it to me that I was to go out to relieve the place. The other major was getting the column and transport ready to move, and dinner was waiting for me in the mess.

No one can ever have inveighed more loudly than I have against night operations in mountain warfare with anything except highly trained troops; and I knew only too well that thirty-eight old soldiers were all the battalion possessed, and there were only 120 other men who had even fired their recruits' course of musketry. The column con-

tained practically all these, and we started off into the night for a march through country none of us had ever seen.

There was only one thing for it. The thirty-eight men came with me as advanced guard, and, after the moon rose, had to act as piqueting troops as well, whenever spurs running down to the road made that form of protection unavoidable. The special protection at night, of course, is speed. We came close up to the Post at dawn; and I think the bulk of the column must have had the same effect on the enemy as Bruce's camp followers had upon Edward II.'s army at Bannockburn. We exchanged a shot or two and the tribesmen disappeared. There were some cavalry acting on one flank, and I believe the total enemy casualties actually found was not a dozen. After this minor excitement I retired to the hospital at Quetta. When I was fit enough to go down to the Club in the afternoon, I met the Indian policeman who is the origin of Kipling's "Strickland", just back from a prowl in disguise along the Border.

While still in hospital, I was appointed to the School of Mountain Warfare at Abbottabad, where I found myself Senior Instructor. The Commandant, Lieutenant-Colonel (afterwards Brigadier-General) W. Villiers Stuart, cramped though he was through lack of Government funds, and at times even ordinary support, succeeded in impressing upon a steady flow of students of all British commissioned and non-commissioned ranks the principles of mountain warfare. There is so much in this vitally important business that the average soldier in India gets no opportunity of learning. Theory

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and the sand table cannot teach the rapid tackling of situations unexpectedly sprung upon even the smallest body of men in a Frontier campaign. The School of Mountain Warfare supplied both the men for the students to handle, and a carefully trained enemy who did all that was least expected of them, on the rocky spurs out of Abbottabad.

The two places I found it the greatest wrench to leave were the Abor Hills and Abbottabad, but the time to leave the School of Mountain Warfare came with my appointment as Brigade-Major, Jhansi. The Jhansi Brigade was a training area, with the strength of a full division, and it was commanded by another born trainer of troops in the Hampshire cricketer, Brigadier-General R. M. Poore. I had known Lady Flora years before, and they were both extremely kind to me. This is hardly the place to enter upon a detailed description of the Jhansi system of training; but shortly, it relied on interesting the men and awakening their intelligence and sense of individual value and responsibility to such a degree that, given the right instructors to supervise, a raw recruit out of a village would become a reliable trained soldier in eight months.

Although we were not hit by the influenza epidemic as severely as cantonments farther north, where men died in hundreds as if it were the great plague of London, we found it serious enough; added to which there was an unpleasant amount of plague, from which the troops were kept free, in the district.

By the beginning of 1919, I made up my mind to return to regimental duty, and went to Army Headquarters in Delhi to see about it. It was

eventually arranged that I should take over command of the 31st Regimental Depôt at Jhelum, where we had 1200 men under training, and be sent at the earliest opportunity to the battalion, which by this time had left Mespot. and gone to Constantinople. There was a great deal of interest in working up mountain warfare demonstrations for the Jhelum Brigade and introducing the Jhansi training system, but the main, and one important event while I was at Jhelum was the extremely serious outbreak of unrest in the Punjab. The ladies in the station had to sleep in the Fort, and we were, in fact, in a state of war. I do not propose to go into the ethics of General Dyer's action, but the result of the affair at Amritsar, with the additional advantage of a strong Lieutenant-Governor, was immediate and complete quiet throughout the province.

Almost immediately after the trouble in the Punjab ended, a medical board, which had been hovering for some little time, swooped down upon me and ordered me back to England. So I went down to Bombay and said good-bye to the Punjab and the North-West Frontier. I also said good-bye to a way of getting to Europe which I had planned for when I left India. There was an Indian cavalry officer serving at Jhelum whom I had got to know at the War Office when he came over from Russia to report on the Murmansk railway business in 1916. How he had worked it I do not know, but he had a pass for two, signed by Lenin, to travel through Russia. We made out our route, through Mespot., across the Black Sea to Sevastopol and then by train (if and when we could get one) to

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Moscow and Leningrad. But one cannot have all the luck all the time.

The changes on the Border since first I saw it had been considerable, and were brought about by tribal rearmament. After 1897 the tribes began steadily to discard their obsolete weapons for others far more effective than those of our Border Militia and Military Police. This rearmament was made by gun-running from the Persian Gulf, and large consignments of rifles began to find their way to the tribes, through Kandahar. Between 1907 and 1909 no less than 90,000 rifles, many of them .303's, were poured into the country in this way, and a great proportion of them got into the hands of the trans-border tribes. No greater threat to peace on the Frontier could be imagined. It is ever present, and one can only hope that the League of Nations, which has so effectively dealt with the drug traffic, may in the end be equally successful in putting down private trading in arms.

By the time that the Indian Government set up a blockade to stop the traffic, a large number of the tribesmen had sunk almost every rupee they possessed in the profitable investment of gun-running. The Adam Khel Afridis of the Kohat Pass, who in earlier days had built up a profitable business copying rifles, finding their occupation killed by the Gulf trade, had taken to gun-running with immense enthusiasm. They now, with some humour, sent in a bill to the Indian Government for compensation due to their financial loss under the naval blockade.

The Frontier had by this time started its own

small armament race. With the tribes so generally armed with modern weapons, the Government had to re-arm the local forces, and issue better weapons to villagers in the administered districts than they had previously allowed them for their own protection.

By 1919 Mills' bombs, or something very like them, had appeared on the wrong side of the Border. Now a hand-grenade is a nasty thing in a trench, but when it explodes inside the stone walls of a *sangar*, which is the only possible defence for a piquet on the stony hills of the North-West, it can do no end of damage.

The British authorities met the new conditions by holding the Frontier with aeroplanes, and this policy is still pursued. Opinion is divided over the use of aeroplanes on the North-West Frontier. It is inexpensive, the radius of action is almost unlimited, the aeroplane is quick to strike, and its objective cannot be foreseen. But its value has been, I think, to some extent lessened by the newly acquired habit of the *lashkars* to move at night, and they have learned the advantages of infiltration tactics. Added to this, far from aeroplanes being able to hold any position, if they are obliged to make a forced landing in hostile country they are lost. Finally, there is the undoubted bitterness that bombing raids leave behind them. We want peace and mutual trust and liking on the Border, and it may be questioned if this is the way to find it when dealing with a man like the Pathan.

But about the latest phase in Frontier policy there can be no two opinions. Peace by roads has been advocated for years by everyone who combines

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a knowledge of the Border with General Wade's policy in our own Highlands a hundred and eighty years ago. On the one hand, the motor roads that are being made so systematically through the Hills enable us to use mechanised transport across the Border. The forces garrisoning Parachinar and Razmak, in the depths of the Tirah and the heart of Waziristan respectively, are on first-class roads. The other side of the picture makes at least equally for peace. The wild tribesman is learning the benefits of civilisation. Not only has the Wali of Swat made motor roads for his own convenience through his territory to the north of the Malakand, but the ordinary tribesman is also learning the value of the motor car. The Pathan to-day packs himself into his old Ford, in his village at the back of beyond, or gets into a char-à-banc crowded with others like himself and rattles down to do his shopping in India. The only difference between the arrival of his bus and a long-distance coach in this country is the provision by the Government of India of cloak-rooms where the tribesmen have to leave their weapons, and get them out again when they go back to their homes. Not only are the roads becoming a convenience and a habit, but their construction has brought working pay to the tribesmen who help to make them, and more money for *khassadars* to guard them. The roads, in 1932, hold out the one promise of eventual settled peace on a Frontier that has seen seventy-two expeditions in as many years.

In order to give a sketchy description of one phase of the situation on the North-West Frontier I have run on too far, even for wandering memories

like these, and must now get back to the Prince's Hospital, Bombay, in 1919. On the 3rd of June, after watching the monsoon break on the Indian coast from behind the glass of the hospital verandah, a consignment of us embarked on the hospital transport *Erinpura*. It is unnecessary to describe monsoon weather. Those who have been through it need no reminder. It seemed as if the Indian Ocean spent more time upon the *Erinpura* than the *Erinpura* did upon the Indian Ocean. But we got to Aden at last, and the quiet water of the Red Sea. Of all the books I could possibly have chosen to read on the voyage, Conrad's *Typhoon* was about the most unfortunate. It was almost painfully realistic, and gave me, when I went to sleep the night we passed Aden, one of the most vivid dreams I have ever had. I dreamed I was in the *Titanic*, and when she struck the iceberg the fearful catastrophe was so real to me that it woke me up, and I switched on the light. At that moment I heard a startled cry from the bows, followed immediately by a rasping crash, and chunks of something white came flying past my port-hole. The crash had made me sit up in more senses than one. I rolled out of bed and, shoving my money into the pockets, got into my fur-lined coat. That had been ice. I was in the *Titanic*. The bell had rung from bridge to engine-room, the engines had stopped, and the ship was humming with life. I went up on deck, and only then did I wake sufficiently to realise that we were not in the Atlantic but in the middle of the Red Sea, in the middle of June, and hard on a reef. What I had seen flashing past was coral, when we struck. The heat below

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had been so great that most fortunately all the men in the wards forward had been sleeping on deck, for their quarters had been jammed together like a sandwich, and we had a hole in the hull nearly a hundred and fifty feet long. There was a full moon, but the sea was almost blotted out by a low thick fog that did not quite come up to where we were standing. There were no lighthouses then functioning in the Red Sea, and we were miles out of our course. Suddenly the fog drifted away a little, and we saw the long, low, crescent-shaped reef, with its curious parallel grooves of coral. The rather strained silence in which we all gazed at the cause of our misfortune was broken from the well deck below by the remark: "Something me, but them's the marks of Pharaoh's chariots".

We were taken off eventually in little boats by the cruiser *Topaze* and landed at Aden. Only two hand packages were allowed each passenger, and a refugee Russian colonel from Central Asia went off with a bird-cage in one hand and a box containing a blue cat in the other. The Arabs had a fine old time looting the rest of our kit later on. Transport in 1919 was rather in demand, and it was a fortnight before we could get a ship to take us as far as Suez. Although we were having a rather memorable voyage, the whisky and soda I was given in the hospital train to Alex. remains one of my strongest memories.

At Alex. we got a ship immediately, and the morning being June weather in the Mediterranean, we all settled ourselves on deck and watched the flat shore-line of Egypt, with its silhouette of pale blue and white cardboard-looking buildings, as they

faded away in the distance. This pleasant occupation was prematurely ended by the ship suddenly beginning to turn round in circles, and someone said she must be looking for something she had lost. It was only too true; she had lost something, and unfortunately it was one of the propellers. So we crawled our crab-like way back to Alexandria for a fortnight in Ras-el-Tin hospital.

Our next attempt to get home took us nearly to Marseilles without any incident whatever, although there was some speculation as to whether a paravane really would keep off one of the loose floating mines with which the Mediterranean was then inconveniently crowded. But while we were having lunch, about an hour out of Marseilles, suddenly, and from a sky with only one smallish cloud in it, there fell a large heavenly body quite close to the ship. The shock was considerable, and the noise so great that a steward passing behind me called upon his Creator, and then poured the contents of a tureen full of very hot soup down my neck.

There were two hospital trains waiting for us at Marseilles, and all that happened to me on No. 1 was some very pleasant bridge, partnered by one of the best-known figures in the racket court at Queen's, against the two train doctors. But even at this stage the misfortunes of the party were not over. Train No. 2 was hours late at Havre, and finally enlarged an extremely cross set of passengers. It appeared that, soon after leaving Marseilles, the middle coach of their train caught fire and was burned out. There were no casualties of any kind, but the entire supply of food for the journey had gone to blazes with the kitchen, and the occupants

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of the train had been living almost entirely on tins of cold bully beef. After all this, the sudden appearance of the bows of a large steamer above our deck, as we crossed to Southampton in a fog, hardly seems worth mentioning.

Two years later, while still unfit for service in India, the War Office arranged for my employment with G.H.Q. Egypt, and I landed again in that country in the summer of 1921. The systematic murder campaign of those years was just beginning, and after a little C.I.D. work I was appointed permanent President of the Chief Military Court in Cairo. We also took cases and appeals from all over Egypt, and the decisions went up to Whitehall. It was rather anxious work at first without a Judge Advocate General, but luckily I had been interested in law all my life. In Assam I had the powers of a first-class magistrate; and Archbold on Evidence, with reports of criminal proceedings at home, particularly cases like the Armstrong trial, which dealt largely with admissibility of evidence, were a great help. Egypt was then, by force of circumstances, being ruled by Proclamation. The police had their work cut out dealing with lawless mobs, usually led by Egyptian students, and armoured cars were at times an unavoidable necessity in the streets. The last important case I tried brought to light the existence of the Black Hand murder gang, shortly before the Proclamation of Independence ended the Military Court and my work in Egypt; the time in between was spent in fighting the organised campaign of murder, which at its height brought about the assassination of an Englishman a fortnight.

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The most dramatic trial with which I had to do was not held in Cairo but in Alex., where some of the 1919 riot cases were still being heard. Several accused were being tried together, three servants and their master, a Turkish shopkeeper. The Turk had no legs; they had been amputated when he was a boy, and he was wheeled into court in a chair. Through all the evidence, his large white face never lost its sickening smile. On the night in question, the poorer districts were being swept by crowds from the dregs of Alexandria, out to kill the foreigner. In the mean streets and squares of that part of the city, the foreigner meant more or less down-and-out Greeks, Italians, and Armenians. The police were powerless; but I like to remember one event recorded of that night. A raging mob were surging, bent on murder and arson, across a big square, when half a dozen British soldiers appeared at one corner of it, and the mob broke instantly in all directions, leaving a deserted square behind them. The moral of that incident is as true in Egypt to-day as it was in 1919. But no British soldiers passed that night through the street where an Armenian lay hidden from the rioters on a low balcony. Exactly opposite his hiding-place stood a shop closed with a shutter-like iron door. From the streets crossing above and below he could hear the angry shouts of a frenzied mob, and every now and then a house close by burst into flames.

Suddenly the Armenian heard a loud rattling noise and found himself looking straight into a brilliantly lighted shop. Along one side ran a broad counter, and on the counter was the unwieldy form of the legless Turk. The stone floor of the shop

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glistened wet from a recent washing down, but the Armenian took little notice of that, till later. One of the servants in the shop strolled out into the road, and at that moment a Greek in a dirty white suit and a straw hat came in sight. The roar of the crowd hunting him sounded close behind. The servant beckoned and pointed to the open door. The Greek seemed dazed with fear, but the servant, with an encouraging smile, put a hand on his wrist, hurried him inside, and the shutter crashed down behind them. How long the shutter remained closed the Armenian could not tell. Ten minutes to him that night must have seemed eternity. But when the iron door was raised again, the Turk still sat on his counter, the servants stood about on a stone floor wet with water, but this time the Armenian saw a battered straw hat at the far end of the room, and on the counter an axe, the steel shining through great dark splashes. The Greek had disappeared.

Again the servant went out, and this time a poor hunted wretch with the mob hard at his heels needed no invitation. He darted into the shop, the servant sprang in after him, and down went the shutter almost in the faces of the pursuers.

Twice more that night the Armenian saw the same scene enacted. Once he saw an axe in a servant's hand. Another time the shutter went up while the servants were throwing pails of water over the floor. Then in the early morning, a British patrol came down the street, and the Armenian lived to give his evidence at the trial.

The prosecution were too heavily handicapped in charging the Turk and his servants with the

murder of four unknown persons, whose bodies were never found, on the uncorroborated evidence of a terrified Armenian. The Turk had a most evil record, both in Constantinople and in Egypt, but for all I know he is still trotting about the streets of Alexandria in his low-wheeled cart. I was particularly anxious to see the street and the Turk's house for myself, but the civil authorities in Alex. made so enormous an escort the only condition on which it would be allowed that I dropped the idea. The unexpected appearance in any part of Cairo of a group of British officers and a policeman, all armed to the teeth, never was, in my opinion, risky, and certainly cleared up one case in the best interests of justice. The defence had seemed incredible on the face of it, but an inspection of the place acquitted the prisoner.

Some of the murders we had to try were so brutal that I had not the slightest compunction in passing the death sentence, but I drew the line at the suggestion made by the authorities on one occasion that I should be present at the execution. If it was necessary that a senior officer should be there, another had to be found than the man who tried the case.

After two medical boards had decided that they could not let me go back to India, there was nothing left for me in 1925 except to retire. But my association with India had not ended, for there still remained work for me to do in connection with the Round Table Conference.

A number of books have been published dealing with the situation in India, and these have been written from various points of view. But few

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authors lay any stress on the fact that an overwhelming majority of the people of India have no views whatever beyond their crops and water supply, the prices they have to pay for the necessaries of life, their dealings with that ever-present evil—the local moneylender—and domestic events under the family roof. The number of people in British India who have never even heard of a Provincial Legislative Council would surprise nearly everyone who has not the experience of an ordinary district officer. With this perfectly natural apathy Congress knows well enough how to deal, and nothing at the moment can be done to counter it by broadcasting in half a million villages. It must be remembered that all present educational advantages notwithstanding, out of every hundred of the 247 million people of British India not more than twenty men and three women, on the most liberal estimate, can either read or write. This includes the appreciable number of men who have received some education in the Indian Army.

I have not the experience necessary for even a reference to the Franchise and the form of Western Government that may be adopted in India, let alone an examination of Communalism. But my work during the Round Table Conference led me to certain first-hand conclusions. The attitude of the representatives of the two-fifths of India held by the Indian States was one of watchful anxiety. Their future relations with the Central Government and, in some cases, with each other make for disturbing uncertainty. The more clamant delegates from British India wanted a settlement by short cuts. The obstacles to this in matters of

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government are beyond my range, but as regards the Indianization of the Indian Army the advocate of the short cut is confronted by the practical problems of supply and training, and the rules of simple arithmetic. Although he did not give the opinion in open discussion at the Round Table Conference, one distinguished delegate was convinced that sixteen years should be the maximum given for the complete substitution of Indian for British officers. By an arrangement made at the end of 1931 with the Prime Minister of Nepal, Gurkha formations are not to come under the scheme, but allowing for this, and assuming a yearly supply of enough cadets of the right stamp for the Indian Sandhurst, it must take a generation to complete Indianization. There are, even now, difficulties in Indianized units themselves; difficulties that are bound to become accentuated when Indian officers reach the stage of promotion to the command of the higher formations; unless in the meantime communalism is peacefully solved to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Congress may sow dragon's teeth, but it cannot make an All-Indian Army rise miraculously at its command, capable of holding the Frontiers. Failure to hold them, and this is not an alarmist view, would mean invasion, chaos, and anarchy throughout India, which British rule, however much criticised it may be in some quarters, now makes impossible. Nor are the Frontiers a matter for India alone. What happens upon them is of Imperial interest, and might at any time affect the entire fabric of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

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