



HIS HIGHNESS THE MAHARAJAH SIR JOODHA SHUM SHERE
JUNG BAHADUR RANA, G.C.I.E.,
PRIME MINISTER AND SUPREME COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF NEPAL

[Frontispiece

THE LAST STRONGHOLDS

By

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Mountains are a glory and an inspiration to man.—*Eastern Proverb*

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To

MY FRIEND

VERNON BARLOW

who, although his name does not
appear on the title-page, has collab-
orated with me in the preparation
and writing of this book

PREFACE

THE world-wide interest excited by the Mount Everest Flight and the prominent part the Himalayas played in the venture, have led me, in response to many inquiries and suggestions, to give a pen picture of that great range of mountains and the lands adjacent to them.

In the preparation of the book I wish to record my grateful appreciation of the courtesy of *The Times* for the use of several photographs taken by them when with the Mount Everest Flight, to the Gaumont British Picture Corporation for a like courtesy, whose operators were working at a height never previously attained by the cinematograph. To the *Sunday Express* I am indebted for permission to use certain material which appeared in their columns.

P. T. ETHERTON

LONDON,
October, 1934

FOREWORD

BY

HIS HIGHNESS THE MAHARAJA SIR JOODHA SHUM SHERE
JUNG BAHADUR RANA, G.C.I.E., PRIME MINISTER AND
SUPREME COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF NEPAL.

THE Himalayas have always exerted a fascination for explorers, for not only are they the highest mountains but are that point on the earth which is in nearest touch with space. The Himalayas have as close neighbours countries which are still largely a sealed book to the rest of the world. No Cæsar of India could ever cross these super-Alps into Central Asia ; they act as one of Nature's mightiest irrigation reservoirs, storing incredible masses of ice and snow that ultimately become the streams providing the water and carrying the silt which give life to millions of people in India's northern plains.

The traveller coming from the West passes for hundreds of miles over the flat ground of the Peninsula, until he reaches the border of the plains where he finds the Himalayas like a wall before him, and although he may have risen two thousand feet the rise is spread over a continent and is too gradual to be noticed.

The Himalayas, and the ranges adjacent to them, have a very real interest. If they are viewed from Darjeeling or from beyond Simla, or a vantage point above our own capital of Khatmandu, there where the earth ends and the sky begins is a crescent of snow-covered peaks which look

out over Nepal, Kashmir, and Tibet, amongst others. Further down are valleys and ravines with steep walls, while so scored are their sides by torrent tracks that they appear like titanic entrenchments, the deserted earthworks of the battling gods. They stand like great battlements, a rampart to shield the sacred snows which touch the blue heaven.

All this region and the neighbouring ranges and lands of which Colonel Etherton writes have a profound interest, whilst the races and tribes to be found there have a peculiar attraction for the explorer and the scientist who are ever striving to add to the world's store of knowledge.

Mankind is indebted to those who, like the author, have penetrated to these by-ways of Nature, given us views and scenes, and contributed much information on peoples and places that are comparatively little-known.

In their exploratory enterprise they have added to the sum of human endeavour and revealed some of the treasures of Nature which are found in and beyond the Himalayas.

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THE LAST STRONGHOLDS

CHAPTER I

NEPAL, THE HERMIT KINGDOM

LOOKING at the Himalayas through the eyes of an eagle or a kite, or even using the more ordinary medium of a map, one of the first natural features to strike the attention would be the mountain kingdom of Nepal. Imagination, kindled to sudden activity, would try to show that surely here of all places should reside the home of adventure, hardihood, and romance.

Behold a thin strip of territory, 500 miles long, a kind of cucumber, that has somehow managed to embrace within its narrow grasp much of the fascinating part of the highest mountains and of the verdant foothills; an Asiatic Switzerland, peopled by a race of sturdy, cheerful mountaineers, ringed by a dazzling array of unscaled peaks, supplying all things needful for a mountain-climber's paradise. Yet this is an Eden from which Adam with his Alpine stock has always been rigorously excluded.

Only on rare occasions has the drawbridge between Nepal and India been lowered to allow the entry of Western visitors. Satisfying the urge of curiosity has never been encouraged. Few Europeans have been granted the good fortune to visit this preserved territory, securely hidden behind the dense covering of the Terai

jungle. Yet how many officers on leave must have cast longing eyes at the fascination of these far, forbidden hills !

The very name of Nepal heralds the unknown, calling up pictures of brown-skinned warriors waving kukris, of strutting peacocks and strange palaces, and of forests bright with tigers. This is the sort of wonderful place, it would seem, where one could hunt like Nimrod, and live in the manner of Haroun Al Raschid.

Khatmandu has become an almost legendary capital associated with romantic poetry and mysterious yellow idols. There are so few untrodden places left in the world for European feet that the last of them, of necessity, impose a peculiar and an added appeal upon the mind. Frontiers in themselves are debatable ground ; add to this the knowledge that this principality gives 25,000 model soldiers to the British army in India, and martial fact begins at once to dominate romantic fiction. In fact, the key to this secret principality has always been a military one.

The decisive period of Nepalese history starts roughly at a period when George III ascended the throne of England, and in the far west the American colonists were turning their thoughts from tea towards independence. About this time, when the Mogul empire was tottering to decay and the warlike Rajputs, many of whom had never really submitted to Moslem rule, again unsheathing their swords, a band of warlike adventurers, themselves of Rajput descent, took the road from Central India to the distant mountains.

Unopposed, they entered the foothills and settled at Gurkha, a small town forty miles from Khatmandu, where they intermarried with existing Mongol stock.

England and France were busy striving for mastery on the hot plains to the south ; all India was in the melting-pot of a new destiny ; golden opportunity awaited the fighting Gurkhas, and they took it, sword in hand.

Inspired by their mountain environment, invigorated with infusions of fresh blood from the neighbouring tribes, they set out on a conquering career that can only be matched in the rapidity of its results and achievement by the rise of the Japanese. In a series of swift raids and forays they traversed a thousand miles of the Himalayas, bringing Sikkim and Bhutan under the sweep of the kukri. In 1792 they invaded Tibet, imposing upon the lamas a wholesome respect that has continued to the present day.

China, angry at such upstart interference in Tibet, girded on the sword of correction. China has always disliked untidy corners in the recesses of her empire.

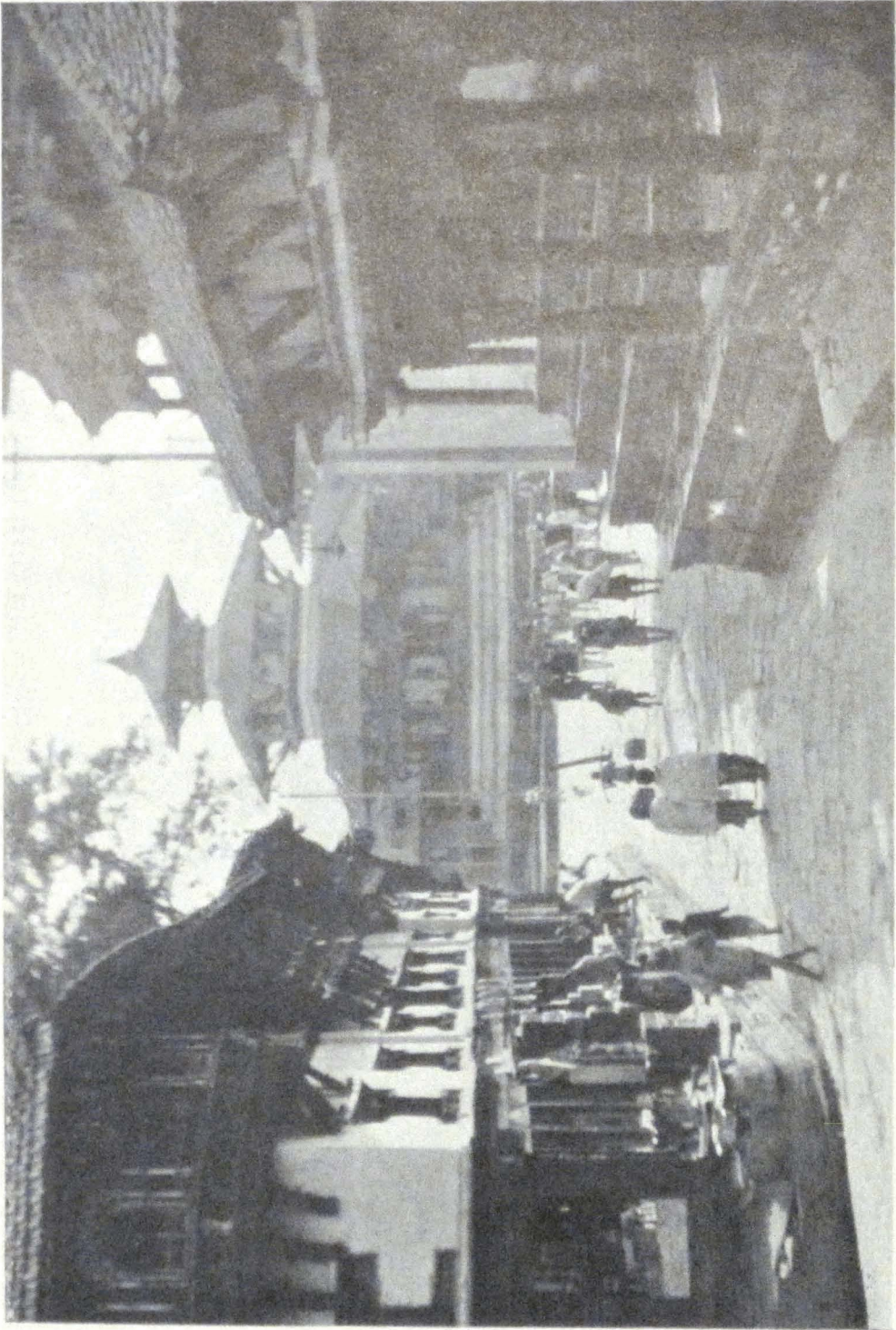
Sitting in state in the Temple of Heaven in Peking, the emperor summoned his favourite general, informed him that all beneath the sun were his subjects, and bid him deal with the situation. General San Fo was given a patchwork army, vague instructions as to the direction of the enemy, and the blessings of the emperor.

His march across Asia, without baggage trains or transport, provides one of the most striking stories in eastern military annals. So long as they remained in inhabited areas the soldiers contrived to live on the country, but soon the deserts confronted them and they were forced to take council. "We cannot advance, and we must not turn back," they cried, "neither can we remain here, for we shall die." The general, imbued with the patience characteristic of the Chinese, evolved a novel stratagem of war. Supplies were necessary for the crossing

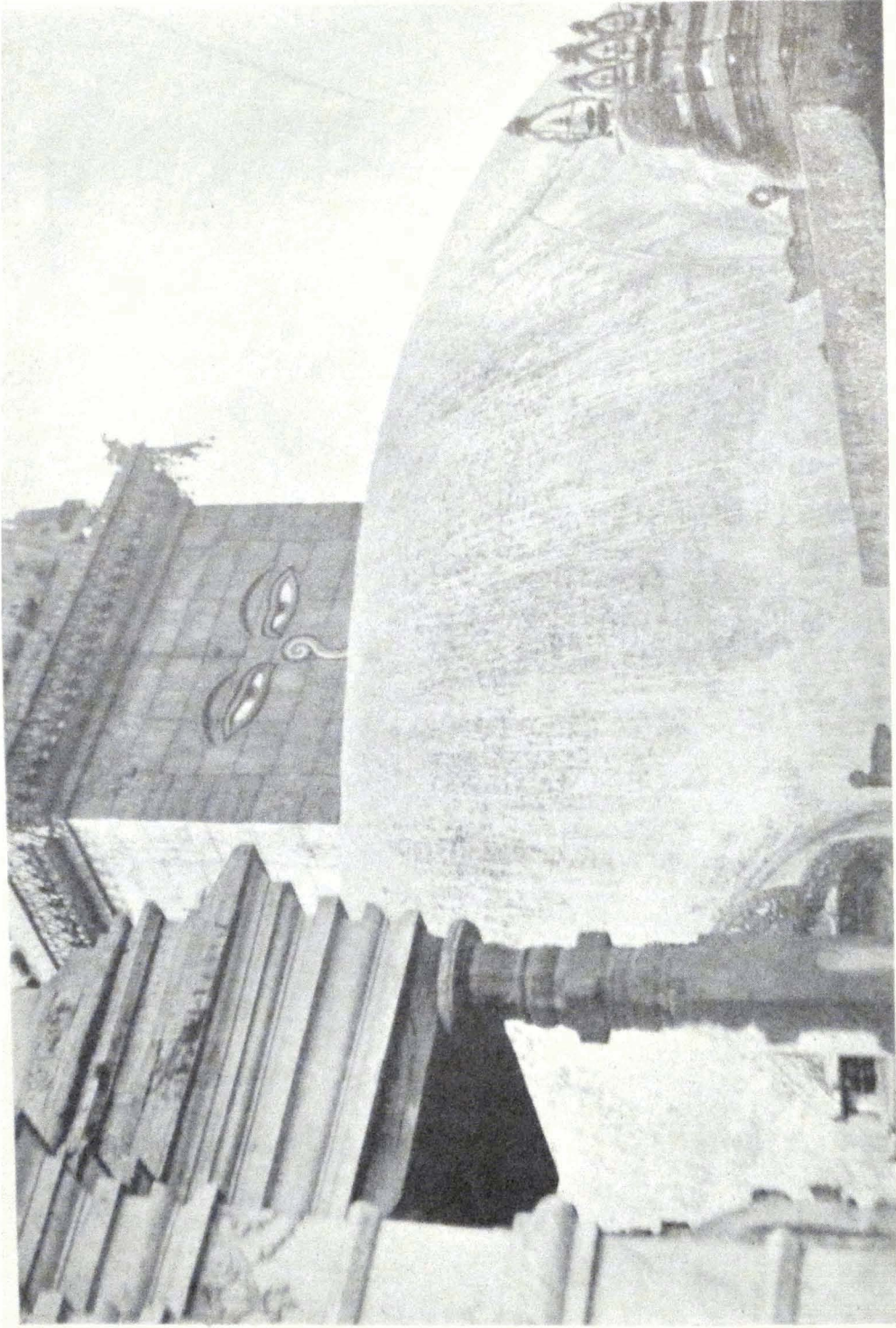
of the wilderness, and they had to be provided. In the space of a few weeks he had turned swords into spades, his soldiers into husbandmen, devoted to the cares of tillage. Crops and cereals were sown on the last patches of fertile ground; in the fullness of time the harvest was gathered, and with renewed strength and replenished supplies the army of 70,000 crossed the desert, and approached its goal. The first man actually to cultivate the art of war, San Fo advanced to within striking distance of Khatmandu. Driving on his soldiers to overwhelm the dreaded Gurkhas by the simple expedient of firing his leather cannon at his own men from behind, San Fo made desperate efforts, but could not gain Khatmandu, so preferring to live in friendship with such valorous people he made peace with them.

Another similar story of celestial craft is told in relation to a Chinese general in Tibet. After a long campaign against the people of Bod, Kung Ming, the Chinese general, offered peace on condition that all land covered by a shot from his bow should be ceded to the Chinese. The Tibetans agreed. But so strongly did Kung Ming bend his bow that the arrow flew out of sight, and was eventually found on a mountain far away, where his followers had previously placed it. Believing that the Chinese leader was a superman, the bewildered Tibetans without further objection granted his terms. Yet all this was only the beginning of the reign of the sword in Nepal.

At the commencement of the nineteenth century the expanding militarism of the Gurkhas fell foul of the British and war was declared; a game of military chess followed, each side manœuvring for position but without decisive result except that of checkmate. Finally in 1814 General Ochterlony came on the scene and by his skilful moves



KHATMANDU IS RICH IN ELABORATE TEMPLES AND COLOURFUL BAZAARS



A FAMOUS TEMPLE IN NEPAL. THE GOD SURVEYS THE WORLD

brought the campaign to an end. The Gurkhas capitulated in 1816, and since then have been staunch friends with the British.

In 1854 these eager fighters once again went to war with the Tibetans, winning the victory after a two years' struggle, carried on under conditions of intense cold and hardship that turned soldiers into snow men.

The Gurkhas, that is to say, the Magar, Gurung and Sunwar clans, are a warrior race who enjoy nothing so much as a fight and nothing so little as pacifism. Hardy, small, entirely fearless, and invested with a sense of humour, they would seem to be the martial type that every general, since the fall of the Roman empire, has sought out for his army.

The kukri is their weapon, friend and playmate. They use it for anything and everything, from peeling a potato to chopping off the head of a buffalo at one blow. Even small boys learn the shining art of kukri management at an early age, and easily their favourite game is playing at soldiers in the streets.

If out bear-hunting, the Nepalese carry a blanket over the left hand, a stick in the right, and the faithful kukri between the teeth. When the bear rises on its hind legs to hug them, they hit him on the nose; before he has recovered from this blow, the sharp steel has found his heart. It is a curious fact that owing to its habit of hugging when about to attack, there is an obstinate belief among certain tribes in the Himalayas that bears violate women. As in Canada, she-bears almost always hibernate the entire winter, the season when cubs are born, and it is only the males who appear to look for winter repasts.

Because of its strong military government and secluded

position, Nepal, through the centuries, has proved a neutral state of Asia, an asylum for oppressed races, and a country of refuge sometimes called the 'happy valley' by contrast with the surrounding district. In its densely populated vale, races and peoples are found inextricably mingled, the higher Hindu civilization from India having gradually imposed itself on the more primitive Mongoloid inhabitants, while absorbing some of their characteristics. In the old days, refugees of all kinds, fleeing from the tyrannies of Mogul India, forced their way through the Terai and settled in the secluded kingdom that knew so well how to preserve its rights.

The drawbridge joining the feudal fortress of Nepal to India has really only twice been lowered, officially, and then under compulsion: the first time for the Gurkha conquerors, and the second for the British. But the moat has occasionally been crossed by isolated individuals or parties, and probably the surest password to approval when one arrives is to have a keen sense of humour.

The Nepalese are a smiling race, with a love of sport and merriment, and none are more ready to see a joke than the little Gurkhas. In China, they say laughter cleans the teeth.

During certain warlike operations with the Tibetans, food at one time became a pressing problem for the soldiers of Nepal. Being strict Hindus they could not eat yaks, the oxen of the mountains. So the chief priests were prevailed upon by army headquarters to declare that zoologically speaking the yak was not a cow at all, but a deer. The men were doubtful at first, since their eyes told them one thing and their leaders another, but their sense of humour triumphed over difficulties.

Nowhere else in the world does modernity meet

antiquity, or old tradition and new polish mingle with such success, to make a novelty out of an anomaly. From apparent discord, a strange and original picture is composed, full of colour and charm; perched above India like a green parrot in a cage the country insists on expressing its own vigorous and exclusive destiny. Hindu and Moslem, Eastern despotism and Western innovations, war and peace, religion and idolatry, fierceness and flowers, all meet and blend harmoniously within the limits of the Nepalese kingdom. Once in this principality and all extremes would seem to be reconciled within the orbit of a smile.

.

Day begins in Nepal when the tiles can be numbered on the roof of a house, or a cat's whiskers can be counted against the light. Killing a cow, since these animals are both sacred and rare, is classed in the same category as murder. Women are exempt from capital punishment and are transported from place to place in baskets on men's heads. Waste land on the mountain sides when brought under cultivation is rent free for ten years.

Nepal, especially the valley, is a land of pagodas, temples and peacocks, where the holiday spirit acts like a tonic and puts the urge of happy pilgrimage into the feet of the people, much as it did in the old days of 'Merrie England'.

There are 2,700 shrines and temples scattered up and down the land, each with its attendant days of worship, ceremonial and sacrifice. Thus holidays are really holy days to the mass of the people.

Astrology, too, plays a large and profitable part in the

national life, and fortune-tellers can be seen sitting at the street corners of towns, plying a trade that is as old as the stars they tell. Good and bad days for business and marriage are decided from horoscopes, and the heavens are consulted about most things whether ranking high or low in the scale of human importance. Out of a total population of six millions the Gurkhas are the ruling military caste; the other and older numerous sect, the Newars, being merchants, tillers and traders.

The Newars own most of the fine houses, and as often as not when they prosper, fall before that paralysing shibboleth of the Orient, which decrees that when a man is great with wealth and riches he becomes small in the eyes of his neighbours if he condescends any longer to work.

Out of their comprehension of commerce, the Newars evolved a plan for getting round the Hindu custom of *suttee*, and the waste of feminine life thus involved. Solemnly, at an early age, they married their infant daughters to a beautiful fruit—the bel fruit, a convenient bridegroom that was afterwards thrown into a sacred river, drifting away from the watchers until lost to view. Thus the first husband could never be regarded as dead. After this, no young Newar maiden need fear her second marriage of reality, nor that she might one day have to throw herself upon the burning pyre of her deceased husband's ashes and perish with him. Divorce, too, was made easy for them. A dissatisfied wife had only to take a betel nut, place it under her husband's pillow as a token of departure, and then suit action to deed. Yet records relate that wives are extremely faithful in Nepal and divorce exceptional.

The girls, as a rule, have large brown eyes, with dainty

and graceful hands and feet. Jewellery is their joy, and many wear nose-rings of gold, silver, or brass. So unlimited is their husbands' delight in their decoration, that if jewellers could persuade Englishmen to follow this fashion, Bond Street would soon start living in Park Lane.

The upper classes are generally heavily decorated with silver necklaces, bracelets and rings, and with large nose-rings. The women are certainly handsome when young, but lose their looks at a comparatively early age and become wrinkled and worn.

Divorce is not only rare in Nepal, but can be an unpleasant luxury. Unfaithful wives find themselves placed in prison for life, while the lover is handed over to the tender mercies of the husband, who may decide to cut him down in public with his avenging kukri. The co-respondent's life is, however, spared if he consents to crawl on all fours under his adversary's uplifted leg, a humiliating alternative that is often rejected.

Among certain clans eyebrows are shaved as a mark of respect to the dead, who are not, as a general rule exposed or cremated, as in Tibet, but buried in the orthodox manner.

The birth of a Gurkha boy is the signal for ceremonies of rejoicing that last many days. Towards the beginning of the second week a name is bestowed upon the child, and he is made to swallow a grain of rice for each friend present, as a symbol of greeting and good luck.

Caste has no strong hold on the people as in India, and men and women live smiling simple lives, the lime-lights of their existence being either military reviews or religious festivals.

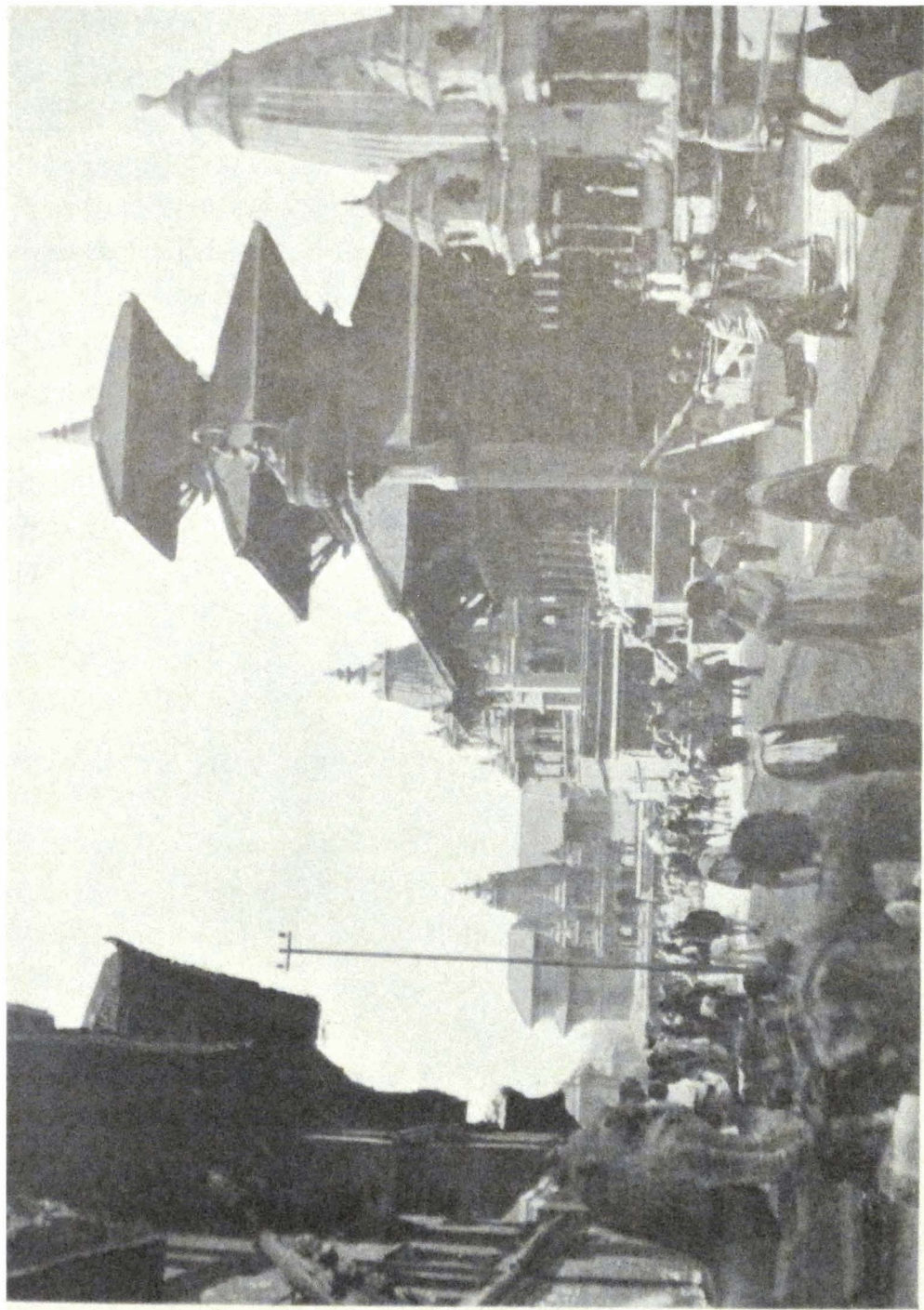
Nepal is divided into three natural zones by vedettes of the main Himalayan range, these districts being drained by the Kosi, Gandak and Gogra rivers. There is in addition

the Nepal valley itself, thought once to have been a large lake, and the tangled districts of the Terai with its jungle types and manners. In the westerly regions live the Dotis and Jumlis.

The government of the country is in the hands of the Kshatriya class that includes not only the leading soldiers, but the King of Nepal and His Highness the Maharajah, Sir Joodha Shum Shere Jung Bahadar Rana. Barriers of birth and breeding count for much more than they do in Europe and America, and Gurkhalis are not expected to leave their particular station in life by express train for one higher up. Each tax-gatherer collects his own taxes, of which he is allowed to retain a small portion, before handing them over to the exchequer; he can call on the services of those in his area to perform one day's work for him every year, thus solving the servant problem.

Where affairs of state are concerned, the King of Nepal acts the part of a living idol, seldom seen and never heard, the executive power being in the hands of the maharajah whose word is law. As in the case of a high priest, his personality counts for much, while that of the effigy he represents is taken for granted. Where Nepal is concerned the maharajah is king.

Although newspapers are unknown, there is a system of collecting news in the maharajah's dominions, almost amounting to magic. Without the aid of railways, telegraph or wireless, or anything so modern, an efficient news service operates throughout the kingdom, passing information from village to village and from hill-top to hill-top. Within a few hours of its occurrence, whatever or wherever it may be, the maharajah and his ministers know of particular events and happenings.



TEMPLES AND BUILDINGS ARE ORNATE IN REMOTE KHATMANDU



A POTTER IN NEPAL

Some of the signalling is effected by the voice, boys being trained in the uses of their own bodies and in the arts of war, as in Sparta, from an early age. 'Hollo-ing' and a form of 'yodelling' with a modulated tempo are practised until the voice has been trained to carry about two miles. Villages, when far up on the hillside, are able to signal to the village in the valley for the cattle to be called home, or if they need help.

The secret of this aerial communication is apparently to keep the voice low, adjusting it to the exact pitch of maximum penetration. Human voices carry from mountain to mountain, and are often reinforced by a system of echoes. Environment helps the peculiar tones to carry. Probably no tiger roaring in the valley could throw his voice farther than the human call of a Gurkha, trained in voice culture of the mountains.

This system of relaying messages, and long-distance vocal communications, has yet to be worked out in print, though it is known in various forms among different races of mountaineers, and must have its connections could they all be compared.

Signalling has certainly been brought to a fine art in the Himalayas. The Nepalese refrain from raising the voice too much but draw it out in a rising crescendo towards the end of what they wish to convey and this makes it carry. Perhaps there is an understood free-masonry in the hills, a sort of shorthand of speech, where long-distance talking is concerned. Given a language that lends itself to transmission, a Himalayan hillman can send a message with clearness and accuracy, beyond the range of civilized man, who, if gifted with good ears, detects only vain and meaningless sounds. There must also be some form of distant telegraphy or signals

incomprehensible to strangers. The Red Indians of North America were accustomed to pass news across the hill-tops by means of smoke clouds wafted in the air, like semaphore, by two men holding a cloth. When the continents were joined, ancient tribal lore may perhaps have been exchanged and carried from one tribe to another.

.

Guarding Nepal on the south and acting as a tropical skirt to the mountains of the Himalayas where they fringe the plains of Bengal are the far-reaching jungles of the Terai. They stretch roughly from the Duns of Dera right away to the mouth of the Brahmaputra, and can be a green heaven or a green hell according to the time of year.

At Hardwar, where the Ganges emerges from the foothills in a succession of gorges, is a most holy city of the Hindus; here, every twelfth year, takes place the celebrated Kumbh Mela when the planet Jupiter is in the sign of Aquarius, a festival regarded by Hindus as of the greatest importance and sanctity. At all times of the year the place is a magnet for pilgrims, and the bathing ghat, 100 feet wide, alive with human forms about to plunge into the sacred river. At the moment of starting these ablutions it is the ambition of each bather to be first in the water, for not only does this act as an absolution of sins but hastens his path in the hereafter. Besides the immense concourse of ascending and descending people, at times a veritable tower of Babel, there are numberless fakirs who practise in public every form of penance and self-torture. Some strip and bake themselves on blazing fires; others lie on beds of nails until their bodies turn

into shoe leather ; others hold their arms aloft so long that they become rigid and can never be lowered again. Venerable Gurus sit under bright umbrellas holding discourse with their disciples and such visitors as come to listen.

The Hindu may get 60,000 years in hell if he belittles or deeply offends a Brahmin of the ruling caste, so it behoves a pilgrim to tread carefully for more reasons than one when approaching the burning or bathing ghats.

But nearly all visitors to Hardwar turn southwards, back into the plains, and seldom northwards towards Nepal and the Himalayas.

Part of the great guardian forest of the Terai was constituted a waste ground by the Gurkhas after the war of 1814, for the purpose of impeding an advance from India, and in the rainy season it would prove a nightmare for any body of troops. There are large tracts of swamps with grass and rushes ten to fifteen feet high ; mosquitos looking more like birds than insects advance ceaselessly to the attack ; leeches drop from the branches of trees eager to reduce the blood pressure of anyone who comes within reach. Swaying strips of thin string in the trees, it is extraordinary how leeches, who are blind, seem to sense the approach of human forms and to fall unerringly upon them, joining their friends who have been brushed off from the bushes. Not until they have turned from string into sausages do they drop off satiated. The problem of dealing with these pests is acute, since, if pulled off before they have finished their meal, the proboscis remains behind and festers, whilst to leave them alone is often more than flesh as well as blood can bear. Soldiers have found that a lighted cigarette is an effective way of removing the parasites.

At the beginning of the monsoon, thunderstorms reach a pitch of intensity seldom found elsewhere. Those who have endeavoured to count the length of thunder claps have desisted when they found them to be continuous, while the lightning gives an electric display far surpassing anything to be seen in cities. There is the celebrated instance of the lightning flash, a thing of sudden spectacular terror, that ran down a whole line of bayonets at a parade and left the men insensible on the ground. Had they been struck at lower altitudes they would all have been killed.

It is said that the Nana Sahib, the notorious tyrant of Cawnpore, fled into these jungles after his massacre of English women and children in 1857, but the story of his fate has never been ascertained. Some say that he ultimately became a hermit, others that he perished in these fever-stricken forests. Be that as it may, he will go down to history as the star-turn of treachery, out-rivalling film villains at their own game. Having promised the British garrison at Cawnpore honourable terms of surrender, he waited till they had marched out and were defenceless in their boats on the river. Fire was then opened from both banks and the tragedy completed for that day. A necklace he once wore, composed of pearls and worth a king's ransom, is now in the possession of the Maharajah of Darbhanga, reputed to be the richest private landowner in India. He it was who entertained the Mount Everest Flight when in India.

The young maharajah, who is a good shot and first-rate polo-player, owns upwards of fifty elephants, fifty-five polo ponies and twenty-seven motor-cars, in addition to a state coach drawn by four elephants and resplendent with canopies of cloth of gold and wheels higher than a

room. Twenty persons can ornament a procession in this Brobdingnagian conveyance, and to take their places they climb up a ladder of beaten silver.

There are times and places in the Terai when the jungles, full of every kind of bird and beast, become a sportsman's paradise—the realization of dreams, not nightmares. Trees of sal and sisu form the rank and file of the forest, with chestnuts, maples, walnuts, acacias, wild cherry and mimosa. Up among the boughs orchids glow in the gloom like candles, and bamboos, rattans and paper plants rustle in thickets stealthy with the pad of tigers. Peacocks meet in glades straight out of story books, and compare tails. Monkeys, like acrobats on the trapeze, fling themselves in cascades across the tree tops.

They spring from branch to branch making dizzy leaps to new hand-holds far below, leaving a branch so quickly on their course that it has no time to break and betray them before they are off again to some fresh point of vantage. Like circus performers they look sometimes as if certain to crash and fall, but like them, delighting in their work, they never do.

There is a theory current amongst certain psychologists and followers of Freud, connecting these animals with human nightmares. No man, they say, who experiences the sensation of falling in a dream ever hits the ground, since this experience is attributable to the atavistic past of monkeys leaping among the tree-tops. Were anyone to do so, just as in the extreme case of an ape who missed his hold, death would be the result.

The best stories, however, about apes usually come from the Zoo and not the jungles of the subconscious. One day in Regent's Park, a well-known Englishman was watching with interest the antics of a baboon. The ape

for some reason insisted on turning his hideous back upon the spectators.

“That young man is wearing his club colours in the wrong place,” remarked the humorist.

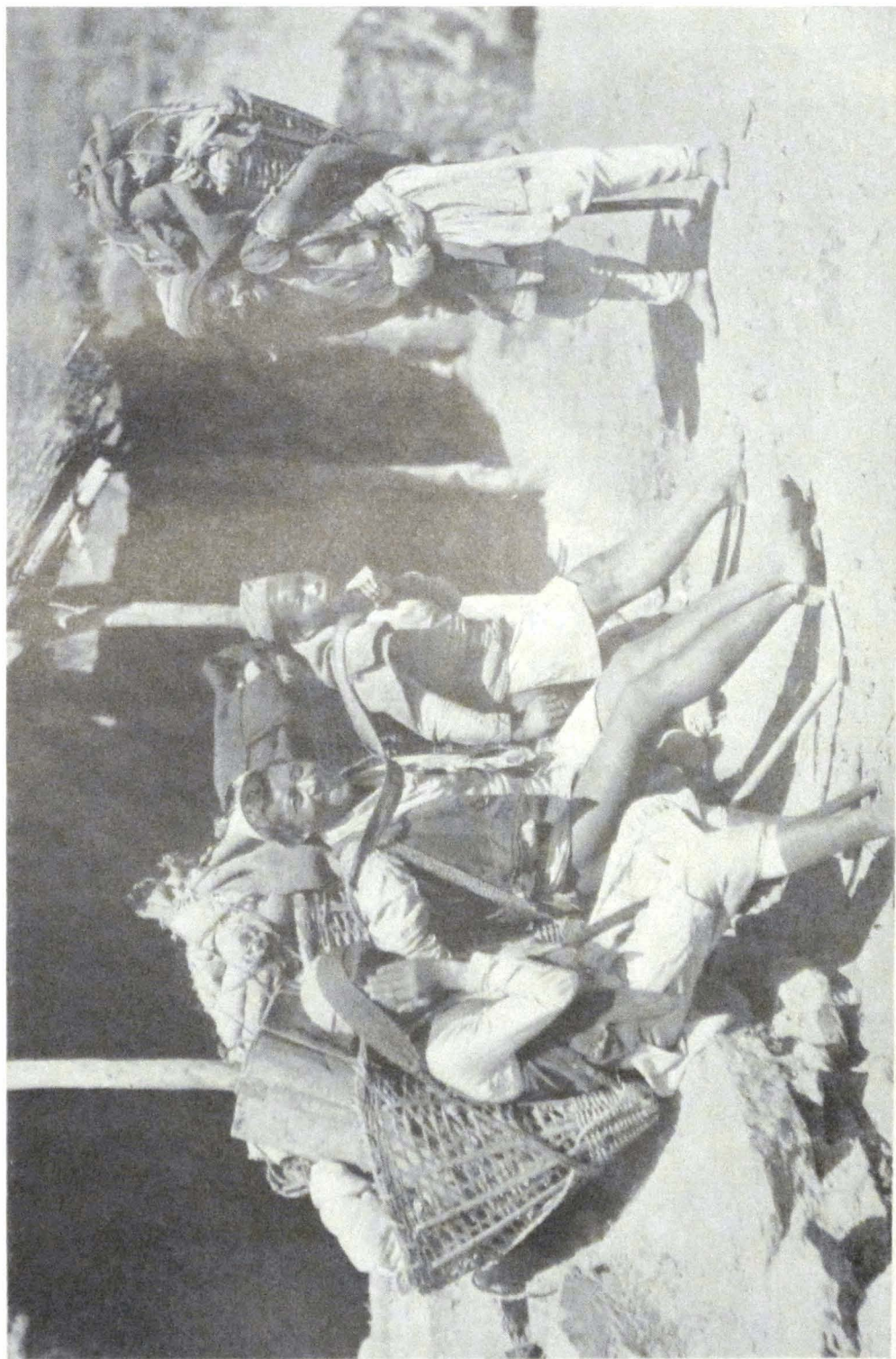
But the baboon knew nothing of the rules of cricket.

Tails as well as arms and legs are employed by monkeys in their dizzy flight through the tree-tops and they often move at an astonishing speed, surf-riding through the foliage in a way which men will never be able to imitate.

Away up in the foothills scenery changes, and rhododendrons, finer than fancy can picture, take the centre of the stage; not bushes, but rhododendrons the size of trees flaming with gorgeous blossoms, more wonderful than words can describe, glittering against the white background of distant mountains. Sometimes they are so bright as almost to give the appearance of having set the forest on fire, and even paint would pale by comparison. Honeysuckle, clematis, montana, wild roses and strawberries adorn the glades at different seasons. Irises, grey as well as blue and purple, break over the grass in waves, and in July there are a million forget-me-nots to help a man remember the scene; but perhaps the most memorable sight of all are the acres of poised white paeonies, tall and scented, and altogether beautiful. In early summer Himalayan foothills can be the garden of the world with such places as Kulu and Kashmir, that are comparable to terrestrial paradises awaiting human appreciation.

The people who inhabit the jungles are primitive and superstitious and without the sturdy independence of their compatriots on more open ground.

I once met a forest native who accosted me with something in his hand. He had long hair, burning eyes and an intelligent face, and might have been a hermit,



MUCH OF NEPAL'S GOODS ARE CARRIED ON HUMAN BACKS



SALUTE! THE YOUNG IDEA IN NEPAL IS MARTIAL FROM BIRTH

or even a Rishi able to talk with tigers, but he turned out to be an itinerant vendor.

“This is the only cure for rheumatism,” he said, holding up a little pot and approaching closer, shuffling his feet.

“How is that?” I asked.

“It is the secret of the jungles,” he replied in a sing-song voice.

“What does the pot contain?”

“Tiger fat,” said my friend, the light of bargaining in his eyes.

I told him that I had no use for it.

“But it will cure any man of anything. It is infallible,” the vendor persisted.

“Tiger fat that cures all men!” I exclaimed. “What story is this?”

“Ah, Sahib,” said the mendicant, with a quick glance round into the thicket, “*this* tiger was a man-eater.”

Owing to its many impenetrable fastnesses, there are probably more tigers in the Terai than anywhere else in India. The Maharajah of Nepal is a keen hunter, in whose company distinguished visitors have a rare chance of a good bag.

When King George visited India for the Coronation Durbar at Delhi in 1911, he attended a shoot in the Terai arranged by the then maharajah on an elaborate scale. Local inhabitants might well have rubbed their eyes, instead of their lamps, and thought themselves transported into some tale of the Arabian Nights. Two camps were pitched, the King’s shooting-box reproducing comfort of Marlborough House, coupled with such domestic details as lawns and rose beds with the roses blooming in them. To attain this pitch of display, preparations had

been going on for several months prior to the King's arrival. A road from railhead was laid down through the forests for thirty-two miles, while 634 elephants were employed in ringing the game.

When King George arrived in camp he lost no time in going out on shikar and the first day shot a large tiger in mid-air, like a bird, as it was taking a flying leap across a stream. That afternoon, by way of variation, two rhinoceroses suddenly appeared out of the jungle, grunting their displeasure and making a dead set at royalty. The King brought them both down with a right and left, to the intense admiration of the onlookers. The Nepalese dwell with enthusiasm on the King's marksmanship, and tell the story of how he was the only man to shoot a tiger and a bear as they burst out of the long grass, each with one shot.

Small wonder that the hillmen came to regard him in the light of a wizard whose eye and aim nothing could escape, which, incidentally, is considered one of the attributes of successful monarchy in the East.

If Nepal is still a sealed book to the western world, a pocket biography of Asiatic war and peace, human and happy enough to be full of contradiction and contrast, the Terai is the dark cover of the book. Green as the Gurkhas' uniform, deep as Asiatic culture and mystery, it holds up a curtain between Nepal and the south that is more efficient than any bodyguard. Always the invasions of India by Aryan, Moslem and Mogul, have come from the west through the gateway of the Hindu Kush and Afghanistan, and never through the impenetrable barriers to the north of Bengal.

CHAPTER II

IN KHATMANDU

Over the hills—The happy valley—Who owns Everest?—Khatmandu, a haven of contrasts—All roads lead to the bazaar—The people and what they carry—Palace of the maharajah—Naples and Maples—A visit to the maharajah—Dealings with royalty—Story of Jehangir and the beer—Preparing to fly.

STRANGERS are not encouraged in the hidden kingdom. The Nepalese consider that trespassers bring trouble, and that even the bible may be followed by the bayonet. They therefore purposely kept their roads in the shape of primitive surfaces where wheels could not easily go round, while as an additional safeguard there is the Terai jungle.

In the spring of 1933 I had, however, to pay the maharajah a visit to discuss with him the question of flying over Everest. The meeting was arranged through the kind offices of Colonel C. T. Daukes, the British Minister at the Nepalese Court, and I started on my journey.

Over the hills and far away through the forests runs the road to Khatmandu, up hill and down dale, seemingly much longer than it is in reality owing to the sense of trafficking with the unknown. The dak runner pursues his way on dusty feet, armed with a jingling bell to keep wild animals from the post. Woodsellers trudge along carrying as much forest as they can shoulder on their backs. Copper-coloured, smiling little people, looking as if they owned relations in Japan, run up and down the gradients in their white homespuns, wearing the cloth

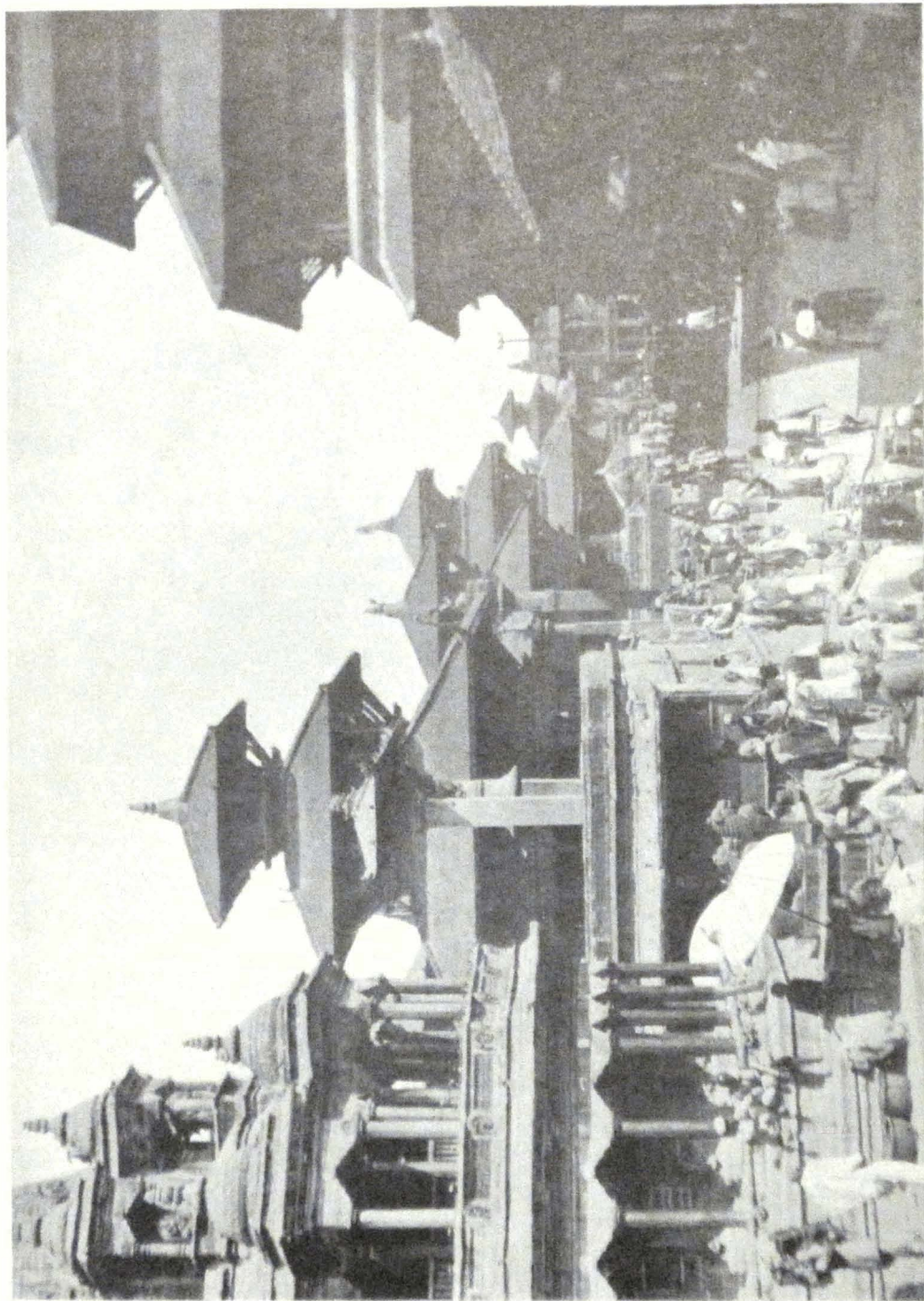
Jodhpur breeches usually seen on horsemen. Bands of coolies, chanting monotonously as they go, carry merchandise and even motor-cars strung on long poles, as if to show the world that men are still more important than machines.

At Bhimpedi the road from India stops short; in front of you is a lofty range of hills having the appearance of a gigantic wall with a narrow track winding zigzag fashion up it. Sturdy Bhutiya ponies from the maharajah's stables were waiting where the road comes to an abrupt end to take me to the fort at Sisagarhi, 2,500 feet up the hillside. Guard houses and guest houses come to much the same thing if you happen to be on a visit to the Maharajah of Nepal. Sixty miles of jungle have been traversed and the hills are dotted cheerfully with red, blue and white houses, basking in the warm sunlight.

From just above Sisagarhi the track winds down, blundering and tripping over boulders and obstacles until it slips into the valley; then up again to the Chisapani pass, across hillsides largely denuded of timber by woodcutters, down, and then on and up once more to the still more arduous Chandragiri pass. Arrived at the top, a splendid scene unfolds itself; a vision of the Happy Valley!

It looms into view, blue and gold and green, shimmering in the sunlight and looking like the promised land. After the barren hills it gives an impression of fullness and completion. This is Nepal proper, pictured upon the retina of time and place, and no longer lost in the rosy mists of conjecture.

Thankot sounds rather like a word of thanksgiving to the traveller when he finds himself at the bottom of the pass and on the road to civilization again, a civilization nearly as old as the surrounding hills.



A TYPICAL STREET IN KHATMANDU WHERE THE PEOPLE
MEET TO TRADE AND GOSSIP



ON THE ROAD IN THE HIMALAYAS

Hilaire Belloc has written of the spirit of travel* that can also be pilgrimage. It should, he said: "Have an eye for happiness and suffering, humour, gladness at the beauty of the world, a readiness for raising the heart at the vastness of a wide view . . . for a man that goes on a journey does best if he starts out with the heart of wanderer, eager for the world as it is, forgetful of maps or descriptions, but hungry for real colours and men and the meaning of things."

As he rode over the downs one day he met a ragged man carrying an onion, who had climbed the hill for the express purpose of seeing what was on the other side.

"This is indeed a day to be alive," cried out the newcomer in greeting.

"I am on a horse and I am happy," Belloc replied, "but these days are but few in life."

"You are right," the ragged man answered, "they are neither rich nor poor—they are happy. I also am filled with that spirit to-day—" and here he cut his onion in two—"and heaven knows I can purchase nothing."

"Then tell me more about these wide days," said Belloc, "and will you give me half of your onion?"

In Nepal it would be a pineapple, but the principle of the story would be the same. The traveller to Khatmandu would say, not "Here is a fabled city of which I have heard so much, or so little, or here are buildings well-designed for photography," but rather "This is a place as old as Eastern mystery and as young as Western curiosity, which many generations of men and women have helped to make alive and wonderful." Any person who approaches such a spot for the first time becomes a pilgrim.

* "Hills and the Sea," by Hilaire Belloc.

True wonder, for ever contracting, expanding and forming anew, is the only travel bubble that can never burst.

At the village of Thankot, five miles below the pass, I was met by an up-to-date motor-car sent by the maharajah. The instant I got in the driver 'trod on the gas' and went off like a rocket as though to make up for time lost in the mountains. Along the road we drove, in and out of the traffic which we missed by inches, past slumbering cottages and peasants hurrying home to bed with bundles on their heads.

In front stretched the green vale, cultivated up to the last spare inch.

Ahead and on either side, hillocks that suggest ant-hills rise out of the plain, each crowned with its little temple or pagoda, ornate as a wedding-cake and often quite as fascinating to study in detail. There are nearly three thousand shrines in the vale of Nepal, carved into the expression of a sigh, a smile, or a silent prayer to Brahma, and all the inscrutable spaces of imagery that lie between. They give the landscape the effect of a tapestry come to life. They are the mushrooms of the sky.

A procession winds slowly across the plain laden with votive offerings. There is the bullock with its gilded horns, the garlands, the monkey in the place of honour, the sacrificial chants and the brown smiling faces. A relic of the ancient Golden Age, or else a frieze by Brangwyn ; and what a contrast to a motor-car !

At a distance the shrines give an impression of beehives in varying colours ; the Nepalese are the bees, each worker carrying his own load of industry, for animals or mechanical assistance of all kinds are scarce, and man himself is the important person. His dignity is not dwarfed

by strident and overpowering machines produced in mineral moments by the brain.

A Nepalese coolie can carry anything on his head from a piano to his wife in a basket. No load defeats them ; not even motor-cars and lorries that have to be conveyed over the hills. They have no great regard for the creaking cart but the motor-car is gradually overcoming their prejudices. An overhead rope railway is in operation from Bhimpedi to Khatmandu that helps the willing coolies and is a concession to more modern forms of transport. In the carriage of most of Nepal's freight on human backs, the women play an equal part with the men. They trudge along quite cheerfully with a basket-load of merchandise and a baby perched on top of it, the whole secured by a strap round the forehead. The record for weight-carrying was said to be held by a woman who transported a piano as though it had been a hat box.

Nearly twenty miles away on the north side of the valley, the Bhagmati river leaps down from the mountains and gives the land its exceptional fertility. Legend relates that Vishnu, the Preserver, who can traverse the heavens in three strides, representing the rising, the meridian and the setting of the sun, during the course of his athletic activities came to the Happy Valley and found that it lacked water, so with one swing of the sword he cut an opening through the Himalayas for the Bhagmati river.

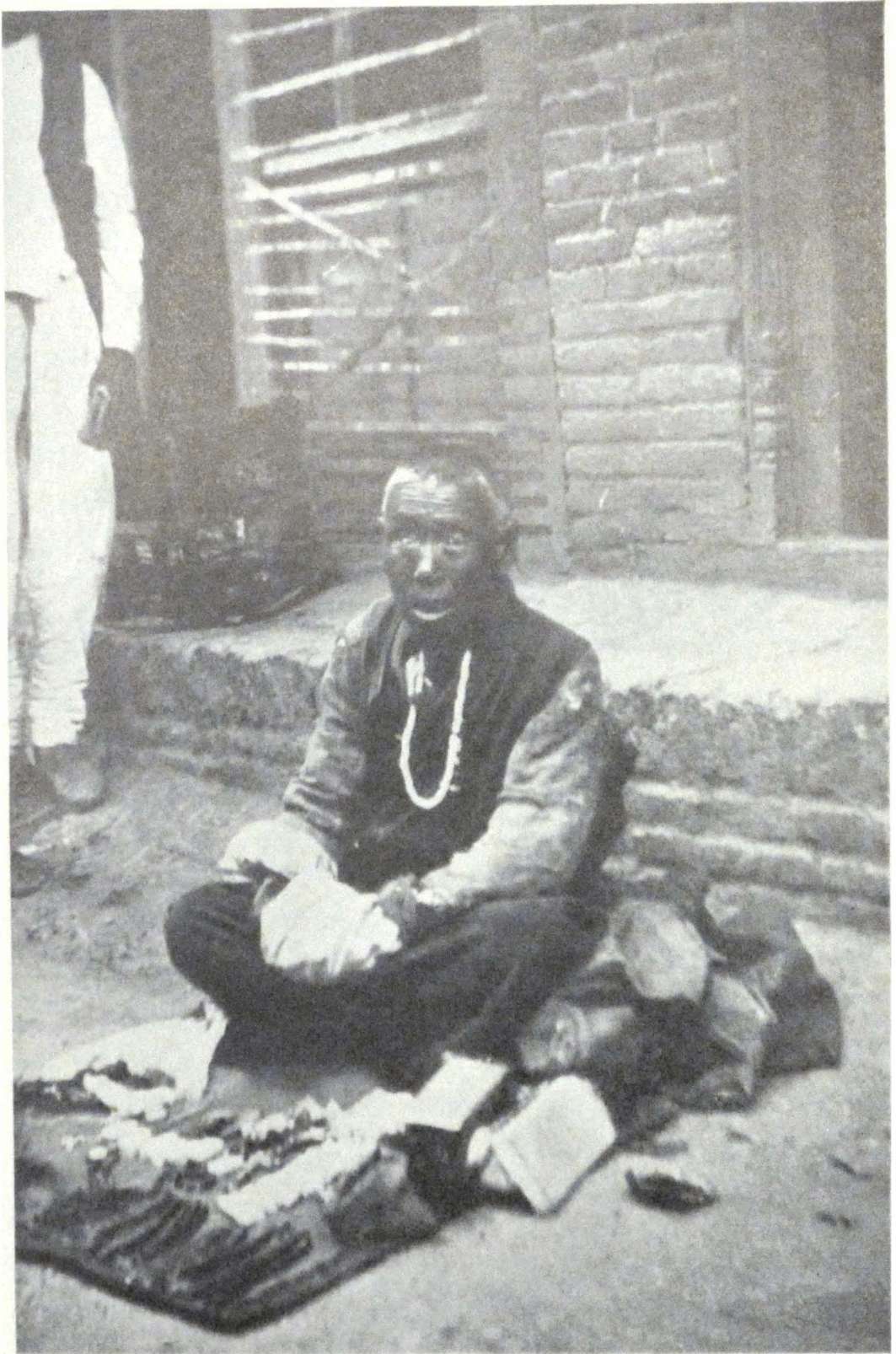
Driving through the valley I came at length to Khatmandu, capital of pagodas, and the British Legation, where I was to stay with Colonel Daukes. The Legation, which is outside the city, has caught the prevalent architectural opulence, and is a mixture between a spectacular Swiss chalet and a medieval fortress ; it has large gardens where

Mrs. Daukes has made a flower show that takes us back to the English countryside.

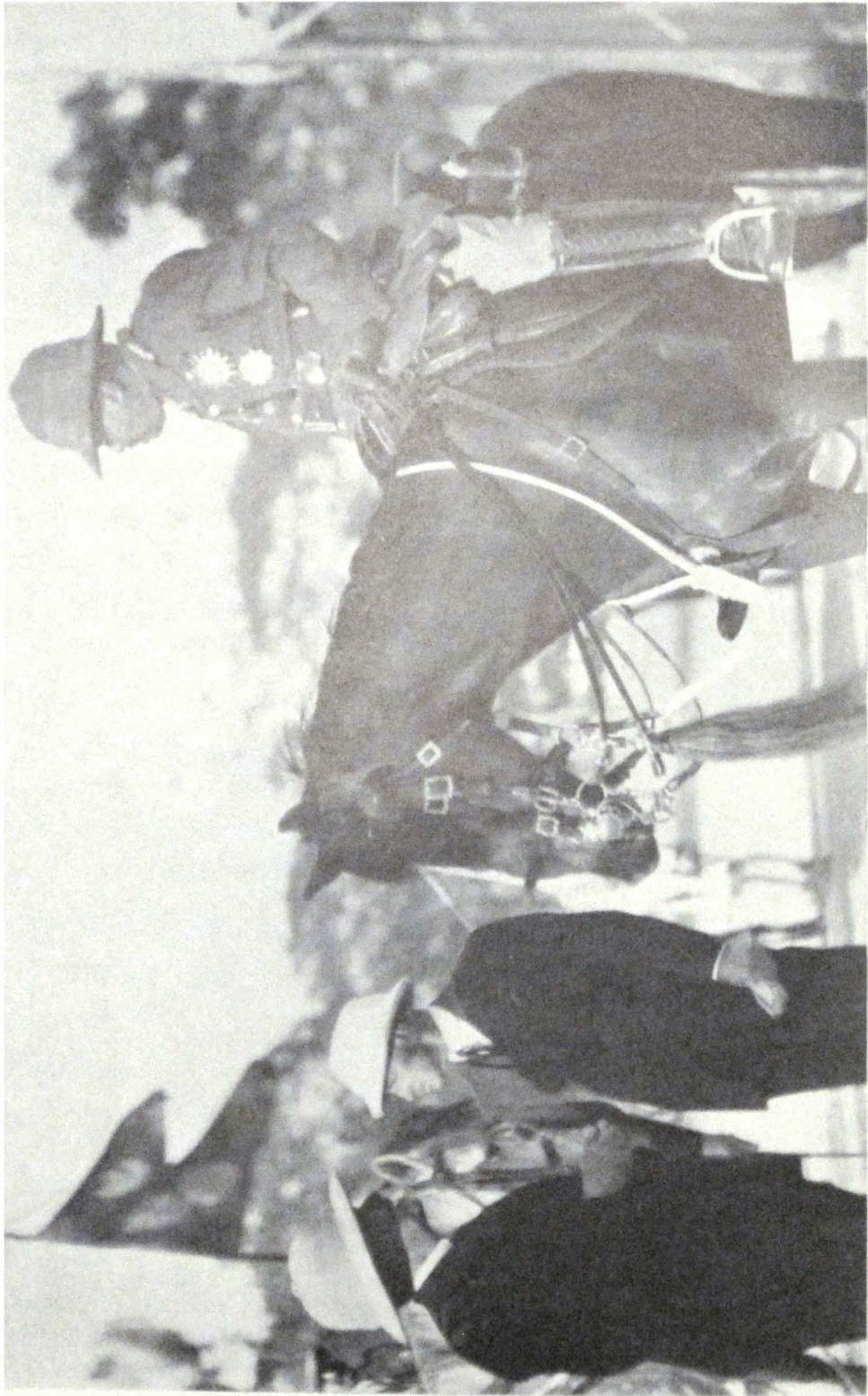
Khatmandu is like an old patriarch, benevolent and courtly, who has lived in so many houses and been blessed with so many wives and children that he no longer knows which or what he likes best. The architecture of the town is a medley of various styles, and buildings are ornate. Burmese pagodas wearing their sun-hats, Indian temples of the Rajput variety are mixed with the Moslem period of the Moguls; shining white palaces are numerous, copied from Agra, in which live the ruling houses who vie with each other after the fashion of medieval Italy. In the alleyways themselves the traveller might at times be back in Florence or Naples.

Red tiles are on the roofs overhead and red bricks pave the streets beneath; up the sides of buildings thrown into brilliance by sunlight and shadow, making the onlooker rub his eyes, climb elephants and idols in statue-like repose. In the streets throng Hindus and Moslems, Gurkhas and Newars, Indians, Kashmiris, the Shylocks of the East, Sikkimese, Bhutias, skirted lamas from Tibet, and even Turkis from far-distant Turkistan. Khatmandu, for heaven knows what reason, has caught them all in her net—Khatmandu that was founded in 723 and has lived through twelve centuries of seclusion, preferring balconies and big eaves to courtyards and porticos, and with no use at all for hotels.

All roads lead to the bazaars in the Gurkha capital. From dawn until dusk they are thronged with a motley collection of humanity, trousered, turbaned and skirted, intent and voluble upon some of the oldest occupations in the world—the art of barter and exchange in the streets with time itself unhurried, and well prepared to wait and



THE SHOPKEEPER AT THE BURNING *GHATS* IN NEPAL.
HE HAS NO OVERHEAD CHARGES



THE MAHARAJAH OF NEPAL TALKING TO THE AUTHOR

serve. The flowing movement of the bazaars proceeds after the fashion of a slow-motion picture. Colours mix and blend and integrate. The glow of life, the sparkle of colour, arrests eye and brain alike. A marvellous kaleidoscope.

Sitting cross-legged at a corner, the professional letter-writer is in evidence, pen and paper spread out upon his knee. Clients gather round him and for a penny narrate the text of documents, petitions or letters, for education is still in its infancy, and the terms of a bargain have to be recorded or deeds of sale drawn up.

At intervals is what corresponds to a teashop in England with the patrons sitting on the floor. The confectioner upon his carpet of baked mud, takes coins in payment for his wares, using his mouth as the most convenient purse.

“Ram, Ram !” cries the vendor of charpoy beds. “Where’s the man with the big family ?”

The seller of liquid refreshment bases his appeal on a note that is universal. “Ho ! thirsty ones,” he calls, “what about a drink ?”

With the coming of dusk, booths are shuttered and tongues silenced ; commerce and business concluded for the day. Stars come out, strewn like necklaces across the sky ; live coals wink at each other in the streets as their owners apply them to Persian tobacco and lean back to take a satisfied suck at the hubble-bubble. White-coated figures flit past like ghosts. Houses are soon darkened and streets left to sleep in peace. Khatmandu goes early to bed as befits a city that counts time by daylight.

On market days there is a special air of goodwill and animation among the polyglot Nepalese crowd ; it is a real man’s day but lacks the additional life and colour

which the women could give it, for they are not seen to any extent in Khatmandu.

How much are cities affected in outward appearance by their absence? Are towns more masculine or more feminine in their general outlook?

These are questions difficult to answer. The East with all its wealth of colour, certainly loses less than the West from the discreet withdrawal of the feminine from the public gaze.

A Greek poet once described the human forms of beauty as follows: "The fairest thing in all the world some say is a company of horsemen, and some say a regiment of marching soldiers, and some again a fleet of ships; but to me it is the heart's beloved—and how altogether easy it is to make this obvious to everybody."

Few moderns would wish to quarrel with the classic ideal; Nepalese women are expert in the ways of self-adornment, even if they are not allowed to ornament their city, and the forbidden hill kingdom has one real link with Greece. Nepal is the modern Sparta. The same militant state trains its citizens, Gurkhas at any rate, to love physical hardihood and daring, and as in Sparta the only art made compulsory is that of laughter.

In contrast to India, Nepal is a smiling principality. The children sing whatever their studies, for the East believes that knowledge comes through the ears rather than through the eyes, and that primal song is part of the stuff of life. Singing schools are a feature of the Happy Valley, as also is the fact that young men do not have to shave their faces until after the age of twenty, rubbing on animal grease instead, a depilatory that makes them shiny and cheerful.

Soon after arrival I went to call on the chief of the state

at his palace. His Highness the Maharajah Sir Joodha Shum Shere Jung Bahadar Rana, G.C.I.E., is an enlightened and progressive ruler, who is numbered among the great ones of the East.

There were no gorgeously-dressed retainers to waft me hither and thither, no inquisitive chamberlains to look me up and down and pass me along innumerable corridors and staterooms. I ascended the grand stairway, the maharajah conversing in English and pointing out a picture of King George, painted in 1911.

He is a great reader, and knows all about Dickens, Macaulay, Bernard Shaw, Winston Churchill, and other famous English writers. In fact he is a ruler who understands more about English literature, music, drama and the arts than many people.

The maharajah has a bodyguard of tall men, a strange contrast in a country where almost everyone prefers to be short. With all these people might is generally right and weakness is held in contempt: the vital creed of the mountains runs in their blood.

In company with the maharajah, I was privileged to see a march past of the bulk of the Nepalese army, thirty thousand men with modern uniforms and equipment, marching across the grassy Aldershot, to the east of the town.

It is not war, however, nor yet peace that has always cemented concord and friendship in the East, for diplomacy is the coil or the corkscrew that never travels straight. When King James sent an envoy to Jehangir to discuss questions of an alliance, the son of Akbar, who had become a tipster, would talk of nothing but drink. Reclining on his throne he asked the Englishman how much he could consume in a day, and the quantity of

alcohol that was brewed in Britain. He wanted to know the exact alcoholic content of his favourite beverage and how it compared with what was to be found in India. Thus the envoy returned to England with the answer that the one thing needful to cement English and Indian friendship and place it on a firm basis, was—beer.

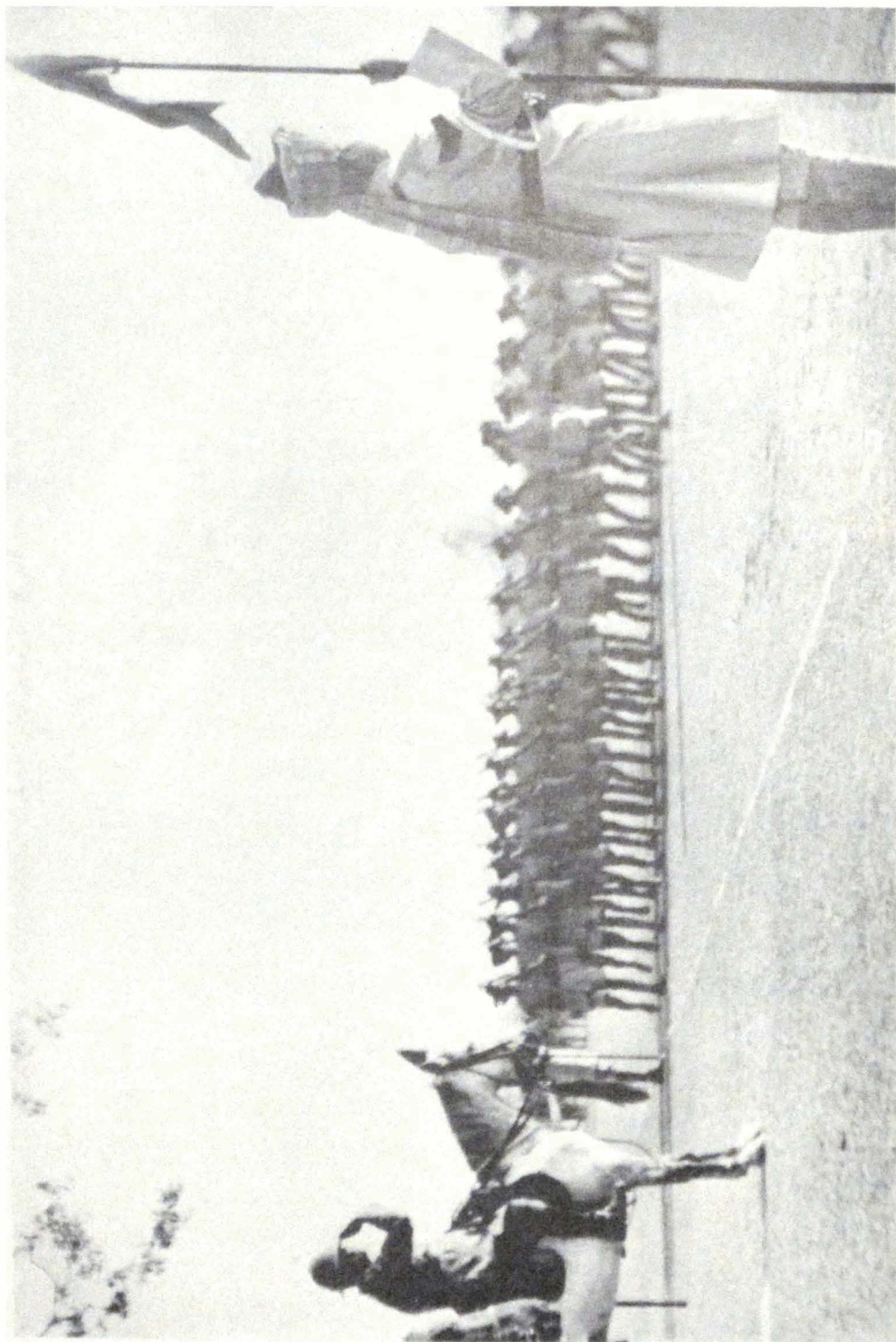
From near Khatmandu the whole of the wonder ranges of Everest can be distinguished in detail, from Dhaulagiri and Mutsiputra to Kinchinjunga, which has had a great struggle with K2 for second place amongst the mountains of the world. South of this country of gods and giants, is a series of glens and gorges with lakes shining like silver blades.

This unknown territory stretching away up into the clouds of Tibet is owned by the Maharajah of Nepal, as a man in England owns a few hundred acres of woodland and perhaps a hill or two ; this was the region, much of it never before seen by man, over which the Everest fliers were granted permission to pass.

The world owes much to the Maharajah of Nepal who is sympathetic to real scientific endeavour, as it does to Colonel Stewart Blacker who evolved the idea of the flight and played an outstanding part in it from first to last.



THE MAHARAJAH OF NEPAL LOOKS LIKE A BRITISH GENERAL



THE MAHARAJAH OF NEPAL TAKES THE SALUTE

CHAPTER III

OVER THE TOP OF CREATION

In the air—Terrible force of the winds—Preparing to fly the Himalayas—Preparations in England—The sealed room at Farnborough—Too high for sound—In India—What the hillmen thought—Some views on flying—Above Kinchinjunga—The story of Everest—Goddess Mother of the Earth—Wonders of the Rongbuk Monastery—The first and second flights—The most wonderful view in the world.

PROBABLY the most inhuman thing about the crest-line of the Himalayas is the wind ; not the boisterous breezes of temperate climes, nor the gales that agitate the northern seas, but a great air power of Viking moods and voices holding the whole sky in thrall. Such a force is elemental and quite impersonal in its activities and incidence.

In the Khyber Pass, as soldiers know, the winds howl in perpetual lamentation, but up on the Roof of the World, across the snow and between the mountainous chimneys, they turn into a pack of fiends. Ten thousand devils rave at each other when the hot winds from the plains of Bengal meeting the cold blasts from Tibet struggle for mastery.

There is the deafening chorus of monsoon storms ; the everlasting exhalation of the snows, immensely cold, that blows across the high tablelands ; there are the soloists of a hundred individual currents and draughts, constantly called into being, that sweep up vapour out of a clear sky and lay clouds like pillows upon the peaks.

Only an eagle or an aeroplane can know the full gamut of the orchestral voices of winds in the Himalayas.

The air is like a sea of waves. A great west wind blows and breaks in following waves across Everest, throwing the snow plume into the sky that distinguishes her from other mountains, the snow plume that men see and marvel at two hundred miles away. Not only are there horizontal breakers but vertical down draughts and swirling vortexes that can lower an aeroplane twelve hundred feet in four seconds, snatching it downwards towards destruction on the rocks. There are immense gulfs and gorges in the sky as well as among the mountains; the head of the Arun gorge, for instance, forms a concentrated chimney of air in which if a man opened a strong umbrella he might almost parachute upwards.

Where aerial reconnaissance is concerned, the only place to escape from winds in the Himalayas is in the stratosphere, 50,000 feet up in the sky. Though the travel of the future will be in these tenuous realms in aeroplanes sealed like saloon motor-cars, carrying their own oxygen and voyaging at high speed without the resistance of storms or aerial disturbances, yet such methods obviously cannot be used for those who wish to study mountains at close range. Members of the Everest flying expedition had therefore to accustom themselves—in England before starting—to conditions they would be likely to meet in India. Whether they had to fly to Mars or to the top of the highest mountain, intricate preparations were necessary before departure. The members of the Flight were carefully tested and examined for any chinks in the physical armour of fitness essential for existence at extreme heights.

The most spectacular of these tests was carried out in

a sealed chamber at Farnborough, where the setting was something between a waking nightmare and an experiment carried out by a scientist in a new world of literature. It had all the novelty of being dynamically static.

Those who have been to the hushed consulting-rooms of Harley Street, or to the happier haunts of the family doctor, in order to have their bodies examined, know little or nothing of the heights and depths of an aerial overhaul as practised in preparation for flying over the world's highest mountain.

As members of the expedition we were asked to enter a large chamber made of steel and extra-lined for safety. The windows were like the portholes of a ship. Time counted for nothing here; this was the waiting-room of space.

Directly we entered, we began to feel like beings from another planet, people who might at any moment be expected to fly to the moon or into stellar space, and the shining instruments, the weird hum of machinery, the oxygen pipes and masks, helped the illusion. Onlookers peered in from outside at these conscious patients in the operating theatre, living organisms in the sealed test tube of science. All our actions and reactions were made the object of the most careful scrutiny and analysis and everything we did was taken down in evidence against us.

The machinery was turned on and the engines started. The sealed chamber seemed at once to start rising into the sky, although in reality it never left the ground. Slowly, as the occupants watched, the huge altimeter, starting at sea level, began to work. Gradually, snail-like, we saw the pointing needle creeping up the scale. Oxygen was

pumped out of the chamber to correspond with the more rarefied air met with at higher levels. Beginning from the density of sea level the air gradually became more tenuous.

Soon, seated on hard-wood chairs, we were higher than St. Paul's ; we had climbed Snowdon ; now we had left Britain behind and were in the bracing altitudes of the Alps. Well above Mont Blanc we had to adjust oxygen masks, for the air was diminishing and failing around us. A tingling feeling, pressure on the ear drums and a pain in the stomach signalled our arrival in the Himalayas, until at 35,000 feet we had reached a totally new world, distant and distinct from all ordinary physical laws and facts. At this height, we were dwellers in a sealed world of our own, a world of silence, without noise and almost without sound, there being too little air to carry the sound waves. Jingling keys or rattling coins deluded the sense of hearing, for they were silent. A piece of paper dropped in that tenuous air fell heavily to the ground. All communication had to be written down and passed to each other. Though they could talk, the inmates of the sealed room had become dumb. We coughed and hearing nothing wondered what had happened to our throats. The pressure on the ears felt as though a hundred-ton hammer was being driven against them, and this sensation was only counteracted by continuously swallowing and clearing the throat.

This aerial illusion at Farnborough would have upset most of Galileo's pet terrestrial laws and deductions. An apple dropped from the tree might have knocked Newton senseless, since it would have fallen like a bomb through the thin air. At this height the external force on the walls of the chamber exceeded the internal pressure by nearly

1,000 tons, but though there was a certain strain on arteries, the fliers, supplied with oxygen, were not unduly distressed.

The breathing apparatus used by the Everest Flight was designed by the inventor of the submarine escape equipment.

They found, from experience, the curious fact that lack of oxygen produces heat at great altitudes in regions where it might have been expected that the body would be shivering. Flying over icy peaks, in an atmosphere corresponding to a refrigerator, the pilots would often find themselves in a perspiration.

It was a long step from the sealed room at Farnborough to the mountains of India, but when, after the flight across two continents, the airmen eventually arrived, they found conditions had been fairly accurately represented.

In a sense the mountains had been brought by science down to the level of man.

At first the hillmen thought that the gods of the mountains, would, by bringing up their storm winds, prevent the aeroplanes from invading their strongholds. No one had ever dared to look down upon the gods before. For centuries there has lingered a belief among Hindus and Tibetans that the Himalayan heights are inviolable alike to birds and men. Few of the inhabitants imagined that the fliers would succeed in their undertaking. Judged on its own merits the aerial expedition was regarded in the light of a forlorn hope or else as a joke.

All the peaks are inhabited by spirits, some good, some evil, who would resent the arrival of strangers in their realm. Makalu, twelve miles east of Everest, was

said to be the armchair of the gods, though an uncomfortable armchair, at the best, with its staggering precipices and its hundred-mile-an-hour winds.

Large numbers of natives gathered round the new birds that had arrived so unexpectedly in Bihar, wishing to touch fusilage or wing tip in case there was virtue to be derived from them, and when they passed overhead local inhabitants would kneel down in attitudes of worship.

The propeller itself was a puzzle to them. They saw it there on the ground, and slowly it began to revolve and the machines mounted. They saw it revolving faster and faster, then, all of a sudden, it disappeared.

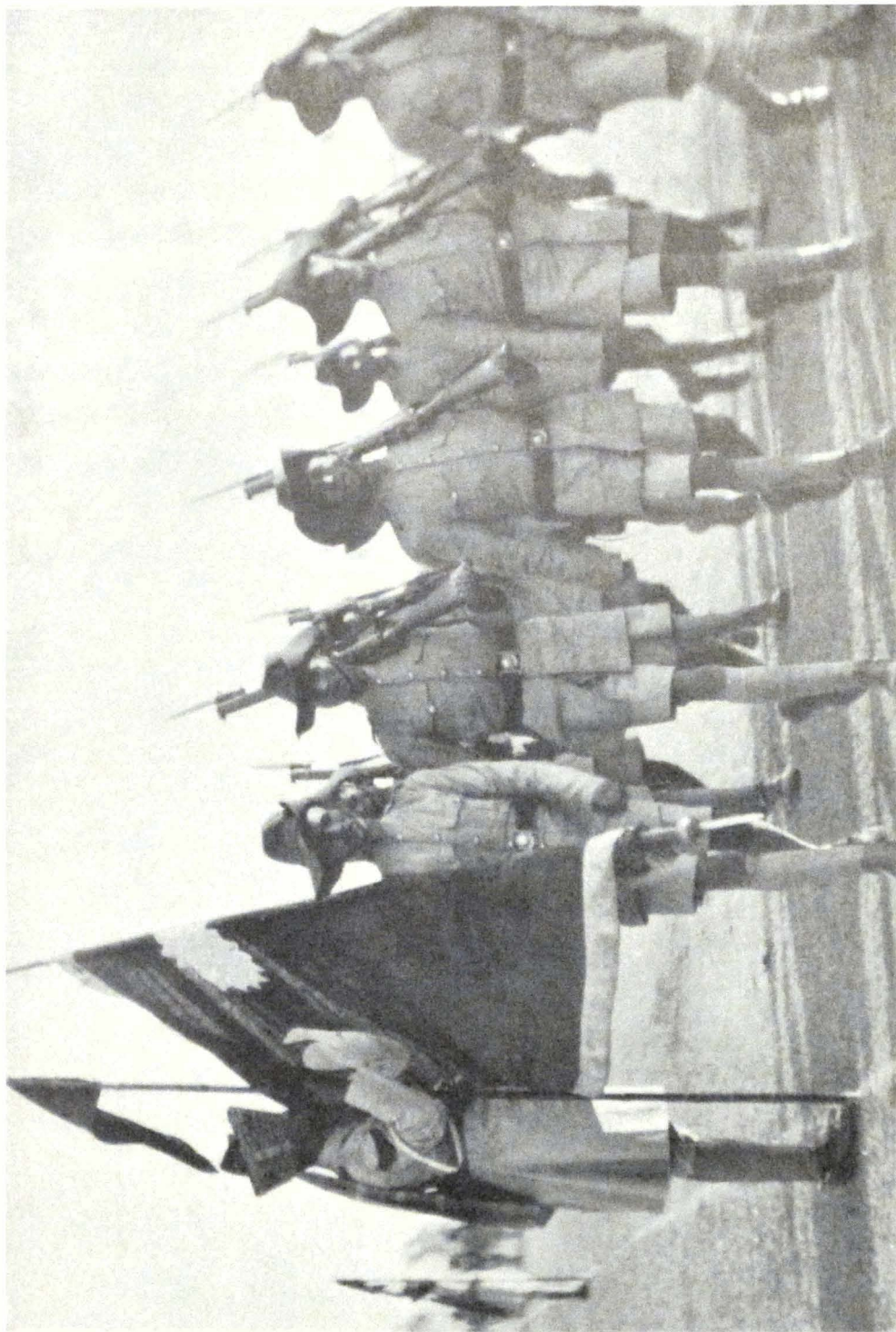
"It is quite clear to me what happens," said an old hermit, who had walked many miles to see the aeroplanes. "When the man-bird gets up into the cold, its nose drops off in the icy white lands."

The Dalai Lama, political and religious head of Tibet, the Sea of Wisdom, whose judgment in all things is supreme, on hearing that the expedition intended flying over the famous mountain, said that the prospect caused him and his people some anxiety, since the spirits might object; if they were going to be upset there was sure to be trouble, to say nothing of the noise which would further aggravate their anger.

All these difficulties had to be explained away and leave obtained to essay the last unconquered geographical objective left on the earth.

Everest thrusts her head just below the air ceiling, reckoned at about 35,000 feet. Above this ceiling, 50,000 feet up in the sky, comes the stratosphere where the air is so thin that there is no resistance and wind is unknown.

Could the Everest fliers succeed in running the



THE NEPALESE ARMY MARCHING PAST



EVEREST THROUGH THE AEROPLANE STRUTS

blockade of these ultimate citadels without experiencing mishap? That was the question to be answered as the expedition proceeded with the work of reconnaissance.

For thousands of years gurus, pilgrims and wayfarers of all descriptions, forsaking their crowded life upon the ground, have climbed to the Roof of the World, drawn by an attraction stronger than themselves. It is not a flat roof, it is certainly not a comfortable or safe one, yet those who have made the journey and seen for themselves the adventurous upthrust of that snowy realm, find the prospect beyond the power of words to describe.

Man is for ever striving to be his best. Only the supreme summits of mountains can extract from him that harmony of body and spirit which is the expression of a life-struggle within him to conquer and to climb. High mountains put a spell upon man's spirit and link him with immortality.

In the belief of the Tibetans, Everest, Queen of the Himalayas, is not only a goddess, but Goddess-Mother of the world. Traversing those unending uplands, venturing towards the unknown, the first nomads discovered a mountain taller than all others, diademed with ice and flying a great snow pennon, which they came to regard as a person rather than a peak. After them came the lamas and monks to gaze at this white wonder.

At the present time Everest is often worshipped. People come from far and wide, and to the goddess-mother they bring offerings of tea, milk, honey and barley. They set up their prayer wheels and burn fragrant fires of juniper, the only firewood available on those lofty plateaux. When anyone dies in an attempt on the mountain, or an accident occurs, to the climbing party it

is regarded as a sacrifice to the mountain, showing clearly the anger of the gods at the invasion of their sanctity. According to a persistent superstition, anyone who happens to be in the same place and at the same time will be killed should he make any attempt to climb the mountain in the future.

Below and in full view of Everest is a monastery reputed to have been there since the eleventh century; a few hundred feet above it are hermit cells, with an opening just large enough for the occupant to take in a daily allowance of parched grain and water.

From the moment he enters, the hermit lives in a world of total darkness. Not for him are the passage of night and day the moving fingers of time; irrevocably his vows preclude him from letting in light or looking out. He must never see or talk to any living soul. Where he sleeps there must he stay.

There are few more entertaining conversations than a talk about Everest with Tibetan lamas. Ever since the first lamas entered a monastery, the highest peak of the Himalayas has been to them a lovely lady, far-seeing and profound, cloaking her thousand mysteries in a coverlet of snow. Yet, has she always remained the same? Has the goddess mountain ever had a different setting or another story to her past? The monks have an answer to this question. Millions of years ago, they say, Everest was not a mountain at all, but a tropical island beneath the ocean, covered with teeming animal life. In her previous incarnation she knew the secrets of the seas. The whispers of the demon underworld were hers. Thus, the goddess-mother of the world comprehends the depths as well as the heights of earthly growth and experience.

North of the Himalayas, in the Karakoram, also

possessing peaks devoted to the gods, live a mysterious sect who have isolated themselves from the world and pray for its forgiveness. This is not a pose or a popular prank, but a grim and often freezing reality. These hermits spend their lives like bears hibernating in caves hewn out of the solid rock, but unlike the animals they never leave under any pretext.

All round Everest animal life is sacred. No life must be taken in this area, and the monks almost make pets of the wild creatures. Little mouse hares scamper about, wild sheep roam the open places, and the songs of lark and blackbird make you think of England. But in the autumn come blizzards of hail, and the wind blows across the snow with hurricane force.

Their sacrifices over, Tibetans who come to visit Everest have a good time with archery, horse-racing, singing, drinking, and general jollification. I once encountered a group of nomads in the Karakoram who had been enjoying themselves in this way. They had demolished nearly all the provisions, but in their midst, untasted and untouched, was something that distantly resembled a joint of meat.

“What is that ?” I asked.

“It is a leg of mutton,” one of them replied, helping out his words with gestures. “It belonged to my father !”

Dried mutton, often five to ten years old, is regarded as an aristocratic dish. A leg of mutton, in fact, is generally kept apart for the important guest ; but he must not think of eating it, or he will be guilty of a grave breach of good manners. The leg is kept for another time, and with luck may last for a generation.

These people bury their dead in an original way.

The body is exposed on a hill, close to camp, and left for dogs and birds of prey. Should it not be devoured within a few days the departed is deemed to have led a wicked and wayward life, all his relations being then collected and given a sound beating to serve as a warning for the future. The sins of the father visited upon the children indeed.

Situated on the flank of the goddess mountain, alongside the Rongbuk glacier, and 1,400 feet higher than Mont Blanc, is one of the strangest secrets of Everest—a Buddhist monastery, already referred to, that houses a number of monks. To be an inmate of this snowy Glastonbury a monk must have passed high novitiate, and vowed his days to contemplation. Up there in freezing buildings, constructed heaven knows how, they pass their days in the company of the everlasting hills, rising at 3 a.m. and going to bed with the sun.

Some of the pilgrims who visit the sacred places measure the whole distance by throwing themselves at full length on the ground. They then get up, and where their hands have touched the ground repeat the process, lying down again. They may take as much as a year to accomplish their task. Travellers have met pilgrims who were thirteen months on the way, but have survived the ordeal and been held in high esteem afterwards.

The monks in a Himalayan monastery salute the spirits of the mountains on eight-foot trumpets. They play shrieking notes, long, weird calls that shock the silence of the snows and echo down the passes. Some of the monasteries, utterly lonely and remote, lie in a fantastic setting of pinnacles and icicles forming part of glaciers that extend for more than fifty miles. In the moonlight they glint. In the sunshine they shimmer.

They are the lamps of the gods and demi-gods who, the people believe, hold suzerainty over the Himalayas and especially Mount Everest.

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This was the giant peak, the topography of whose summit and approaches the Everest Flight expedition had come to photograph at close quarters. Everything had been prepared in readiness, and no stone left unturned that might help to ensure success. The day of fulfilment approached at last.

On the eve of April 2, a balloon was sent into the upper strata of the air. The wind was recorded as being 57 m.p.h., a gale in Britain but a modest breeze for those parts. Early on the morning of April 3 we paraded at Lalbalu aerodrome, near Purnea. The die was cast.

Enveloped in weird high altitude suits, with their goggles and a network of electric wires, the airmen gave the appearance of visitors from Mars. Clydesdale, the chief pilot, and Blacker, as chief observer, climbed into the first Westland. They joked about lunch and waved their hands. McIntyre, the pilot, and Bonnett, the cinematographer, boarded the second machine. I handed McIntyre the mailbag containing letters bearing a special cancellation stamp issued by the Postmaster-General in India for the occasion. These letters, bearing messages to the King, the Prince of Wales, Lady Houston, and others, were to be carried over Everest before being sent by air mail to Europe.

There was also a postcard entrusted to me by a friend from Grosvenor House. This he had asked me to present to the world's highest mountain. The postcard, with 'from us to you with the best of luck' written on it, was dropped

over Everest—a marvellous shot—and the message faithfully delivered; the first visiting card ever to have been received by Mount Everest.

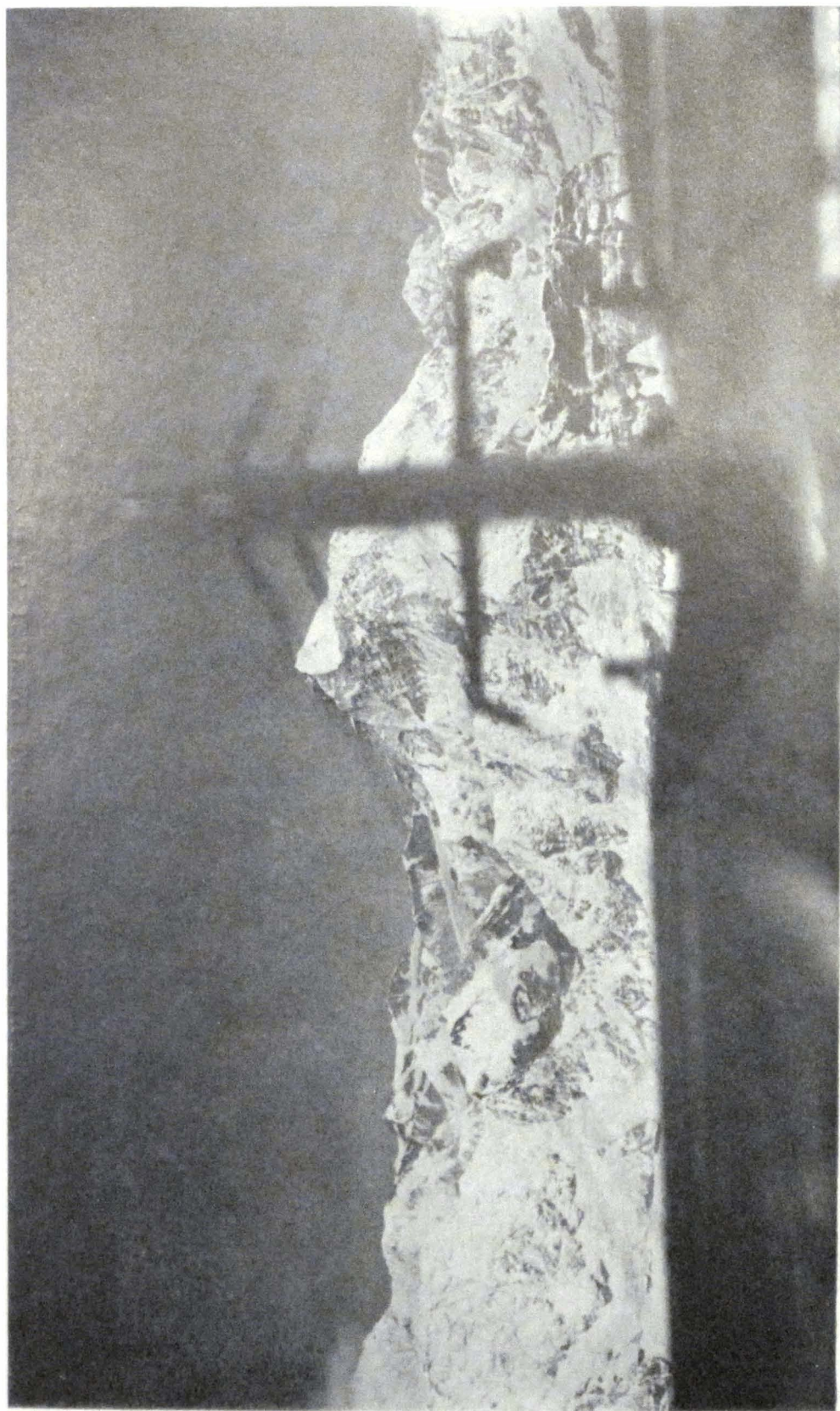
Although everyone had complete confidence in the success of the flight, at the actual moment of starting we were assailed by a hundred anxieties about a hundred different things that might go wrong. As the machines warmed to their work the engines seemed to roar defiance at the mountains. Once again it was a case of civilized man pitted against the resisting forces of Nature. Many British workmen had toiled to make that great engine now throbbing with life. It *would* not let us down.

For a moment or two I was held in a reverie, caught by the drama of the moment. Then a tremendous roar brought me back to reality . . . the machines were off!

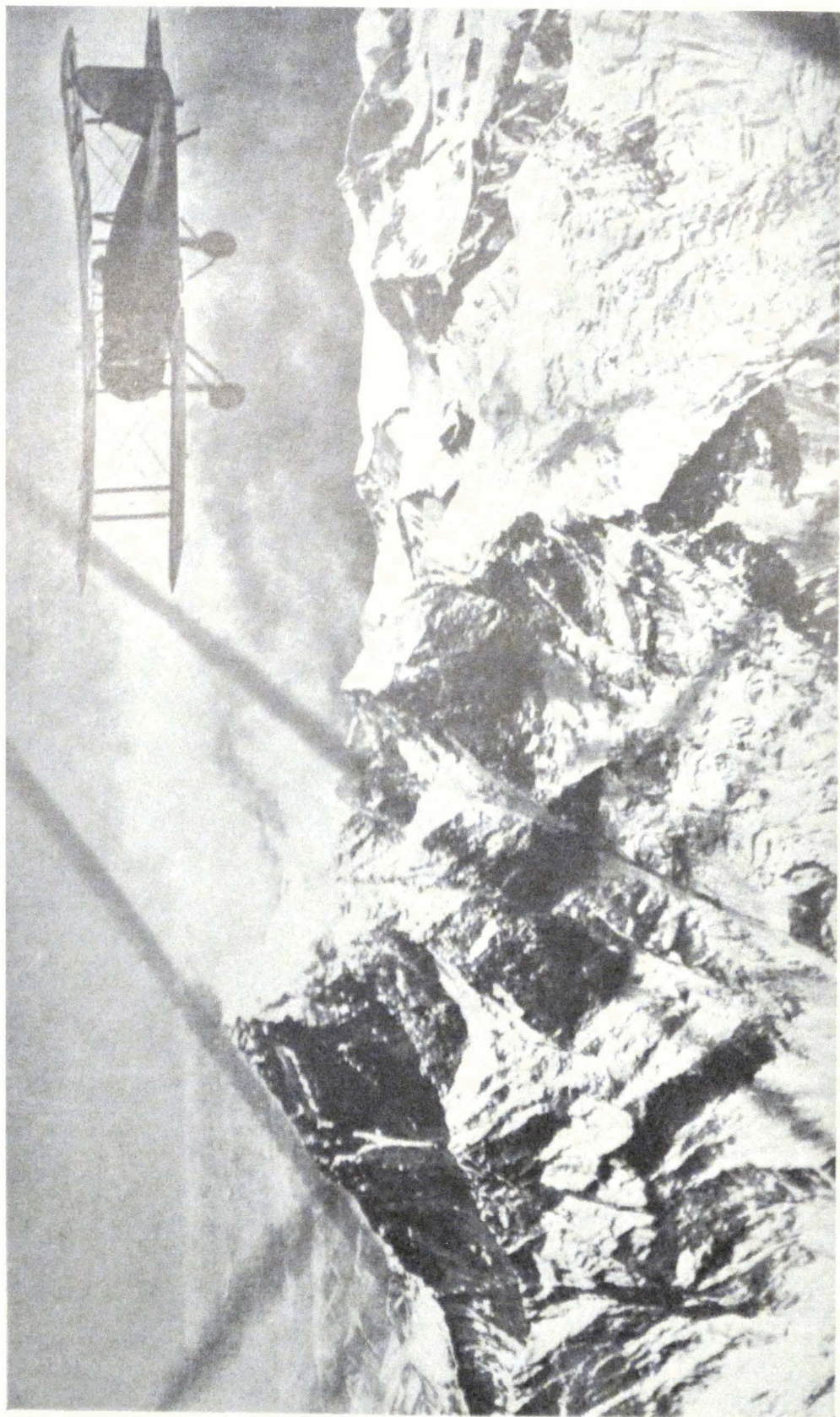
Fellowes and I waved farewell, and watched the Westlands mounting, not knowing if we would see our friends again. A silence followed, the silence of men whose minds are busy and whose hearts are full. We had the feeling that not only the human side of the expedition rested in the balance, but that the prestige and fair name of British aircraft depended to no small extent on the result of the day's work. No one knew the conditions that the fliers might encounter on their voyage into those unknown heights. Everest remained the great enigma.

Hundreds of natives had camped round Purnea to see the result of the contest with the elements, which they pictured to themselves as a battle—the Sahib against the gods.

The two Westlands gained altitude rapidly. They droned away into the distance, and swiftly became



MAKALU (27,790ft.). THE GOD'S ARM-CHAIR,
THROUGH THE AEROPLANE STRUTS



APPROACHING MOUNT EVEREST AT 32,000 FEET

two specks of silver. Soon they had vanished from sight.

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As they ascended, a scene of fairy-like beauty unfolded itself below the fliers in the Westlands. Nothing was clear-cut. An opal dust haze hung over the world, blurring all outlines ; opening the hatch they could look down into thousands of feet of purple space. After an hour's climbing three tiny specks of white incandescence grew out of the haze—Kinchinjunga, Everest and Makalu. They could see the infinite tangle of the mountains of Nepal and the swift Arun river gleaming like a silver snake.

“At 19,000 feet,” said Blacker, “we suddenly emerged from the haze. Sunlit mountains surrounded us. Leaving my routine duties for a moment, I opened the cockpit roof, and there ahead, and almost level with us, was the incredible majesty of Everest. . . .

“The astounding picture of the peak, its terrific southern slopes silhouetted against the white background of Makalu, is a sight that will linger in my mind for ever. . . .

“Upwards our great engine took us ; the summit rushed towards us threateningly. It menaced our advance, but in another instant the machine, splendidly piloted by Clydesdale, passed over it with barely a hundred feet of clearance. I looked down through the open floor and saw what no man since time began had ever seen before.

“No words can tell the awfulness of that vision. Entranced by both thought and sight I was for a moment spellbound. Struck with astonishment, I found myself panting with exertion as I wrestled with the all-important photography. Surely there could be no views such as

these in all the world? Then a great vortex or overfall of winds seized the machine, which swooped down over 1,500 feet in a second or two. Clydesdale turned her at once into the wind, her nose to the westward, and we battled against wind and downfall combined, so that for all our 120 miles of speed we scarcely made headway.

“As we came round over the top we passed through the famous plume of Everest, that awesome, miles-long white streamer which men see and marvel at 200 miles away. Huge flakes of ice rattled into the cockpit with such force as to break one of its windows. The pilot, handling the machine with consummate skill, turned her in big curves so that I could take a rapid succession of oblique pictures of those stupendous ice cliffs with a height of 8,000 feet and more.”

As it turned out, the wind encountered by the aircraft far exceeded the velocity suggested by the balloon test. At one time the machines were as straws swept along in a whirlwind sky. For one unbearable moment it must have seemed to the pilots as though, caught in the pitiless clutches of the wind vortex, they would be hurled round and round Everest, torn into shreds and battered on the projecting rocks far below.

The first time, tugged downwards at terrific speed by an invisible hand, they had entered the whirlpool and were rushed in a circuit round the peak. Forcing their way to its outer edge, where the wind was only a trifle less violent, they managed to gain altitude once more. Again they approached to fly over Everest, and were torn downwards towards destruction and engulfed in the maelstrom; only this time they knew more about the danger and succeeded in steering a course to safety.

They were taking pictures all the time as they headed

for home, the Himalayas silhouetted in sharp relief against the rudder ; soon they were over the gorges of the Arun river, steering south-west for the landing ground. They had looked down on Everest. Their minds were still amazed by the vision of stark beauty they had seen. If life held no other achievement than this, still it were enough . . .

The pleasure was release
To rocket me beyond the press,
Up through the darkness went I, and could guess
Man's first world-passage in that flight.

Air could substantiate
My claim to live its anywhere.
I hung upon its lips, and thence could dare
To take earth, having all in sight.

"The Baptism" : L. AARONSON.

Everest had not beckoned in vain. A queen, clad always in the royal ermine of her winter furs, jewelled with a million icicles, aloof as death . . . it is not to be wondered at that the Tibetans called her goddess-mother of the world ; nor that a long succession of climbers and explorers have been drawn to her side.

From her throne on the roof of the world she watches over two forbidden lands : mysterious Tibet and the secluded kingdom of Nepal. From where the Indus river and its affluents put a cool arm round the Punjab to where the Brahmaputra bends southward towards Assam, through a mountainous region 1,500 miles in length, open only to the wind and the eagle, her dominion stretches. Only in an aeroplane could this mighty barrier between two worlds be surveyed, or any adequate idea be formed of the myriad ranges that form the backbone of our planet.

Broadly speaking, the problems of mountain flying, except in the Andes, have hitherto been neglected or left to chance. The air breathed by the highest mountains lacks most of the oxygen to which man is accustomed. They hold varying surprises up their sleeves and in their air pockets, and cruising over them, difficulties of landing, photography, engine running, all present new problems for study.

The actual temperature registered by the aircraft when above the summit of Everest was 74 degrees below zero, or 106 degrees of frost. Leaving down-draughts out of the question, there is always an aerial movement from west to east over the great mountain, probably due, in part, to the curvature and rotation of the earth. At 30,000 feet this sky swell is pronounced in its effects, the wind breaking like ocean waves. Winds, when they feel like it, sweep the Himalayas at 140 miles an hour.

Just below the summit of Everest a powerful vacuum forms, where conflicting winds run into a tangle. They suck up the snow in a whirl and flurry, convert it into ice particles, and send them crashing off to form the famous ice-plume already mentioned.

At these immense heights, lassitude grips the body in a vice, due in part to lack of sufficient oxygen, and to the vapour created by the sun shining over hundreds of square miles of snow and ice that reacts adversely on the brain. The fliers found they needed every ounce of concentration and will power to tackle the task of steering, photography and observation. At 30,000 feet in an atmosphere far below zero, the brain falters and becomes disconnected; inertia tends to take command of the faculties. Over Everest the telephone communication between pilot and observer broke down. To get messages

to Clydesdale, Blacker was compelled to write them, forcing himself to do so with the special tablets and unfreezable ink provided for the purpose. In front of him were sheets pinned to the dashboard, with the forty-six things on which he had to concentrate. Up there, in that rarefied and ghostly region, the flyers, ceasing to be human, had turned into robot men, seeing, yet no longer reasoning, and working in convulsive movements, controlled by the clockwork power of their will.

Down on the ground at Purnea aerodrome the rest of the expedition anxiously awaited the return of the pilots. It took the 'planes half an hour to reach 29,000 feet. The distance from Purnea to the summit of Everest was 158 miles. If all went well it was reckoned they should be returning in about two and three-quarter hours.

Three hours ten minutes after their departure we saw them in the northern sky.

As they touched ground everyone ran forward, but there was no need to ask the great question for the smile on the faces of the flyers was answer enough. Hands were shaken without realizing in the least what was happening. "We've done it," said McIntyre as he climbed out of his machine into the sunshine. His simple words made those present realize that Mount Everest, the unconquerable, had been conquered from the air.

We also flew over Kinchinjunga, a monarch of the snows, twelve miles from the Tibetan frontier, and so well known to European travellers, more especially the view obtained at sunrise from Tiger Hill near Darjeeling. It is not so much a mountain as a kingdom of snow and ice with a climate of its own. Not only does it break the force of the monsoon, but protects the watershed to the

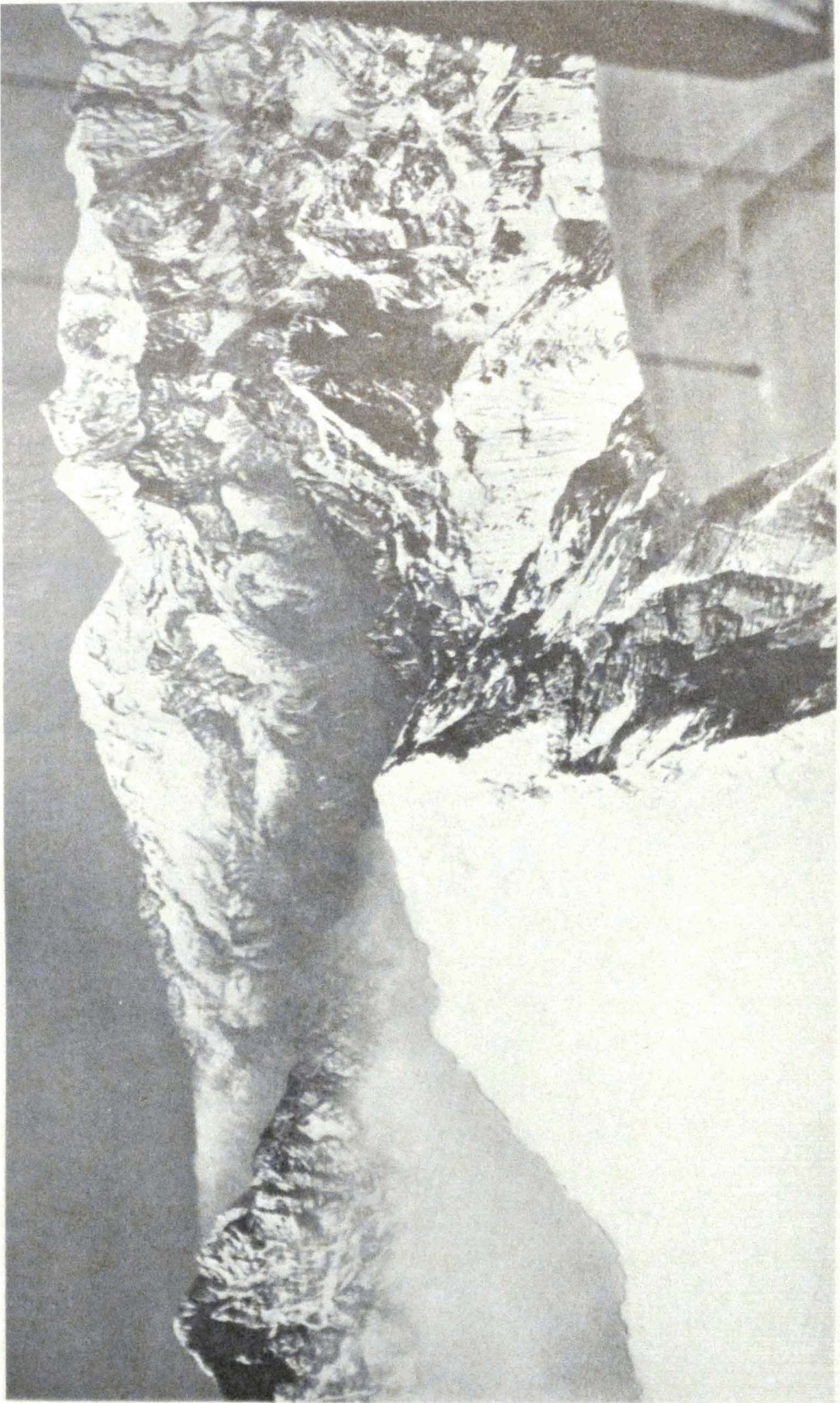
north. It has been described as a great baron, clothed at dawn and dusk in shining armour, and defending a territory that is the stronghold of the gods.

Over Kinchinjunga the fliers were in a world of their own that sparkled like an icicle. Below them they could see peak after peak, precipice upon precipice, glaciers like tumbled seas, unplumbed purple depths, enormous white faces, and the blue of the outermost sky, all in an amazing arena of windswept giants far removed from the dusty habitat of human beings.

Then, suddenly, conditions began to alter. Until this moment the peaks had been clear, standing out, where there was cloud, like islands in a misty sea ; but the wind currents changed, sweeping the clouds higher into the Himalayan sky. When less than half a mile from the top of Kinchinjunga the fliers saw the summit clearly. Before they had halved the distance the top was obscured.

They went at full speed for their objective, but it was just too late. It was as if, knowing that the cameras were coming, the great mountain had turned into a bashful Eastern maiden and drawn the veil across her face. At the summons of the atmosphere all the peaks, far and wide, had begun to pull the white coverlet from around their feet and muffle their heads. It was a mighty disappointment for the pilots and camera men. Ten minutes sooner on the scene and they would have obtained a clear view.

On the way back, missing the guiding mark of the railway line, Air Commodore Fellowes, the pilot, lost his way in the mist, and was forced to descend in a field close to the town of Dinajpur. He hoped his arrival might have passed unnoticed, but it was not to be. Villagers appeared



CIRCLING THE SUMMIT OF EVEREST.
A CLOSE-UP OF THE WORLD'S HIGHEST MOUNTAIN



OVER THE WORLD'S HIGHEST MOUNTAIN.
IN THE IMMEDIATE FOREGROUND IS THE SUMMIT
OF MOUNT EVEREST, SHOWING ITS NORTHERN FACE

on all sides from nowhere, eager to see this bird-god who had so unexpectedly appeared out of the Himalayas to come and visit them. While he stayed in the machine, with the engine running, they remained at a worshipful distance; but as soon as he left the cockpit and began to walk like an ordinary mortal they crowded round—men, women, naked children and dogs forming a gesticulating wall.

With the help of some English-speaking natives, who acted as human broadcasters, order was restored. It was explained to them that the machine disliked being touched and that it might easily become angry and start to roar. In the eyes of the thousands of surprised onlookers, the pilot must have become a kind of modern Gulliver.

Everest was flown over for a second time on April 19 in spite of opposition from home due largely to questions of insurance. The telescope to the blind eye so as to consummate the aims for which the expedition had come so far, the Nelson touch was employed again. This second flight was described as 'a piece of grand insubordination which saved the expedition'.

All went well. The higher the aeroplanes went the happier they seemed to be. The propellers revolving at half the speed of the engines carried them steadily through the upper air. This time they were approaching Everest as conquerors and not as quarry. The stage was set for the last stand of the giants against the advance of modern scientific invention. A careful scheme of navigation had been worked out, taking into account the different horizontal and vertical aerial forces the pilots might expect to encounter. Approaching the summit at a sharp angle, so as not to be caught in the wind whirlpool, they flew over Lhotse, the southern peak of Everest, and turned

sharply to the right in the direction of Nepal, the west wind behind them, taking successful photographs as they went.

The dust haze was much lower than on the first flight, making visibility clearer. And what a royal horizon was theirs! For them the eye had turned into a telescope, viewing everything afar, its vision extending for hundreds of miles and only limited by the curvature of the earth's surface. There is a legend among some of the dwellers in the Himalayas that in a certain spot on a certain day, when the gods speak the magic word, the King of England can be seen across the seas sitting on his throne and robed in state. The fliers saw no such wonderful sight as this, but they saw enough. Central Asia lay at their feet—a view that was a gasp!

In the sunshine the snowy world about them took on the quality and glitter of a diamond, each facet being a different mountain face. Dark were the rocks and precipices, and grimy an occasional glacier in contrast with the dazzle of the snow. There were the staggering cliff precipices of Kinchinjunga and Makalu, deepening into chasms filled with cloud. For hundreds of untrodden miles in every direction, splendid and defiant, stretched the halted ranks of the ranges, throwing up every now and then a giant leader, unconquered by man, overtopping all the rest.

Westward they rolled in white waves to the Karakoram, and northward they extended endlessly beyond the plateau to the dim dream mountains of the Kuen Lun; and eastward the snowy skyscrapers continued towards those gorges where the Brahmaputra river flows through the Himalayan barrier in cataract upon cataract. A land of silent spaces and silver dawns filled with the fierceness

of frost and the freshness of spring. A land of white magic ! The roof of the world !

From these regions of struggle in the north the first Mogul emperor swooped down upon India to sit in cushioned ease upon the peacock throne ; from the might of these mountains our Aryan ancestors, high-nosed, hearty men, singing their songs and drinking their warming liquor, first descended as conquerors on the plains of Hindustan. Here was the meeting ground of three empires, four civilizations, many ancient races of men, and no trippers.

CHAPTER IV

TIBET THE INCREDIBLE

A country apart—Unveiling the ancient mystery—Some explorers described—The lama's bluff and how it affected the history of Tibet—The truth about Tibet—Extraordinary contentment—Nomadic link between outer Tibet and India—The question of food—Tea that is sold in bricks—The people themselves—How they dress, eat, and live—Family life described—Buttered tea, and babies who are smeared with butter—Propitiating devils a large part of Tibetan's life—New Year ceremony of burning the bad luck—Chased to death through Lhasa—A queer marriage ceremony—Polygamy and polyandry—The musk deer, yak, and ram chikore, or "Winter Sports" bird—Some queer stories—Sports of stone-throwing and snowballing.

FOR seventeen hundred years after the birth of Christ, Tibet remained for all the western nations a conundrum and a country apart. Those white plateaux concealed and invisible from everywhere except the tops of mountains, became the Arcanum of Asia; a place inhabited by portent myth and mystery. From the days of Herodotus, stories of strange wonder attached themselves to this land where temple music sounded across precipices and shrines rose out of the snow; tales that soon took on the strength of legends.

It was said that men who saw the great idol of the Buddha in Lhasa were struck with glory, and that the people who inhabited Tibet were a race of spirit-men able to talk with mountains and discern the pathways to heaven. Here was said to be the light of Asia and the holiest home of Buddhism. As the centuries progressed, from far and wide eastern pilgrims began to make their progress to these places. A general occultation of thought veered

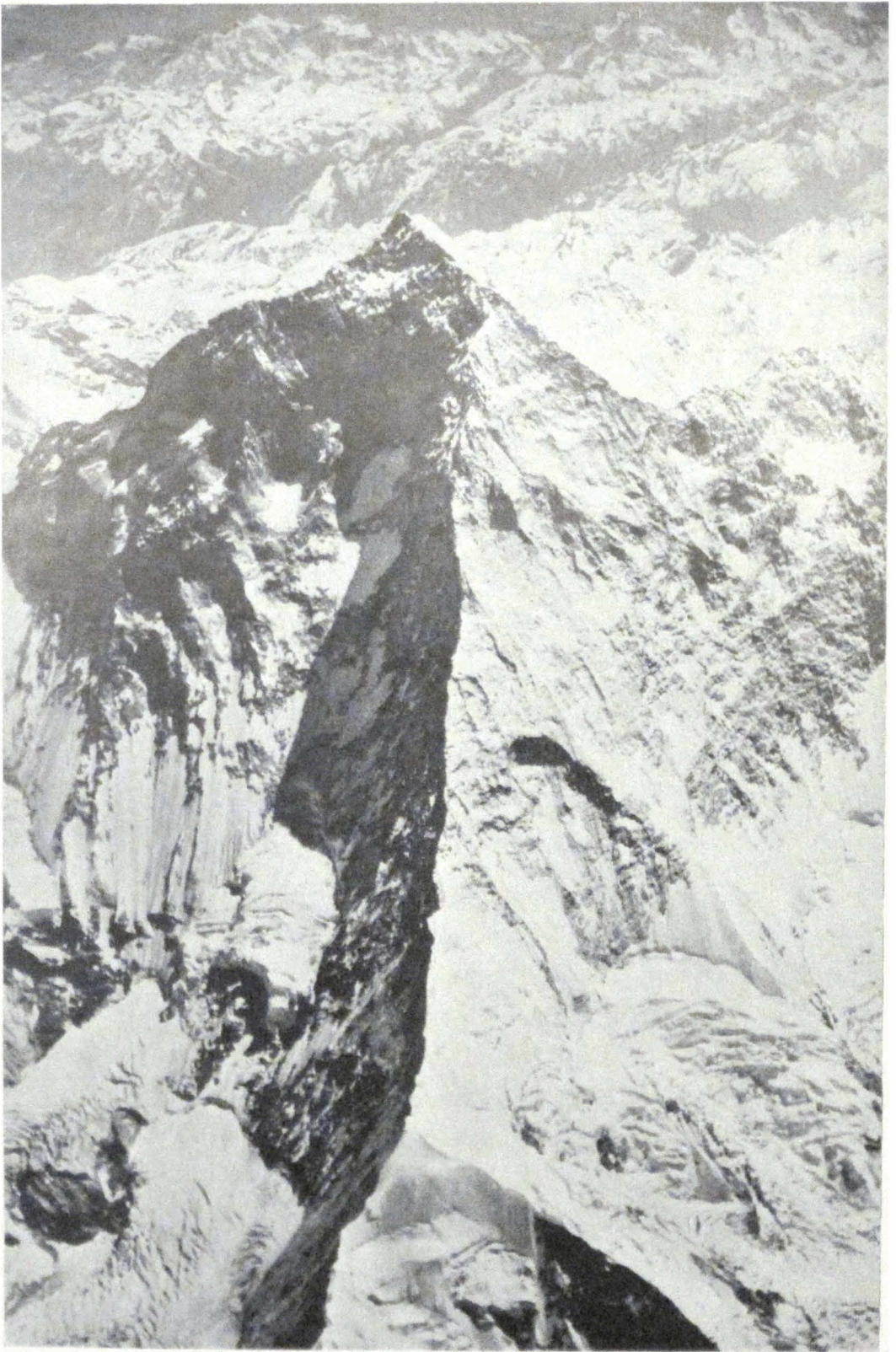
in the direction of Tibet, a process of exploration that has far from ceased even at the present day.

Gradually corners of the veil of mystery came to be lifted and each traveller brought back with him a few more grains of truth to add to the sands of certainty that were collecting about this fabulous land. But it was many years after Europe had become civilized, and her thought crystallized, that any first-hand glimpse of Tibet was obtained. The country, really the last secret citadel of Asia, remained free indefinitely from the invasion of western curiosity and contact.

George Bogle was the first Englishman officially to enter Tibet. He went as an envoy from Warren Hastings to the Dalai Lama, with letters from the John Company, and returned bearing tales of a people who were happy children, not supermen or devils.

He was followed at the time of the Napoleonic wars by Thomas Manning, who visited Lhasa in 1812 on the way to China and stayed for five months. But nothing was published of a visit that must have been of extraordinary interest, and at his death only a few leaves of his diary were found. His successor in the list of travellers, William Moorcroft, actually lived for many years in Lhasa disguised as a Moslem, and, about the year 1812, visited Lake Manasarowar.

But then the curtain, so recently lifted, was lowered again by the lama authorities, the path of exploration became closed, and during the 19th and 20th centuries a strong barrier was put up between Tibet and the western world. Previously travel had been comparatively easy and every newcomer was given the freedom of the East, being accorded at least equal rights with other citizens, but during this period the Far East was



MAKALU (27,790ft.), SISTER PEAK OF EVEREST AND KNOWN AS
THE GOD'S ARM-CHAIR



A HOLY CHILD OF TIBET AND A REPUTED
REINCARNATION OF THE BUDDHA

almost off the map and few took advantage of the favourable conditions. The change of front on the part of Tibet had been attributed to the discovery that the Westerner had come to stay in the East, that he was often territorially minded, and that explorers, just like visitors, could outstay their welcome. Moreover, the lamas had no wish to lose their power and influence when forced to compete with foreign knowledge and progress. So the age of the "Foreign Devil" began. East was East and West was West and where the two met, trouble fitted an arrow to its bow.

The next newcomers were men of God : priests, such as the Abbé Evariste Huc, Joseph Gabet, and Abbé Desgodins, who travelled through Kam and Eastern Tibet, and took their lives in their hands. They may have been the cause of curious resemblance to-day, between some forms of lama clothes and ceremonial with that of the European friars.

In 1863 came the advent of the first of the Indian pundit explorers, despatched by the Survey of India. Many of their wanderings were minor Odysseys of interest and valour ; men like Nain Singh and Kinthup became professional tramps, sometimes sold into slavery by the lamas and informing the Indian world of their whereabouts by means of cryptic signs and marked logs thrown into rivers that rushed the wood down hundreds of miles into the plains of India. Chandra Das, the Bengali schoolmaster, incensed the Tibetan authorities by publishing a book of disclosures and experiences amongst them. Miss Taylor, a solitary Englishwoman, entering Tibet from Mongolia, arrived within one hundred and fifty miles of Lhasa. But everyone was turned back. Even Sven Hedin and Aurel Stein chose the unknown Pamirs in preference

to the Forbidden Land. The game of geographical hide-and-seek continued until the British military expedition to Lhasa in 1904; then the fierce spirit of priestly opinion began to be watered down by the principle of a buffer state and there came the unheard-of spectacle of Sir Charles Bell, British representative at Sikkim, actually invited to Lhasa on a visit in 1920. Telegraphic connection, new wires of understanding, was established between Lhasa and India, and for a time the late Dalai Lama, when escaping from Chinese complications, came to live in Calcutta, returning to his capital impressed beyond measure with one western product—the magic of electricity.

All this time the lamas continued their old policy of resistance to outside influences, by telling the people that they were the most enlightened, happy and fortunate race on the face of the earth. They went further, and preached that Tibet was an earthly paradise, an incomparable country, where everything was perfect, and no reforms or improvements necessary. "All other nations envy Tibet," they said, "and will try to gain your privilege and copy your happy land."

It was a grand bluff and it succeeded. Other reactionary governments in other places have tried time and again to foster the same illusion, but without avail; only the lamas have been able to turn a tale into a fairy story that lived happily ever after. Practically no shadow of revolution or internal discord and discontent has ever darkened the snows of Tibet. Everything was the same as it had always been and everything was for and of the best. Social or economic advance became unnecessary. A care-free sense of completion settled upon the minds of the uneducated inhabitants. With the

exception of Tartar invasions made by tribes to whom physical obstacles were of no account, and an occasional punitive expedition from China, the peace of Tibet has remained monumental. So great is the force of persuasion and studied isolation that the people did consider they were blessed beyond all others and that they lived in a perpetual Utopia.

This was believed of a country that was once an ice desert and still preserves many characteristics of its past. Extremes exist on such a scale that to this day many of the inhabitants walk about with one shoulder bare and the other covered in furs so as to be clad both for the sunny and the freezing side of the road; biting winds turn skins into leather; washing is so unpleasant that the people prefer to appear black, when they are really of a brown-red colour. Travellers have described Tibet as being, with the exception of a few favoured valleys, a desperate country for man to inhabit permanently, cold, bleak, desolate, wind-whipped and without the exultation of the outer mountains.

Yet the Tibetans continue to smile. They sing as they plough their fields with barley in the summer; they laugh as they drink their tea in the icy blasts of winter. They are one of the most cheerful and contented races in existence. It is a solemn thought.

A pantheistic religion founded on animism and ancient superstition, its origins lost in dragon worship, rule their lives and many of their actions. All Nature is so animate around them with devils who can come up from the ground, and spirits that descend from the mountains, that their bleak days are far from dull ones. Without a single amenity or pleasure of science and invention to help them, they continue down the chosen and primitive

paths, existing contentedly under conditions that Europe would consider hardly suitable for charcoal burners in the Middle Ages. The people of Tibet listen to the persuasive voice of their lamas. The next life in the future is of far more importance than the present one. Customs, good enough a thousand years ago, still content them to-day. What a subject for economists, physicists, psychologists, hygienists, and busybodies generally !

For keeping them in this static circle of contented being, the Tibetans have their extraordinary geographical position, besides the lamas, to thank—or is it to blame ?

Tibet is divided geographically by the valley of the San-po, but a far better line exists in the two differing climatic zones. The south-east of Tibet is the fertile quarter with fields, forests, and a general display of cultivation both natural and artificial ; elsewhere, and especially towards the north, a change comes over the land. Stark, inhospitable highlands swept by constant wind, take the place of undulating valleys ; the great backbone of mountain chains rise so sheer that even the snow cannot stay on them ; entries through the ranges become sword-cuts, and the coloured monasteries and djongs poised on their crags seem to have been erected by magic or a race of supermen. Without timber for beams or props, many of these structures, built in some cases out of mere mud and bones, are oddities of skilfully adapted architecture. These craggy mountains witnessed the first arrival of sky-scrapers long before any city rose in America. But the houses of the people in these districts tend to be mean and huddled, almost hiding beneath the ground in their efforts to escape the constant buffeting of wind and weather.

On all sides their land is buttressed not by enfiling ranges that diminish in altitude as they reach the plains

below, but by a series of gigantic walls running roughly parallel to each other and forming the colossal rim of the central cup of upheaval which consists of Tibet, the Pamirs and the Gobi Desert. No medieval trade routes ever crossed Tibet; they always ran westward by way of the Pamirs and Badakhshan. The Tibetan Chang proved an obstacle that could only be crossed with difficulty over high passes, at certain points and seasons of the year.

The Tibetans themselves are a survival of the Mongolian-Turkish stock that once prevailed all through high Asia, and their country is a relic of glacial epochs and internal upheavals of Nature. A route from Leh, two hundred and fifty miles from Srinagar, leads by way of the Chang-la to Grangra and thence traversing difficult country to Lhasa; near Leh the Indus river has literally carved his way through 'caverns measureless to man' into the bottle-necks of roaring cataracts. Another hairbreadth track leads into Tibet from India via the Shipki route near Simla, with the Sutlej valley for company; yet another runs through Sikkim from Darjeeling, as traversed by Chandra Das, and leads to Kamba and Shigatze; the most direct, about three hundred and fifty miles in length, and that taken by the British expedition, passes through Kalimpong and across the Jelap-La to Chumbi, Gyantse and Lhasa.

The main trade routes of Tibet have always been westward over the thousands of miles to China proper, rather than southward over the Himalayas to India. One of the principal China trade routes passes through Khatmandu, with small caravans of opium, brick tea at an anna per pound, spices, drugs, cloth, merchandise and ponies.

Tibetans import part of their food from China, India and Nepal, making the hay of commerce when the passes are open during the summer months. Like England

they are dependent on foreign produce for existence. Wheat, rice, tsamba, tea, and sugar are bartered in exchange for the borax, salt, musk and wool of Tibet. A feature of commercial transaction is the blessing given by the merchants with the goods they sell. Leaning forward with a smile the shopkeeper will speed the customer on his way, in the hopes that he may soon return.

“May the goods you have bought from me avert the breath of disease or any other sufferings ; may this purchase bring you good luck and prosperity so that you may grow rich and fat, build store-houses and warehouses and buy more and more goods from me.”

Tea, sold in bricks about a foot long, is the most prominent of imported articles. The poor and needy have often to be satisfied with the rejected decoction obtained from teapots of wealthier people. These tea bricks are made of big leaves and twigs hardened into cakes with the liberal use of rice water ; without them life in these inhospitable, bleak highlands would be unthinkable as well as unpalatable to the inhabitants. A Tibetan drinks from thirty to fifty cups of tea every day, one of his great fears being that his stomach will get cold. The tea is placed in a churn, boiled up in water flavoured with soda, rancid butter and salt are added, and the whole is stirred into a brew that astonishes the inside of strangers but nourishes and sustains the people of the country.

The people of Tibet ! A subject strange and remote as the Druids. A nation of monks paradoxical as the hot sun and the cold snow that surround them ! A land, where with few written records and the currency of conduct all verbal, many things might be spoken of as true, and where the standard of living can be as high as the roof of some monastery, brooding on its crag, and



A PRAYING PILGRIM WHO HAS TOILED OVER
THE WORLD'S ROOF TO REACH LHASA



A NOMAD LADY OF TIBET

low as the Golok robbers lurking in their woods almost without clothes.

The national garment is the chuba, worn by men and women alike with an enormous pocket, in which the women carry their babies after the manner of kangaroos; this garment is looped up above the knee for ordinary folk and worn ankle deep by monks and priests. At night it is let down to its full length and so forms a nightdress without any of the inconvenience of changing. A Tibetan believes in wearing his clothes until they drop off or let in the cold so much that he is forced to renovate them; a woollen gown that lasts a lifetime is held in high esteem and the wearer admired for preserving this museum exhibit upon his person. A Tibetan tailor could announce with pride that he makes suits which will live.

All their lives the people seldom wash unless they can help it. In the normal course of events the most a man will do is to rub his body with butter, the most rancid he can find, the best being kept for the tea, and this buttering will in time add several layers of thickness to his skin when it has come in contact with outside influences. The nobles in Lhasa wash, it is true, but it is after a fashion of their own. A servant brings water in a lordly jug; the master imbibes, spitting out the water on to his hands, which he then uses to scrub his face.

Inside round tents, girdled by snow, family life proceeds upon primitive and strictly limited lines. In the centre of the tent stands a smoky mud stove filled with odorous yak dung, surrounded by perpetually stewing tea to provide for the innumerable cups of cheer without which even a Tibetan's composure might be frozen solid. Beside the fire usually reposes a block of wood waiting for the reception of the precious teacups; when not needed

it is a special seat of hospitality for the stranger. Around the tent, a wall of yak dung is erected for protection against the wind, an unwelcome visitor that will push its way past anything.

The smell, compounded of many strange ingredients, permeating these movable homes is so strong that the visitor is staggered and often compelled to retreat; travellers relate that Tibetan tent odour has almost the force of a blow and would make horses panic, but it helps, no doubt, to warm the inmates and keep alive the idea that their country is a cheerful, cosy place. Richer nomads instal in the position of honour a shrine, with images of the Buddha, in front of which are brass bowls for offerings of food and butter. Religious exercises are performed with unvarying regularity, the principal one being the turning and re-turning of the prayer wheel that mechanically, eternally, automatically, revolves Tibetan petitions. This is the only form of revolution known to Tibetans, and small children start on it at an age when their Western brothers and sisters would be given rattles, turning the wheels from left to right, clockwise, since to do the reverse renders the prayers useless and might almost have the force of cursing. Rosaries are told, one hundred and eight beads to each necklace. When a cat purrs it is said by the Tibetans to be telling its beads.

It has been asserted that there are no fat people in Tibet, though the heavy clothes generally worn tend to give this appearance; nor are female figures wasted in the same way as are those of people living on lower levels of the earth. The women, dark-haired, brown-eyed, with the universally black complexion, express their charms not in looks but in their laughter and hospitality. Years of exposure to the glare of the sun, eternal blasts of wind,

together with the rubber substance they smear on their cheeks, produces skins of crocodile leather, unsightly but serviceable, amid conditions that would quickly murder the strongest complexion. Tibetan features are wrinkled, seamed and furrowed, but not with age or antiquity so much as by the perpetual attentions of an inhuman climate ; a face-lifter might make a fortune in this realm of wrinkles if he could persuade the inhabitants to undertake anything so inverted.

No one can wonder that kissing or hand-shaking are unknown. The national form of greeting is to place the hat in front of the stomach and put out the tongue as far as possible. The protusion of the tongue is not only a sign of respect, but registers strong emotion, and is often reinforced by bulging eyes. No lizard could use his tongue to more effect, since this labial gesture is employed to bear witness to death, birth, robbery, and after important words of speech.

As for any Tibetan belles, to see them you must go exclusively to Lhasa or one of the principal towns where if you search diligently you may find society beauties with beaming faces, and masses of dark hair, parted Madonna-fashion, and falling in waterfalls over their shoulders. Turquoise ornaments and aureoles are used prolifically for feminine adornment ; some of the highest ladies in the land wear immense fillets ornamented with coral and precious stones mined from the mountains. In Lhasa beauty culture ordains that some portion of the face should be allowed to show through the natural make-up of dirt and black grease ; smart women in fact reject make-up and allow something of themselves to show besides their eyes. Their clothes can be brightly coloured and striking, and their ear-rings a sight to behold.

In most Tibetan establishments meals are taken, as in the beginning of things, off the floor and not from tables or chairs. The men sit cross-legged on carpets but the women kneel, for sitting is not considered modest for them. They are fortunate beyond most mothers for the ease with which they surmount childbirth.

Sherap, the Tibetan, who has written about his country, describes how children are buttered up at the start of life and seldom afterwards. Directly they are fit for the ordeal, infants are taken out and smeared from forehead to toe with yak butter and then left to melt in the sun. This greasy ceremonial has the effect of hardening them for the future against their common enemy—the wind, that blows away their cries of protest no sooner are they uttered. Children know little about their fathers in Tibet, their early education is in the hands of Ma, Tibetan mother. Boys are generally called after a religious movement or the name of the day on which they were born; if they become ill in the meantime, the lamas are summoned and a fresh name chosen. When more than one or two boys are born into the family tent, the parents become mildly alarmed and the next son is taken to a monastery to be a lama. His head is shaved, he puts on a dressing-gown of red or yellow and soon becomes a little god, his parents visiting him from time to time, thankful that his profession has been settled.

By the Buddhist law, fish and eggs as well as pork may not be eaten, being classed with reptiles. In any case, the Tibetan a thousand miles from any sea, knows little of what he is missing and his tastes run in the direction of milk, meat and strong drink. His digestion rivals that of the ostrich and he has been known to comment unfavourably to British explorers on the ridiculously

small appetite of the Westerner. Great value is placed on preserving the blood in the carcasses of slaughtered animals, which are all killed by strangulation. In this land of anomalies, though life is supposed to be sacred, the only domestic animals that are well treated are those found on the bodies of the Tibetans themselves. The lama will not molest or remove any animal life that has taken refuge on his body lest he may be called upon to take such a form himself in some future reincarnation.

The people, even brides, do not favour ablution, for a bath may invite the devil, and, in any case, it will wash away happiness.

“Have you slept well,” is the universal greeting, sleep being an all-important necessity for the snow dweller.

“Good morning,” would be classed as redundant and strictly untruthful when the wind is howling, and a snow storm swathes everything in gloom.

Instead of saying “Good-bye” the host speeds his guest by saying “Go slowly”; to which the guest replies, “Sit slowly,” implying that he does not wish to be forgotten too soon.

The country people do not take life very seriously in the Forbidden Land. It is too cold to think much. Life is often no more than a getting up, an eating, and a lying down again. Over all this elemental realm, entirely cut off for the most part from the outer world, man is strongly influenced by his environment. The nomad mountaineer attains hardy physical status, and sometimes develops strange spiritual powers, but intellectually he is still a child. He is either something of a god or else a struggling atom. In man-made, makeshift corners, where the sublime comes to terms with the ridiculous, the average Tibetan,

wrinkled, smiling and dirty, drinks away time with copious draughts of buttered tea.

Isolation has turned Kam, Bod, and Tibet proper into the Rip Van Winkle of modern nations. One day under the influence of commerce or the dynamic urge of electricity the inhabitants may wake from their medieval sleep and turn from picnics to progress. But the time is not yet; meanwhile, they continue to live in what must be the best-stocked hunting ground to be found anywhere except on the Arctic prairies. Animals of all kinds abound, since the people regard a gun in the same way as London would think of a Chicago gangster let loose in her midst.

A million square miles of gorgeous cloud-caught mountains and lofty valleys, dwarfing man and all his little works, uprise and group themselves in a country that is the last stronghold of the old gods.

Most of the Tibetan's fancies are tinged by beliefs in gods and devils, of which the devils tend to take the prominent place, since they have to be propitiated and kept out of harm's way. He thinks, logically enough, that while spirits of good operate in the air, evil spirits come up from the ground. Around and about the farms and cattle are placed images of the Buddha, the all-seeing, the all-protecting, the divine insurance system; when, however, bad luck continues apparently to dog his footsteps he comes to the conclusion the devil must be kept down somehow, so he erects a pile of stones with a prayer streamer flying from its summit, to imprison the enemy underground.

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At the New Year the Tibetans indulge in the ceremony of burning up the accumulated bad luck of the year that has gone. Lamas are hired for the occasion and the clash



THE CALL TO PRAYER IN A MONASTERY



A DEVIL DANCER CAN WARD OFF EVIL SPIRITS

of cymbals and loud voice of trombones resound far and wide. On the last day a great bonfire is made of the past, while all the treasures of the house are brought out before the priests to be blessed. Finally the lamas carry on to the roof an arrow with lucky streamers consisting of the five basic colours of the spectrum, waving them at the heavens to attract good fortune, and shouting words of good omen.

In Lhasa, the New Year festival, described by the Indian pundits, must have been one of the most remarkable ways of celebrating the New Year ever known.

For several days in January the town is given up to rejoicing and festivity, a special magistrate being appointed for the occasion from the Drepung monastery. At the same time an individual is chosen, called the Logan, to represent the bad luck of the whole city during the past year. This unfortunate personage is given three weeks in which to eat, drink and be merry, capering amongst the population with his black yak's tail, as though in a carnival, and being allowed full and complete license in all his actions. At the end of the period the magistrate and the Logan toss up to decide which of the two of them should continue to rule the city of Lhasa*. In the event of the Logan winning, revelry would naturally turn into rioting, orgy, and worse, but authority takes no chances of this kind, for it always provides the magistrate with dice especially loaded with sixes. The New Year wins, and the bad luck of the old year, in the shape of the Logan, is chased out of the town, running for his life through yelling mobs. If he gets away he can hide in the Samye monastery for a time and then continue living outside the law for a further period. But in actual fact the bad luck

*"Tibet the Mysterious," by Sir Thomas Holdich.

of Lhasa is rarely allowed to survive very long. The Logan has, what might be called, a sporting chance of getting away, but it seldom takes him very far.

Marriage, too, is treated much more as a matter of luck than of love. Astrology comes first in importance and then a commercial understanding between the parents. The poetry of betrothal is roughly pushed aside by practical considerations.

Bride and bridegroom are not consulted, neither do they know each other nor even meet until the day of the wedding ceremony that must be surely one of the most curious forms of marriage in existence.

Amongst the well-to-do inquiries are set on foot by the son's parents and a present is taken by a middleman to the father and mother of the bride. If the suit proves acceptable, they send back the man, with some bottles of 'begging beer'. These parents do not ask the bride's opinion in the matter at all, but after consulting an astrologer to see if the dates match, they inform the girl that they are taking her to a holiday festival and that she must attire herself in her best. The daughter of the house is not always quite as innocent as she appears to be; she may weep and wring her hands at the thought of her unknown fate, or even fall into a swoon, but it is generally of no avail. Guests come in and help her to dress, congratulating her in advance. They may even cheer her up by telling her that custom allows her to have several husbands and that there is safety in numbers. Feasts are given and offerings brought to the bride; a long list of wedding presents is arrayed, but only on paper, as the realities may never materialize until many years afterwards, if at all.

On the night before the day fixed for the marriage,

representatives of the bridegroom appear to partake in a mixed banquet, given at the expense of the bride's parents. At this feast it is the object of the girl's friends and relations to intoxicate the newcomers since they can then appropriate their valuables, returning them in the morning with uproarious mirth, after a forfeit has been paid. The bridegroom's followers are divided between their respect for a good dinner and their duties as officers of the wedding feast; the most important sits farthest from the door, and loud oratory is an honoured achievement.

"In the sky are the sun and the moon and the stars," says the orator-in-chief. "May the home of this boy and girl be equally bright and beautiful." All this time, however, the particular boy and girl are shut away in their rooms, and have never seen each other.

On the morrow, the cavalcade sets out and the bride is put on horseback, riding astride with short stirrups. In cases where she refuses to leave her home, gallants, warned in advance, sometimes abduct her at full gallop, picking her up by employing the momentum of their horses. On the way to the bridegroom's house more banquets are given, six in all, three by those who are seeing the bride off, and three by those welcoming her.

After these varied carousals it might seem that honour was satisfied, but the bride arrives at the house to find the door barred and bolted against her; this is because she has left the good luck of her own home and may now be bringing bad luck to the new house. A sword is thrown at her by the Torma, and, if she belongs to the old religion, a crimson cloak is cast round her to enlist the King of the Dragon deities on her side. Sometimes she is abducted on the way to the house by villagers who consider that in passing she has brought them bad fortune, and the bridegroom's

parents have to pay a ransom. Finally the door is opened and the pass word of "Good luck" is exchanged, whereupon the bride is allowed to cross the threshold, an act that symbolizes her entry into marriage.

After this, feasting proceeds on even grander lines, lasting anything from several days to three or four weeks, while an old lama sits in the corner of the room, reading from the Buddhist scriptures, and the two mothers unite in cooking dishes for the guests.

From all this, it might appear that the nomad girl is more fortunate than her richer sister; for she has only to exchange boot garters with her fiancé and then to light a fire with him beside her. This is her marriage vow, and it must sometimes save a lot of trouble.

After the girl is wedded she may find herself taking on two or three other marriages, in the shape of brothers, within the next twelve months. Polygamy is practised chiefly for the sake of keeping family property intact; one husband is called father and the others become uncles to any future offspring—possibly a convenient but hardly a convincing system. Women, however, appear to come off comparatively well under an arrangement that makes them more dominant and endowed with greater freedom than anywhere else in high Asia.

They possess equal rights with men, and all the matrimonial money is in their hands. When working in the fields or in shops they are given the same wages as men and sewing is regarded as a man's job. Having very little to do in the house, and nothing to speak of in the way of social or political duties, they have plenty of time to devote to the business side of affairs. Women in Tibet tend to rule the domestic roost; if they quarrel with

one man, they walk out of his house and join another husband. Widows must be as scarce as windows.

What happens to all the women in Tibet and where they go to, is a problem that has occupied the mind of many travellers. A fifth of the male population become lamas and enter monasteries, yet a shortage of women seems to be the invariable rule. It is one of the few countries where the balance between the sexes seems constantly to favour fewer women, and thus, paradoxically, to make them the predominant factor in social life; a reason suggested for the shortage being that Tibetans care little for girl children, so that many of them die in infancy.

At any rate, women in Tibet can please themselves in a way that is impossible in neighbouring countries, being able to give or withhold their favours from various husbands, whom they can thus control. Whereas polygamy makes for servility and suppression of the fair sex, polyandry, debased though the custom may be, would seem to have the reverse effect. In other words, if she be forced to sit at all, on the seesaw of extremes, a woman does better to take the empty end, even though it sends her up into the highlands of Tibet.

The repulsive form of burial in these highlands, where the body is exposed to the mercies of birds and dogs, is well known; also the picnics that the relatives enjoy on such occasions. A dead body is considered less than the dust that may be harbouring some animal life. Lamas believe that it must be returned to one of the four elements—earth, air, fire, or water. The air burial, through the medium of birds, is still much the most common; people are only buried in the ground when suffering from infectious diseases, at which time it is

considered that to throw them to the four winds is bad luck on the birds.

High up in the skies are the sanitary inspectors of the East, swooping specks, with eyesight that can see a meal miles away. These vultures are the lammergeier, carrion-feeders, who are both bigger and bolder than their Indian cousins. Crows, too, assist them at their grim repast, but they are considered very unlucky by mourners.

On the slopes of steep hills the ram chikore can be seen diving down hundreds of feet of precipices in the most breathless manner. He has a peculiar shrill whistle to call attention to his headlong feat; Tibetans leave all the winter sports to him, since they neither skate, ski, nor hunt; shooting is, of course, tabu amongst them, and they detest any form of geologizing, holding the opinion that the mountains must not be disturbed.

Snakes are unknown in Tibet; cats are also scarce since they seldom live above 10,000 feet; but larks are plentiful and the brown chough which lives at a higher altitude than any other animal or bird being found up to 21,000 feet.

Honours at the animal show in these highlands would go to the peaceful, plodding yak. He would undoubtedly take first prize as the most useful beast in creation. Yaks are given nothing to eat or drink; they sleep in the snow; they are often beaten, yet in return they give food, clothing, milk, transport and fuel. They can only live at high altitudes and die if brought down to the heat. Without this shaggy provider life would be impossible in many corners of Tibet.

During the Anglo-Tibetan war of 1904, Tibetans were fined fifteen tons of yak-dung for cutting telegraph wires. To escape parting with such a valuable article



THE YOUNG NOVICE AND THE LEARNED LAMA



A LAMA AND HIS WIFE IN NEPAL

they begged to be allowed to pay in rupees, and the line was never cut again.

The neighbourhood of Lake Manasarowar is deemed something of an Avalon by the shepherd. On Kailasa, the sacred mountain of Tibet, dwell the blessed beings who saw the Buddha. A story of this district, illustrating naïve Tibetan humour, is told of an ancient king of the country who, wishing to put his ministers to the test, ordered them to set up as shepherds in this district.

“Go from here,” he commanded, “and rear sheep such as have not been seen before. You will live in this new paradise, but you must see that the sheep, though strong and excellent in every particular, by no means grow fat. They must eat of the best and yet their figures at the end of the time must be such as will not disgrace my court. By setting you this task shall I be able to comprehend which among you is the ablest of my agriculturists.”

The ministers departed reluctantly and started on their new work. Most of them appeared to prosper, but so did the fiores of their sheep. One man, however, more cunning than his fellows, set up in front of the sheepfolds an exact wooden replica of a wolf. His ingenuity was rewarded by the fact that his sheep kept on the thin side, while at the same time developing into fine specimens of their race.

“How have you succeeded where the others failed?” the king asked him, wishing to satisfy his curiosity.

“Sire, I did it by fear,” answered the minister.

“It is a great power,” said the king.

History in Tibet goes back to the time when there were kings and warriors, priest rulers being then in the limbo of the future. Thirteen hundred years ago, King

Songdsengombo married a beautiful Chinese wife at the same time as a Nepalese maiden, and the two worked together to convert the husband to lamaism, thus starting the mightiest hierarchical system the world has seen and proving the truth of the theory that there is always a woman in the case. King Songdsengombo, who had heard of the beauty of his Chinese consort, sent an envoy to ask for her hand. The envoy was told that he could take her back if he was successful in selecting her from among a bevy of beauties ; he succeeded in his task by unhesitatingly choosing the ugliest of them.

Between them all, the sorcery and witchcraft of the Tantra system was gradually superseded by Buddhism, sacred instructional books being introduced from India and stored in the Samye monastery. The monarchy was dissolved and an Indian high priest became the first power in the land, and finally, the Mongol emperor, Kublai Khan, invested the ruler of the Red Cap monks with sovereign power. By the time of the battle of Agincourt in 1415 a clerical reformation had swept Tibet, turning houses into monasteries and men into monks.

A story is told among the old legends of Tibet giving some of the humours of the period.

A poor man borrowed oxen from his richer brother to do some ploughing, not without much difficulty.

“He must be a mean man,” said a passing hermit, who heard the farmer making the request, “and that is one of the worst of vices. Because of this avarice his oxen or his son will die. You may choose which it is to be.”

The poor farmer named the oxen as the lesser of two evils, whereupon when he knew what had happened, the rich brother accused the poor man of having wilfully killed them. On his way to the court trial the poor man

accidentally sat on a baby and killed it. Deciding to commit suicide, he jumped off a bridge into the river, but only succeeded in crushing to death a poor old beggar who was bathing; in drawing himself out of the water he pulled off a horse's tail, the worst sign of ill-luck. Arrived in court and convinced the case must go against him and that his days were numbered, he took a stone from his pocket and wrapped it in his handkerchief, meaning to kill the judge when he pronounced sentence, and so at least be guilty of one crime before he died. The judge, however, seeing his action, thought a bribe was being offered to him, done up in cloth, as is usual with marriage offerings, and so gave all the verdicts in the farmer's favour.

Tibetans are experts at stone-throwing. They practise both by hand and with slings. Stone-throwing, together with snowballing, is the young man's chief diversion and he can lift heavy rocks and hurl them over his head. Stone fighting between quarrelling families, or factions in large towns, provides a quick way of settling disputes, besides affording sport for spectators, who are careful to keep themselves well out of range of the missiles. Dancing and theatrical entertainments, which are really religious pantomines, are continuous and popular, and reach their heights at festivals of the New Year and the feast of flowers.

Religion, in fact, is treated as the producer that supplies most of the dramatic details of life.

"Eat, drink, be merry and obey the laws of the lamas." Such is the universal chant, while day and night, summer and winter, sunshine or snowstorm, ceaselessly revolves the ubiquitous prayer wheel in an endless, uncomplaining repetition that is symbolic of the lives of the people of Tibet.

CHAPTER V

A VISIT TO A HINDU TEMPLE

The road to Badrinath—Talk with a Hindu priest—Views on saints and sages—The Brahmin autocracy—The Untouchables and the degradations they suffer—Lords and beggars—Wood smoke and sausages—Reception by the Raoul—The temple, its idol, and attendants.

WHILST in the northern part of the Himalayas I determined to visit the famous Temple of Badrinath, where the god Krishna had descended in one of his flights and made of it a holy place.

I had often heard about this curious retreat, the nearest point that pilgrims and others can reach and be in touch with the great ones of the mountains. Beyond the narrow valley in which the temple was located were the towering heights of Nanda Devi and other peaks, not one of which was less than twenty-four thousand feet. The temple stood near to a mass of glaciers covering hundreds of square miles; within a radius stretching only as far as from London to Croydon are more than twenty peaks, every one of them dwarfing Mont Blanc, putting in fact the highest mountain in Europe or America into the shade.

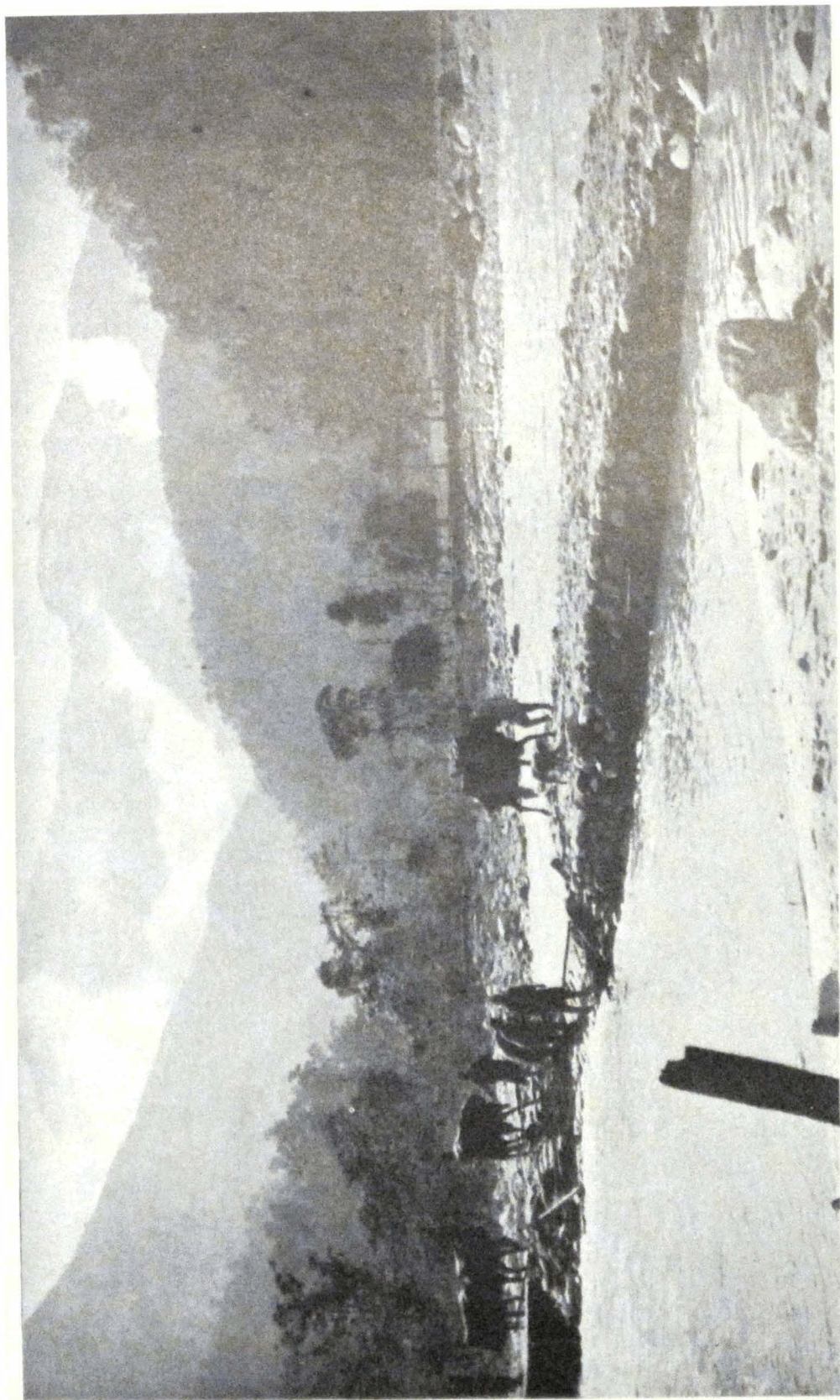
It was no easy matter to reach this outpost of the Hindu world. The way to it was long and laborious; it led through narrow ravines and past tremendous rocky walls that went up for full three thousand feet; beyond them again lay ice cliffs and glaciers until the wall seemed almost to reach the heavens.

From the small garrison cantonment of Lansdowne, situated at six thousand feet above sea level and the headquarters of my regiment, the Royal Garhwal Rifles, I had an uninterrupted view of the Himalayan foothills, the forests that lay on and below them, and the glittering summits fringing the crestline of the range itself. It was a view that would be hard to beat anywhere, for it combined a panorama that took in the valley below and the successive ranges between me and the main chain of the Himalayas; from this alone one could appreciate the sense of grandeur with which the temple and its surroundings were invested.

The route looked easy, but only when we descended into the valleys and began the north-westward journey did I realize the toil ahead.

It was a mystic land I was passing through and every turn of the track brought something fresh to view. I camped at nights within the shadow of the greatest range of mountains. I looked at the snow-crowned line, and thought of the land of superstition that lay beyond. On both sides of the Himalayas there is the firm belief that the gods live in the snows and ice over which they have spiritual and physical control, and that they resent the invasion of their preserves by climbers or explorers who wish to penetrate their secrets.

Beyond the wall confronting me was Tibet, one of the most conservative of lands since the days of Noah. The age-old customs and influences which have dominated the country for centuries may, perhaps, in years to come be partially broken down by outside forces, but it will not be within the lifetime of this or the next generation. Little is known of the world beyond and what is happening on the other side of the Himalayas. Tibet is still a



THE VIEWS IN THE HIMALAYAS ARE FULL OF MAJESTY AND CHARM



THE WATER CARRIER GIVES A BIBLICAL TOUCH TO THE SCENE

world apart, communication with India is at best intermittent, and the Tibetans prefer it to remain so.

I camped one night in a forest of deodars, and an old Hindu priest, who was the guardian of a temple near by, came over and sat by my camp fire. He was in communicative mood, and accepted a cigarette I offered him, which he smoked through his closed hand, so that it should not actually touch his lips.

“Since the world was first created”, I said, “the Himalayas have had a peculiar attraction for the traveller. How do you explain this?”

“For hundreds of years,” said the old priest, “saints and sages have found their way to meditate amidst these scenes of solitude and grandeur. Long, long ago, how long I cannot tell, they came across the plains of Hindustan. They came out of the heat and dust into the forests and cool heights, and found again their ancient home.”

“Yes,” I remarked, “what you say reminds me of people who lived far away across the black water, hundreds of years ago”—I was thinking of the Greeks—“They had their snow-crowned Olympus, to keep the gods from being gazed on by ordinary mortals.

“You,” I said, “have your Himalaya, or Abode of Snow, to be the home of *your* gods.”

The old fellow puffed meditatively at his cigarette.

“I know little about the world outside, since I have never left these mountains. Perhaps it is gain, perhaps it is loss; it is not for me to say. But I am happy amongst them, and to me life is very wonderful, for the gods have been kind in providing us with the necessities of life and with all that surrounds us.”

When I looked around at this magnificent deodar

forest, the wild hyacinths, the scarlet rhododendrons, the soft grass, and, hanging here and there from the branches of trees, such orchids as one would see only in Kew Gardens, I felt there was a deal of truth in what the old priest said.

He regarded me inquiringly. "You have come a long way," he asked. I replied that some years ago I had crossed the seas to Hindustan, and was now on my way to Badrinath to see the famous temple. He nodded approval and puffed again at his cigarette. After a while he said to me, "I have heard of Vilayat (Europe); greater, they say, than any country in the world. The people can travel under the ground, and they talk to each other through the walls of houses. Are these tales true?"

"Some of them are," I said, gazing abstractedly into the log fire as it crackled and shot its sparks into the starlit sky.

He looked at me quizzically, but my thoughts were far away. The idea of upsetting his notion of the primitive world, the world of simple beauty exemplified in the trees and flowers of the forest, the mountains and glaciers which, since man first appeared on the earth, have been his natural environment, was so unpalatable that I said nothing. I had been up and down and round the earth and had seen some mighty truths shattered by modern invention. It seemed sacrilege to spoil his dream of the calm and peaceful universe.

"Are there Brahmins in your country as in mine," he asked, after a long pause. "Yes," I replied, "but they are not so all-powerful as yours." And then, as it were, he slid into top gear and treated me to a disquisition on Brahmins in general and Hinduism in particular, for he must have seen many people in his time.

His remarks were illuminating and some of them original; they threw interesting sidelights on the life of the Hindu and the vast and complex religious system under which his daily life and actions are controlled.

“If you thought that by offending one of your neighbours you might doom yourself to 60,000 years in hell, you would develop a wholesome respect for his feelings.” Thus he referred to the Brahmins, or twice born, objects of veneration for the millions of Hindus who make up two-thirds of the population of India; a priestly caste, far more exalted than the Levites in the days of their greatest power, they spend their lives as mediators between men and the gods. They alone may perform sacrifices and all priestly duties, and expound the Vedas, or ancient Hindu laws.

Some Brahmin castes are so holy that a fixed price is charged for their favours. You may kiss their feet for eighteen rupees (about 24s.), take a long drink of their bath water for eleven rupees, or a modest lick at the betel nut one of them has been chewing for ten. All or any of these privileges bring you reflected glory and ensure you a better place in heaven.

Down at Madura I once saw a temple of Siva in which the god owned and wore £35,000 worth of jewels. Every time a Hindu loses caste by coming into contact with an inferior, or breaking one of the religious laws, he has to buy back his status, so that jewels and gold flow in daily.

Cows and monkeys, the sacred animals of Hinduism, are under the protection of the Brahmins. Cows wander the streets, causing taxi-men to brake hard, or swerve reverently. They must be moderate in hooting, for it is sacrilege to hustle them. Sacred cows saunter up to greengrocers' stalls and munch their fill, for such 'custom'

is a guarantee of joys in the world to come. On the other hand, if a cow falls ill, it is left to die in the baking sun of the street, for no one is so impious as to put an end to its pain. The Jains are Hindus who obey the Brahmin law against the taking of life so minutely that the more orthodox wear a veil over the mouth to prevent an insect flying in to its death. Before sitting down they brush the ground carefully to make sure that no ant or beetle will be crushed and it is forbidden to leave any liquid uncovered lest a fly should fall in and drown.

It is the Brahmin who keeps the untouchables firmly in their place. These unfortunates must not come within more than sixty-four feet of the super-Brahmins of Madras. In the old days the punishment was death, but British rule has changed that. Even the greatest of Hindu princes is under the thumb of the Brahmins and must consult them in all things. This priestly domination is one of the greatest obstacles to a self-governing India, for it is the Brahmin who keeps the antipathy between Hindu and Moslem alive. It is he also who decrees that no man may rise above his caste. He has made the Hindu people a race without hope.

As regards the princes, none of them represent the bulk of Indian rulers. Some are content to live on the toil of their peasants, giving nothing in exchange. Such princes regard motor-cars, racehorses and casinos as the best gifts of the West. The income they enjoy may amount to anything up to £500,000, in addition to wealth in the shape of vast quantities of jewels and gold in underground treasure-houses. The utmost limits of Eastern and Western luxury are combined in their lives. In England they stay at fashionable hotels; at home they maintain harems that vie with Solomon in extent.

The Nizam of Hyderabad, a Moslem, has a harem of three hundred women and maintains a fleet of cars for their benefit. Meanwhile the peasants of most Indian rulers lead the same lives as their ancestors of a thousand years ago, living on rice and water and earning about two-pence a day. Hindu rajahs have two meals a day, the first about eleven o'clock and the second at night, when twenty or thirty dishes containing every kind of bread, cake, vegetable and sweetmeat are served. My friend, the late Maharajah of Kashmir, had sometimes as many as seventy dishes to choose from, but his favourite repast was curdled milk and pickles.

Every Hindu prince, however enlightened, is under the thumb of the Brahmins, who, if opposed, can inflict the dire punishment of those sixty thousand years in hell. In order to preserve their caste, strict Hindu princes such as the late Maharajah of Kashmir, who came to England for King George's coronation, cannot cross the sea without chartering a ship for themselves, and taking enough Ganges water to last for the period of their absence. This ruler brought four hundred followers; so the quantity of special copper water-vessels brought over was enormous. On his return he and his party had to remain several days outside the city, as the Brahmin astrologers declared that the omens were unpropitious. Against such a ban the maharajah was completely powerless.

A Hindu chief's day begins with 'puja' or morning prayers, and time is set aside for consultation with the astrologers. If the omens are favourable, he takes a light meal, receives the reports of his ministers, gives an audience, and then either walks or drives abroad. All sorts of devices are employed to make these ceremonial appearances impressive. One rajah of my acquaintance

never showed himself in public without a large stuffed panther drawn behind him on a wooden trolley.

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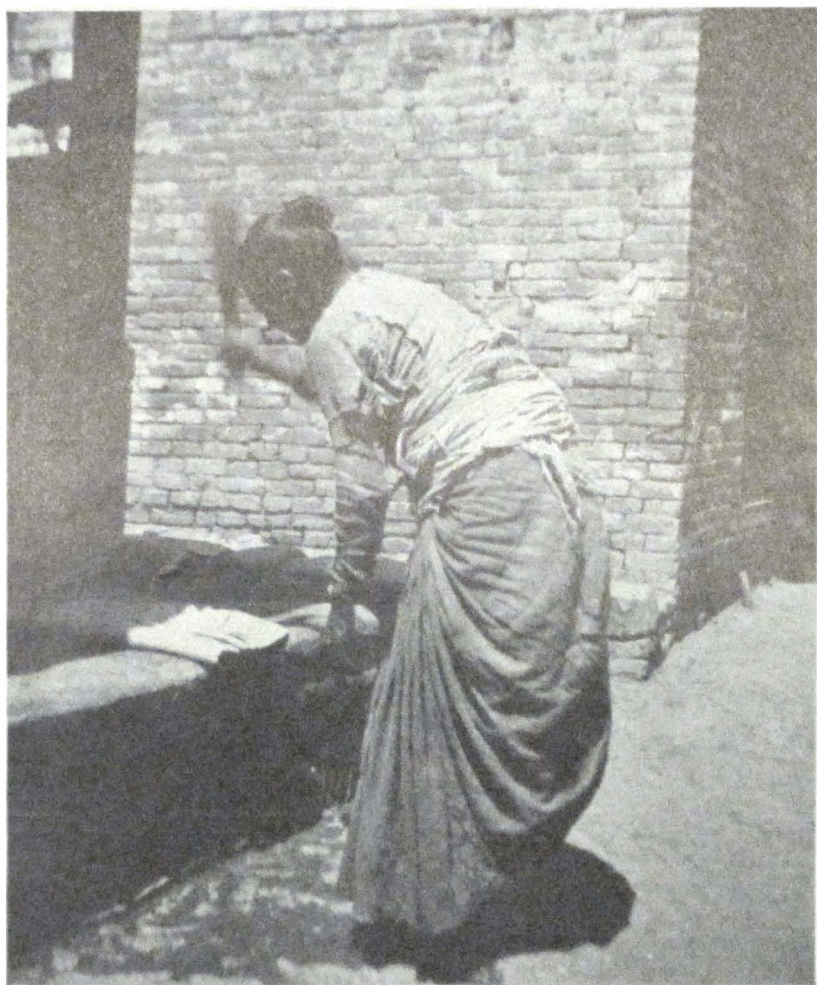
Such are the princes of India. Many are intelligent and progressive, but so bound by the chains of their faith that they cannot free their people even if they would.

What an example of the tail wagging the dog, and the frame ordering the picture !

“With all my education I am still an untouchable,” bitterly exclaimed one of the delegates to the Round Table Conference. “Nonsense ! You are a very dear colleague,” retorted another. I am not sure he was right. Here in England it is easy to transcend the barriers of caste, but in India they form a towering wall.

According to the Hindu religion, the untouchable is suffering for the sins of a former life, and it is the duty of the faithful to see that matters are not made too easy for him. There are fifty-four millions of these people in India. The most menial tasks, such as sweeping the streets and carrying refuse to the burning dumps, are reserved for them. When on the road—and half the population of India spends its time tramping along in the dust—no innkeeper would dream of admitting one of them. To open the door to an untouchable would be to pollute his inn and expend his entire fortune in propitiation money to the Brahmins.

An untouchable is forbidden to read the Vedas, the sacred scriptures of his religion, and no Brahmin priest will minister to him. His very shadow is pollution, and if it falls on a dish of food or a sweetmeat stall, everything must be thrown away. The untouchable has no rights of citizenship. He may not take water from the public



WASHING DAY. THE CLOTHES ARE BEATEN
WITH A STONE HAMMER



THE SHOPKEEPER HAS A CHOICE OF SITES. HE OFTEN
PREFERS A TEMPLE

wells, and in the frequent times of drought this means great suffering. In some towns he may not enter a shop, or pass through the streets, and he can only buy food through the good offices of some higher caste Hindu. The lowest untouchables are not even allowed to work. All they may do is to stand begging at a safe distance, ready to catch the alms that are hurled at them like balls at a coconut shy.

On the west coast of Madras I have seen the Puliahs, whose standing, even for untouchables, is so low that they are forbidden to build huts, and must live in shelters of branches. Formerly it was death for them to come within twenty yards of a Brahmin, and even to-day such sacrilege would have painful consequences. In recent times some of the bolder of these people have begun to resent their suffering, and not long ago a band of untouchables seized a Brahmin, forced him into the arms of an old sweeper-woman and then shut him up with her for a whole night.

The pollution was so terrible that the Brahmin could only get back to his caste by ordering a cow of solid gold just large enough for him to crawl in at one end and out at the other. Having wriggled through the sacred animal, he presented it to the temple, and by this means he was pure once more. An expensive business, but better than the 'sixty thousand years in hell' that would otherwise have been his lot.

Hindu life is based on the caste system. Hindus not only share the Victorian belief that it behoves a man to be content with the station to which he has been called, but they forbid for ever any ambition on the part of his children. The offspring of grooms, cooks and sweepers must be grooms, cooks and sweepers to the end of the chapter. There is no loophole by which merit can

rise. Caste restricts the work a man may do more rigidly than any trade union. The man who sweeps your room must not take a glass from your hand. The groom who looks after your pony will not cut grass for it, and a coolie who is allowed to carry anything from a sack of coal to a piano may not lift a man on pain of losing his caste. Anything that belongs to an inferior debases, and no workman will touch the tools of another unless he belongs to the same caste. Untouchable children may not come to school; at least, if they did, all the higher caste children would leave. Often postmen will not deliver letters to these people, and sympathetic British and Moslem officials must move cautiously in any attempt to help them; otherwise the whole Hindu community would be up in arms. It is true that many untouchables are filthy and degraded. Few could lead their life without becoming so; but some have already made efforts to shake off the curse under which they were born, and the India of the future will owe much to such men and women. . . .

I have set down the gist of what the old priest told me or brought to mind; far into the night we sat round the camp fire smoking and talking, the flames lighting up the trees around us, and the great stars twinkling at us from overhead. The night was very still; save for the crackle of the fire, the occasional call of a nightjar or the hoot of an owl, hardly a sound could be heard.

“Life is not easy,” I remember saying. “There are so many different paths in India, and so many people to tread them.”

“Up here they go towards the same goal,” remarked my friend, the priest, his eyes contemplative. “They lead to the calm of knowledge.”

"It must sometimes be cold work," I said, moving closer to the fire.

"Nay," said the old man. "Wisdom is warm. It is the glow of understanding."

Some paths go straight up and on, and some seem to proceed in circles like the snake swallowing its own tail. "Wisdom is warm" . . . with these words still in my ears I turned over on to my side. The smell of the camp fire became pungent all at once. Suddenly I had an intense desire to hear a sausage sizzle, and to sample once more the robust results of a good old English grid. Kidneys and bacon! What vitality for the snow! Where are the great chefs of history, and who remembers their masterpieces, their finest culinary creations, when once they are swallowed and digested? Pantagruel serves a twenty-course dinner in honour of Lucullus, and even he cannot recollect one of them when he wishes to repeat his Roman feast another day.

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I struck camp early the next morning; the sun was still low in the heavens when we were moving along a ridge running down from the main chain. Far below in the valleys to right and left the trim terraced fields of the villagers showed up in the growing light, smoke curled up lazily from the little thatched huts, flocks were already browsing on the hillside, and the occasional bark of a watchdog and the tinkle of a cowbell were the only sounds that disturbed the stillness of the morning. I wondered why life could not always go on like this.

The views were inspiring and it made me think of their relation to mankind. One could not help loving the mountains and the mountain air; they are the epitome of

all that is beautiful, and breathe the spirit of delicacy and fortitude.

Personally, I know nothing better than a holiday in these surroundings ; up amongst the peaks, passes, and glaciers, you are in a world of your own.

The air is a cure in itself ; no need to go for long and expensive regimes at fashionable watering places and chosen spots of the *élite*, when one can get here everything required, almost for the asking. Many a man can attribute his long life and good health to the influence of the mountains and the life-giving air.

On the sixth day out I reached the place I was in search of ; I came on to it at the end of a valley, nestling at the foot of giant mountains that seemed to be its guardian angels. The grey stone buildings set in this amphitheatre of peaks and glaciers seemed so tiny that it was with difficulty I could realize that here was one of the sacred places of Hinduism, to reach which pilgrims came so far and endured so much. I had seen the Holy City in Rome, and had admired the immensity and magnificence of the Vatican, but this spot in the heart of the Himalayas struck a note of its own, for it had a background such as no other place could show.

Echoes of the bells of Christendom began to ring in my ears as I heard the first harsh notes of the gongs summoning to prayer.

The high priest knew of my coming and met me at the entrance of his domain. He was a Brahmin of the highest caste, chosen from the Namburi sect, who live on the Malabar coast of India, where the heat reminded me of a tropical hothouse in England. He was slightly above the middle height and wore the ordinary dhoti, or sheet of white cloth, worn in loose folds round the body

and thrown over, leaving the legs bare below the knee. On his forehead were painted the marks of his caste, and beyond this he possessed no other ornament. A dozen priests similarly garbed and marked were grouped around him, treating their spiritual head with a becoming awe.

The Raoul received me with an easy grace ; we then sat down on a low stone coping and he told me about the temple and its adjacent buildings which form three sides of a square and, with the courtyard, are built of hard granite, hewn with infinite toil hundreds of years before out of the surrounding mountains.

The temple contains the idol of Vishnu, the god Siva having his own shrine beneath another set of summits some distance away.

The entrance to the holy of holies where none but Brahmins of the highest caste are allowed, is a study in realism. The outer door of the temple is of burnished copper, beyond, and leading into the second room, is another of silver, and the door of the third is of gold. There, brooding and static, reposes the idol of black marble, covered with rich vestments, and with a diamond shining in its forehead.

No European has ever set foot in the temple ; were he to attempt to do so he would be lost. I looked at the idol from outside, taking stock of the gold and silver ornaments, its costly robes, and other such things.

Their value, as well as the furniture and fittings of those three rooms, must be considerable, whilst the ceremony of attending to the personal comfort of the god is on an equally lavish scale.

The idol, I learnt, is provided daily with meals at regular hours ; at night he has a bed prepared by attendants,

and everything used in his service is of gold and silver and the finest materials that the land can produce.

For the high priest himself as many as fifty or sixty dishes will be prepared, mostly cakes and rice with sweetmeats of every description. There is rancid butter in all the dishes, but I heard his favourite dish was pickles.

It is curious to think that this man, sole arbiter in a mighty religion, living up amongst the peaks and glaciers, should be chosen from a special sect far down in the torrid heat of the Madras plain. He leaves that Turkish-bath atmosphere for a stone shelter in the icy realm of the gods, the smoke of whose kitchen is the clouds appearing above the summits of the world's highest mountains.

None but the Raoul is allowed to touch the idol, and for its amusement and service a large staff of men and women is maintained, the latter as the wives of the god, and, incidentally, the mistresses of the priests; when they are no longer attractive the god divorces and sends them out to the charitable public.

Attached to all these temples are dancing girls, dedicated to the service of the god, and consecrated in a special manner to the worship of the Hindu divinities. I am told that when their services are dispensed with they usually have little difficulty in finding husbands, temporary at any rate, since with a certain amount of jewellery and money, even though they may lack attraction, they bring with them wealth.

“Do you regard Badrinath in the light of a monastery or a convent?” I asked one of the monks, wishing to see how he would explain the dancing girls.

“It is neither,” he replied at once. “Badrinath is a Temple, and it is the home of the gods.”



WOMEN AS WELL AS MEN CARRY HEAVY LOADS IN THE HIMALAYAS AND TIBET, USUALLY BY A STRAP ACROSS THE FOREHEAD



THIS ORCHESTRA MADE UP IN NOISE WHAT IT LACKED IN TUNE

CHAPTER VI

A STUDY IN LAMAS

A pageant of lamas—A comparison with monastic England—Novitiate—Lama doctors—The religion of the people—A pantry shrine—The wheel of life and the eight lucky signs—Ancient Buddhism and its introduction into Tibet—The life and teaching of Buddha and the doctrine of Nirvana and Mahayana—Magical hermits, the students of Yoga and their control of the body—Lhasa, the key to Asiatic power—The city described—The mighty Potala Palace, the Dalai Lama and his reincarnation—The golden image in the Cathedral, the 'holy of holies' of Buddhism—Warrior monks who act as escort—Tibet, the monastic.

A LAMA in Tibet can wear a red or yellow robe according to his sect; in many monasteries he is clothed in maroon. For hats he may choose from a selection of mushrooms, pancakes, baskets or helmets, according to time and place. If lamas are said to be undeveloped intellectually, there is nothing dull about the way they cover their heads. Travellers have described their hats as being all the colours of hollyhocks.

A lama may elect to spend all his days in the monastery, or he can devote his time to the people, or he may decide to proceed to the extreme of imprisoning himself in a solitary rock cell from which he will not emerge for a given number of years. In this last state he becomes a hermit monk, and pilgrims and others visit him as they would a shrine. It is a question not of the fashion of a moment, but the faith of a movement. Even in Tibet, no one cuts himself off entirely from his fellow beings without due and previous consideration.

A procession of dark, lean, wrinkled-faced men,

sonorous voiced and deep-chested, clad in the primary colours of sunset and dawn, tall hats on their heads, proceed across the white places, clashing their cymbals and chanting in unison with tidal ebb and flow, a cavalcade of colour containing the only ruling hierarchical system left in the world.

Tibet is the one remaining realm where the word of the priest is still the law of the land ; the only country where religious observance and ceremonial are put before everything else by everyone.

In England, a comparison could only be made if all the town halls were turned into monasteries, and from these were to issue forth besides the monks, teachers, doctors, business men and frauds, who directed and influenced the lives of the surrounding districts. They would be called in for consultation over everything important from birth to burial, and they would have in their hands most of the wealth and learning of the neighbourhood.

The best of them, staying apart, would become holy men, occupied in prayer and meditation, for the sins of mankind ; the worst would be frauds living at other people's expense and wandering at large with their heads full of superstition. Leading this priestly procession that circulates everywhere, is a sacred figurehead, providing, what might be termed in modern days, a non-stop performance, for he can never die.

The system would be much more universal than the monastic system of the Middle Ages. A fifth of the total male population would be included in its ranks ; it would not be exceptional to become a monk ; on the contrary, it would be unusual for several sons of a family to avoid putting on the robe of service.

If you were one of a large family, you would certainly find yourself taken away at the age of eight and led by the hand to the gate of some monastery. A door leading to a draughty corridor would open and a door would shut. The earth outside, the lamas say, is no bigger than you think it. You would be given a priest instructor, and taught to read quickly but not to think, and in due course you would become a member of one of the several sects.

This system of lamaserais and lamaism only arose in Tibet twelve hundred years after the death of the Buddha. Since the great Eastern teacher had been dead three hundred years before his principles were set down in writing, plenty of time had elapsed for variations from the original teaching to make their appearance. King Songdsengombo was the first warrior king of Tibet to turn his mind to Buddhism; a hundred years later, a little before the time of King Alfred in England, Pedine Sambhava of the Yoga Tantrik school in magical Udyana, north-west of Kashmir, overcame the dragons and human sacrifices of the old Bon demon worship and upon its still living body imposed the branch of the Buddhist doctrine known as lamaism.

Wives were given to all the existing gods and deities and a new thought of dual energy conceived for the Himalayan world.

Gradually many kinds of hermits and holy men began to evolve among the Tibetans. They ranged from the book hermit and the good works hermit, who rings a bell to announce that he is going to pray, to the clerical lama, and those devotees who by constant concentration or meditation attain to peculiar spiritual and physical powers. All these people are consulted by the Tibetans

for various ills, real or imaginary. Lama doctors regard disease as an evil spirit; one of their cardinal principles of treatment is never to allow the patient to sleep during the daytime. They believe each wrist to possess three pulses, yellow on the left and red on the right, by feeling which in turn an exact diagnosis can be made of the part of the body affected.

Paul Sherap, who absconded from a monastery in Tibet, and traversed the country on various adventurous pilgrimages before he came to Sikkim and met G. A. Combe, his British Boswell, describes in detail the multitude of religious ceremonies, more numerous than any code of special observances at a western school, that go to make a full day for layman besides lama.*

In place of a larder on the cool side of his house, a Tibetan, if he can afford one, has a small chapel which he calls a *chokang*. At one end of his room, instead of shelves for food, are narrow tables in three tiers. On these he arranges the eight lucky signs beautifully sculptured out of butter, and around them are grouped saffron water charms and many lamps of melted butter. If the day be a special one he adds to these a handsome wedding cake made of rice, intended to represent the fertility of the universe. Each night the lamas arrive in the chapel, they clash cymbals or beat the drums for family prayers. If a Tibetan householder is too poor to own a *chokang*, he goes on to his flat roof and makes burnt offerings of juniper, tea, and butter.

The eight lucky signs which a Tibetan considers all-powerful are the wheel, the double swastika, water vase, two golden fish, conch-shell, lotus, banner, and the umbrella.

*"A Tibetan on Tibet," by G. A. Combe. (T. Fisher Unwin.)

The wheel of life is displayed everywhere, especially at the entrances to lamaseras, being the symbol not only of the mystery of evil and stress in life, but of the Buddha's own teaching. It takes the form of an endless chain, composed of three animals, a pig, a red bird, and a green snake, swallowing each other's tails. These typify the sins of obstinate ignorance, evil desire, and rage or bad feeling. The wheel of Buddhism, like the Zodiac, is divided into twelve pictorial segments, each illustrating a different side of the universal senses.

A monkey climbing a tree shows the power of consciousness.

An empty house with five windows illustrates the senses.

A man drinking wine demonstrates the human thirst for living.

A sailor on the sea gives the idea of the progress of individual shape and form.

A man with an arrow in his eye shows the stings of sensation.

These are all sacred symbols of Buddhism and part of a religion which numbers a quarter of the world's population ; but change and variation have done so much to the original faith as propounded by Guatama Buddha himself, that, were he to return to earth, he would be unable to recognize many of his followers as his own.

The Buddha, who lived five hundred years before Christ, was born the son of a Rajah at Bodhgaya, in northern India, over which I flew when with the Everest Flight.

From the ancient legends that have come down about him, he stands out an Indo-Aryan in looks, tall, dark-eyed,

straight-nosed and magnetic. At the age of nineteen he married a princess, but the birth of a son seems to have persuaded him to leave the world of well-ordered pleasure and comfort before it was too late, and to find a way of escaping from the unsatisfying wheel of life, with its endless repetition and rotation of erring mortal, and therefore, vulnerable, senses.

Putting aside his silks and jewels and bidding farewell to his beloved wife, he donned the patchwork gown of poverty and wandered into the world trying to find the secret of salvation for human suffering and limitation. He became a seeker of the silence.

For six years Guatama lived the life of an ascetic, until, it is said, he could subsist on one grain of rice a day.

His quest, however, remained unfulfilled, and he returned to more normal ways of life. It was not until he had reached the zenith of his powers that one day, beneath the Bo tree, he experienced his vision of Nirvana, or selflessness, a vision that was gradually to change the habits and outlook of Asia.

All at once the blinding truth came to him that it was only by renouncing his selfish self, by giving up the false riches of desire which merely brought misery and disappointment and a continual clinging to the wheel of life, that man could attain peace, and escape from the chain of reincarnation that haunts the dream mind of the east. He taught the eightfold, the Aryan path, to beatitude, by following which a man could be saved from himself. The Buddha attained the realm of selflessness, called in the west saintliness, and the immense elation of a wider life in harmony with cosmic law and wholeness.

Living among the suppressed humanity of the northern plains of India, he saw clearly that for most people human

existence entailed suffering, sorrow and constant disappointment. He taught that to attain peace and certainty a man had to lose himself, his worst self; Christianity teaches that man must strive to find his best self. One is a negative renunciation and rebirth, the other a positive striving, but they lead ultimately to the same path of realization. They both taught the same truth, that to be happy man has to lose the part (himself) in something greater than himself through which he may attain ultimate completion.

A way of escape from Karma, the sum of a man's doings, actions and thoughts, which weave into a pattern that makes his future fate, and that will bring him back, the Hindu believes, to 'dree his weird' on the wheel of life, was provided by the Buddha. He tried to show people how to come to terms with their own destiny.

For forty-five years the Buddha continued his earthly mission, preaching the doctrine to his disciples and passing away at an age that few amongst the other great spiritual teachers have reached. There are legends of rays of light surrounding him, and the deep viewless calm of certainty that made all listen to the saying of this prince who had become beggar.

"Work out your salvation with diligence," were his dying words to his followers.

As already remarked, his sayings were not set down in print until three hundred years after his death, and the light of Asia grew dimmer. New schools of thought arose such as the famous Mahayana which now has its devotees all over India. By the Mahayana doctrines, Buddhists were still taught to renounce the world, but not so much for its sorrows as for its unreality. The path to salvation was made a little broader and easier.

As time went on the pure doctrines of Buddhism became tangled in a hundred queer and monstrous manifestations, called into being by the teeming imagination of the priests. The chain of causation became thronged with the spectres of various superior beings, giants and devils who had to be propitiated and pressed into service. Instead of invoking the aid of known arhats and saints to attain Nirvana, they chose the dangerous course of inventing spirit people. Manifestations of forces, some possibly more real than visible saints, but many of which appear fantastic to the western mind, filled the religious corridors of Buddhism with new distractions

Tibetans believe that the spirit of life remains with the deceased for three days after death, and during that period his place in the house must be kept open for him. They think it must leave through the head or else it may be captured with lassos by demons who drag their captive before the lord of hell for judgment ; with black and white pebbles bad deeds are then weighed in the scale against good ones.

A salient point of the Buddha's teaching has always lingered in the East ; it is the art of contemplation. For hundreds of years so-called holy men have given themselves up to the consideration of this subject. Concentration was a powerful force ; contemplation was another. If the one was used to strengthen the other, power that might move mountains could be evolved. The whole variance between East and West began to resolve itself into a deep void, difficult to bridge : the West believed in doing things to obtain good results, the East in thinking them. On the one hand was the eager onset of invention, the continuous probings of science, the ceaseless demands of a many-footed activity and existence ;

on the other the ancient brooding wisdom of a central contemplation.

Something there must have been about the stillness of the snows of Tibet, often lashed to no purpose by the hurrying winds, readily conducive to the practice of meditation. Far back into the past Tibet has proved to be the focus and stronghold of Buddhism. Many hold that she is a focal point of the ancient knowledge and mysteries, older than religion itself, old as Egypt and the submerged civilization of Atlantis.

What of the powers, real or imaginary, of the recluses who dwell in the hermit kingdom? Are they mostly pious frauds or have they developed strange and shining psychic gifts? Stories are told of monks who lived like Methuselah for well beyond a century and could transpose themselves in a twinkling to the tops of mountains. Certain it is that the Yoga system of miraculous self-control entered Tibet and found a home there.

Mental concentration upon a point instead of the ordinary lines and circles, is said to have accomplished astounding results. Exercises go with this cult, and the mentioning of words of secret power, such as 'aum', and 'Om-mani-padme-hum', the reiterated Tibetan formula.

Sitting in the required posture, a man will breathe so many times through one nostril and out of the other, inhaling the power of the universe, and gradually obtaining control of his own vitality and vibration. From the physical, he proceeds to mental self-hypnotism, his exercises covering periods of many years. Tibetans imprison themselves in living tombs, until by perseverance they have seen the vision, fancied or real, of some powerful spirit they are seeking. Paul Sherap, the Tibetan, gives an account of how the Yoga student strives to make his

body lighter than air, in order to expand it into anything or contract it into nothing, at will.

“Sitting in the meditation attitude,” he says, “the hermit concentrates his thoughts on the non-existence of the body and practises self-levitation. At first he will not be able to rise more than half a foot, but with increased concentration he can attain ten feet. The period of meditation lasts for many years, the longer the better, and in due course miraculous powers are attained. The hermit is able to pass through a hole an inch in diameter ; he can see through walls or partitions ; he does not feel severe cold ; and he can travel far and fast like the wind.”

All physical manifestations, the Yogis claim, are a matter of law. All knowledge is knowing. The aims of the lamahood have been put into words by one of their followers, thus :

Wisdom is warm, not cold and challenging like the powers of intellect. Wisdom is the glow of unfolding understanding, taking a man into wider states where there is but one being, no second.

The question of the powers developed by some of the devotees of contemplation in High Asia is a most interesting topic for speculation. How much of their reputed skill is real ? To what degree is it either fabulous, fictitious, or even futile ? Perhaps no one knows the whole truth of the lama riddle except themselves.

Yet it is certain that a life study devoted to these arts of concentration must of necessity sometimes produce results that can astonish others. No one denies the expert cricketer or the practiced surgeon his uncommon ability. Even the cunning juggler, who has become a master of his art, can hold our fascinated attention while he throws caution and other subjects to the winds.

Why, then, should we think that sincere students of the more advanced levels of physical and psychic being cannot achieve results impossible of attainment by the uninitiated? Why should we doubt that in some cases a trained recluse, his mind spreading a quietness around him, should not hear the voice of the unspeakable, and see the shape of truth flying like a solitary bird through the spaces of the air?

Here, in Europe and America we fear loneliness. People, busy with a thousand disturbing thoughts, are afraid of being left too much with themselves: they know the laws of movement and activity, but little of the forces of condensation. Inaction is an agony. We have never attempted to study, in the same way as the lama, a mastery of the senses and the conquest of consciousness; long ago the Greek philosopher Thales described one of the highest forms of wisdom as that of knowing oneself.

It may be that with the advance of international relations, the age-old barriers of isolation will one day fall, and that lamas will be broadcasting talks on their secret knowledge to millions of listeners.

What shall we hear? Long-forgotten truths of Nature perhaps. Lost secrets. Canons of contentment. Certainly more about the most difficult art in the world—the art of living.

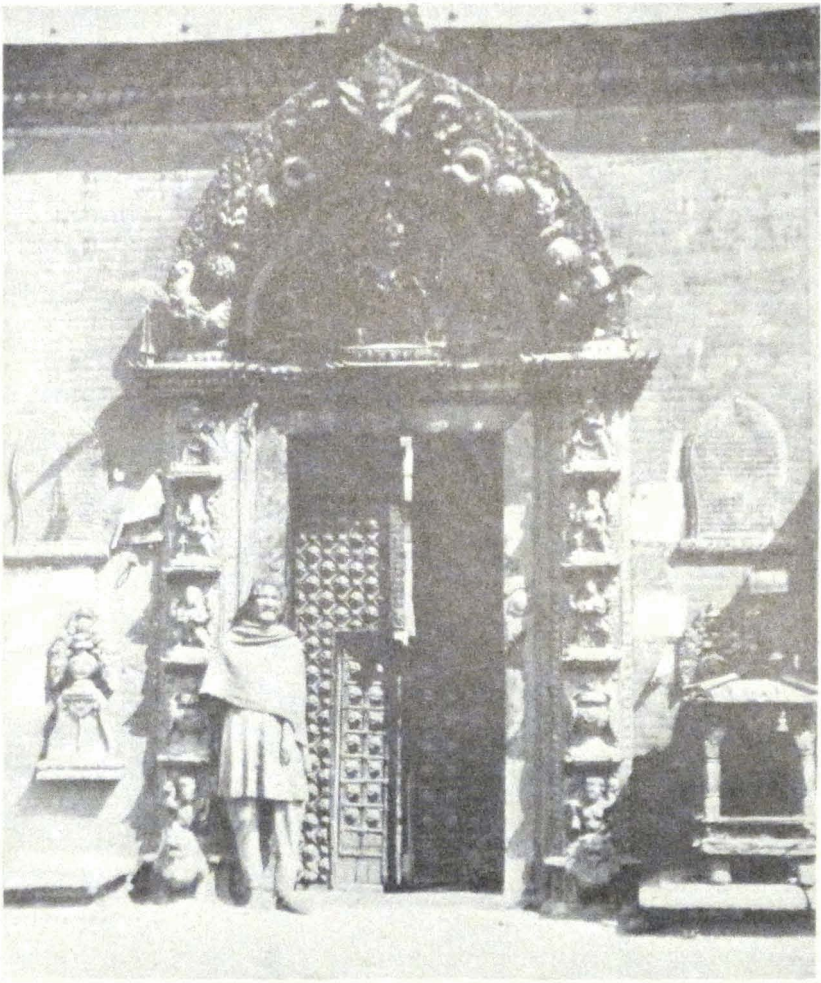
Members of one of the Everest climbing expeditions who had an audience with the Grand Lama of the Rongbuk monastery, relate how their host never spoke a single word, but so striking was his silence that when they came out, they felt they must have been in the presence either of a wonderful actor or a great saint.

To-day, in the West, with the discovery of new rays, vibrations and magnetic waves of all kinds, the paths of

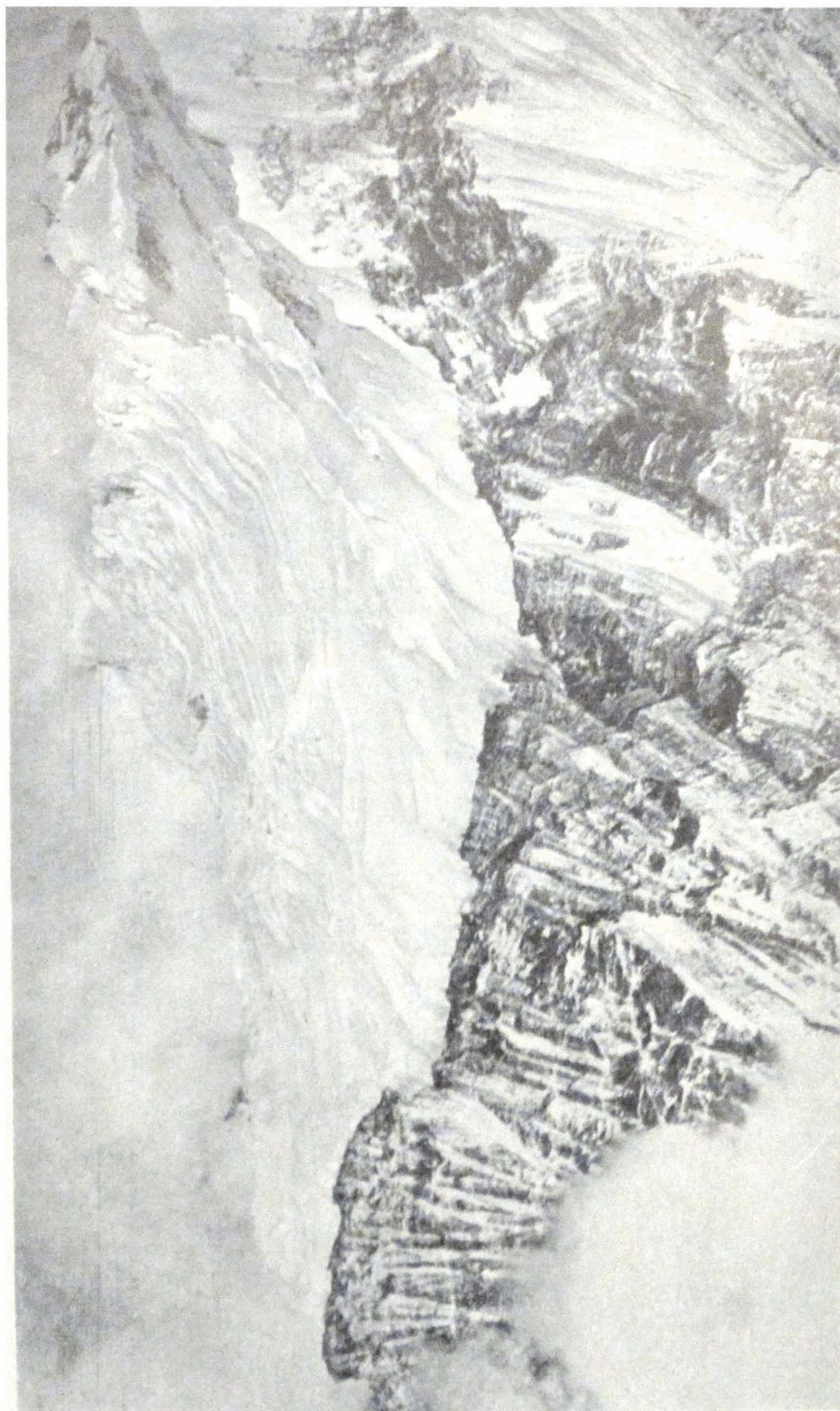
natural science lead more and more into the aerial roads of spiritual science. The manifest result is that, after the manner of Tibet, the warfare and struggle of the future may develop into a battle between the forces of black and white magic. As I have previously stated, a Yoga student believes it possible to achieve seeming miracles with his etheric body and to transport himself without difficulty to the tops of mountains or across deep ravines, levitating his body through the ether. The solar plexus is more important to him than the brain and he learns the scents of oxygenization.

I know of a high lama condemned to death by drowning for the crime of sheltering and aiding an Indian explorer. Heavy stones were secured round his waist and he was sunk in the river. When his executioners pulled him up some time afterwards he was found to be still alive. He was again weighted and thrown to the bottom of the river, and once more, after an even longer period of time had elapsed, was hauled on to dry land and discovered to be perfectly conscious. The executioners refused to go on with the task and begged the lama forgiveness ; it was only after he himself had asked them as a favour to continue, and had voluntarily renounced his hold on mortal existence, that they succeeded in drowning him at their third attempt.

Few Westerners have witnessed any such marvels, and since they have seldom, if ever, been scientifically analysed or investigated in detail, clear judgment on the possibilities or otherwise of such feats has never been formulated. At any rate, the Yoga movement starting from Peshawar benefited the East to the extent of showing, as the Buddha and St. Paul had done, that mortifying the body is of little profit to anyone, and that it is far wiser to try and train it into a vehicle of power.



TEMPLES IN THE HIMALAYAS HAVE BEAUTIFULLY
CARVED GATEWAYS



THE GREAT ICE CLIFFS OF THE HIMALAYAS

Monks, lamas, and practitioners from Peshawar have all found a stronghold in the snowy kingdom. Any great nation making a bid for Asiatic supremacy must reckon with Lhasa. For better or worse, some call, some urge to fuller expression, and to the power of pilgrimage has driven the feet of unnumbered Asiatics to tread the path of Tibetan discovery just as the gilded glamour of Bokhara, Yarkand and Samarkand set the caravans of Asia in motion along the yellow roads of commerce.

It is no longer exceptional for a European to have visited Lhasa ; several have done so within recent times. The veil of mystery has been drawn aside by soldiers, diplomats and explorers.

The view of the mysterious city is withheld until almost the last moment, being shut from sight by two hills of which Potala is one ; but, the corner turned, a panorama suddenly appears, smiling and pleasurable enough apparently, in comparison with the bare surroundings, to warrant Tibetan enthusiasm. A small, welcoming valley, eight miles long and five across shelters between the mountains, dotted with houses and fruit trees, and watered by the trout-filled waters of the Kyi river. Away towards the horizon can be seen the great monastery of Sera and beyond that again are unseen vistas of the Tengri lake and remote Mongolia.

Throned upon the summit of the Potala hill is the mighty palace of the Dalai Lamas, resplendent in crimson and gold, over nine hundred feet long and four hundred and thirty-six feet above the ground. A great stairway leads to it from either side. On its roof five golden pavilions endeavour to outrival the sunlight ; there are caves of crimson and gold, of blue and yellow, blending into a colour display of singular beauty, but with the

coming of night the whole of the vast structure fades as though dissolving with the light. Yaks' tail banners wave from the windows; dark purple yak hair cloths muffle the corridors. On all sides there is an air of mystery, secrecy and magnificence that is sadly belied when the empty echoing interior itself is reached.

Sitting on a cushion surrounded in state is a ruler chosen by fate, who can never leave the world. This principle of lama reincarnation was first introduced into Tibet by the Chinese to stabilize their authority, soon after the expulsion of the Mongols by the Ming dynasty.

The Dalai Lama, vice-regent of the Buddha on earth, occupies a unique position among the rulers of mankind. None may look at him until leave is granted; they must bow and remain with faces to the ground. He does not attain his majority until the age of eighteen, and attempts are often made on his life during minority so that the Regent and Council may continue in power. This witchcraft is carried out by the Black Hat lamas, a branch of the priesthood that deals with magic. They perform various elaborate incantations and sometimes the child sickens or dies of fright. The Dalai Lama never touches alcohol; he eats meat, but since taking life is forbidden in his country, religious ceremonies have to be performed at each meal to ensure the dead animal's reincarnation in a higher state of existence. Before he dies, the Dalai Lama usually tells how and where he will come back to earth again and so assists those who seek for his successor. The father of the selected child attains the rank of duke and the entire family are honoured. The palace entourage consists of the Lord Chamberlain, the Chief Secretary, who is the connecting link between the palace and the outside world, the master of the bedchamber, the court chaplain

and butler and a number of gigantic orderlies comprising the bodyguard.

The Tashi Lama has no temporal power, dealing only in things spiritual; he enjoys the high-sounding title of The Lord of Boundless Wisdom.

The thirteenth Dalai Lama, who ruled Tibet and concurred in the expeditions to Everest, died at the age of fifty-eight; four of his predecessors succumbed before they attained their majority. He had fled to Peking when the British mission came to Lhasa in 1904, and was forced to take refuge at Darjeeling when Chinese troops entered Tibet in 1911.

The new Dalai Lama is chosen upon the death of his predecessor, infants who are born at the time of his decease and display certain physical characteristics being selected for the purpose. Their names are placed in a golden urn at Lhasa and a lama of high rank draws one out according to the will of destiny, or, as some say, at random. Since the young Dalai Lama does not assume temporal power until he is eighteen, it is unlikely that further permission to climb Everest will be granted before his accession to office.

A child ruler of Tibet must be a touching and unusual sight, and Tibetans see in it a holy mystery. Manning, entering the country in the eighteenth century, was probably the first Englishman to have audience with an infant high priest of Buddhism. He describes his feelings with emotion.* "The Dalai Lama's face was beautiful," he says, "and it engrossed my attention. He was about seven years old; had the simple unaffected manners of a noble child. His face was, I thought, poetically and affectingly beautiful. He was of a gay and cheerful dis-

*"Tibet the Mysterious," by Sir Thomas Holditch.

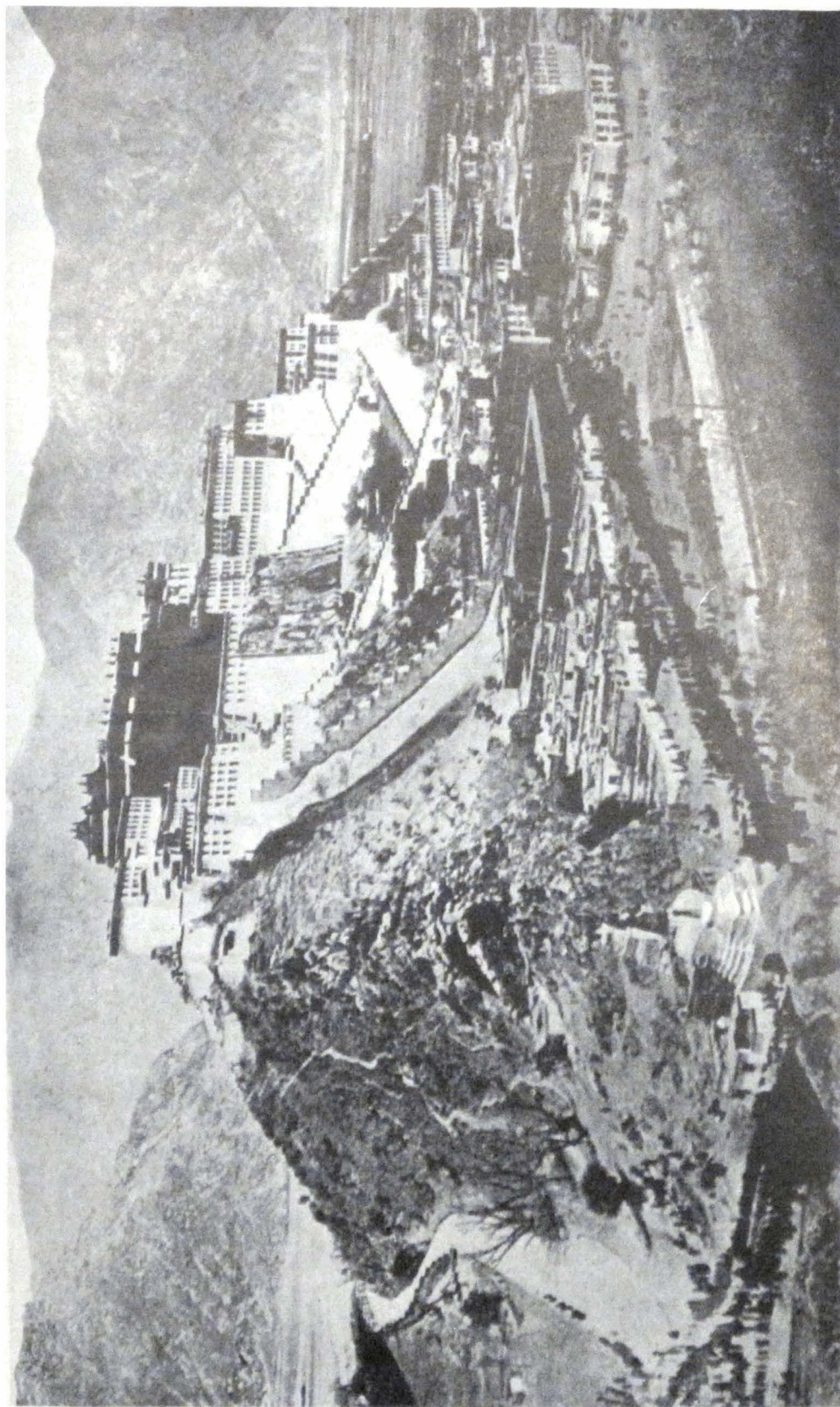
position, his mouth perpetually unbending into a graceful and illuminating smile. Sometimes when he looked at me his mouth almost approached to a gentle laugh. . . . I was extremely affected by my interview with this child lama and the strangeness of my sensations."

Some assert that the Potala Palace is but an empty shell, peopled by dreams, and that the real centre of Buddhism, the Light of Asia, is to be found, not here, but in the Jo-Kang Cathedral. Others again hold the opposite view. Whichever is correct, the pilgrim to the holy city always insists on seeing the famous Jo, the golden image that has beckoned him from afar. Though the cathedral may be treated after the manner of a stable, dirty beyond belief, in the absolute gloom of its interior the great golden idol holds increasing sway.

In the Potala Palace are miles of cold corridors leading to nowhere in particular, while in the cathedral the image of the Buddha provides a climax and a consummation. The idol is reputed to have been fashioned from positive powers of the universe, being composed of all five mineral elements; it is declared to be in the likeness of Buddha himself—not an effigy but an image, a likeness, a piece of golden sculpture from the past. From China came this crowning emblem of Buddhism, none know how. Instead of being the usual graven image, inscrutable as the Sphinx and ponderously benevolent, it shows the Buddha in the form of a young and eager prince—a sort of David of his day. So lovely and human is this effigy and so begirt in joyful happiness that it has come to be regarded in the light of divinity. Limned by the flickering glow of rows of butter lamps is a throne supported by two dragons ten feet high; all the canopy is gilded or jewelled; there are corals and pearls from the sea and turquoises mined



THE LATE DALAI LAMA OF TIBET AND VICE-REGENT
OF THE BUDDHA ON EARTH



THE POTALA—THE PALACE OF THE DALAI LAMA AT LHASA IN TIBET

from the mountains. The image itself is studded with all manner of precious stones—emeralds, rubies, lapis lazuli. A coronet of gold inlaid with turquoises and the five leaves of mysticism adorn the Buddha's brows. Behind the throne vast primeval figures are dimly revealed in the darkness, symbolical of the elemental forces of creation.

Most people in Tibet have seen this statue at least once in their lives, and well-to-do girls in Tibet are scarcely considered marriageable unless they have made the pilgrimage to Lhasa, this being regarded as comparable to a presentation at court in England. The yellow-gowned monks, the Geluba sect, are the established church of the country, though on the death of a Dalai Lama all sects are represented at the cremation ceremony with which the high priest is honoured.

Sera monastery, adjacent to Lhasa, is filled with warrior monks who enter on a course of training extending for twenty years. Many of the high lamas possess numerous servants at their country homes and thousands of yaks, being, in fact, rich prelates with an eye to trade and commerce; when they marry their life companions are not styled wives, but proprietresses and keepers of the household. The warrior priests, as opposed to the scholastic sect, practise stone-throwing daily at a target, and also gymnastic combats with clubs, these exercises training them to become an efficient bodyguard to high lamas and officials when travelling in districts infested with bandits and robbers. The Mongolian monks and students, filled with the last conquering relics of their mighty past, usually win most of the awards and prizes.

At sunrise and sundown, from corridor and cloister comes the sonorous chant of powerful voices, a timeless choreography rising and falling like the flux and flow of

the sea ; from the rooftops ascend into the frosty sky the smoke of incense, fragrant of juniper wood, and where the moonlight breaks in silver ripples across the courtyard, night-faced men, a haze of red or yellow robes mark the movements of the moon, performing their devotions to the company of stars, taking their calendar from the seasons and the strong flights of migratory geese, passing in bird-clouds from Northern Siberia to the plains of India.

From the interiors of the dark lamaserais perched amid the quietude of mountains, arise the shriek of trombones, the rending crash of cymbals. Or is it the loud voice of the wind ?

It is all part of the lama landscape. It is Tibet the barbaric, Tibet the monastic, Tibet the mysterious.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE LAND OF THE THUM

Two mountain fastnesses that have been bitter rivals—Wild valleys and inhabitants—The men of Hunza and Nagar—Greek traditions of jovial Hunza raiders—A fearful country and the last of the Himalayas—The Aga Khan's followers—A journey to Hunza and a visit to the Thum—A master of magic and the supernatural—Slave markets of Asia—Tales and contrasts of Moslem married life—A harem holiday that can become a means of travel—Polo played in a village street—A fierce game—The North-West Frontier meets China—From Baltit to the Pamirs and a night on a glacier.

TUCKED away in the extreme north of India amongst the glaciers of the Karakoram and the Hindu Kush are to be found the two small principalities of Hunza and Nagar. Lost in a land of dark ravines and cañons, they are overpoweringly spectacular, barren, and forbidding. The two tribes, separated by a wild dark valley and overlooked by some of the finest mountain scenery on earth, have been rivals for hundreds of years, never missing a chance of a raid or foray, and only united against a common foe—such as the British expeditionary force, which penetrated to these fastnesses in 1891, to set up the Pax Britannica in this outpost of empire.

The Hunza men have generally vanquished those of Nagar, being both happier and stronger than their rivals across the way, since they inhabited the sunny side of the valley and in the cold gloom of winter the Nagaris hibernated.

Hunza has always been regarded as a desolation of the mountains, surrounded as it is by precipices, ice-fields and glaciers, beside which the largest in Europe or America

pale into insignificance. Even in the summer months entry into this land of warriors and raiders is a matter of difficulty, for then the rivers are swollen by melting snows, and change into raging torrents foaming down valleys that can only be crossed at risk to life and limb. Fords become impassable; crazy bridges of tree trunks and stones take the passenger across torrents rushing like a mill-race below, and, when over, he has to negotiate narrow paths and ledges in the cliffs fit only for goats or cragsmen.

Yet the inhabitants of this land, more desperate and fearful than any other part of the Himalayas, are a fair-haired, blue-eyed, jovial people, strangely at variance with their darker neighbours; a clan that has preserved its characteristics through the ages and claims descent from Alexander the Great.

In pre-war days Hunza and the adjacent state of Chitral were regarded as possible, though most difficult, routes for a Russian invasion of India, and the great Greek commander is supposed to have made contact with this district when leaving Hindustan. The ruler, or Mir, of Hunza still likes to talk of himself in the same breath with Alexander. At banquets or receptions the question is sometimes asked by one of his chieftains: "Who is the greatest man after Alexander?" and the answer comes, "It is the Mir." Greek relics have been found by British officers in this district, and it is strange to think how, after the fashion of Arles in the Provence of Southern France, Hunza and Chitral still carry the delicate and ineffaceable stamp of the Greeks, though separated from the classic peninsula by thousands of miles of country and hundreds of years of time. Ghost names, like Demetrios and Menander, appear on old coins out of the past.

The inhabitants of Hunza are Kanjutis, whose spiritual

ruler and chief is the Aga Khan, but while they belong to the Maulai sect of Mohammedanism, the Nagars are Shiah Mohammedans.

The Aga Khan, lord of European racing stables, is revered in India as head of the Khojas, with adherents in various parts of the world such as Bombay, Sind, Kathiawar, Persia, Afghanistan, the Pamirs and East Africa. He traces his descent through forty-eight generations to the Fatima Caliphs of Egypt, and to Ali, Mohammed's son-in-law. He has probably one of the most precious pedigrees to be found in any part of the globe, since it turns him from a man into a deity who is practically worshipped by large numbers of people willingly offering to him their taxes, stinting themselves to provide handsome offerings, and even putting the ground on which he walks into their mouths in token of his sanctity. He is thus regarded as an inherent Imam by a succession that is almost apostolic. The Khojas believe that each successive Imam from Ali downwards was sacred and that the succession to this holy state is hereditary in the male line.

The Maulais are not fanatical and are on good terms with other Moslems. Orthodox Moslems regard the desert pilgrimage to Mecca as being necessary to salvation, but the Maulai pilgrimage is much shorter and simpler for it takes him no farther than Bombay, the Eastern headquarters of the Aga Khan.

For centuries the Mir of Hunza has been called the Thum, ruling his territory from his ogre-like castle at Baltit with all the picturesque detail of a fierce eastern storybook, each foray providing a new chapter of adventure. The curved sword of Islam has often flashed on these wild heights; daggers have been drawn in secret destruction.

The confines of the district form a triangle filled with

pieces of the Hindu Kush, Karakoram, and the northern Himalayas which come to a majestic full stop where Nanga Parbat, sentinel of the west, drops twenty-four thousand feet of precipices into the bed of the Indus river. The Hunza valley is one of the most tremendous in Asia, of a stern beauty that the flanks of the Hindu Kush supply with all the depths of shattered abysses.

A vale of enfolding desolation has been hewn and quarried out of the bedrock of grandeur, and overtopped by the bastions of the Hindu Kush, savage gateway to the plains of India ; far below, the river, six hundred feet across, roars and thunders as it dashes itself in pieces over the rocks, washing with its waters the base of the erstwhile robber fastnesses of the Thum.

You can get to Hunza on foot, but it is a steep and narrow path, not even straight like the way to salvation ; and it is easier to go there in fancy.

From Gilgit, ten marches north of Srinagar in Kashmir, the distance is sixty-five miles to Baltit, the capital of Hunza, the road crossing the Burzil Pass at 13,400 feet, through contoured depressions swept by such deadly winds in winter that a high wooden refuge-tower has been constructed for the luckless traveller. The wind springs up quite suddenly, swooping down upon the wayfarers after the manner of robbers, sometimes carrying away the path in its impetus. Beyond the Burzil, you come by way of the Astor valley to Hattu Pir, as savage and enchanted a spot as ever haunted the mind of a poet, and necessitating a night crossing in the summer, since the precipices become warmed during the day to furnace heat. The place is an inferno in every sense, for in olden days the Kashmiri rajahs took their prisoners out here and abandoned them to a fate consisting either of starvation or capture and

death at the hands of mountain tribes ever on the watch for such windfalls.

Perched like an eagle above the town of Baltit, holding the mountain-side in subjection, is the fortress of the ruler of Hunza, where the Thums have played the game of King of the Castle for fourteen hundred years. An amphitheatre carved from the hollows of mountains outlines the scene, with the peak of Rakapushi, never yet climbed, catching the glitter of sunlight to the south.

In all my wanderings over the globe I have seen nothing to equal the view from this fortress. North, south, or east, immense snow-fields lead up from pine forests, black as night, while to the west yawns a ravine enclosed by precipices at the head of which are terrific glaciers, the frozen icing from the brows of the Hindu Kush. Ordinary landscape values can be doubled and trebled and more still added.

Pelion is piled on Ossa. This is a land of giants, where Gusherbrum, the Mustagh, and the Golden Throne, raise clouded heads into the sky, and Mount Godwin Austen, or K₂, in the Karakoram range, struggles for second place amongst the barony of mountains, with Kinchinjunga holding high command on the other side of the Himalayas. A place in which to energize but not to live.

Many famous climbers have delighted in this district where the scale of life is beyond the reach of any map.

The fortress of the Thum is constructed of bricks, stones, and massive timber, darkened by smoke to the colour of Tudor beams, and with quaint eaves of carven woodwork. A ladder and a hole in the ceiling give access from floor to floor, and the approach to the fortress is made up of a succession of twists and turns specially constructed to baffle attack. Behind the castle is a ravine into whose

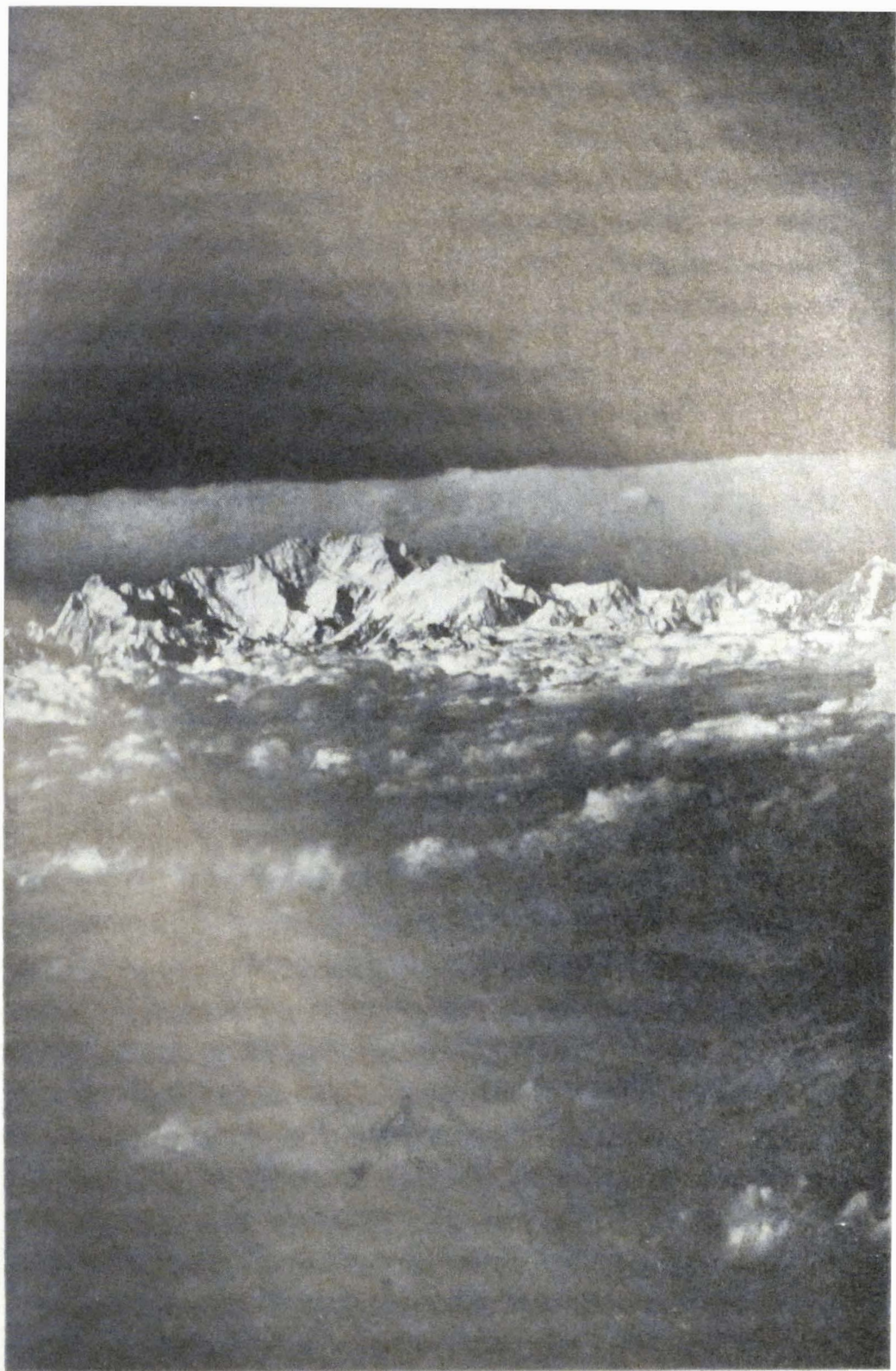
depths condemned prisoners were thrown to join the torrent far below.

I found the Mir of Hunza and his followers, armed to the teeth, waiting to receive me in true musical comedy fashion. Inside the castle I noticed a jumble of queer furniture, some valuable rugs, and portraits of celebrities, one or two hanging upside down, but as King Edward was one of the pictures on the wall that looked at me from an orthodox position, I made no comment on the Kanjuti's inverted sense of art.

Although they are Moslems, the Kanjutis drink a white wine resembling Sauterne, made by the Mir at his own wine factory. Libations are drunk out of strange goblets recalling the craft often employed over the design of Eastern drinking vessels, most famous of which was probably the emperor Jehangir's cup of ruby cut from a single gem three inches long.

On my first visit to Hunza I paid the customary state call and was received by the Thum and his minister surrounded by the bodyguard dressed in their scarlet jackets, blue trousers, and soft leather shoes made in Hunza from goatskins. A bodyguard of originality, both in arms and composition. They carried breechloading rifles and carbines, they wore red fezes, and the commander appeared in the full dress uniform of a lieutenant of the Bedfordshire Regiment. Apart from its military significance, I was interested in the guard for it gave me an opportunity to study at close quarters the mountaineers of Hunza.

With their fair complexions, long curls hanging down below the ears, similar to the 'bobbed' hair of to-day, and their bold and jovial type of feature, they would pass as a revival of the freebooters of medieval England. Clothed



ONE HUNDRED AND FIVE MILES FROM THE RAMPARTS OF INDIA



AN AWE-INSPIRING ARRAY OF PEAKS ON THE INDO-TIBETAN BORDER

appropriately they might also be taken for hardy Norsemen, or the rough Highlanders of Jacobite days.

The Thum was impressive on parade, and after my inspection we ascended by a ladder to a balcony and thence into a room supported on beams—evidently old and staunch supporters. They must have been there for hundreds of years and bore witness to the strength and solidity of the Thum's home. In the far corner was another ladder going up through a trap-door; my host led the way and I followed, the ministers, with and without portfolio, bringing up the rear.

We emerged into a reception-room about fifteen feet square, the floor covered with priceless rugs from Bokhara, the walls hung with portraits of varying artistic skill. Around the room were sundry niches with wooden chests black with the smoke of ages, some of them secured by iron locks and bands that would have tested all the skill and cunning of a modern burglar.

The windows faced south, they were wide and lofty, the carved pillars on either side gave them an old English aspect, but the outstanding feature was the magnificent view. If the immensity and grandeur of it could compensate for the difficulty of reaching Hunza then I could consider myself domiciled in luxury. In fact, absorbed by the outlook from the castle, I suddenly awakened to the fact that my host had been pressing upon me light refreshment; home-made cakes, dried grapes, fruits, biscuits, and the famous Hunza wine. The Thum spoke in fluent Hindustani and told me of his visit to India and his impressions of the land beyond his own borders.

The present ruler of Hunza is Mohammed Nazim Khan, half-brother to Safdar Ali, the once all-powerful Thum who had murdered his father and two brothers to secure

the throne, and ruled his subjects after the full-blooded fashion of a bandit chief. He had gained the kingship in the same way as his father had done before him, assassination being considered the mother of accession.

A robe of honour, really a garment of death, in which a man had died from virulent smallpox, was sent to the old Thum on his birthday; to this insidious present he quickly fell a victim, sickened and died, and his son reigned in his stead. Safdar Ali, after his Borgian stratagem, continued to rule according to his lights until the advent of the British who were compelled at last to take the initiative.

The storming of the Hunza fastnesses supplied one of the most difficult campaigns in frontier military history, and taxed the resources of Colonel Durand and his men to the full. The fort at Nilt, commanding the road, had an almost impregnable position guarded by perpendicular approaches both above and below, the only access being by a narrow pathway in full view of the Hunza marksmen. After a bitter struggle the fort was blown up, but the Hunza irregulars, supported by their Nagar compatriots, took up an even worse position to the rear, across a deep nullah. No means of turning these positions could be found, and a delay of weeks took place before a steep path up the crags was finally discovered by a sepoy, and employed in a manner that repeated over again in these unknown wilds General Wolfe's storming of the Heights of Abraham at Quebec. After their second defeat the tribesmen had had enough. Several V.C.s were gained in this arduous and gallant march on Hunza that turned soldiers into explorers and sent the Thum to seek his fortunes in Turkistan.

I met Safdar Ali a short time since at Kuchar,

in Chinese Turkistan, where he had become a vintner, after fleeing across the Mintaka Pass at a speed incompatible with dignity and greatness. He begged to be allowed to return to the land of his birth, but his record of murder and sudden death, and all his innumerable crimes, made it impossible to encourage him in any way. So he went back to his wine.

The Thums of Hunza have built up a reputation as masters of magic and the supernatural. Neighbouring tribes in olden times regarded Baltit as the home of sorcerers and magicians. The Thum with his spells and surroundings might have done duty for any old witch's tale. On the summit of the castle, a magician's drum was suspended in view of all; before he started on a war-like expedition the drum would beat and thunder, a token of forthcoming success in battle.

"Where is the Thum?" a terrified villager would ask on some wild night when a foray was expected. "What is he plotting to-night?"

"He is stirring up the waters," would come the reply, "in the place of magic."

It was said that the Hunza chief, when he wished to raise snowstorms and hurricanes, and to ally himself with the elements, had only to repair to a certain stream where he cast an ox-hide upon the waters. Such castles as these must have terrified the childhood of antiquity; nowadays they would merely bring on the scenes a camera. But the real magic is the sense they awaken of the unchanging East, and of customs and objects that go back through the ages to the days of the Caliphs of Islam, and the Nights of Arabia clouded in the fiction of a freebooting past. The gulf between these primitive tribes with their simple ways, and the advanced sophistication of Europe and

America, is as wide and deep as the valley that separates the two states of Hunza and Nagar.

Castles in the air often take a good deal of keeping up and, until the advent of the British, the men of Hunza lived by plunder. In fact, the Mir derived most of his income from taxing this fruitful source of revenue. In the guise of brigands they crossed passes and emerged through the mountains to prey upon the caravans travelling to Kashgar and Yarkand, holding merchants to ransom and selling captives into slavery. For centuries adjacent small states suffered from their raids. The men of Nagar had a valley ending in a cul-de-sac, but their more fortunate neighbours of Hunza possessed ways of penetrating into Turkistan and holding up traffic across the Pamirs. The Chinese found themselves unable to check this brigandage and paid at one time an annual subsidy to the Thum in his Magician's Castle. Tribute passed between Hunza and China many years before the Chinese revolution and formed the subject of a yearly article in the once famous *Peking Gazette*, the oldest journal in the records of man.

Hunza at one time was a regular slave market for the surrounding district; beauties could be bought and sold, and men came to it from many parts to purchase human wares. Such slave markets existed all over central Asia, but Hunza had the distinction of having captives mostly taken in war and not exchanged commercially.

"If we had four men to marry," members of harems have been overheard to say, "we could deal incomparably better with them than do they with four women. Where is the fairness, except what our master is pleased to find in ourselves?"

A question answerable only by saying that Mohammed happened to be a man.

What sort of life is led by these houris who have been bought in the open market? Where does allurements end and estrangement begin? How many heartbreaks go to make a harem?

It is difficult for most of us, used to the feminine freedom and emancipation of modern times, to visualize the complete subjection and often degradation that is the lot of the inmates of a harem. Their daily round and common task are nothing more nor less than arraying and deporting themselves in ways that will please their lord and master, whose property they are, alive or dead. Their path for the future lies in the direction of complete obscurity, often serving a master they never see, or else occupied in a ceaseless round of intrigue and jealousy for the possession of his favours.

They find themselves the Cinderellas of a night, the playthings of a mood or a moment, and then—the East smiles inscrutably and veils her secrets in darkness.

It is sad to recall that there have been cases of European girls foolish enough to allow themselves to be carried away by the glamour of the East; willingly, they have become the wives of Orientals and entered into utterly strange and unnatural surroundings that end for them in degradation and misery. East and West can learn to meet each other in most walks of life excepting the one impassable barrier of marriage. From the point of view of 'seeing life', a Western girl would do far better to run away to a convent than enter seraglio surroundings of which she knows nothing.

Romance of this kind is totally different from its counterpart in the Occident. In Europe, since the days of chivalry, romance has centred round women and their beauty; they have supplied much of the substance and

meaning of the Provençal word. The troubadours turned love between man and woman into an idyll and the music they stirred in the human heart has never been allowed to grow old. The fair sex were regarded as beings to be courted and admired; they were no longer part of the everyday level of life.

Among Asiatics, however, romance has little or nothing to do with women. They are still treated as belonging to the commonplace and even commercial side of things—accessories easily acquired for the home, even if they can no longer be bought and sold in public. So far from being in any way idealized, for all practical purposes they are classed as furniture and possibly useful decoration for the house. The average Moslem mountaineer thinks much more highly of his horses and dogs than he does of his womenfolk. Romance in these parts is concerned with the brave deeds of men, the combats of warriors and hunters, and any such manly pursuits.

It would, for instance, be strange to expect a Helen of Troy to take an entirely inconspicuous place in central Asia and to set no epic feelings in motion for the masses, and yet such would almost certainly be the case. Over all this mountainous territory romance remains a strictly male preserve. The East has had its share of heroes, but there are practically no records of heroines.

The Koran allows a Moslem four wives, but this places no limit whatsoever except that of his purse on the number of his concubines; these are recruited in various ways, being offered as presents in the New Year or purchased secretly by agents in the markets, the price varying according to their attractions. Moslem frontier women are still, in most cases, quite unemancipated and their world consists of court-yard and roof-tops in these

Moslem corners, where girls were once displayed like pictures at an exhibition, arrayed in their best and catalogued at different prices.

Beyond the fact that they are no longer public, these markets still exist, but they have been shorn of their barbarity and are now conducted with more decorum and less display. Circassians in the states of the Caucasus, blazoned on Eastern imagination for their charms and haunting femininity, still contribute slaves and concubines to the households of central Amirs and chieftains. Shah Nasr-ed-din, the conqueror despot of Persia, held the record where the size of harems was concerned, being the absolute ruler of fifteen hundred women. Recruiting was done by his agents on a large scale, often whole populations of villages or towns being lined up while he made his selections; whereupon batches of girls were sent to Teheran to undergo a regular course in etiquette and deportment. Their most popular form of recreation was the hamam, or bath, which is really an Eastern ladies' club, where gossip is exchanged, plots are hatched and scandal passed from one to another.

The Shahs of Persia have always had a name for luxury and display that would easily out-rival Hollywood in its details. A former Shah of Persia, when arrayed in all the glory of his robes, known as the 'Sea of Light', was such a scintillating mass of diamonds, rubies and pearls, that a famous jeweller in Paris once said that he would buy him as he stood for four million pounds.

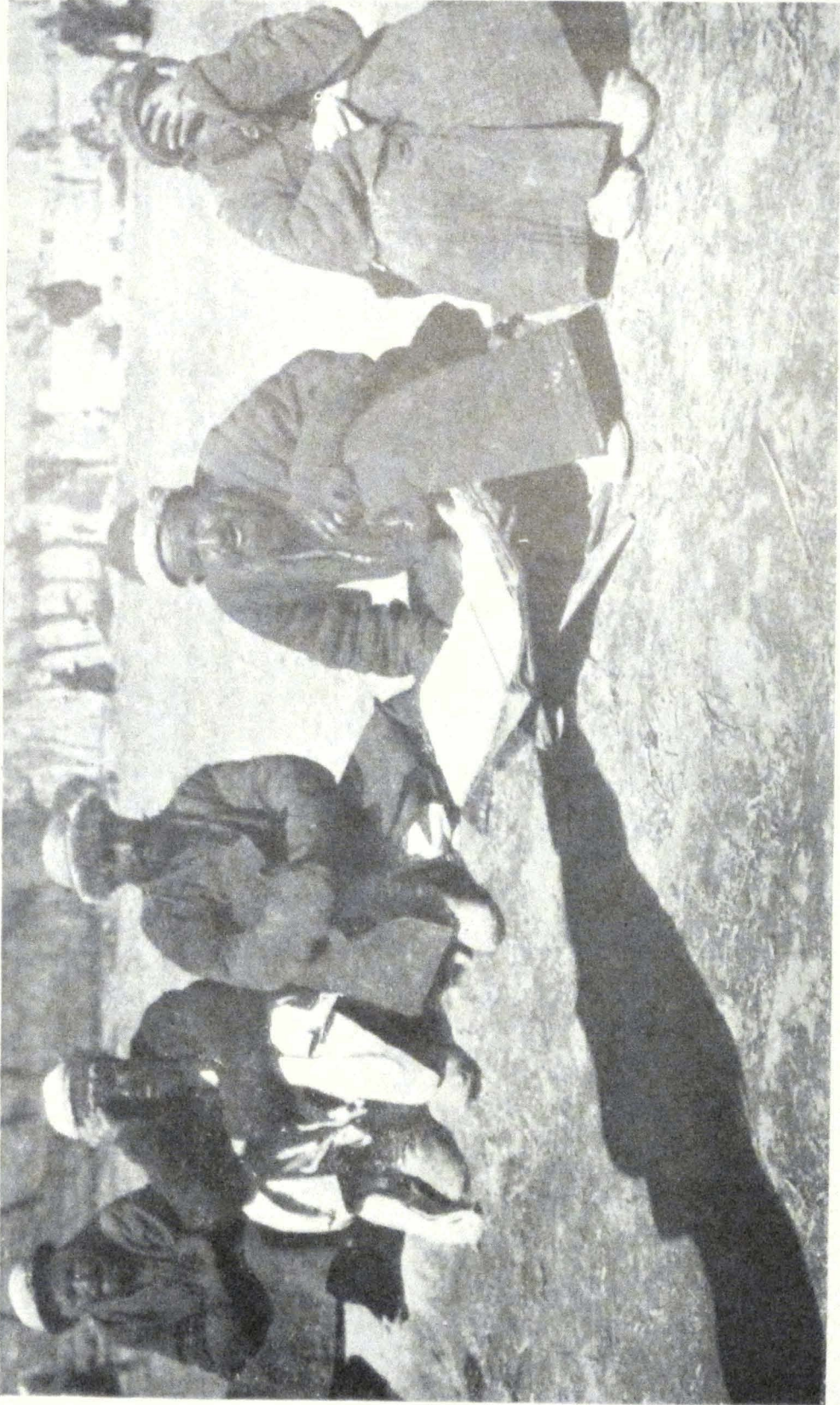
The Nizam of Hyderabad, unwilling to take over the expense of his father's collection of three hundred beauties, and only to afford his own variety, was greeted with a revolt in the harem that ultimately forced him to make provision for the old members as well as the new.

Incidentally, he maintains a large fleet of motor-cars for their benefit.

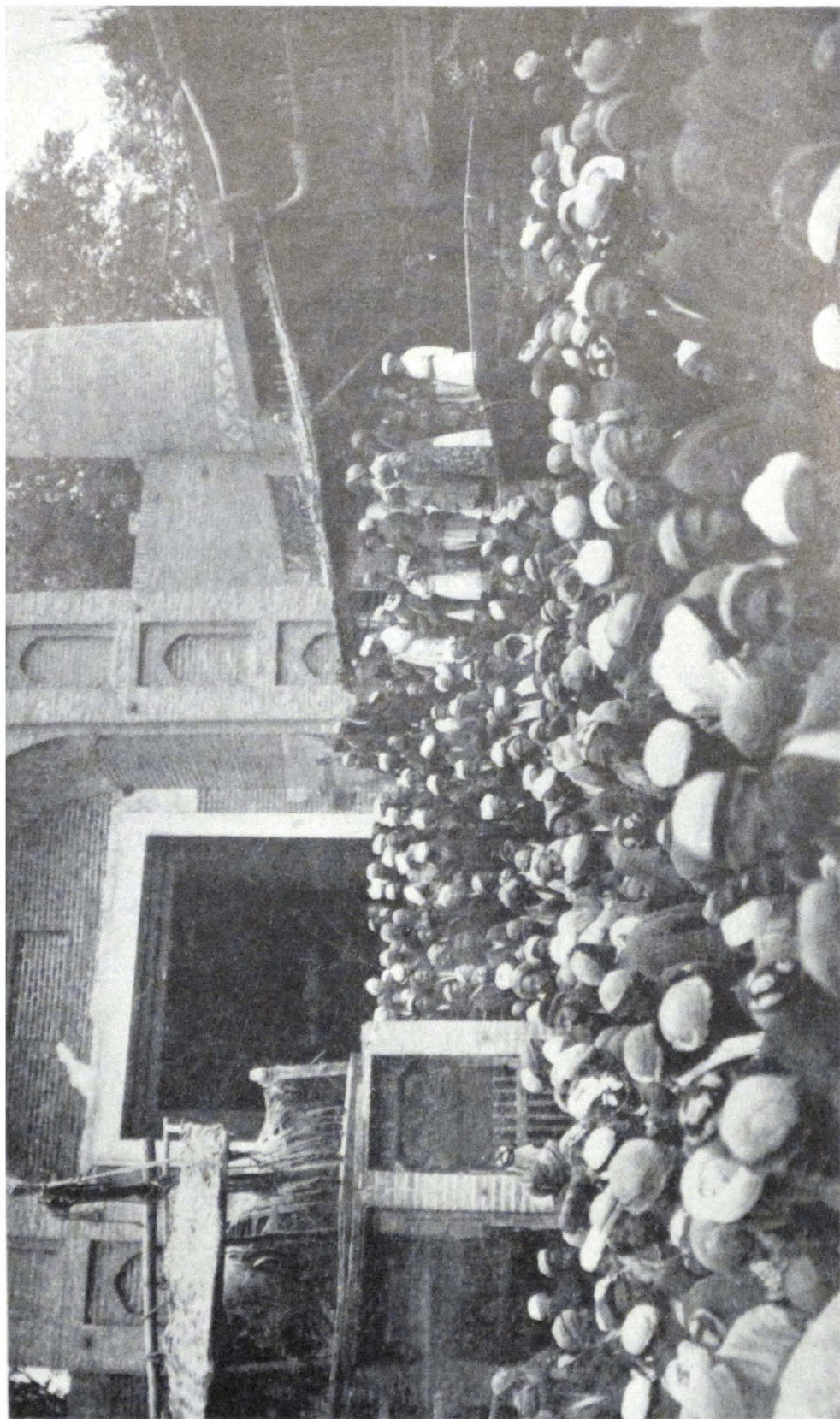
In Turkistan and Persia a system of temporary marriage exists allowing of women to break away from one harem and enter another. Indeed, life for them under certain circumstances, if they are clever enough, can develop into one long honeymoon. A marriage is arranged by a go-between and carried out by a mullah or priest, whilst a divorce is prepared at the same time. After separation from her temporary husband a woman cannot marry again until one hundred days have elapsed, but she circumvents this restriction quite easily. She marries into one harem and on leaving receives a document of departure for the fee of fourpence. At the end of the hundred days, she marries again, divorces and gathers in another divorce letter; she can now move on and marry once more on the strength of the first document of divorce, procedure that can be repeated indefinitely. To see some more of the world by means of this matrimonial travel bureau, all that is necessary for her is to possess good looks and a letter of divorce as introduction.

Some of the Khans and chieftains still treat their womenkind like goods and chattels. They could fill the part of Bluebeards without need of rehearsal. Among the members of the harem, the presiding dame, or mother-in-law, has an authority extending to the use of such punishments as solitary confinement, caning, and standing in uncomfortable positions for long periods of time; but the ordeals imposed by the lord of the harem can be much more terrible and crippling.

I often came across such examples when serving as the British representative in Central Asia. One was that of a Chinese dictator of Turkistan, to the north of



HUNTERS IN HIGH ASIA CONSULT THE KORAN FOR GOOD OMENS



THE FAITHFUL GATHER AT A CENTRAL ASIAN MOSQUE

Hunza, who was informed on returning one afternoon from a visit, that three young girls of his harem had been out for an unauthorized walk. They were paraded in the garden and beaten, after which their hands were tied behind their backs, and they were suspended from a tree during the night. In the morning when they were cut down, two were found to be dead and the third hopelessly crippled.

On the North-West Frontier an irate tribesman, hearing that his young and pretty wife had conversed with a neighbour over the wall, cut off her head and threw it over the wall to the man with the remark that he could now have her for good.

In the heart of seething Asia there is a punishment for those detected in unfaithfulness quite as original as the system of the harem holiday. The lady is seated upon a donkey facing its tail, her face is blackened, and she is then led through the bazaars exposed to the jeers and missiles of the rabble. Her condition at the end of the ride can be better imagined than described.

With regard to home life, as a general rule only two meals are taken a day, so that the work of household or farm goes on in the Moslem East without the culinary interruptions of European countries. Shopping is an easy matter in the towns, for each trade and profession have their own allotted areas where they bring individuality and colour to the locality.

In Hunza life is simple and houses are built of one pattern; the rooms are windowless and illuminated by door or skylight. The lives of the women proceed on the slow-moving immemorial lines of the past, drying skins, weaving cloths and baking bread. To-day is the same as yesterday and to-morrow is left to look after itself. Allah is great,

Allah is good—and Kismet is his faithful and unchanging retainer.

A popular pastime among the men is the game of polo. In Hunza and Gilgit it is played on original lines, the ancient relative, so to speak, of a sport which is the oldest ball game in the world. Born and bred originally in Persia, it became the national pastime from the dawn of history until the eighteenth century. The Persian court two thousand years ago was passionately fond of polo; the populace judged the merits of a king largely from the way in which he acquitted himself in this game, while national poets described experts as 'possessing the courage of seven lions, riding on the winds for speed and careering through space like an entrancing meteor'.

It was the Iranian custom to lead off by hitting the ball as high as possible into the air and then catching it another blow in its descent. From Persia the game travelled through Central Asia to India, and from Manipur, where it remained popular, after decaying in older Indian haunts, it traversed the seas to Europe and America. Under the Mogul emperors polo became a passport to imperial favour and advancement at court. Baber's grandson, Akbar, showed himself to be both a daring soldier and a skilled polo player. He is credited with the invention of luminous polo balls that could be used after dark, and knobs of gold and silver were fixed to the sticks to satisfy his love of the magnificent. In the ranks of Eastern armies promotion was often influenced by taking into account skill at polo.

There is a legend that Bahram Gur, the Sasanian hunter king, immortalized by Omar Khayyàm, once discovered a player cheating at the game by wearing a chain mail vest under his jacket, and promptly slew him with his own hand.

At Hunza I watched a contest in the village street. No rules of off-side or crossing restricted the tourney; all was fair at Hunza in war, love and polo.

The opposing sides, each numbering fifteen, entered from one end of the ground. When they had taken up positions, the rajah signalled, and out from the centre of one team shot the captain like an arrow. He threw the ball into the air and, as it descended, gave it a terrific whack that sent it bounding down the field. At once there came an avalanche of pounding horsemen from each end. From the opposing goal post a burly ruffian, mounted on an Afghan pony, charged straight at the leaping ball and into the midst of the players. Riding like a madman, he extricated himself from the yelling, struggling mass, waving his stick triumphantly, with the ball leaping and bounding in front of him. From one end of the ground to the other the players surged, the ball speeding up and down and occasionally landing amongst the spectators.

At every goal the band broke into a frenzied crash, to which was joined the applause of the crowd. There was a brief rest, and the players came thundering down the field again. Out shot the great chamberlain of the rajah's household, the commander-in-chief charged straight at him, the rajah's son saved, the head of a clan up the valley gained the ball, a long, dark-haired warrior, with the scowl of murder in his eyes, took it from him, and the heir-apparent struck a goal with a blow that sounded like the crack of doom. It was fast and thrilling, that game in Hunza.

At the close of play I was present at the dance which the defeated side has to perform on the ground, a dance much older than the people present. While they contorted themselves and made merry, an orchestra of drums,

tom-toms, mandolins, and a reed instrument resembling a clarinet, gave a spirited programme of music. Possibly owing to something in their Aryan origin the Hunza musicians excel at this form of entertainment, and when allied to the melodious chant of war-song, the wild chorus of raid and foray, echo back the ageless past of Islam—its sudden wars, and wonderings and wanderings. No modern symphony this, but wildest Asia talking in its sleep.

The East has slept for centuries now, her powers dormant, and students of history are beginning to wonder whether the day is coming for her to reawaken and reassert herself. Hitherto revivals have usually occurred in the guise of religion, all ideas being opposed to massed forms of modern life and production. The demarcation line between East and West has been somewhat on these lines.

The West.

1. Life is something to be lived.
2. Charity and lawfulness are necessary virtues for civilization.
3. We strive after effort and becoming.
4. We follow the wheels of progress.
5. We believe in love.
6. We love women.
7. Children are a delight.
8. Death is to be feared.

The East.

- Life is something to ponder.
- Strength is stronger ; guile more supple.
- We are content with being.
- We follow leaders.
- We venerate ancestors.
- We find them useful.
- Children delight us also ; but not too many girls.
- Death is a stop, but not a full-stop and therefore of no ultimate importance.

From Baltit and Hunza the Kilik, Mintaka, and Gul Khwajawin passes lead to the Pamirs and Central Asia.

The Mintaka is generally used in winter, for the ascent is steep, so that the snow does not lie deep. On the summit of the Mintaka, or Pass of a Thousand Ibex, 15,430 feet high, a cairn of stone marks the crest-line of the Hindu Kush and the frontier between India and China.

Standing here you may feel the strength of the wild places lay violent hands upon you, and see the tangles of Central Asia meeting in the silence of mountains and warrior crags; and here, if the elements allow you to loiter, may be experienced something of the far-flung meaning of the word empire. One foot can be placed in China, another within the Russian Empire, while an arm remains in India.

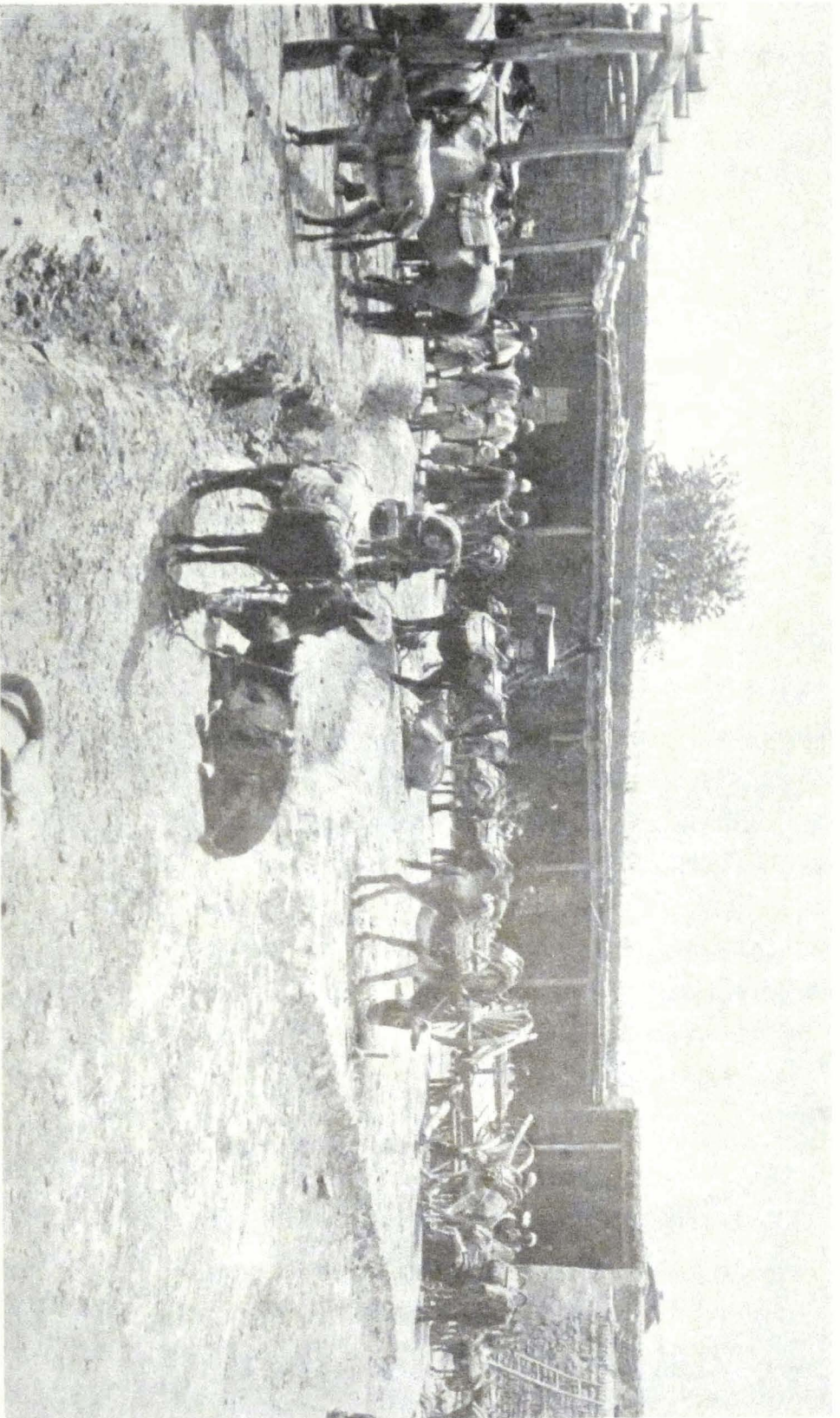
Around this region are glaciers, some of them thirty to sixty-five miles long and of a wide variety of form; they are of all colours, brown and black and sometimes clear as crystal according to the light. Men live here under the emotions of raging wind and rain and the loneliness of eternal snow.

Henry Savage Landor has given a graphic account of a night spent on a glacier during one of his Asiatic journeys.

“A Himalaya glacier seems to be the home of noises of all kinds. The wind blowing among the pinnacles and recesses produces weird melodies like solos and immense choruses of human voices; you can hear shrill whistling all round you when sharper blades of ice cut the current of air, and roars like those of wild beasts, only stronger, when the wind penetrates into some deep cavity. No sooner were you closing your eyes again for a much-wanted sleep than thunder, so loud that it made you jump, startled you, but when you peeped out of the tent, there were brilliant stars in a limpid sky everywhere above you. Sleepy as you were you could not resist—

at least I could not, and I am not much of a star-gazer—the temptation to gaze at the stars and planets. In the rarified and limpid air they showed like huge diamonds and gave quite enough light to see all round one, even when there was no moon. Indeed, anyone who has never been to exceptionally high elevations has an idea of the beauty of stars. They appear several times larger than they do when seen from London or Paris, for instance, and the magnificence of their everchanging colours is indescribable.”

Lofty mountains rise on both sides of the Kanjut valley forming walls of rocks, broken gorges filled with silt and detritus spread out into symmetrical fans where straggle lonely nomad camps, the only sign of life in an otherwise rocky wilderness. Where the traveller is concerned, the mountains become walls of rock, and even eight thousand feet high, and looking down into chasms, sight is lost. Nature has thus helped the Kanjutis to preserve their independence, surrounded as they are by ravines where horses and cattle can only pass during two months of the year. Snow and sun between them tend to sweep the tracks away. Cultivation and civilization become more and more scanty as the path leads upward to the Roof of the World.



AN INN, OR CARAVANSERAI, IS AN IMPORTANT CENTRE IN HIGH ASIA



A KIRGHIZ FAMILY GROUP ON THE ROOF OF THE WORLD

CHAPTER VIII

THE ROOF OF THE WORLD

Strong winds and driving snow—A land of primal simplicity—
Nomadic customs—Love on the world's roof—A dangerous game—
Hunting eagles—A ferocious general—Sidelights on Turkistan—
A weird monastery—Living tombs—Surgical secrets.

MORE than six hundred years ago the Venetian traveller, Marco Polo, passed over the Pamirs on his celebrated journey to the court of the Mongol emperor, Kublai Khan; his description of local people and customs is applicable now as it was in those far-off days.

To the north-west of the Himalayas and completing a mountainous continuation towards Central Asia run the Hindu Kush, second only to them in size and aggressive grandeur; they extend eastwards and southwards with them, and along the northern side form the frontier of India. It is a romantic spot, for here is the meeting-place of various paramount cultures, and the summit of the earth—a region that excited intense interest some years ago when Russia was moving in the direction of India.

In the south-west corner of China, where the Celestial empire meets Hindustan, lies Chinese Turkistan, a land of climatic and geographical extremes and affording with its mixed races rich material for the ethnologist.

To gain Turkistan from Peking involves a march of four thousand miles across China, occupying from six to eight months but devoid of serious obstacles. The approach from India, however, is much more formidable, leading through Kashmir, Gilgit, and Hunza to the Mintaka—and few Europeans make the journey.

Caravan routes still run linking up far distant towns,

their numbers made up of hardy merchants of many races and creeds, sometimes taking a hand at the game of gun-running or illicit opium smuggling. The inhabitants encountered on the way are generally nomads by preference, wandering tribes simple in customs and outlook, taking each day as it comes, the good with the bad, and not averse to a little freebooting when the spirit moves them.

Past nor future matters; only the actuality of the present.

Leaving the comforts and customs of civilization behind him, the traveller steps into a new life of toil and vigour far removed from anything he has left behind. It is a world of primal simplicity into which he enters, filled with the energy of wide horizons and the cleansing forces of primitive nature. Men live here under the strong emotions of raging wind and loneliness and fallen snow. There is peace and at times a tranquillity different from any met with on the plains; not the peace of a cat blinking by the fireside nor that of an old dog basking in the sun, but the peace of wild places that know no fear or favour, nor any of the conventional laws of man.

The call of a partridge or chikor is a sound coming from another world. The cries of children seem quite out of place. Domestic occurrences become unimportant amid the wider activities of overpowering natural surroundings, so that sitting back afterwards in the chairs of civilization a man is filled with wonder at the contrast between two such varying environments, and the Pamirs become like a dream of some other life, stronger, simpler, more invigorating.

Up on the roof of the world is the freshness of the dawn, the cry of the unknown, the hungry stride of

movement. In the strong air of the heights, days are filled with tireless action, and at night the warmth of watch-fires becomes a thanksgiving. The snow can lend an air of suspended animation to the scene, insulating as it were the little hidden activities of the land, and leaving the landscape full of the strength of unworried perspectives and smooth expanses that go on for ever.

Less difference exists between man and man. Riches and possessions can count for little; nearly all men are poor in Central Asia.

Among the Moslems, to leave no possessions after death is the hall-mark of real piety; to complain neither of heat nor cold is extolled as a necessary quality of patience; hospitality becomes one of the strongest virtues amid surroundings where people can so easily starve.

Some there are who journey for the thirst of great horizons and the fever called the Wanderlust; others take ship, car, or aeroplane, that they may have for companions those fickle, fair-faced wanderers, Change and Contact and Variety, but on the Pamirs, a thousand years back in time and filled with the freedom of unmapped places, men travel because they must.

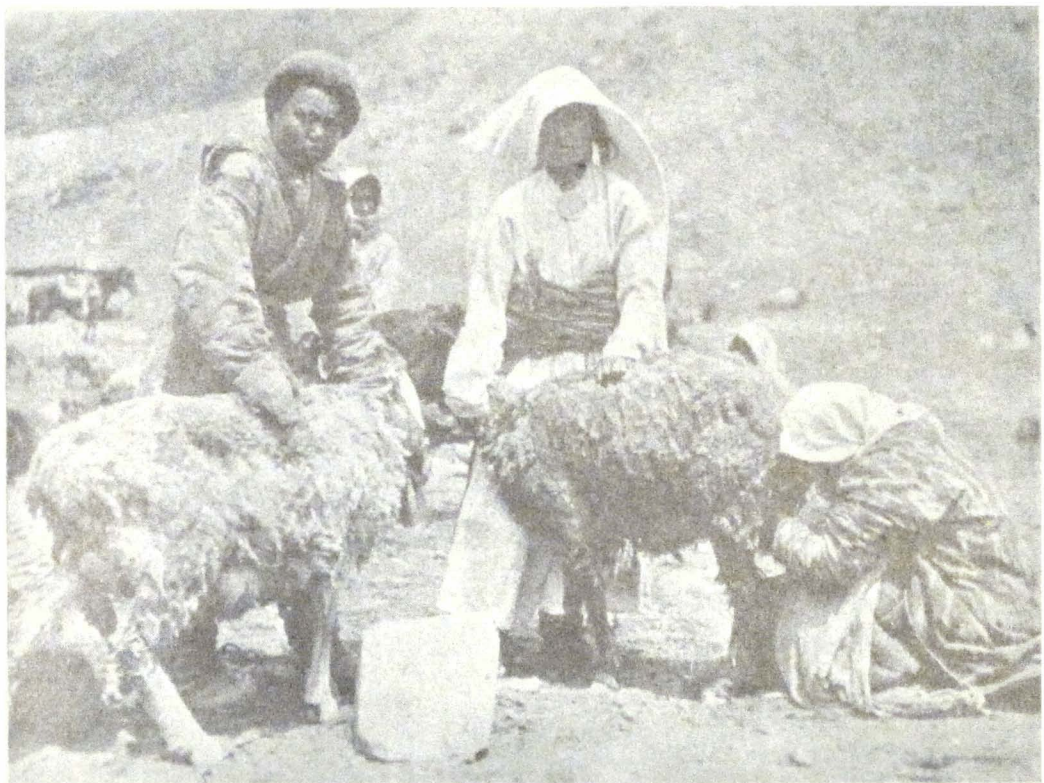
The Pamirs get their name from a Persian word meaning the feet of mountains, and this fittingly describes these central tablelands that roll away endlessly, fold after fold of virile desolation, better watered and more traversable, but a little less high than those in Tibet. The shepherds are mostly Moslems and some of the Pamir peoples are related to the gypsy tribes. Traces of Christian practice are still to be found among them, a curious feature commented on by Marco Polo, who described the chief of the Titai and Kipchak kingdom as a Nestorian

Christian and none other than the celebrated Prester John.

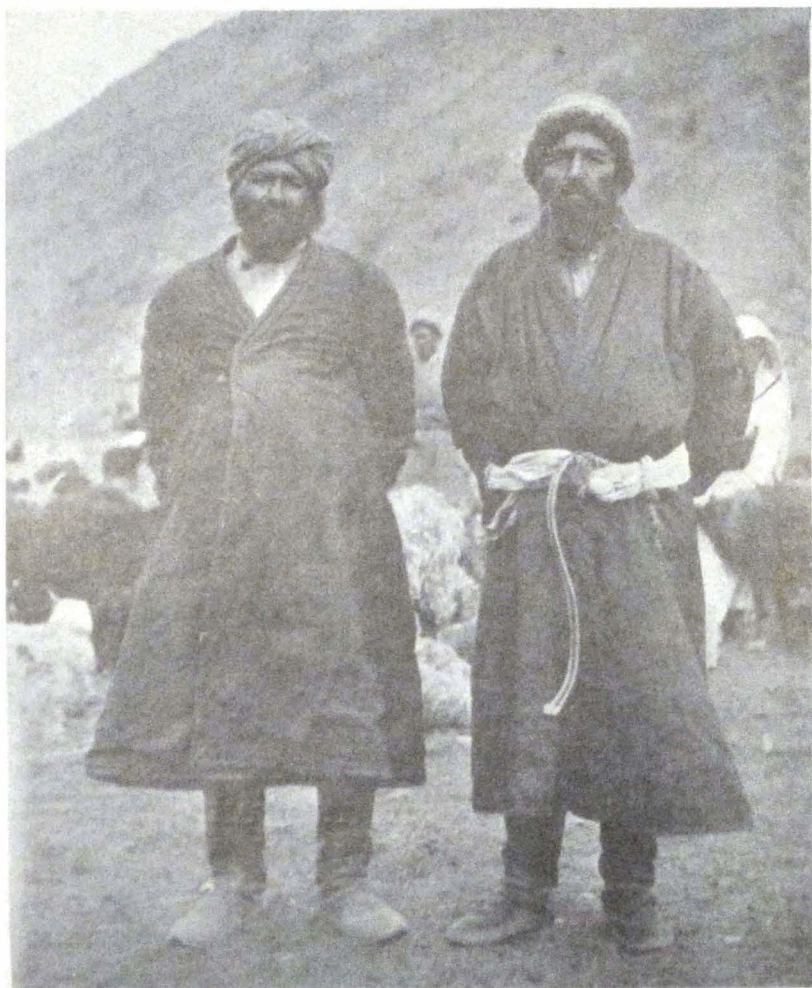
He was an ally of Genghiz Khan, whence probably arose the confusion about his greatness and splendour. Missives to be found in museums to this day quote him as waited upon by seven kings, sixty dukes and three hundred counts, not to mention a special king as his cook. Though the stories of the fabulous Presbyter were afterwards transferred to Africa and Abyssinia, there can be little doubt that Prester John first originated in High Asia.

For only a short time in summer are these barren, treeless tablelands graced with green grass and flowers; in winter blizzards from the north-west can freeze men solid where they stand, and legions of snow invade every slope and shoulder, driving and drifting, obliterating landmarks and characteristics—snow, the universal leveller and democrat of Nature.

The Kirghiz are the chief element in the population and represent a large and widely spread division of the Turkish race. They are nomads whose chief occupation is cattle-breeding. In religion they are Mohammedan and their dwellings are semi-circular constructions on a wooden framework covered with felts made from the fur of goats and camels. Kirghiz dress is in keeping with the climate of a region that has at an average elevation of 14,000 feet above sea level, long coats stuffed with cotton wool, trousers tucked into leather knee boots and fur caps pulled down over the ears. Their food is mainly milk and mutton with a form of drink called 'kumis' prepared from mare's milk by shaking it in a leathern bottle and then leaving it to ferment. 'Kumis' has a great reputation as a tonic, an antidote in fever cases, the retarding of



MILKING-TIME ON THE PAMIRS



NOMAD CHIEFS ON THE ROOF OF THE WORLD

old age, and the rendering of barren women fertile. The flavour is sub-acid and the taste for it must be an acquired one, for I have seen nothing like it during travels on five continents.

The manners and customs of the Kirghiz present many quaint features for study and observation. Here, as elsewhere, a wedding is a great event, the bride being acquired by purchase at a figure commensurate with the wealth and status of the bridegroom, and one that may run into many hundreds of sheep, cattle, and horses. In the negotiations the Kirghiz are eminently practical, an essential preliminary being delivery of part of the purchase price, for credit is discouraged and a cash basis insisted upon. In the case of an impecunious bridegroom, the financial difficulties are partly overcome by a small initial payment, the balance being settled on the instalment system and by personal labour.

In funeral ceremonies the Western order of things is reversed and the occasion becomes one of hilarity and amusement, in which horse-racing is prominent. A feast is given and prizes are awarded to successful competitors in the flat races, for jumping is never practised. Viewed from our standpoint the idea of celebrating death is unusual, but the Kirghiz argue that the dead disperse the wealth accumulated in life, and are not concerned with the passing on of riches to those who follow them.

So far as love and marriage are concerned, the high altitude and intense cold are not conducive to courting—it is difficult to enthuse in a fifty-miles-an-hour blizzard, with the thermometer at anything from ten to forty degrees below zero—yet we find the Kirghiz swain just as susceptible as elsewhere. To visit the camp of his lady love he may have to negotiate glaciers honeycombed

with yawning crevices, cross raging torrents, and thread his way down precipitous slopes with a drop of hundreds of feet. But he seldom fails, and his constancy is usually rewarded. If he cannot pay the price demanded by his prospective father-in-law, which may run into many sheep goats, and yaks, he can, as already remarked, liquidate the debt by personal labour.

For beauty and intrinsic value the head-dress of a Kirghiz bride is remarkable, for on it are strings of turquoises and other precious stones from this land of minerals, and her earrings are something to contemplate with awe.

Sharing the Pamirs with the Kirghiz are the Sarikolis, with customs akin to their neighbours, who acknowledge the Aga Khan as their spiritual chief. It is curious to think that these people, whose environment is one of glaciers upwards of forty-five miles long and a score of peaks exceeding 24,000 feet in height, should have as their spiritual head this genial sportsman.

Games are popular on the Pamirs, and none more so than that of 'baiga' in which the carcass of a sheep or goat is the object of contention. The players, to the number of seventy or eighty, or even more, all mounted on strong and agile ponies, form up into line. One of them is given the carcass, which he places across the front of his saddle, dashes forward, and circling round in a gallop, hurls it to the ground. This is the signal to the field, and with a thunder of hoofs they dash forward, striving for possession of the trophy in a whirlwind mêlée. It is a scene of the wildest confusion; no rules of off-side, crossing, or fouling, hamper the players, for all is fair in this desperate game. A rider who may have gained possession of the carcass will have a dozen others hanging

to him either by his clothes or the saddlery and trappings of his horse. A man may beat his opponent's mount to force it out of the scrum, he may seize any player, and by fair means or foul, unhorse him, or compel him to yield up the trophy.

With the single exception of a cavalry charge in which I took part during the South African war, I cannot recall anything to compare with a game of 'baiga' for dash and excitement of a high order. The din is terrific, mingling with the thunder of hoofs, the yells of the contestants and the jingling of stirrups and ornamental trappings as the players sweep on like a devastating host, the main object being to gain possession of the carcass and place it at the feet of the principal guest, a role I often had the honour of filling during my official tours amongst these riders.

The close of the game sees the entire party, players and spectators, adjourn to a chosen spot for the 'dastarkham', the Kirghiz equivalent of tea, cakes, fried meat, and 'kumis'. Dancing supervenes to the music of an orchestra consisting of a dulcimer, a flute, a mandolin, and a tomtom. The tune is a repetition throughout, the Oriental idea of music being in a class of itself. I remember the visit of some Turkomans to St. Petersburg in pre-war days who were taken to witness a performance at the Imperial Opera House. At the fall of the curtain they unanimously agreed that the finest part of the entertainment was without doubt the tuning-up of the orchestral violins.

The Pamirs are the habitat of *ovis poli*, the largest and finest of all the wild sheep, but big heads with the long and graceful curving horns are rare, for wolves have caused havoc amongst them. During the summer,

when the Kirghiz move to the higher ground, the wolves subsist mainly upon the flocks, although the latter are guarded by dogs. Wolves are constantly roaming the valleys, ever on the watch for a favourable opportunity to levy toll. With the coming of winter and the move to the lower valleys, they turn their attention to *ovis poli* and ibex, and in this show wonderful cunning, working on a plan of campaign that is almost human in its detail and the way in which they carry it out. A herd of sheep is marked down, and the wolves then proceed to encircle it. The deep snow, and the requisite turning movements, make the task a long one, possibly an entire day, but when the cordon is finally drawn and all avenues of escape closed, the wolves set up a prolonged howling, with the object of forcing the herd to bunch together, when it will be easier for the hunters to gain close touch by drawing in the cordon.

The sheep are then shouldered off to where the snow lies in drifts, and therefore difficult to get through. By now they are more or less panic-stricken, heavily handicapped in their frantic endeavours to break away in the deep soft snow, and easy to pull down. During my several visits to the Pamirs I have encountered great numbers of sheep's heads lying along the valleys and shale slopes, silent witnesses to the devastation wrought by wolves and the hunting Kirghiz.

On leaving the Roof of the World one passes for seventy miles through rocky cañons, when the track emerges on to the plains of Turkistan, a new world that is in striking contrast to the wind-swept uplands of the Pamirs. Here the people, who are also Mohammedans, dwell in permanent settlements and engage in commerce and agriculture. They, too, are fond of sport and

particularly so of hawking, the quarry being mainly the hill partridge and hares, some of the latter giving the hawk a tough struggle, not infrequently carrying him along for two or three hundred yards before being finally brought to a standstill.

Turkistan is, I believe, the only country in the world where eagles are used to bring down wild boar, gazelle, foxes, and similar game. Falconry is a sport to which I devoted some of the spare time that fell to me, and I found the procedure interesting.

The party travels on horseback to the reed and tamarisk jungles wherein the game find cover, the latter being supplemented by the maze of hillocks and sand-dunes which are a prominent feature of Chinese Turkistan. Early morning, or late afternoon, is the best time, for the gazelle lie up during the heat of the day. As soon as the quarry is sighted you dismount and continue the pursuit on foot, taking advantage of cover and following the contour of the ground. The reed and tamarisk are trying obstacles to overcome, for they sway and crackle, warning the quarry in advance that danger threatens. Detours have to be made round the flank of giant sand-dunes a hundred or more feet in width and thirty feet high at the crest-line. When within a couple of hundred yards of the game, you seek the shelter of some such dune, peer cautiously above the sky-line and, raising the eagle sufficiently, give it a view of the quarry. It is no light weight, this splendid specimen of the genus aquila, as it perches on the right forearm, surveying the scene with its piercing eyes and eager to get away. The moment has arrived, the eagle sways lightly backwards and forwards in the same way that the body of the cat and the tip of its tail move when about to spring. So with a downward and

forward movement of the arm, the eagle is released and sets out on his flight, keeping close to the ground and moving without apparent effort, but with astonishing speed that fully justifies his claim to be one of the fastest flyers in the world. The gazelle has spotted the enemy and is off like the wind. The eagle has now got into its stride and, conforming to every movement of its prey, gradually lessens the intervening distance. Then, with a final spurt, it is above the gazelle and drops lightly on its back to dig razor-like talons in the neck, at the same time using its powerful wings to hamper the quarry and so bring it to the ground, the final collapse usually eventuating within a hundred yards or so of the eagle's descent. The latter, by an offer of raw meat held in readiness, can then be drawn from the game and handled with ease.

Should the gazelle have had too long a start and so evade its pursuer, and, in an extreme case succeed in shaking it off, the eagle flies slowly away to a hillock, or the top of a sand-dune, and there alights, declining to be flown again, as if conscious of a loss of dignity.

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Holding sway over this district was a curious personality, a strange mixture of the refined and the inhumanly brutal. He had the somewhat domestic name of Ma, but only in that respect could he lay claim to anything homely. He was Commander-in-Chief of the forces in Turkistan, a Tungan or Chinese Mohammedan by religion, and a vainglorious tyrant of the worst description.

When I was Consul-General in Kashgar I went to dine with him one day ; the room was ornamented with slabs of exquisite green jade for which that part of Asia is famous,



HAWKING WITH EAGLES IS A POPULAR PASTIME
IN TURKISTAN



THE REGENT STREET OF A TOWN IN CHINESE TURKISTAN

and he spoke of the relative values and glory of jade as a collector of pictures might do of the products of the Dutch and British schools.

He was the perfect host and certainly looked after his guest. "Do you like that bit," he would say to me, as someone helped himself to what he thought a tempting morsel. "You shall have it," he said, despite my protests, and forthwith dashed to the other side of the table to poach for my benefit, the acme of politeness being to crowd the plate of the principal guest with tit-bits from others.

I was told he had thirty-two wives, and was supposed to maintain an army of eight- or nine-thousand men, but in reality it never exceeded seven hundred. When an inspector came from Peking to see the army, strenuous efforts were made to bring up the paper total by impressing every man from sixteen to sixty throughout the countryside and arming them with every kind of weapon from old Tower muskets to lances and battle-axes. When the inspecting general had departed the army shrunk to erstwhile proportions and the revenue accruing to the old chief rose sharply in consequence.

On my first state visit to him he received me with much pomp and ceremony, and two miles from headquarters I was met by his eldest son, several high officers of the household, and a regiment of cavalry. Thus escorted we swept on in magnificent array to general headquarters. Here were lines of cavalry through which we passed, the while drums and trumpets dinned forth discordantly, flags and banners were lowered, and swords flashed in the sunlight. At the far end an infantry guard of honour was drawn up, where the Commander-in-Chief, dressed in a long robe of yellow silk and wearing a grey slouch hat,

received me cordially and conducted me beneath a large awning, where a table was set in the centre with a chair on either side. The old chief then took the ceremonial tea from an attendant, placing the cups on the table with a reverence that would have done credit to a cardinal at the High Altar.

After the usual exchange of compliments I presented him with a beautiful roll of yellow silk (the Imperial colour under the old regime, and one much revered by official classes) the conversation then turning to generalities. Although a Mohammedan, he was no believer in temperance, and told me that every day he never consumed less than a large bottle of wine of his own concoction, the ingredients being taken from seventy-four different herbs. He extolled its invigorating qualities but, after sampling the beverage, I will say no more than that the taste for it must be acquired.

He was much interested in forestry and had planted more than one hundred thousand trees in and around his headquarters. The planting of trees, incidentally, is regarded as a pious undertaking in China, so that when I put in twelve hundred trees in my consulate gardens, Ma was delighted, and regarded me in the light of one already in possession of the key to perpetual bliss.

He was an implacable tyrant and cordially hated by all classes. "I am going to be ruler of China one day," he said to me; "and then I will give you anything you ask."

"You will follow in the footsteps of famous men who like yourself have made history," I told him, although the fame he had achieved was only infamy.

Strange are the workings of fate; the tyrant invariably overreaches himself. His ambitions led him to defy the

Governor who could strike with swift and terrible vengeance. A force was secretly despatched to bring the swaggering commander-in-chief to book, and almost before he knew it they were at the gates of his headquarters, having travelled secretly and rapidly through the hills. The fort was carried, the would-be emperor was shot, his body being fastened to a framework and exposed at the city gates, so that all might see what happened when they fell foul of one stronger than themselves.

With regard to the maintenance of law and order some curious customs existed peculiar to Chinese provincial government. Generally speaking, each city and town is surrounded by a wall with four gateways corresponding to the points of the compass. Within are four quarters subdivided into wards each under a pashrab, a minor official similar to the thanadar, or sub-inspector of police, in India. The pashrab is assisted by police sergeants, under whom are watchmen perambulating the streets at night. None of these individuals is paid by the State, but they are authorized to collect a small fixed sum from every shopkeeper in their ward on the weekly bazaar day. All those attending the bazaar from outlying districts, for the purposes of trade, are subject to the same levy.

A ward numbers from fifty to eighty houses and has one watchman allotted to it; each householder pays a small fixed sum monthly to the watchman, whilst in addition he is entitled to a commission when a house or any immovable property is sold within his ward. In the bazaar and commercial quarters, each shopkeeper pays an additional sum weekly to the watchman for the provision of oil for lighting purposes. Should there be any default

in payment, or the sums due be in arrears, the police and watchmen have their own methods of bringing the delinquents to book, either by ignoring the house or shop, or, in an extreme case when this has failed to achieve the desired result, by the simple arrangement of a burglary!

It will be seen that the police and watchmen are paid by the public, but they are also paid by the thieves and the gambling community, so that we have the extraordinary phenomenon of the two powers of light and darkness in league against the public. It not infrequently happens that the police are themselves the receivers of stolen goods and play the leading part in the division of the spoils. A case was reported to me once of theft from a British subject, a shopkeeper in Yarkand, in which I followed up several clues without success, until finally my intelligence service intimated that it might be useful to examine the house of a certain policeman which, after the exercise of considerable care and circumspection, I had carried out, the greater part of the stolen property being discovered there. This man had actually been selected by the local authorities to run down the criminals and secure the return of the stolen goods. He showed great zeal in this unusual pursuit of himself, but, of course, made no headway.

The administration in Turkistan does not provide for the poor and indigent, but it must not be concluded from this that there are no poor and that the mendicant is an unknown quantity. On the contrary, throughout the province there are gangs of beggars who constitute an element in the population of the towns and villages. Formerly the Chinese authorities allotted special quarters to them, but this no longer obtains, and they live wherever they are able. The mazars, or shrines, particularly that of

the Shrine of Hazrat Apak, the last of the mulla kings of Kashgar, who died in 1690, are favourite haunts. The Kashgar begging fraternity differs from the rest by reason of the importance of their domicile, their leader possesses an estate near the city, and is regarded by his followers as the spiritual head, periodical offerings being made to him.

As the begging class is one that might be a danger to the state, the Chinese, who are an eminently practical race, placed it, during their rule, under the control of a headman appointed by the local magistrate. This man was held responsible for the good conduct of the ragged army committed to his charge, and enjoyed considerable power in connection with his office. If the system still obtains since the recent revolt in Chinese Turkistan, he reports periodically to the governing authority, and arranges with shopkeepers for the payment of a fixed sum monthly to his followers, thus obviating merchants and traders being pestered during business hours. Should there be any refusal to pay the sum in question, the beggars soon bring the refractory one to a sense of his obligations. A dirty and dishevelled party will appear at the shop and demand alms. Their odoriferous presence scares away customers, potential buyers cannot get anywhere near the shop even if they wished, whilst traffic is held up and all business is at a standstill. If the shopkeeper still proves obdurate his resistance is countered by an increase in the number of beggars, who press their demands for charity until nothing can be heard above the din. Finally he is forced to submit and pay up.

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It is said there is nothing new under the sun. Year

by year the ring round the unexplored portions of the globe is being tightened; inexorably man penetrates farther into the unknown; soon there will be little left to conquer, and then will come a new beginning elsewhere, or an end to the currency of geographical adventure?

The Arabs say that travel is conquest. It is, indeed, good to leave home and wander in far-off lands and make contact with quaint peoples who have changed little since the start of things, and whose customs are as marvellous as an Eastern fairy tale. Perhaps they have their reward in contentment and simple faith, for in their way they are philosophers, and deeply religious after the manner of most simple folk. Their environment precludes knowledge of the world beyond the lofty mountain ranges that hem them in, and, as they themselves say, it is not for them to be concerned with what passes on the other side of those barriers, for in hunting, fishing or tilling the soil they are fully occupied.

From the haunts of Kirghiz shepherd it is only a few days' strenuous journey into the Karakoram Mountains. Many narrow valleys and ravines, shut in by rocky walls towering sheer into the skies, their exact geographical position difficult to define, go to form this neighbourhood. Some very high peaks are within its confines, and access to its inner valleys is gained only at risk to life from raging torrents.

Some years ago I found myself in this mountain maze on my way to Turkistan. For days on end we struggled through ravines and rock-bound gorges, enclosed by tremendous heights, and for most of the time ran the gauntlet of avalanches and snow slides. Finally at dusk one evening we gained the summit of a pass at an altitude of just under eighteen thousand feet. I was heading for



A HUGE CIRCULAR STONE DOES THE THRESHING IN
CHINESE TURKISTAN



TIBETAN MONKS IN THE KARAKORAM

the valley in which was a monastery with a reputation for sanctity and occult knowledge derived from its policy of isolation and seclusion.

Before I could get to my destination, many formidable physical obstacles would have to be overcome. Amongst them was a pass which had not previously been crossed by a European, but this was merely an incident by the way. The ascent on the southern side had been strenuous, but the descent on the northern slope was far worse. We slowly worked our way to the foot of the pass, down glaciers, along the edge of yawning crevasses, by walls of snow and ice, and across torrents that swept through the ravine like a millrace, where one false step in jumping from rock to rock in the moonlight meant an icy grave. At midnight we reached a clearing in the ravine, and never was habitation or human being more welcome. It was a tiny camp of Kirghiz nomads, who eke out a precarious existence by herding a few flocks in these fastnesses.

Despite the midnight hour and chilly climate all that they possessed was put at our disposal; fires were rekindled, and sheepskin rugs spread in profusion on the floor of their felt tents. Then followed a supper of meat and barley broth, strips of mutton fried in fat, and delicious cakes from the little store of barley that these nomads had brought with infinite toil and pain through two hundred miles of raging torrent from the plains of Turkistan. Of a truth the milk of human kindness was exemplified that night in this dark ravine on the Roof of the World.

When daylight came I was able to take stock of this unexplored corner. The clearing in the river on which the camp stood was shut in on all sides; we had as near neighbours more than a score of peaks exceeding a height of twenty thousand feet with glaciers covering hundreds

of square miles, altogether a scene befitting the world's loftiest range.

I wondered how we were to get out of it, but luckily the weather was fine, and the Kirghiz guides who were to accompany us seemed quite happy about the prospects for the forward move. So again we toiled onward, occasionally fording the river, the noise of which was deafening. Twenty-six times during the day did we ford that Stygian stream, twenty-six times did we challenge death, until the mind became bemused, and one behaved as a person walking in a dream.

Picture to yourself the canyon, which varied from seven to thirty yards broad, its sides towering sheer for at least six thousand feet, and above them again glaciers and peaks, until the wall was two miles high.

At dusk we gained a point where the canyon widened to some two hundred yards, with a patch of barley supplying the one sign of vegetable life, being the only cereal to grow at this altitude. A rocky path led off into a side ravine; this was the way to the monastery I was in search of, where a curious religious sect is doing penance for the rest of the world. Its members are devout followers of Gautama Buddha who, five centuries before the birth of Christ, found his way into India and there preached the gospel that later on was to control the destinies of a quarter of the human race. In spite of the purity of the Buddha's teaching and his sincerity of purpose, the creed he advocated became contaminated, and from it sprang the perverted form of Buddhism, Lamaism, the spiritual and temporal head of which is the Dalai Lama in Tibet, the reincarnation of the deity, and, as already related, one so holy that he is rarely seen except by his immediate entourage.

Continuing our journey, we turned off into the side ravine. The roar of the water was deafening, and the track so steep and narrow that in places two people could not possibly have passed each other, while frequently it ran flush with the cliff side, with a drop of more than a thousand feet into the torrent below. Finally, we reached a clearing at a sudden turn in the path, and saw before us a massive stone structure built into the side of the cliff, almost overhanging the edge of the ravine.

I had intended camping outside on the small clearing immediately in front of the vast, cold-looking building, but the abbot, who greeted me dressed in a dirty yellow robe and with a shaven pate, insisted on my partaking of their hospitality within his grim retreat. So, accepting his offer, I followed him through the gateway into a sort of huge lounge hall with cold damp walls, bare of any ornament. The great doorway closed, and I was entirely committed; I recalled, too, with startling suddenness some of the queer stories connected with the place.

Other monks now joined us, dressed in long coarse robes, like the monks of Europe, and together we passed up a flight of steps into a corridor that seemed to be hollowed out of the mountain. My followers were to be accommodated elsewhere, the abbot assuring me that they should be well cared for.

The abbot leading, I went along this passage for some twenty yards, then branched off into a similar one that twisted and turned until I lost all sense of direction. Occasionally, I glanced behind me; the remaining figures, cowed and spectral, were following us like ghosts from another world, so silently did they move. It was an eerie progress, but I was determined to go through with it.

At last we reached a small doorway, on which the

abbot knocked. It was flung back by yet another hooded figure, and we filed through. All this time not a sound had been uttered. The whole place was wrapped in semi-darkness, and the air of mystery and uncanny procedure that cloaked my ghostly attendants was cheerless in the extreme.

We next ascended by a spiral stairway to a small landing, lighted by a long slit in the wall; I surmised that we must be at the side of the monastery overlooking the ravine, but the crevice in the wall being about a dozen feet above me, I was uncertain of my bearings.

From this landing we entered a room resembling a cell, about ten feet by six, and at least twenty feet high. In one corner was a narrow ledge of rock serving as a bed, a rough chair of wood and goatskin, and a large earthen pitcher. This, with an oil-lamp, was all the cell contained, and as the other rooms leading off from the landing were bare of any furniture, and on a par with the abbot's quarters, I was compelled to consider myself to be in monastic clover.

The etiquette of the monastery apparently required that all conversation should be carried on in so low a tone as to be practically whispered.

Having shown me to my apartment, and made me at home in so far as the circumstances and means permitted, the abbot served tea flavoured with rancid butter, and some coarse brown cakes resembling the oaten cakes of Scotland, but by no means so palatable as the Scottish variety. I was both hungry and thirsty, so the frugal repast was most acceptable.

I started on the meal, and the abbot departed with his attendant monks, declaring that so long as I was within the monastic walls he considered me as his guest, and all

my wants would be ministered to by himself or his immediate entourage.

Although I have travelled in fifty-seven countries, and have an average bump of locality, I realized how difficult it would be to find my way out into the open again should this become necessary; but, dismissing such possibilities from my mind, I sat down on the stone bed and awaited developments. The only natural light came through a long slit high up in the wall, similar to the crevice in the landing outside. Soon the shadow grew longer, until finally the light turned to darkness, for there is little or no twilight in the East, and I was left with the gloom, the cell and my thoughts.

Night closed over the lonely monastery; after another scanty meal from the remains of my initial repast I wrapped myself in my blankets and lay down on the rocky couch. The wind moaned and shrieked through the crevice and up the stairway; the light from the oil lamp, perched on a projecting bit of rock, cast weird shadows across the room, whilst anon dark figures, silent and ghostly, passed in front of the door. Once or twice during the night I woke from a fitful sleep and found a cloaked and spectral figure making a tour of my room.

At last, some time before dawn—it was about three o'clock in the morning, the hour at which Napoleon once said man's courage is put to the severest test—I heard the chant of voices in unison, a wailing note as of souls in torment. I sprang up and went to the doorway. Not a sign of anyone, only the distant sound of that depressing dirge! What could it mean? Was this the prelude to some weird funeral rite, or only the echo of a midnight service?

As I stood there listening, a shadow appeared upon

the wall, and a huge bat flashed past within an inch of my face. Galvanized into activity, and donning coat and boots, I set off down the corridor in the direction of the music. Threading many passages, twisting this way and that, I came to an open doorway with a verandah beyond it, then a courtyard leading to a building opposite. I crossed the courtyard to this building, the door of which was ajar, and peeped through the opening.

Before me was a chamber about one hundred and twenty feet long and sixty or seventy broad. It was but dimly lighted with oil and wick in clay bowls, emitting volumes of black smoke and soot. Kneeling on the stone floor were the members of this extraordinary sect, droning the song of remorse, bewailing the sins of those countless millions who had gone before, of those millions scattered throughout the earth's wide surface who were still a living force, and of those millions yet unborn whom it might be possible to turn into the right path.

Imagine, if you can, that courtyard set in an amphitheatre of mountains, the loftiest peaks in existence, the pale light of the moon, the ghostly oil-lamps, and the hundreds of kneeling figures intoning a supreme chant to an omnipotent power. Enthralled, I listened on, spell-bound, until the voices began to die away; they were coming to the end of the service, and it might not be good for me to be caught in there eavesdropping. Hastily, I retraced my steps across the courtyard, making for the passages and tunnels along which I had come. As I did so I heard the faint sound of voices coming from the side flush with the mountain. Curiosity, perhaps irresistible fascination, drew me there. I saw openings some eighteen inches square in the rock, a similar chant to that in the great hall issuing from them.

Was it an echo, or merely an hallucination? I struck a match and peered through one of the openings. Gradually something in the form of a human figure with emaciated body and glassy eyes became outlined against the light. It *was* a man, a human form, but it seemed to be looking at me from another world. Then it lowered its eyes and continued to chant.

I ran from the courtyard, from those living tombs, regained my room after what to me seemed to be endless wanderings, up and down, and encountering dead-ends in that vast rabbit-warren. There I lay down, but not to sleep.

Dawn came, and with it my departure from the monastery, out into that great world of sin and sorrow with its wars and upheavals and the train of consequences that follow in their wake.

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High above rushing rivers, perched over sheer walls of rock, the Buddhist monks preserve the brooding quietness of the snows; the snows that cover all things in a cloak of stillness. In some cases the views before them extend across snowfields and glaciers that stretch for sixty miles. At night, the moonbeams turn the ice into crystal candelabra, candles of the night, alight with a hundred strange gleams and twinkles, while the wind in winter moans past ice arch and serac, and stirs the mists in shudders across the chasms. Then at dawn the whole sky is brilliant with the birth of light.

In the eyes of the devout monk, living in these regions, his surroundings are intensely alive and animate, and he finds a compensation in the ageless, untamed character of his environment. To a lama, the only inhuman thing

about Nature is to be found in the shape of men who have fallen below human levels of existence and transmigrated for a time to the demon underworld or the Yidaks, the beast men.

Om — the gods
 Ma — the demigods
 Ni — men
 Pad — beasts
 Mi — Yidaks
 Hum — Demon underworld.

He believes that in the six circles of achievement lies the secret round of existence and ultimate destiny. He considers rulers of monasteries to be advanced human beings who have escaped from the circles of life and attained Nirvana, but who have transmigrated back to earth once more at their own choice to help struggling mortals. To them everything is living and vibrating at different pitches of energy and reality. Men can become gods or sink back into something far inferior to animals. Nothing is dead.

There are some Tibetan lamas who spend their time in the study of the occult and are possessed of psychic knowledge in advance of anything in the West, and I have met Chinese doctors who can perform seeming miracles of surgery such as filled me, at least, with amazement.

I was taking tea one day with a Chinese surgeon-dentist, who had travelled beyond the Orient, so that he possessed some knowledge of the world outside his own country. He told me that during the afternoon he was seeing a patient suffering from toothache, and asked me if I

would like to see how he proposed to deal with the case. I told him I should be highly interested and so shortly after the tea the patient was announced, and shown into the dentist's consulting-room. The man sat down, my friend examined his mouth and then extracted from a phial a tiny quantity of white powder, the smell of which reminded me of a mixture of cedarwood and camphor.

He took a little of the powder between the thumb and finger of his right hand and applied it over and around the offending tooth, rubbing it well into the gums. For about three minutes this part of the operation continued, after which the dentist allowed the powder to take effect and at the end of another ten minutes he applied finger and thumb to the tooth, worked it gently backwards and forwards and side to side, until within a space of perhaps thirty seconds it was removed as cleanly as a cork from a bottle, but with far less effort.

"Is there anything in the western world that can give a dentist the power to do that," he said.

"There is nothing as far as I know," I replied, taken aback at the amazing simplicity of the operation.

"If you are free to-morrow I can show you something else," my friend continued, "which proves that the power of medicine and the arts of healing have been studied in the East by those who have given up their lives to mastering the imperfections of the human anatomy."

The next afternoon I accompanied him to a house where a man was lying with a swollen thigh as the result of a fall from his horse. At the invitation of my host I bent over the man and examined him; the leg from the knee to the thigh was black and red and swollen to almost double its normal size. A Chinese doctor was there, who took from an assistant a small square bottle containing a

yellowish substance of the consistency of butter. The doctor anointed the leg with this grease, whatever it may have been, and a bandage was then fastened lightly over the leg. It was left there for a space of twenty or twenty-five minutes, after which the bandage was removed and the ointment again applied, the doctor kneading the leg gently in much the same fashion as a masseur would have done.

Now, a European would probably have borne this operation with considerable difficulty, but so far the demeanour of this man had not changed; in fact, he seemed to be suffering no pain whatever, nor did his face assume the appearance of other than that of a normal person.

I put this down to the stoicism of the East, but apparently the ointment had a certain deadening effect which enabled the doctor to carry out the treatment with an absence of pain to the patient. At the end of a quarter of an hour the bandage was restored, and the man stood up, which, prior to this extraordinary operation, he had been quite incapable of doing. He was standing before me apparently as fit as I was myself.

I saw him the following morning, the swelling had subsided, the discolouration had practically disappeared, and the man walked up the street with me as though nothing had happened.

I could never induce the doctor to reveal the secret of the ointment; like all Chinese he was inscrutable and I could get nothing out of him.

I liked that doctor, for although he was reticent he had shown me such surgery as Europe has not yet produced. He was cheery company, talked well, and was what we in England would call a good mixer.



AN IMPORTANT DEITY



A MONGOL IMITATING THE CALL OF A WAPITI STAG ON THE
BARREL OF A SHOT-GUN

Remote as he was from the western world, every discovery in medical science was known to him; century after century, generation after generation, he and his fellow medicos have been improving on the knowledge handed down to them, but at the same time keeping it from the world beyond their own borders, making nothing of the secrets they possess.

A year or so later my Chinese friend died; he had told me that he expected soon to have to take his courage in his hands and go down into the darkness, but that he had made certain arrangements for his creature comforts in the world beyond. This was in accordance with the Chinese belief that the spirits passing from this world to the next must be looked after; they need food, clothing and money.

My friend had always done himself well and meant to ensure that he was provided for in the next world. So a kitchen was devised complete with dummy cooks and scullions which were to be burnt on his demise. The kitchen would go up in smoke, be reincarnated and all would be ready for its owner on his arrival in the hereafter; so he would find appropriate living in his new sphere.

Those whose task it is to look after the departed are hedged round with an elaborate ritual, to say nothing of a series of observances extending over years. The future welfare of those who survive depends upon the precision with which these rules are observed.

I once knew a Chinese who had no living relatives; he had hanged himself from a tree, so to prevent a demoniacal spirit from taking up its residence in it, the tree was removed root and branch by the local authority and the spirit of the lost wandering up and down in the still hours of the night had to go elsewhere.

“We were a civilized nation two thousand seven hundred years before your Christian era,” said another of my Chinese friends.

“Yes, I know,” I replied, “but China does not change and you don’t keep pace with the times.”

“Why should we,” he remarked, “we are better off as we are.”

I am not sure but that he was right. I thought of my own personal experiences in the East, and that vast and unshakable difference existing between two continents. I knew that the East changes slowly, that it takes many generations to graft new fashions, and that although the limited few may incline towards our ideas, the immense majority will have nothing to do with them. As it was in the beginning . . .

His observations reminded me of a Chinese official who just before his demise had left directions that his expensive car, complete with stuffed chauffeur and footman, should be burnt at the funeral, so that he might step into it on the other side. Neither he nor the chauffeur, who knew all about magnetos and big ends, could see anything ridiculous in the idea.

On a first visit to China, Europeans are so surprised to find cities and factories and motor-cars that they say, “Ah! China has become modernized and European and ordinary.” Nothing could be farther from the truth. All that we Westerns mean by civilization sits as uneasily on China as a coster’s feather hat on a Mayfair dowager. China has taken certain articles from our civilization showing that while she is sometimes ready to accept the purely mechanical gifts of the West, when it comes to ideas she much prefers her own. In some things they stand out in bold relief; for example they are clever to a

degree in the study of human psychology, and in the art of discovering crime they have nothing to learn. While I was in China three men were suspected of theft. As the evidence was not satisfactory, the magistrate shut them in a temple, all kneeling with their hands on the wall. The place was in comparative darkness and the suspects were told that when the door opened the actual thief would have a black mark on his forehead. Sure enough, one man's face was covered with soot. Each man had placed his hands on the smoky temple walls, but the thief, thinking to remove the tell-tale brand, had been the only one to touch his forehead!

In many parts of China, especially adjacent to Tibet and High Asia, even the mechanical gifts of civilization are scorned. People insist that if wide highways were built motor and cart traffic would throw the coolie porters out of work. Europeans who have seen strings of these skeleton-thin men, with dark scars on their shoulders where innumerable pack-ropes have cut into the flesh, might feel inclined to welcome the abolition of their toil, but the Chinese sees nothing degrading in it. He has no objection to using his countryman as a beast of burden, and steps into a rickshaw, or piles his luggage on a coolie's back, as cheerfully as if the man were a mule.

Unfortunately, where the western economic system has been accepted, Chinese tradition has intensified its faults. The father of a Chinese family is an absolute master, with right of life and death over his children, the still more unpleasant right to enjoy the fruit of their labour all his life, and to insist on luxuries in food and clothes for his spirit after death.

The Chinese destroy unwanted girl babies, but those women who are allowed to grow up hold a high position

in the country. They rule the house, preside over its destinies, and arrange the menus. The housewife who can serve pigeons' eggs preserved in chalk, the older the better, or sharks' fins, or bamboo roots and seaweed, is held in great honour.

Europeans are amazed to find everything reversed and opposite in China, just as in looking-glass land. The saucer is placed on top of a cup of tea, not under it. White is the colour for mourning. The chief guest sits opposite his host, never beside him. Every polite Chinese is careful to put his hat on in the house, and on Chinese maps the South is marked instead of the North.

These are superficial differences, perhaps, but they are symbols of the great 'differentness' of China.

CHAPTER IX

THE MASTERS OF ASIA

Conquerors of the Earth—Riddle of the Yellow Peril—Fall of Mongol Empire due to Lamaism—Wandering monks—Mongolia the secret of the Gobi Desert—Dress customs and superstitions of the people—The art of riding—Genghiz Khan, his hordes and his invincibility—Tactics and strategy—The Range of the Long Bow—Famous Moslem shrine of Ordah Padshah and spread of Mohammedanism—Tamerlane, the greatest cavalry leader of all time—His character and conquests—His descendants bring Mogul dynasty to India—The origin of the Domed Cupola.

WESTWARD of the Altai mountains and north of the Nan-Han and Koko Nor, divided into two parts by the Gobi desert, stretches the old dominion of the Tartars and their cousins the Mongols (brave men), a race of nomad horsemen treating the northern steppes like the Arab the desert; a race who once swayed the destinies of nearly every dynasty, made war successfully on a front extending from Vienna to the China seas, had the greatest wall in creation built to keep them out, and finally passed into an historical byword for the art of elusive evasion and of never being caught by their adversaries.

Under Tamerlane, the Tartar trumpets sounded unchallenged across Asia. Under Genghiz Khan and his sons the whole of Central Asia had become Tartary—a fabulous realm of silk and jewels and spices, where it was said a virgin could traverse the kingdom with a sack of gold without coming to harm.

Mongol and Tartar were the only people in history to control and unite the destinies of Central Asia; out of a

mass of war-like tribes, barbarians and highlanders, they made for a time an empire wider and even more wonderful than the Roman. Then like all conquerors they passed from the scene and became a legend of savage deeds, silken cities, and golden tents. Their saddles knew them no more.

No single race in the history of man has proved more conquering, or controlled a larger stretch of territory. They blew across the earth like a tempestuous wind, and no physical obstacles to be found on land, like deserts or mountains or the vast snow wastes of Russia, that ruined Napoleon, defeated them or brought them to a standstill. The sea alone they never crossed and never tried to understand. They feared its treacherous surface, and its deep-water moods which they could neither foresee nor forestall in the way they had always done so successfully when dealing with campaigns on land. When the sea age came to mankind and the trade routes of Asia dwindled in importance, the last of their powers passed into the hands of their island kinsmen, the Japanese, while the central stock faded into decay.

In the city of Samarkand in Russian Turkistan, which holds the tomb of Tamerlane who dethroned twenty-seven kings and even harnessed royalty to his chariot, can be read the epitaph to the greatest of the Mongol leaders:

“This is the resting-place of the illustrious monarchs the most great sultan, the most mighty warrior, Lord Timur, conqueror of the earth.”

His name is still remembered to the north-west of the Himalayas. There is little question but that with the hardening of boundaries and the consolidation of nationalities, he will remain the last of the great conquerors, the earth-shakers, the mortals who have exercised the

power of a god. Mullahs and Imams shake their heads and mutter: "Ah! Timur! He was the lord"—much as a Cockney Londoner would nod and smile, and then remark in an emphatic voice: "He *was* a one."

Long ago, Kit Marlow, the Elizabethan, wrote a poem about Tamerlane, and Milton is said to have taken him as a model for Satan in *Paradise Lost*.

Mongolia is still the same vast pastoral plateau rich in possibilities and potential wealth that was once the norm and centre of nomadic energy and unrest. But the population of the old days has vanished. There are some thousands of scattered inhabitants, possibly three quarters of a million horses, and some four million sheep. Mongolia has now taken to the breeding of cattle, and warriors have turned into scattered shepherds and herdsmen.

Masters of most of the known world in the thirteenth century, the Mongols have long since fallen from the front rank amongst conquerors to a status that no longer counts, and hardly exists. As in the case of the Gobi desert in which post-war expeditions have been finding evidence of the Stone Age and of tribes going back to the probable ancestors of the human race, they offer one of the great riddles of history.

What was the reason of the decline and fall of the Mongol empire? Was it another case of conquerors who could not colonize, of success that carried with it the seeds of its own destruction? Was the sudden decline of pasturage on the barren steppes responsible, or the intrusion of gunpowder that brought artillery on the scene to dominate war?

The solution to this slant-eyed riddle is to be found not in any material change of characteristics or life, but

rather in a mental transformation brought about by the spread of lamaism.

Previously, the Mongols, Tartar and allied tribes, had been either virile pagans with a leaning towards monotheism, or else Mohammedans; but when Kublai Khan came to build his pleasure dome and occupy the throne of China at Kambalu, the Mongols turned to the teachings of Buddhism. Gradually lamaism, its degenerate offspring, spread from Tibet to the northern nomads until, in the seventeenth century, a Mongol infant became a Dalai Lama. About 1717 Lhasa was taken by storm and a Tartar prince ruled Tibet for a while.

From that time there could be no looking back. A Hutuktu, or Living Buddha, of Mongolia was appointed, second only in importance and dignity to the Dalai and Tashi Lamas, the three forming the ruling triumvirate of lamaism.

In accordance with its tenets, one or more sons of each family are dedicated to the priestly calling. In many cases every son except the eldest, who inherits all available property, becomes a lama, since it affords a method of living easily and for nothing.

The roving lamas visit Mongolia, China, Tibet and Nepal, and with Tartar hospitality to feed the movement, the monks spend their lives moving from place to place. Where they halt at the coming of night, there they sleep; they can never become lost because all Asia is their home and their house broad as the dome of the sky. They never work because there is no necessity, and so they continue for ever journeying, the wandering Jews of Buddhism, impelled by some nomadic instinct to walk away their lives.

In recent years, the Mongols have looked to Russia

to befriend them, rather than China. As a buffer state between modern Russia and China and with their religious shibboleths collapsing under Soviet influence, they may once more partially regain the vigour and independence that characterized them in the past.

Mongolia, together with Manchuria, forms one of the strategic and economic centres of the Far East, and its secluded and barricaded position has made it a museum of the human race, undisturbed and little known.

All through the ages the Gobi Desert has acted as a barrier and a bar to travel, the Mongols alone, with their trained horses and extreme hardihood, taking this remote wilderness in their stride. Few Europeans have been all over it; but in 1923 the scientific expedition that left London found various buried secrets of past ages: forty nests of fossilized dinosaur eggs and a well-preserved series of dinosaur skeletons, not to mention fifteen earth horizons. This northern wilderness, it began to be realized, is one of the last remaining and most fascinating treasure houses of antiquity.

The Gobi Desert, principally sand, with occasional scrub, resembles a sheet of corrugated cardboard, with undulations and a fretwork of shallow depressions on a tableland 4,000 feet high.

In olden days the Chinese believed it to be haunted by dragons. It was a place where fairy tales got lost and caravans came to a full stop. Trees are practically unknown, and the few that exist are objects of worship to the nomads. Over the eastern portion, however, pasturage is plentiful and agriculture of a rough kind possible. Instead of a few precious wells, water can be found almost anywhere twenty to twenty-five feet below ground level.

Hedging the desert on north and east are the Altai,

or Gold Mountains, rich in mineral wealth and always coveted by Russia. The district is covered with forest trees and in spring and summer valleys are turned into quilts of colour by the myriad wild flowers that bloom on northern prairies. A portion of these mountains was once the private property of the Czar, who regarded it as a kind of Eldorado and a sportman's paradise, and it is certain that part of this almost unknown area of northern Mongolia will one day prove a centre of commerce and activity, with keen competitors from different parts of the globe.

In this secluded region, still beyond the grasp of capitalism, the Mongols continue to live as in days of old. Their tents, or yurts, are the movable home that can be set up or taken down in fifteen minutes without the aid of builder or contractor.

Mongol clothes are a study for an artist. The men wear a form of dressing-gown as bright as they can bear them. Clashed round the waist is a brilliant sash. For hats they wear something that might be the offspring of a Mexican cowboy's headgear and that of a medieval witch; it has a large, saucer-shaped brim turning up at the edges and rising into a lofty crown that may be any colour the wearer pleases. On their feet they wear long leather boots reaching to the knees, always several sizes too large, but allowing plenty of room for successive layers of socks and for such objects as pipes, bricks of tea, and household utensils. The women wear brocade and cloth with ruffs; with them beauty culture runs to adornment of the hair in a way never seen in the West. Their dark locks are plaited on to a framework curved like the horns of a sheep, terminating in a silver plaque covered with beads and precious stones; thus their hair, instead of staying on or



THE WANDERING MINSTREL IN HIGH ASIA



TROMBONES IN A MONGOLIAN MONASTIC BAND
ARE EIGHT FEET LONG

close to the head is trained into the shape of pergolas in a garden.

The pipe of peace plays a leading part in the life of the Mongol, being an occupation and a diversion combined. Without tobacco and his drink of fermented mare's milk, or kumis, he would feel life to be dull indeed. Hospitality enjoins that the wants of a visitor should be quickly satisfied, so that when a Mongol finds provisions are scanty at home he becomes an enthusiastic visitor among his friends.

They are wonderful riders ; no Mongol ever walks if he can possibly avoid it, and if a horse be not available he is equally at home astride the lumbering ox. In this alone of all their present customs do they follow in the footsteps of their forefathers, who rode in triumph across the snows of Asia from the snows of the Arctic to the warmth of the Indian Ocean, and from the Yellow Sea of Cathay to the frontiers of Germany. All Mongolia is a riding school and the children are expert equestrians almost as soon as they can walk.

Weddings all over the world are occasions for hilarity and expense ; but some of the Mongol tribes treasure the romantic theory of the bride being abducted from her father's tent, and they cling to an unwritten code which permits of the young lady in question when pressed by a superfluity of admirers adroitly confiding herself to the one she favours most.

These weddings are a great event, especially when the belle of the encampment is the prize. At other times she is a sooty Cinderella, but on her wedding-day she is arrayed like a dainty princess, with a long coloured coat fastened at the waist by a sash, and with a hat shaped like an inverted saucer having stand-up edges with gold,

black, yellow and red tassels, dangling from it. Top boots and a handsome riding whip complete her adornment and make her ready for the meet. In this primitive game, which might well be termed a love chase, the bride, armed with her whip, and mounted on a fiery mustang, gives the lead in a breakneck race to her young suitors. The result does not depend upon hard riding or luck, since to ward off undesirable aspirants she uses her heavy whip with force and accuracy, a well-directed slash across the eyes putting the offender out of action. 'Tis, indeed, no game for weaklings.

Like the tribes on the Roof of the World the Mongols drink copiously and often of kumis, fermented mare's milk, from leathern bottles after the manner of the Jewish patriarchs and their nomadic forbears centuries before them. They devote scant attention to washing, and their customs in regard to the disposal of the dead are remarkable, giving rise to the Chinese saying that the raven is the Mongol's coffin.

In Eastern Mongolia the corpse is sometimes placed on a cart and driven at full speed across the plain; the jolting dislodges the body from the vehicle, but the driver carries on with breakneck energy, never daring to look back for that would bring upon him the evil spirits. Only when he is sure that the burden can be no longer with him does he rein in and offer a prayer to his gods.

Amongst the Mongols the medical profession is popular; it is, however, more a system of superstition and horrific remedies applied to trusting individuals than skilled application of knowledge.

The lamas especially find in it a lucrative trade. When in doubt as to the wherewithal for morrow, the Mongol can always become a doctor. They stay with the patients

until they are cured or past assistance, payment being usually reckoned by results, a method of liquidation which seems to work out satisfactorily for all concerned. The more objectionable the drug prescribed the more readily will the credulous Mongol take it; but cures are often effected by religious methods. In keeping with the basic ideas of their religion which ordain that the taking of all life is sin, they imagine illness has assailed them because of having inadvertently cut a stick from a tree in the monastery garden, or have dug a hole in the ground and so destroyed some worm or insect.

In the Far East no degree or licence for medical practice is necessary, and those who wish may set up as consultants or purveyors of vegetable and mineral pills. There is no restriction on the selling or purchase of poisons and drugs, and no control whatever of cookery.

In China dried rats are esteemed a delicacy; I was told they restore the hair when you are bald, while a stewed black cat will ward off a fever. But the *pièce de résistance* at one of these banquets I attended was a number of newly-born white mice served alive, to be dipped in treacle and swallowed whole like a prairie oyster.

It is pleasant to turn from white mice, stewed black cats, and hashed dog, to the Lob Nor country on the confines of Mongolia and just north of the mighty Kuen Lun range, sister heights to the Himalayas, and over which a veil still hangs. The Lob Nor people display a natural hospitality, and they could not have given me a better dinner than they did on the occasion of my visit to them. The menu was fish from the lake and fried to a turn, an entrée of wild duck's eggs, the shoots of young bulrushes deliciously cooked in fat, tiny meat dumplings steamed in a copper pot, and wild fruits.

At their best on horseback, the Mongols are a cheerful and hospitable race who may one day again find a leader to knit them into activity. Their worst enemy is alcohol. They are passionately fond of a drink and a smoke and will endure almost anything to get gloriously drunk. Their wonderful powers of endurance admit of spending days in the saddle and when on camel-back they will sleep just as soundly as on the ground. In the heyday of their fame the Imperial despatch riders thought little of traversing a hundred miles a day. Fruit picked on the Imperial farm in the morning would be on the emperor's table in the city early the next evening, a journey of four hundred miles that would have taken others double the time, and might well tax the horse-power of a modern motor-car.

Queer and romantic beliefs are rife in Mongolia. In the north along the Siberian border, they say that the sky has a door through which the gods look from time to time to see how the affairs of the world are progressing. If the gods consider that anyone is deserving of help they will send their children to perform the good work, and should anyone happen to be looking upward when the door of the sky is opened he will have good luck.

Whistling is taboo amongst some of the clans in the Far East ; it is said to emanate from the devil and if you transgress the law in that respect something has to be done for repentance and purification with some tribes in Asia the rule is drastic against whistling ; forty days of penance and self-denial are required to restore one to the *status quo ante*. There are also other curious things pertaining to Central and High Asia. I was recently talking to a friend who had been on a visit to a fanatical state beyond the Indian border, disguised as a Moslem hawker. In a moment of forgetfulness he kept time to the tune played

by a native orchestra. The act nearly cost him his life, for the unsophisticated Oriental never beats time with his feet as we frequently do.

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In Asia, legends are long-lived, and it is believed that Genghiz Khan, the Mongol Napoleon, lies buried on the summit overlooking Urga. The mountain has been consecrated and none may approach lest the mighty warrior should be disturbed in a sleep that the Mongols declare will end in his coming again to renew his former conquests.

Genghiz Khan is one of those figures of destiny that loom up suddenly on the canvas of events, and like the sunrise, illuminate the East with a fierce glow.

Other conquerors before him, the Alexanders and Hannibals and Mohammeds of history, strove to subdue the world for various reasons, but the great Khan's acquisitive motives remain a mystery. Rugged and simple in disposition, untutored, unable to read or write, invincible and implacable, a rock in the barren wilderness, he resembled some primitive upheaval of Nature.

He was in a sense the last of the pagan warriors, the great barbarian captains of war, who lived for fighting alone, the clash and combat of arms, the thundering might of charging squadrons. What the Vikings in the dragon galleys were to the sea and the seaboard of Europe, the Mongols were to the land.

They fought because they loved fighting, they conquered because victory nearly always attended their banners. They were the visible expression of the great clash between Turan and Iran, between the nomad of the highland and the luxurious city dweller of valley and plain, between war and peace.

Genghiz came from the land of Sib, the old Ultima Thule of the northern barrens. His capital, that once belonged to the Ugar kingdom, was at Karakorum, metropolis of the desert, windswept and sandblown. Dwellings of mud and thatch took the place of houses and with no attempt at street planning. In course of time the city, which was never more than the headquarters of his army, became swallowed up by the Gobi Desert until now only ruins and derelict houses remain.

After three years of hard fighting he mastered the local clans and was elected Khan, Genghiz Khan, Emperor of Asia. On his seal were engraved perhaps the haughtiest words that have ever decorated a royal coat of arms :

God in Heaven
The Kha Khan
The power of God on earth
The seal of the Emperor of Mankind.

Pictures show him tall, with high, powerful shoulders, a thin beard and tanned skin, his eyes the colour that lies between green and grey. He was born with a clot of blood in his hand and this was taken as an omen for the man, who, by his implacable will and exceptional leadership, united the barbarian tribes and became Commander of the Faithless.

He invented a code of laws, the Yassa, that was a mixture of ancient tribal customs and his own dominant will. Under his leadership the East became united for the first time and all roads ran to Tartary. His legions galloped over fifty degrees of longitude and the dust of his despatch riders rose everywhere into the sky.

Gradually he subdued the surrounding tribes that had never before been mastered, Manchus, Tartars, Jalairs,

Ugars, Persians, Turcomans, Kipchaks, Seljuz, and twenty-seven kings were swept away beneath his banners or became part of his irresistible horde.

His people were the bands of massed nomads, rough-riders of the north, races which had always been on the move. Out of this motley material he formed a military machine that was one of the most perfect fighting weapons the world has ever seen—an army of cavalry splendidly equipped and led, demonstrating the advantages of mounted infantry long before that arm had come to be used in Europe.

His forces consisted of military divisions of ten thousand each, with skirmishers and shock troops. The front ranks were covered with lacquered armour, gaudy as well as effective; the rear ranks were more lightly armoured for skirmishing purposes. Each trooper carried thirty arrows in his quiver and a sponge-bag for dried food and clothes, which also proved useful when inflated, for crossing turbulent rivers. Emergency rations consisted of smoked strips of meat and dried milk curds which could be cooked in water.

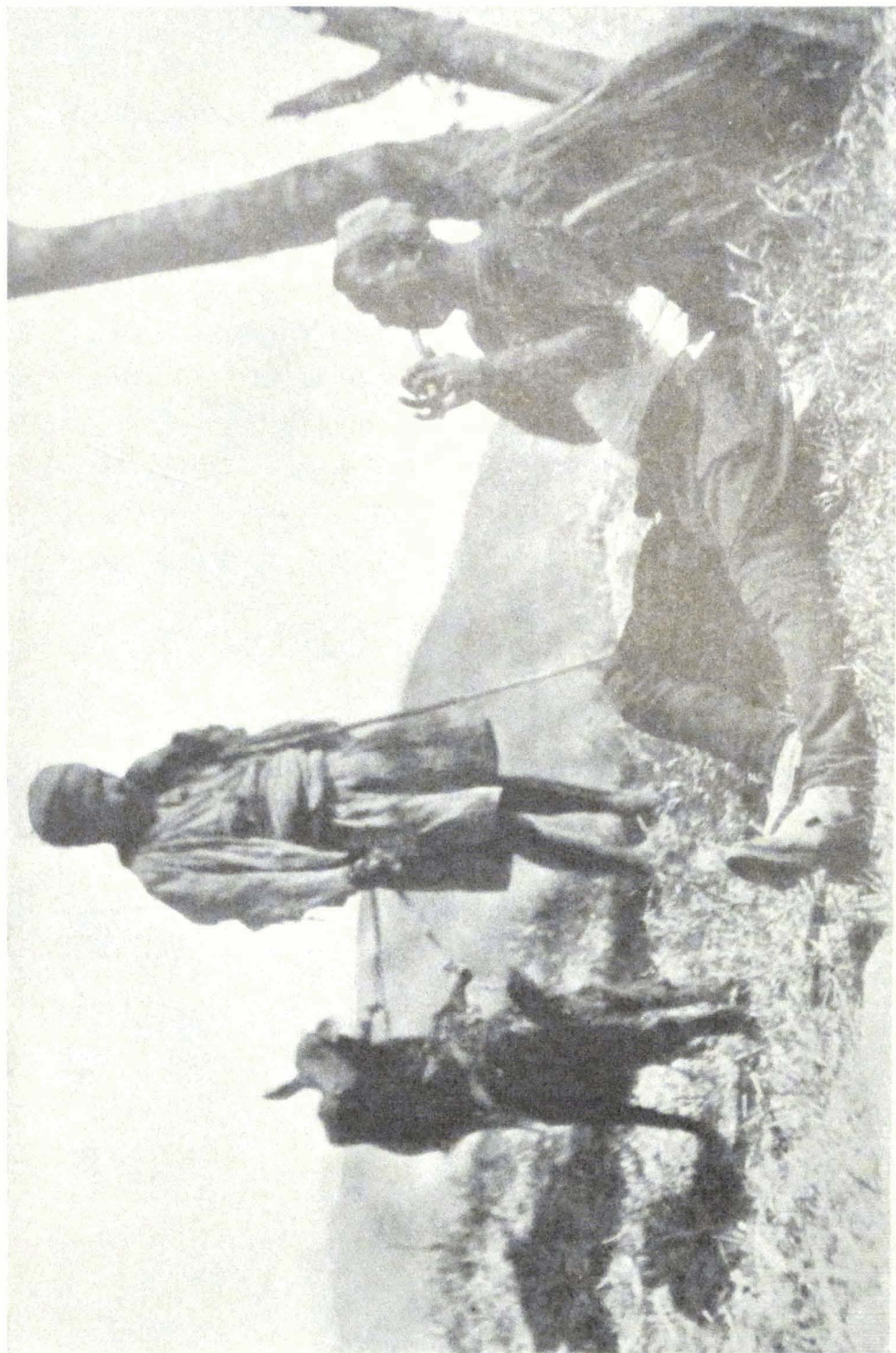
Like Napoleon, Genghiz Khan (1162-1227) had his imperial guard, and his marshals or orkhous. He moved bodies of half a million men with the utmost precision and despatch across thousands of miles of treacherous country, and in all his military career it appears he never made a mistake. His plans for far-flung invasion were worked on the same system and always proved equally successful. The situation was discussed by the higher command, spies were sent out, the calendar was studied and no stone of information was left unturned, then at the right moment and place the doomed country was entered from several points at once. Each army had

its own commander, but all moved towards a fixed objective with the clockwork precision of fate.

The enemy town would wake up one morning to discover a yellow army assailing it in front ; when they turned round it was to find escape from the rear cut off by another army appearing suddenly out of nowhere, and while they still hoped, yet a third force would swoop down from the hills, leaving no avenue open for succour or escape. Sometimes armies would march for a year before they met each other, the nightmare strategy of their movements and combinations leaving the enemy helpless. Until the Great War no other battles had ever been fought before with such a chessboard accuracy of movement, and over such a vast area of operations.

The Mongols under Genghiz Khan, his sons and his marshals, swept across Asia and Europe in an unbroken tide of war. None could withstand them ; nothing stopped them except the death of one of their leaders, or pestilence among the horses. The terror and paralysis caused by their approach sounds unimaginable to modern ears. They were the high wind that blew out of Asia, cold and cruel and conquering, ploughing the earth with iron hoofs. They were the true yellow peril that terrified the adolescence of Europe ; something that still dimly troubles the consciousness of the West when it looks towards any new power rising in the East. The Mongols and Tartars rode through the gateways of Christendom and when they retreated in the full tide of victory left Europe amazed and gasping.

And how they rode ! Their mobile armies, trained to every strategy of war, could keep in the saddle for weeks on end ; the hordes could even sleep in the saddle if the necessity arose. The famous Mongol ride to Peking of



THE MOUNTAIN SHEPHERD PIPES TO HIS FLOCK



A HIGH PRIEST ADDRESSES THE PILGRIMS AT ORDAMPADSHAH

fifteen hundred miles in eight days set a standard of horsemanship quite beyond the reach of the average nation. The tribal cavalry of Genghiz Khan, that was a nation on horseback, could move so fast that all the accepted laws of manœuvre and mobility went by the board.

More than to anything else, the ascendancy of the Tartars in battle was probably due to their bowmen.

The range of the English long-bow and its predecessor, the Mongol weapon, was about the same. This corresponded to a modern golf drive. The greatest distance ever attained by the bow is said to be just under five hundred yards. How much of Sherwood Forest, Robin Hood, master of the arts of archery, managed to cover with his arrows has never apparently been recorded. At any rate both Mongol and English archers had the advantage of being able to pierce armour with their arrows, more than decimating the enemy before hand-to-hand fighting commenced.

In 1221 Genghiz Khan sacked Moscow ; in the same year he despatched an expedition through the passes into India and took nominal possession of Delhi. After his death his four warrior sons, Juchi, Ogotai, Chagatai and Tuli carried on his conquests. The eldest was dispossessed of the inheritance for disobedience, but Subatai, his general, advancing into Hungary overcame the Knights Hospitallers and western chivalry in the holocaust at Bela. There seemed nothing at this time to prevent Europe in addition to Russia from being turned into the salve of Asia ; Christendom from becoming a second Cathay ; but the wheel of fate spun again and the numbers changed.

Ogotai died at Karakorum, and Mangu Khan, eldest son of Tuli, perished of dysentery on the way back to take

his place. So keenly did the Mongol empire feel this second dynastic blow that every person who passed the funeral *cortège* on the road was slain. Marco Polo has a story to the effect that twenty thousand people shared the death of Mangu Khan.

The Mongol empire then split up into several sections ; Juchi, and his son Batu the Magnificent, headed the Golden Horde that harried Europe for another hundred and fifty years ; farther south Chagatai ruled the Jats on the Roof of the World ; Hulaghu took over Persia and Irak, and Kublai Khan, brother of Mangu and son of Juli, occupied the fabulous throne of Cathay, extending his frontiers beyond Tibet to the Bay of Bengal.

Genghiz accomplished the impossible by uniting the forces of orientalism, setting them up against Europe. Probably no other leader will ever succeed in arming Asia again ; Europe has now grown into manhood and the United States holds the balance of power between East and West.

Kublai turned the Mongols to Buddhism and the softer modes of life enervated the Tartar warriors ; in the reign of his son they were driven out of China and beyond the boundaries of the Great Wall.

On the fringes of the old Mongol dominion, Mohammedanism and lamas had begun to enter the picture and to convert their conquerors to new customs.

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Hidden among the sandhills to the north-east of Yarkand is the shrine of Ordam Padshah, ranking next to the holy cities of Arabia in the scale of Moslem sanctity ; for it was here that, ten centuries ago, a historic battle took place between the rival religions of Mohammed and

the Buddha. The Moslem army were victorious and their religious supremacy in Central Asia was assured for the future. Seven hundred and thirty million people in the world are now indirectly interested in the result of the religious duel at Ordam Padshah.

I have the good fortune to be numbered among the only five white men who have penetrated to this sacred shrine. It lies amidst sandhills that resemble a maze with streets and houses of jutting banks of sand, where the voice carries no farther than fifty yards and it is easy to become lost.

My visit to this historic spot was of exceptional interest, for until that time only four white men had preceded me since the far-off days when it acquired the pious fame with which it has been invested for nearly a thousand years. In fact, it was just prior to the landing of William the Conqueror on Britain's shores that the armies of Mohammed and the Buddha met in a great battle for supremacy between the rival religions.

This celebrated goal of pilgrimage lies two days' journey east of Yangi Hissar in Chinese Turkistan, and is shut in on all sides by sandhills and dunes. I had devoted much time to the study of Turkistan and its language; in close touch with the people and their curious ways and ideas, one is able to get at the heart of things and cement the bond of friendship that at once springs up. Previous travels had taken me to the four corners of the earth, but this journey was right off the map of knowledge.

I was to visit the scene of the historic battle between the Buddhists and the Mohammedan host, when, though the Moslem leader was killed, his cause triumphed.

It was a mysterious region I had to traverse to reach the famous shrine, far out amongst the endless dunes,

some only six or seven feet in height, others towering to more than two hundred feet, but each composed of that devastating, all-conquering sand of Central Asia which has swallowed up once-flourishing cities.

This weird uncharted region has originated all sorts of ghostly stories—creepy tales of fairies and gnomes peculiar to the superstitious Asiatic. Certainly you cannot marvel at the legends, for the immense stretches of sand have a dismal and depressing effect upon the traveller. There is no sign of human, animal, or vegetable life, no sound of bird or beast, nothing to relieve the sepulchral silence. No wonder the people believe this terrible desert to be the abode of demons and evil spirits.

The aspect of the dunes is always the same—successive rows one behind the other, resembling great ripples running along the seashore. They are continually pouring in from the east, steadily and pitilessly overwhelming the land lying in their path. Settlements are engulfed by a gradual process of encroachment; at first the walls of the houses keep out the advance guard of the sand, but, gradually, it climbs over them. Then the courtyards are invaded, until, with successive storms—which range with great violence in this region—the drifts slowly mount to the roofs and complete the work of destruction, leaving scarce a trace of a once-prosperous town.

The buildings of these cities were composed of sun-dried bricks, and a kind of matting, made locally, was used in the foundations. The climate of Turkistan is wonderfully dry, and sheets of this matting are often found beneath the walls of these ancient cities which are still in a marvellous state of preservation, although the ruins date back for at least fifteen hundred years.

Towards sunset we came to more open country and

I asked the Chief Beg at what time we should reach Ordam Padshah. "In an hour, if it pleases God," he said. The sun went down; the sand-dunes assumed a weird and irregular form silhouetted against the horizon. We moved onward in the silent evening, on all sides the indefinite overhanging blackness of the sandhills, with the contrast of yellow sand beneath us. Everything seemed weird and ghostly; how could there be reality in this region of desolation? I could not imagine a sacred city in such an environment.

So, passing on in the gathering gloom we gained the summit of an exceptionally lofty sandhill and there below us was this second Mecca in search of which I had come so far. The outstanding figure was a gigantic column of beams and poles, the structure marking the spot where the Moslem champion, Ali Arslan Khan, fell in the battle for supremacy.

The mosque is the principal religious building, but the one interesting me most was that assigned for reception of offerings brought by the faithful. It contained an astonishing variety of objects, including horses, camels, sheep, cattle, carpets, brocades, fruits, precious stones, jade and other articles. Here also were five bowls set apart for votive offerings; the largest, of bronze, measuring nearly six feet across at the top and five feet in depth, is reputed to have been cast in the days of Ali Arslan himself. The second, of copper, measuring four feet in diameter, was presented to the shrine by Amir Yakub Beg, the stormy petrel of Turkistan, who ousted the Chinese during the 'sixties of the last century, his brief reign and the influence he exerted upon the country forming another romantic page of Oriental history.

When at the zenith of his power and fame Yakub Beg

maintained a large personal household, in addition to a harem of three hundred beautiful women. He made three pilgrimages to the shrine and generously endowed it.

Soon after sunrise on the day after my arrival the sheikh and his followers came to conduct me to the sacred shrine erected over the spot where the Moslem leader fell. A crowd of pilgrims were kept back by the sheikh's attendants, sometimes a trifle forcibly, though they were unable to make any protest, still less any resistance, in so sacred a place.

I stood beneath the sheaf, a gigantic collection of sticks and poles more than a hundred feet in circumference at the base, and upwards of fifty feet in height. The sticks, many of them crowned with varicoloured pennons, have been deposited by successive generations of pilgrims, some of whom journey great distances to the object of their veneration. Most of the sticks are small, but wealthy devotees often bring poles and beams of great size carried with infinite labour from distant places.

Time passed pleasantly ; each day was full of interest. At nightfall would come the final call to prayer, the long-drawn quavering cry of the muezzin piercing the eerie silence which hung over Ordam Padshah. It was taken up by other voices, which rose and fell until the gathering night seemed to be ringing with the call ; it was the signal that all obeyed, and then, their duty done, they would sit in the cool evening air, the sky above glittering with stars. We would talk of the things of this world and the world beyond, of the moon, the sun, and the earth, which they would not admit was round. "The universe is flat and has hills along its edges. Is it not so ?" they said.

I who had travelled much, and seen mighty truths shattered by modern invention, said nothing. I could offer no evidence from the Koran that things were otherwise. So I held my peace.

The day came when I must leave Ordam Padshah. The chief priest and a large concourse came to say farewell before I once more entered the region of sand and desolation.

Viewed from the summit of a sandhill the shrine looked dreary indeed; an oasis in an infinity of sandhills giving the impression of continuous lines of waves for ever rolling onwards, swallowing up everything that lay in their path.

Then the parting words of the sheikh came to me: "The sand has not touched the resting-place of the holy martyr; it has left it unharmed and has passed on in its course, giving peace and protection to the sacred spot, and, if God wills, it shall do so to all eternity."

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The link between north and south, between Mongol and Mogul, is supplied by the tremendous figure of Timur the lame Tartar, or Tamerlane, as he is known to history.

Timur's father, Teragai, a descendant of one of Chagatai's generals and chief of the Barlas clan, was the first Mongol of importance to be converted to the Moslem faith. Timur himself was the chosen of the Imams and Mullahs, as well as the hero of his own army.

Beyond the Mir Amn, there lay, the farther side of a deep defile, called the Iron Gate, the first caravanserai, a fertile spot with a small river of its own shut in by hills. Here Tamerlane was born in a house of wood and unburnt clay.

With only a few followers at his back, by his courage and consummate strategy he became at the age of thirty-four

a second Genghiz Khan, with almost all Asia beneath his banners, under his feet, or paying him tribute. One by one his enemies were outmanœuvred and overcome. The Jat Mongols, the Golden Horde of Batu and Tocktamish away on the Steppes, the Persian princes, the Malik of Herat, all bit the dust before him ; until finally he met the invincible hosts of the Turkish Janisseries at Angora in a battle of thunder.

The western world watched and wondered at this battle of giants. Constantinople was saved for the Christians for another fifty years and Turkish power broken. Bajazet, the Turkish Sultan, feasted before the battle in the pride of pomp and confidence, but afterwards, the chroniclers relate, when he found himself eating his own viands among the victorious Tartar lords, his harem beauties stripped of their clothes bearing round the dishes, he bowed his beard upon his breast and was carried about in a litter.

Timur was tall and well-built with a ferocious energy, and the slanting eyes of the Tartar. After the death of his first son, Jehangir, he hardly ever smiled again. But though his hand was of iron and his will of steel, his rule never swerved from the straight path of military justice and his words held something of the sublime simplicity of a Solomon.

Two rules of war had Timur.

Never to retreat except as a means of attack.

The belief that a thousand horsemen to suit the occasion are worth ten thousand and a delay.

His solitary and continual diversion was chess. When he found the board too small for his *fierce manœuvring*, he had one double the size constructed ; all his genius flowed into the game and in this he foreshadowed many



ROCKING THE CRADLE IN THE HEART OF ASIA



A KNIFE-GRINDER IN TURKISTAN

modern military leaders. His sons, so it is said, caused a wonder chessboard to be made in Samarkand, on which the pieces were beautiful slave girls, models of bliss whom they moved and posed upon the squares. Such frolics, however, left Timur unmoved, for he had no weakness in his disposition. Wine, women, fear, favouritism, seem to have played no part in his long life. He took off his helmet to war alone. There must have been something both terrible and inhuman about this conqueror who never made a mistake.

The only softening gleam in his iron character was a dim love of art and for the woven expressions of the fabrics of the time. Amongst the Tartar captives, only savants and artisans were spared, the rest were slaughtered and their skulls built into the shape of human pyramids—the grim Tartar architecture of war. The artists were coaxed or carried back to the capital of Samarkand, which Timur changed from a collection of mud dwellings and intricate streets into the Rome of Central Asia. The Tartars wore silks and damasks and wondrous embroideries; their pavilions and huts were covered in cloth of gold, and Samarkand was roofed with blue tiles, beautiful and deep as the sky that shone overhead. The best paper was manufactured at Samarkand and its crimson cloth gradually superseded the Tyrian purple as the apparel of kings and prelates. Silken Samarkand became a legend that tintured the mind of romance and gave new patterns to the loom of poetry. We have a picture of Timur in his white astrakhan shako crowned with rubies, the marshal's baton of a golden ox-skull in his clenched hand: the Genii in the tale of Tartary.

Harold Lamb in his authoritative book, "Tamerlane", gives a vivid account of a meeting between the Grand Cham

of Tartary, this figure as resplendent as any mythical Prester John, and Hafiz the Persian poet, pen companion to old Omar Khayyám.

At Shiraz the Persian poet was brought before the conqueror.

“Is this your doing?” Timur asked him sternly, quoting from a poem :

“ ‘If my mistress of Shiraz would take my heart in her hand
I would lay before her, Bokhara or Samarkand.’ ”

“O Lord of Kings,” Hafiz answered like any shame-faced schoolboy, “that is my doing.”

“With my sword,” the Tartar answered, “and after years of conflict, have I taken Samarkand. Now I am taking the ornaments of other cities for Samarkand. How is it that you would bestow all this upon a wench of Shiraz ?”

Hafiz hesitated and then replied : “O Lord, it is by reason of this very prodigality that I have fallen into my present plight.”

Timur was pleased by the poet’s ready answer and sent him away with presents.

Many of the caravan routes and much of the trade of the Orient passed through Tamerlane’s dominions. From Cathay across the Gobi to Kashgar, through Khojend, Samarkand and Bokhara, through Persia to Sultaniah, Tabriz, Baghdad, Asia Minor, the great Khorasan trade route of olden times was the Khan’s highway. The plateaux of High Asia were his. Couriers rode dawn and sunset out of the sky with messages for Samarkand.

“Who comes riding like the wind ?” would cry the sentry at the guardhouse.

And the answer came back : “I have words for the lord.”

“Pass then,” would be the command, “and may Allah speed your footsteps.”

Couriers riding for Timur were entitled to change horses with anyone they met along the route so that messages arrived almost with the speed of telegrams. Any who stopped a messenger or delayed him in his duty knew that their heads were forfeit. Caravans traversing High Asia rejoiced that they had only to pay one toll even though it was a heavy one, and not a dozen tributes to minor chieftains. The great Tartar was the Charlemagne of his time in the East; not only did he unite the tribes under his rule, converting them in some cases from animism to a tolerant form of Mohammedanism, but he drove the barbarians northward out of sight or else turned them into more civilized communities.

More than anyone else Timur was responsible for the cessation of the barbarian inroads that had descended on Europe through the dark ages like wolves on a fold. All the harrying that was done Timur did himself, and history has repeatedly proved that one tiger is better than a hundred jackals.

Europe, at this time, would hardly have seemed worthy of notice to an Asiatic conqueror. She was a mere child to kidnap when compared to the riches and importance of the far older East. The population of some of the caravan towns where came the camels with their corded merchandise and the bearded merchants, ran into nearly a million. Neither London nor Paris could muster one hundred thousand souls, and Timur probably never heard of them.

As a successful cavalry leader Timur had no match in the annals of war. He would take out his eighty or ninety divisions of horsemen to battle, leading them with a skill

that had never to acknowledge defeat. The long trumpets would sound 'Hurra', the ox-hide drums would beat to war, and lifting their horse-tail banners the cavalry array of the Tartars rode away to victory.

In the main, the tactics they employed were to break the enemy's lines with shock attacks from the right flank, the suicide divisions, while Timur himself, holding a strong reserve behind the centre, would then swing the battle into any line or formation that occurred to his genius. He appeared to bear a charmed life. At one siege he went unarmoured among his men and pulled two arrows out of his body ; at another he rode up to the fortress and challenged the enemy general to combat, while all his amirs watched with quaking knees.

In the Near East he effected with ease what the crusades and western chivalry had broken their lances against in vain. To Baghdad word was sent that the centre of Islam was only to capitulate if the Unconquerable appeared before it in person. Timur did arrive, but the Commander of the Faithful saw fit to trust in the support of a heat wave and to resist. So hot was the brazen atmosphere that birds dropped dead out of the sky and the armour of the Tartars melted as they worked in the sun. His amirs and marshals implored Timur to let them storm Baghdad or else they would melt away ; but he held his hand, ordering rest hours for all during the intolerable heat of midday, and it was by using this siesta for his storm troops, when the defenders had been lulled into inactivity, that he captured Baghdad and razed it to the ground.

Each stone was lifted away from its fellow, a perdition that accounts for the reason why modern travellers visiting Baghdad will find only disappointment and none of the

architectural glories of Haroun-al-Raschid and the Arabian Nights. Baghdad had been 'bumped off'. Tamerlane had passed that way. The court of the Caliph, once the most magnificent Islam had ever seen, could once boast of eighty thousand servants living within the palace, and in the Hall of Audience stood the famous Golden Tree, upon which, according to tradition, fluttered the mechanical birds of silver and of gold, studded with precious stones.

The greatest chess-player in history added Baghdad to the other kings, castles, and citadels he had captured with the ease of pawns ; with the exception of Cairo, hardly an important town was left outside the sweep of his victorious hosts, and the princes of Europe hurried to send him embassies.

It can be said of Timur, as it was of another Mohammedan conqueror before him :

He rides in a billow of horsemen,
He sweeps o'er the earth like a flood,
His spears flash forth to the foeman
Incarnadined tongues of blood.

The great mosque in Damascus caught the conqueror's fancy and he gave orders for it to be duplicated in his own city of Samarkand. Prior to this the domed cupola of the Omayyads had been unknown elsewhere in the East. Later, through Tartar agency, it spread across Russia, crowned the Taj Mahal at Agra, and can be seen in almost every town in India. Timur disliked the little square pointed erections on the top of the old mosques. He preferred the full blown swelling bubble of beauty. The dome of Damascus, afterwards destroyed by fire, sent its offspring to populate the cities of the East.

In September, 1398, Timur invaded India, arriving on the banks of the Indus. He came down through the

Khyber Pass, but he also used the more northern route over the Baroghil Pass, the back-door entrance to Chitral, one of our most northerly outposts of India.

The Tartars mistrusted the fortifications of Delhi and the unknown factor of Indian elephants, so they lured out Mahmud and his men by means of a stratagem. Trenches were dug to receive the elephants; buffaloes were made ready with firewood tied to their horns; but none of these preparations proved necessary. The Tartar triumph was quick and overwhelming as usual. Delhi was sacked, then ninety teams of enemy elephants were used to transport the plunder back to Samarkand.

“Victory! Our lord has conquered again,” shouted a courier spurring in advance into the city.

The gates were opened wide.

The townspeople gave themselves over to rejoicings that were more like the flowering of fairy tales than any facts. Slaves threw gold dust and pearl seed into the air, fountains flowed, the houses shone with a thousand costly silks and embroidered cloths, and when the conquerors rode through the Turquoise Gate precious stones were flung beneath the horses' hoofs. Glittering carnivals in Samarkand that followed, we are told, included such items as elephants fighting, fair girls dressed in the skins of wild animals, and castles that appeared suddenly out of nowhere built of gold and crimson cloths, apparitions that made western envoys, like Clavizo from the Court of Castille, rub their eyes.

This was Timur's eighth triumphal entry into the city of his dreams. In 1402 he left on his last long campaign to crush the Turks under Bajazet, and on his return three years later started almost at once for the conquest of China,

* "Tamerlane the Earth Shaker," by Harold Lamb.

dying at the age of sixty-nine amid the snows of the Roof of the World.

Had his favourite grandson, Prince Muhammed, not fallen in action during the struggles with the Turks, the Tartar Empire might have endured for some time longer ; as it was it soon became disorganized. Shah Rukh became the Kublai Khan of his day and reigned in Samarkand. Then, less than a hundred years later, a descendant of Timur's, living in the small principality of Ferghanah, descended upon India with a mere handful of warriors to found the Mogul Empire.

Babar, son of Omar Shaik, who defeated the Hindu princes on the plains of Paniput in 1526, has been called the most attractive of the Mogul conquerors. At any rate, he was a sportsman and a poet. He called his three daughters Rosebloom, Roseblush and Rosebody. He was modern enough to keep a kind of diary while he looked upon life in the light of a joyous adventure. "I swam across the Ganges for entertainment," he tells us in his memoirs. "I counted my strokes and found I got across in thirty-three. Then I swam back again. I had crossed, by swimming, every river I met."

Babar the Lion, as he was known, died in 1530 leaving an empire that stretched from the Amu Darya in Central Asia to the delta of the Hoogly at Calcutta.

He had come into his own with the aid of fire and sword, and had need of quick and daring men, men of resource, and so he developed all kinds of games as a test of temper and courage, and a proof of fitness, or want of it, for the arduous life of those stirring times. The prizes were on a par with the games and comprised most things from jewellery and precious stones to a lovely houri with a face and figure that would flatter Venus.

Babar's descendants, especially his grandson Akbar, consolidated the Mogul Empire and raised it to a spectacular pitch of magnificence and display until the time of Aurungzebe and the coming of John Company. Then once more the wheel of fate revolved, lamaism entered the lists, and gradually Mongol and Mogul faded like a dream from the stage, leaving behind names at which civilization once paled : names which are now used to paint gorgeous pictures, frighten politicians, and to adorn the fabric of tales.

For five hundred years the yellow races were masters of Asia, and for much of this time their power extended over Northern India and the heights, a cradle of mankind, the rulers of which, Napoleon once remarked, could dominate the earth. To-day, Samarkand is ruined by earthquakes and decay, her supremacy has been swallowed up by the sea-power of the West, and the trumpets of Tartary have long been silent.

The golden road still runs across the hills to Samarkand, but the glory and splendour have departed.

CHAPTER X

THE HIMALAYAN FORESTS

The spirit of the woodlands—Forest and jungle—The Tahr—How he is trapped—Bhotiya nomads—The Rogue Elephant—How the peacock got its legs—Strange primitive tribes—A visit to Santal aboriginals—Bows and arrows still in vogue—A powerful drink in petrol tins—Dancing as old as the hills—Primitive views on flying.

ONLY the few have the chance of travel and conquest in distant places, but to almost everyone comes at some time and in some place a response to the great pictorial landscapes of Nature, some urge to fuller self-expression, whether it be the strength of mountains, the mystery of forest, or the attraction of the wide nomadic spaces.

Two of these calls from the racial past can be satisfied at one and the same time in the Himalayan foothills, where trees put clothes upon the bare rocks and cloak the chasms. Even a sense of the sea can sometimes be gained when the wind, running over the fir forests with practiced fingers, brings with it a sound that is shoreless and oceanic. From the 'bhabar', the belt of jungle in India that divides the mountains from the plains, to the unshuttered thickets of spruce and fir perched high up on the mountain-sides, are tracts of forest unmatched for their variety of contrast and climate. They range through all the shades that separate snow zones from tropics and they include most types of thickets, trees and dells.

The presence of the mountains acts as a sort of

nameless safeguard, uplifting jungles into calm forests, and removing that dim, inherent dread of dense, viewless tracts of woodland which has descended upon the mind of man since those days when great forests clothed Europe like an unfettered imagination, and were full of the outlaws and outcasts of civilization.

Mountains and forests can have a harmonizing and enhancing effect upon each other, as have hills and the sea. They cling together happily. They would appear to be one of those successful marriages arranged by Mother Nature.

Up in the wooded hills and valleys, life is full of the simple delight of living, and brings a sense of freedom and happy possession. It must resemble the spirit of ancient Switzerland before the time of trippers, hotels or even inns, only with a more abounding life.

A sense of mystery and novelty clings to forests that turn corners, and climb hills, and flow down precipices as if they themselves wish for fresh beginnings.

Blue mists shutter the valleys in the evening and sunset paints the heights; in the cool, clear air of night the stars appear wide-eyed and lustrous, great diamonds of destiny, and the moon rising like a silver lantern throws her searchlight through the lattice of the trees, streaming in between the dark trunks and across glades, where—

'Leafy night of the many sounds
Speaks through the space between.'

In the distance, mountains loom up in silhouette, lone sentinels of detachment. Tents are pitched; a camp fire and the homely smell of cooking brings a glow to the scene. A dog points his nose at the sky and howls—



AN ASIAN ORCHESTRA IS OFTEN MELODIOUS; GUITARS,
MANDOLINES AND DULCIMERS ARE THE LEADING INSTRUMENTS



A 14ft. CROCODILE, SHOT BY THE AUTHOR, WHICH CONTAINED
THE SKULL AND BONES OF A HUMAN BEING

the age-old call of the wild making its triumphal return from out of an ancestral past. It brings an 'as it was in the beginning' feeling to man as well as to animal. Returning to the strength of the wild places, and pitching his tent a few days' march nearer the Himalayas, the changing complexities of life are forgotten, and, alone with Nature, man has the chance of rediscovering the essence of human nature.

Up at dawn and then away on the early morning climb or shoot while the day is still young and the bears breakfasting in the mulberry trees. The walk may be a long one, but sleep has been sound, and the air holds the vigour of wine. Colour has not yet climbed into the sky with the light, and each tree appears to be standing on tip-toe waiting for the golden reveille of the sun.

Forests on the southern slopes of the Himalayas tend to become thinner and sparser as they spread toward the west, until the flanks of the Hindu Kush are reached with hardly a tree to relieve the utter desolation of the scene. In Bhutan and Sikkim large tracts of woodland have been burnt by the inhabitants to open the way for agriculture and enrich the soil for pasture; but there are hundreds of miles of forests in all directions, notably in Garhwal where the Ganges waters the countryside with a cluster of tributaries, and where are woods in which the whole of London could become lost.

These mountainous districts to the east are the happy hunting grounds of the goral, or chamois, and the tahr, the wild goat of the crags, while farther north their place is taken by markhor and ibex.

If the best form of hunting is that in which the element of danger is most prominent, and the odds in favour of the quarry, the chase of the tahr ranks high in the scale

of sport. The Himalayan tahr has a dark brown coat thick enough to withstand the rigours of a cold climate, and is possessed of exceptional climbing powers, enabling him to walk like a fly up the most dizzy slopes when escaping from what appears to be a complete cul-de-sac. Those who pursue him across breathless crags must be strong in wind and limb and with heads of iron.

The Garhwalis and Kumaon hillmen hunt the tahr by a form of trickery that makes the goats miss their usually certain foothold and plunge to death. They drive the tahr into nullahs with perpendicular sides, having first covered the goat tracks in certain places with mats soaked in water, soon turned by the frost into sheets of ice.

Fleeing at high speed, the unfortunate animals slip on the unexpected ice rinks and dive over the abyss to destruction. Little can be said for this primitive method of poaching, except that it is done for the sake of the pot and not from cruelty.

Besides the resident hillmen a touch of novelty and change is caused by the passage of nomadic Bhotiyas, passing through these districts on their way to the plains below. They are a pastoral people and form a trade link between India and Tibet, noteworthy for the strange method of transport employed. The merchandise, borax and wool, is carried by sheep and goats, two bags weighing about six pounds each being slung across their backs. These strange convoys are guarded by huge sheep dogs, resembling shaggy mastiffs in size and ferocity. With a collar of spikes round their neck to ward off enemy fangs, they are a match even for a panther. The Bhotiyas, the Basques of the Himalayas, are remarkable for their ancient customs and superstitions, some of which they would

seem to collect like food and drink on their long journeys through the forests.

They are haunted by ghost stories, and should a Bhotiya die far from home, they believe that his spirit must be guided back by means of a piece of string. The women of this primitive but happy race resemble the Japanese in looks, and ornament themselves with the tushes of the musk deer, found in Tibet, and persecuted on account of the valuable musk pod.

Part of this Garhwal district is sacred both to Hindus and Buddhists, since they regard the three peaks of Trisul, Kedarnath, and other commanding heights as Olympian homes of the gods; at Badrinath dwells the Raoul, or Pope of Hinduism, in a remote temple annually visited by numbers of pilgrims journeying from every part of India.

All the country is wild and beautiful.

Loosed from her snowbound home among the snows, creeping at first through snowfields, roaring down precipices, comes the Ganges river, falling in silver cascades over rocks covered in maidenhair . . . downwards ever downwards with swirling, rejoicing tributaries, leaving behind the upright youthful fir trees, the secret haunts of solitude . . . rushing in greater might through jungles where bathes and sports the elephant herd, and the tiger comes to drink, leaving the mountaineer behind and talking instead to aboriginal forest folk who weave legends out of her hurrying voices and reaching at last the parched and grateful cities of the plain; then onwards, outwards, for 1,500 sacred miles to the sea, ceaselessly, endlessly she continues her course, a mother of India, and arbiter greater than any king, of thronging human destiny. Elephants, it is said, make of her waters their last resting-place, taking

the death bathe when the crippling finger of old age has touched them.

Feeding most of the day and night, so large is his vegetarian diet, the wild elephant of the lowlands fears only two things in all the jungle—the sound of the human voice and fire. And it is usually fire, wielded by some villager defending his crops, that creates the rogue elephant. One of the herd, bolder than his fellows, will charge the line of fire-bearers intent on saving their crops, and puts them to flight, trampling on any who are unfortunate enough to get in his way. No traffic-signal, even of fire, would stop an enraged elephant once started on his charge. The man-killing habit grows until he is eventually labelled as outlaw and ‘rogue’ in the district and a price is placed on his head.

In addition to the elephant, the only other denizen of the jungles tamed and taken away into a dignified captivity by man is the peacock, that walking firework.

Indian tribes have a legend that Solomon in distributing awards for a jungle contest, was about to give the beauty prize to the peacock, when he suddenly noticed its legs and refrained. This bird, so the legend relates, had entered upon a preliminary dancing contest with the partridge in a secluded glade. On the plea that his own were getting tired, the partridge borrowed the peacock’s feet and then promptly ran away, leaving his rival an ugly legacy for the future.

The teeming life of the jungle can be studied to effect in India; other jungles may have a greater quantity and variety of game, but nowhere else is there such an exuberant expression of life.

Here we shall find most of the denizens of the wild, an immense growth of plant life, giant trees that came from

seed before the Norman Conquest, and whose leaves struggled for life and air when the Crusades were about to start. These vast jungles send up trees two hundred feet and more into the air ; generations of monkeys have gambolled amongst their branches, elephants have fought for mastery of the herd beneath their shade, snakes have coiled around their branches waiting for the unsuspecting deer, and tiger and panther have stalked their prey under the light of a tropic moon.

To reach the jungles in the proper way let us imagine that we have landed in India, where the train will take us many hundreds of miles up-country, bringing us to a tiny wayside station, whence we travel seventy or eighty miles by a small, two-wheeled cart that sways and clatters from side to side along the dusty track, past crops of millet, villages of mud and thatch, over sandy river beds, anon through park-like glades, until gradually the jungle becomes thicker and the foliage stretches across the track which has been hacked out of the primeval forest by Government to help in the transport of timber. By changing ponies *en route* we do the distance in five hours, and reach a clearing in the forest, a tiny village of the same mud huts and thatched roofs, with a few fields in their immediate vicinity. On the outskirts of this jungle settlement stands the dak bungalow, or rest-house, a rough building of several rooms, whitewashed inside and out. We pull up at this bungalow ; a white-robed and turbaned servant greets us deferentially and conducts us within. We have arrived at the confines of the jungle, with its growing of life and all-pervading mystery.

It is November ; the tropical rains have ceased and wild life is all around. Not far down in these dark, thick green jungles is the elephant, who lords it over all

the others. He finds these dense woods suitable to his solitary and retiring habits; where he can obtain ample shade, interspersed with clumps of bamboo on which he loves to feed. With his keen sense of hearing and his faculty of moving about the jungles almost without noise, the elephant can hold its own in the fight for existence. No one realizes the acuteness of hearing of wild animals until he stalks them over dry leaves and through the overhanging jungle. A leaf may drop from branch to branch, falling in the ordinary way, and the elephant or the deer never starts. But let there be ever so slight a crackling of leaves under the foot of the hunter, and the wild beast knows at once that something is wrong.

There is probably no animal that can equal an elephant in the amount of food it consumes. They love the succulent bark, spending most of their time breaking down trees of many years' growth merely to strip the trunk for the comparatively small meal it gives them; but as they feed for eighteen hours out of the twenty-four, their vegetable ration is colossal.

Feeding most of the day and night, so large is his appetite, the elephant provides an example of successful vegetarianism. An elephant can live to the age of one hundred and fifty years or even longer. The identical animal that bore Warren Hastings on many of his State visits, had the distinction of carrying King Edward VII when Prince of Wales, at a Durbar in India. There must be others alive to-day that saw the first predominance of Britain in India, and perhaps fought at Plassy. In the scale of intelligence the elephant ranks high, though below the orang utang and the baboon. He is the grand old man of animal life in the East.

The denizens of the forest are fairly plentiful, but are

not easy to find, though by night and in the cool of early dawn they make themselves heard; but the smaller fry of the jungle, both by day and night, are numerous and varied. On them the tiger preys, prowling silently from cover to cover, well knowing how to make himself invisible. He has need of invisibility; his existence depends upon his skill in catching animals gifted with extraordinary powers of sight, hearing and scent. Unluckily for the tiger, he can himself be scented a long way off, so must needs approach his game up-wind. For the greater part of the year, when the ground is dry and hard, he must shift for himself and, however quietly he moves, there is sure to be some dry leaf or twig that will snap or crackle and give the note of warning. The stag or antelope he is after is so wary that he may have to spend a day and more to get within killing range. Deer roam all night, feeding here and there, and ever on the watch. They will stand still and listen intently for long periods, wondering what the noise can be that comes from a thicket close by, moving an ear every now and again, those super-sensitive organs which mean so much to them in this still air, this world of dry leaves, brittle twigs and undergrowth. The deer's coat assimilates well to the rocks, and as he stands against the pale yellow of the wood and coppice he is quite inconspicuous. You may get close and never see him. This is his home, and here he will lie up during the heat of the day.

All deer dislike the glare of the sun, for they are true children of the jungle and revel in the shade, where they lie close, still, and silent. Their enemies are many, not the least being that scourge of the jungle—the wild dog, who hunts in packs and terrorizes bird and beast alike. Then there are bears, panthers, leopards, the beautiful

spotted deer, gazelles, wild hogs, and all manner of snakes, from the tiny krait, whose bite brings death within a couple of hours, to the king cobra, that attacks man just as readily as it does the deer that passes beneath the tree where it is coiled up waiting to spring.

If you would see the jungle when it wakes to life you must sit by night in a tree, over a pool that in the hot weather is the drinking-place of all game within a long distance. It is a weird experience. Owls moan dismally from neighbouring trees, jackals slink by in the moonlight, nightjars flit past, deer creep down to drink, and stampede at the sound of crackling in a nearby thicket, whilst there is a faint rustle in the bamboos hard by the water's edge, the upper branches of the clump quivering slightly. It is not the wind, for the air is quite still ! Some animal is shaking the bamboos. Their branches quiver again, the faintest movement against the sky. You look intently, and presently a form outlines itself by the dark clump ; it is that practiced creeping murderer, the panther, who is taking post in readiness to spring out when deer or pig appears.

Presently the silence is broken by the hideous laugh of the hyena, a weird and nerve-racking cry. He delights in this during the night, seeming to select the moment when the quality of the sound will produce the most startling effect.

What of the flowering trees and shrubs of the jungle ? There is every kind ; gorgeous red flowers known as the flame of the forest, for their fiery glare lights up the jungle in the early summer. There are beautiful varieties of teak, with gigantic leaves and a peculiar crackling sound they radiate with the approach of the hot weather. As you wander through the jungles comes the sickly scent

of the mhowa ; from it the local drink or toddy is made, for the jungle man has a preference for alcohol, and his ingenuity devises a liquor of sorts.

Now and again you will come across a tree with weird pink and white arms pointing to the skies, and playing at ghosts in the dusk. There are magnificent ferns with fronds six feet and more in length, silk cotton trees with gorgeous leaves that look like silken carpets, trees with scarlet blossoms, trees that ooze gum, cascades of laburnum, shady tamarinds, acacias of every hue, the madar—a curious shrub with white and purple blossoms but with a juice that is a deadly poison, and often used by jungle tribes for getting rid of undesirable or weakly offspring.

Living in these mighty jungles, gaining a scanty subsistence by hunting, are quaint people, essentially nomads, here to-day and gone to-morrow. They live in temporary camps of bark and branches, placed on the side from which the wind will blow. Queer folk they are ; physically and mentally incapable of agricultural or industrial effort, neither do they possess draught animals nor the ability to domesticate them. Hunting is at once their primary and only need, and it has developed their faculty of observation to an extraordinary degree. They will track down an animal by its claw marks on a tree, or by watching the flight of mosquitoes, if no other signs are there.

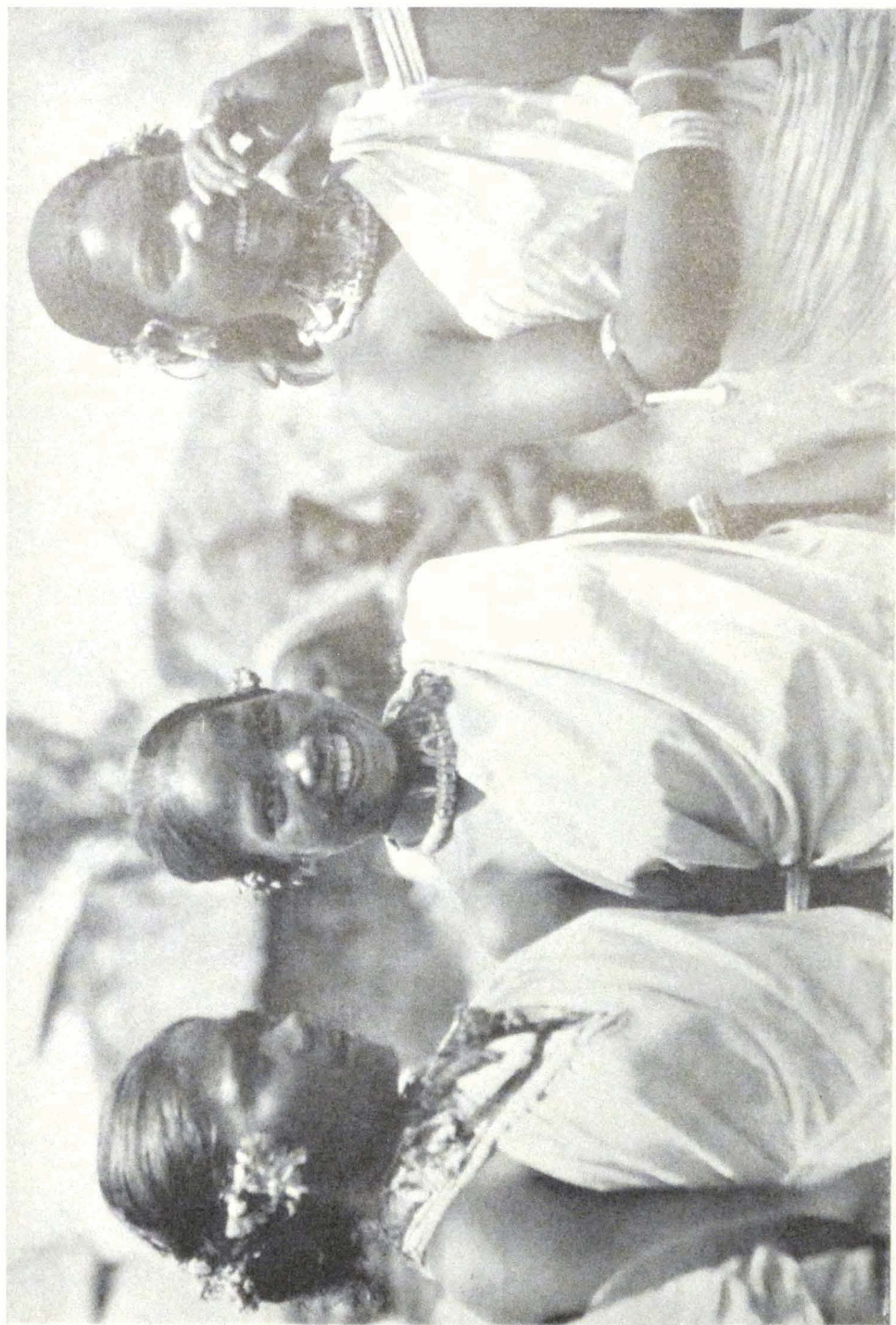
The jungle man is fond of honey, and so catches a bee, gums a tiny feather or piece of down on it, releases the bee and follows its flight through the jungle, from flower to flower, until the honey store is gained. . . . They tell stories of the flood, of how the sky is supported, how the sun, who is an entrancing lady, came into being, and why that interesting man in the moon comes and goes, with

his periodical display of vanity in eclipses, and the shooting stars and comets, who are his followers and serving-men and -women.

Chapters might be written on the psychology and customs of the jungle people; when, for instance, one of them aspires to being a medicine man, the course extends over some years. He must undergo solitary confinement in the jungle and practically fast for twelve months; he must be able to dance and work himself into a frenzy, and keep it going for whole nights in succession; he must have the capacity of a Falstaff for strong drink and yet maintain a steady eye and straight pace. He must be able to swing heavy clubs for hours on end, smoke strong tobacco, and spit upon his patient with force and accuracy from a distance of several yards.

In the jungles along the Indo-Chinese border, which are, if anything, denser than those of India, the jungle people are frequently at war with each other; they live entirely upon what their locality gives them, and have customs in keeping with their environment. They regard the human skull as the aristocratic form of wine cup; and a man cannot marry until he has presented his *fiancée* with a number of heads, which are afterwards preserved in a casket. Only after a certain number of heads have been placed beneath the foundations of his hut of wooden beams, branches, and leaves, can he take up residence with his bride in their new home, and the finest form of internal decoration is not pictures and works of art but the skulls of enemies.

Some jungle tribes in India are peaceably inclined and do a certain amount of barter amongst themselves. They shun the world beyond the dense forests that hem them in, and carry on trade without seeing or speaking



BEAUTY QUEENS AT A SANTAL DANCE



DEVIL DANCERS VIE WITH EACH OTHER IN
FRIGHTFULNESS

to each other. They cannot be dealt with directly, and when another tribe or clan wishes to do business they announce their advent by beat of drum, the goods in exchange then being placed in a given spot, where they are appropriated, the parties retiring until the next trade meeting. In this can be seen one of the world's oldest trading methods.

Many and strange are the secrets of the jungle, where man and beast live by their wits, where men have head-gear made from the feathers of the bird of paradise, the golden pheasant and other rarities, and the primitive, the weird and the original greet each other at every turn.

Whilst the Everest flyers were at Purnea, a visit was paid to a village of Santal aboriginals, among the last of their race in India, to see a display of archery and forest dancing.

The customs, clothes, and mentality of these people made a fascinating study. Their houses were of reeds, thatch, and grass, all perfectly woven. The floors were beaten mud, and everything was neat and clean. The faces of the men were dark and coarse, with the broad nostrils that go with a low type of humanity. The women jingled silver bangles on ankles and wrists.

They had a jazz band, composed chiefly of flutes, violins and dulcimers, in which the players were men, but the dancers were women. Warmed by wine of their own decoction, they staged a dance for our benefit. Not the sensuous movements of Hindu nautch maidens, who beckon and whisper of the dark mysteries of hidden gods and sacred temples where the moonlight whitens Jumna river; but rather the spontaneous, carefree self-expression of primitive bodies, eager and happy to be alive.

We were as watchers translated back into the dim unrecorded past, seeing once again the sons and daughters of cave men come out of their cramped homes and dance round the watch fires at night, discovering movement and finding that it was good.

These aboriginals, their dark faces kindling with humour and energy, their eyes flashing, following the mood of the moment, flung themselves about, allowing their bodies full play. They beat tom-toms and uttered sharp guttural cries; they brandished bows and arrows. Girls danced and swayed and touched hands, their black hair thick with flowers. Loose skirts of native cloth covered their rocking forms—red, green, and yellow skirts, and many another hue, all blending into the semblance of a rainbow that had fallen to earth. Brassieres adorned their breasts, and as they bent and moved their arms the silver bangles clashed and clashed again.

An audience of aboriginals applauded them, beating out the tune with violin and dulcimer and sundry Oriental instruments. The music was a haunting melody, with all the repetition and monotony of non-stop tunes in a bazaar.

These wild men of the jungle began to drink again, and as they drank, filling up their empty petrol tins, the band enlivened and crashed into barbarism. From the petrol tins the liquor was poured out into little gourds and passed round to the visitors. It had all the strength of gunpowder and nearly blew the unwary drinker sky high.

After the dance came the archery. The men pulled long bows to their ears, much, I suppose, as in the days of Merrie England, and they shot with accuracy up to a distance of about fifty yards.

I asked the Robin Hood of the band of archers if he would give us a special demonstration of his shooting. In a twinkling he had fitted an arrow to his bow, pulled it to his ear, and tumbled a pigeon out of a distant tree. The aboriginals rely on bows and arrows where hunting is concerned, and manage to do very well. Tiger flesh, though never eaten, is in great demand, since the fat is a charm used to ward off diseases.

The Santals are a bright, joy-loving race of patriarchal people—the children of India. They seldom have more than one wife, and treat her well. They cherish a notion that the spirits of the dead are employed in grinding the bones of past generations into a powder, from which the gods create children. They are a pastoral race that has been oppressed by outsiders and driven down the scale of a complicated civilization, rather than in any sense savages. The spirits they worship are all on the ground. Hence the idea of the Everest flyers disturbing the spirits of the mountains, or upsetting the gods, worried them not at all, as it had the hillmen.

When I explained to them that we were taking the aeroplanes to discover some of the secrets of the mountains they thought we were wasting our time.

“It is useless to go up there,” a Santal said to me.

“Why so?” I asked. “There is much to be found on top of the Himalayas.”

“No game up there in the snow,” he said. “Too cold for shooting. Nothing to eat. No use at all.”

I expatiated on the wonders of flying over the highest mountain—of looking down upon the home of the gods and going where no man had ever been before.

I struck with all the linguistic force I could muster, but I might as well have tried to cleave the Pillar of Asoka.

“There’s nothing to shoot,” he said, fitting an arrow to his bow, but shooting it, I observed, up into the air, towards the clouds for once, rather than along the ground.

CHAPTER XI

TIGER-WORSHIPPERS

Man and the tiger—Attitude of Gonds and Santals—Rishis and magical transformations—Tiger charms—Tigers towards men—The man eater—Queer legends—A celebrated man eater—The terrible demon tiger and how he was killed—How a tiger hunts and kills—Jungle warnings—His only foe.

TIGER-worshippers are not confined to aboriginal tribes in Asia, nor, indeed, to sportsmen and hunters eager to experience the crowning thrill of shikar; they are found any day gazing spellbound through the bars at the Zoological Gardens, hurrying to the circus, looking at illustrations in books, and, in fact, wherever the name of the great cats has crossed the civilized earth.

Certainly without them the forests would lose their flame, and the world would become a tamer place. The door of imagination slips back, and in the opening, ears laid back, lips snarling, tail twitching slowly, crouches the great carnivore. The synonym of ferocity, the most powerful of the killers, the striped Juggernaut, the light of the jungles, the terror by night—the tiger!

If India were to lose her tigers, it would be like England without foxes. It is said, however, that they have been increasing slightly during and after the war, partly owing to the fact that they have been less hunted. No one has been able to compute their numbers, for they are solitary animals with bachelor habits, tremendous walkers, and lacking any of the clannish propensities of the lion; nor can they easily be found.

Edward Lear has immortalized the lion in relationship with wandering human beings, in a little verse :

The lion is the beast to fight
He leaps across the plain.
And when you run with all your might,
He runs with all his mane.

And he did his best for the tiger, though perhaps, in this case, a little too successfully :

There was a young lady of Niger,
Who went for a ride on a tiger.
They returned from the ride,
With the lady inside,
And a smile on the face of the tiger.

Which unusual method of locomotion shows, if anything, how rash it was for a young African belle to travel about in India, and how unfortunate for her to come in contact with a woman-eater. The tiger is one of those hair-raising animals everyone wants to see, but few to face.

The only place in all the width of Asia or Africa where lion encounters tiger is in Gir of the Junagadh state of Kathiawar, north of Bombay, where densely wooded tracts of country and dark malarious hollows supply the last of the Indian lions with a natural preserve.

There are stories, however, quite as original as those by Lear, told round the magic word of tiger, by the primitive hill-forest races of India, the Gonds and the Santals, who live in the domain of the yellow ruler of the jungles and brood upon his ways. To them the word has become almost a cult, bound up with secret rites and practices, a centre of tribal lore and legend, a sort of exciting bonfire smouldering wickedly in the imagination.

They believe that certain animals, especially monkeys, act on occasions as valet and guardian to an old tiger. From the nature of the kill, they deduce strange conclusions. There is, for example, an obstinate belief in out-of-the-way districts, that if the kill is left lying on the left side, he will not come again, but if on the right side, he will return.

At the appointed hour, solemn, guttural-voiced conclaves of villagers squat round the camp-fire fingering their muskets and discussing new aspects of striped wisdom—Gonds in particular; aboriginals of Central India, they have been driven up into the hills and forests by conquering races; bold hunters and woodsmen, they live in districts where big game abound.

The Santals, an ancient pastoral race, mostly found in Bihar on the outskirts of the Terai, hold no oath so sacred as that taken on a tiger skin. Relying entirely on bows and arrows they think nothing of killing the king of the jungles, though they will never eat his flesh.

Their method of tackling a tiger is to surround him, preferably after he has made his kill, with a large ring of hunters, and then gradually to contract the circle. At first the beast, ringed in by shouting villagers and probably gorged after a good meal, does little more than creep from side to side. But when he finds the circle rapidly narrowing and escape cut off, he begins to become desperate. First he flings himself to one side of the ring, then to the other, but by the time he has decided to charge his adversaries and break away, the ring of bowmen is close enough to shoot him full of arrows.

There are Rishis and hermits of the mountains whom natives often believe, can, after long practice, effect strange transformations, talking secretly with tigers,

whisker to whisker, in glades when the jungle moon is full. The superstitious believe them to derive knowledge of Nature in the raw, and of the bodily meaning of such words as swiftness, strength, and terror.

A village native went to visit a Rishi ; squatting down in front of the hermit, he proceeded to explain that his affairs were in the gravest disorder and that the wise man of the village had told him the only cure would be to possess, as a charm, a certain tooth of a tiger living in the neighbouring jungle.

“Would you wish me to take you down to it, or perhaps I might bring it up to you, if your faith is strong,” spoke the hermit.

“I pray your highness is referring to the tooth and not the tiger,” quavered the trembling villager.

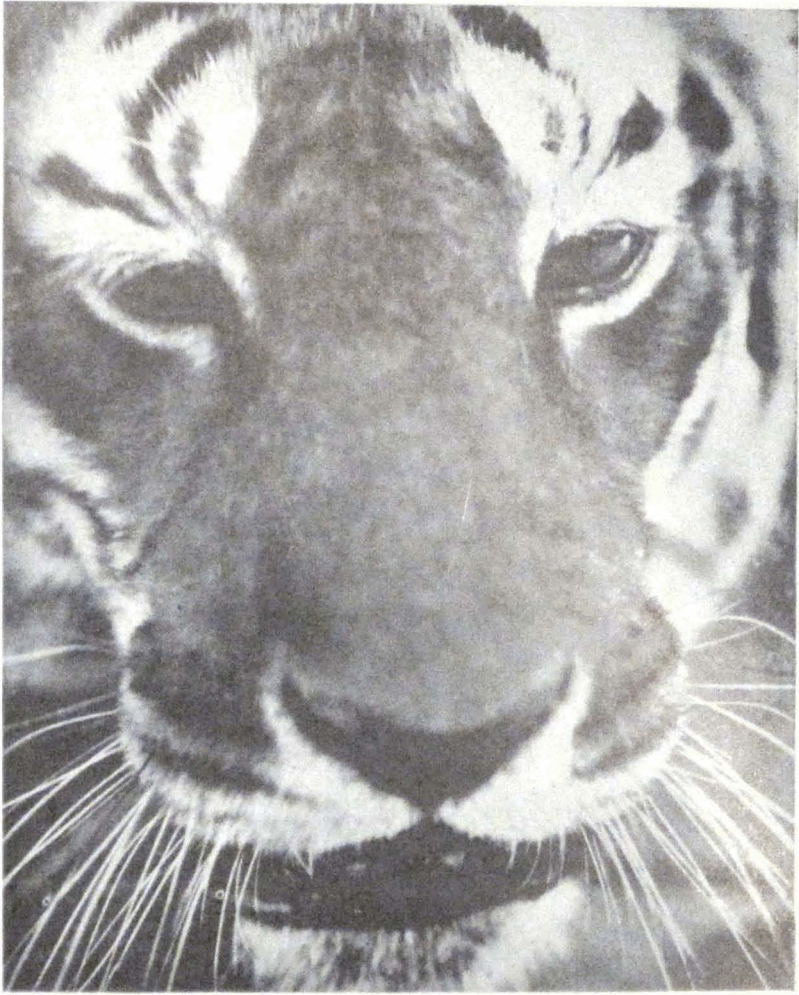
Uncanny superstitions continue to cling round the tiger. Whatever Englishmen may say or do he persists in remaining one of those myths that the bullet of reason cannot kill.

The floating collar-bone is one of the most highly-prized charms to be found upon a tiger ; but his whiskers are also regarded as an efficient remedy against the evil eye, and tiger-fat boiled down into ointment is sold in the bazaar at high prices as a cure for rheumatism and lumbago.

I have always been impressed with the way in which the tiger is dreamed about in the philosophy of the Indian villagers who think much more of him than he does about them. The tiger instinctively distrusts and avoids man, steering clear of his proximity wherever possible, except in the case of man-eaters ; unlike the panther, that often hunts round human habitations, he much prefers his own powerful independence.



A FLASHLIGHT CLOSE-UP OF A TIGER BATHING



A TIGER'S PORTRAIT AT CLOSE QUARTERS

With regard to classification of tigers, authorities as a rule divide them into two sections, the deer-slayer and occasional cattle-lifter, and the man-eater.

There are several arguments to account for the latter developing a taste for man, the main reason probably being lack of natural food, brought about in the hot weather by the waterless condition of the country and the consequent scarcity of game. Once having realized that the human being, of whom he has moved in such dread, is not formidable as an enemy, he may confine himself exclusively to this form of prey. Should conditions change, however, he has been known to return to his usual methods of hunting, thus creating the mysterious disappearance of a man-eater from a district.

Bad teeth as well as old age often combine to turn his attentions upon man, and it is worth remarking that the transformation marks a great 'come down' in the scale of life for a tiger, comparable, perhaps, to a well-conditioned city alderman having to reject oysters in favour of cockles and limpets.

Much has been made of the evolution of the man-eater; but the exact circumstances inducing the change still lack scientific determination. It may be sometimes that opportunity makes the thief, and the ease with which human beings are waylaid converts the tiger into a highwayman.

When this happens they can terrorize whole districts, as their powers of travel and movement are tremendous.

One of the most famous of all man-eaters lived in the Central Provinces, was the incarnation of ravage, and killed everyone with whom he came into contact.

The story of the demon of the 'Great Jhoot' is well

narrated by the fantastic Colonel Bowlong in his "Told in the Verandah" and is typical of the tiger's ingenuity.

It did not matter in the least whether this particular one was stalked on the most scientific principles, or laid in wait for with all the precaution that foresight could suggest. The result was monotonously the same; the man was always killed. But, strange to relate, this tiger was never seen on a beat; he had his lair in the most inaccessible part of the 'Great Jhoot', and he went on the warpath only at night. There was a singular circumstance about the creature's killing; it was always by a heavy blow, without the action of either tooth or claw; blood was then sucked through an orifice made over the jugular vein, and he was never known to either mangle the body or return to it. This striped vampire would enter cottages at the dead of night, cottages of which the doors and windows had been bolted and barred, and with a populous village around him would silently drain the blood of an entire family. Before the body of his victim was cold he would have taken the life of some unlucky being thirty miles away. How he effected an entry into closed houses was a mystery; one thing alone was patent; the doors were never *forced*. The people were satisfied that this was no ordinary tiger, but a man-eater, otherwise a man, they thought, who, by eating a certain root, or by means of enchantment, had become transformed into a wild beast.

All the bhoomkas, or tiger-charmers, had tried their art upon him in vain, and it was asserted that a spirit sat upon his head and gave him warning of any danger that lay in his way. It was also affirmed that like all man-eaters he had no tail. The demon's devastations had been going on for many years, and from this fact alone it was clear that he must be enormously old. The natives

declared him to be at least a hundred, and this belief was supported by his almost supernatural cunning, which he could only have acquired by experience far surpassing in duration any ordinary feline existence.

As he never returned to a kill, and could not be got at by beating, the only way to obtain a shot at him was by sitting over water, and that plan offered a chance of success only in the height of the dry season when drinking places were few and far between. Of course the first thing to do was to discover the pool he frequented; this, though difficult, was practicable, for the animal had such mighty pugs that the print identified him at once. His pug was a good deal larger than a soup-plate; it was known throughout a tract of one hundred square miles, and the sight of it sent a churchyard shudder through the whole countryside.

About six months after Bowlong joined the regiment two subalterns had spotted the demon's drinking-place, and going out had sat together in a tree over the water. Neither of them was a bad shot, and each could claim some experience in the matter of big game; they had a powerful battery and it was a moonlight night. Nevertheless, they were found dead at the foot of the tree next morning, their bodies fractured and with a small hole in each of their throats. One of them before he died had scrawled something with his finger, but all that could be deciphered was: 'Look out for a L . . .'. No one could interpret this satisfactorily, but the general opinion was that the warning referred in some way or other to a lion or a leopard. The problem, however, that remained for solution was how a beast that could deal a blow like a mammoth also inflicted a bite like a rat.

Another subaltern appeared on the scene and no

sooner had he arrived than he sent out men in all directions to gather news of the demon. In the course of a day or two word was brought that the killer had drunk on two consecutive nights at a little pool among some rocks in the jungle five miles off.

Away went the hunter full of hope, and two of the best breechloaders with him. The next morning they brought him back on a litter; he was still alive but had sustained the usual injuries, and they were invariably fatal. He was unable to speak, but retained just enough vitality to motion for pencil and paper; the poor chap could, however, only scrawl two letters before he died. The letters were 'A.M.'. Everyone was much exercised as to what on earth these words could signify; some thought that they referred to the time when the slayer arrived. Others that they declared the demon to be a human being, perhaps a jungle madman; but the idea of a cannibal lunatic depopulating a whole countryside was too horrible to be generally accepted. Everyone ceased, however, to speculate on a mystery which could only be made clear by powder and bullet.

Bowlong himself decided to take on the job, promised the shikari a hatful of rupees if he got the tiger, and then sent out to search for its drinking-place. Going to the rocks would have been useless, for it was known that he never came twice to any spot where he had killed. In the meantime work was set going to cast bullets for an old number four elephant rifle.

The next day it was reported that the tiger had drunk at a stream eight miles from the scene of the last tragedy. No time was lost in setting out to inspect the place. It was a wild and lonely spot and thoroughly *tigerish*. For a long distance both above and below it, the bed of the

stream was dry, but the drinking-place, which was merely a large pot-hole, still contained above a foot of water. A solitary mimosa tree hung over the pool, but as all the men who had lately gone after the supposed tiger had taken to trees, it seemed that he would naturally be on the alert for an attack from above, and as he could evidently climb like a cat, the stalker would have a better chance on the ground; so a square place was made of leafy branches with a hole to shoot through, and at sunset the new arrival took post. He had no one with him. A lakh of rupees would not have bribed a native to sit up for the demon, and as Bowlong wanted to have all the glory to himself he did not invite any of his friends.

The sun went down and the night came on; it was just full moon and before the light topped the trees he grew very anxious, for from where he was sitting it was too dark to see a yard in front and he might have been chopped in cover without seeing his assailant. Now and again there was a stealthy footfall; what it was he could not for the life of him guess—now it was to the right, now to the left—sometimes in front, sometimes behind; then the gentle patter was followed by a slight creaking noise in the branches of the neighbouring trees; then it ceased for a moment, and after a little time, there it was around him again as before. Just as the full light of the moon fell upon the stream and illuminated the surroundings there was an almost inaudible rustle of leaves close behind, and turning on the instant he saw a little grey-brown paw cautiously pushing aside the twigs of the shelter and behind the paw he could discern two small green eyes attentively regarding him. Like a flash the situation crystallized itself in his mind; “a lungoor,” he said to himself as it vanished from view. A monkey was

what the others had tried to tell them, and, by George, there was going to be mischief!

Moved by a sudden inspiration for which he could never account he hastened from the shelter and quickly ascended the adjoining tree. Scarcely had he time to seat himself when he saw the lungoor returning, followed by the most repulsive-looking monster mortal eyes have ever beheld. They talk of a tiger being mangy; this one was absolutely naked, nude as a nut, bald as a bottle, not a hair anywhere—a huge, ghastly, glabrous monstrosity, a very Caliban of tigers, as big as a bison and as long as a crocodile.

As the ghastly creature crept after the monkey, he followed the slightest curve and deviation of his guide with the delicate alacrity of a needle under the influence of a magnet. The adroitness displayed by the tiger was suddenly converted into a subject of horrified wonder, for as he approached the ambush he turned his hideous face up to the moon, and it was then plain that his eyes were a dull dead white, without light, intelligence or movement. The creature was stone blind. For all that he evidently knew, or thought he knew, what lay before him, for the saliva of anticipation was clinging to his wrinkled jaws like a mass of gleaming icicles. The monkey, when it had come within jumping distance, giving a low signal cry, made one spring into the stalker's shelter, alighted on the camp-stool and sprang out on the other side. He was instantly followed by the tiger, who fell like an avalanche on the stool, crushing it to matchwood, and at once began to feel about on all sides for his expected victim. Now was the chance; beneath the tree, in the broad light of the full moon, lay the mighty demon who had terrorized for so long and over so vast

an area. A steady aim was taken at a deep furrow in the huge shoulder-blades and the hunter held his breath for the shot. At that moment the keen eyes of the monkey caught sight of him and the little animal uttered a shrill note of warning. But it was too late, the finger was upon the trigger, and both barrels were fired in quick succession. Half a pound of lead through the spine would have killed a mastodon ; the demon rolled on to his back, stretched his legs quivering in the air, and opened his enormous mouth in a last effort for breath.

He then gave one roar, such a roar ! It combined the notes of concentrated savage fury, intense physical pain, and as the hunter expressed it, "the keenest mental agony". Before the awful sound had ceased to reverberate through the forest, the beast was dead.

The action of the monkey on the fall of his companion was remarkable. At the first sound of that trophonian cry he sprang back again into the shelter, and climbing on to the tiger's body began to search eagerly for the wound. One of the bullets had come out somewhere near the chest, and the lungoor addressed himself to the hopeless task of staunching the blood with twigs and leaves, at the same time making plaintive lamentations in the monkey language. Descending the tree the victor tore down the wall of the shelter in order to have a good look at him. Seeing this the monkey applied his mouth to the tiger's ear, and strove with passionate cries to arouse the dead beast ; failing in this he rose on his hind legs and standing upon the body defied the hunter to approach. Pushing the frenzied animal aside with the butt of his rifle he proceeded to examine the quarry ; the bullets had done their work well, for they had entered the back close together and you could have

put your fist into the hole. He stood for some time marvelling at the enormous dimensions of the creature; besides being without hair or eyes, it had neither tooth nor claw. The plan of operations was clear enough it was the monkey who did the scouting and discovered the position of the shikaris. The monkey played the part to the tiger that the jackal does to the lion, or the pilot-fish to the shark, and no doubt the tiger followed Jacko by scent!

So much for Bowlong, his priceless stories, and his play upon Hindustani words.

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There are villagers who hold the belief that, in certain cases, the spirit of a slaughtered man enters and possesses the tiger who killed him, and so warns the beast of the approach of danger. They tell of such spirits accompanying him on hunts and sitting on his head.

A tale is told of a native shikari whose relative had been mysteriously killed and who had sworn vengeance.

Selecting a tree close to his dead kinsman, the hunter sat up in the branches with his rifle, hoping the tiger might reappear. The corpse was beneath him lying on its back. After a long vigil the grasses stirred gently by the side of the track, there was a slight rustling caused by the stealthy passage of some heavy body and the hunter knew that the killer was approaching.

But at that moment the corpse on the ground raised its right hand and pointed to the tree in which the shikari was sitting. The tiger went away. Climbing down, the shikari tied the dead man's hand securely to the body and then climbed into another tree. After a long wait the same stealthy movements reoccurred and the hunter in the tree prepared to shoot. But this time the left hand of the



CROCODILES ARE NUMEROUS ALONG THE RIVERS BELOW
THE HIMALAYAS



THE HIMALAYAN PLOUGHMAN SOMETIMES HAS HIS CATTLE
TAKEN BY A TIGER

corpse raised itself into the air and slowly pointed to his tree. Again the tiger departed. The hunter descended from his tree, tied up the second hand of his relative, and once more climbed a different tree, awaiting results. This time the man-eater left the thickets and came out into the centre of the track. The corpse remained without movement. The shikari raised his rifle with infinite caution, fired, and the man-eater fell dead.

Sometimes man-eaters have been known to move great distances after they have struck down their prey; in some instances they travel forty or fifty miles, a distance of from London to Brighton, as though apprehensive of impending danger. The ordinary tiger, too, can be a great walker at times, pacing through the jungle, head down, feet treading velvet footsteps, twenty miles a night, without thinking anything of such exercise. You get a picture of them roaming the forests on long, wild forays, muscles flecked, senses on the alert, insatiable highwaymen, with a roar that awakens the sleeping world into a start of terror.

These are some of the facts about tigers.

Authorities agree that their roaring in the jungles is, in a sense, a sort of song of thanksgiving for their food, or to call up their mates to the banquet. Whether there is any quality in this thundering that may sometimes paralyse game in advance, as is the case with the hypnotic eyes of snakes, has never been proved, but a roaring tiger in a forest is usually a sign either that his suspicions have been aroused, or else that he has made his kill, since noise gives him away and sets all the tree-tops ringing with warnings of his presence. This roar may be the dinner gong of the lord of the jungle, but it is usually sounded after dinner.

Tigers have also a low moaning note, something between a purr and a cry, that is occasionally heard in the forest and is probably a sign of intense emotion, either of hunger or delight. When the tigress hunts in company with her mate, the two great cats have been known to exchange muffled growls, and 'miaows' with each other as signals of instruction or warning.

In stalking and bringing down its prey a tiger does not spring. There is no sudden steely leap into the air, no tremendous propulsion and projection like that of the panther, launching himself into space. Without fuss, or any advance publicity, he arrives within close range of his prey, takes one or two quick balancing steps and then rushes forward; should the quarry evade the attack, unlike the wolf or the wild dog the tiger usually abandons the chase after about fifty or sixty yards. Before actually coming to the kill, he surveys the scene from a distance, in absolute silence, often for some time, as is customary with all the cats.

Eye-witnesses of the actual attack agree that the prey is swiftly killed by having its neck broken and its vertebræ dislocated. To do this the tiger rushes upon the victim, placing one forepaw on the withers, the other round the animal's face, and wrenches back the neck of the deer against its own momentum of flight. His hind legs in the meantime are engaged in tripping up the quarry, and in getting the necessary purchase power for the *coup de grâce*. Sometimes, where large buffaloes are concerned and the attacker mistrusts his powers, a neck grip is used from underneath, the stranglehold being maintained until the buffalo is suffocated or, in its struggles, falls over sideways and dislocates its own neck. His dinner ready, the tiger proceeds to galloch the quarry and feed ravenously;

each kill provides him with two, or at the most three meals.

The Himalayas are famous for their fast and secretly moving tigers, and the Central Asian type has a luxurious coat in keeping with the wintry climate. In the 'bhabar', the fringe of forest running along the Himalayan foothills, tigers have been known to drag dead buffaloes across the most difficult country for over a mile and even to climb hills with them, a feat demanding incredible strength. They kill roughly every four days and though the principles of a Gandhi have never been popular in their clan, they can at a pinch fast for long periods of time—up to a fortnight or three weeks if driven to it.

No four-footed vehicle moving along the green paths of forest has such wonderful headlights as the tiger; his eyesight is superb, and his pupils at night swell into glowing lamps. He is a first-class swimmer and his hearing is also acute. He has just one failing in all his armoury of aggression: his sense of smell is practically non-existent.

Had he this faculty developed to the same degree of perfection as the others, then indeed might the tiger menace man as well as the wilds and prove a difficult problem for the hunter.

Just one foe has the war lord of the jungles, a small and insignificant one; but an adversary that in his very defeat and death often wins the victory—the porcupine.

In a battle between such a David and Goliath, the porcupine, if attacked, generally brings about the death of his giant assailant by sticking him full of spears with flail-like movements of the tail. Goliath is turned into a raging pincushion, with little possibility of ever removing the pins.

The porcupine, like the Londoner, always seems to be in a hurry; it has 1,500 quills on back and tail, black spears edged with white at the ends, and varying in length from one to four inches. Hidden in its fur, of which they are a development, and lightly attached, these prickles have a thousand barbs tucked away in the stem, each appearing immediately on contact with flesh. No other animal except the porcupine can teach the tiger to mind his own business.

Over all the rest of the wilds he holds undisputed sway, and his appearance sounds the tocsin of alarm. At his approach the lordly sambur bells and the lungoor in the trees utters his deep-toned grunt of warning—a well-known and unmistakable danger signal; screeching discordantly, the jungle fowl seek safety in flight, while the peacock lowering its tail makes off in a flutter of colour. The jackal when near a tiger's kill assumes an air of strange disquietude as though realizing that he is playing with fire, while even man grips his rifle more firmly, not wishing to provide another sacrifice for the yellow god of the Indian jungles.

One of the most exciting times I have ever had was in pursuit of this monarch. It happened in this wise:

The countryside for many a league around was full of the depredations of a tiger, the size and ferocity of which increased with the telling of the story. There was nothing it could not do, and as with Colonel Bowlong's tiger, medicine men from far and near had tried their skill upon him. They had conjured the spirits and wafted incense and sacrificial fumes towards the inaccessible parts where he had his lair, but all to no purpose.

No one would venture out at night, nor run the risk of crossing the tiger's path, and the moment it was heard

that he had killed in the neighbourhood, even though it were a dozen miles away, the entire countryside was agog with fright and apprehension.

I had gone out for a few days' shooting and was staying in a forest bungalow in the heart of the jungles. One afternoon news came that the tiger had killed a bullock about six miles away, and the native who brought the news was tingling with suppressed excitement. I, too, was thrilled, for, apart from the tiger's reputation, his cruising range was tremendous. He would, for instance, appear at one end of a district as large as Sussex, the next night would be heard of at the other extremity, and everything pointed to its being the same animal. Clearly, this was a tiger beyond the ken of mortal man.

I well remember the old forester discussing with me the plan of campaign to outwit so formidable a creature of the wilds.

This warden of the jungles gave out in eloquence what he lacked in looks. "You alone can rid us of this pest," he said. "You can strike down this scourge of the country, against whom all our efforts have been in vain." His appreciation placed me in an entirely false position, but since I had been so elevated, I felt compelled to do something about it. In any case, I was interested in such a tiger. Who would not have been?

I therefore set out on an elephant to the scene of the fray. I knew that the tiger would almost certainly return for a second meal, and so I went to prospect the place and choose a suitable point to take up my position in the contest.

Through dense jungle we slowly made our way, until we arrived at a clearing beyond which the ground sloped up in a gentle undulation. When within 100 yards of

the "kill" we halted the elephant; I knew I was at the fatal spot, for the buzzing of innumerable flies disturbed the uncanny stillness, and revealed where the carcass of the bullock had been hidden. Cautiously we moved forward; the whole place had a definitely creepy touch. The very air suggested tiger, and one would not have been surprised if a huge man-eater had suddenly leapt out into the half gloom. The tense situation and the atmosphere of the place gripped my followers, and I could see that they were desperately anxious to get away from the spot.

I looked around and chose the only suitable point—a tree about twenty yards away and some fifteen feet in height. It commanded a view of the "kill", and on this precarious perch I settled down to await the appearance of the tiger.

I was quite alone, and made myself as comfortable as the circumstances would permit; a king's ransom would not have induced a native to spend the night there, and the two men I had brought with me went off to a chosen spot a mile or so away, whence I told them that they were to come to me at once if they heard firing.

So there I was, perched in my little tree, only the buzzing of those flies breaking the eerie stillness. I was to have all the glory, such as it was, to myself.

Gradually the sun went down, the shadows lengthened, and night close over my lonely post. Once or twice an owl moaned dismally from a neighbouring tree and a nightjar flitted so closely past me in the darkness that I involuntarily started.

On such an occasion the imagination plays strange tricks. I thought I heard a rustling in the grass, quite close to my tree. Then it appeared to be right behind me. Again, it was to the left, and once I could have sworn it

was immediately beneath me, so close that it seemed I only had to stretch out my hand and touch the thing, whatever it was. The almost black darkness, however—for there was no moon, and the stars shone but fitfully through the trees and undergrowth—prevented my locating these nerve-wracking sounds and movements. I strained my eyes in the darkness, but could see nothing.

The noises at first came quite faintly, seemed to grow more distinct, then faded away, only to recur a few moments later.

I could not for the life of me make out what it was, and after a while I began to grow a trifle anxious, because, apart from the darkness of the night and the uncertainty as to what was going on around me, my perch was so unsteady that I dared not move without risk of toppling over.

The rustling ceased. There was complete silence; not even my neighbour the owl spoke. The flies appeared to have gone elsewhere, and the silence was so intense that you could have felt it.

The minutes dragged on in this deathly quiet. To me they seemed hours . . . then I heard the rustling again. It was just behind and below me . . . followed an interval of silence, then the cracking of a twig. It sounded like a gun, and I sat rigid, keyed up to an intensity of suppressed excitement which can only be really understood when experienced.

Something big and formidable had broken that twig. Things were beginning to happen . . . we were nearing the climax. It is a curious feeling, to be sitting in a tree, shrouded in black darkness, in the heart of an Indian jungle, and far from any material aid. I was not certain that the tiger was not a man-eater and an adept at springing

on to his quarry. At any rate, if he felt so inclined, he had only a few feet to jump. Perhaps he was manoeuvring for the take-off!

I turned my head ever so slowly, peered into that almost impenetrable gloom, and by such light as came down from the stars and the heavens I made out a huge creature creeping slowly past my tree.

It was, at that moment, and to my distorted imagination, a gigantic form, and what amazed me was that it made no noise. It seemed to be moving like a shadow through space. Then it came right up to my tree and stood perfectly still. By gripping the rifle at the fore-end and leaning down I could have touched it. I knew it must be something animate, for I could hear it breathing. If only it would move and transform itself into life and activity it would relieve the tension, for, what with the black night, the deathly stillness, and that creeping phantom below me, I seemed to be shaking in every limb.

At last it moved forward, after what seemed to me to be hours, but it can only have been a minute or two. It was followed almost immediately by another and still more massive form!

The whole situation now crystallized itself in my mind. The leading one was the tigress, who invariably goes ahead to reconnoitre for her companion; the second was the tiger himself.

By this time I had become accustomed to the darkness, and the noise that the tigress made as she moved on to the "kill" and started to clear away the branches was an extraordinary relief to my harassed mind. But still the tiger did not join her. He was now comparatively distinct, and was standing motionless at about fifteen yards to my left front. Here was the demon who had terrorized

the simple countryside, whose range was thirty or forty miles in a single night. It was due to me to put a term to his murderous activities, and I certainly felt the weight of my position.

I slowly raised my rifle, took as accurate an aim as possible under the circumstances with my night sight . . . and let drive. As the sound of the shot crashed through the jungle, the tiger leapt into the air and gave one roar. . . . such a roar! Then he crashed into my tree, and it can be imagined that with ten feet of length and twenty-eight stone of weight against that frail growth, I was within an ace of toppling over from the shock. Then he ricocheted off and bumped into another tree, roaring and growling to such an extent that pandemonium seemed to be let loose. After that he lay quiet for awhile, but heavy breathing proved that he was hard hit.

At the sound of the shot, the tigress went off, leaving no trace behind her, and shortly after this I heard the elephant approaching in the distance. The tiger's stertorous breathing and his occasional savage grunts indicated quite clearly that he was in no mood to be disturbed, and so when the elephant came within range, I called out to the driver to stand fast.

As already remarked, tigers dislike the sound of human voices. I heard him rise slowly and move off in front of me as though seriously crippled. I then called up the elephant, which came right under my tree, and stepped from my perch on to its broad back. The Indian tracker had brought a hurricane lantern with him, and taking this, I leant down from the elephant, whilst we cruised around over the scene, trying to ascertain to what extent the tiger had been hit. I afterwards realized that this was a crazy thing to do, but then we never seem to reckon the

possible consequence of our acts in similar circumstances.

Finally I decided to go back and resume the search the next day. Dawn came, and after coffee and a biscuit, I set out to the scene of the previous night's adventure, picked up the trail, which I followed on foot, and from then onwards we were conscious of the tiger's nearness.

The track led up over the undulating ground and through comparatively open jungle, with clumps of bamboo and here and there bushes and grass, in some cases two or three feet in height. It was easy to follow the trail, for the leaves were spattered with blood, and twice we came across a place where the tiger had been lying down, for the ground was pressed out and blood smeared and congealed on the leaves. Beyond the last of these two places the trail petered out. I could not imagine why it had suddenly disappeared. I then stood still and had a careful look round. In front of me, about thirty yards away, was a ditch some ten feet deep and twelve to fifteen feet wide. It was evidently the bed of an old stream and covered with bush and short grass—just the place where a wounded animal might go in search of quiet and shelter. I went down into the ditch and, arrived at the bottom, knelt down to examine the ground. There, sure enough, was a leaf with a drop of blood on it, quite fresh. Obviously the tiger had passed there shortly before.

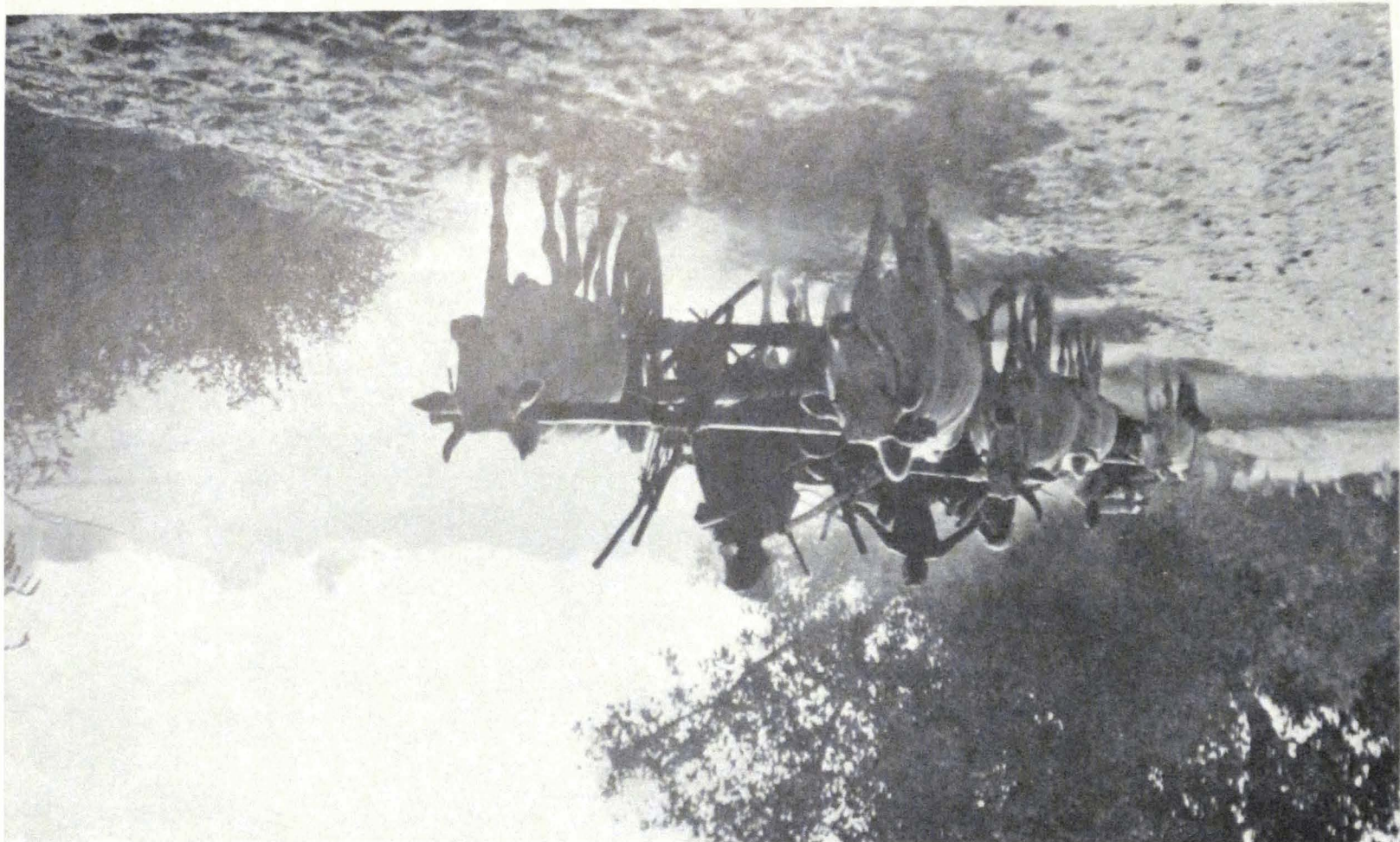
Immediately behind me was one of my trackers, and as I raised my eyes to glance round and show him the leaf, I saw the tiger staring intently at me from under a bush, which we afterwards found was fourteen paces distant!

He was regarding me with a most intense look and moving ever so slowly in my direction. I was electrified at the critical position we were in, hemmed in, as I was, by this deep and narrow ditch, with no chance whatever of



A 10-ft. TIGER SHOT BY THE AUTHOR

THE ROADS BELOW THE HIMALAYAS ARE SHADY, BUT THE
DUST IS ALL-ENVELOPING.



putting up a favourable fight. At the same time, it is strange how fate comes to the rescue and suggests a way out of what appears to be certain death.

I remember passing in flashlight review what I should do if I wanted to live. I recalled having read or heard, perhaps many years before, that if you look fixedly at a wild animal and do not attempt to dash away, it will be temporarily nonplussed, whilst it is making up its mind what you are going to do and what it intends to do itself. This does not take very long. No time must be lost. A sort of film was passing with lightning rapidity before my mind, urging me that unless I decided without a second's hesitation, I should be in the grip of an immense tiger with a fighting weight of over 400 lbs.

The film was passing with incredible speed. It seemed to say that if I fired at the tiger and missed, or only wounded him again, nothing could save me from the death struggle. The other suggestion was to look at him as fixedly as the ground and the tensivity of the moment would allow, retreating slowly up the bank of the ditch, beyond which was the elephant, about seventy yards away. I chose the latter, stared with all the intensity I could command, backed slowly up the bank out of that terrifying presence, and reached the top in safety. There I mounted the elephant to cruise along the edge of the gully, but no trace of the tiger could we see. One must live in the Indian jungles and have close and intimate knowledge of jungle lore to appreciate how a tiger, despite its size, can so easily efface itself.

The earth might have swallowed him up, so completely had he disappeared. For two hours we cruised around, searching the long grass and every nook and cranny over a wide radius—all to no effect.

At last, when the burning May sun had climbed into a

blue sky and was casting shadows across the trees, I nudged the mahout, or elephant driver, and directed him campwards. Again Fate was to play another trick with us ; the mahout, in turn, gave the elephant a prod, the huge animal started forward and within six paces kicked up against the tiger !

A tawny mass rose up, a chaos of gleaming teeth, viciously laidback ears, and such roaring as only a wounded tiger can emit. I remember seeing it trying to climb up the elephant's trunk to get on to its head ; at first the elephant faced the charge and made desperate efforts to dislodge his enemy, whilst I was endeavouring to give the knock-out shot. What with the swaying of the elephant, and the difficulty of retaining my seat on the pad, to which one had to cling to avoid being thrown to the ground, this was no easy matter.

Then the elephant took fright, always a critical moment, for they become demoralized and only time and a quiet corner can restore their usual calm. The immense bulk turned tail and bolted, but the tiger, never losing his grip, hung on to the side.

So there we were, myself dislodged by the sudden swaying and *volte-face*, swinging like the pendulum of a clock, the tiger alongside roaring in my ear, the flying elephant in full cry through the jungle, and the mahout calling loudly on Allah to save us. What a picture for the movies !

Fortune favoured us, for a mighty kick from the elephant, aided by the friendly branches of a tree, swept the tiger from his perch as we raced through the jungle.

For the greater part of our record sprint the tiger was alongside me, and I afterwards realized that the wound being in the lower part of the body he was paralysed

from the hips downwards. This prevented him using his hindquarters, so essential for the spring.

The final lap took us through a nullah and up the opposite bank into a clearing, and here the mahout managed to pull up the elephant. It was far too agitated, however, and in such a state of fury, trumpeting and pawing the ground, that nothing would induce it to return for a further search. A second elephant had to be requisitioned to round up the quarry ; it was the largest tiger I have ever shot and measured ten feet two inches.

CHAPTER XII

STRANGE SHIKAR

Hunting Echoes from the ancient past—The all-embracing wish of a Chinese—Some queer dishes and their contents—Bird's nest soup and hashed dog for the rich—Choice of cooked eggs in the Tarim Desert—Queer superstition of whistling in Mongolia—Meeting with chieftain who discusses death and making punishments fit the criminal—Dogs—The Great Wall of China—The wonder palace of Kublai Khan—His pleasure gardens and stolen trees—How Marco Polo first saw the celebrated rope trick—Fabulous Oriental jewellery—The Kob-i-nur.

ALL over Northern India, Central Asia, and the lesser-known East, strange customs are still prevalent, many of them relics of past superstition and veneration such as are interesting and provoking to the student of the curious. Mystery, old as Buddha, and curiosity, young as Aladdin and his lamp, are to be found for the seeking. The collector of the unusual can add big game to his bag, not to be found in deep forests or remote mountains, so much as wherever primitive people are gathered together to pass their limited lives and ancient cities guard the secrets of olden times.

Up in these strongholds of the past, where to-day and a thousand years ago are much the same, can be discerned some of the lost secrets of man and the last secrets of Nature. They come as echoes of voices calling from the battlements of bygone ages and they dot the present with points of interest.

A story is told of a certain Chinese who, after consulting a genii, was told that he might see the realization of one wish, but only one. After much thought the

Chinaman evolved a request that seemed to him to cover the whole gamut of earthly happiness, contentment and success. He wished that he might be alive to see his great grandson eating the finest rice of the country off golden plates. This, of course, ensured that he would live to a good old age, be prosperous, and that famine would never darken his declining years.

It is difficult to ask why a Chinaman shakes hands with himself when a guest is leaving, but this is possibly a gesture of consideration. In any case, some of the food the Celestial eats before dinner is over, and the moment for departure has arrived, is even more out of the way. Dried rats as an item of diet figure on the dinner-table, and you find them prepared in various ways, either boiled, roasted or grilled. There are many other such dishes to be had in China ; pigeons' eggs preserved for years in chalk ; the older the egg the better the taste ; sea-slugs with as many legs as a centipede, caught in the seas round Vladivostock ; stags' tendons, seaweed, and lotus seeds. A former Emperor of China, a noted epicure, handed down to posterity, amongst other recipes, one for the careful preparation of hashed dog which was thought to be a febrifuge. At the same time, rather fortunately, the price of the best quality dogs and cats placed them beyond the reach of all except the wealthy.

One of the most expensive dishes consists of bird's nest soup made from the nests of swallows found along the Chinese coast. Slung hammock-wise on the wall, in appearance this nest resembles isinglass and is really the mucous secretion formed by the salivary glands of the bird. This is vomited by the swallow, which then turns the material into a nest and fastens it against the wall or under a cliff. The trade in these nests is considerable and high

prices are often realized for what is considered a dainty morsel. The soup is produced by the process of boiling the nest with a suitable flavouring of spices.

Travelling northwards from Tibet, and crossing Turkistan, one reaches the borders of the Tarim Desert, vast, mysterious, and unexplored. Here and there are marshes stretching away like mist. This is the country of the Lob Nor, where the people make a display of original hospitality to strangers. The young shoots of bulrushes cooked in fat are the leading tit-bit, garnished with every kind of duck and wild fowl's egg. There are so many different varieties of eggs to be boiled that it would be almost possible to have a different one for breakfast every day in the year, for the Tarim marshes are the breeding-ground of countless birds which in summer fly to Russia, Europe, and the lands of the south and west.

In Mongolia and Dzungaria the past unrolls like the pages of a book that is never out of date. As it was in the beginning is still now, and will be for a long time to come. With regard to meat and drink the Mongols and Kalmuks do things on the grand scale; the principal dish may often be a sheep roasted whole and served in a sitting position on a salver. This the host attacks with a scimitar, carving long strips from the back and neck for the guest of honour, adding to them by tit-bits from his own plate.

Where food as well as occupations are concerned, necessity is often the mother of invention. What appears fantastic in one country becomes almost a national dish elsewhere. One man's poison practically becomes another's meat, and dietetics, as well as environment, provide a never-ending influence on the human race. The South American gaucho becomes thirsty for the sight of blood since he

eats no fruit or vegetables, only meat ; the Irishman is lean and hungry on a diet of potatoes ; the American may grow aggressive without his leavening of grape fruit and tomato juice.

A short time since, an American professor caused a stir in his own country by proclaiming that the man who whistles betrays an inferiority complex and is often little more than a half-wit.

This pronouncement reminded me of an experience I once had in Mongolia, near the borders of Russia and China, on which occasion a bottle of cherry brandy unexpectedly stood me in good stead. I had arrived in camp, and without thinking began to whistle a little tune. I was hardly aware what I was doing, but my action caused an immediate sensation. The Mongol chief, betraying great alarm, rushed up to me. "Why have you done that," he shouted, the expression of concern on his face being so pronounced that I could with difficulty repress a laugh. "Do you not know," he continued, "that when a man whistles it is certain to bring disaster."

I expressed my regret, but it proved difficult to appease the chief. He was so indignant that relations reached breaking-point and I had to save my face by evolving a plan for smoothing out the trouble.

"In my country," I told the chief gravely, "we have a way by which the gods can be appeased. If we carry this out at once all will be well."

The chief listened eagerly, his relief being almost pathetic.

"Come with me," I said mysteriously, "and in a few minutes the danger will be over." I led the way into my tent, and there explained that if one looked up towards the Great Spirit through the glow of a

specially potent liquid, there need be no fear of consequences.

Thereupon I produced a bottle of cherry brandy which by good luck I had with me. Pouring out two glasses I held one up and looked through it with appropriate gravity, saying at the same time: "Oh, Great Spirit, this do I drink to your health, and in token of my everlasting shame at having whistled." The chief did not understand a word until it had been interpreted, but he was impressed. I sipped the drink and then, pouring out a second glass, asked him to do the same.

Very quickly his attitude towards me changed, for he enjoyed the cherry brandy, and insisted on drinking more, and I presented the bottle to him lest at any time in the future it might be necessary for him to mollify the spirit of disaster.

The sequel was that he got gloriously drunk and insisted on my being elected a lifelong member of the tribe, so I felt that, after all, whistling has its compensations.

"There is nothing," the chief exclaimed to me on another occasion, "that brings so much good fortune to a man as a drink from the sacred soup."

I asked him where this soup could be obtained, and of what it was made.

"In the Karakorum," came the reply, "but it is only prepared once in every seven years. At the end of the seventh year, according to our beliefs, it is necessary for man to purify himself, and a festival is held at the appointed monastery in the mountains. Great cauldrons eight feet deep are filled and in them the holy soup is brewed.

"After it has reached boiling point, the most aged monk amongst those present leaps into the cauldron and perishes. When he does this, pilgrims rush forward to

taste of the soup for they know the piety of the monk will cleanse them of all evil and assist them on their path to paradise.”

The soup therefore not only cleanses them of all unrighteousness, but is a passport to Valhalla.

The old chief, when he felt in the mood, told me queer details of life amongst the Mongolians.

“When a man dies,” he said, “it is not our custom to bury the body, but to place it on a hillock near camp or leave it on the plain for the dogs and birds of prey. Since the soul of a man rises after death, air burial is best for the body. If the birds do not dispose of it quickly then is it taken as a sign from the Great Spirit that the man was wicked . . . his relatives are consequently collected and given a sound beating as a warning for the future.” The sins of the father visited upon the children indeed! “But if a man is detected in wickedness before his death he is placed in prison. Since we are wanderers we use a wooden box about five feet long for this purpose, two feet deep and two wide, the criminal being placed in it. There he remains unable to lie down or stand up.”

“What about food,” I asked.

“It is passed through a hole in the box.”

“How long is he kept in this position?”

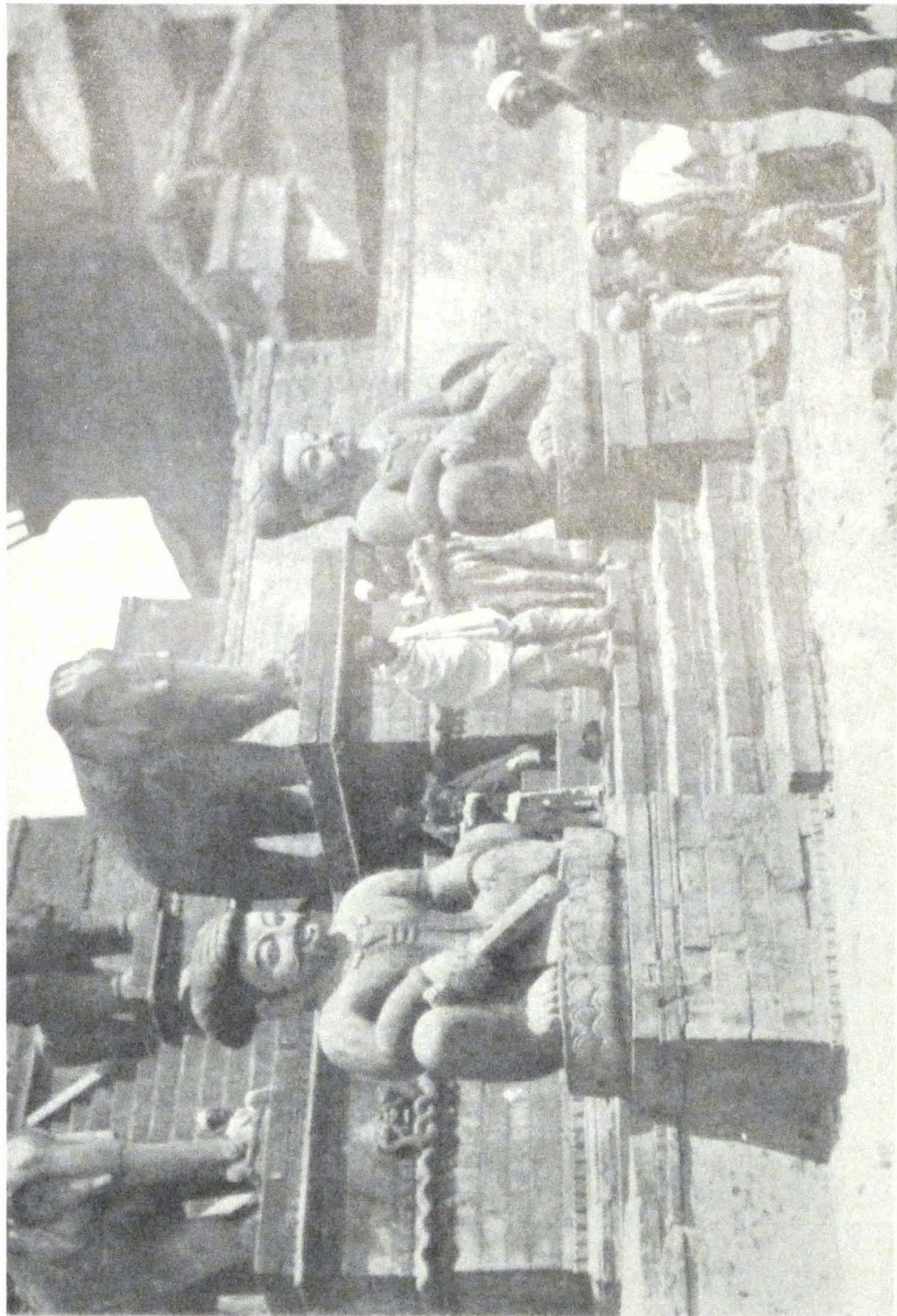
“Maybe for weeks or months, according to his punishment.”

“Is he never allowed to get up?”

“Once a day for a few minutes.”

There are times in Mongolia when the temperature drops twenty degrees below zero, and I suggested that the poor fellow might freeze to death even if he was not paralysed first.

“That is true,” the chief replied, “many of them die,



GODS OF THE ATHLETES AND THE DARING GUARD THE ENTRANCE
TO THIS TEMPLE



ANYONE MIGHT FALTER BEFORE THIS DANCER

but large numbers live. Their limbs, however, often become shrunken and useless.”

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I heard, too, of the medicine man of China and Mongolia whilst on this same trek. Doctors, apparently, here as elsewhere in Cathay, are paid by results and summoned to live in the patient's tent until the latter either recovers or dies.

“Our medicine men are very wise,” a headman told me. “They have found that the body consists of 367 squares, and each square corresponds to a particular disease. In searching for the disease they puncture a square with a needle, and if they happen to puncture the wrong one they go on to the next. They continue to do this until they discover the correct one.”

The Chinese have a proverb that a rich man covers his faults with gold, but a doctor with earth. I thought that this indeed must often have been the case.

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Amongst some tribes in Northern India, dogs, at one time, were considered superior to human beings. In certain remote villages the bodies of the dead were taken to the dogs before burial in the belief that canine glances would attract good luck for the future. So averse were villagers to killing dogs that they would put them in sacks and then place them on trains, this being the only method of getting rid of them without resort to capital punishment.

Tibetans believe that if a stranger takes a dog from a village their good luck will go with it.

Moslems, however, have a curious aversion to dogs in almost any form. There is, of course, the famous instance

of the fate of the canine population of Constantinople, who, when they exceeded the bounds of convenience, were deported to an island in the Bosphorous, where they were left to howl at night and prey upon each other, until famine and thirst wiped them out.

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Astronomers tell us that the only thing on earth that could be seen from the moon is the Great Wall of China. This immense structure stretches from the Yellow Sea to the borders of the province of Kansu, a distance of 1,900 miles, and is a monument to Chinese endurance, tenacity and patience.

Mystery shrouds the creation of many of the most famous monuments of antiquity, but the start of the Great Wall is clear enough for historians as well as archæologists. It came into being in this way. In 219 B.C. there reigned in China one Tsin Shih Hwang Ti. The perpetual raids of nomad Huns and Tartars had proved a burden and a nightmare to China. No human bodyguard could defy these incursions, until one day the idea was conceived that if the enemy could not be kept out he must be shut out with a wall so long that he would become like a man locked in his room. The plans necessary for such a colossal enterprise might well have appalled any mortal, but Shih Hwang Ti knew exactly what he wanted and how to get it. Tradition says that he took a map, drew a line from Shanhaikwan, 35 miles north-east of Peking, boldly across China to the deserts of Kansu, the territory beyond being comparatively safe by reason of its physical obstacles and waterless nature, and said, "Let there be a wall." And there was a wall!

Coming from a Chinese emperor of the old school

such a command would be final enough, though in this case it was merely the beginning, and not the end of the matter. Having decided upon the wall, he next directed the ways and means by which it could become an accomplished fact. It would have to cross ranges of high mountains, traverse deep valleys, span patches of wilderness and start out on one of Nature's obstacle races. Shih Hwang Ti did not hesitate. He allocated an army of a quarter of a million men, brought out prisoners and every criminal he could lay hands upon, and transported whole tribes from different parts of China, placing reserves of labour at intervals along the line of the wall. The resources of the empire were mobilized to meet the requirements of this army of workers distributed over 2,000 miles of country.

No actual figures exist of the men and animals necessary to complete this gigantic undertaking, but old Chinese writings record that approximately only one load in fifty arrived at its destination, the remainder being requisitioned on the way. Even so, construction went on apace, and in fifteen years the wall was finished. History has no parallel to match this amazing architectural feat, both as regards the numbers of bricks and material used and men employed.

From time to time the wall was repaired and endowed by successive dynasties; after the lapse of nearly twenty centuries it is still in a fair state of preservation, and portions of it have even been suggested as tracks for motor racing. The breadth of the wall varies with the section; in the eastern part, near the Yellow Sea, it is 25 feet high, 25 feet thick, and 15 feet wide along the top. The sides are of brick or shaped stone, but the central part is filled with earth and rubble well beaten down. It is said that the bones of many workmen have gone into the

framework of the Great Wall. For long distances over this incredible work it is possible to drive a carriage and pair, and in parts of the eastern section, two carriages can be driven abreast along the summit. Throughout its entire length the wall once boasted upwards of 18,000 towers, each a miniature fortress; at every danger point a signal beacon was erected so that in event of attack on any particular section reinforcements could be rushed up from elsewhere.

The wall starts from Shanhaikwan, and it rises sheer from the edge of the ocean. Soon after leaving the sea, it bids farewell to the plains, ascending sturdily and steadily towards the hills 300 miles away. Here it goes in for mountain climbing at an altitude of 5,000 feet. The immensity of the work becomes apparent; the dizzy heights over which it climbs, the precipices to which it clings, impress the imagination. In places it is actually necessary to climb with the aid of ropes, but the Great Wall scorns any such assistance. The onlooker is struck with amazement at the idea of building anything in such an inaccessible region; the mind boggles at the thought of an army of bricks marching straight across Nature, taking all obstacles in its stride, and providing a wonder brought into being in obedience to the will of one man.

The scenery over much of this area is magnificent, but for long distances there are no signs of life, no voices to this vast, voiceless panorama, and the wall pursues its way in a silence cold as the stone that cut Asia in half and built a boundary for war.

All along the mountainous section the general state of preservation is good; several passes are crossed, such as the Nankow Pass, where the wall is strengthened by a system of fortification that held the Mongol leader Genghiz

Khan in check during the thirteenth century, although he ultimately broke through at another point. From the Nankow Pass the wall is now a mere ridge of earth and stone crowned at intervals with crumbling towers. About 1,100 miles from its starting point, it passes the Yellow River, thereafter losing its size and dignity, to become a mere rubbish-heap of stones. The Yellow River, running north and south, constituted a second line of defence, the wall not being considered so important there as the more vital section guarding Peking from northern invasion. It finally peters out altogether upon the borders of Chinese Turkistan, a gallant old warrior who marches face foremost into alien land and finally falls down and dies in a far country rather than suffer the stigma of a too speedy return.

That is the story of the Great Wall that rises out of the sea at Shanhaikwan and flows across the face of China to Turkistan and the central mountains—deliberate, far-reaching, incorruptible! I wonder how many people living or dead have walked its length and what they have gained thereby of any sense of buttressed adventure? The wall was the determination of a king in terms of stone. Nothing shook its advance; nothing hindered its completion. In vain Canute tried to hold back the ocean waves from advancing, but the wall succeeded in halting the waves of human invasion that had been restrained in their turn from turning south into the plains of India by the ramparts of the Himalayas.

There was nothing small or limited about the gesture made by a Chinese emperor in the face of the evils that beset him from beyond his own borders. Take note, ye gardeners and city craftsmen, who are afraid of being too free with your material. Take note, ye stiff-necked

ironmongers, who teach people to surround their land with cages of wire. This was not a fence to shut out neighbours, but a barrier to exclude nations. A guardian, not a gaoler, it was one of the last defences of Iran against Turan before the coming of gunpowder. Has peace ever before made such a visible answer to war? Have the disciplined forces of stability ever taken their stand in such a concrete form? Men who are frightened by many enemies usually hire a cunning lawyer, or they take to their heels and run round a sharp corner. They never stand astride their land and build a wall so high and broad that they are safe from interference. In the Middle Ages they put up battlements behind which to live in peace; and these they hedged with a moat of water. But in China they did but the one thing and that they did properly. A Roman Emperor passing by would have said: "*This is a wall.*"

The palace of the old Chinese emperors in Kanadu must have been a wall of China on a minor scale and it may have accustomed the emperors to the idea of making such an immense architectural gesture.

Marco Polo, in his book of travels,* describes in detail the wonders of this pleasure palace.

"In the first place," he says, "is a square enclosed by a wall and deep ditch; each side of the square being eight miles in length, and having at equal distance from each extremity an entrance gate, for the concourse of people resorting thither from all quarters. Within this enclosure there is, on the four sides, an open space one mile in breadth where the troops are stationed; and this is bounded by a second wall, enclosing a square of six miles, having three gates on the south side and three on the north, the

* "Travels of Marco Polo."—Everyman's Edition.

middle portal of each being larger than the other two and always kept shut, excepting on the occasions of the emperor's entrance or departure. Within this walled enclosure there is still another of great thickness and its height is full twenty-five feet. The battlements of crenated parapets are all white . . . the spaces between one wall and the other are ornamented with many handsome trees and contain meadows in which are kept various kinds of beasts, such as stags, the animals that yield the musk, roe-bucks, fallow-deer, and others of the same class."

The palace itself was a one-storied building, raised ten spans above the level of the ground, with a wall of marble and a special terrace concealed from sightseers outside. The sides of all the apartments and walls were ornamented with dragons and other representations of birds and beasts. Marble steps carried the traveller to the visions of loveliness within. The roofs of the different rooms were of red, green, azure and violet. The floor of the audience hall was of beaten gold. Not far from the palace was a large mound of earth, a kind of celestial Kew, about a mile wide, into which the great Khan transplanted any trees in his kingdom which took his fancy, transporting them to his pleasure garden with the help of elephants.

Kublai Khan, so Marco Polo tells us, once prohibited all species of gambling, which he considered to be a form of cheating.

"The whole of Cathay is my property," he declared in a manifesto; "those who gamble are sporting with possessions that do not belong to them."

Visitors, when they approached, showed respect for this king of kings by assuming a humble demeanour and not making the least sound. Every nobleman carried with him a vessel in which to expectorate, for no one dared to do

so upon the floor of the palace. They also took with them buskins of white leather, changing their shoes before they entered the court, this practice, Marco Polo declares, being necessitated in order that they should not spoil the beautiful Chinese carpet underfoot.

It was in the presence of Kublai Khan that Marco Polo saw the celebrated rope trick performed, being certainly the first white man ever to view this striking phenomenon.

In an age of facts, broadcast labels, and indefatigable explanations, the rope trick still stands alone as a mystery thriller. Everyone has heard the name; but only the fortunate few have ever seen it. So long has it remained seemingly inexplicable that there are those who maintain that the trick is a cunning deceit of the imagination, a noose thrown across the mind by fiction and never unleashed in the realms of reality.

The rope trick, as seen by Marco Polo at the court of the great Khan, had the full force of uneasiness and wonder behind its materialization. No Indian magician of to-day has been able to improve upon the effects produced.

The sorcerer, who had arrived from Kashmir, ancient home of magic, produced a wooden ball, a thong, and a small boy. Before the entire court, he threw the ball with the thong attached into the air and lo! it became rigid. The small boy began to climb the cord. Three times the magician called back the boy in tones that increased in fierceness. But the small boy continued to climb, and finally vanished. Then did the magician, uttering strange curses, climb after his satellite and disappear in his turn, whereupon were heard lamentations and hideous cries echoing from out of the empty air above the heads

* "The Perfume of the Rainbow."—Adams Beck.



THE ORCHESTRA IS POPULAR IN REMOTE ASIA



THESE MOUNTAINEERS ARE BORN GAMBLERS

of the astonished courtiers. And presently, as they watched, pieces of the lad, severed from his body, began to fall upon the floor and roll on the ground at the Khan's feet.

Then there came a fearsome sight, for the magician himself reappeared climbing down the rope, covered with blood and waving a dripping sword. Coming to the Emperor Kublai, he prostrated himself before the throne and spoke in words modified from their previous wrath. Rising to his feet, he amazed the onlookers still further, for he replaced the limbs of the lad, piecing them together skilfully and quickly. Passing his hands across the body he lightly kicked it, and lo! the boy sprang to his feet with a shout of laughter and shook his master's hand. The sorcerer and the boy bowed to all the court to show they were unharmed and well, but several of the ladies who had witnessed the grim performance were carried off swooning.

The interpretation of the rope trick has long been a bone of contention, and still provides an elusive quarry for the hunter. It has been suggested that it is no qualified mesmerism, but the employment of their spirit bodies by the conjurers, whose physical bodies are lying in a state of trance close at hand.

Marco Polo found much at which to wonder during his stay in Tartary, and he returned to Europe with his father in the guise of a dutiful son and not as one who departs willingly. It is curious to think that but for his journey, Christendom, until a few hundred years ago, would have known nothing of Cathay, and the biography of this mysterious, secluded region that kept itself so successfully out of history and geography books might still be mere fable. Never before or since has the tide of exploration turned so exclusively upon the walking tour of one man. What a film it would make!

Kublai Khan and his descendants, the Moguls, held no monopoly for the splendour and magnificence of their courts. All over India the craze for lavish adornment has tended to decrease little with the years. To this day people delight in hoarding treasure of all kinds, gold coinage has been found practically impossible to circulate, and numerous are the private possessions of value tucked away in corners of gardens or hoarded beneath mud floors.

In the matter of riches the Nizam of Hyderabad, with an income of perhaps three millions a year, and an estate the size of Britain, easily comes first. He has swords and sceptres blazing with jewels and a court paraphernalia that would have filled Louis XIV with envy in his princely palace of Versailles.

A story is told that a western visitor once inquired as to the quantity of gold bullion owned by the Nizam. He was asked by a court official to throw a stone as far as he could, and when he had done this, was informed that this distance could be filled with gold by the Moslem ruler. Taken to see the royal treasuries, where, sure enough, he saw millions of golden sovereigns, he remarked to the Nizam that such an unbelievable quantity of wealth would become even greater if it was put out to productive uses.

"True enough," the Nizam replied, "but if all this gold were to be taken away, what should I have left to look at?"

"Well," said the man from the West, restraining with difficulty his astonishment, "this is a very rare picture, indeed, so precious that no one will be able to buy it."

Where precious stones are concerned, different maharajahs take first place in the gilded display. Mention has already been made in an earlier chapter of the rose-pink pearls belonging to the Maharajah of Darbhanga, that once

hung round the neck of the ill-fated Nana Sahib. The Maharajah of Jodhpur has the finest emeralds of any of the princes, and the same may be said of Patiala in the matter of pearls.

The Gaekwar of Baroda owns one of the rarest treasures of all—a carpet sewn stiffly throughout its length and breadth with pearls, rubies and emeralds, an amazing opulent sight that takes the mind back to the Caliphs of Baghdad. The Gaekwar's wife, the maharani, has court dresses so laden down with gems that she has to be lifted to her feet in order to take part in state functions. The carpet is too precious to put on the floor and always hangs upon the wall: a strange picture full of hidden life and interest.

Yet of all the jewels that glitter in the East, stones of crystallized activity which have caught the cupidity or the attention of millions, the Koh-i-nur must easily come first.

In India the Koh-i-nur has always been called the 'Mountain of Light', famous as any of the snow mountains of the Himalayas, incomparable amongst the ranks of diamonds for the halo of romance with which it is surrounded and the hazards through which it has passed. Probably no precious stone has ever had so many human contacts or such a widespread influence and attraction. All the details of this gem, with a story more varied and striking than that of most monarchs, have never been fully traced. It provides a trail that cuts a path through a forest of events, leaving many stains of bloodshed behind.

Long before the Christian era there lived in the south of India a ruler who was King of Golconda, a region noted for its diamonds and the envy it aroused amongst

the other princes of Hindustan. It was here that the Koh-i-nur first came to light and made its appearance in a royal crown. Its beauty and lustre attracted all-comers; time passed on and the centuries brought added fame to the 'Mountain of Light'. Babar, during his march on Delhi in 1526, had encountered Ibrahim Lodi and Vikramajit, Rajar of Gwalior, defeated at the battle of Panipat. Humayun, his son, moving still farther south, captured the Vikramajit's family together with the Koh-i-nur diamond at Agra. During the triumphal durbar which followed, Humayun handed over the diamond to his father. Babar looked at it in amazement and the words he spoke are worth recording :

"This stone must be worth half the daily expense of the world."

From Humayun the diamond passed through the hands of the Mogul emperors Akbar, Jehangir, and Shah Jehan, who more than lived up to the reputation of the Koh-i-nur with the lavish splendour of his display. It was Princess Jehanara, daughter of Arjamand Banu, the young wife for whom he built the Taj Mahal, who was instrumental in preserving the diamond from theft and surrendering it to Shah Jehan's son Aurengzebe, with the prophecy that the end of his dynasty was at hand.

Nadir Shah, the despot of Persia, now entered the lists of events. Not only did he covet the wealth of India; he aimed especially at possessing the Koh-i-nur as well as the peacock throne. He easily captured Delhi and Mohammed Shah in 1739, but of the jewel he sought there was no trace. The entire city was ransacked in vain, yet no clue to its whereabouts could be found.

The feminine element was then called in to assist in the diamond hunt; the leading lady in the harem of

Mohammed Shah was captivated by Nadir, and revealed to him the hiding-place.

So great a value, apparently, did Mohammed Shah place upon the gem that he carried it about securely hidden within the folds of his turban, never parting from it either day or night.

Nadir took stock of the situation. There were several courses open to him. He could cause his captive guest to be robbed, he could secretly ply him with wine and then obtain possession of the coveted stone, or he might quite simply commit murder. Nadir, however, had a sense of the fitness of things, and of the power of Eastern hospitality. He invited Mohammed Shah to a magnificent banquet at Delhi and here a high compliment was paid to the fallen ruler by employing a custom current in the East.

If you are an oriental potentate and wish to show especial esteem for a guest, it is customary, amongst other things, after deprecating the quality of your own headgear to suggest, by way of mutual fraternity and goodwill, to exchange it with that of your guest. In Europe such an exchange of compliments and headgear might not appeal to many, and those economically inclined would probably leave their best hats at home. In the East, however, you are often judged, *inter alia*, by your headgear, so that the higher your rank the finer it must be.

The banquet proceeded. Towards the end Nadir Shah proposed the health of his guest in a graceful speech, suggesting in conclusion that they should exchange turbans. It was an anxious moment for Mohammed Shah; not even a conjurer could have extracted the diamond lying in the folds of his headgear; not even a brave man, which he was not, could dare to refuse the request of the

bloodthirsty Nadir. Whilst he hesitated, the turban was removed from his head and another substituted. So passed the 'Mountain of Light' across the borders into Persia.

Ahmed Khan was the next conqueror to gain possession of the gem, which he took from Nadir's son who had been blinded by his own father. Appropriating the jewel, he remarked: "Of what value can such a wonderful stone be to a blind man?" The new ruler captured Kandahar and laid the foundation of modern Afghan power.

With the death of Ahmed Khan, the diamond passed from his son to his grandson, Shah Shuja, dethroned and driven out of Afghanistan in 1810, a phase which saw England and Russia manœuvring for paramount influence. Shah Shuja, fleeing from Kabul, sought refuge with Ranjit Singh, taking with him the precious Koh-i-nur, ill-starred to all its possessors since the start of its wanderings. The Sikh ruler at Lahore received the Afghan amir and granted his requests at a price—the surrender of the Koh-i-nur. Ranjit died soon afterwards, and ten years later the military state that he built up had ceased to exist following on the Sikh war of 1849. At the annexation of the Punjab, the Koh-i-nur passed to the British and entered upon the final stage of its long adventures.

The question of the disposal of the famous gem caused much discussion; eventually it was decided to present it to Queen Victoria, since the jewel, apparently, confined its evil influences and disasters to men only.

Pending its transfer to England, the Koh-i-nur was entrusted to the care of Sir John Lawrence, Commissioner at Lahore. Here it was nearly lost through an accident that might have swept it from the scene for ever. So as to be always with him, the diamond had been placed by Sir John in his waistcoat pocket, where he could feel

from time to time that all was well. One day, to his horror, he missed the waistcoat and heard that it had been sent by his servant to the laundry. Fearing the worst, he called in great agitation for the man, who told him that the waistcoat, had, indeed, been sent to the wash, but that he had first extracted a piece of glass found there lest it might make a hole in master's 'west'!

This narrow escape gave Sir John such a fright that he applied for permission to send the diamond to Bombay in safe custody. A trustworthy officer was detailed to take charge of the valuable packet and look after it during the hazards and dangers of transit.

In those days the road leading from Lahore to Bombay, thirteen hundred miles in length, swarmed with all manner of robbers and dacoits, to say nothing of the strangling fraternity of the Thugs. The route led into the very spider web of the Thug system, gloomy jungles and dark caves where Sleeman discovered many deep graves containing murdered people buried in fifties, the head of one at the feet of the next, after the approved Thug fashion. The track leading past this gruesome spot was known by the humorous name of 'Strangle Street', for the entire population of the district were Thugs deep dyed in villainies innumerable and flourishing on the proceeds of murder.

By luck and good management, however, the officer chosen carried the Koh-i-nur safely to Bombay, whence it was taken to London and presented in due course to Queen Victoria, ultimately becoming part of the Crown jewels. It now adorns the crown of Queen Mary, where it has found rest from its long career of wandering and adventure.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LOFTY SOLITUDES

The Heavenly Mountains—A race invited to come and stay—A wind out of Asia—Aspects of the mountains—Their spell—The voice of solitude—The Great White Wall.

HUNDREDS of miles north of the Himalayas, and east of China, are some of the most beautiful of all mountains. They are the Tian Shan, or 'Heavenly Mountains'. The Chinese have given them this name and they deserve the title. Some years ago I spent several happy months there.

The range is part of the central mountain system of Asia, separating the Tarim basin in the south from the Ili in the north and running from the confines of the Gobi Desert towards Turkistan, where, like the Great Wall, it finally merges into the plains. A fan-like arrangement of parallel heights, connected by transverse plateaux towards the south and south-east, it meets the Tibetan and Indian ranges on the Pamirs.

The Tian Shan has a frozen side to its many beauties possessing upwards of seven thousand glaciers and ice fields and yet, strangely enough, it only produces one river, the Ili, that empties its waters into Lake Balkash. The southern slopes, as with most other central Asian mountains, are almost bare of vegetation, but the northern side is covered with forests of pine, wooded dells, and glens filled with flowers of every description. Snow wastes are varied with the tinkle of streams, their banks carpeted

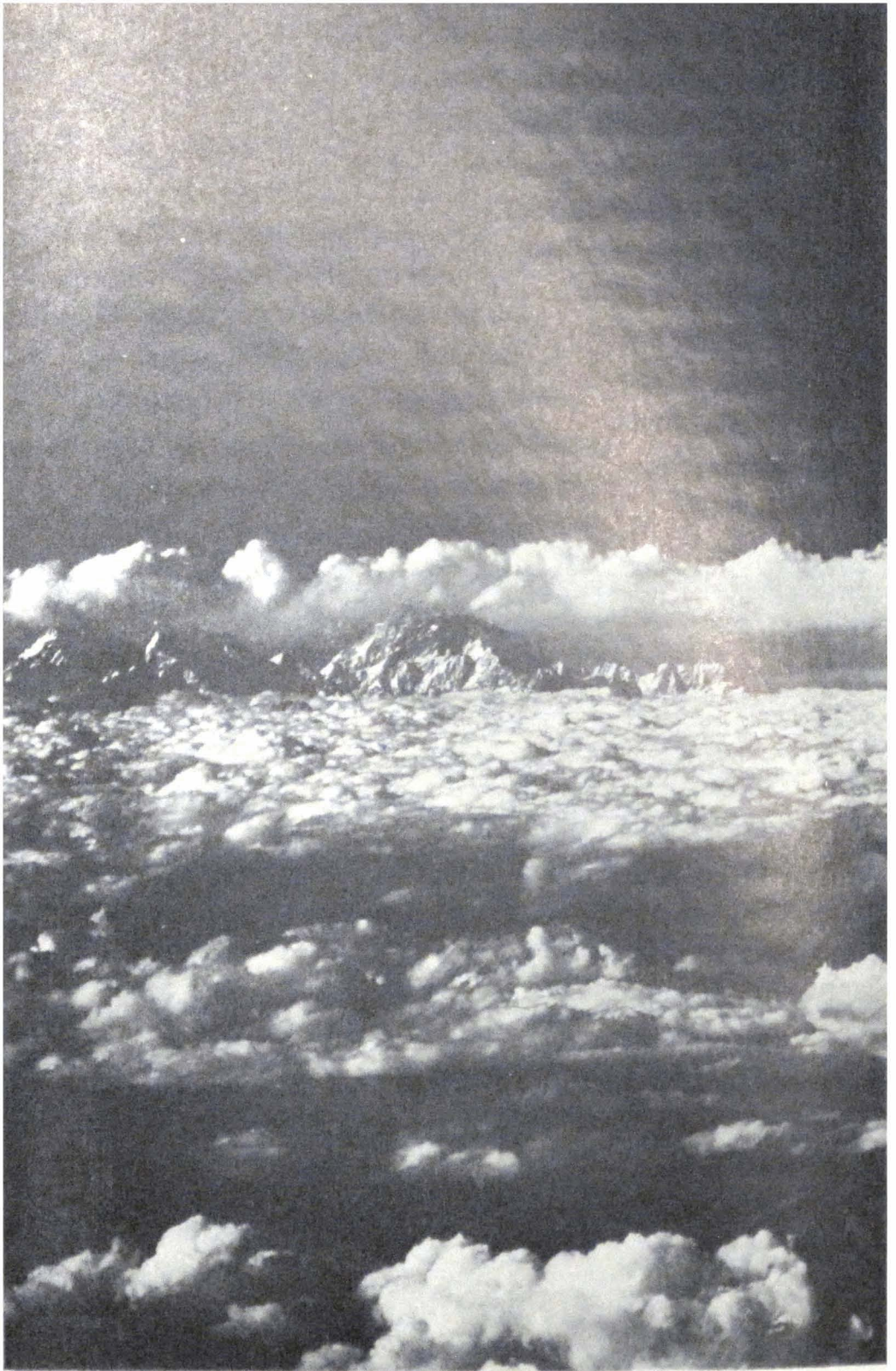
with turf, and from woodbine and briar comes the song of birds. A vista of majestic peaks and crags, of grassy slopes filled with game of all kinds, it is a beauty spot as yet unknown to Europe; these wonder mountains look down upon the Ili valley where many races have striven for mastery, whence Huns and Mongols have swept towards the riches of China, and where is now the happy hunting ground of Kalmuk, Kirghiz and Kazak.

In this valley can be learnt more of Asiatic history and of human struggles for supremacy than is obtainable from most books. This lofty and fertile land was once governed by Syrian kings; conquerors came from Persia, from distant Macedonia, and after the Huns appeared, the Uighurs, Turanian nomads, to be followed in their turn by the Mongols.

The Chinese emperors found the Heavenly Mountains so much in demand by hostile tribes that in 1771 they allowed a friendly nation to come and settle there. Marching on a journey of three thousand miles the Kalmuks left the Volga and migrated to the promised land, where they have remained ever since. History has no parallel to this march of a nation across Asia to settle in a new home, partly with the agreement of the Chinese as well as to escape the tyranny of the then existing regime in Russia. The journey has been immortalized by De Quincy in his "Flight of a Tartar Tribe". The Kalmuks set out from the Volga in the winter and reached their goal after eight months of fighting and marching. At first no taxes were levied on them, but later, an annual quota of horses and cattle was taken from their herds. The Kalmuks are Buddhists by religion and their general mode of life is similar to that of the Kirghiz. They wear their hair in pig-tails, make excellent hunters, and in their new setting



LOFTY HEIGHTS NEAR EVEREST THAT LOOK TOWARDS CENTRAL ASIA



KINCHINJUNGA IS ONE HUNDRED MILES AWAY

spend most of their days in the chase, days which, an Arab proverb relates, are not counted in the span of life.

In the Heavenly Mountains the Kalmuks have found their spiritual home, for there are few tribes so settled and contented. They supply an example of a whole race, and not mere solitary individuals, taking the law into their own hands and leaving inherited environments for the change of wider horizons. It is as if the Irish were to be asked by the president of the United States to take ship across the Atlantic and populate the sunny lands of northern Mexico, or the inhabitants of Jersey and Guernsey were suddenly induced to spend their lives farming some tropical island in the neighbourhood of New Zealand.

Change and movement are two of the swift horses ridden by destiny. Often they will approach an individual and, rising from his bed of settled habits, he will mount them with a cry of gladness and ride away ; but when entire races and tribes are captured by the drumming hoofs of migration, the settled order of things is soon upset and countries find themselves beleaguered.

Something there must be about the stretching spaces of Central Asia that has urged man to get into the saddle. There is a wind of movement that blows through these places like fate ; no tribe, it would seem, can escape its influence until they climb into the high peace of the mountains.

A young man grows up in the midst of civilization and takes a horse or a motor-car to gain greater freedom of action, or else he directs his footsteps to a ship in order that he may attain the still wider vistas of the sea. In his early manhood, desire descends upon him to spend his time upon a stage greater than any to be found in the places where he has lived. He puts on the spurs of adventure

before civilization, that ancient contentment, casting its lasso, has corralled him into the social fold and set him down to work.

A man wears certain clothes because others do the same ; he takes unto himself a companion because he feels lonely and unfulfilled ; he drinks his ale or wine since their property is to turn companions into good company, but when the voice of unrest whispers in his ear, he travels because he must. Horizon fever is the thirst of youth, not easy to quench, yet ever seeking fulfilment.

The battle between stillness and movement, between nomad and townsman, highlander and farmer, has been fought out in Asia through the centuries, sending its ripples of wanderers across the world. Central Asia has been like a high sea, breaking in migratory waves over neighbouring countries, storm being followed by a period of empty calm. First the mountains dominate with their brooding quiet, and then, born of the contrast between hot and cold, a high wind of activity rushes across neighbouring lands.

Where does it begin and where does it stop—this sudden unrest that has hit races of men with a scourge ? Some hidden strength seems to have resided in these central tablelands, some potency that caught the world when it was young and sent it spinning faster, but which is now fading and dying. Gradually the static symbol of the Great Wall is winning ; the wildness of Asia is being tamed.

And when there are no more untamed places left ? When the wilderness is no longer wild ? What a day of bitterness that will be. The fat, sleek hand of a modern civilization may come with picnic parties and cameras to shoot the final targets of strange beauty ; the shouting

voices of mechanism may take the place of solitude. Then will one wish for another Tamerlane or Genghiz Khan, rising again in all his barbaric wonder to place a veto upon foreign entry, keeping his realm safe for ancient geography.

Perhaps the Kalmuks are fortunate because they have found their Heavenly Mountains which have won and tamed them without doing violence to their instincts. The sea, restless and profound, lays its spell upon the young; moors are shaped for wanderers; cities supply resting places for the middle-aged and old, but mountains such as these have it within their power to be all things to all ages.

“I have lived my life on the plains and now I count myself fortunate to be in the land of the heavens.” So spoke an Eastern sage.

Of all physical features, mountains are amongst the most enduring, yet they change their aspect with the atmosphere, seldom repeating the same appearance. Winter covers them with glitter of whiteness, summer with a thousand flowers, the wind brings crowns of clouds and mist vapours that simple hillmen believe to be smoke from the kitchen of the gods; with the sun come stencilled shadows and that particular fadeless blue of the sky which is only to be found in the proximity of high peaks. The influence of these heights provokes movement and conquest whilst breathing the spirit of calm. In themselves mountains are a paradox, possessing a vitality that stands still. The mind of man, restless and changeable, mingling with them, loses itself in the immeasurable and rests content.

Environment makes for much in human development. Nature is a nurse who never leaves her charges unattended.

Babar, the Mogul, counted his war-won domains in India flat as boredom in comparison with the highlands of his upbringing. And few men have been more competent to judge than he.

Who, indeed, can decide the hidden influences and fluxes of the highest mountain ranges? Savage Landor, an invalid in Europe, discarded all doctors, and struggling to pack his trunks, became a man renewed when he felt the breath of his beloved mountains. Many a traveller before and since has found amongst them the kernels of strength and has returned attuned to new vibrations.

Climbers understand how the ascent of mountains is its own reward, while those who sit still in hut or monastery know of the satisfying quality of solitude spent in their presence. It is a strange fact how loneliness in the heat and beauty of the tropics can become sorrowful and degenerating, but how solitary days spent amid cold zones revitalizes and restores. Cares and troubles can still oppress the mind, but they seem diminished and far away, as happens when a man looks at his surroundings through the large end of the telescope.

The sea of the senses calmed, beauty now rests in the eye, or deeper within the mind.

A pinnacled panorama clusters around, obstructing and yet revealing. Sentinel peaks, uplifted and aloof, picket the sky, their brows wrapped here and there in vapour that casts blue shadows on the snow; shoulders and shelf are domed and cushioned in white, dazzling where the sun strikes fully upon them; there are mosques and minarets waiting to be completed—everywhere is a snowy architecture, save where splintered precipices, too sheer for clothing, sink darkly into chasms. Fantastic icicles frozen into strange, clustering formations, some glinting

green, some blue, poised in trembling uncertainty await their unknown fate ; lower down, if it is spring, the snow line merges into the first verdure, wild flowers are leaping into life, hanging torrents, solidified into stillness, are preparing to escape from captivity ; the world is melting into summer.

A wind, fresh as birth, springs up and blows across snow fields and down passes. The first signs of earth, brown and waterlogged as a sponge, appear ; the lowlands are musical with a thousand rills ; fir forests throwing off the coverlet of winter in sparkling snowfalls are filled with the explorations of birds that call to each other through the crystal air ; animals, besides those with horns, are abroad again—bears, grubbing in the thickets, marmots on the edge of their winter quarters ; little mouse hares ; beyond each vista and landscape is another and another, each intermingling and a little different ; and always there are dazzling fresh peaks and summits crowning the ridges, with blue spaces between, watching and waiting silently or thunderous with avalanches.

The earth is naked, flashing, elemental.

The voice of water is everywhere, rippling and dripping. Twinkling icicles, as you watch, melt away and vanish into nothingness.

An old monk or hermit shuffles out of his hut built from the surrounding forest and surveys the scene. He has a brown woollen gown hitched up a little so as not to hamper his long, hide boots.

Outside his dwelling may be a small praying bowl in which the passer-by can put gifts of sustenance ; but his needs are small and he lives upon the food of solitude.

He may remain, crouched close to the ground, for hours studying the landscape with brooding eyes or lost in inner contemplation. If there is a glacier stretching in front

of him, no cathedral has a greater air of cloistered calm. Amid such surroundings man must either indulge in violent effort or he must match repose with his own quietude. He may learn of the One that is all things.

The ancient monk remains until evening, motionless and quiescent, watching the shadows lengthen on the slopes and the chasms grow purple-mouthed.

The clear quiet of the sky is about him. The Nirvana of the sun! With slow dignity it sinks behind darkening peaks and is lost in a sea of gold. Like an eastern dancing maiden, the sunset trails soft scarves of amber and rose across the heavens. Out of the dusk, the complementary hues—pale green, blue and violet, gather to greet them, until the whole sky is turned to colour, and presently, when the glow has faded, the mountains mantle with pink. Darkness descends like a cloud of horsemen; the peaks glimmer a ghostly white momentarily and then are gone.

In the nescience of darkness, fresh light stirs, silver instead of gold, kindling the pale, flickering lanterns of the stars.

The Buddhist monk repairs to his hut at sunset and so to bed; the nomad and the hunter light fires to cook their evening meal and soon climb into the warmth of their felt tents. Storm will keep them shuttered there, but spring brings them out to range the land in freedom.

These are the mountains, hard with rock, fierce with tempests, serene in summer, jubilant in spring, terrible in winter, yet always holding man in a certain thralldom of spirit that must be experienced and cannot be expressed. The foothills, brown and green and vermilion, are the retainers, arrayed in spreading lines, who lead the eye and mind on and up towards the white-haired monarchs, powerful and profound in their isolation. Leaving the

ceaseless fret of existence in the plain, men climb up into a wild, free land, where tranquillity becomes a presence, with a force and sufficiency of its own. Spring sits upon the waterfall and eternity stands calm upon the abyss.

Aryans, Tartars, Mongols, Turkis, Pathans, wildmen, have all been touched in turn by the central heights, thought in classical times to be the end of all things. Man's mind is not built to measure spaces in millions of miles, or hyperborean highlands in tens of thousands of feet, so that this realm has always been a world apart, distinct from and above the ordinary levels of life. Highroads would lead to nowhere amid these tireless horizons, streets would be pathetic. It is a land of beginnings without endings. A man might walk a thousand miles without encountering any of the ordinary sights or noises of civilization: no echoes of human footsteps, no turning of traffic wheels, no cock-crow. Silence stretches in all directions—the white signpost where no name is written.

The voice of solitude can be caught sometimes in the hoarse murmur of streams, the challenge of wind blowing clear and shrill across newly-fallen snow, the movements of thaw, the sudden rush of the avalanche. Yet soon, if the wind drops, silence is supreme again.

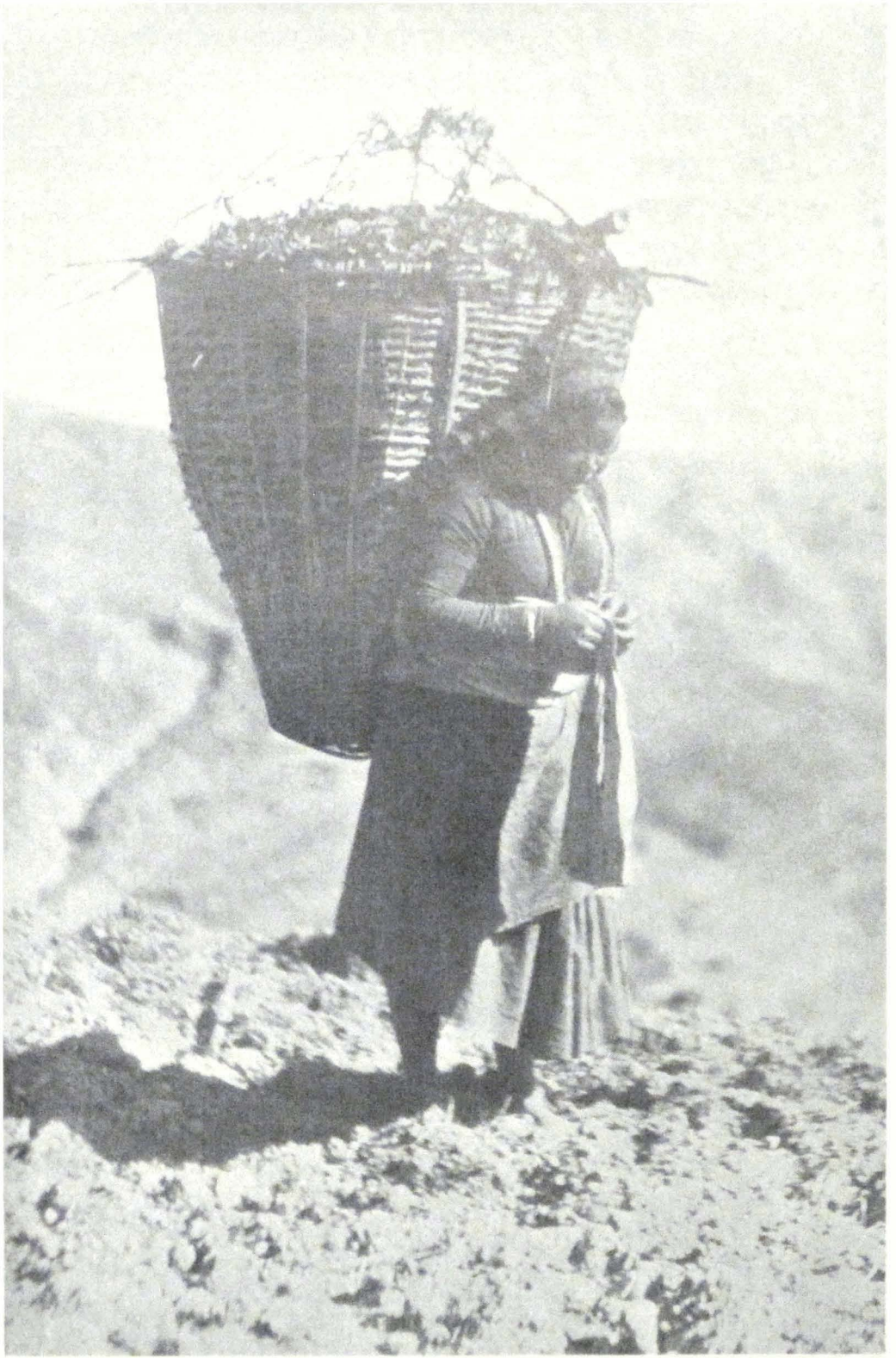
These mountains, remote, removed, have many of them never been trodden by the foot of man. These inhospitable wilds have never echoed like the New World of the Americas to gun of hunter and hatchet of trapper. They are sleeping in the early stages of history, untravelled and untrammelled. Long ago, and still at the present time, they are free from the contacts of civilization—a power and a law unto themselves.

Can a picture be made of solitary immensity? Can the almost unlimited be captured and depicted on canvas?

If Leonardo da Vinci had seen the summit of the earth, he, who knew how to put in the mystery of Nature as backgrounds to his portraits, would probably have painted for us some fierce-bearded nomad conqueror with the smile of a saint ; or else some mountaineer garbed in the habit of a monk. So wild and yet so quiet are the heights.

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And thus farewell to the far-off ranges which once seen can never be forgotten. No one who has contemplated them can forget the central mountain ranges of the earth. No one can compute their exact influence on the different races of men. In themselves they are the beginning and the end of movement, a barrier and yet a ladder. They are so far and high they seem to belong to some fairer and mightier world, where age and decay are transmuted into nothingness. There is a radiant insulation about them, above and beyond the ordinary cares and littleness of life ; despite their rigours, they are a compensation and inspiration, a reward for the unattainable that stirs the hearts of men.



A HIMALAYAN WOMAN IS A GOOD WEIGHT CARRIER.
THIS LOAD WEIGHED 120lbs.



THE GREENGROCER DOES A THRIVING TRADE

CHAPTER XIV

HIMALAYAS—CRADLE OF THE ARYAN RACE

Magnetism of mountains—The Aryan race, first invaders of Hindustan—Their culture and customs—Meeting with serpent-worshippers—Snake-thought in India—Precipitation from the heights—The way of an aeroplane—Rajputs—The modern Aryans—Debased races such as Gonds and Thugs—Everest aeroplanes visit Rajputana—Jodhpur with its polo—Udaipur a fairy-tale city—Farewell to the Himalayas.

THE wide world is narrowing down year by year, the unexplored spaces on the map are gradually being reduced, and soon there will be little left for geographical ambition.

Centuries have gone by and still the Himalayas attract followers in ever-increasing numbers, some of whom have come to regard the mountains in the light of human beings, and share their companionship and experiences. In the northern wall of India are to be found 2,000 miles of mountains, with a hundred peaks thrusting higher than those in other parts and twenty that overtop 26,000 feet. Were the Alps to be transported here, the difference would hardly be noticeable at first sight, so small would be the change.

For seven or eight months in the year, Tibet and the inner ranges put on a shroud of white, then summer and spring arrive almost together. Roses, rhododendrons, and wild flowers cover the hillsides; there are patches of

sky-blue poppy and the song of blackbird and lark ; lower down, bamboo forests screen waterways that quiver with dragon-flies and brilliant butterflies. In winter the atmosphere is braced with fifty degrees of frost, and nomads and monks contrive to keep warm by wearing thick furs inside out.

Long ago when the Indo-Aryans were advancing into India from the north-west, spreading southward over the land in the Indus valley, and eastward to the great barrier dividing China and Tibet from Hindustan, they probably felt an affection for the snowy heights and lofty uplands which had been their earlier home. Marching over the plains and looking up from the heat and dust they must have seen there in imagination the ancient home of their race, where dwelt the spirits of their ancestors, and where in the fullness of time they, too, might pass to their fathers. Just as the Greeks had Olympus, whose snow-crowned summits hid the assembly of the Hellenic deities from mortal eyes, so the Aryans had their Himalaya, or Abode of Snow, which were eventually to become the home of more modern Hindu gods.

The shrines of the principal Hindu deities are in the Himalayas ; by the Hindus they are regarded as sacrosanct, and more merit is obtained by a pilgrimage to them and the snowy peaks than to any of the numerous goals of pilgrimage throughout the East. The Buddha was born within their shadow near the Nepaleset Indian border.

Apart from these attractions and the wide field open to the student of mythology, Everest has exercised an hypnotic fascination for explorers since it was discovered in 1852 to be the highest mountain in the world.

Then came the idea of a flight to the mountain ; it was no new one. Many years ago Jules Verne allowed himself

to play with the subject and conceived the idea of cruising over its summit in a search for the unknown. More recently it was revived by the expeditions attempting the assaults on foot, and in 1921 it was proposed to use an aeroplane. But the machine was considered from the point of view of an auxiliary to the climbers, rather than as a camera in the clouds that would photograph actual results of exploration.

Tinged with the vivid beliefs of the people and ever regal in its own majesty, the Himalayan region has proved a power-house of destiny for the human race. Through the ages various conquering cultures have grown up here, and have overflowed in emigrating waves to the south and west. Greeks and Scythians, Parthians and Bactrians, Mongols and raiding Mohammedans—all came this way.

The greatest and oldest of these historical ebullitions was probably the arrival of the Aryans two thousand years and more before the start of Christian history. Ethnologists and antiquarians have found them a puzzle, increasing rather than diminishing with the years. Some have even gone so far as to say that the Aryans never really existed, but they are the kind of people who would deny any reality to Shakespeare. It is safe to say that the race, advanced beyond all others in the gentle arts of civilization, and fair, rather than brown or yellow, did live in the land of the Jaxartes and Oxus rivers, and that for some reason they filtered in successive waves into Northern India, repopulating the Punjab.

Tall, slender, well-built men, notable for their straight, well-bridged noses, they worshipped Indra, the Cloud god, and Agni, the Fire god, and they brewed spirited alcohol which they drank to Pushan, the Pathfinder, when

they started on their wanderings. They evolved a primitive vocabulary which is the foundation of most of the literary languages of Europe, India and Persia. Indian, including Sanskrit, Aryan, Celtic, Hellenic, Italic, the Latin languages, Slavonic and Teutonic, comprising Norse, German, Saxon and Dutch, all are derived from the Indo-European or Aryan language.

The names of the sun, moon and stars, simple parts of the body and most intimate relationships and numbers up to ten, date back to the early vocabulary founded by the Indo-Europeans of Central Asia. In course of time the community of tribes split up, some travelling into Persia and India, others moving westward; in new homes they evolved many fresh customs, grafting differences to the old social stem according to environment. The word Aryan began to include so much that to certain critics it has come to mean nothing at all.

Details of these Aryan invaders and their ways are given in the Rig-Veda and Mahabharata, earliest epic hymns of Indian literature. They show that not only were the Aryans in a state of civilization far in advance of their neighbours, but were the first race in the world to acknowledge the liberties of women. The father of the family was patriarch, fighter and farmer, but his wife was his equal in the house, and they prayed together at dawn and sunset.

It is strange to think that in 2000 B.C. women had greater freedom in India than they have to-day.

The exact dates when these fair-skinned peoples, called Aryan or 'Noble', streamed down into India is unknown; the process probably extended over hundreds of years. These civilized conquerors must have brought their women with them for they maintained their type all

through the Punjab and Rajputana. In the Vedic hymns, the Dasyas, aboriginal inhabitants of India, are described as a reddish Mongoloid race who uttered fearful cries. The struggle between brown and white must have gone on for centuries, and mention is made of such places as Magadha where once throve the mysterious Nagyr, the serpent-worshipping race, echoes of whose cult have come down the alleys of Indian thought to this day. Alexander the Great came in contact with Taxila, the city of Trumpet Flowers, situated on the banks of the Indus and famed far and wide for its elephants, its fair women and serpent lore.

Serpent-worship is one of the oldest cults known to man. Its bizarre influence can be traced back to the earliest race consciousness; it has a place in the mind of India to-day. There is not a man or woman alive for whom the thought of snakes does not bring up some strong emotion, whether it be of fear, wonder or repulsion. Its presence is found in most of the mythologies directly preceding religion, and from the days of the Garden of Eden the study of the serpent and its ways has exercised a strange fascination.

Their hiss has sounded a warning signal up and down the earth. No one is indifferent to snakes.

To primitive man the first temple of religion was the atmosphere and the sky, with all the wonderful changes continually occurring therein. The serpent is as old as the sun and the two are connected together in the earliest form of sun-worshipping, the hooded snake being the Totem and distinguishing mark of the solar race. In Central Asia, some of the chief facts of existence were drought, barrenness, famine; the snake epitomized the various atmospheric changes, the drought serpent, the

prince of powers of the air, was something to be revered and placated with a wisdom of its own.

There were two distinct serpent cultures of ancient thought, the one good, the other bad. The snake as a symbol of evil has outlived its rival and taken the form of a generation, or sex-myth. The serpent has come to be considered more subtle than any beast of the field.

The Zoroastrian Golden Age was destroyed by Jahi, the serpent woman, who came to earth to tempt mortals; the Norse Golden Age was terminated, according to legend, not by one but three maidens who came from Jotunheim; primitive Adam was thus not alone in his predicament and Eve appears to have possessed sisters. These stories illustrate the point that the serpent was originally connected with the origin of sex and the earliest wisdom. The sun and the serpent were the chief deities of the first inhabitants of India. Brahma, like Ra, was originally a name for the sun; in the same category is Zoroaster. Flashes of sunlight radiated across the first ignorance of space. According to the Vedic poet :

“A steady light, swifter than thought, stationed among moving beings to show the way to happiness; this light is Brama, seated spontaneously in the heart as the means of the true knowledge and the one cause of creation, supreme spirit.”

The heavens over which Indra ruled were thought to be tenanted by Devas and Nagas. The Nag, a hooded serpent, was considered a protector and guardian, and it was the Nag alone that was sacred. They were worshipped, not as reptiles, but as racial Totem emblems of the ancient serpent-worshipping race who were opposed to the influx

of the Arayans, and these people of the epic poems were the Dasyas, Asuras, and Serpas of the Rig Veda.

Kabul was ruled by serpent chiefs; from Afghanistan to the Indus, the Naga demi-gods were venerated until the advent of Mohammedanism swept them away. Taxiles, an ally of Alexander the Great, was a serpent-worshipper. Ancient Khsatriyas are said to be descendants of the Asuras, sun- and serpent-worshipping race. They had chariots and bows and arrows and they did not engage in agriculture or commerce. They were reckoned to be descendants of the sun, and are now the ruling class in Nepal.

Temples to the sun exist in Kumaon and Garwhal, being mostly built of cedar wood, a tree considered sacred. It is said that Buddha once travelled to Udinar to convert a Naga king. Naga rajahs were considered competent to control the elements, and in times of drought, sacrifices were demanded from superstitious people. To this day rulers of Hunza and Naga are thought by their subjects to possess the power of control over the elements.

With the decline of Buddhism in India the Nagas disappeared from history. But the old cult still lingers and cobras are never killed by the superstitious. Many Turanian tribes followed this worship of sun and serpent. Buddha's family are said to have belonged to the serpent sect since Nagas have been found on their tombs, and this Totem of the solar myth was known in many parts of the earth. The guardian deity of the Acropolis of Athens is a great serpent. The Pharaohs of Egypt and Incas of Peru claim descent from the sun; the Mikado of Japan is of their company. China has had dragons in place of serpents and in Tibet are people who still believe that Nagas can be found in certain lakes and streams. In India, the idea

of the hooded snake as being, in some instances, the guardian spirit of an ancient wisdom as fundamental as sex itself, has always lingered.

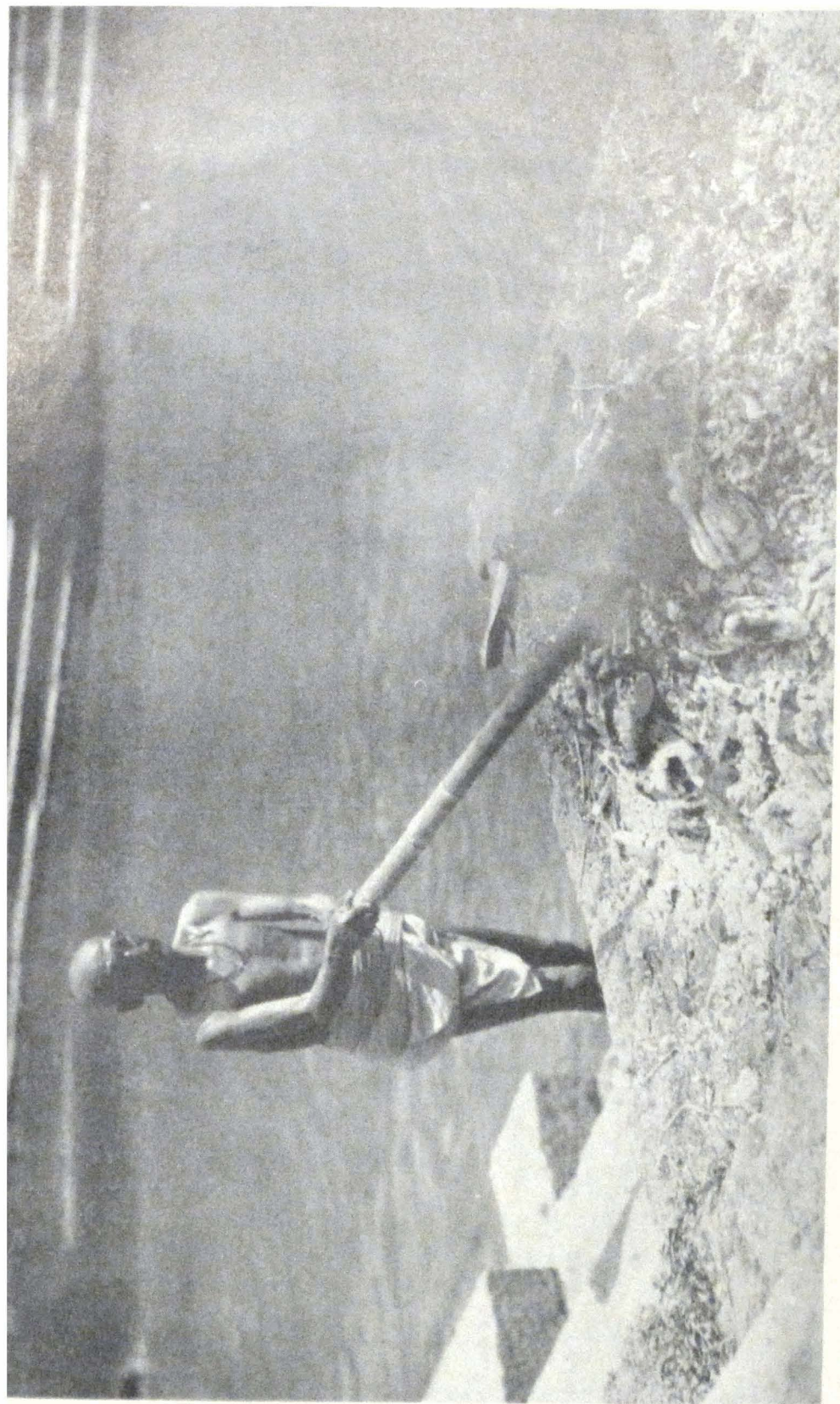
Into the Punjab, the land of the five rivers, descended the fair-complexioned Aryans, first invaders of Hindustan who began to give battle to the serpent-worshippers. Many Rajputs of the present day claim descent from them, boasting a pedigree longer than that possessed by white-skinned people of the West.

Why the Aryans wandered is an unsolved secret of the past. Why did such an advanced race need fresh fields? How came the necessity for them to try conclusions with the barbarians? It has been suggested that Central Asia five thousand years ago was a very different place to what it is now. Rainfall was much greater, fertility was possibly far in advance of anything Khorasan or Samarkand could show to-day. These districts may once have been a happy land rich in sunshine and pasture, a fitting cradle for the start of the fair-skinned sons of Japheth.

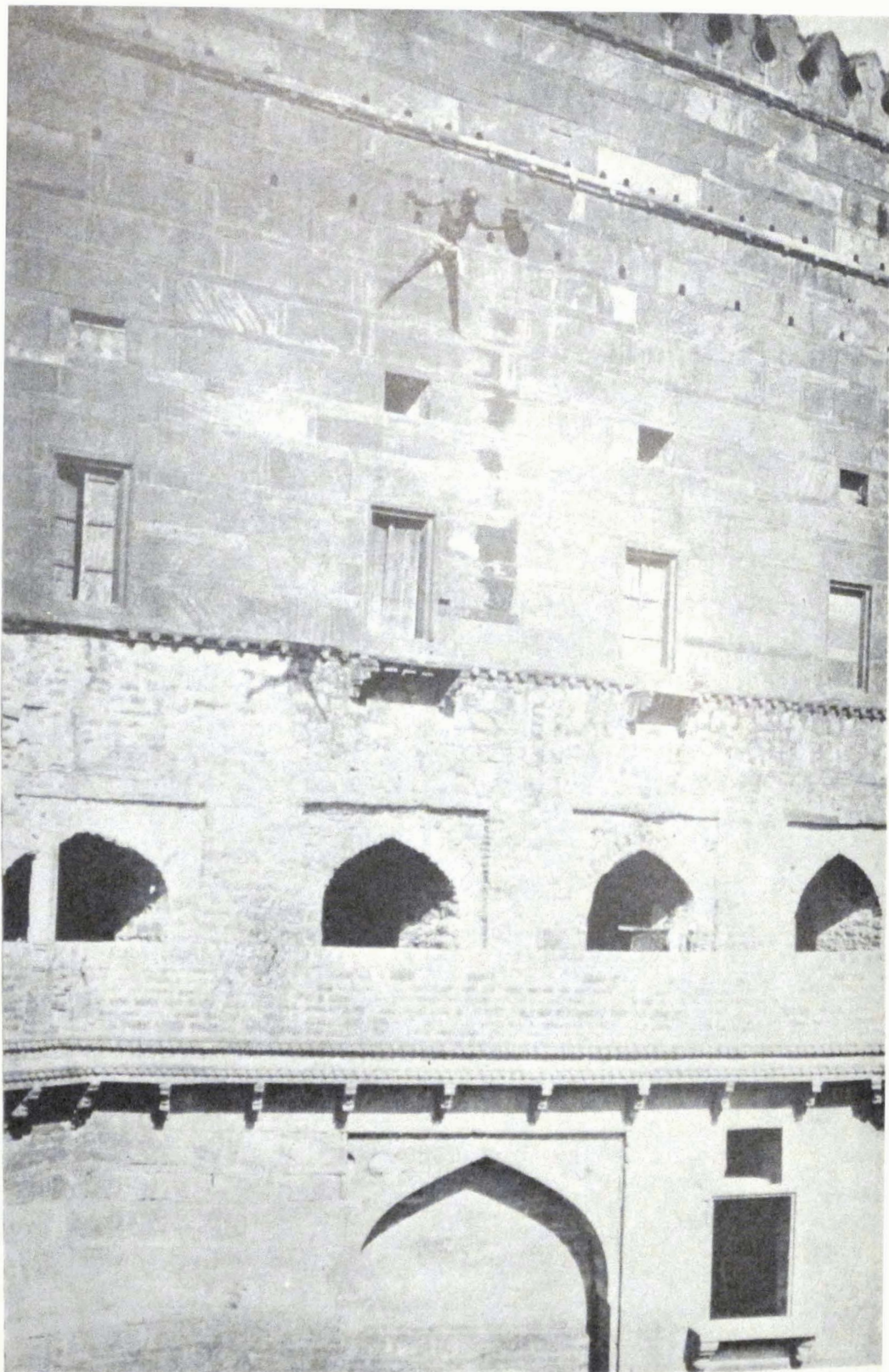
Then the rainfall probably altered and diminished, fertile basins gradually turning into wilderness so that the Aryans were forced, by slow stages, to emigrate. The children of Israel sought out their Promised Land, but the Aryans had to leave their Canaan and seek fresh habitations.

The Normans of India, they set the fashion of trekking over the passes into the sunlit plains; they were soon to be followed by a stream of invaders.

Between the Indo-Aryans and their descendants, still regarded as the noblest elements in India, and some of the two hundred other tribes, lie many varying shades of colour, creed and custom. Dark-skinned peoples,



AMONGST THE HINDUS CREMATION OFTEN PROCEEDS ON PRIMITIVE LINES



THE WORLD'S HIGHEST DIVE. JUMPING OVER ONE HUNDRED FEET INTO A DEEP WELL NEAR AGRA. IT DATES BACK TO THE TIME OF THE EMPEROR AKBAR

like the Gonds, were forced by the onward march of civilization into jungles and mountain districts. Debased in their ideas, they sacrificed human beings to Kali, tearing these offerings to pieces with their hands. Children were brought up for this purpose from birth and prepared for their horrible end much as a turkey is stuffed for Christmas.

Another and inhuman sect of the community were the Thugs, who, since the time of the Mogul emperors, wandered up and down India selecting unsuspecting victims. They adopted murder as a profession, displaying great patience over their calling. The only way to stamp them out was to imprison for life all those who were caught. The moment they emerged from confinement they started on their murderous career once more. For days and weeks Thugs would follow their innocent victim, becoming his friend and then, when the moment was ripe, tightening the noose round his neck. A story is told of a traveller in the mountains who thought it strange that night after night his two companions always slept one on either side of him. "What is this?" he said to himself. "Does it mean that they regard themselves as my protectors, or can it be that there is something sinister in this manoeuvre?" One night he had a premonition of danger. "I will change places with one of the men," he said to himself. "In this way I shall no longer lie between two fires." Next morning he found the Thug lying in the centre had been strangled by his companion.

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Following in the steps of the Aryans, the Moslem

invaders, about the time of the first Crusades, came in successive waves across the passes of the North-West frontier of India, when the fruit trees were bright with colour and the first blades of corn sprouting from the dusty earth.

This process of human precipitation from the mountains to the plains has been the salient feature of Indian history; where the Aryans were concerned it was a gradual infiltration, but the others took the form of swooping storms, gathering in the highlands and breaking with destructive force on the rich basins of the Indus and the Ganges.

Until the advent of the British and French with sea-power from the West, the waves of Indian immigration came from the mountains. Fresh blood and new elements have always filtered through the passes of the Himalayas. Now, for the first time in thousands of years, a greater way has appeared that takes no account of the passes. The roads of the future are in the sky. Not even the loftiest mountains can impose frontiers upon the aerial highways. The Himalayas can be traversed with comparative ease by aeroplanes; this transit need only mean a matter of a few hours, not weeks of arduous marching across vast wind-swept stretches, as in the past. The aeroplane has arrived in the East, and with it a new writing on the wall of India.

Two days flight from Purnea, the base used by the Houston Mount Everest Flight aeroplanes, can be found the buried wonders of the Gobi Desert, the pastoral resources of Mongolia and Manchuria; a shorter run leads to the riches of the Yangtse valley. In the near future it will be possible to traverse the Himalayas to the upper reaches of the Yangtse, a land of gold, silver, iron and

copper, and everything essential to the economic life of nations. What more could man or merchant want ?

Where waterways are concerned, the Yangtse river vies with the Amazon for the long distance race of the earth. It rises up in the western wall of Tibet and flows for over 2,000 miles into the China Sea. No other river can compare with it in potential wealth. All the mineral requisites necessary for modern industrial life lie ready to hand. It is no mere dream of the future to say that soon fleets of aeroplanes, like eagles, will be crossing the Roof of the World with less concern than the Atlantic, and gazing down at places never before seen by Western eyes, helping plain dwellers and citizens to enter into their ancient heritage of height. The arrival of the aeroplane has made the barriers of Northern India both more accessible and more human. The supremacy of the gods stronghold is passing and a human membership taking its place at this Olympian club.

Previously eight months were required to reach Tibet from Peking. 3,000 laborious miles had to be traversed ; but as the crow flies the distance is only 1,800 miles and can be flown in a day. Westward of the Yangtse valley and north of the Kuen Lun mountains, near the foothills of Southern Turkistan, are the famous Khotan jade mines, coveted by many. The journey to these places took me thirty-six days of hard travelling from British India, but now they are no more than four hours' flight from Lahore. Aeroplanes offer a short cut to these new centres of commerce and adventure. Lying as they do across the Himalayan barrier, many of these hidden storehouses of Nature's secret bounty are at present unmapped and unexplored ; for centuries they have slept in oblivion.

No one can gauge the possibilities of air transport

over these strongholds ; shibboleths may crumble, strong barriers fall, and the majestic Himalayas will no longer be off the map.

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Before leaving India, the Houston Mount Everest flyers went up to have a final look at the matchless beauty of the mountains that had beckoned to the offspring of the new mechanical age. It was soon after sunrise, when there is a glittering brilliance, born of the sudden transition of darkness into incandescent light. I had a last view of the ranges lifting up their summits in an ageless challenge to distance and the unattainable blue sky ; then we bade them farewell and turned our eyes once more to the plains, always grey with the dust of departures and journeyings.

What are the dramatic things of Nature ?

The way of an eagle in the air, and a serpent on the rock ; the way of a man with a maid ; and surely the upthrust of ultimate peaks into the sky ?

Maharajahs who, previously, had considered the flyers were rash men tempting Providence by their endeavours were now keen to take to the air themselves. Aviation became a topic of conversation and it is certain that the Mount Everest Flight, evolved by my colleague Colonel Stewart Blacker, has been the means of making India more air-minded for the future.

At the close of a visit to Darjeeling we flew beneath a brazen sky to Lucknow and thence via Agra, with its book of kings, to Jodhpur, famed far and wide for the excellence of its polo and the comfort of its breeches. On the way we stayed at Dholpur, where the maharajah has a hunting-box in the forest, to which wild animals from the jungle come to be fed.

From Agra the aerial way took us towards Jodhpur, but a sudden storm came up nearly sweeping us to destruction. We had risen high above the Agra plains when in the far distance a brown wall appeared that seemed to rise out of the earth. The day was becoming black as night and full of moaning voices : nothing was visible except a dark rampart of storm advancing to sweep everything out of its path. Making a hurried circuit in the darkness, we started a race for life against the oncoming typhoon. On the ground a dust storm is bad enough, but in the air it becomes demoniacal. We rocked along, partly under our own propulsion, partly urged on irresistibly from behind. Gusts of the typhoon caught us up and leaped over us like devils playing at leap-frog.

Over the side of the cockpit was the Agra aerodrome, and almost at once the aeroplane was gliding towards a walled enclosure. Not a moment too soon ! The storm was upon us again, reaching such a pitch of wild intensity that for a minute or two the machine seemed as though it would be swept away into the air. As so often happens, just when we had finished our work with the Himalayas and gone off duty, expecting an easy voyage across India, was the moment when the elements chose to concentrate all their forces, as if determined on the flyers' destruction.

Filled with the strength of the wind we carried up large boulders and did what we could to anchor the aeroplane ; then we held on to the wings, one on each side, hanging on for dear life, determined that the little 'plane should not be dragged away and torn to pieces.

That night we rested at Agra and next morning prepared to try again ; proceeding westwards, Jaipur was passed, probably the only town in the world that has

been built by an astronomer. It is laid out on the dead straight, gridiron American plan, with streets a hundred feet wide. Everything is governed by mathematical precision, so that from the air an American might almost be excused for thinking he was approaching Chicago.

Jodhpur is famous for its crown jewels. Emeralds, rubies, diamonds, and ropes of pearls that would ransom a king. The maharajah told us that any attempt to gain the treasure would be almost impossible, since not only was it well guarded, but was surrounded by a labyrinth of corridors, gateways and intricate passages, sufficient to baffle the cleverest cracksman and hold him secure until captured.

The journey to Jodhpur for the second time of asking was much more satisfactory than the first, and it was good to land in the aerodrome specially constructed by the young maharajah, himself a pilot of distinction, and ruler of the most air-minded state in India. Here we found ourselves among the Rathors, the ruling house of Jodhpur, a family whose ancestry goes back long before William the Conqueror brought blue blood and the Norman nose to England. Nowadays they are nearly as much at home in the air as they have always been in the saddle. Apart from the maharajah's aeroplanes there are several private machines in the State.

Few ride so boldly or so well as the horsemen of Jodhpur, and the surrounding country, for the most part sandy plain, divided by the river Luni, is ideal for them.

A fortress upon a rock, suggestive of Edinburgh Castle or the Acropolis at Athens, has been the stronghold of the ruling house for centuries and round the city is a six-mile wall with seventy gates.

The young maharajah's famous uncle, Sir Pertab Singh,

who always wore on his turban a miniature of Queen Victoria set in pearls, had two ambitions in life; one was to die in battle at the head of his Jodhpur Lancers, the other, to win the coveted Rutlam Polo Cup of India. The second he accomplished soon after the War, when Patiala was played in a polo contest compared to which a Cup Final at Wembley would have seemed tame.

At first Patiala made most of the running in a match watched by the Prince of Wales, the Viceroy, and at least four-score chiefs and princelings from all parts of India. At the end of the third chukker Patiala led by three goals to none; but Jodhpur soon got into their stride, and with only three minutes left to play the score was level, five goals all. The immense crowd went wild with excitement. Dignified officials, sedate generals, bejewelled ministers, all stood on tiptoe, waving their turbans and shouting themselves hoarse. In all that hurly-burly only one figure sat immovable as though carved in stone. Old Sir Pertab never moved an eyelid. Just before the last half-minute had ticked itself away, Jodhpur scored a goal amid scenes of intense enthusiasm.

Sir Pertab rose to his feet, to find the Prince of Wales shaking his hand.

“You have won! You have won!”

Then was the graven calm of that gallant old warrior touched at last and the tears of happiness streamed down his face.

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The Maharajah of Jodhpur talked to me about flying. “Riding a horse and riding an aeroplane are the two finest sports for a man,” he said. “Man has the mastery of the horse, but not yet of the air. When he can play a sport

up there in the clouds, then he will be able to say that he can fly."

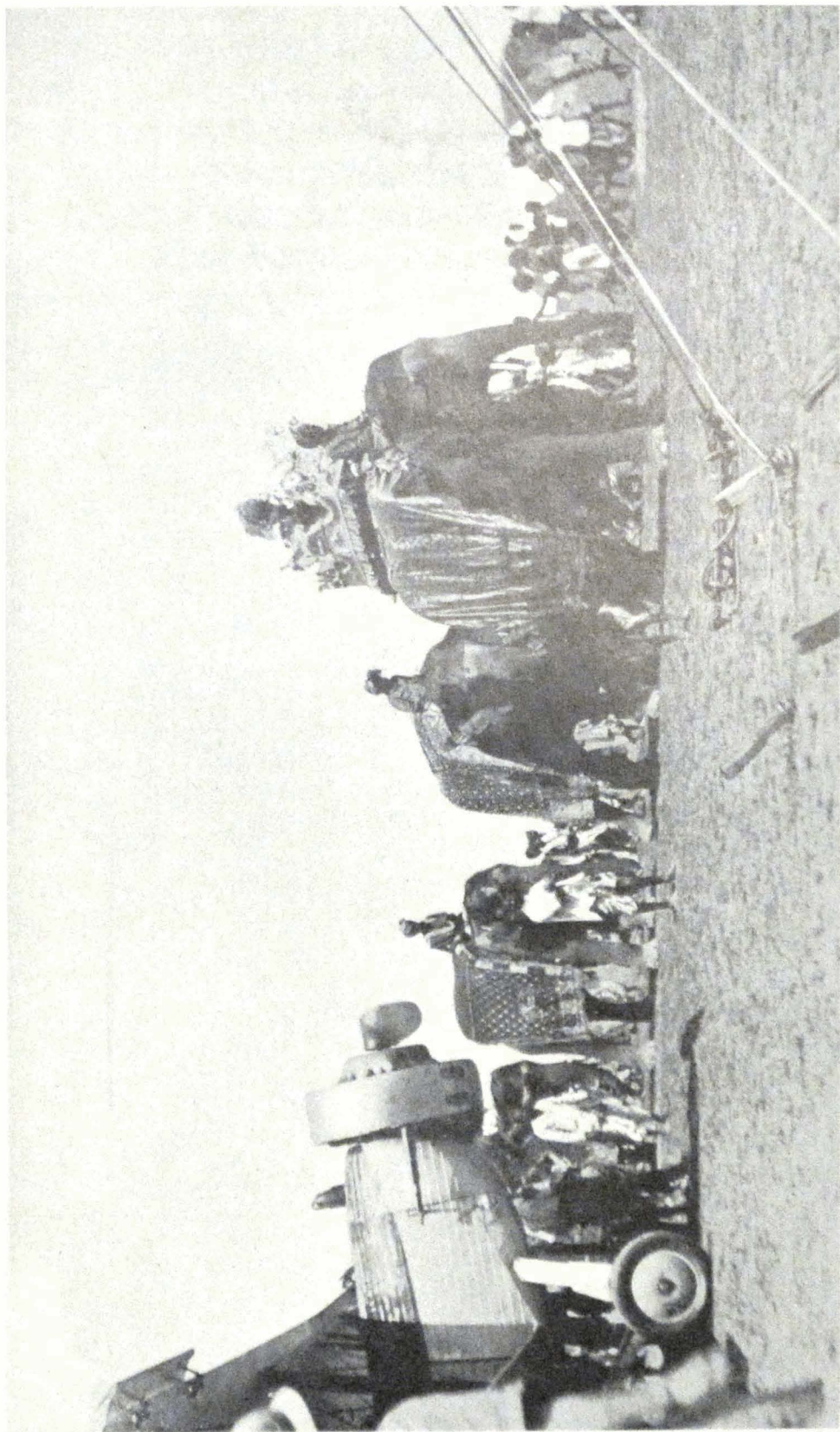
His words conjured up strange visions. Would the Aryan race soon be evolving some new ball game for the sky; would they be playing polo with balloons from fast-darting parachutes, and staging relay races in the clouds, or would they rest content with the adventure of audacious, unrestricted speed? Already man can travel six times faster than the fastest bird. He can shoot into the sky like a rocket. He can charge the clouds at more than 400 miles an hour, and swoop down upon the highest mountain and across mountain ranges that have acted as a barrier since time began.

What next? Certain it is that in the coming decade the age-old dominance of the sea will be passing, and man will trust himself and his unfolding enterprises more and more to the new element of the air that is everywhere, unlimited and free.

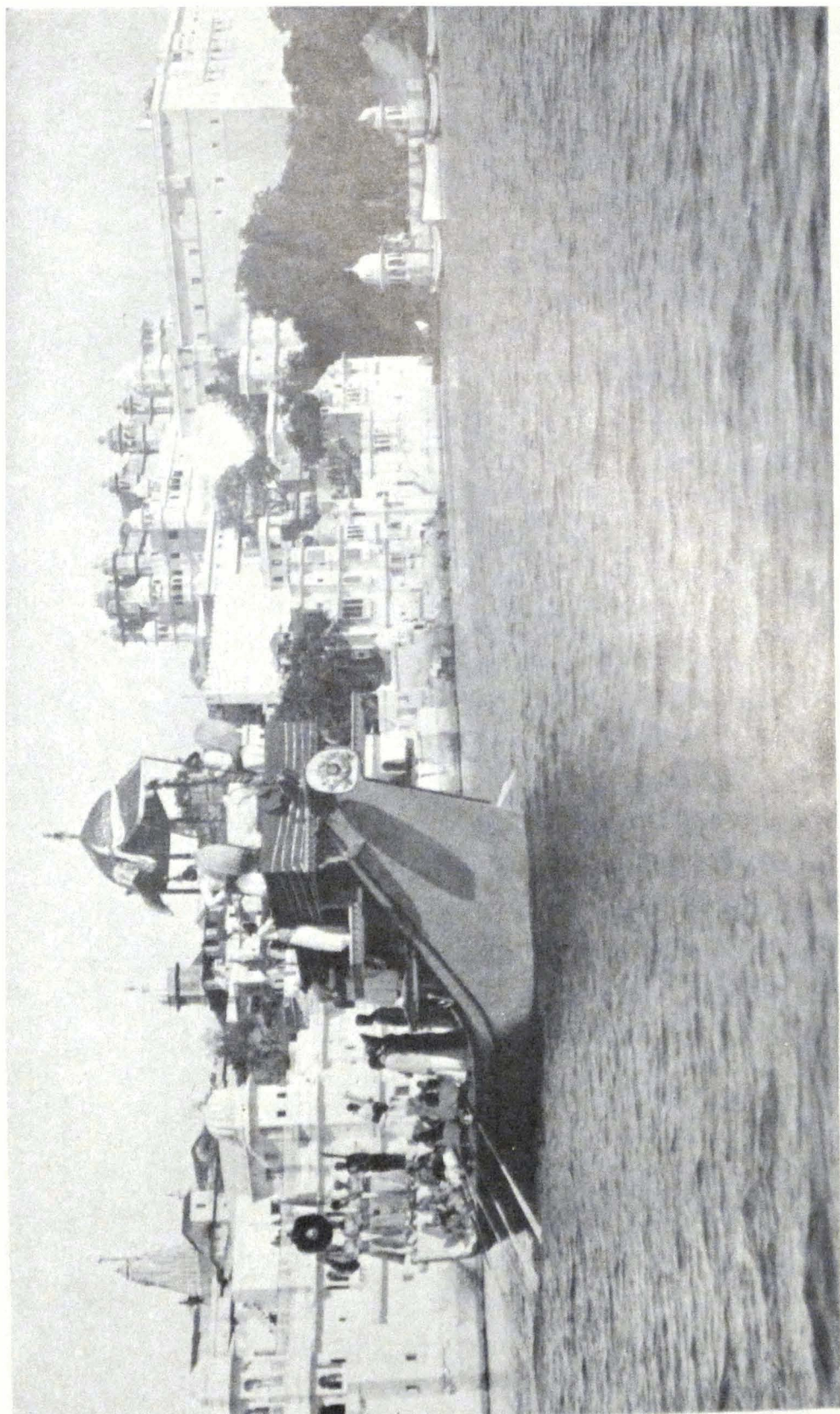
From the sporting city of Jodhpur we went on to Udaipur, a halting-place in Rajputana which demonstrates the difference between art and algebra, for Udaipur is one of the most astonishing and beautiful places in India. No one had ever visited this city before by aeroplane, so that on arrival we were greeted as beings who had consorted with the gods and were now for a time descending to the plains.

Udaipur is a jewel set in an encircling rampart of hills, that, when viewed from the air, shows off her hundred facets of sparkling lakes, islands covered with palaces, clumps of green trees, and the domes of temples shimmering in the sunlight. All roads lead up to the palace at Udaipur, or down to the iris-blue waters of the lake.

In a palace that is a marble dream lives the maharana,



THE OLD-TIME TRANSPORT AND THE NEW. NATIVE CHIEFTAINS CAME ON LUMBERING ELEPHANTS TO GREET THE EVEREST FLIERS



UDAIPUR IS LIKE A BIT OF ITALY TRANSPORTED TO THE TROPICS

ruler of Udaipur, and of such ancient lineage that he claims descent from Rama, god of the sun, away back in the dim days of mythology. He is highest in rank of the Rajputs and comes of a dynasty that stoutly resisted Moslem invasion and proudly claims that it never gave a daughter to one of the Mogul emperors. Here in this walled city, pierced by many gateways through which enter and make their exit slow-moving figures with scrip and staff, looking as if they belonged to the Bible, and where the ambling ass walks in and out, the fame of the maharana has grown into a fable and a legend.

Other rajahs may possess more rupees. Not one of them has so good a pedigree or such a golden past.

Udaipur looks as if it has stepped straight out of a fairy-tale. Here is a sort of Eastern Avalon, where the young prince of fiction finds his princess, tells her of his love, and they settle down to live happily ever afterwards. It is not so much a place as a picture painted for some old story-book.

To heighten the illusion we were housed in a guest-house containing almost everything that one could desire. Whatever our requirement we had only to name our fancy for it to appear ; what is more, no bills were sent in and no payment accepted for anything we chose to eat or drink.

But the beauty of the spot really consisted in the wealth of water and islands, each adorned by a marble palace or temple. With its palm trees and blue lakes the place is really a little bit of Italy that has wandered off into the tropics and got lost. One has the feeling that Udaipur is not India at all, but a piece of Eastern enchantment stolen from the West, that may one day wake up and remember it does not really exist in a modern world.

The state is dotted with lakes and tanks. We visited one that is said to be the largest artificial stretch of water in the world, made by a capricious ruler in medieval times.

Among the curiosities of the principality is the coinage, Persian in origin, containing coins bearing on the reverse side the curious title: 'Friend of London'. Under the palace is reputed to be buried, no one knows where, a hoarded treasure of gold ingots and precious stones.

A few miles from the town is situated a gaunt, battle-mented fortress that watches over a thick belt of jungle. Here at eventide came scores of wild pig, cascading out of the forest to be fed by the custodians of the fort. First one or two old tuskers appeared on the edge of the trees, sly and wicked-looking, their little eyes gleaming. They grunted hoarsely, perhaps with satisfaction. The custodians on the walls waved their hands and called. In a twinkling, behind those old boars the wood had become solid with a scrambling, squealing, leaping torrent of pigs rushing to be fed. Looking neither to right nor left, keeping straight on, the hurtling mass of piggery charged the fort. There it split up into a dozen lesser battles, fighting and pushing for the largest share in the scattered grain. No quarter was given or asked. Where the biggest pig had his nose buried in the dust, and where the noise was greatest, there was generally to be found the largest portion of food. At this dinner-party the only thing that counted was unaffected greed. Bristle to bristle they proceeded to turn the banquet into a battle. The gluttonous grunts that went up from that squirming porcine mass seemed loud enough to attract every wild animal in Rajputana. Never was a repast so much appreciated or so loudly advertised.

And then, suddenly, silence descended on the scene.

Having eaten their fill and left nothing over, the wild pigs turned and, on a sudden, trotted off to their lairs in the jungle. We were alone on the ramparts gazing into a spell-struck forest, quiet with the approach of night. For a minute or two we heard hoofs ploughing through the undergrowth, then all was quiet, and we were left wondering at what we had seen.

Someone suggested that this must be an enchanted jungle—that Circe probably lived there, and that she turned human beings into boars, people, perhaps, whom she found dull or who had the impertinence to try and modernize ancient Udaipur, the last relic of the Golden Age. At that moment no one would have been surprised if further manifestations of fairy-tales—Little Red Riding Hood or the Three Bears, for instance—had stepped out of the forest and confronted them.

Udaipur gave the impression of a sunlit Utopia—a sort of unspoilt Eden. She owes her excellence not to any search for perfection, but as a result of conserving her golden past. As an old fakir on the frontier remarked: "It is easy to find something that has never been lost." About the only thing that seems to trouble Udaipur is an occasional famine. Leaning from balconies at night the incense of wood-smoke filled the air. White-shrouded figures moved mysteriously through the streets. There came the distant resonance of a drum.

The two high lights of our aerial expedition in the East had been the Himalayas and Rajputana. In the one scale was the cold, unearthly splendour of the Roof of the World; in the other, the more hospitable display of the Aryan Rajputs.

It was fitting that here, at the gates of Udaipur, last lineal descendant of the sun, the Everest flyers should

separate, leaving behind them the weeks of comradeship shared and purposes accomplished, and should set their faces for England and home. It was a glorious May morning when the aeroplanes took off, circling over the city so as to show the inhabitants the latest form of transport.

They droned above the marble palaces, and the placid waters of the lake, dipped in salute to the maharana, and then headed for the West.

THE END

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