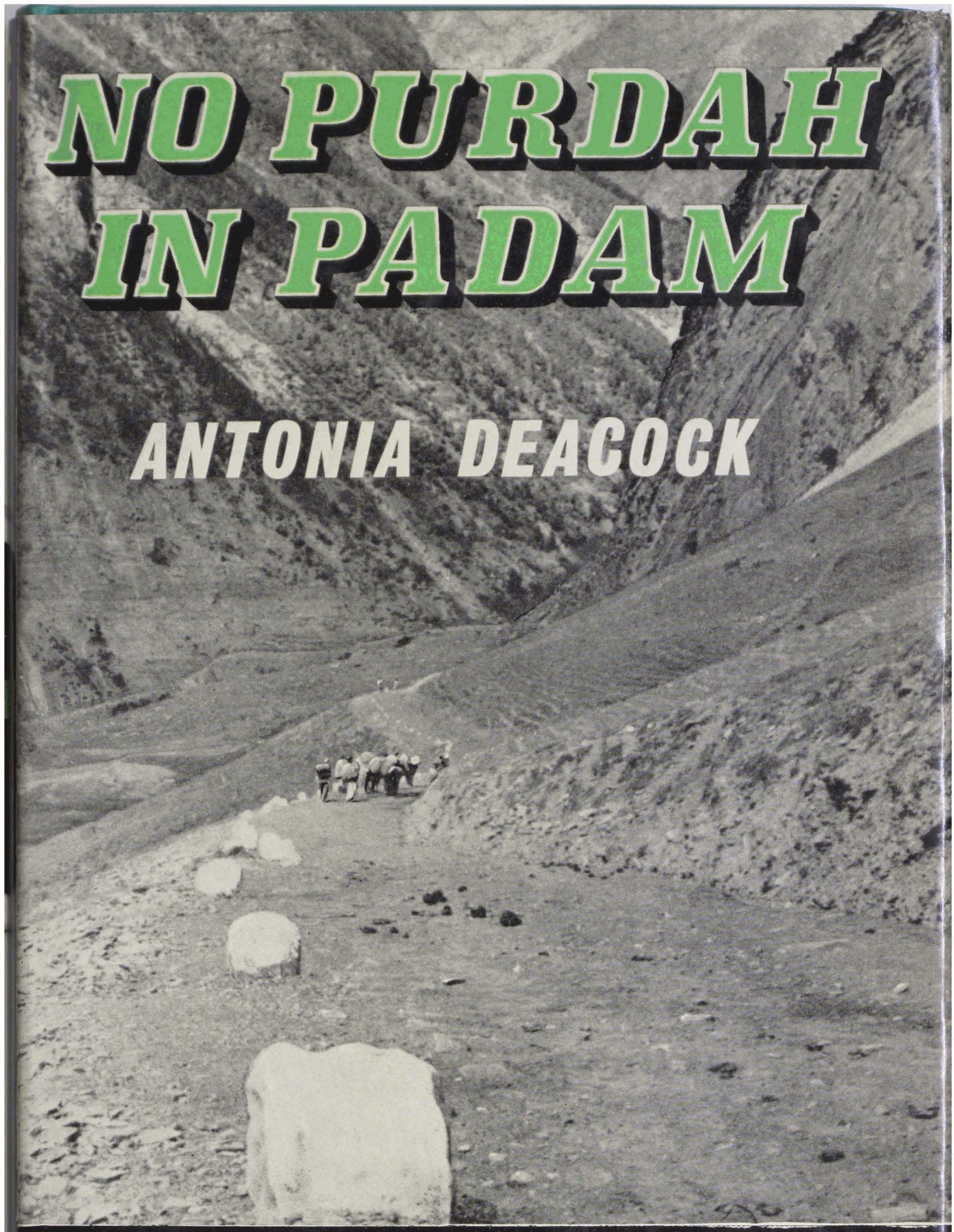
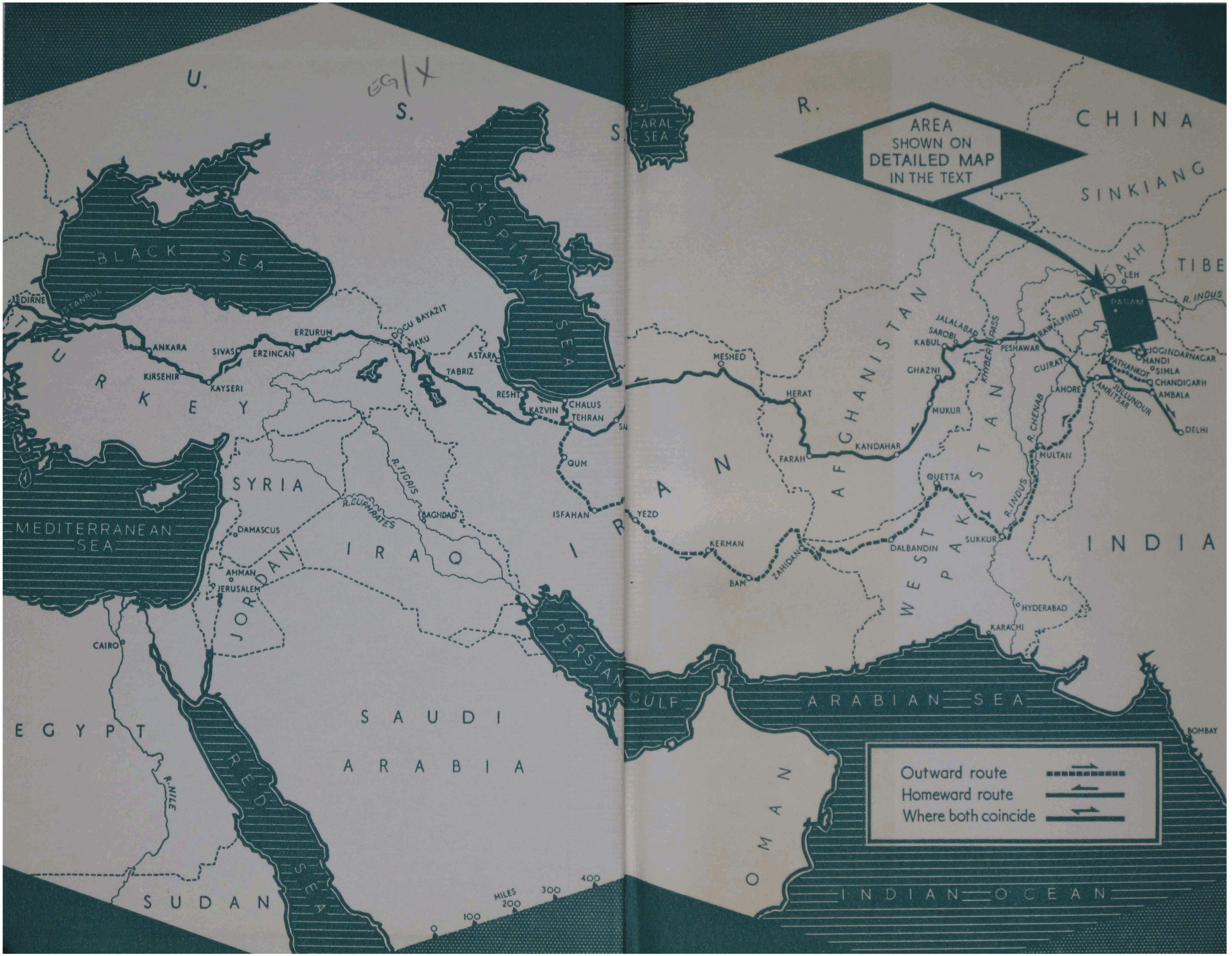
NO PURDAH IN PADAM

ANTONIA DEACOCK



Being the account of the Women's Overland Himalayan Expedition, 1958

WITH A FOREWORD BY DAME ISOBEL CRIPPS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LAHORE
JOGINDARNAGAR
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Outward route
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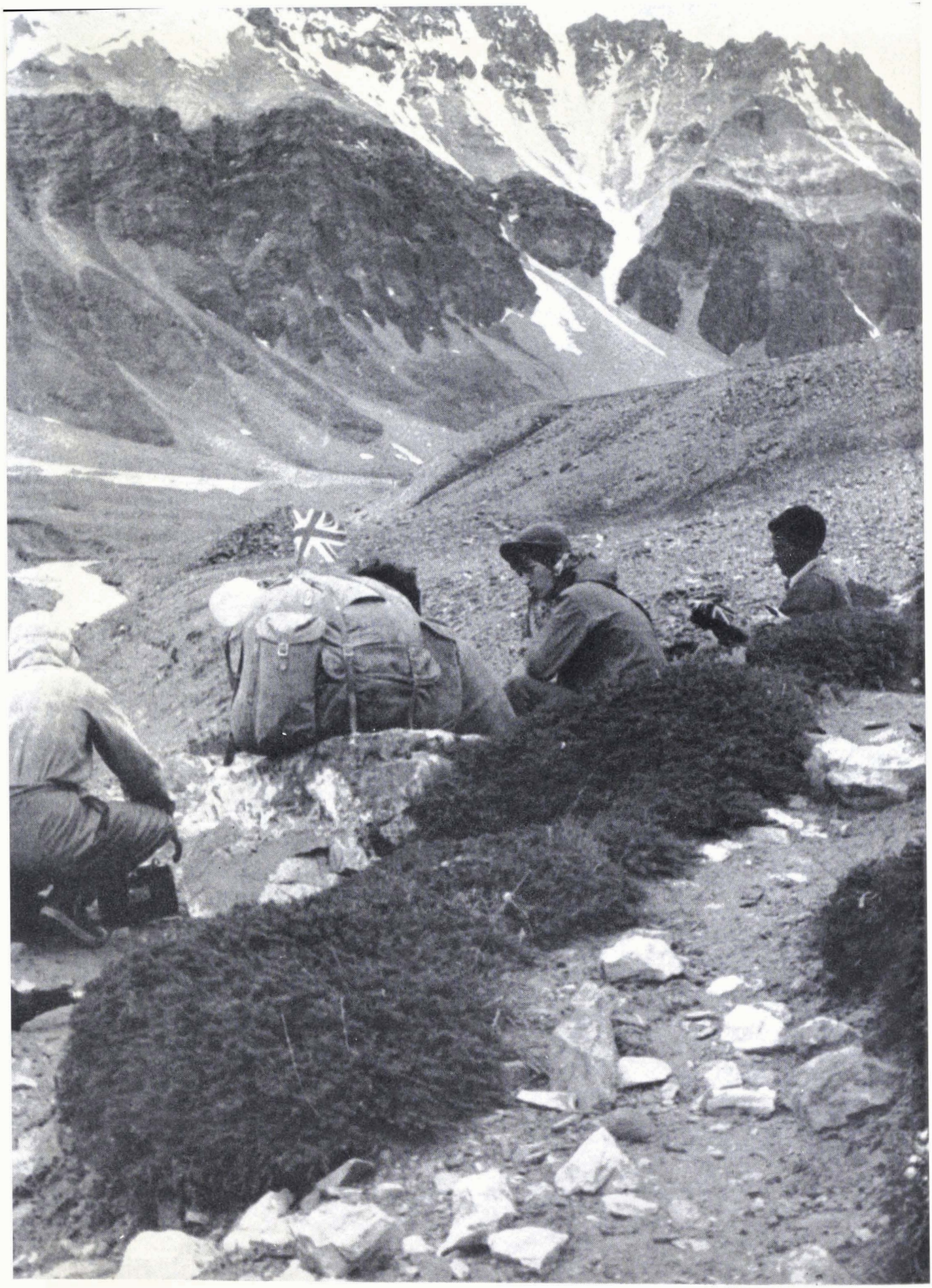
Where both coincide



A Well-earned Rest on the 14,000-*foot Lingti Plain, surrounded by Snow-capped Giants*

Eve Sims, Numgyal, the author, Nowa Ram.

NO PURDAH IN PADAM

The Story of the Women's Overland Himalayan Expedition 1958

by

ANTONIA DEACOCK

with a foreword by

DAME ISOBEL CRIPPS G.B.E.

and with eleven plates in half-tone and two maps

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Foreword

by

DAME ISOBEL CRIPPS, G.B.E.

THIS book is to be recommended to readers of all ages. They should be encouraged by it to acquire the spirit of adventure and fearless endeavour. The opportunity of "exploring the Himalaya" cannot present itself to many, but the spirit within this achievement can be transferred to all sorts of ways of life—big and small. The central point of all is the rejection of fear, and faith in purpose.

My contact with "the explorers" came about without any premeditation, and I left our first short introductory tea-meeting at the Strand Palace Hotel in London with a sense of kinship with them, feeling that I would give such support as I could without reservation; and from that time on we set out to work together.

Here were three young women with, as Anne tells you, diverse temperaments, who scarcely knew one another, but who were determined to set out on an adventure of this magnitude and who seemed to have one thing in common—undaunted minds. None of it would have been possible without the devoted support of husbands who themselves understood the urge with which their wives had been infected. As the story unfolds one realizes that for Lester Davies especially, tied as he was to his job at the Outward Bound School and with his own three boys at school, there were many agonizing moments.

The explorers felt a desire to prove to themselves, and to others, that they could overcome the reputed feminine failure to work as a team, and to show what could be achieved by women, as well as by men, in the matter of endurance. They also wished to bring back information concerning the customs

and lives of people of other countries in unexplored regions, observed from a woman's point of view. These aims they realized in full measure.

All this the story tells as it develops. My contact with the Women's Overland Himalayan Expedition has added richness to my own life, and, though we have not met very often, I feel linked with them all in spirit, wherever they are. I am most grateful to them for the affectionate confidence they gave me, without which I could have given them no real help at all.

ISOBEL CRIPPS

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by

ANNE DAVIES

Leader of the Women's Overland Himalayan Expedition, 1958

THIS book tells the story of how my two companions and I jokingly accepted a challenge to drive alone to the Himalaya and back. Until we were on our way few people, including ourselves, really believed the expedition was feasible. Never before had three women driven alone, in a single vehicle, unescorted, from England to India and back.

Some said we should be tearing each other's hair out before we reached Istanbul; others that, if we somehow succeeded in reaching India, the rigours of the journey would have been so arduous that the Himalayan part of our venture would merely consist of a leisurely stay at an Indian hill station. As to our ability to face again the heat, dust, and discomforts of the 8000-mile return journey to England, even we ourselves were at times a little in doubt.

However, as you will read in the pages that follow, we accomplished, a little to our own surprise, all that we set out to do. We motored through twelve countries in Europe and Asia—a round distance of 16,000 miles—without any major breakdown, trekked 300 miles on foot in the mountains, twice crossed the greater Himalayan range, traversed five high passes between 13,000 and 18,000 feet, climbed a 'virgin' peak, and explored some of the mysterious country of Eastern Zanskar, where European women had never before been seen. Moreover, our small team was afforded the rare privilege of being permitted to cross the "Inner Line," and, later, we were probably the first unescorted European women to cross Afghanistan. It seems incredible that not once throughout our five-month journey did we quarrel or have any serious

disagreements, despite the great differences in our individual temperaments.

The success of the expedition would not have been possible without the enthusiastic help of our many well-wishers, who, if they ever privately doubted our ability to accomplish our objectives, never showed it, and always gave us the maximum encouragement.

Particularly were we grateful to Lady Joy Hunt, who agreed to be our patron; to Dame Isobel Cripps, G.B.E., for her invaluable assistance in many ways—in fact, she became a fairy godmother to the expedition—and to Mrs Pandit, the Indian High Commissioner in London, who did so much to help us through our political difficulties and who so graciously introduced our lecture at the Royal Festival Hall, London, on our return. A list of business and other organizations that helped us appears as an appendix to this book. However, mention should here be made of our gratitude to the Afghan Ambassador in London; Mr Mohammed Ikramullah, the Pakistan High Commissioner in London; Mr Malcolm MacDonald, the British High Commissioner in New Delhi, and the members of his staff, who made us so welcome in that city during an Indian high summer. Among these we are particularly indebted to Group Captain J. H. Chaplin, the British Air Adviser, and Mr Jack Hughes and Mr Alfred Hall, of the Information Division. Much help was provided by Mr Robert Hotz and Major Henry Banon, President and Local Secretary, respectively, of the Himalayan Club, of which I am a member. Our thanks are also due to numerous other kind people, some of whom are mentioned in this book.

Lastly, but by no means least, we owe a lot to our husbands, whose support and encouragement helped us so much. From the outset they took our project seriously and never once failed to buoy up our self-confidence.

For me this expedition was by way of a 'home-coming.' For much of my girlhood India and Pakistan had been my home. I had met and married my husband in India. My first son was born in Jodhpur, my second in Karachi. For thirteen years I

had been dreaming of revisiting the sub-continent, but with little hope of ever doing so.

It was, therefore, a tremendous thrill when I was asked to lead the expedition. As the outward journey progressed my excitement grew, and after our crossing into Pakistan it knew no bounds. Eve and Antonia were wonderfully understanding and tolerant of my delight at finding so many of the old, well-remembered things. I was thrilled to be able to talk to the many children who surrounded us wherever we went. Antonia tells me that once I started to use Hindi and Urdu every day I ceased to disturb her nights talking it in my sleep.

As of old, the bazaars were a riot of colours, smells, and sounds: the gay hues of turbans and saris; the open-fronted cloth shops, with their glorious array of soft silks, gaudy cotton prints, and scintillating brocades; the fruit-sellers, with stalls of melons, mangoes, plums, and bananas; the sweet-shops, with their vivid red and yellow confectionery decorated by clouds of black flies; the smell of a hookah or hubble-bubble as it was smoked by a circle of men noisily discussing the business of the day; the tantalizing aroma of curry and hot ghee, mingled with the scent of jasmine and incense.

As we drove through the cool of the night the wheels of the bullock-wagons still squeaked in the same old way, with their drivers asleep as the animals wandered along the middle of the road. Even at night the darkness of this teeming continent seemed to pulse with life. The distant beat of a drum, the barking of a pariah dog, the cry of a restless child, the tinkling of cow-bells, and the incessant chirping of the crickets disturbed the peace. In the early dawn, while brilliantly coloured peacocks strutted near the villages, the brain-fever bird and the koel rent the air with their raucous cries, as if to tell of the heat of the coming day. Gradually the sun rose higher and stabbed at our eyes as the heat rose like a furnace out of the parched ground. Even the myna birds moved listlessly. Our clothes clung to our damp bodies, and the sweat ran down our legs and arms in trickles. The whole country seemed to gasp, dazed and breathless in the midday sun.

As evening approached towns and villages slowly came to life. People thronged the streets, and the vendors called their wares. Water-buffaloes emerged from the muddy pools where they had wallowed during the day, and small, almost naked children urged them along with sticks and shouts of "Hut! Hut!" A delicious scent of wet earth rose as a *bhisti*, or water-carrier, settled the dust with a fine spray of water from the neck of his glistening pigskin bag. As darkness fell men rested on their charpoys beside the road. Bats skimmed ahead of us in the streets, and the babble of voices and roaring radios died down as the dogs took over and told the world that they were again on guard.

As the days passed the years between vanished, and it was as if I had never been away. If it be true that one always returns thrice to a land one loves I shall some day return again to this land. But I very much doubt if I shall find to accompany me two better companions than Eve and Antonia.

To the Amusement of Nowa Ram, Anne improvises for setting her Hair

Eve, Anne, and the Author have a Wash-day in a Wood Camp in Austria

A Hindu Festival at Nagar, in the Kulu Valley

The Kulu valley is known as 'the valley of the gods.' Beneath the palanquin on the left of the picture is a silver idol of one of these gods.

Mane Stones on a Wall

Each stone is engraved with the Buddhist prayer, *Om mane padme hum* ("Hail to the jewel in the lotus flower").

1

Cutting the Traces

POSSIBLY the most important qualification needed by the wife of a man who goes on expeditions is the ability to be content to be alone. In the year before my marriage to Warwick he was away in Alaska for three months; six months after the wedding he left for Arctic Lapland, and in between there had been numerous forays to Scotland and Wales on climbing meets of the Parachute Brigade Mountaineering Club. None of these activities allowed for feminine inclusion, so it was no shock to me when plans were put into operation early in 1957 for an expedition of British and Pakistani Service officers to climb a mountain in the Karakoram range. Perhaps, also, I had been imbued subconsciously with a pioneering spirit in my home country of South Africa, which made the ever-repeated separations easier to bear.

In my rôle of unpaid secretary I typed out numerous letters for Warwick and tried to keep the mounting files of correspondence in some sort of order in our tiny cottage in Surrey. We met Squadron Leader Lester Davies in the early stages of planning, and he and his pretty blonde wife, Anne, regaled us with stories of treks they had made in the Himalaya with their two elder sons, then no more than small babies.

Anne had spent periods totalling eleven years in India and Pakistan, first as the daughter of an Army officer serving with the Indian Army, and later during the early years of her marriage. She spoke Urdu and Hindi fluently, and longed to revisit the countries which were in the nature of a second home, and which she had not seen since 1945. Lester and Anne invited the members, together with their wives, to their home in Oxted for a business and social gathering to meet one another. While the men held a committee meeting in a room upstairs the wives helped Anne with preparations for

luncheon and discussed what they would do in the four months they would spend alone.

Eve Sims, newly married to Flight Lieutenant John Sims, of the Royal Air Force, had recently returned from a two-year visit to New Zealand and Australia, where she had worked in a variety of jobs, ranging from pharmacist to frozen-food packer and tobacco-picker, interspersing periods of employment with trips on her motor-bike in her efforts to see as much of these countries as she could. Born in Darlaston, she had found her way to the mountains of Wales as a teen-ager and had eight years of climbing experience behind her.

Betty Patey, also recently married, was equally experienced as a climber, and had earned the unofficial title among the young tigers of the Cairngorms near her home in Aberdeen of "the best woman climber in the Cairngorms." She and Eve were considering the possibility of travelling to the Alps on Eve's motor-bike for a short season of climbing, while I felt that this might be an opportunity to visit my family in South Africa. Anne merely sighed that she would love to go with the men.

"Well, why don't you all catch the bus to Karachi?" said Captain Riaz Mohammed, one of the candidates for the men's team. "You could meet us there."

I am not sure how seriously he intended us to take this remark, but I am quite sure that the uproar that ensued for a few minutes must have startled him! We were all agreed that it was an excellent idea, and were soon engrossed in a lively discussion on ways and means. We were wildly excited by the prospect of visiting such countries as Iran and Afghanistan, up to now little more than interesting names on maps, conjuring up quite personal visions of spouting oil and arid deserts, peopled by savage tribesmen. Maps were produced, and before long the four women were considering the possibility of travelling out in a private vehicle and trekking for a short while in the mountains before travelling home by the same means. This would give us the chance to stop at will

and learn a little about the people of the countries through which we should drive. For the trek we selected at first an area around Nanga Parbat, but the thought that the tag of 'camp-followers' might be attached to our efforts set us studying areas farther east in the greater Himalayan range in Northern India. We came to no definite conclusions then, but did decide that each woman was to undertake some section of the work entailed and that, from our homes in various parts of Britain, we should each keep the others informed by letter of progress made.

Anne was voted 'leader' by virtue of her previous experience in the Himalaya and the advantage in years over the average age of twenty-five of the other three. She undertook to obtain the vehicle and photographic equipment. Eve was to investigate the details of the overland route and collect the food; Betty was to be treasurer; and I should handle equipment and collect information from embassies, since my job as an assistant to a firm of architects took me to London twice weekly. Apart from Anne none of us held a driving licence, and the first objective was for Eve, Betty, and me to remedy this slight handicap.

The problems facing us might have seemed insurmountable to anyone with a less optimistic faith. We had no vehicle, little money, and none of the equipment required for an undertaking of this kind. Drawing on the experience of countless previous expeditions, we knew, however, that there is widespread sympathy for these 'wildcat' schemes and that many business firms contribute in kind to expeditions again and again, ostensibly for tests on their products, but, I suspect, more because the adventures appeal to the core of romanticism that is found in every one. It is, of course, necessary to impress possible philanthropists with the genuineness of one's aims, and for this reason we felt that we should submit a brief to some well-known person and gain the seal of respectability with his or her patronage. An obvious choice was Lady Joy Hunt, the wife of the leader of the successful expedition to Mount Everest, and we prepared a brochure,

setting out our plans. In this we expanded the aims of the expedition slightly to include such impressive phrases as "ornithological survey" and "sociological research," and included some fairly immodest remarks in brief dossiers on the members. To our delight, Lady Hunt not only agreed to lend her name to the expedition, but was most enthusiastic and encouraging about our plans.

By this time we had settled on Zanskar (a province of Ladakh), whose capital is Padam (pronounced "Pahdum"). Ladakh is a small country which lies between India and Tibet. Governed by India, parts of it are still virtually unknown and unmapped. In the days of British rule a line had been drawn across the southern boundary, beyond which no British subject might rely on protection by the Government. This line, known as the "Inner Line," has been maintained and extended by the Indian Government with the purpose of controlling movements between India and Communist-occupied Tibet, and the would-be traveller in Ladakh must apply for special permission to cross it. The fact that no non-Indian had been granted this permission since before the War did not loom very large in our calculations at this stage.

Navigator Eve had visited her local office of the Automobile Association on the morning following the visit to Oxted. In a letter to me she wrote, "To my amazement, the suave young man behind the counter produced a printed itinerary from a drawer without batting an eyelid. I felt then that if the route had reached this stage of commonplace occurrences we could do it too."

We set about the task of raising money from outside sources, and with the help of a literary agent succeeded in selling the story to a weekly magazine and to a publisher. Betty, who had been miserably juggling with figures which so far totalled only what the team had undertaken to contribute, cheered up a little, but her job as treasurer was for the moment nominal only, so she offered to help me with the raising of equipment. I was particularly relieved, as the

letters to embassies and High Commissions were taking up a great deal of time, especially in cases where my letters remained unanswered as precious time filtered away.

We had a stroke of luck at the beginning of the year when a film-producer friend, who was interested in the possibility of making a professional film on our travels, introduced us to Dame Isobel Cripps. Our aims seemed to appeal to her from the angle of meeting women on our journeys, and she set to immediately with an energy that left us gasping, to help us in every way she could. In fact, she gave us so much assistance that we asked very diffidently whether she would agree to becoming the chairman of the planning committee (us). Although she averred that her contribution did not really warrant this title, her readiness to follow all stages of planning certainly earned her an honoured place in our activities and affections.

Lady Cripps introduced us to Mrs Pandit, the High Commissioner for India, and in a brief interview we set out our requests for the Ladakh permit and special Customs clearance. I had seen Mrs Pandit before at a dinner, but at close quarters she was even more beautiful and vivacious. She listened quietly while we outlined our plans and how she could help us, asked some pertinent questions, and promised to do what she could.

Later Lady Cripps took us to meet the Pakistan High Commissioner and the Afghan Ambassador, both of whom promised equal support. This side of the planning was falling into place, and Eve and Betty were receiving replies to their requests to business firms, offering donations towards our food and equipment. Only the vehicle remained out of reach, and this was almost the most essential—as well as the largest—single item, without which we might as well give up all idea of going ahead with the expedition! Lester, who had just retired from the Royal Air Force, and thus the men's expedition, in the interim, to become Warden of the Outward Bound mountain school at Ullswater, was so keen that we should go that he offered to lend us the money from his gratuity to buy

the vehicle, if necessary, but we continued our efforts to interest some motor manufacturer in the expedition in the hope of getting a car on loan.

Our determination was strengthened by the flood of publicity that had been appearing in local and national newspapers since January 1958, when some enterprising reporter had got wind of our plans and, to our horror, had demanded full details. Now, if only not to lose face, we should have to succeed. The files of cuttings grew. For some reason we had a 'gimmick' that appealed, and we were dubbed with such titles as "Four Fed-up Wives," "The Wives who won't stay at Home," "Mother of Three Leads Trek to the Himalayas." The *Daily Mirror* started off in the vein "Himalayas—Here We Come! Gad, sir, here are four officers' wives who want to pack up their troubles in an old knapsack and climb, climb, CLIMB." Each newspaper translated the news into its own form of bright reporting, usually liberally laced with inaccuracies, and we watched with appalled fascination as the snowball grew. Significantly, *The Times* and other papers with sober intentions and small circulations did not touch on us at all at this early stage! But, whatever our personal reaction to this publicity, we discovered the truth in the old cliché about the power of the printed word. Heralded as we were by the Press, our approaches to various people for help met with success in the majority of cases. At last, to our great relief, through a contact in a major oil company, the Rover Company, fairy godfathers to many expeditions before us, expressed willingness to help us.

Anne and Eve, on one of their frequent trips to London, diverged to the works at Solihull, where they were met by the Overseas Sales Manager and the Publicity Manager. They learned that a long-wheelbase Land Rover that had been used as a demonstration model but had clocked up only 6000 miles would be offered to us at half-price. Possible modifications and extras were discussed, and they finally drove down to my cottage in Farnham, where we sat up into the small hours, too excited to sleep, talking about the great news.

Another recommendation by Rovers had been that we should all present ourselves for a week's course in the maintenance of the Land Rover, a useful precaution against possible breakdowns in situations well beyond the reach of service stations.

As if this was the signal for the realization of our plan, other pieces in the intricate puzzle fell into place. Eve brought word that food-supplies were coming in rapidly, and Betty had similar good news about the camping and climbing equipment, in addition to the medical supplies that her husband, a doctor in the Navy, had specified for us. Lester lent us the money to buy the vehicle and cine film, and at the last minute I managed to borrow a cine camera from a friend who appeared to have more sympathy and faith than shrewd sense. We had had no word yet from India about permission to enter Ladakh, but were not unduly concerned since there would be six weeks between our leaving England and the moment that we wished to embark on the Himalayan trek—sufficient time for Governmental departments to go to work, as we thought! We settled on the date of April 30 for our departure, and arranged to meet at Solihull on April 21 for the course at the Rover works.

With six months of planning and hard work behind us, and with the added work we had carried out for each of our husbands in the planning of the men's expedition, the strain was telling, and we agreed heartily that it would be an excellent rest, comparatively speaking, to get under way at last. For Anne, Eve, and Betty there had been the nuisance of long-distance travelling, living as they did in Cumberland, North Wales, and Plymouth respectively. The necessity for frequent gatherings in London had made these journeys essential, and undoubtedly we achieved far more in these meetings than by the lengthy delays of correspondence.

I was the first to arrive in Solihull on the morning of April 21, and changed into jeans and gym shoes in preparation for my rôle of motor mechanic-to-be. Secretly I giggled at the thought of my highly unmechanical mind having to assimilate the intricacies of the internal-combustion engine, but I put on

a bold face and listened to the first instructor with deferential interest. The others joined me shortly, and in the unseasonal warmth of the afternoon we studied a stripped-down engine with worried frowns, making copious notes. Our instructors plodded on bravely, encouraging us at intervals with the statement that such things as taking off the cylinder-head were unlikely eventualities.

To the dismay of our hosts, we had elected to camp out for the duration of the course rather than stay in hotels, and we set up a small camp in a field adjoining the factory. This was to be our first taste of living together under canvas, and although life was made easier by the caravette trailer attached to Anne's car, the few days spent thus turned out to be not so very different from what we should experience later. By day we were taken step by step through the processes that make the wheels go round, and in the evenings we continued to write letters and discuss outstanding details over meals cooked on a pressure stove.

I abandoned camp for one night when Warwick came to say good-bye. Together we enjoyed an excellent meal at a local hotel in the nature of a private launching ceremony for the two expeditions. I had cause to admire again the resourcefulness of a mountaineer when he produced a pair of shoes belonging to one of the waitresses to take the place of the pair I had left at the camp! The following morning he returned by train to London while I rejoined my companions, who had now graduated on to the electrical circuits. A little light relief was provided when we were driven over a spine-chilling testing course and learned that we could ford deep waters, although the brakes might fail afterwards; that we could start on a hill at an angle of 45 degrees; that we could run down such a hill without fear of turning over; and that the Land Rover adored endless acres of muddy, rutted ground. Whitefaced and clutching on to every available strut, we agreed that this was just the vehicle we had been looking for!

On the last day of the course we achieved little, as our

lecture-room was invaded by a photographer from *Illustrated*, the magazine with whom we had signed a contract for exclusive on-the-move stories, in search of a cover picture. We were posed in numerous ways, looking, I fear, rather more competent to tackle repairs than we felt. Television cameras followed, and we were later shown to interested viewers variously removing a spring (Eve), piecing together a brake drum (Betty), looking learnedly at a differential (Anne), and removing the nuts from a battery—just about the limit of my ability. We graduated in a blaze of publicity if not competence.

From Solihull we returned to our homes with ten days in hand. Our vehicle would not be ready in time for our planned departure, so we delayed this until May 5. During this time there was still much to do. Anne had to prepare the school wardrobes of her sons in preparation for the new term; Eve and I had to vacate our homes with the prospect of new postings for John and Warwick in the autumn; and Betty had her own domestic problems added to the packing up of the equipment which was still coming in. I spent much of this period in London visiting numerous people in efforts to clear up last-minute obstacles, while Eve moved to Anne's house in Ullswater, where the two of them started to crate our food and equipment and pack the Land Rover.

Thursday, May 1, brought catastrophe, in the form of a letter from Betty to say that she would be unable to come with us. Uneasy premonitions had resulted in a medical check-up, when she was told by her doctor that she would have to give up all idea of the expedition as she was expecting a child. I flew to the telephone and called first a tearful Betty, who was sick with disappointment. I did my best to soothe her and then called Anne. She and Eve were at that time in Liverpool, delivering to the shipping agents the stores that were to be sent to India by sea, and Lester answered the telephone instead. No, the letter had not yet arrived in Ullswater. What ghastly luck! Yes, he would get in touch with Anne and tell her the worst. There was little we could do. In

the time available there was no question of getting a substitute, and we agreed to go ahead with our plans as a party of three.

I spent the last few days in the flat of a friend and one-time landlady. Each day Hilde was secretly appalled to see the flood of boxes and bags increasing; the telephone was usually in use—by me—but her greatest trial must have been on a Sunday, when the Land Rover appeared, closely followed by Lester and Glyn, the youngest Davies, in their car. On the way down they had visited Sir John and Lady Hunt, who told them jokingly that they had not really believed that we should ever 'get off the ground' until the Land Rover swung into their driveway. To complete the chaos Betty then arrived in a taxi with the last of the equipment and a report on financial affairs. For a few hours the flat in a quiet side-street of Maida Vale buzzed with activity and noise. My kit-bags were stuffed into the back of the Land Rover on top of an already alarming pile of boxes. I looked carefully, but could not see daylight through from one end to the other. I remembered the conservative payload estimate given us by Rovers and shuddered inwardly. There must be at least two tons of stuff. With the roads to come, we should surely need to use the spare main spring we were carrying as a precaution!

Hilde valiantly prepared a meal for the invading crowd and smilingly posed for photographs with us. We called a taxi for Betty, who was heading for Scotland, and waved until we could no longer see her forlorn figure. A last check to ensure that we had everything and we drove off in the direction of Dover. The convoy of the Land Rover and Lester's car with the caravette swaying behind caused some merriment as we passed—not for the brave title and Union Jack transfers on the Land Rover, but for the little dome-shaped trailer. Lester and Glyn were on holiday, and would accompany us to the Austro-Yugoslav border. In this time Lester was to give us all much-needed advice and instruction in photography. So much depended on the success of our pictorial records that

we were more than glad to have his tuition; during the expedition Lester would continue to act as clearing-house for our films, correspondence, and publicity. In his own disappointment at staying at home while two expeditions set off we were grateful to him for undertaking this. On his part, I think he was keen to keep in close touch with us, primarily, of course, because of Anne, but also because he had been so enthusiastic about the expedition and eager for its success.

We set up our first expedition camp some twenty miles outside Dover. We were all terribly tired, and the meal we cooked and ate perfunctorily did not serve more than to keep us out of our sleeping-bags for an extra hour. Lester was to cross the Channel by sea, while we should be using the air ferry from Lydd to Le Touquet. We travelled on to Dover and did some final shopping, including the purchase of a length of stout manila rope from a sympathetic ships' chandler, to be used if required to winch us out of difficulties. He expressed the hope that we should not have to use it, we grinned agreement, and the rope was ours for a fraction of its value.

Some twenty minutes later than scheduled we drove to the airport, where we were met by a photographer and reporter from 'our' magazine, still in search of a cover picture and what they termed "background material." By this time we were becoming pretty blasé about posing for photographers (we had already had two long sessions with them, one at my home in Surrey and the other at Solihull), but the bitterly cold wind on the landing-strip did much to upset our sang-froid. We perched on the bonnet of the Land Rover with a Bristol freighter looming artistically in the background, smiling manfully between shudders. The light was poor and mist closed in as we tried to comply with idiotic requests for "a nice big smile, please, girls." Anne complained that her teeth were getting cold, and we were hustled off into the passenger lounge to hear that flying was postponed. So much for the speed of flight.

The hours passed, marked off by successive cups of coffee.

Henry Crumm, the only male member of the expedition, sat furrily impassive to the scrutiny of the Customs, a lonely little Teddy bear in the cab of the Land Rover, and we all waited. The mist lifted slightly, and we were pushed through the channels of international travel to see the Land Rover being driven up the ramp into the nose of the freighter, together with three other cars. We took our seats in the stern of the aircraft and spent the next twenty minutes debating whether the weight of the Land Rover would tip the scales in favour of a disaster over the Channel. Without sensation we landed on French soil and taxied up to the airport buildings, aware that the first of our adventures was already in being.

2

Destination Delhi

THE Customs official who met us approached the Land Rover with an air of deep suspicion. On the front seat he found a crate containing 5000 cigarettes, impressively sealed under bond by the British Customs, and a carton containing 8000 feet of cine film, similarly sealed. His hands flew into the air as his shoulders moved upward to his ears in a characteristic shrug. "Pas possible," he murmured. Anne was led to the office of the chief official, surrounded by a Gallic chorus whose utterances were completely unintelligible to her. After a few minutes of discussion, in which the cuttings book was produced to prove our intentions, the official looked up at her. One glimpse of her face prompted him to say, "But, Madame, why do you look so worried? You are in France now." All was well, and we were through.

Inevitably each expedition of this kind must discover very soon that the packing has been chaotic. The things most needed are inaccessible, and those least required are always in such a place that they must be carefully unpacked before one can reach for anything else. On the second morning out we stayed on in the field where we had camped, and under lowering skies and intermittent rain we unpacked and repacked the back of the Land Rover in its entirety. This was the first of many such occasions during our travels, and the great bonfire we lit with the help of a dash of petrol was the first marker of our progress to the East.

In easy stages we made our way across France to the Rhine near Strasbourg. We arrived at the great river towards dusk and found that we had lost sight of Lester. In the shadow of the bridge which led into Germany we waited. Anne, a non-smoker, became more worried by the minute, and even

accepted a cigarette eventually to show that she could smoke with the best of us. After a few hours she and I went to a telephone kiosk to ask whether the police had any news of an accident. They had none. On the way back to the Land Rover we were nearly 'run down' by four young men in a car. Seeking an evening's entertainment, they followed us to the Land Rover and stopped alongside, whistling and commenting. We kept up a pretence of being deaf, but finally I lost my temper and, sweeping the window open, I leaned over Eve and said furiously, "Vamoose, vamoose. Be off, will you?" In the moment of stress the French words left me, but the meaning was clear and they drove off. Soon after this Lester arrived. A spate of punctures had detained him, and in the relief of finding that the cause was no more serious, hot recriminations on both sides preceded our entry into Germany.

Here as in France our camp sites were invaded by curious natives. We made a point of telling our story in stammering French or German, and it was quite obvious that this was met with sympathy for the utter madness of these Englishwomen. When we came to the Autobahn we sent the speedometer needle soaring and made good time into Munich. Our arrival there coincided with Eve's birthday, and we decided that she should be treated to a modest celebration by the expedition. Eve shares my weakness for the Goon show, and asked that she should be given a bear as a mate for Henry Crumm—so Min joined Henry on the top of the dashboard in his world tour. Eve rounded off the celebration with a glass of beer and a plate of white sausage, for which Munich is famed.

It was interesting to note the difference between the reaction of hill people and that of plain-dwellers to our entourage. Up to the Austrian border the main interest had been in the funny little caravette, but at the frontier the guard studied us and our papers for a long time. When Lester approached to find out what was wrong he was waved away, and the guard continued to stare. We became uneasy until he suggested that we should take one of the bystanders with us to the Himalaya. This man told us in perfect English that

he was a ski-ing instructor, and that, in common with the others gathered round, he felt most envious of us.

In the early days we found ourselves driving on and on into the night, investigating and rejecting possible camp sites. This was a natural mistake which we later remedied as we became more experienced and less nervous of the unknown, but the strain of late starts after exhausting night driving made a second rest day imperative. In the setting of a pleasant wood in Southern Austria we set up a camp, and during the following day fetched numerous buckets of water from a wayside café near by and indulged in a laundry session. While we boiled water in the 22-pint billycan on the pressure stoves and scrubbed our clothes Lester filmed this aspect of "the escape from the kitchen sink." The sight of countless 'smalls' strung on a line between the trees did not enhance, perhaps, the romanticism of Austrian woodlands immortalized by Johann Strauss the younger, but we were well pleased with the labours of the day. A rest day is a misnomer, for on these occasions we did the many chores which could not be done on the road. Apart from laundry, there was the necessary job of drying out the silica gel crystals which kept our film stock from rotting, there were many letters to write in advance of our coming or, later, to thank people for their hospitality, and always the need to keep up to date on our diaries and write to husbands and families kept us fully occupied through the hours of these days.

In one Austrian village Lester put into practice an idea he had cherished for filming the expedition on the move. While Eve drove the Land Rover, Anne drove his car, and I stood by to photograph the scene in turn with Lester, precariously perched on the roof rack of his car. I was lucky to capture too the reaction of a farmer who steered his horse and cart into the main road at the moment when the procession passed. His mouth hung open and the reins fell slackly from his hands, but the horse waited patiently, looking down its nose horsewise until we had passed.

In Eisenkappel, the last village before the Yugoslav border,

we noticed that the silencer of the exhaust pipe was about to shear off. While we waited for the mechanic to return from his home I engaged the garage proprietress in conversation. She too was convinced of our craziness, and confessed that the only holiday she had spent out of Austria had served merely to confirm her opinion that no place could equal home. Looking around at the glorious setting of mountains and forests, I could sympathize, but when the exhaust pipe had been welded we continued up the Seeberg Pass to the Yugoslav frontier. Much of the ground we had covered had been the scene of past Continental holidays for one or more of us, and perhaps we dallied overlong enjoying the revisiting of much-loved places.

The previous day some Yugoslav refugees had been machine-gunned at this point on our route, but they escaped into Austria unharmed. This heightened our sense of tension as the expedition crossed the 'Iron Curtain.'

On the top of the pass we found the two frontier posts. Lester left us here while I sat in the Yugoslav Customs office, attempting to type out a list of our equipment on a typewriter which bore little resemblance to those used for the English language. Anne drove down into Yugoslavia through delightful scenery of which she could have seen little, having just parted from Lester and Glyn. She confessed some trepidation at being in a Communist state, but the three solemn children who appeared immediately we started to pitch the tent for our first camp, and who studied our every move until the chiming of a distant clock sent them scurrying home, could have been found anywhere in the world.

We awoke to the sounds of a woman gathering leaves near by. As we cooked breakfast a man and child appeared. White-haired, with a youthful face and piercing blue eyes, he showed much interest in our plans when we found our common language, German, and told him about ourselves. He showed us a basket of young pine shoots that he had been collecting. These evidently form the basis for a fairly potent home brew. His daughter remained behind to watch while

he went on gathering shoots. She refused a boiled egg but accepted a biscuit spread with jam. Her father reappeared shortly and made some ironic remarks about our apparent lack of fear in a Communist state. My reply that the régime bore little relation to the character of the individual in any state seemed to find favour, and he arranged that we should be presented with a posy of lily of the valley as we left.

In Belgrade we visited the office of the Rover agents. Our welcome was cordial, and, in the fashion of the country, glasses were put before us which were then filled with Slivovića poured from a brake-fluid tin! This latter is not, I think, traditional. Excellent Turkish coffee followed to lubricate the conversation, but at eleven in the morning the little glass of Slivovića proved rather heady. Here we held our first Press conference, and later saw the account in a Cyrillic newspaper, a satisfyingly unintelligible report. An English-speaking secretary was put at our disposal, and we were shown some of the landmarks of the city. Rosa told us much of the details of her life. The family system maintains a strong hold on the actions of children, and she complained with some bitterness that, although she was twenty-six, she could not marry the man of her choice without parental consent. We learned later, on our return, that she had married a few weeks after our visit; perhaps the influence of three Englishwomen had been subversive.

We were taken to the main market to buy some fresh food. A handsome young man took a fancy to Eve, or to her plaits, and followed us around in the company of a large crowd of peasants and idlers. I was buttonholed by a fat farmer who told me through our interpreter that he had just the cure for my freckles. "Take the water in which the Easter eggs are boiled and your freckles will wash off," was his advice. To prove his point he rolled up his sleeves to show his heavily freckled arms, contrasting with the clear skin on his face. I can only assume that he tackles a new area each year.

At dusk we were taken to a terrace which overlooks the confluence of the Danube and Sava rivers, and when the sun

had set in a twin blaze of gold we retired to a restaurant terrace to enjoy a dish of Cevapčiči: minced beef, and pork bound with egg and seasoned with paprika and herbs.

We had to continue our journey, and with mutual good wishes we left our hosts and set off on the road to the South. Although the road itself became a nightmare, we were more than interested to note that the farther south we travelled, the stronger became the flavour of the Orient. This is probably explained by the fairly recent Turkish occupation of Southern Yugoslavia, and we were thrilled to see the costumes and agricultural methods so similar in many ways to those of countries still so far ahead of us. Anne drove through the night in a gruelling stretch, dodging potholes until we reached a mountain stream at dawn, when she fell asleep in the cab while Eve and I prepared breakfast. We passed through the frontier at dusk and drove into Greece.

In the first village we entered a group of youths and girls came down the main street, singing and dancing. We stopped the Land Rover to watch and were surrounded. We gathered that this was a wedding celebration, and a pretty girl proffered sugared almonds, followed by a glass of Arak from her young escort. They passed on and we drove off, warmed by the gay welcome and by the flavour of the aniseed beverage.

The pile of dirty clothes in our rucksacks made another rest day a necessity. The song of a young cowherd woke us at six. He whistled on, exchanging greetings with passers-by. We lay in our sleeping-bags, fully aware that his eyes were resting thoughtfully on our tent. The heat of the sun drove us into the open at last. Within seconds not only our minstrel but twenty other boys surrounded us, laughing, chattering, fingering, and pushing, while the cows wandered on to the railway and the road, heeded only by sweating engine-drivers and motorists. In self-defence we roped off the area of the tent and the back of the Land Rover, and while we stayed inside like monkeys in a cage, they sat cross-legged along the rope and watched. The Simplon–Orient express passed,

narrowly missing two cows and a horse, we laundered and typed, and our audience continued to ply us with requests for "cigarro," which we turned down with some firmness since the average age was in the region of thirteen years. Occasionally the rôles were reversed as we were treated to a fine display of circus tricks on the back of one of the more docile horses. Two raging stallions threatened to create havoc by bursting free from their tethering ropes and galloping through our camp. We packed up as hastily as we could and drove off, quite exhausted but on the best of terms with our tormentors.

We made good time through Greece, in spite of the temptations of the Mediterranean coastal scenery and the dangers of the shocking patch of road that led to the Turkish border. The Customs official who met us in Turkey spoke good English, and when the paper formalities had been concluded he accompanied Anne outside to the Land Rover. He insisted that everything should be taken out of the back, and it was only when he asked whether we were carrying bombs or sputniks that she grinned weakly at his little joke. We passed through Edirne, with its famous mosque sailing above the skyline like a full moon, and camped a short distance beyond the town. An old man arrived on the scene. With no common language we indicated by gestures that we should like to rest here if he was agreeable. He replied with a gesture of welcome, although in all probability he was not the owner of the field. Very early the following morning our old guardian arrived, and passers-by were treated to full explanations of our identity. He graciously accepted a cup of tea and, expanding in the warmth of our hospitality, indicated that he had served in Yugoslavia (then Serbia) during the First World War. The sight of Anne and me upending our heads in buckets to wash our hair was too much for his dignity, and he gave vent to a gust of giggles. As a parting gesture we took a photograph of him, and he snapped to attention, arms stiffly by his side and chin in the air, as befitted an old soldier.

The impact of Istanbul on the traveller has been described

on countless occasions; we were no exception to the rubber-necking multitudes as we drove through the maze of streets and alleys of the old town in search of the Rover agents. A resourceful policeman on point duty requisitioned a passing car to lead us through the crowded streets. The Land Rover required servicing, so we visited the British Consul-General to pick up mail and to ask for advice on a possible camp site. The official who interviewed us lectured us in extremely prim but emphatic tones about the inadvisability of women camping out in Turkey. Later we laughed about his use of the phrase "fate worse than death," but at the time we were so tired and dispirited that we could only sit glumly until he disappeared. The stock Foreign Office warning was tempered by sympathy from another quarter when arrangements were made for us to camp on the playing-fields of a school.

The Land Rover was delivered to the garage the next morning, and we were taken on a tour of the city by one of our Turkish hosts. He delighted us with his story of a visit to London, where he had visited Marks and Spencer's ("you cannot beat them for value, you know") and had bought a botany wool twin set for a "very good friend" who had asked him to bring back a cashmere twin set. "I exchanged the label for a Bond Street label in the present I had bought for my wife, and to this day my friend proclaims loudly that this is the finest cashmere she has ever had." Apart from being an engaging rascal he was a very good guide, and we saw much of the beauties of this city which straddles two continents.

We crossed the Bosphorus on the ferry that afternoon, and in a few miles left the Mediterranean behind, the last we were to see of large tracts of water for a long time. Ankara has few of the attractions of Istanbul, and, stopping only to collect letters, we left it behind. In one of our camp sites in the mountains beyond Ankara we were visited by two shepherds, an old man and his son. They examined our equipment carefully, clicking tongues at each new miracle. Especially the polythene caught their fancy: buckets that could be bent into any shape, cups and plates that could be dropped with-

out fear of breaking. We offered them coffee and cigarettes. At first the old man hesitated to accept, but he followed the lead of his more sophisticated son and smacked his lips to show his appreciation. A tense moment followed when the young man grabbed a precious polythene water-bottle, laid it under his coat, and turned defiantly towards us, challenging us to remove it. Knowing no Turkish, I taxed him, "You have accepted our coffee and cigarettes. Will you now do this?" No, of course he would not so abuse hospitality; it was just a little joke. His father shook his head sorrowfully at the breach in good relations, and we parted after exchanging gifts of Turkish delight and Scottish toffees. We enjoyed their sweetmeats: I hope they chewed ours with similar pleasure.

The state of the Turkish economy had been insufficiently impressed on us. True, we had seen cars and trucks travelling on tyres that had all but lost their entire coating of rubber. We had seen many of these jacked up in the middle of streets while punctured wheels were rolled off to the nearest garage; spare wheels are almost unknown these days. We were given a list of banks authorized to exchange travellers' cheques, but, trained to the ease with which one may change a cheque at any bank, hotel, or even shop in Europe, this control on inflation did not register very strongly. We drove into Kirsehir with near-empty tanks, having spent our last ten lire on petrol, confident that we were in good time for banking hours and with the intention of changing a cheque in this town. There was only one bank in Kirsehir, and it did not appear on the list. The manager showed reserved interest in dollars, of which we possessed none, but ignored our sterling notes and cheques. Again we were frustrated by the lack of a common language, but we gathered that it was possible to exchange cheques at Kayseri, some eighty-seven miles on. But what could we do? We had no petrol.

The manager sent an odd little man with us to the garage, where the tank was filled. Eve and Anne were a little nervous, but my idea was to get the petrol into the tank and then to start negotiations. We waited hopelessly at the garage for

some one to appear and accept a promissory note. A large crowd gathered, which in turn brought a young policeman on to the scene who waved them away and fetched the Chief of Police. This worthy appeared in dramatic style in a jeep, which came to a halt in front of us with a squealing of brakes. A swarthy man with a Clark Gable moustache swung out and greeted us with a wholly sinister smile, displaying a full set of gold teeth. By this time an interpreter had been found who told our story. We were ordered to follow the jeep, and, in a cloud of dust and scattering pedestrians, it led us back to the bank with a continuous tattoo on the horn.

Despite the warmth of the greeting between the two dignitaries of the town, the manager remained adamant, and it was explained that the bank would stand security on the petrol, the payment for which we should make by post from Kayseri. With the mystery cleared we were escorted through the town by the jeep to the main road, where we took our leave amid a dazzle of golden smiles. Although we covered the distance in two hours, we were just too late. The banks had closed for the week-end in Kayseri. The situation looked to be irremediable, and we had decided to stay at one of the doubtful hotels until the banks reopened, when we caught sight of a car with R.A.C. and A.A. plates in addition to the discreet C.D. identification. We parked nose firmly on and waited for the owner to emerge.

Undoubtedly the scene of a large crowd surrounding three distressed British females must have caused some rueful amusement to our benefactor, Mr Heathcote Smith, the Commercial Counsellor at the Embassy in Ankara, but he and his wife gave no indication of their dismay. We learned that there was no possibility of circumventing the regulations, but were taken back to a guest-house, where we were entertained. Over diplomatic whisky and cigarettes we discussed the expedition, the Turks and their customs. One mystery was cleared up for us by the explanation of the curious gesture of throwing back the head with eyes closed disdainfully with the word "yo" or a *tsk* as accompaniment. This we

learned means "no." Our host insisted that we should not delay, and helped us out of our difficulty with a loan, to be repaid when we found a bank of the right sort. With the promise that we should revisit them on our return through Ankara, we drove on into mountainous country.

I had read much of Kemal Ataturk's reforms in Turkey, and was disappointed to notice that in this eastern part of the country some reaction had set in. Except in the larger towns, women drew their veils across their faces and turned their backs at the approach of the Land Rover, and our desire to meet other women met with less success in Turkey than almost any other country apart from Afghanistan. The attitude of the men also reflected this reaction, for they sneered openly when they saw three women in the Land Rover, and we took childish pleasure in making them jump as we threatened to cut their leisured promenades in the centre of the roads brutally short! The landscape did much to allay this unpleasant feature. The panorama of great plains and rolling hills, with occasional snow-capped mountains puncturing the horizon, the profusion of wild flowers which decked the fields, and the green, mauve, red, and brown in the earth of the hills delighted us. Anne was ecstatic about the variety of flowers and birds, and was for ever asking us to stop so that she might collect or photograph some new species.

On entering the military zone of Erzurum we had to make room in the cab for an escort. Cameras were stowed away, for photography is forbidden, and we made our way into the Aldershot of Turkey, its ancient monuments almost obliterated by the appurtenances of military occupation. While our papers were checked by the police and militia our escort took us to a restaurant, where we might sample again the famous cuisine of his country. Eve and I stepped into the kitchen to select the dishes from a large collection simmering in saucepans on a ten-by-five-foot 'tomb,' evidently a charcoal-fired stove. We chose stuffed tomatoes, kebab, and a dish of mixed vegetables. Our escort did not join us in this meal, but sat

smoking and chatting in his slight French. In the midst of the kebab he looked across at Anne and said in deliberate English, "I lov you vur much." She choked and blushed. Inquiries elicited that this was the only English he knew, but we recognized the gambit in all its antiquity and concentrated on the food.

Our last night in Turkey we spent camped in the shadow of Mount Ararat. Although the mountain was discreetly veiled with a wisp of cloud over the summit, we were able to admire Noah's legendary landing-stage, and considered the possibility of 'knocking it off' on the return journey—an idle boast. The frontier post at the entrance to Iran has, as I have since learned, acquired a rather dubious fame over a long period. There are gruesome tales of travellers being delayed for five long days or more while the officials make a leisurely check on papers that are suspect merely because they are unfamiliar. We suffered no such hardship, fortunately, for I can think of few more unappetizing camp sites. The place was dirty, with a pervading odour of nauseous strength, and the large offices and echoing corridors appeared to be furnished almost entirely with large ledgers, in each of which, or so it seemed, our particulars had to be entered.

Anne could not find one of her papers, and a lone Turkish official dealt with Eve and me, sending us back to another office. I quipped to Ann as we left the room, "I'll leave you to his mercies. May they be tender." This was an unfortunate remark as it transpired, for no sooner had we left them than he started to stroke her knee. In Urdu she told him to stop it and leave her alone. Whether it was her apparent gibberish or the fact that she then found the missing document, she was permitted to leave—and beat a hasty retreat. So we learned yet another lesson, that we should always attack in pairs! Four hours passed while we duplicated the formalities under both flags and passed into Iranian territory.

The frontier acted as a guillotine on the road, which for the next 1200 miles became a bone-shaking ribbon of corrugations with occasional dizzy descents into wadis which lurked un-

seen, threatening the unwary with broken springs if the plunge was taken at speed. The mountains to the north and west cut the rain-clouds off before they can reach the high plateau of inner Iran, and we looked in vain for the mountain springs which had been our source of water in Turkey. We reached Tabriz with our supplies down to a cupful of water. We had heard of the existence of an office of the British Council in Tabriz, and made inquiries of a policeman as to its whereabouts in the hope of getting information there about safe sources of water in the country, and to fill our bottles as well. A fruitless five minutes passed while we tried to convince the policeman that we knew there was no British *Consul* but what we wanted was the British *Council*. At this juncture two unmistakeably transatlantic accents crossed fire from either side.

"Sure, there is a British Council here. I've bin there, but I just can't recall how to get there."

Pressing offers of assistance followed if we would just drive after the jeep standing by. Thirsty women do not waste time, and Eve let in the clutch and followed. Our two benefactors were members of an N.C.O.'s mess of the United States military advisory unit. We were led into a cool cellar where a further eighteen men sat round a large tub of ice packed to overflowing with cans of beer, relaxing after the day's work. As we sipped gratefully of the nectar that emerged from one of these tins we told our story. One man, fairly advanced in a private celebration of his imminent departure for the States, leaned over to study the crook of Eve's elbow, where telltale black 'sausages' of dirt had collected, and asked in careful Southern accents, "Say, would you girls like to refresh yourselves with a shower?"

I have always found that Americans have the gift for getting down to the practical aspects of hospitality with the minimum of delay. We accepted the offer with alacrity, and while two men were posted to stand guard outside the shower room, and a further two men were posted to guard the guard, we splashed happily under the jets of cold water.

In fresh clothes we appeared for dinner, after which we were in great demand as dancing partners. During the gaiety a heavy storm burst, and our hosts considered it highly improper that we should have to suffer the discomfort of camping in such a storm. It was rather amusing to be made to feel helpless! Sergeant Lennon, who had served with the Commandos in the British Marines from 1941 to 1948, vacated his room, and three austere camp-beds were installed for us. With a hearty breakfast of waffles and maple syrup inside us, we thanked our twenty hosts the following morning and took the road to Tehran.

Jonathan Nathan, an Iraqi and the Rover agent in the capital, with his pretty wife, Jasmin, took us into their home and made us welcome with hospitality that left us gasping. We sampled traditional Iranian dishes in a series of meals that seemed to follow on each other's heels almost without pause, and learned much about the country from our host, who appeared to be the only person in Tehran to agree that we should be quite safe in the country. The increasing heat had decided Eve to have her long hair cut off, and we inquired from Jasmin where this could be done. She swept us off to her own hairdresser, where Anne and I sat by to watch the fun. The salon was filled with women, having already immaculate hair dressed while a manicurist worked on their finger- and toe-nails. In the streets we had noticed that the Iranian women were well up to date with the latest fashions from Paris, and in this city at least there was little evidence of the veil. It does seem a pity, though, that the married women on the whole do so little with their day. While servants take care of their children and homes, their outlets seem to be confined to visits to the hairdresser and dressmaker.

Eve emerged totally unfamiliar with a bouffant topping of curled hair. Soon the old Eve would reappear when the curl had gone, but for the moment she was a stranger among us. That evening we were taken to a night club. The highlight of the evening lay for me in one of the items of the cabaret when a scantily clad girl appeared in a 'snake dance.' In the most

fantastic series of frenzied shakes she all but dislocated every bone in her body. The audience rose to their feet as a man, and I giggled to note that, while the men indicated wholehearted approval with gasps and cries of encouragement, the women stood intently silent, mentally disembowelling the girl.

The Nathans provided us with several letters of introduction to cover our route to the south, and we left Tehran, heading for the Great Salt Desert, which covers a vast area of the country. Still alternating between speeds of 15 and 35 miles per hour over the corrugations, we skirted the holy city of Qum and drove towards Isfahan. There is no monotony in the desert landscape, and the ever-changing contours and colours give the bleak wastes a terrible splendour. Mountains of 10,000 feet and over surround the plateaux, but we were puzzled by the trails of small mounds of earth that cross the desert in all directions. Two young shepherd boys solved the mystery for us after the radiator had boiled over for the umpteenth time, leaving us without water, so that we enlisted their aid. They led us to one of these mounds and, dropping underground on a tiny path, we came to a vaulted channel where a stream of clear water coursed its way below the surface. In future searches for water we found that other mounds were simple wells and that many had dried up, but with further attempts water was always to be found.

This preoccupation with water and heat brought about a change in the theme of our soapbox opera. We took no wireless-set with us, and in the course of several thousand miles we had taken to whiling away the hours with song-and-dance routines. As the floor under the feet of the passengers grew hotter with the exhaust pipe snaking about below, so we placed our feet on the windscreen. For propriety's sake, the driver would shout "Legs!" as anything appeared on the road, and soon this cry would bring instant obedience from even a slumbering passenger. A soft-shoe technique was rehearsed on the windscreen, while all three would hum an accompaniment. The opera was a far more serious business.

Each day brought a completely original and impromptu contribution from all three of us, rather in the style of Restoration opera, with much *recitativo* and pompomming from an imaginary harpsichord. Anne as soprano, I as mezzo, and Eve with a fine fruity contralto, lapsing occasionally and regrettably into a 'potato' contralto whose rendering of music must be unintelligible to all, including the composer, ran through a gamut of luscious menus and Paradisiacal iced drinks to the tender accompaniment of song. I think, and I am sure the others will agree, that we were rather good.

In Isfahan we followed up the first letter of introduction to a garage proprietor who spoke no language but Parsee. He kept calling in passers-by who spoke English to act as interpreters, and over innumerable glasses of the very excellent Iranian tea we asked whether we might see some of the beauties of the ancient city. We were taken to see the silversmiths, for whom Isfahan is famed, at work. Each article is painstakingly decorated by hand, by incision or filigreed to an unbelievably slender degree. We climbed to the top of a minaret and visited museums and mosques, ending the day (with a bottle of the "Cola" which has swept the non-alcoholic Muslim countries of the Middle East) at one of the two delightful Venetian-like bridges over the river to watch the sun set.

In Kerman we realized a shyly cherished hope when we were invited into an Iranian home of the traditional style and conventions. Our host was a member of a wealthy and influential family, the leaders of a small splinter sect of the Islam faith. He, as younger son, managed the family estate, and his elder brother carried out his duties as religious leader. It was explained to us that had the elder brother been at home he would not have had a meal with us. But we did dine in the less formal company of our 'farmer' host and his wife at the table in the courtyard under a tree. The house and garden were entirely surrounded by a high wall. Inside this wall it was as though the dusty streets of the town and, beyond that, the desert did not exist. The house consisted of a series of

separate wings, one for the servants, one for the family, one for entertaining, and so on. Between these were large trees and paved terraces with a circular pond fed from a spring, with the water gently splashing into concentric channels. We sat beside this, relaxing after the heat and dust of the drive. Our hostess spoke no English, but busied herself with organizing drinks and a meal for us. She wore the "chowdhur," a shawl which is draped over the head and is swathed around the body but is not fastened, so that hands and even teeth must be employed to keep it from slipping. Significantly the word also means "tent." She discarded it eventually; presumably among women and familiars that is in order.

Over a meal of hot or cold cucumber soup followed by an omelette and rice dish we discussed the status of women with our host. We learned that there are increasing numbers of women in the professions in Iran. Some study medicine, but the majority are teachers. The difficulty is to get them to leave the towns and to go into the villages. I thought of the difference between the freedom they had in Tehran and the cloistered lives they would have to lead in villages, but politely refrained from suggesting that this might be the reason.

For some time the petrol pump in the Land Rover had been making noises of complaint about the heat, and on the road to Bam we were stopped in our tracks with petrol starvation. I had just driven through a stream and suspected that we were no longer on the road—in the desert and by night one track is much like another. Eve and Anne started mechanizing while I fed them coffee and biscuits and, I hope, not too much good advice, but the moonlight was insufficient for the delicacy of the work, so we pumped up our air mattresses and slept under the stars until dawn. In daylight my suspicion was confirmed, but it turned out to be a fortunate mistake. The stream we had crossed had just surfaced, and the water was crystal-clear and icy-cold. While Eve and Anne continued to trace the fault in impeccable style, I made breakfast and laundered all our clothes. I found a well-protected

stretch of water and stripped off, splashing and shouting like a child. The others followed suit, and we then made for the shelter of some trees, deciding to rest out here and travel on by night.

During the day we were visited by shepherds and small boys, one of whom presented us with a large bunch of grapes wrapped in a cloth. He insisted on washing these for us, and we partook of them solemnly, indicating in sign language how much we relished their sweetness. In turn we offered him a plateful of pistachio nuts. He was most upset to learn that we were travelling by night, and made signs that we should leave at once as the road was bad. Impressed as we were by his earnestness, the arrival of a U.N.I.C.E.F. jeep with a surprising complement of quite un-United Nations personnel in the guise of police prevented us for a time from following his advice to start. We were to pack up at once and follow them to the police-station at Bam. This was not disturbing, as we had been checked countless times *en route*, but it did serve to delay us, and it was seven before we left Bam.

Our young friend had not exaggerated, but it was not so much the road that made the following hours hellish. Imagine a great plate filled with sand, disturbed only by blasts of wind hotter than the sand below. This was the desert of South Iran on this night. The Land Rover approved as little as we did. Eve fell into an uneasy sleep, but Anne and I could only find relief every hour by stretching out on the sand by the roadside while waiting for the radiator to cool. We, and the vehicle, consumed large quantities of water. In one of my stints as driver we averaged only 16 miles in an hour and a half, for we experienced the most frightening of all conditions. Even Eve woke up in the atmosphere of tension, and we all three 'drove' through this stretch. The road was no more than a sand-drift several feet deep. Some attempt had been made to solidify the base with rocks and chicken wire, but countless straining and heavily laden trucks had churned deep ruts along the sides, throwing up an alarmingly high ridge between. I slammed the Land Rover into four-wheel

drive as we dipped into the trap, and we negotiated the first part successfully, the differentials scrunching painfully over the rocks and central ridge, but eventually our clearance proved insufficient and we foundered, canting to one side.

A huge truck was on my tail, and I feared that we should both be bogged down, but in the powerful gears of low ratio we managed to get through. Frequently I had broken into a cold sweat on the journey, but this time I dried up completely and sat licking my lips for the next few miles! We crossed the Afghan Pass, a weird road leading up a defile and across a river-bed, closed in by mountains on both sides and sweltering. Eventually we could carry on no farther and slept by the side of the road, completely exhausted, until dawn.

It was somewhat cooler on the other side of the pass, and we drove to Zahidan, grateful for the slight relief. There we presented yet another letter of introduction to the Indian Vice-Consul. Mr Kapur looked at our dirt-streaked faces and tired eyes and insisted at once on taking us to his home, where he and his wife proceeded to make us welcome with the same practical approach as the Americans, but with a quiet grace that we found most refreshing. Apart from meals we were left to rest. Anne took the Land Rover to a Greek mechanic who checked the petrol pump and showed her his visiting-book of expeditions who had passed this way and availed themselves of his services after the rigours of the desert. She added her signature and posed for a photograph which he took with a Japanese camera no larger than a cigarette-lighter. He complimented her on the repair of the fuel system, although he pointed out that all the nuts were only finger-tight!

We spent the night in the courtyard of Mr Kapur's house—for Eve and me our first experience of sleeping on charpoys, the beds made of webbing, but for Anne the first tangible sign of homecoming. There were 53 miles to be covered to the frontier post at Mirjawa, and we left our kind hosts, arriving at the Iranian Customs house at noon. Sleepy police and Customs officials dealt with us very promptly and more

kindly than a truck that had just come through from Baluchistan. The load of hay was carefully prodded with a long steel rod, reminding us that the Baluchis are famous for their prowess as smugglers. With the cholera epidemic in East Pakistan, the Iranians had closed the railway through from Pakistan, and we were warned that, with this means of smuggling cut off, the Baluchis were quite likely to revert to their time-honoured custom of robbing travellers! Undismayed, we drove on into our first tribal territories. We had caught our first glimpse of these wild, shaggy people in Zahidan, and we now passed the ruined mud fort that marked the actual boundary, veering dutifully to the unaccustomed left of the road as we entered Pakistan.

3

Arrival and Frustration

WHATEVER we had expected to see, the first hours in Baluchistan were an anticlimax, for we saw nothing at all. The bleak wastes of the desert certainly pointed to the necessity for occupations other than agriculture for the inhabitants. The Land Rover continued to boil over at regular intervals, holding up progress, but eventually we came to a small cluster of sheds around the base of a watch-tower. This was the first police check-post in Pakistan, but the turbaned figures with wild, untrimmed beards that rushed down to meet us with rifles carelessly slung over their shoulders were anything but reassuring. Bright eyes darted from one to another as the police scanned our passports, and several of them made for the back of the vehicle, peering intently into the chaos of boxes. "Where is the sahib?" they inquired. We denied the presence of male companions and made ready for a quick getaway when this phenomenon penetrated realization. Flashing smiles and animated chatter broke out, but we were waved on when they had looked their fill.

The first village we came to was Nok-Kundi, where the Customs post was situated, some 100 miles inside the frontier. We were greeted with the sight of a busload of pilgrims standing patiently around a collection of their luggage, scattered in a wide circle for careful scrutiny at leisure, but perhaps my plea to Karachi for dispensation had resulted in instructions being given to the Customs, and we were passed through without difficulties. In the inevitable periods of waiting we made friends with some of the Baluchi children playing in the vicinity. They were as handsome as the adults, with bold manners and picturesque, brightly coloured clothing. We were yet to see veiled women in Pakistan, for the tribes of

nomads and hill people afford their women an inordinate amount of freedom by Muslim standards. No doubt the hard lives they lead and the necessity to travel continuously with the flocks are the cause of this.

The Pakistani medical officer invited us to join him for a cup of tea, over which he told us something of the trials of this posting. Water has to be brought many miles in containers, and, apart from the heat and dust, the worst enemy of the stranger posted to Nok-Kundi is boredom. He advised us to drive on to Dalbandin, where the rest-house was far superior to that in Nok-Kundi. Eve covered the distance in good time on a road which, although still shingle, was well maintained. The Baluchi sentry on duty at Dalbandin guided us to the rest-house and vaulted over the gates to waken the watchman, or chowkidar.

Rest-houses are peculiar, I think, to countries once, or still, in the British administration. Built in bungalow style, they are found in most places in Pakistan and India, large and small, and may be civil, P.W.D., Dak (or Post) bungalows, Canal and Circuit rest-houses. In the case of those which come under Governmental departments permission must be sought from officials to spend time there, but this we always found readily granted. Each room has a bathroom and sometimes a dressing-room, and is simply furnished with charpoys, chairs, and a table. Where electricity is available electric fans are provided, but we were to find rest-houses where the traditional punkahs still prevailed. Large rectangles of heavy rush mats, these are operated by means of a rope which leads through a hole in the wall to the veranda, where a punkah wallah sits or reclines, pulling the rope to and fro with hands, or feet if he is an old hand! Effective cooling for the occupant of the room, but, one feels, a little hard on the operator.

We laid out our bedding on the charpoys and made much use of the bathroom, pouring water over ourselves gratefully from the zinc storage bath. During the following day we rested, ordering large pots of tea to be brought at regular intervals by the chowkidar. I have never been much of a tea-

drinker, but in the heat of Pakistan and, later, India I was to become a veteran swiller of the brew. It seems to quench the thirst more completely than any other beverage. Anne gave us glowing reports of iced *nimbu pani* (fresh lime-juice), but Eve and I could only look forward to this new delight—for some days yet we were out of reach of ice and fresh fruit. We contented ourselves with the tea and powdered lemonade made with tepid water!

On the road to Quetta the morning sun soon raised the temperature to the level where the fuel system began to play up. On one of our frequent stops an Army lorry drew up alongside with a flourish and a dozen men crowded around the bonnet, ignoring our diagnosis of the trouble, and proceeded to dismantle pipes and blow through them, finally announcing that the fault lay in the vaporization of the petrol—precisely what we had told them forty minutes earlier. By this time the engine had cooled down, and when the mechanic of the party tapped the carburettor with a spanner, ordering us to start the engine, his bearing claimed all credit for this magic knack. We spent a day in Quetta, the city once destroyed by an earthquake and now entirely rebuilt in what is reputed to be earthquake-proof style. To me it looked like wood and corrugated-iron architecture, which is undoubtedly more resistant to upheaval than bricks and mortar. Brooke Bond and Co., Ltd, who were providing us with tea, had sent one of their men to meet us and take charge of us for our stay in the town, and to present us with renewed supplies of tea for the mountaineering part of the expedition.

Eve had estimated in England that we should need 40 pounds of tea, and when the company suggested politely that this represented a generous intake for a family over a period of three years or more she halved the quantity. Even so the amount was far more than we required, and it was with desperation that we gallantly smiled at each new presentation, mentally calculating how many brews would be required daily to keep up with the flood.

From Quetta our route lay through the northern fringes of

the Sind desert. Dropping from the relatively cool altitude of Quetta, we drove through the night to Sukkur, reputedly one of the hottest places on earth. At nine in the morning we were installed in a comfortable rest-house, and already the temperature outside precluded any serious activity. It was to rise during the day to 116 degrees Fahrenheit, certainly the hottest I have ever experienced, although we were assured that this was quite cool for the time of the year! Eve collapsed for the day in a heavy sleep, looking very pale. At 5.30, assuming that the worst of the heat would be over, Anne and I made our way in the Land Rover to the bazaar. A policeman stopped us and told us to go home until eight, when it would be a little cooler! We were inclined to agree with him. How people survive in the tiny mud huts and narrow streets is a mystery to me. I cannot believe that their physiology is so different from mine that they are impervious to the conditions. In fact, each year takes its toll of lives during the heatwaves, as I learned later.

It was not until we neared Lahore that the atmosphere cooled sufficiently for us to be able to expend energy by day. The Brooke Bond office and that of the Rover agent in Lahore were fortunately in the same building, and we paid our respects in the luxury of air-conditioned offices. A pile of letters awaited us, including a telegram from Warwick and John Sims on Rakaposhi, complaining that they had had no letters whatever from us. The intricacies of postal connexions from places on our route to a remote mountain in the Karakoram were obviously to blame, and we hoped that letters posted in Pakistan would reach them more quickly. There was also a letter from the shipping agents in Bombay giving notice that Customs refused to clear our stores. Since we should be in Delhi in a day or two we decided to wait until then, but, with the experience of previous expeditions as warning, the situation looked pretty grim.

One cheering thing, however, was the praise bestowed on the condition of the Land Rover by the agent. Of all the vehicles that had done the overland trip, he said, this was in

the finest condition. When Anne suggested that this might be the result of careful handling by three women drivers the servicing manager laughed uproariously—Philistine!

We spent the night in Faletti's, the luxury hotel of Lahore, our first hotel *en route* and, we fervently hoped as we paid our bill, our last. A Press conference had been arranged for us the following morning by Brooke Bond in a dimly lit café near their offices. A dozen journalists and photographers awaited us. Unfortunately we had not prepared a statement, and Anne, in particular, as leader, was subjected to a fast cross-fire of questions. The fact that we had travelled through Pakistan mainly by night, thereby missing so much of the country, seemed to be a sore point. In this and other interviews in Pakistan we were aware of the sensitivity towards the slightest criticism and were careful to sidestep any touchy issues. After the interview tea was served, and in the less high-powered atmosphere we were able to discuss such questions as feminine emancipation quite freely with them. We hoped uneasily that the overall impression we had left would translate into a fairly sympathetic Press.

From Lahore our route lay along the Grand Trunk Road which is described in great detail in Kipling's *Kim*. The scene is unaltered apart from the "Tarmac" surface of the road and the many gaily decorated motor-driven trucks which speed past the bullock-wagons creaking painfully in their slow progress down the road. The banana palms, the neam-trees, the water-buffalo submerging luxuriously in pools and rivers—these are unchanged, as is the sight of countless villagers in the early morning, squatting for their daily evacuation with buttocks turned to the road.

At the Pakistan frontier post we were taken to task for the fact that we had not been given a currency declaration form at Nok-Kundi. With careful politeness we riposted that we had crossed many frontiers, each with its own rules, and if paid officials did not know the details of the regulations, who were we to correct them? Our point was made—we passed through into India. Here a Sikh policeman scanned us care-

fully, smiled graciously, and ordered tea, over which we all sat conversing amicably while he dealt with the formalities at his leisure. An American entered, and his papers were stamped and signed first, for, as the policeman said, "The family must wait on the visitors." This attitude towards the British was one we were to experience throughout our travels in Pakistan and India, perhaps a tribute to the timing of the granting of independence and the popularity of the officials who had dealt with the details of the handover.

India, as our destination, could not be claimed as a transitory country, and we were particularly worried about Customs clearance. But the official who dealt with us seemed to be concerned mainly with gold-smuggling. He valued the four cameras at the same sum as our three wedding-rings, one of which was silver, and showed no further interest in our possessions. We drove on through the heat to Amritsar and continued down the Grand Trunk Road, dodging the trishaws and bicycles as we went. In particular, we were careful to give a wide berth to whole families of Sikhs wavering down the road on ancient bicycles, father pedalling furiously, with one or even two children perched on the crossbar, while mother sat gracefully on the back with a baby clutched in one arm.

The Punjab is the home of several million Sikhs, and we had ample opportunity to study the difference between their habits and customs and those of countries through which we had already passed. What impressed us in particular, I think, was the high status held by women in their community. We learned something of their religion and the symbols that mark them as distinct from their neighbours: the steel bangle for unity, the comb which keeps their uncut hair in place in a delightful topknot, the dagger, and the fact that they may never totally undress. These characteristics date from a massacre of Sikhs by the Dogras, who caught the Sikhs bathing by a river-bank in a state of undress and butchered them without much opposition. Since then tradition has decreed that no Sikh shall relax his vigilance even in the bath, hence

the rather awkward need to change underpants one leg at a time!

At Ambala our pitiful petrol pump breathed its last, and a carload of Sikhs stopped to render assistance. Again our diagnosis was brushed aside while they satisfied themselves as to the cause of the trouble in a lengthy and painstaking stripping down of the fuel system. We were content to let them proceed, however. Apart from their other talents, Sikhs are the undisputed kings of things mechanical in India, and these men efficiently changed the petrol pump while we sat by the roadside drinking "Coca-Colas." I was amused to note that the silver bangle on one Sikh's arm was put to efficient use as a bottle-opener.

On June 16, six weeks to the day since our departure from England, we drove into Delhi. Anne took over at the Kashmir Gate, entrance to Old Delhi, and with one hand on the horn she drove slowly through the crowded bazaars, our progress sometimes slowed down to a snail's pace by the mass of pedestrians who continued to walk unhurriedly down the centre of the roads. Delhi was just coming to life again after the night's rest. Everywhere sleepy, half-dressed shopkeepers were sipping their cups of tea and waiting for first customers, their wares on shelves around them or hanging from hooks overhead. Trishaws wove crazy patterns ahead of us as they dodged through the crowds; taxis and buses drove at a furious pace, sending up waves of pedestrians rather like the bow wave of a ship. We passed into the comparative order of New Delhi, which had been laid out by Sir Edwin Lutyens in neat circles and radial, wide streets, tree-lined to give some relief from the rays of the sun, and dominated by the Legislative Assembly and Secretariat buildings, built of the local sandstone of the characteristic pink. Some regard this as one of the most beautiful cities in the world, but I cannot agree. The grandiose public buildings fit uneasily into the tropical scene and form vibrating pools of heat with the large areas of paving that surround them.

We made our way in to the Rover Agents, where we picked

up the mail. Still no word about our permit to enter into Ladakh, and confirmation that the sea stores were held up. A depressing start, but our troubles had only just begun. A visit to the department of External Affairs revealed that our file had been lost. A man was sent to look for it. An hour later, with Eve and I nodding off at times in a losing battle with sleep, the file had still not appeared. Would we telephone the following afternoon? We made our way to the Y.W.C.A. and were installed in the guest-room. Evidently our business in Delhi would take several days, and although we could ill afford even the moderate fees of the hostel, we should have to stay somewhere. We could hardly have chosen a better lodging. Some fifty to sixty girls lived in the hostel, and in the next days we were given the opportunity to learn much about the lives of the new generation of young working-women in India.

Traditionally a girl becomes the bond slave of her parents-in-law when she marries; her husband is usually completely subservient to his mother, and few young couples live outside the parental home. The father of the bride must provide a handsome dowry in addition to all furniture and so on. Thus the chances of a girl whose father is not rich are proportionately less attractive. We heard the complaint that even boys with overseas education prefered to marry illiterate girls, as they would be of more use around the house! No doubt much of this is changing, but many of the girls expressed some dismay at the thought of giving up the intellectual freedom they enjoyed while they were at work, fearing the strength of traditions among the older generation of their own families and those into which they might expect to marry.

We were much taken by the grace of these girls. Erect of carriage and fine-boned, they make an elegant picture in their saris. Contrary to appearance, these garments are not cool. Made of muslin or silk, they must be tightly wound round the waist several times, and are finished with seven pleats or so before the end is thrown over the shoulder. Six to seven yards of material are involved, together with a half-petticoat

and blouse. This latter nowadays is cut very short, and the slim bare midriff artistically displayed between blouse and sari looks most attractive. For comfort, however, most girls admitted that the ballooning pantaloons and knee-length tunics of the Punjab are preferable. Much worn in Pakistan, they were regarded as children's garb in India.

In the morning we visited yet another department of Government—this time the Department of Inland Revenue. Unfortunately the man we visited had just taken over the post and was reluctant to make any concessions about our stores. The conversation became a little heated—always an error in such extremes of temperature—and we left hurriedly before we marked ourselves out for a stiff duty on the import! We recovered our equanimity in an air-conditioned restaurant over glasses of fresh lime-juice and totted up current achievements. The answer was a large zero. We were slightly cheered by weighing ourselves on a weighing-machine outside. Anne had lost nine pounds, Eve fifteen pounds, and I had come down to an angular eight stone six on the overland journey. More was to be removed in the Himalaya, and I can heartily recommend such a trip for anyone who is getting desperate about curves in all the wrong places.

The telephone call to External Affairs produced no more than the pledge that the messenger was still hunting for our file. We had rather hysterical visions of a worried little man with a candle stump in one hand peering at endless files in a cellar under the imposing superstructure of the Secretariat. To this day I do not know whether the file was ever found. In due course we were informed, however, that it was out of the question for us to enter Ladakh. This was a serious blow, but we studied maps and settled on a new area within the bounds of 'free travel.' Without the additional food-supplies, however, we should be unable to start out for this area. To add to our depression, news reached us of a strike of dock-workers in Bombay. If this were not settled soon it would be of little use even if we succeeded in clearing the stores. A visit to the branch office of the shipping agents, and one to the

secretary of the Himalayan Club, of which Anne is a life member, did little to cheer us up.

At this stage Anne had a bright idea. We were strolling past the office of the *Statesman*, Delhi's largest daily newspaper, and she suggested that we should go in and sell ourselves in the form of a report. The journalist who interviewed us admitted openly that he had not the slightest understanding of things mountaineering, but in the small item that appeared in the paper next morning he had included a sentence about our Customs troubles which we had slipped in craftily. No doors were miraculously opened for us in this matter, but it served to bring other reporters down about our ears, and to draw the attention of the Information Service of the United Kingdom High Commission to our plight.

We had had a letter of introduction to Group Captain John Chaplin, the Air Adviser, and on his return from leave he invited us to luncheon. Here we met Alfred Hall, of the Information Services. In modern clothing it is sometimes difficult to recognize immediately a knight in shining armour, but Alfred adopted us and our cause with all the fervour of a Crusader. We gave the miserable details of our failures and were deluged at once with plans for overcoming the obstacles. We should be introduced to the Press and to All-India Radio; the latter would bring in financial contributions, by this time heartily welcome; we must meet Nehru; the U.K. Trade Commission would be drawn in to help with our stores; we should move out of the Y.W.C.A. and move into his flat as his guests. In the glow of this enthusiasm the depression of the last week lifted magically. We returned to the hostel in the late afternoon, feeling that we might still rescue the expedition from the anticlimax that had loomed over us.

With the prospect of forthcoming interviews and social gatherings, Eve felt that her wardrobe of cotton skirts and blouses, as an alternative to climbing clothes, could well be supplemented by a dress. While hidden wheels turned the next day she and I went shopping, and returned with a length of material which we proceeded to convert into a simple dress

by means of cutting it out on the model (Eve) and sewing on a borrowed machine in our room at the hostel. Although the result would not have passed muster in a fashion house, we were reasonably satisfied with our labours.

India is a country of merchants. The bazaars are filled with cloth-shops which can occupy any woman for days in admiration of the gay cottons, the gorgeous silks in bolts or in the form of saris. We were all determined to buy a sari, and spent several hours making our choice. The girls at the hostel gave instructions on how to drape the sari, but we were too shy to appear in their company in our finery. Before we took our leave of them we asked them to appear one afternoon in saris and took photographs and movie film of the lovely scene they presented.

By some extraordinary chance we met a secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs who was one of the residents of the hostel. She had read the newspaper reports, and suggested with some firmness that we should apply to Mr Nehru for an interview. She helped us couch the letter in what seemed very informal terms, accustomed as we were to the stylized form of address to Government departments at home.

A few days later Anne was called to the telephone in Alfred's flat to hear from a private secretary that the Prime Minister would be pleased to see us at his residence. We were flabbergasted to realize that what had seemed sheer cheek on our part had met with success.

In the interim we had moved from the hostel into the luxury of an air-conditioned room, and with the careful ministration of Alfred's butler and cook we gradually resumed the appearance of civilized beings, no longer transforming our surroundings into the chaos of temporary expedition headquarters. One curious thing transpired. We had tossed up for the privilege of sleeping in one bedroom alone. Eve had won, so Anne and I shared another. It may have had something to do with the fact that Eve had slept in a fan-cooled room while Anne and I were enjoying the luxury of an air-conditioned

atmosphere, but somehow the separation had not pleased us. It was as though one limb were missing. Since we are all three individualists and at the end of the expedition went our own ways quite happily, I can only assume that for the duration of the expedition we were geared up wholly as a single unit, extending the aims of the expedition to a single-minded personal relationship.

A radio interview was arranged, and we presented ourselves at All-India Radio, where our interviewer, the Public Relations Officer of the Indian Air Force, ran through his questions briefly before the interview was translated on to tape. We were congratulated on our 'natural' broadcasting technique, but the play back sounded ghastly to us. Three quite unrecognizable Pooh-Bah voices that made us curl up inwardly! It was arranged also that we should each prepare short talks for their External Service. Since these talks were not to be concerned with the expedition, we brazenly selected the subjects "India revisited" for Anne, "The Indian working-girl" for Eve, and "New Architecture in India" for me. We felt these latter two to be somewhat presumptuous, but set to work on the talks with a will. Alfred gave us helpful criticism, and we knocked them into shape before committing ourselves to tape.

Ten days after our arrival in Delhi the interview with the Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, took place. We had slicked ourselves up, and drove nervously to the official residence in the Land Rover. We were met at the entrance by a private secretary, who chattered gaily as she led us up to the main reception-room. There we were introduced to Mrs Indhra Gandhi, Nehru's daughter, who is indispensable to her father as hostess and a leading example to the women of India. With her long experience and innate graciousness she put us at ease, and when her father appeared a few moments later we were recovering some vestige of courage with which to face the interview.

Nehru danced into the room, discarding his sandals at the doorway, and with the grace of a ballerina advanced on the

company. I was particularly surprised to find that he is a small man. Somehow his reputation as a statesman and the official photographs give one the impression of great physical stature. Without his "Congress" cap it was also apparent that, apart from a fringe of hair, he is completely bald. In no other way were our preconceived impressions subjected to change. The intent look he bestowed on each one of us at introduction and the subsequent searching questions left no doubt that he is a man accustomed to probing to the core of people and matters with the minimum of delay. He had evidently studied the brochure which we had included with our request for the interview very closely, for he expressed surprise to hear that we had changed our area in the mountains.

On hearing the reason he called for maps of Lahoul and Ladakh. These were spread on the floor, and the Prime Minister and three very subdued English housewives sat cross-legged around the maps, tracing the course of the "Inner Line" and our original route. It was interesting to note that these maps were evidently an original set on which legislation for the amending of the boundary had been based. Finally he said, "I can see no reason why permission should not be granted. If you young ladies will leave your address with me I will see that something is done." Our reactions to this had to be expressed in carefully worded thanks, but we were all jubilant and looked at each other with tremulous smiles. The conversation continued for a while on Nehru's recent visit to the Kulu valley, from which he had ascended the Rohtang Pass on horseback in defiance of his doctor's orders. He told us something also of his trips into the mountains as a young man. His mood was expansive, and he ended the interview after an hour with a tour of his art treasures of the East, including a clay model of a horse of the T'ang dynasty, I think, in almost perfect condition—a beautiful thing presented to him by the Chinese People's Republic. We were led casually to the portico where stood the Land Rover, and Nehru and Mrs Gandhi bade us farewell much in the manner of personal guests. The lack of formality impressed

us. If this was typical of the new India it was certainly an improvement on the formal protocol of olden days.

We raced back to Alfred to tell all. I think what surprised him most of all was the length of the interview. No doubt he was thinking of the number of occasions when the High Commissioner, on State business of much greater importance than our paltry affair, had had to be content with a mere ten minutes of Nehru's time. But, then, perhaps our expedition could be classified as a little light relief from the pressing affairs of State. His promise was borne out very swiftly. On the morning after the interview Anne had a telephone call from Mr Dutt, of External Affairs, informing us that we would be granted a permit to cross the "Inner Line." In a day or two the precious papers were in our possession. The official who finally issued the permits expressed his doubt of the wisdom of this generous act, fearing that it would create a precedent, but the cautious phrases of civil servants no longer had the power to intimidate us! Except in the matter of the clearance of the crates in Bombay. . . .

In the course of the big celebrity-run-round act which we were experiencing we were invited to have luncheon with Malcolm MacDonald, High Commissioner for the United Kingdom. This luncheon took place just after the interview with Nehru, and our fellow-guests, mainly personnel from the High Commissioner's office, were buzzing with the news of our visit. Mr MacDonald was charming with a lack of effort that is not inherent in all diplomats. With Anne he discussed birds of the Himalaya, and promised to lend her his own copy of a book recently published on this subject. On hearing that my destination after the expedition was to be Malaya he enthused about the country that he had only recently left. After the luncheon we were driven to All-India Radio in the official car, the luxurious saloon with the roll-down window between chauffeur and passengers a startling contrast with our more familiar vehicle.

Exciting as the last few days of our stay in Delhi had been, the continued delay in Bombay put a severe strain on our

already precarious financial position, and we decided that the only solution was for Anne to fly down to the port and clear the boxes as quickly as possible. We reserved a seat for her on the plane, and Eve and I drove her to the airport early one morning, with the understanding that should she meet with success she would send a telegram instructing us to meet her at the Himalayan railhead in Pathankot.

Anne learned that the shipping agents had done little more for us than base assumptions on previous experience and that their grim forebodings about lack of co-operation from the Customs were totally unfounded on fact. It transpired that the agents did not even know in which warehouse our boxes were to be found and she forced an unwilling clerk into accompanying her through various offices and the warehouses, with the result that she and the boxes were on the train heading north that same evening. Her telegram and a newspaper report that the men's expedition had succeeded in climbing their mountain reached Eve and me almost simultaneously, and with spirits miraculously restored we prepared to drive to Pathankot.

At midnight we took our leave of our 'good fairy' friends in Delhi and headed through the maze of bazaars and side-streets of Old Delhi for the Grand Trunk Road towards Amritsar once more. The monsoon had not yet reached the capital, but some few miles beyond we saw the first signs of its early storms. Gaps in the avenue of trees on either side of the road, with the ruins of felled trees cleared from the "Tarmac" lane, indicated the high winds that accompany such storms. Once we nearly ran into the back of a truck that had been flattened by a falling tree—a far from cheerful prospect for the remainder of our long drive. We took benzedrine pills to help us keep awake.

I was determined to see something of Chandigarh, the newly created capital of the province of Eastern Punjab, because of professional interest in the work done there by Le Corbusier, who is responsible for the town plan and some of the public buildings and housing. So we left the main road

at Ambala and drove on optimistically past signs warning of river crossings that were closed. Whether the flood damage had been repaired or the rivers in question were beyond the town we did not discover, but we reached Chandigarh, where I spent some hours attempting to take some photographs while a soft drizzle alternated with short periods of watery sunshine.

From here we drove into a veritable deluge. At times we had to reduce speed to a crawl, for the windscreen-wipers could not cope with the sheets of water that poured down the glass. Fortunately most Indian travellers, whether pedestrian or drivers, take refuge from the worst of the monsoon storms and the road was left clear. When the storm abated we were able to see something more of the byways of the Punjab, bordered wholly by farming communities and free from the sometimes sordid vistas of major towns. At times the sketchy road map proved inadequate, and we were thrown on the mercies of passers-by for directions. The average man hates to disappoint one by confessing ignorance of the route, and after several mishaps we learned to recognize the symptoms of this ignorance: an unhappy look or a measured pause for consideration followed by a desperate wave of the arm.

We crossed the barrage over the river Sutlej and followed the course of a canal for some miles. This road was under water for the major part, but we ploughed through and eventually reached Jullundur, a triumph of navigation by Eve and such helpers as had known something more than the immediate environs of their own villages. As I uncoiled myself from the driver's seat a fit of trembling set in, no doubt the reaction from lack of sleep combined with the after-effects of the benzedrine. Some mail awaited us at the office of the local Rover agent, among which we found a telegram from our literary agent with the news that one of the cameras was letting in the light and the greater part of the black-and-white photographs were useless.

This was a serious blow, for we had hoped that the first

instalment of our series for *Illustrated* would be published in time to strengthen our rather shaky financial position. We set off for Pathankot feeling very depressed, but tacitly agreed to leave discussion of the matter until we were less exhausted. Eve drove fast on the good road from Jullundur, but the inevitable overheating in the engine delayed us a few times. We approached Pathankot and were held up at the combined rail-road bridge over the Beas river in sight of the first snow-capped mountains of the Himalayan range, hitherto and subsequently obscured by the foothills. Eve's comment summarized our mental state as she murmured laconically, "By God, they're *high,* aren't they?"

Pathankot is unquestionably the most unattractive gateway possible to the grandeur that lies beyond. Even at five in the afternoon the heat was intense, and the dirty streets were thronged with people, bullock-wagons, and lorries. We found our way to the Shell depot, but learned that Anne had not yet arrived. A retiring-room was reserved for us at the railway-station, and a lock-up yard was provided for the Land Rover. We ordered dinner and stretched out on the charpoys fully clad. The arrival of the Frontier Mail at eleven left our sleep undisturbed, but I woke with a wild start at three in the morning with qualms of conscience lest Anne should have been one of the passengers. In a conference with Eve I decided that had this been so Anne would probably be sound asleep in a neighbouring room, and we relaxed again until the hum of activity on the platform outside gave warning of the arrival of the 6.40 train.

Anne emerged, and as we gave instructions for the unloading of the precious boxes we exchanged news of our experiences with mutual congratulations on the safe arrival of the boxes, the Land Rover, and the reunion of the 'expedition.' Our most pressing worry remained that of finance, and we decided over breakfast that Anne and I should drive to Dalhousie to pick up any mail that might have accumulated there, in the hope that we might find some definite news, leaving Eve to resort the rations and equipment into "moun-

tain boxes" and "return-journey boxes," the latter to be left at Pathankot.

The former plan was frustrated, however, at the barrier to the one-way road to Dalhousie, which, we learned, would remain closed for two hours, thereby excluding the possibility of doing the journey both ways within the day. We returned to the station to give aid to Eve. A labour force of six porters was mobilized to help with the manhandling of the boxes, and in temperatures of well over 100 degrees Fahrenheit each quarter-rupee we paid for the handling of the boxes was well earned. I sent off a letter to the postmaster at Dalhousie with instructions for mail to be forwarded to our new roadhead at Manali, and we left Pathankot in the late afternoon, relieved to see the end of the town and to head for the hills.

The road climbed steadily, bringing us to noticeably cooler temperatures. In the gathering darkness we delighted in the scenery about us, so different from the semi-arid stretch around Pathankot. We spent the night in the Dak bungalow at Palampur, having parked the Land Rover on the veranda to bring it off the road.

The chowkidar brought us bed-tea the following morning, with the news that some girls were waiting outside to see us. They had seen a newspaper photograph of us with the Land Rover and had recognized the vehicle. Six pretty, simpering girls stood shyly on the veranda. They had requested leave from the principal of their college in order to meet us, and now produced sheets of paper for our autographs. We discussed with them their studies for intended careers. University education is much sought after in India, despite the fact that an M.A. may expect a salary of less than £25 per month.

We left the colourful welcoming deputation and drove on to Mandi, where again we crossed the Beas river over a rather insecure Victorian suspension bridge with its battlements and castellations looking forlornly misplaced against the backdrop of temples and indigenous architecture. In Mandi is the start of a one-way-only road, and inevitably we struck the

barrier at the wrong time. On the terrace of the rest-house we enjoyed a hearty meal, and whiled away the intervening hours seated in comfortable chairs in the shade overlooking the village and the river from a dizzy height.

From here the road follows the Beas river valley, and we were frequently tempted to stop for the filming of the gorge and turbulent river. Impatient hooting of lorries and buses behind us reminded us of the fact that the road was too narrow for overtaking, and we were forced to speed along the tortuous track at their pace. From Aut we travelled once again on a normal road, but before we had even left the town we were brought to a near standstill by a vast flock of sheep and goats being driven before us. Anne drove at stalling speed while the shepherds continued to whistle and cluck at their charges, ignoring our plaintive horn. The petrol pump began to tick ominously, but a greying Sikh in a small car strode into the fray and began to move sheep in all directions.

At one point the shepherds, upraised crooks in hand, and he nearly came to blows, but, with a shout for us to follow, he leaped into his car and started ploughing his way through. I am almost certain that we left no dead bodies! With the obstacle behind we made good progress in the dark to reach Manali and the home of Major Henry Banon at ten o'clock. We were shown to a separate bungalow, where we dropped our rucksacks and were soon fast asleep.

With three weeks of delay, we were understandably impatient to set out for the mountains as soon as possible. Major Banon told us that the two porters and the ghorawallah (muleteer) were ready, and had been so since the middle of June. Our host, apart from his duties as local secretary to the Himalayan Club, is the owner of a large orchard of deciduous fruit-trees which he imported from Europe, and has personally been responsible for the building up of a good market in Northern India for his fruit. Son of an Irish father and a Garhwali princess, he has lived in Manali for most of his seventy-four years and enjoys the position of a local 'squire.' This fact has proved of great use to many expeditions in the

past, for to him is brought news of conditions in the mountains far afield by merchants and road gangers.

We decided to start the weighing-in of loads the following day, and Anne and I took advantage of the respite by visiting the village proper. With the glory of the surroundings it was sad to note the dirt and squalor in the bazaar. There are no latrines, which may account for the clouds of flies that settled everywhere and with particular relish on the eyelids and lips of the toddlers playing happily in the filth. What they lacked in cleanliness the villagers made up in friendliness, and they were ready with smiles and chatter, especially when they discovered that Anne could speak Hindi.

Among our fellow-guests we met Mr Kaul, the Indian Ambassador-Designate to Iran, who expressed great interest in our experiences *en route* and the plans for the trek in the mountains. "I worked on the revisions of the 'Inner Line,' and frankly I am astonished to learn that you have been granted a permit. We did our best to keep people like you out!" This latter was accompanied by a broad smile and the wish that he could have come with us. Several weeks later, acting on his invitation, we visited him in Tehran on our return journey, to be welcomed with great hospitality.

In the morning our porters presented themselves in order to help us with the weighing of the mule-loads. Numgyal, a man of some thirty-three years, born and bred in the mountains of Northern Ladakh, had already been on several expeditions, and had accompanied a member of a recent British women's climbing party to the summit of Deo Tibba, a 19,000-foot peak. Major Banon had already 'briefed' him on our plans, and in the following weeks he ensured that these were fulfilled. His experience, sound judgment, and initiative, coupled with his loyalty to the "memsahibs," proved of inestimable value.

Nowa Ram, twenty-one years old, also a Ladakhi, was the Mary to Numgyal's Martha. His engaging chuckle and banana-skin sense of humour kept the party lively, if at times somewhat ruefully so. Frequently his youthful irresponsibility

occasioned well-earned if severe castigation by Numgyal, but he seldom remained downcast for long, and we forgave him readily enough.

They set to with a will. We had to ensure that the 120-pounds maximum load per animal was equally divided in two packs for equilibrium, and there was much reshuffling of stores until we had achieved this. The ghorawallah seemed content, and we arranged that we should set out on the first stage of the trek in the late afternoon of the following day.

First there was the matter of slight adjustments to crampons, and we found the itinerant blacksmith in a tent in the village. With the limitations of the most primitive equipment, he did well, but we discovered later that the crampons had been made useless in the 'forge' because he had sprinkled cold water on to the metal, thereby rendering the high-tensile steel liable to fracture in use! We spent some two hours squatting on our haunches, watching him at work. I began to feel a little giddy, but attributed this to the heat of the day.

The feeling persisted, and when Anne took my temperature that evening the mercury registered 104 degrees. It seemed that our start was fated to further delay. The young doctor at the mission hospital was summoned and appeared daily on his mission of mercy to give me injections. Through the effects of modern medicines and my determination not to hold matters up I recovered swiftly, and four days later we were ready to start.

During this delay we received letters about our finances, and estimated that, although the position was not too bright, we should have enough to pay off the porters and muleteer on our return. Our last worry was thus relieved, and of the delay we could agree with Anne's expression, "It always turns out for the best."

4

Blisters and Bridges

BY Thursday, July 10, even the doctor's cautious forecast of my recovery was satisfied, and we spent the morning in preparations for an afternoon start. In the past few days our small bungalow had begun to resemble an expedition camp-ground. We spent some time sorting the chaos into heaps and stuffing clothes, papers, and a miscellany of pressure stoves and saucepans into rucksacks and boxes. Such items as would be needed only for the return journey were left in the back of the Land Rover, which Numgyal and Nowa Ram had cleaned and washed with great enthusiasm. The drawings that subsequently appeared in Nowa Ram's 'diary' gave an indication of the measure of his admiration for our vehicle!

The ghorawallah appeared after luncheon, heralded by an orchestra of tinkling bells which were tied round the necks of each horse, mule, or donkey that belonged to the train. He brought with him his son and nephew, who were to accompany the expedition to help him with the thirteen animals, two of which carried loads for some private enterprise he was carrying on as a sideline. The final member of the party was a young boy leading a 'riding pony' ordered by Anne for the first day out lest I should suffer a relapse. I surveyed this animal with some trepidation while the pack animals were being loaded.

Apart from the bells, the horses are equipped with rudimentary wooden saddles which are attached with girths of woven goats' hair and with a further strap leading round under the base of the tail. The loads are then attached to these saddles with goats'-hair ropes, having been selected for balance in the experienced hands of the ghorawallah, who scorned the magic of our spring balance throughout the trek.

Numgyal and Nowa Ram lent a hand in this work, lifting loads or holding the halter of an unwilling animal, and by slow degrees the pile of boxes and bags on the ground decreased. At last it remained for me to mount my singularly unfiery steed, and we set off down the steep path into the village.

A procession of any kind will draw a crowd, whether it be in a remote village in the Himalayan foothills or in the crowded streets of London. Our train was no exception, and the villagers waved us on our way. Some hilarity could be detected among their ranks, probably caused by my Basuto hat, conical in shape and with a wide brim which is unknown in these areas. We crossed the bridge over the Beas and made our way slowly up the valley towards the first of the passes we were to cross.

Eve did some filming of our progress, while Anne and I popped off in all directions with the still cameras. Nowa Ram and Numgyal fought for the honour of carrying the cine camera in addition to their packs. We sensed that the older man was slightly jealous of the fact that Nowa Ram had been trained to take cine shots by Lester on the R.A.F. expedition to Lahoul in 1955. To keep the peace we promised that both men should be called upon to take sequences of the three memsahibs in the future.

Anne and Eve were travelling 'the hard way' on foot, and were subjected to the usual initiation by Himalayan porters, who recommended various short cuts. Since these invariably involve one in breathless steep ascents, we soon learned to stick to the track unless in familiar territory. I wondered ruefully whether in fact my suffering was not the greater, however, for the qualifications of a riding pony above that of a pack animal lie only in a thin leather covering to the wooden saddle and a pair of stirrups of uneven length. On the several occasions when I dismounted ostensibly to lighten the burden of the pony on the steeper stretches I realized that even my most hated activity of walking uphill was Paradisiacal by comparison!

We continued to climb through the delightful countryside of fields and villages bordering the river's course down the valley, surrounded by mountains covered with forests of deodars. In each village solemn, runny-nosed children came shyly to a halt by the track and were given sweets. Some eight miles beyond Manali, at an altitude of about 8500 feet, lies the village of Rahla. We went beyond the cluster of huts and pitched camp on a small plateau beside the river. I sent back the riding pony with little regret and helped the others in stacking the boxes, pitching the tents, and cooking a meal. No sooner had we bedded down for the night than it started to rain. The water rushed off an adjacent rock under the tent wall and threatened to soak through Anne's bedding. Hasty scraping of a small gutter deflected its course, and we fell asleep without further alarms.

The luxury of Himalayan travel introduced itself insidiously in the morning with a soft voice calling, "Bed-tea, memsahib," while a mug of steaming tea was thrust through the tent flap into groping hands. With the understandable difficulty of both men in mastering European names, I was soon firmly established as the "*Chini nay* [no sugar] *memsahib*," and neither porter slipped up on this fad after the initial request. For purposes of identification Eve had inscribed the bottom of each polythene mug with our names, and these too were carefully registered with the correct owner.

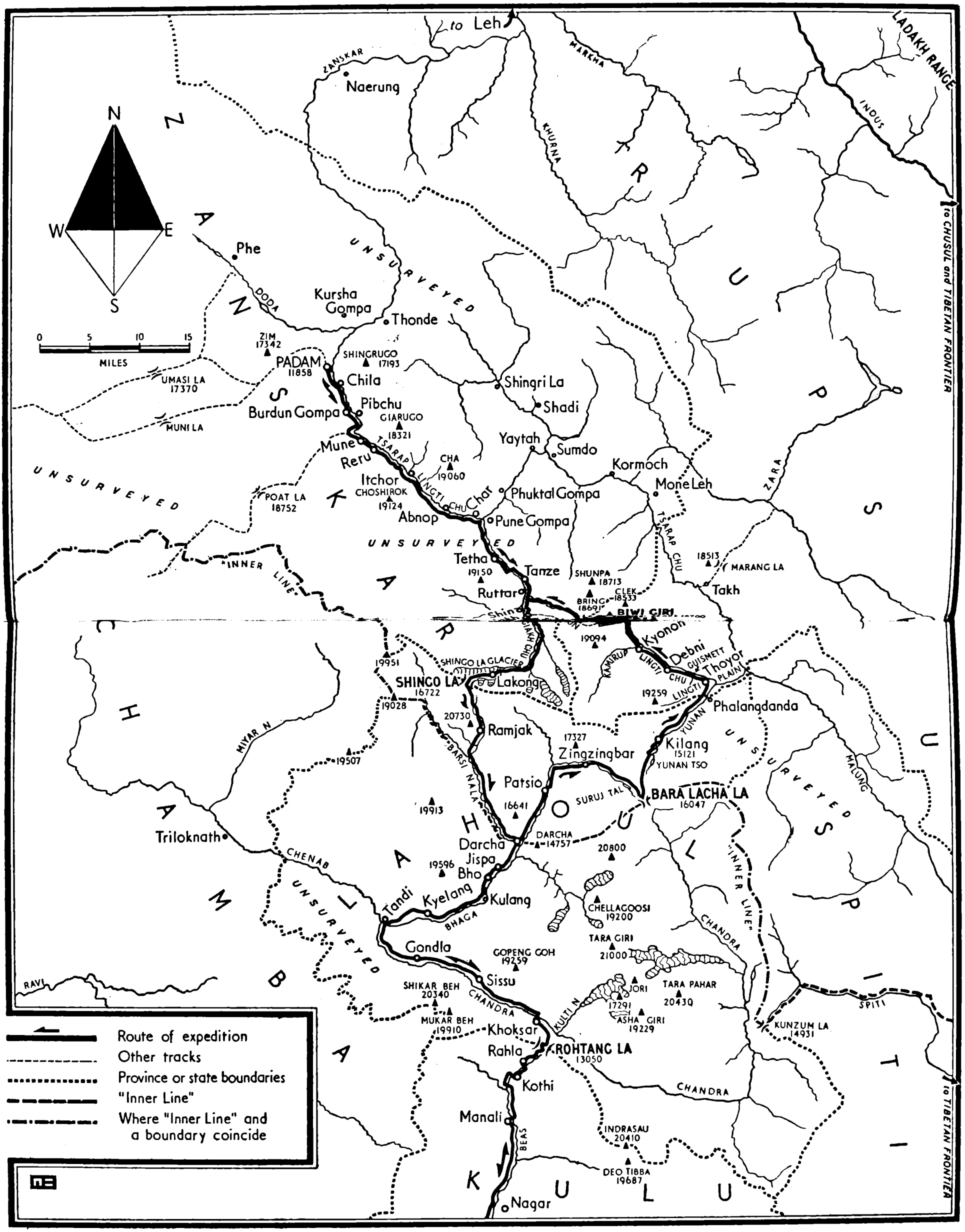
A gruelling day lay ahead. The Rohtang Pass (Rohtang La), of 13,050 feet, although quite low by Himalayan standards, is attained by a very steep, swift ascent, and is considered a severe test at the start of a trek, even by those who may be fitter than we were after six weeks in the cab of a Land Rover and a further three weeks of inactivity in Delhi. I dressed fast and headed for the river for a b-r-acing wash in the icy water. With the novelty of the landscape still fresh, I fetched the cine camera from the tent and filmed the waterfalls and the turbulent pool below, where a jammed tree-trunk lay, branches upthrust and twisted in supplication against the pounding given it by the water.

We breakfasted on porridge and watched the loading of the animals. With a desperate bid not to be last I strode on and gradually outdistanced the train. The mist cleared as the sun rose, and I maintained my lead for about three hours, climbing 3000 feet. On a large plateau I came upon an encampment, and was admiring the offspring of two women squatting beside a tent, when the porters arrived and produced a beaker of tea within seconds from another tent, evidently the 'hotel,' and which we dubbed the "Teahouse of the August Moon." I closed my eyes to the methods of brewing and washing-up of utensils while I sipped gratefully.

From here on the pace slowed considerably; possibly the altitude combined with the aftermath of my fever began to take effect, but Eve also complained, and, in company with the ponies, we rested frequently, gasping for breath and with our pulses racing. Anne was going well and wandered happily on, pausing to admire the profusion of flowers which covered the mountain-side and exclaiming rapturously at the glories of the posies collected by Nowa Ram and presented for her approval. We were particularly impressed with blue poppies, which grow tall stalks decorated with flowers of deep mist-blue.

Unfortunately, at this height, the cloud closed in and views were restricted to our immediate surroundings. We met two parties of holidaymakers who had already been to the top and were now on their way back to Manali. With our leisurely start we were still struggling up, and I envied them the comparative luxury of descent. Twice the track led across snowfields, and we shivered at the sudden drop in temperature. Suddenly we rose above the cloud and found ourselves at the top of the pass. My relief was heartfelt when I realized that from here on the toes of my boots would be pointing joyously downhill!

Looking north across the valley of the Chandra river, we could identify the Kulti valley, snow-covered and ringed with the peaks that were familiar to us from the pictorial records of the R.A.F. expedition. Anne and Eve, in particular, were



THE ROUTE OF THE EXPEDITION, FROM MANALI TO PADAM

thrilled to see the actual site of their husbands' adventures, in which they had participated only at second hand. We sat in little hollows, sheltering from the wind and resting before the descent into Lahoul.

One or two of the ponies were struggling up in the rear, and while the ghorawallah stayed behind to encourage them Numgyal elected to take charge of four others and whistled them on with the ease of an old hand. At no time would any animal respond to our whistles and cajoling, evidently recognizing us scornfully as inexperienced foreigners. Light-hearted (and -headed), Eve and I loped downhill, taking short cuts between the loops of the track, while Anne sensibly stayed with Numgyal and his charges.

Unnoticed, the track veered away maliciously, and we found ourselves scrambling down a steep, gorse-covered slope. I lost sight of Eve, but saw the track to one side and started to edge towards it. Then I noticed Eve, who had reached the bottom of the slope and was signalling furiously. I sensed, though I could not see, that I was on the edge of something, and made my way upward and round towards the track, at times scrabbling on all fours. Anne rounded a bend, saw the scarlet of my anorak poised on the edge of a 500-foot cliff, and hurried towards me to encourage me past the foot of a waterfall and back to safety. I had been very frightened and was now tired. The lesson of the dangers of short cuts was learned, fortunately without mishap. We respected it.

After taking a short rest, during which I puffed appreciatively at a cigarette—for the first time that day—we set off on the last few miles. We were fording a waterfall, when the rush of the water blew my precious Basuto hat up and off my head and carried away my trophy triumphantly to the main river below. The loss was mourned sincerely, also by the porters, whose amusement had been tempered by the pride they took in this distinctive headgear. The contraption that had cost me half a crown in South Africa had travelled far, and is now no doubt a sad pulp in the

Indian Ocean, whither the inexorable floods must have carried it.

Towards dusk we staggered in to the camp site at Khoksar, on the banks of the Chandra, a bleak place fast cooling, where we shared the stony ground with several trains of ponies carrying supplies in the opposite direction. Eve had forged ahead, and tea was ready on our arrival. Stiffly we rolled into our bags and slept.

The ghorawallah came to us early with a request that the ponies should be given a rest day either at Khoksar or at Sissu, a village eight miles on down the valley. The delay in Manali during my illness had had disastrous effects on their general condition, as public grazing had been very limited and the cost of fodder exorbitant. His experience on the pass with the weakest animals had emphasized the urgency of the matter, and we agreed that it was of the utmost importance that the animals should be fit to cross the more demanding passes that lay before us. However, Khoksar did not impress us, either from the point of view of grazing or as an idyllic camp site for a day's sojourn, so we decided to postpone the rest day until we had completed the next short stage of the trek.

We crossed the Chandra river by a very rickety bridge which bounced and swayed underfoot, the ponies following one at a time. The temperature rose rapidly as the early mist cleared and we plodded along the sandy track, winding into nullahs and crossing the tributary streams over bridges made of spanning logs covered with rock slabs and consolidated earth.

The contrast between this valley and that of the Beas river, on the mild, southern side of the pass, is very marked. We were now travelling at an average altitude of 10,000 feet, where, apart from carefully tended woods and groves in the villages, there were no trees to subdue the effects of the sun's beating down on the landscape of rocks and sand, trapped by the sheer walls of the mountains on either side. We soon stripped off anoraks and sweaters and retired behind dark

spectacles. I longed for the small pool of shade that my late lamented hat would have offered.

Already all the winter snow, apart from that on the highest slopes, had disappeared, and grave misgivings were experienced in Lahoul and, later, in Ladakh about the possibility of late summer droughts. By crossing the Rohtang Pass in the greater Himalayan range we had left behind the areas fed by the monsoon. Few rain-clouds cross this barrier, and for their water-supplies to irrigate the fields the inhabitants of areas north of the range depend entirely on the water from the melting snows, which courses down the slopes to the main rivers. Over the centuries these main rivers have eroded their way deep into the valleys, and in most cases are some 200 feet or more below the level of the small terraces on which the villages and fields are situated. An unusually hot summer such as this could spell disaster for the crops and a hungry winter for the farmers.

The severely swollen river had undermined the track, and we picked our way carefully over the initial cracks in the surface which presaged imminent collapse of the earth below, and scrambled up the mountain-side to a detour where a gang of roadworkers, both male and female, were carving a new track out of the steep slope. These tracks are usable for an average of five months each year, and the avalanches and landslides in the spring ensure constant expenditure by the Public Works Department and, of course, work and wages for the labourers.

A mile or two beyond the detour we rounded a bend to see a verdant oasis on the hillside—the village of Sissu. We decided to camp on the large lawn in front of the Government rest-house, and, to the amusement of the inhabitants, three footsore women sank down under the trees, removed boots and socks, and sat with feet firmly planted in the cool waters of a tiny irrigation channel. Within fifteen minutes we felt capable of helping to pitch tents and lay out the corral of aluminium boxes round the entrance of our tent—a feature of our camp life that was to be of great use in the days to come.

Across the valley the 19,000-foot summit ridge of Mukar Beh, as yet unconquered, made an impressive backdrop to a waterfall dropping some 350 feet sheer from a glacier and resembling a gigantic gargoyle on an ancient cathedral.

The two younger muleteers led the ponies away up the mountain-side with the prospect of thirty-six hours of undisturbed browsing and grazing ahead of them. In the afternoon Anne and I walked down the single street of the village, stopping first to admire a sock growing fast in the deft hands of a girl. Knitted on very fine needles, these socks are made in a variety of colours. This example was soled in brown, heeled in green, and with a purple anklet. The instep was a gay medley of colours and patterns far more intricate than the familiar Fair Isle work. We were interested to see the swastika, historical Aryan emblem which is found throughout Western Asia from Turkey to India and familiar to most of us in recent years in more sinister guise.

Anne, with badly blistered heels, sunburned nose, and streaming cold, was joined on the sick-list by Nowa Ram and the ghorawallah with colds and headaches. We administered paludrine, vitamin pills, and pain-killers liberally with the sincere faith that the combined effects must achieve some good. As a fervent Buddhist our ghorawallah appeared to have more faith in his prayers than in our pills and brought out his collection of brass vessels, pourers, and bells to carry out the ceremonies in a lengthy murmur of chanting, interspersed at frequent intervals with the famous Tibetan words *Om mane padme hum* ("Hail to the jewel in the lotus flower").

A rest day is something of a misnomer. The repetition of this plaint is quite deliberate from one who thinks longingly of week-ends in England with the wholly admirable practice of 'lying in late,' of breakfast in bed with the Sunday newspapers spread out on the coverlet for leisurely reading of their considerable contents. In the mountains, as *en route* overland, such days passed in a welter of laundering and diarizing, the mending of holes and tears in garments and tarpaulins. Only

the three large cooked meals and the constant procession of mugs of tea, coffee, or other beverage and the fact that we were not plodding through dust or boulder-hopping underlined the difference.

Anne brought out the typewriter and immediately attracted a large audience. The arrival on the scene of a man spinning wool interrupted her literary efforts, and while he taught her to play the roughly combed tufts around a small hand-spindle, twisting continuously, Eve filmed the progress of the lesson.

The small pony that had suffered most on the Rohtang Pass evidently considered that the life of a pack animal had no appeal, and could not be found by the time we were ready to start on the next leg of the trek. The sight of two lammergeier circling the summit of the mountain on which the ponies had been grazing was not reassuring, and conjured up the pathetic picture of an equine rebel come to grief over a cliff, with the vultures overhead jockeying for the tastier titbits.

The apparently tireless young muleteers went out in search of the animal, but returned to report failure to the ghorawallah, who was quite obviously totting up the blow to his livelihood by the loss of one of his train. Already it was too hot to start out, but we arranged that we should walk to the next camp site in the late afternoon, thereby giving him a few hours' grace. By the time we were ready to load there was still no sign of the wanderer, so we had the additional load distributed among the other animals and left one boy to continue the search.

Our departure coincided with the release of the children from school. We stopped one or two and studied their wooden 'slates,' which carried Arabic numbering up to 49. These are washed off every few days, when presumably the lesson starts at 1 again. It was of interest to note that although Lahoul is under Indian rule, the schooling continues in Urdu rather than Hindi. For such brilliant children as are eventually encouraged to leave home and continue their education

in the south it must be a strain to acquire a third language, Hindi or English, in order that they may study at all.

The track led through numerous villages. In one of these we found two rude looms that had been set up in a field. We were disappointed to find that there are no handicrafts indigenous to either Lahoul or Ladakh. The patterned socks are introductions of women missionaries homesick for the Scottish Highlands, and the weaving is purely functional rather than decorative. Only the mane walls and the chortens provide grounds for the artistry of the inhabitants, and since this is restrained by the limitations of religious conventions, there is little to see. Mane (pronounced "mahnee") walls consist of hundreds of stones engraved with the words *Om mane padme hum.* Chortens are Buddhist monuments, conical in shape.

Both the men and the women in Lahoul wear rather elegant tight tweed trousers. The latter cover these with knee-length lama-type robes in sober colours, mainly black. Ornaments are fairly profuse, in the form of necklets of river stones and ceramic beads, earrings of great brass loops with small beads and coloured wool tied to the hair. Farther on we saw silver necklaces and brooches of great intricacy—unfortunately not for sale, as the silversmiths work on a commissioned basis only. The women wear no hats, and pluck out a sort of inverted 'widow's peak' at the forehead. The hair is parted centrally and drawn back into long plaits.

Much interest though they aroused in us, the effect we had on them was quite astounding. Anne talked at length with those who could speak Hindi, and when their curiosity about us and our destination was satisfied they told something of their lives in this rather inhospitable country. As in countries we had travelled through on our way to India, the women till the fields, raising year by year a pitiful crop of barley and some wheat. The men spend most of the year away, leading the flocks of sheep and goats to richer pasture lands during the summer and working on the roads in Kulu during the winter.

We passed through Gondla, with some fine chortens and an old palace of the traditional ruler—the Thakur—dominating the cluster of houses by virtue of its great height and commanding position on a rocky outcrop. Numgyal, in consultation with the ghorawallah, had selected a camp site in a village a little way beyond. Anne joined us there, having staggered painfully on with her blistered heels somewhat eased in a pair of Chapli sandals borrowed from Numgyal. The shower that came on while we were cooking dispersed the large crowd of women and children that had gathered around, but we knew that they would return in the morning.

I felt very guilty when the porters had to ask for a little meat. We had included rations for them, but Numgyal insisted that we should keep the bulk of these in reserve for the period of trekking in Ladakh, where he would have difficulty in buying local produce. On a previous expedition he had served the party had run out of food: he had no intention of permitting a similar disaster to overtake us.

In line with the normal practice of previous expeditions, we had included rations and, with some trepidation, cast-off anoraks and windproof trousers, socks, gloves, and sweaters for the two porters. They for their part had been prepared to equip and feed themselves entirely. Whatever we gave them was accepted with sincere thanks, and they retained a measure of independence by offering us in turn some cooked rice or some chuppaties. Perhaps in time the Ladakhis will become as highly organized a union as the Sherpas, but I was most impressed with their undemanding self-sufficiency. We insisted, however, that they should have a properly balanced diet for the hard work they would have to perform at high altitudes later, and provided them with meat, jam, and fats as a daily supplement.

Our camp was situated midway between the village and fields, so we had a constant stream of visitors in the morning. It appeared that the villagers were working in a united effort to build a new house, and while the men were busy on site the women wandered up and down the hillside, rough

The Thakur of Lahoul with Anne and the Author

A Waterfall in Lahoul

Eve and the Author rest by a Signpost

Local Lahouli women and child come to chat.

The Author and Eve

A Signpost in Lahore

wooden pack-frames strapped on their backs, to fetch large slabs of rock. As they walked their hands were busily occupied with knitting-needles, and each time they passed on their way up or down they made a pause by our tents to look their fill.

Among these women were some girls who bore striking witness to the descriptions we had heard previously of the beauty of Lahouli womanhood. Unfortunately, the greater the beauty, the greater was the shyness of the individual, and we were reduced to laying innocent traps to take photographs of them. As the camera swung round in their direction they would race away, shrieking in mock dismay. An old woman sneered at their antics and graciously permitted us to photograph her instead. She was inquisitive about our plans, and, unlike the majority, who held that we were mad to travel to Ladakh, merely to see that country, she expressed a wish to see it too.

We packed up, and loading had started when the young muleteer, complete with unabashed pony, walked triumphantly into camp. If wishes were horses, said the expression on that pony's face, I would gladly change places with the load that they are heaving on to my back! We were unsympathetic.

At this moment a road ganger well known to Numgyal, who appeared to be bosom friends with every ganger we met, appeared. He was carrying a letter from the P.W.D. engineer of the next section to the engineer in Sissu with a plea for help in his efforts to prevent the imminent collapse of the bridge at Tandi, seriously undermined by the floodwaters. As this bridge lay a mere four miles ahead and there appeared to be no alternative route, we were worried about the possibility of a lengthy delay. It was obviously necessary to assess the situation at first hand, so we started out without more ado.

This last stretch of the Chandra valley to the point where the Bhaga river flows into it is completely barren. Our camp had been situated under the last trees we were to see until we

came to the confluence of the two rivers. Even the water-courses in the nullahs had dried up completely, and, with the increasing heat of the day, the few miles to Tandi were hardly enjoyable. We plodded on, our rest stops infrequent for the lack of shade pools, our main thought being to reach Tandi as soon as possible.

Approaching the confluence, we saw signs of flood damage. Small trees on the river-bank were awash, and we heard a thunderous roar, indicative of the force with which the two rivers were battling for possession in a changing pattern of muddied waves and whirlpools. The track dropped steeply and rounded a bend into the new river valley. The bridge lay a few hundred yards beyond the corner, and from afar it was already evident that work of some kind was in progress.

A closer examination showed that the unmortared stone breastwork of the bridge on the near bank was taking the full force of the current and had settled alarmingly. Three gangers were building a deflecting dyke into the river, while a group of men, women, and children unhurriedly fetched rocks, sucking at great lumps of rock salt the while. As we stood there the P.W.D. engineer sent a porter over the swaying bridge before crossing himself—brave man—but, then, porters are expendable perhaps! It was quite obvious that mules could not cross. A permanent notice at the approach to the bridge stated that animals could cross only one at a time. We knew that jeeps had driven across here, which may have contributed to the weakness.

To allow time for consultations and decisions we pitched the tents in a grove of trees on the river-bank in the company of several other parties of would-be travellers and awaited developments. The first reaction of the engineer was to refuse pedestrians and ponies alike access to the bridge, but we were fast acquiring a philosophy of "Wait and see; things are sure to change."

Eve had developed a greatly swollen underlip resembling a purple spoonbill and was feeling grim. We did not know the cause. Apart from germs, it might have been brought about by

the effects of sun and wind, or through vitamin deficiency. A dose of antibiotics was offered optimistically, and a threat to serve curried *bouche à la Sims* for dinner raised a painful smile.

While we slept that night Numgyal had been busy and woke us very early, telling us to get ready and packed as quickly as possible. His plan was to send the ponies unloaded round by the old track on the near side to a damaged bridge some miles upstream and to carry the loads across this bridge by hand before nine, when the P.W.D. sahib might be expected to arrive and spoil the fun. It seems that even in cases of emergency the working hours are from nine until five. We connived at the plan without conscience, and long before the hour we and our boxes and bags were ensconced quite innocently on the other bank. When the burra sahibs arrived they studied the phenomenon with great suspicion, but our faces were politely blank.

Anne sent Eve and me on ahead with Nowa Ram to Kyelang, where we had heard of the existence of a hospital. She was to follow with Numgyal and the pony train later. The knowledge that we had criminally circumvented the almost inevitable delay of a few days made our progress lighthearted. Even Eve forgot her misery in the general holiday spirit, and together we set about giving Nowa Ram his third English lesson. In this we were severely handicapped in that our command of Hindi was only a fraction less than his grasp of English.

It was at Sissu that our poetic peasant had first voiced his wish to acquire a speaking knowledge of English. Having spent some years of his boyhood at a Buddhist monastery, he had been trained to read and write in Ladakhi. When he renounced the life of a religious devotee, by what means we did not inquire, he had come south to the Kulu valley and had learned to speak Hindi. On our rest day in Sissu Anne had spent some time with him, carefully enunciating simple English words and phrases for him to transcribe into his diary in phonetic Ladakhi script together with their meaning translated from Hindi.

With the help of a Hindi-English dictionary, Eve and I now translated such words as 'rock,' 'high mountain,' 'make camp,' which he repeated several times in between engaging chuckles when he mispronounced a word. The four miles to Kyelang passed quickly in this way, with our spirits in no way dampened by the heavy rain which soon drenched us to the skin.

In the downpour Eve decided to bypass the hospital, and we trudged through the muddied 'streets' of the capital of Lahoul to the Government rest-house, some distance beyond the bazaar and houses of the village. Our progress was watched with interest by the inhabitants, who stood under cover, sheltering from the rain. Nowa Ram exchanged greetings with them, and, by the sound of it, satisfied their curiosity about our identity with somewhat jocular exaggerations.

We booked in at the rest-house and ordered cans of hot water to be brought to the room by the chowkidar. In turn we stripped off our wet clothing, washed, and changed into dry sweaters and slacks. On the principle that one should never be parted from the essentials, we had brought changes of clothing and our sleeping-bags in a rucksack. To circumvent possible chills we sat on the veranda in our sleeping-bags and ordered a large pot of tea. Nowa Ram we sent into the room with a cup of tea, and when Eve found him asleep in a chair with his head on the table she suggested that he might be more comfortable stretched out on the charpoy. He had a gift for falling asleep in any situation and at any time of the day or night: throughout the expedition he had to be shaken awake before we moved off at the end of a rest stage.

The tea in Himalayan rest-houses has a flavour of its own. Brewed over an open wood-fire, it tastes and smells of wood-smoke, and with the addition of boiled goat's milk assumes a faint mauve colour. This brew was no exception, but we drank cup after cup, ordering the pot to be replenished at intervals. A jeep drove into the compound with a complement of P.W.D. engineers, one of whom approached us and inquired whether one of us was Mrs Davies, of the Women's

Overland Himalayan Expedition. He called for the chowkidar to fetch a telegram which had been delivered to the rest-house the previous day by the police wireless operator in the village.

The envelope was indeed addressed to Anne. We debated whether to open it or whether to wait for Anne's arrival. Provided that there was no delay in the loading of the ponies, she would be with us fairly soon, for we had passed the animals on the road near Kyelang going in the opposite direction.

"It may be a message for us all. Alternatively, it may be something personal, but if it is bad news perhaps it would be better for us to tell Anne than to let her read it immediately," Eve said. I agreed, and we tore open the envelope.

The message read: "Arriving 16th stop please wait stop Deacock–Sims."

This was July 16. The message had been sent from Manali, but, as the police transmitters were the only means of quick communication, there was no proof that the message had originated in Manali; Major Banon might well have sent on the message by this means. Presumably the date referred to this day, but no destination was given, and if it referred to Manali there would be a further delay if we were to wait for Warwick and John to come on to Kyelang.

Our common reaction was one of fury. "What right have they to barge in at this moment? We can't afford to waste any more time. If they are arriving in Manali to-day they must come after us as best they can. We won't wait for them." We poured out our problem indignantly to the engineer, who stood by in bewilderment. He assured us that there was no possibility of sending a reply until the following day, as the wireless operator was now off duty, so we decided to wait for the morning. Meanwhile we indulged in a session of 'rhubarbing.' Our husbands might be thinking sentimentally about two meek little wives preparing joyously for the reunion. The picture in fact bore more resemblance to two fishwives, arms akimbo and faces implacable!

In the meantime Anne had sheltered from the downpour

in a natural rock cave by the bridge. Normally the home of a hermit, whom we had seen the previous evening defying the orders of the P.W.D. engineer by crossing the bridge, his small bundle of possessions slung over his shoulder, it had been vacated temporarily. Evidently, although he was pleased with the offerings of the occasional passer-by, the sudden invasion of his privacy by the gang of roadworkers, engineers, and waiting travellers had upset his contemplations and his equilibrium. One can only describe his crossing of the offending bridge as flouncing. Whatever the reason for the evacuation, Anne was grateful for the shelter in spite of the engineer's horrified remark, "But you cannot sit here. You must agree you look very odd, is it not?"

The ponies had been loaded promptly on arrival, and the party had covered the five miles to the rest-house without the discomfort of wet clothes. In the watery sunshine she strolled into view. Eve and I handed over the telegram with a wholly nasty air of grim triumph. "We're not waiting, of course," we said.

"But we must," she said warmly. "They would be so disappointed to miss you."

While this decision settled the dispute, we were no nearer knowing when to expect the men. We ordered more tea and thrashed out the possible alternatives.

Discussion ended abruptly within twenty minutes. Numgyal, grinning broadly, came to us with the announcement of the arrival of two sahibs. In the archway formed by low overhanging trees over the steep, short hill that led into the compound we saw two pairs of brown legs, surmounted by blue shorts. Not until the disreputable figures were nearly at the veranda could I believe that one of them was Warwick, whom I had not seen for three months. I was overcome with a sudden shyness, and stood against one of the pillars without making any move in his direction. He swung me down to his level, but, surrounded as we were by a large interested audience, our greeting was of the most perfunctory.

5

Mrs Livingstone, I presume

WARWICK had brought with him from Manali a pile of letters for us, and Anne was able to find some compensation for Lester's absence from the reunion of husbands and wives by reading a long letter from him, while Eve and I heard the details of the "Deacock–Sims Expedition in Search of the Brave Little Women."

Rakaposhi had been climbed and the expedition business settled a full month earlier than expected. Transport for the party back to England could not be arranged immediately, and John and Warwick had formulated plans and asked permission to cross the border into India in the hope of meeting us before we set out on the trek. Our letters giving them the news of our changed plans and route had not yet reached them, and to their knowledge we should be starting out from Dalhousie on the first leg of the trek through Chamba state on the way to the Umasi La, which pass would take us into Zanskar. They did not know that we should be starting from the roadhead at Manali, and following a totally different route.

From Gilgit they flew to Rawalpindi with the regular service flight, and were able to hitch a lift in an Air Force plane to Lahore from there. In Lahore they visited the Rover agent, who was able to reassure them of our safe arrival after the tribulations of the overland journey, and who entertained them royally while they made plans for continuing their journey into India. With 80-pound packs on their backs and dressed in garb distinctly unbecoming to "officers and gentlemen" they boarded a bus for Amritsar. Apparently their informal clothing did not receive the approval of the Indian immigration authorities, for they were met with high suspicion. With travel documents unaccountably in order, how-

ever, no excuse to detain them could legitimately be found, and the gates were reluctantly opened for them.

The next stop was at Pathankot. Warwick described how they had had to sleep on the station platform. In the rush of preparations they had forgotten to exchange currency, and Pakistani rupees are not acceptable, even to the most rapacious money-changer, in India. The night passed in a series of uneasy cat naps, for they were woken frequently by the feel of searching fingers in their clothing. By pawning his watch Warwick restored the finances, and they boarded the bus for Dalhousie.

The memory of these Himalayan bus journeys has imprinted itself with a certain clarity on the minds of both men. Their account records, through the haze of travel-sickness induced by the winding roads and impetuous techniques employed by the drivers, impressions of a motley load of humans, animals, and baggage. On all occasions they were offered the choice between taking children or goats and chickens on their laps to make way for an extra group of travellers. They chose the children, not from humane motives, but because they felt that the animals might be less impressed into subdued deportment by the presence of strangers than the children, who were probably overawed by their curious foster-fathers.

At Dalhousie the trail petered out, and their inquiries as to the whereabouts of three English memsahibs in a Land Rover met with blank ignorance until an inspiration took them to the post-office, where they were shown my letter to the postmaster, requesting the forwarding of letters. Their sense of frustration grew as they calculated the further delay of three days entailed in retracing their route to Pathankot and the journey to Manali. Both were suffering from severe attacks of gastro-enteritis, a legacy which seems to be the normal for male expeditions, and which the women attribute smugly to the employment of porters as cooks.

The impetus was temporarily lost, but they continued in a mood of desperation, in no way relieved by Major Banon's

report of our departure for Lahoul six days before. He also considered that by this time we should be across the "Inner Line," overestimating our fitness by several days, but, of course, no news had reached him of our slow progress. It seemed that the Pursuit Expedition had foundered completely. But here they were, on the fringe of a new area of the Himalaya, although John had been through Manali on a previous expedition. There were new mountains and new people to see. They decided to make themselves known to the Chief of Police in order to enlist his help.

When he understood that they were connected with us he exclaimed in his stilted English, "Oh, yes. I saw the memsahibs at Sissu two days ago. They are delayed by bridges, isn't it?"

"Can you signal your patrols?"

"Officially no, but I shall see what I can do."

With this official warning this kind man proceeded to bypass official regulations with efficient speed, and the message awaiting us in Kyelang was the result. He also gave his word to Warwick and John that no efforts would be spared to help the women in any way within the powers of his colleagues and himself.

Hope in their ultimate success thus renewed, Warwick and John lost no time. They bought supplies of food in the bazaar, hired a Ladakhi porter awaiting the arrival of another expedition to help them carry their loads, and set off in the late afternoon in the direction of the Rohtang Pass. They camped at the approaches to the pass as we had done, and made an early start the following morning. Forty-six miles and a 13,000-foot pass had to be covered in two days, a journey which had taken the women seven days!

They reached Sissu by nightfall and stayed in the resthouse, where they were told by the P.W.D. engineer that "by unfortunate predicament these ladies are somewhat delayed by bridges." They drove themselves hard on the barren stretch to the bridge at Tandi, where they were told that we had left that morning. Would the telegram have been de-

livered to us? Warwick described to me the growing irritation of "always finding ourselves one tantalizing step behind you." Along the track to Kyelang he found the ribbed imprint of a rubber-soled shoe, and remembered with growing excitement that I had bought a pair of hockey boots of similar pattern. This was, in fact, Anne's print, the rain having washed out all traces of my passing. The pace increased through the streets of Kyelang, and they outdistanced their porter in their haste to reach the rest-house. Their arrival put an end to the search and to their anxieties, and the two expeditions met.

The next hours passed quickly in a confused babble of conversation. Questions were answered, experiences related, with interruptions as extracts from letters were recited aloud to the assembly. We cooked a large meal and raided the medical box for the whisky in which to toast the success of all expeditions and this one in particular. The men had brought their own food-supplies, and we studied these with interest for new flavours, while our own supplies were subjected to the same treatment by them. We agreed on an exchange. Corned beef seems a delightful treat when one has been living on dehydrated steaks for weeks, and the reverse is equally true. There would be no delay in the trek. The men had come prepared to travel on with us to the limit of the unrestricted zone and also to that of time at their disposal.

With the rain-clouds of the afternoon temporarily dispersed, we all chose to sleep out rather than occupy the room in the rest-house. The four tents were pitched in a row and looked impressive, even against the sedate background of the rest-house. The enlarged party of intrepid explorers was served bed-tea in the morning by the grinning porters, in whom was discernible a trace of anxiety lest the sahibs should interfere in the arrangements of the expedition. It must be admitted that the two wives nurtured similar doubts, and we were on the defensive against possible encroachment.

Whatever amusement may have been felt by John and Warwick as they regarded our luxurious, leisured starts and

easy stages of march was carefully concealed. Only in the question of our improvident habit of not carrying biscuits and sweets on the march did their criticism become vocal. In later days we were to follow this advice when we recognized the needless sapping of energy that resulted from this practice.

We had fourteen miles to cover to our next camp at Jispa. The sky was again overcast, and during breakfast it started to rain. In the hope that the storm might abate we sent the ponies and porters on ahead, with the intention of following in less depressing conditions. Having restocked on supplies of kerosene and food at the bazaar and having bought large black umbrellas in imitation of the men's equipment for the princely sum of eight rupees each (about twelve shillings), we sat on the veranda of the rest-house, drinking tea and waiting for the skies to clear.

By noon it was obvious that the rain would continue through the day and, with our tents and all supplies steadily covering the distance to Jispa, we should have to follow. I exchanged my new umbrella for the gaily red-white-and-blue-striped golfing umbrella that Warwick had 'borrowed' from his father, and was now bequeathing to the women's expedition for its photogenic qualities.

The track climbed steeply from Kyelang, and in places was obviously impassable for jeeps. Some weeks later, on our return, we were surprised to note the changes that had been brought about by the road gangs, who worked hard to widen it and shore up the crumbling verges in parts. I walked at my own steady pace to ease the distress caused by the steep climb and increased altitude. For once Warwick was content to slow down and to refrain from flogging me to better efforts in the manner that had aroused my black anger on so many occasions in England! Instead he offered me a pep tablet, renamed "hulagoolas" by him for reasons unknown. As this took effect my headache eased, and I began to enjoy the walk and my surroundings to a much greater extent.

Eve and John walked ahead, while Warwick and I sometimes kept in company with Anne and sometimes continued

alone. When breath allowed we discussed a wide range of subjects from plans for future expeditions to world affairs, with which we were both somewhat out of touch, although my stay in Delhi had given me the opportunity to read up events that had taken place during the time of the overland journey at least. Eve tells me that she and John had a raging argument on the merits and demerits of the British adopting the metric system!

The rain slackened its efforts to intermittent showers, and in the short periods of pale sunshine we could appreciate each new breathtaking vista as the track wound in contours along the mountains. The valley of the Bhaga, unlike that of the Chandra, was fairly well wooded with stunted conifers and juniper-bushes. With each new panorama circled with distant snowy peaks, it was a great temptation to analyse the possible routes up the loftier mountains. Warwick was alarmed lest our ambitions should override our good sense in the tackling of some climb well beyond our capacity. He need not have worried. Apart from our own awareness of our limitations, Numgyal had already summed up our experience pretty shrewdly and had no intention of permitting us to take wild chances.

Approaching the village of Bho, Warwick and I met an old woman and her obviously inebriated son. They permitted us to study her beautiful silver ornaments, and with great mutual politeness we shook hands again and again with the tipsy man, who insisted on displaying his sophistication and knowledge of the great world outside. Apart from the usual greetings of "Salaam," each party was ignorant of the other's language; but we chatted on happily.

In the village we stopped by a chorten, plentifully decorated with brass, beside which stood a young girl. I tried to pass the time of day with her in order that Warwick might take a photograph, but she cast nervous looks over her shoulder. In a moment a group of men and boys leading a horse came down the path to where we stood. The leading figure, dressed soberly in a long black robe and dark spectacles,

greeted me in Hindi. I stammered something in reply and looked around helplessly. Anne had joined Warwick and was able to come to my help.

In a moment her help as interpreter was no longer required, for he switched to faultless if slow English. This was Pratap Singh, the one-time Thakur of Lahoul, who still occupied his palace, set on a crag high above the village, and served the Indian Government as an adviser on local affairs.

"It is a great pity that you did not arrive some hours ago," he said. "We have been holding a devil dance in the village. You would have been very interested."

This explained the condition of our friend now heading unsteadily for home with mother in attendance. Our host ordered the brilliant saddle-cloths to be stripped from the horse's back. These were spread on the muddied ground, and while servants were sent to fetch a supply of Chang (the local beer, brewed from freshly fermenting barley) we all sat on the cloths and started to tell of our intentions and how we came to be there.

The Chang was served from an enamelled teapot into beautiful silver bowls, which circulated from the Thakur to the three guests and, at a later stage, into the ranks of lamas surrounding us. We did our best to narrow the lead they had on us, but obviously they had been partaking of the brew for some hours. No sooner had we reached the bottom of the bowlful than the spout of the teapot was lowered into it again.

The Thakur told us of his sixteen years' service with the Dogra regiment, paying flowery compliments to his British masters and commenting with less enthusiasm on the new régime. This may be explained by the difference of opinion between Hindus and Buddhists, and possibly also regret for the days of nominally absolute power, before his people were subjected to the general democratization programme of the Indian Government. On the surface it seemed to us that his status had changed little.

He pointed to the chorten and told us that this was a shrine in memory of his younger brother, who was killed in

an air accident. A pilot of even one of those crazy biplanes that trundle through the sky at little over one hundred miles per hour seemed to have little in common with the ruling family of a remote Himalayan valley. Here beside us sat a slim, middle-aged man, last in the line of the rulers, dressed in simple robes, with his diseased, failing eyes sheltering behind the incongruity of tinted spectacles, but with no further visible hint of his past exile in the service of strangers to this continent and its philosophies.

He extended a warm invitation to us to accompany him to the palace on the mountain and to stay as his guests. We refused regretfully. Eve and John, together with the ponies and porters, were some way ahead, and there was no means of recalling them before nightfall. In the gathering darkness we took our leave and continued our walk.

Beyond the village lay an enormous rocky glacier bed, the path demarcated by a double row of whitewashed stones. A river split the rubble slopes, and we missed the small bridge that spanned its turbulence. We made a long detour, looking for a suitable fording-place, but caught sight of the bridge far below. On the opposite bank, in the lee of a huge boulder, we found Nowa Ram—fast asleep—his head cradled on a small rucksack. He had been sent out to meet us with flasks of hot tea. This we shared with a traveller who for some miles had attached himself to Anne for company, and we continued on the last mile to Jispa.

A few seasons ago the river formed a large shallow lake by the village, flooding a large plain and destroying several houses. The lake is receding, and we crossed the mud flats in a bizarre landscape of ruined stone huts and twisted dead trees. Numgyal met us at the outskirts of the village, carrying torches, and we arrived in the rest-house to find that John and Eve had prepared a meal. It had been a satisfying day, and we prepared for bed with the comforting knowledge that the following day was to be a rest day.

All traces of the rain had disappeared by morning. We woke to cloudless skies and warm sunshine. The porters had robbed

the rest-house of chairs and tables and had set them out on the lawn. We breakfasted in the open, enjoying the view of the 'lake' with the mountains all around. Warwick had prepared a programme of scenes to be taken on still as well as cine cameras of camp life in the mountains. Since this was a good chance to have some records of the trio as a whole, we co-operated willingly. We posed at the breakfast-table, we studied maps, we applied our masks of cosmetics, which had wrung a reluctant admission from the husbands that our protective methods against the effects of unscreened ultra-violet rays gave a more pleasing general appearance than the usual shield of glacier cream. Throughout the day each aspect of our activities was filmed.

I decided to wash my hair. Since the fever I had glossed over the necessity for this, but now felt that I could not bear the itching a moment longer. This was to be my last effort in the mountains. For one thing, the dirt of the mountains is relatively 'clean,' and for another I was inclined to agree with the counsels against the risks of chills and pneumonia at high altitudes! But that day I upended my head in a bucket of hot water, and Warwick helped willingly enough to pour rinsing water over the foaming topknot that emerged from the vigorous shampooing. Eve followed suit, and likewise inspanned John to help in a very domestic scene.

We were still rubbing briskly at the rats' tails with towels, there was the usual line of washing spread over boulders and bushes, while the trim lawn and rest-house had assumed the chaotic appearance of a camp site, when a deputation of policemen arrived from the local barracks. Jispa is the last outpost of the Punjab Armed Police in the valley before the "Inner Line," and their visit was primarily connected with the routine of checking papers and permits. We spread our prized documents out before them on the table for particulars to be entered in their records.

"It is very strange that we have not been warned of your coming," they said. "We are expecting a party of three women across the Bara Lacha La from Ladakh."

Evidently our first contact at External Affairs had been told of our permit, but not of the fact that we were taking a different route! The police listened politely as we explained the probable reason for the apparent duplication of expeditions, but it was obvious that they were not convinced. Perhaps at the end of the season when the 'other' party had still not put in an appearance they may have been persuaded of the accuracy of our construction. John and Warwick, of course, had no permits, but were assured that it was in order for them to travel as far as Darcha, the next village, which represented the start of the restricted territory.

In the afternoon they appeared again, this time complete with camera and accompanied by a Sikh doctor and dispenser, the two-man complement of a mobile Governmental clinic. We consulted the doctor at once about Eve's lip, which was still swollen. He later sent some ointment, and the trouble cleared up in a day or two. Dr Singh, a slightly built Sikh, had much to tell of his findings during his travels in the area. He warned us against drinking unboiled water from the mountain streams. The flocks of sheep and goats that spend the summer months in high pastures have infected the water with thread-worm and hook-worm, and much of his treatment is for these two complaints.

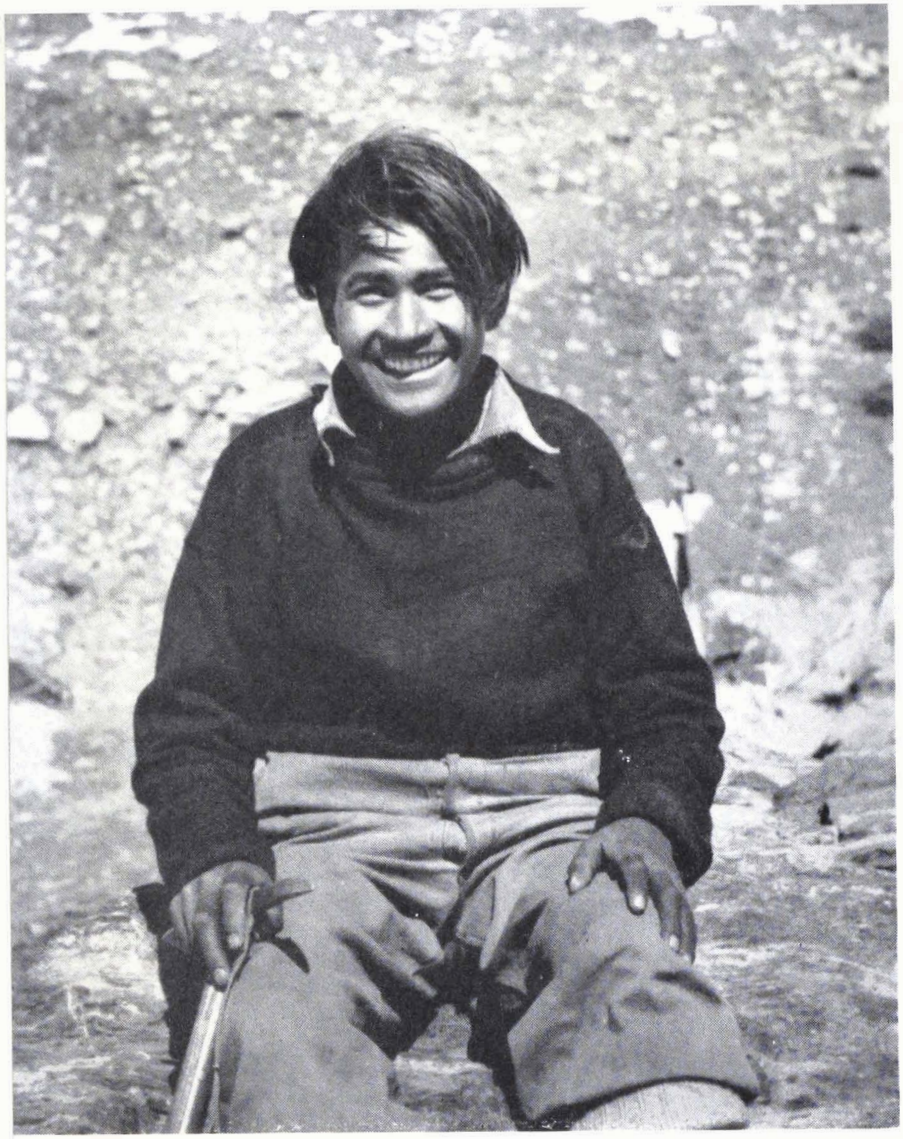
The population in general is fairly healthy; to survive the severe winters presumably they have to be. Diseases fall into two categories: those brought about by deficiencies in diet and those resulting from unhygienic habits. Eye complaints are fairly frequent, as is diarrhœa, but dysentery is virtually unknown. Tuberculosis and venereal diseases are rarely found. We agreed that these are primarily introductions of civilization and so far have not reached the peoples of these areas.

To counter the onslaught of lice and in efforts to introduce personal hygiene, propaganda, he explained, had been started to induce the people to take first monthly baths during the summer and then persuade them that weekly baths are even more desirable. I do not know whether his efforts were meeting with success. To a Sikh, who must bath daily, the presence

Fording a Fast-flowing, Icy-cold Glacial River in Zanskar

Numgyal and the author are being encouraged by the gorawallah and his assistant. In this river Anne and Numgyal were nearly drowned.

Anne distributing Sweets among the Children at Tetha, in Zanskar



Porter Nowa Ram

Eve talks to Numgyal and a Kulu Child

of so many unwashed sons of the soil may be somewhat undesirable. For my own part, the close proximity of these same unwashed produced no greater sensory awareness than the strong smell of the smoke from their dung-fires, though, of course, I know the dangers inherent in preparing food with dirty hands.

He discussed also the great hold over the people by the lamas, who, side by side with modern medicine, effect cures by incantation and prayers. The lamas themselves are not loath to use the medical services, and in this way the Government hopes to increase the trust in the clinics. We did not discuss the outcome of a possible instance when a lama might succumb in spite of medical care!

I was interested to note the presence of the same idealistic zeal in him that is commonly found in missionaries, and was not surprised to learn that he was a great student of theology and philosophy. He expanded on this theme and set out the philosophy at which he had arrived in the course of his studies. He held the principle, common to most religious beliefs, that mankind must strive for a great love removed from itself and immediate environs, but he seemed to have little new to add to the world's fund of philosophic thought. It was evident, though, that he had arrived at his conclusions by long pursuit of several theories, and that, to him at least, it was something unique.

Anne, still in search of local handicrafts, asked whether he had found any signs to contradict our impressions that there were virtually none. Dr Singh had found this same lack of creativeness. The Government has started a school of weaving in Kyelang in an effort to improve standards and to encourage the start of a local industry, but the cloth will have to be greatly improved before it can be marketed in cities. I mentioned my interest in the finding of the swastika emblem, supposing this to be an introduction by invaders from the Middle East.

"No, no. You are wrong," he said. "This is the emblem of a Hindu god who made a love marriage with a goddess of a

Himalayan village." In this he may be right, but the origin of the emblem must nevertheless have been west of India, since there is no record of a similar conquest in the opposite direction.

Four miles up the valley from Jispa is the Barsi Nala, a large tributary which joins the Bhaga from the west. A careful study of the map revealed that there was only a pulley bridge across this river, and that the ponies would have to walk up the near bank for a few miles in order to cross a bridge upstream. The Ghorawallah suggested that we should unload them in the same way that we had done at Tandi, sending the loads over on the pulley bridge, because he thought that the track on the opposite bank was not in good condition and the risks would be increased by the carrying of loads.

With the certainty that the detour would preclude the possibility of travelling a long distance, we ambled along the track at the rear of the ponies, enjoying the sunshine and scenery. John bravely carried the 16-mm. camera and stopped frequently to photograph flowers and birds along the route. Warwick and I walked ahead, taking similar records with the still cameras. He had offered to leave his Leica with me in place of the camera which had been letting in light, and was teaching me to use it. We studied possible routes up a mountain on the opposite bank of the Bhaga, and came to the conclusion that the route that had been visible from Jispa would 'go.' Since this mountain was still within bounds of the "Inner Line," we decided to leave it for future expeditions. Just as well—it looked ambitious!

As we came to the tributary and rounded the corner into the new valley we saw the site of operations of a new bridge which was to replace the temporary pulley bridge. On both banks mortared breastworks were rising, but it would be some time before the water was spanned. We learned that frequent avalanches of the slopes on the near bank had destroyed the previous bridges; it remained to be proved whether the new site was any less prone to danger from above.

Half a mile upstream was the pulley bridge, a very rough-and-ready structure, consisting of a steel cable slung between foundations of boulders piled up on either bank and with a wooden cable-car attached to the pulley and controlled by a leading cable. The ponies had been unloaded and were ready to start out on their long detour. We waited while a group of shepherds transferred their flock from the opposite bank in a lengthy series of journeys involving the loading of about two sheep at a time in the rough cable-car. The animals' legs were tied to prevent them plunging through the slats in a suicidal attempt at escape. Many sheep who had made the journey were bleeding from the nose, and all were resting, panting heavily as their panic subsided.

At last the cable-car was freed for our use, and by degrees the mound of boxes was transferred to the opposite bank. Nowa Ram went across with the first load, leaving Numgyal behind to load the car and to pull the empty car back across the river. We filmed some of this activity before crossing ourselves. The cable was about twenty feet above the water, and the crossing in this direction was made easier by the fact that the 'landing-stage' on the farther bank was several feet below the level of the near bank.

When my turn came I climbed gingerly into the swaying car and crouched on the bottom. I was firmly wedged in with rucksacks, which I clutched lest they should go overboard. The lead rope was freed and I sailed off into space at great speed. Almost before I began to enjoy the sensation I was across and being helped from the car by Nowa Ram.

In less than an hour we and our baggage had crossed without mishap. We prepared ourselves for a long wait for the ponies. There was no room for boredom, however, for we had stepped straight from the car into a rather unusual market-place. Each year Tibetan traders had travelled from the high plateaux of Tibet over countless snow-covered passes through Ladakh and into Lahoul. They used to bring rock salt transported in small homespun woollen bags, double slung over the backs of sheep. The journey would take about two and

a half months, but the return was faster, for the loads of barley and grain which they bought in return were somewhat lighter.

That day three traders had arrived with a flock of 400 sheep, each animal carrying about ten seers of salt (roughly ten kilograms). At the current price of salt at 5 annas per seer, their gross income represented about £100. It seemed a tough way of earning money, but they needed grain and the Lahoulis needed salt, so presumably the effort was worth while. In spite of the recent Chinese occupation of Tibet and with none of the difficulties of passports, Customs, and immigration formalities that beset the modern traveller this habit of many years seemed to have continued unchanged. Through Numgyal, Anne asked the Tibetans what the road conditions were like. She was told that as far as Leh, the capital of Ladakh, the track was very poor, but that a short distance beyond Leh it became very good. In the light of recent developments we wonder whether this stretch could have been the road which the Chinese, unknown to the Indian Government, drove through the north-eastern corner of Ladakh. It is quite probable that this innocent trading has now come to an end.

We studied the Tibetans with great interest. Fantastic figures, with broad Mongoloid faces topped by long wiry hair in plaits apparently unwashed and uncombed in years, they were clad in woollen robes worn like togas, leaving one shoulder bare. Their boots, with long leggings, were of hide and wool, criss-cross-thonged, and they carried about them an assortment of ornaments and knives in bone sheaths. Pinned to their robes, each had a little silver toothpick and ear-spoon, a set much favoured also by the Lahoulis and Ladakhis. Their weatherbeaten looks, skin darkly tanned by the brilliant glare of high altitudes, made the shrewd Lahouli traders look almost effete by comparison.

The Ladakhis are very similar to the Tibetans in type and language, although our own porters looked less like these traders and more like the Lahoulis we had become familiar with. Numgyal spoke to the Tibetans. He told us that they

were feeling the heat! To us this was the equivalent of a mild spring day, fine weather but with a sharpness in the air.

Tarpaulins had been spread, and the contents of the little bags were emptied on to them. A brass dekchi (bowl) was filled to the utmost and weighed with the crude hand-operated scales that are used universally by small traders and merchants throughout India. A rough average of weight thus being reached, the remaining process of measuring is carried out by the dekchiful. The Lahouli trader had made a fine art of the filling of the bowls, his fingers delicately shaping the salt to the highest possible pyramid. He then tossed the salt behind him on to the tarpaulin, where his assistants raked it into sacks. Each series of loads was marked on a stone by the Tibetan. Throughout the Lahouli kept up a monotonous humming, probably weaving his counting into a song. Sometimes apparently the song failed to scan, for a friendly altercation would break out between seller and buyer.

At the conclusion of this deal the rôles were reversed and the Tibetans measured out grain into the dekchi and their now-empty bags. I did not see money change hands. Possibly the lesser load of grain is equal in price to the salt. We filmed to heart's content, doubtless getting in the way on many occasions, but they did not lose patience and smiled at us quite cheerfully between the moments of concentration.

We brewed up some tea. Several hours had passed and there was still no sign of the ponies. The ghorawallah, who on such occasions stayed behind, leaving the two boys to carry out the tedious chores of driving the unladen animals through detours and to pasture as befitted their less responsible positions, seemed quite unconcerned as he puffed away at his 'hubble-bubble' water-pipe. Numgyal inquired about the delay, and reported to us with fury that the ghorawallah had given instructions to the boys to leave the animals to graze higher up the valley.

The only level ground on this rocky site was already fully occupied by the market. Apart from this, what few places remained for the pitching of tents were fairly fouled by the

number of animals which had passed to and fro over the river. We had had a rest day the previous day, during the course of which the ponies had eaten well. And we were not permitting the expedition to be run solely by the decisions of the ghorawallah! He was sent on his way to fetch the ponies, grumbling as he went.

A long wait ensued. Evidently the animals were already out to graze on higher slopes, and it would take some time to round them up. The sun's rays were cut off by the rock walls lining this part of the valley, and in the shade we soon began to shiver. Numgyal went in search of a camp site in the direction of the village, and returned to report that there was a large meadow by the new bridge. He picked up one of the aluminium boxes and disappeared round a corner, humping the load of 60 pounds on his back. We followed suit with rucksacks and tent bags.

The meadow was rather boggy, but we selected an area less damp underfoot than that surrounding us, and, with six people working to pitch tents, our little camp was soon up with tea brewing up and the ingredients for a meal laid ready. Anne had gone in search of the ponies meanwhile.

We knew that this valley (the valley of the Barsi Nala) led up to the Shingo La, the pass by which we hoped to return from Zanskar. The track that she followed bore little resemblance to the wide jeepable track we had so far used, being no more than a narrow path cut into the crumbling hillside. Later we were to become accustomed to such tracks and to traverse them light-heartedly, but now she went very carefully, picking her way round landslips and gradually becoming more doubtful of the advisability of using this route. For two miles she continued up the valley without meeting the ghorawallah and animals. She turned back, convinced that the route was out for loaded animals.

At the pulley bridge she met a young Sikh engineer, whom we had missed on our way through Kyelang, where he was staying. His job was to supervise the building of the new bridge. As they walked towards our camp site he told her

that he had just heard on the wireless that a tense situation had developed in the Middle East. King Feisal of Iraq had been murdered, together with the Prime Minister, in an armed revolt. American troops had moved into the Lebanon, British troops had re-entered Jordan, and it was reported that Russian troops were massing on the Turkish frontier. Anne rushed ahead to tell us the grim news.

So much international trouble lies in the countries of the Middle East, with their precious deposits of oil, that we could not be blamed for taking the news very seriously indeed. Especially the account of foreign troops massing seemed to spell trouble, far greater than that of a national revolution. Here we were, five British subjects, in the Himalaya without wireless contact and with three of us about to travel beyond the reach of further news for several weeks. Apart from our proximity to the Tibetan border, and thus Chinese troops in the event of a major conflict, we were reasonably safe in neutral Indian territory, but we should be cut off completely from our families and friends. John and Warwick would be recalled immediately, and the thought of total separation, also for Anne from her husband and children, was not very cheering.

Over the meal we discussed the possible effects of the situation and its future developments. Even if the troubled areas quietened there was still the chance that we might not be allowed to drive through Turkey on the return journey. The route lies through Erzurum, where for many years Turkey has maintained a large garrison in defence of her border with the Soviet Union. Perhaps the presence of foreigners, however innocent, might be unwelcome.

The alternatives involved additional expenses we might be unable to meet. We could ship the Land Rover to Africa and drive home from there, or, with special dispensation, we might be permitted to sell the vehicle in India and travel home as best we could. Until such time as we could hear more news there was no point in continuing the discussion. We were all becoming more and more depressed. Apart from our

personal fears, the expedition seemed to be threatened with yet another damaging anticlimax.

The Sikh had told Anne that a man in the village owned a wireless-set. We decided to ask whether we might listen to the news broadcast that evening. In the dark we picked our way through the marsh and deep puddles towards the village. We found the track, which rose steeply away from the meadow. In the weak beam of our torches we missed the turning to the village, but the noise of singing below us told of our mistake.

We were hailed from below by a familiar voice. It was Numgyal, who came up the slope to meet us. As he came within breathshot it was plain that he had been slaking his thirst after his heroic efforts of the day. His progress was rather unsteady, but he offered Anne his hand gallantly to guide her down. We followed, stumbling over the uneven ground. We were led into a house, where we met his three companions, equally unsure of their movements and blood-shot of eye. The low room was empty of furniture and was filled with the acrid smoke from a small dung-fire in the centre of the floor. Few houses have chimneys, in view of the need to eliminate unwelcome draughts in winter. This may explain why the people of these valleys suffer from permanently reddened eyes.

We asked after the owner of the wireless and were introduced to one of the men in the room. It transpired that his set was in his tent not a hundred yards from our camp. It was too late now for the news, but we asked whether we might visit him in the morning. We were invited to stay now to partake of the Chang, which was circulating once more. Our mood was hardly compatible with celebration, and we declined politely.

Numgyal insisted on accompanying us back to the camp, although we did not want to spoil his evening. I was interested to note that although the degree of his inebriation had seriously impaired his sense of balance, he shone the torch steadily behind him to make our way easier. When he

was satisfied that we had negotiated the hazards safely he bade us good-night and returned to his party.

"Poor man will have a bursting headache to-morrow," said Anne.

That her prophecy was fulfilled was obvious, but Numgyal was awake and moving about the camp at his normal speed in the morning. We let him go about his tasks, taxing him as little as possible with conversation and discussion for the day's plans. In any case, we had enough to worry about. After breakfast we made our way across the meadow towards the tent of the wireless-owner. As overseer of the bridge-builders he was already out at work, but had left instructions with his personal servant to allow us to enter and fiddle with the knobs of the wireless.

Without knowledge of the local wavelengths Warwick fiddled aimlessly, until he cut into the latter part of a speech by Eisenhower. We learned little, but the fact that the heads of State were still talking might indicate that the situation had not exploded yet. An hour or two later we tried again. This time a voice with a strong American accent was reading out the text of a note from Khrushchev to Eisenhower, making it clear that if the United States were to use force in the Middle East the Soviet Union would not hesitate to do so too. The announcer ended his report with the surprising words: "That concludes this relay from Radio Moscow."

Still no definite news. We decided to send the ponies and porters on to a new camp site, four miles up the Bhaga valley. The ghorawallah had already been taken to task by a woman working in one of the tiny fields that clung to the slopes above the meadow when his ponies had strayed into the crop in search of tastier food. At noon the overseer returned to his tent in the company of the young Sikh engineer. We removed our shoes and entered the tent. The Sikh introduced us officially to the overseer, a native of Lahoul and the nephew of the Thakur. We asked him to convey our greetings to his uncle. The Sikh tuned in to All-India Radio, but remembered that the news bulletin was already over. Further exploration

found Radio Pakistan about to launch into a description of the situation. Apart from the plans for a meeting of the "Big Three" nothing appeared to have changed. We thanked our host and left him to his luncheon.

Our decision was made quickly. We should continue with the expedition as arranged. If matters were cleared up in the next few days our failure to proceed now would mean the curtailment of our aims still further. We climbed the steep hill of the previous night and continued after the pony train. Numgyal met us and led us the last half-mile into camp. We were now half-way between Darcha and Pastio, almost the last village before the Bara Lacha La. Warwick and John would turn back on the next day with an increased distance of 67 miles to Manali. They decided to cut down this distance by taking a short cut from Kyelang over the mountains to Sissu, provided they could hire a guide to show them the way.

While Eve and John cooked, Warwick and I worked out a code for telegrams should we find ourselves in difficulties on our return from the mountains. "Journey into the Interior" would mean our returning via Africa; "Visit Pat" meant that I should make my way to Malaya, Warwick's next posting; "Send money" was self-explanatory!

I cooked an early breakfast, and by eight the next morning the men were ready to leave. There was so much to say that we retreated into hearty inanities. Warwick promised to visit Lester when he reached England to reassure him about Anne's welfare and that of the expedition as a whole. We saluted each other briefly, and in the next moment the two figures went off over the skyline, where they paused to wave, and then were lost to sight. Eve and I turned our backs and sat down to smoke a cigarette. Another phase of the adventure was over.

6

Across the "Inner Line"

THE Himalayan "nymphs and shepherds" idyll ending thus, we turned our full attention to the programme ahead. The excitement of heading into parts little known is one that defies description. Perhaps because my interest lies less in the physical trials of pure climbing, I have always regretted the fact that so many expeditions have centred their attentions on the climbing of one peak to the exclusion of exploratory work in the area surrounding that peak. The thrill of climbing a pass which may not require particular skill, to descend into a valley beyond and to discover for oneself new vistas, different flora and fauna, perhaps different races on the other side, must compare with the reactions of one engaged in research as each new fact emerges. It matters little whether the ground has been covered before—for oneself it is a discovery. But if the map contains blanks or question-marks it is all the more exciting.

We were still on a well-trodden trade route, but the pass to be tackled next would lead us into Ladakh, our primary goal. The early start we considered was opposed by the ghorawallah. "The grazing is very bad beyond Zingzingbar, at the foot of the pass. I should like to spend as little time there as possible, so we could leave as late as possible, please, memsahib?" With 15 miles to go to the foot of the pass and in view of our own rather leisurely pace, we were rather reluctant to agree, but for once we could flay ourselves in the interests of the ponies, and there had been no straining of our physical resources up to the present. It was settled that we should start out at eleven.

The boys went in search of the ponies at ten; by eleven there was no sign of them; similarly at noon the skyline showed no trace of them. The ghorawallah went up the

mountain rather than face our grim looks any longer. Numgyal was furious. I had lost interest, for I was suffering rather badly from an attack of diarrhœa, a legacy from our visitors, I suspect. The ghorawallah reappeared with a long face. Three animals had strayed and could not be found. The boys were continuing the search. It was already much too late to start. The tents were re-pitched, and we crept into shelter, for it had started to rain again.

Anne wandered off and returned with a butterfly, our first catch for an amateur lepidopterist friend of mine in England. I stabbed it through the thorax with a needle and some reluctance, and stowed it away in a matchbox and the aluminium box containing our medical supplies for safe keeping. We brewed hot drinks and nibbled at biscuits to pass the time.

The boredom lifted when a group of horsemen arrived on the plain, driving a large flock of sheep. Closer inspection revealed that they were Tibetans, evidently on their way to Darcha to sell salt in the same way that we had witnessed. They set up a primitive camp with speed and built a small fire, over which a collection of cooking-pots was arranged. With their immediate needs thus taken care of, they came over to our camp individually during the afternoon to exchange courtesies with the porters and to satisfy their curiosity about us.

In particular we admired their beautiful hats. The high crowns were faced with gold brocade, the rim and upturned points rather like Dutch bonnets, lined with fur. Nowa Ram tried on one and presented himself to us for approval. Eve looked up the word for 'handsome' in the Urdu dictionary and complimented him. Perhaps we used the wrong word in the context, but he collapsed in giggles, translating for the benefit of the Tibetan standing by. The weatherbeaten face of the latter relapsed into crinkles of amusement momentarily, but he resumed his unwinking stare from under the hat he retrieved from Nowa Ram.

In the late afternoon two exhausted boys came down the slopes above us with a full complement of ponies in tow. A

shepherd in an adjacent valley had found the missing three animals and had obligingly driven them back. It was too late to do more than cook a meal and retire for the day. Anne had the ghorawallah on the mat.

"We have given you many opportunities to rest the ponies, and by now they are in good condition. To-day you have had a free day which you have not earned, and each delay is causing us much trouble. I think you have lost the right to payment for to-day."

She added this threat on the recommendation of Numgyal, who felt that the possible loss of a day's earnings might spur the ghorawallah to better efforts for the remainder of the trek. We thought privately that it might result equally in mutiny, but Numgyal had summed up his man very accurately, and we had no further cause for complaint.

The ponies were tethered on the plain for fear of a repetition of the delay, and, to emphasize the seriousness of the threat, we insisted that the start should be an hour earlier than previously arranged.

Under overcast skies we walked three miles along the track and came to a bridge over the Bhaga which led to Patsio rest-house, on the opposite bank. On a hill overlooking the village we were stopped by the sight of an eagle gliding level with us in a predatory search of the ravine. The large bird obligingly returned again and again in its casting for prey, at times directly overhead, which gave ample opportunity for filming and for identification by our ornithological expert—Anne.

"I'm sure it's a golden eagle," she cried excitedly. What little study Eve and I had made of the textbook on Himalayan birds, lent to Anne by Malcolm MacDonald, served as a guide to her excitement. While the black eagle is fairly common in the mountains, the golden eagle is only rarely seen. We were favoured indeed if her identification were accurate. We marked the occasion with the exposing of many feet of film, until the eagle at last flew off in search of more favourable hunting-grounds.

As we packed up the cameras and turned towards the bridge we were passed by a red-robed lama on horseback, with three men following on foot, one of whom carried a black Gladstone bag—a rather odd touch, we thought. Nowa Ram explained that this was a doctor-wallah. The use of the word 'wallah' in place of 'sahib' was fairly significant, and I should have been interested to examine the contents of the bag.

On the opposite bank we were met by the chowkidar of the P.W.D. rest-house in the village. Word had been sent to him by the engineer at the bridge at Darcha to clean up the rest-house in preparation for our arrival. He stood by eagerly, but was disappointed when we explained that we should not be using the rest-house.

The last point marked on the map before the pass was Zingzingbar, a name with which to conjure. We asked Numgyal for a description of this village. In answer he smiled mysteriously, leaving our curiosity unsatisfied. On a small alp at the point where the Bhaga swings into the main valley from the north-east we rested for luncheon. Eve set up the tripod and the cine camera for one of those clever self-run shots where the cameraman appears to walk into the picture and partakes of a cup of tea with as much *aplomb* as she can muster in the need to look up in the direction of the machine without giving evidence of concern whether the beastly mechanism is working or not. A similar sequence taken in the deserts of Iran was nearly useless because of our obstinate refusal to sit in the sun. Here the problem did not arise.

Nowa Ram lay down on the edge of the alp high above the river and fell asleep. In the fear that he would turn over in his sleep and roll down to a grim death below we packed up the small rucksack and prodded him awake.

Climbing steadily, the track merged imperceptibly into a mere way threading through glacial moraine. In rubber soles it was rather hard going. We stumbled through a chaos of boulders of all shapes, levels, and colours. A geologist would be well content to linger here, I thought as I looked at the

dazzling display. There were boulders of green, grey, pink striated with purple, rust striped with glittering quartz in the formation of the familiar game of noughts and crosses. There was in addition black slate, milk quartz, and clear quartz in profusion. The scene was unbelievably beautiful in spite of the desolation.

Along the track in a sort of clearing in the forest of rocks Nowa Ram found some purple flowers. He gathered a bunch of these and presented them to Anne. She tucked the posy into the top of her umbrella and strolled on, for all the world as though on a country walk in an English spring! In a narrow part of the ravine I saw a large slab of rock on which was carved the sign of the cross and some Ladakhi script. I asked Nowa Ram to translate. The sense of the words soon came through Anne's literal translation from the Hindi: "Our Father, Which art in Heaven . . ."

According to Nowa Ram, an American missionary was here. One of his converts had evidently applied himself to the new religion in the tradition and crafts of the old.

With milestone zero we realized that we had arrived at Zingzingbar. I understood Numgyal's smile. Apart from a stone hut, which was easily overlooked in the background of tumbled boulders, there was nothing to mark the place as any different from any other we had seen in the last few miles. The only occupants—and they were of a temporary nature—were gaddis, shepherds from the Kangra valley and Rampur Bashahr, who may be seen all over these areas of the Himalaya during the summer with their flocks.

Ethnically of a quite distinct type, they are light of skin, with finely chiselled features similar to the Persians'. Their work calls for a fine physique, and most of them are quite young. We admired their characteristic garb, a short woollen robe gathered round the waist like a skirt and slung over one shoulder, with a length of goat's-hair rope wound several times round the waist. In many ways they resembled Greeks in national dress.

Two of these men, who had been to Kyelang to buy sup-

plies and were now returning to rejoin their companions in the mountains of Ladakh, accompanied us as far as the camp site at the foot of the pass. We had lost sight of the ponies some time before; Anne was walking very well, and kept ahead with Numgyal and Nowa Ram.

Eve stayed back to encourage me on the last stretch into camp. I felt very weak as a result of the stomach complaint and stopped frequently for long rests. At Zingzingbar our altitude had been 14,000 feet, and we continued to climb steadily. At sunset I saw the two bungalow tents, fluttering bravely in the rising breeze, ahead of us. On either side there were snow-capped mountains, and as the sun withdrew from the narrow valley it became appreciably colder.

I staggered into the tent and flopped out on an air mattress. Anne was already preparing a meal and handed over a mug of hot lemonade, which helped me to sit up and take interest again. Eve was madly cheerful, whether from the altitude or by disposition I could not discover. Perhaps the excitement of the proximity of tempting mountain peaks had caught up with her.

Before settling down for the night we dressed in warm underclothes—string vests and most unglamorous "Long Johns" borrowed from husbands—ready for an early start in the morning.

Numgyal woke us at 4.30. In the dark we fumbled around, getting dressed and preparing breakfast, yawning mightily at intervals. The tents and boxes were packed up and loaded on the ponies in good time, during which there was a noticeable lightening of the sky, although the sun had not yet risen. The ghorawallah was anxious to negotiate as much of the snow as possible before the intensity of the sun's rays should melt the surface and make the going too difficult.

Still somewhat sleep-befuddled, I stumbled after the others up a steep slope to the first obstacle. On an ice wall the ponies were sliding and slipping in their efforts to climb, encouraged by the whistles and curses of the three muleteers. Our dual-ended braying donkey, known alternatively as "Zephyr" or

"Windy" by the end of the trek according to our mood, slipped and slid elegantly down the ice in a sitting position. Its next attempt was more successful, and the other ponies followed in its wake of churned ice and snow.

We followed, armed with umbrellas as ice-axes. So spoilt had we become by not carrying loads that, in the choice between carrying both weapons or only one, we had decided in favour of the umbrellas for the shelter they would give from the sun later on. We poked the ferrules into the snow and made half-hearted attempts to kick steps up the ice. Nowa Ram's smiling comment that Anne and I appeared to be having difficulty met with a ferocious snarl from me that were he suffering with my stomach he would not be so jolly either.

At the top of the wall Eve set up the cine camera on tripod again. We were glad of the excuse to rest, until she demanded that we should retrace our steps so that she could film the climb. We stayed for about an hour in the hands of our producer. Around us the snow had been tipped with pink light, and by now the sun was shining brightly. Nowa Ram reminded us of the dangers of melting snow and prodded us on.

We skirted the lovely Suruj Tal, or Chukum Lake (different maps give different names), from which the Bhaga tumbles under the ice fall and down its valley course. Across alternating snowfields and scree we came on to the plateau of the Bara Lacha La, the pass of twelve mountains, with access to the Bhaga valley, to Spiti in the south-east, and to the Rupshu province of Ladakh in the north. Numgyal had returned to urge us to hurry. We reached the highest point of the pass and sat for a while in the lee of a chorten which had been built by passing travellers.

The peaks around us rose a further 3000 feet from the pass, and we earmarked three of these, within easy reach, to the east of the track into Ladakh. Our altimeter registered 16,100 feet, a reading almost coincidental with the survey point on the map. We judged the peaks to be in the region of 19,000 feet, a greater altitude than we had aimed for, but the routes seemed feasible even to Numgyal. Should we be

forced to return this way by bad conditions on the Shingo La we would bear them in mind.

The snow was melting rapidly, and although our route was fairly safe, we judged that wading through it was not a very attractive proposition, and it was time to move. We turned north, leaving the beauties of the plateau behind. From here the way led ever downhill, at first over a glacier in a narrow ravine. From this glacier flowed the Yunan river, along which we should make our way into the Zanskar province and which eventually flows into the Indus near Leh, capital of Ladakh.

From a series of rivulets the main river grew. We had to boulder-hop over the tiny shallow streams which formed a network over the floor of the valley. Again our route lay through snow alongside the river. By this time the surface was very soft, and occasionally we plunged knee-deep into the snow. With the sun warm on our faces and bodies, these mishaps were only an excuse to clown a little with mock screams of terror and ridiculously careful picking of route around possible hazards. We were careful, however, to give a wide berth to an ominous crack where the overhanging snow formed a cornice over the river. The height of fall would not have been great, but the volume of snow which might have been brought down in the wake of such a fall was certainly enough to bury the victim in a most unpleasant and possibly fatal incarceration.

The snow gave way to moraine, necessitating the tiring negotiation of boulders and scree that we had encountered on the previous day. The landscape looked as though the mountains had dissolved in a downhill tumble of rubble as the result of a Cyclopean explosion. It occurred to me that this might well be named the Pass of Bones, for alongside the track there were countless bones bleached white in the sun. There were the skulls and vertebræ of sheep and horses, and in one place an interesting aroma led to the discovery of the carcass of a horse, advancing fast into a state of decomposition.

Unaccustomed to the climbing boots that I had donned as protection against the snow, my feet were aching, and the

thought of the comforts of camp was beginning to occupy my mind to the exclusion of my surroundings. The valley opened out into a broad plain where we found Kilang, the first stop marked after the pass. This consisted of no more than a rough stone-built shelter similar to the one at Zingzingbar, but far below us there was a bridge spanning the Yunan.

Our map was of too small a scale to decide with any certainty that the route lay across that bridge, but it seeemed logical. Anne and I, who were now ahead of Eve, scrambled down the hillside with the intention of cutting off the last bend of the track and made our way towards the bridge. Insistent whistling from a point ahead and slightly above us called our attention to the figure of Numgyal. He waved us away from the bridge, and we altered course in his direction.

A group of hillocks lay a half-mile ahead, and behind these we found the ponies and the start of our camp. On our way towards them we made several exciting discoveries. A twittering whistle seemed to indicate the presence of a colony of birds, but a movement among the rocks showed instead a group of marmots, their brown fur difficult to distinguish from their surroudings. They lumbered away, and at what they deemed a safe distance they sat up on their hind-legs and peered at us.

At this altitude of over 14,000 feet we found a totally new selection of flower varieties. Among these I was thrilled to come upon a mass of small white star-shaped flowers, the petals and leaves covered with fine hairs—edelweiss. There were no trees at this height, but patches of lush grass and the wild flowers served to soften the otherwise bleak landscape. The mountains appeared to be mainly of sandstone, and tremendous erosion had taken place on the lower mountains and on the lower slopes of the high peaks.

The ghorawallah appeared to be well pleased with the new camp ground, as the grazing was better than anything hitherto encountered. We in turn were glad to discard our boots and rest in the sunshine for a while before busying ourselves with preparations for a meal. I opened a tin of corned

beef and cooked dehydrated potatoes and brussels sprouts to go with it. Eve concocted a dressing of mustard, salt, and pepper, livened with condensed milk and a drop of brandy! At this latter Anne balked completely, but the cooks used the sauce and ate with apparent relish.

Not far from the camp on the route of the next day's march we came on the first of many similar obstacles we were to experience in this undeveloped country. The Public Works Department has not penetrated into this area of Ladakh, and the tracks are the responsibility of the local inhabitants. The many rivers which come down from glaciers into the main rivers are bridged only where natural mishaps have facilitated the spanning of their water or where there is urgent need for communication across an otherwise unfordable river.

This first river fell into neither category, and we were introduced to the pattern of technique and routine that was to govern our timing and actions in the weeks to come. The water which so recently has been in the form of snow on a glacier is only a degree or two above freezing-point, and varies in depth from calf-deep to waist-deep. Not, one might consider, cause for anxiety. But the danger in the crossing of these streams is the force of the current. As the main flow buffets at the most vulnerable point of a puny nine- or ten-stone weight—that is, the legs—any mis-step can result in the victim sprawling headlong and being carried down into the main river, where the chances of survival are slim. As far as possible we tried to cross these rivers early in the day, before the heat of the sun had caused a large volume of snow to melt and swell the rivers still further.

We waited as Numgyal went ahead, ice-axe in one hand, probing the river bottom for a safe route and using the axe as an additional point of support. The men stripped off their trousers and crossed barefoot. On the opposite bank they pulled on trousers over their little striped undershorts and were relatively dry. We had to content ourselves with rolling up the legs of our jeans as far as we could. Eve and I decided to cross barefoot, our shoes and socks tied securely around

our necks, but Anne elected to keep her shoes on, for she feared that sharp rocks might cut her feet.

We were ready in a moment, and Numgyal came back to help us across, one by one. He grasped Anne's hand, raising it to shoulder-level, and they started out. *"Asti, asti, memsahib!"* ("Slowly, slowly, memsahib!"). Then, as they reached the full current and buckled slightly, *"Jaldi, memsahib!"* ("Quick, memsahib!"). The pace quickened and they were across. The water was icy, and in a few seconds my feet lost all feeling. On the other bank I hurriedly drew on my woollen socks and fastened my shoes. A few minutes of walking restored the circulation, leaving only a feeling of exhilaration. One or two of the ponies showed a little reluctance to brave the waters, but in general, after the leader had taken the plunge, the remainder followed quickly, at times crowding each other in their efforts to get the ordeal over.

Rounding a hill we came to the plains proper. These form the Lingti Plain, the most fertile grazing area north of this section of the Himalayan watershed. In this valley they stretched for two to three miles between the mountain barriers on either side, dissected by the Lingti Chu, which flows in a deep gully it has cut out of the plains. I was surprised by the apparent absence of flocks, but we were to come across several, and presumably there were many sheep grazing on the slopes above us.

On a promontory we came to a chorten and mane wall. The ghorawallah maintained that this was called Thoyor, but according to the map Thoyor was situated at the junction of the Lingti Chu river with the Yunan. We paused for luncheon and studied the stone carvings in the mane wall. In addition to the now familiar prayer carved in the stones we found carvings of decorative rosettes incorporating the words of the prayer, and pictorial representations of chortens. We hunted for small boulders containing these carvings, but were disappointed. It is considered very bad luck to remove a stone, but although we were willing to risk the consequences, we were not prepared to add a large weight to our baggage.

The ghorawallah grew impatient with our interest in the carvings and begged permission to go ahead. Numgyal was satisfied that there were no major rivers to cross that day and went after the ponies, leaving Nowa Ram to accompany us. We dawdled, stopping frequently to study some new plant. For a time he was content to humour us, but the emptiness of the plains around us (by now the others were out of sight) seemed to arouse some nervousness.

He addressed Anne earnestly. "Memsahib, we must hurry after the others. In these parts live dogs as large as donkeys, who will attack and eat sheep, horses, and men. When they see us alone they will lose their fear and attack us."

Anne translated for our benefit. This aroused my interest. Herodotus writes of a country to the north of India which is populated with ants as large as dogs and a thousandfold more fierce, who burrow for gold. Should we find evidence in support of this we should return to more fame and fortune than if we were to return with a live Yeti! Alas for one's dreams of the golden road to success! Later conversation with Numgyal elicited a description that narrowed down identification to that of a common wolf, a known occupant of this area.

We reached a large tributary which we assumed to be the Lingti Chu. A large chorten marked the probable site of Thoyor, which seemed to bear out the accuracy of our map, but instead of heading for the Tsarap Chu we swung westward along the valley of the Lingti Chu. This did not make sense, but Nowa Ram insisted that this was the direction taken by the others. We should have to clear up the mystery when we caught up with them.

It was still early afternoon when we saw the familiar green tents pitched on the plains on the opposite bank of a very deep nullah. We scrambled down the near slope and crossed the waters of the Guismett river, hopping from boulder to boulder across an excellent natural bridge of stepping-stones. The short steep climb on the opposite bank left us puffing, but we hurried on into camp for a conference with Numgyal and the ghorawallah.

Knowing only that we intended to go to Padam, and with no understanding of the profounder implications of our trekking permits and the route laid down in them, Numgyal and the ghorawallah had inquired of the conditions of all routes to the capital of Zanskar. They were aware that the route along the Tsarap Chu, although the main trade route with the north, included a chest-deep fording of the river, and with the increased volume of water brought down this season, conditions were reported to be exceptionally dangerous. For this reason they had asked particularly about alternative routes.

Apart from the track along the Tsarap Chu there is a route, normally considered fit only for sheep, along the Lingti Chu and over the mountains into the valley of the Kurgiakh Chu river which connects with the Tsarap Chu many miles downstream. It was on this sheep-track that we now found ourselves. Little was known of it by most travellers, but the gaddis had assured Numgyal that it was perfectly feasible even for ponies, and that it was in good condition.

There were only two reasons why we hesitated to continue. First, our permits contained a well-defined route, admittedly chosen by ourselves. Any deviation from this might lead to severe recriminations and accusations of abuse of privilege, if not of active 'spying.' Second, there appeared to be no villages in this area, and we were eager to make a study of the peoples and customs. We explained our doubts to Numgyal. To the first he shrugged. A man who has spent his whole life in these mountains without experiencing restrictions and regulations imposed by a remote Government cannot be expected to understand the hesitations of one who has been reared to obey a series of complicated social conventions and civil laws. In answer to the second he assured us that we should come to several villages once we reached the Kurgiakh valley.

To retrace our steps would delay us by a further two days, and the thought of curtailing our trek even more decided us to continue. Numgyal might be described as a lucky mascot. By this accidental alteration of route we embarked on a real journey of exploration. The ghorawallah was delighted with

the decision. Now he was assured of rich grazing for his animals. It is to the man's credit that he took such pains about their well-being, but at times we were heartily tired of discussing the pros and cons of fodder!

Our future thus settled, Anne reverted to her previous complaints that she was feeling uncomfortably dirty. In the last few days the need for long marches and the shortage of water had precluded any serious bathing attempts. The day was fine, and she made her way well upstream and out of sight. There she stripped off completely and bathed in the freezing water. To add to this death-defying madness (thus the opinion of less fastidious Eve and me), she lay on some boulders and dried herself in the sun. She spoke with great enthusiasm of the refreshing after-effects on her return to camp, but we shook our heads gravely and clucked at her foolhardiness. In the following days we kept watch for signs of incipient pneumonia, but were fortunately disappointed. The less courageous members of the party made do with licks and promises in streams, or, when time allowed, an overall wash in a pannikin of hot water in the shelter and privacy of a tent.

The next major river-crossing was over the Kamirup river, about four miles from this camp. We started fairly early and forded several small streams without difficulty. We reached the Kamirup in good time, but already the river was very high. Numgyal and the ghorawallah joined hands and plunged into the swirling waters. The river was very wide at the junction with the Lingti Chu, and long before they had reached half-way it was clear that the ponies would not make the crossing without the loss of at least one load. Our position was even more dangerous, we noticed, as the two men struggled back to the bank. We should have to wait for early morning for our attempt. In a stiff breeze we pitched the tents and prepared to wait. The total mileage for the day was disappointing, but nothing could be done to improve on it.

We had camped behind two mane walls. Several ravens had settled on the top of the farther wall and were poking about among the slabs of rock, concentrating their interest on

something inside the wall. Investigation showed that there was some corpse in the wall beyond the reach of these scavengers. We were told that dead sheep are buried carefully by the shepherds to prevent their bodies being dragged to the river by predatory animals and possibly causing pollution of the water. In the other wall Anne found a small rock carving and slipped it into her rucksack unseen. Poor Numgyal could not understand why his load was so mysteriously increased.

As we sat by the tents a gaddi appeared from the hillside behind us. He told Numgyal of the route to Kurgiakh and also where the best position for fording the Kamirup could be found. We took this opportunity of ordering some fresh goats' milk, which was promised for the evening. My hunger could not be stilled for so long, and Anne prepared a mid-afternoon meal. Sometimes I felt ashamed of my ever-demanding appetite. Anne and Eve did not appear to suffer in this way, and Eve went so far as to leave a morsel on her plate for the gods at every meal. Only the fact that I was the thinnest of the party could allow my gluttony to pass unremarked.

The gaddi returned at dusk, bearing a large brass dekchi full of frothing milk. Anne asked how much he wished us to pay.

"Nothing, memsahib, but my eyes are bad. Will you give me some medicine for them?"

His ailment might have been anything from trachoma to grit. We were prepared for such emergencies, and had been provided with an ointment with which to treat local complaints. A doctor had told us that the medicine was harmless and might bring relief in many cases. We translated the instructions on the tube, and repeated them several times so that he might not be tempted to use the complete contents in one treatment. So far, although we had been prepared to run a minor dispensary at every camp site, we had treated only the sniffles and headaches in our own party and a boy in Sissu who had removed two fingernails with a blow from a pickaxe.

Whether we should be inundated with requests for help in villages where medical services are unknown remained to be seen.

With the gift of milk we made a rich cream soup and boiled the remainder, giving a pint each to the porters and the muleteers, which left a small supply for our breakfast. It tasted delicious.

Eve and I left ahead of the rest in the morning, together with Numgyal. He was to make a reconnaissance of the best fording-place, and we hoped to be able to film the crossing of ponies from the opposite bank of the Kamirup. The sun had only just risen and the day was cold. About a mile upstream the river broadened out still farther, and we decided that this must be the point described by the gaddi. Numgyal took his load over without much difficulty and came back for us. The fiercest part of the current was quite close to the opposite bank, but already we were learning to head half into the current for increased stability. We all crossed without mishap and hurried on to dry out and warm up again.

We crossed yet another large plain, dissected by countless nullahs, some dried up and others with minor streams. Eve and I were recalled by a whistle and, against our better judgment, dropped down to the Lingti Chu again. According to the map it seemed unnecessary to cross this, and after two abortive attempts by the men and a conference our opinion was confirmed. I grumbled mightily as I struggled up the crumbling bank to our earlier level.

Shortly we came to a ravine, possibly that of the river on a new course. That we should have to cross now was definite. The river had carved a grotesque channel out of the rock and pounded against the walls of this gorge with a deafening roar. A short way upstream the current was still much swifter than anything hitherto encountered, and we embarked on elaborate precautions.

Eve had donated an old 100-foot length of nylon climbing-rope to the equipment, and this was brought forth for use as a safety rope. Numgyal tied one end round his waist and struggled across the river. He tied the rope to a large rock on

the farther bank. Nowa Ram similarly fixed the near end, and the rope stretched across, just clear of the water. This was not to be used as a hand-rope, but as a recovery rope should a man or pony be swept away.

Eve was taken across first. We noticed that the full current was again very close to the opposite bank. Numgyal returned for Anne, and the ghorawallah took my hand and led me to the shallows. We were aghast to see Anne losing her balance about midstream, and she had not recovered when the current took hold. She floundered almost up to her neck in water while Numgyal and the two boys on the bank each grabbed at some part of her and pulled her out. Eve had been filming at this moment of drama. The developed film shows a sudden blur as the camera nearly dropped from her hands; then, with cool presence of mind, she continued to film the event. As she explained, "I realized that there were sufficient helping hands and could not bear to miss the chance."

I was brought across safely, and the ponies followed. Zephyr, who was carrying the precious load of films, came through at speed without wetting his load at all, in spite of the lack of several inches on some of the less careful animals. The first consideration was to get Anne into dry clothes. Eve and I formed a protective screen round her while she stripped off for a complete change.

The easy going over the plains of the last few days was now ended. The track up the narrow valley belied its primary purpose as that of a sheep-track. Contouring and climbing steadily, I found it fascinating to watch the ponies being manœuvred past tight spots. One muleteer stationed himself to grab their tails to swing them round over a steeply tilting rock slab, handing over to another to reverse the movement. Snowfields and glaciers, from which the river rises, were now to be seen, sometimes on a level with us on the opposite bank.

Suddenly it came on to rain heavily, the first rain we had experienced since crossing the Bara Lacha La. We put up the umbrellas and walked on, slipping on muddied patches and puffing with the effort of climbing at this altitude. The valley

ended in a high, snow-decked barrier, which we presumed to be the site of the pass into Zanskar. On either side of us the mountains towered to a jagged skyline of snow.

We crossed a stony plateau and came to the foot of a small, steep hill. Eve and I were bringing up the rear. We flogged ourselves up this obstacle in short stretches, pausing for long rests at each predetermined goal. I found a bar of Kendal mintcake in my pocket, and we rewarded each effort with a small piece of this delicacy, so popular with mountaineers in England. Undoubtedly each titbit gave us an infusion of energy—or perhaps the effect of its popularity with us was to make us struggle on in order to have a little more.

We reached the top of the hill and saw the ponies far ahead. To our surprise they were travelling in a northerly direction instead of due west, which would take us to the head of the valley. Since the gaddi had given his instructions to the ghorawallah and Numgyal, we should have to follow their interpretation. Possibly there was a devious approach to the pass.

From here we contoured along a mountain on a series of paths made by countless sheep. Far below was a river, merely a small stream at this height, but which joined many another similar stream in the main valley to form the torrent we had crossed. We reached a small alp and flung ourselves down on the grass to enjoy a cigarette (by this time the mintcake was finished). I pulled the altimeter out and found that already we were at a greater altitude than that of the Bara Lacha La. On the alp there grew flowers in profusion. Perfect Michaelmas daisies on tiny stalks, so much more attractive than the shaggy bushes that grow in English gardens, edelweiss, blue poppies, and forget-me-nots surrounded us.

For another mile we climbed, and at the top of a rise we saw the camp below us in a small basin. Anne waved cheerfully from below, and we raced down the slope and into camp. It had been a good day's march of about twelve miles over rough ground. Anne had opened her camera to remove the wet film and dry out the mechanism as best she could.

She was worried to find that there was no corresponding click as she pressed the shutter button. In her involuntary bath of the morning the camera had been completely immersed. We could only hope that the damage was slight.

Numgyal returned from one of his reconnaissance walks in great excitement. He had not been able to see the pass, but he told us that we were surrounded by easy mountains. This was our opportunity to fulfil another object of the expedition. Already we were at a height of well over 16,000 feet. The pass would be a high one, and there would not be much effort involved in climbing a peak from the top of the pass.

With Numgyal as the expert we discussed the best means of setting about the climb. Eventually we came to the conclusion that we should pack all our needs into a selected few containers. The ponies would carry these up to the pass in order that we might set up an overnight camp there. Then Nowa Ram, who was already suffering from altitude sickness, would be sent on down off the pass into Zanskar with the pony train, only Numgyal staying with us. Nowa Ram and the two ponies would return on the morning of the climb to retrieve the loads. To lessen Nowa Ram's disappointment, Anne stressed diplomatically that his rôle would be to ensure the safety of our gear, and to make decisions on our behalf in our absence.

We left Eve to decide what equipment we should need. Throughout the expedition she had been in charge of the commissariat, and now her superior mountaineering experience was called upon as well. The kitbags containing climbing-ropes, steel snap links, ice-spikes, and an assortment of rope slings were emptied, and she set to work to coil the ropes, still in their original packing, and to make a selection of 'ironmongery.' Two tents and the bedding would be packed up separately in the morning. The foodstuffs, stoves, and utensils were packed in a single box. We should need to pack little additional clothing, as the early start for the pass would necessitate our wearing nearly the total complement of climbing-wear.

I was left to cook a meal and prepared a large curried stew in the pressure cooker, with sufficient quantities to include the porters. By now we were regularly including their food in our own preparations, apart from rice, which they cooked so much more efficiently. In this way we hoped not only to make sure that their diet was adequate, but also to save precious fuel. It would be some time before we could replenish the supply of kerosene, and we were rationing ourselves carefully. We struggled into our sleeping-bags soon after the meal. At this altitude and with the sun set, it was much too cold to sit around for long.

Although the day had been tiring, I did not fall asleep immediately. The prospect of any climb finds me wound up with nervous tension. This climb was unseen and unknown and on a scale I had never considered before. I hoped fervently that we should find an easy peak from the pass, and that in its absence we might not be swayed by the dictates of pride and force ourselves up something well beyond our capabilities.

I should have trusted Numgyal's judgment. He knew the character of his own country, and the geological formations in Zanskar are apparently similar to those in his own northern province. The north faces of Ladakh mountains are very sheer, snow-covered throughout the year, and present an unclimbable face to the mountaineer. From the south, however, the picture is very different. The mountains rise gently to a dome-shaped summit, with none of the picturesque drama of the grim reverse face, presenting a multitude of routes of the merely 'slogging uphill' kind, and certainly this year almost completely free from snow. We should discover the next day whether there was access to one of these routes from the pass.

Only the ponies remained awake, cropping at the sparse grass around the camp. From the muleteer's camp and from the porters' tent, where the alarm clock ticked on to the moment when it would give its discreet warning at 4.30, there was no sound. I slept too.

7

Boundary in the Clouds

RISING before dawn has never been my strong point. This time was no exception, and I stumbled about my tasks shivering with cold and half blind with sleep. To our great surprise, the ghorawallah was in high spirits. His prayers over, he went about the camp, cracking jokes and slapping the ponies on their rumps. The spirit of adventure seemed to have entered into him. Perhaps he had dreamed during the night of his virile, adventurous youth and of how he had worked his way up from under-muleteer to master-muleteer, had married, and had reared his nine children. I had not told him that already we were above the height of the Bara Lacha La, but I do not think that this knowledge would have dismayed him in the slightest. As never before, we warmed to him now with these indications of whole-hearted entry into the spirit of the expedition.

We left Nowa Ram to supervise the loading of the ponies, a task hitherto carried out by Numgyal, and left in the company of the older man. Following the course of the river, we soon came upon snow and ice in a narrow ravine. We crossed the river by a gigantic snow-bridge and continued to climb up through snow and scree. As the valley opened out again and we started to climb we left the snow behind. In other situations we should have dismissed the rate of ascent as easy. Now we found ourselves climbing only a few yards before standing for a moment to allow the pounding of our hearts to subside and for our breath to return. At increasingly frequent intervals we sat down for short periods. The effort involved in forcing our protesting bodies on left no room for thought.

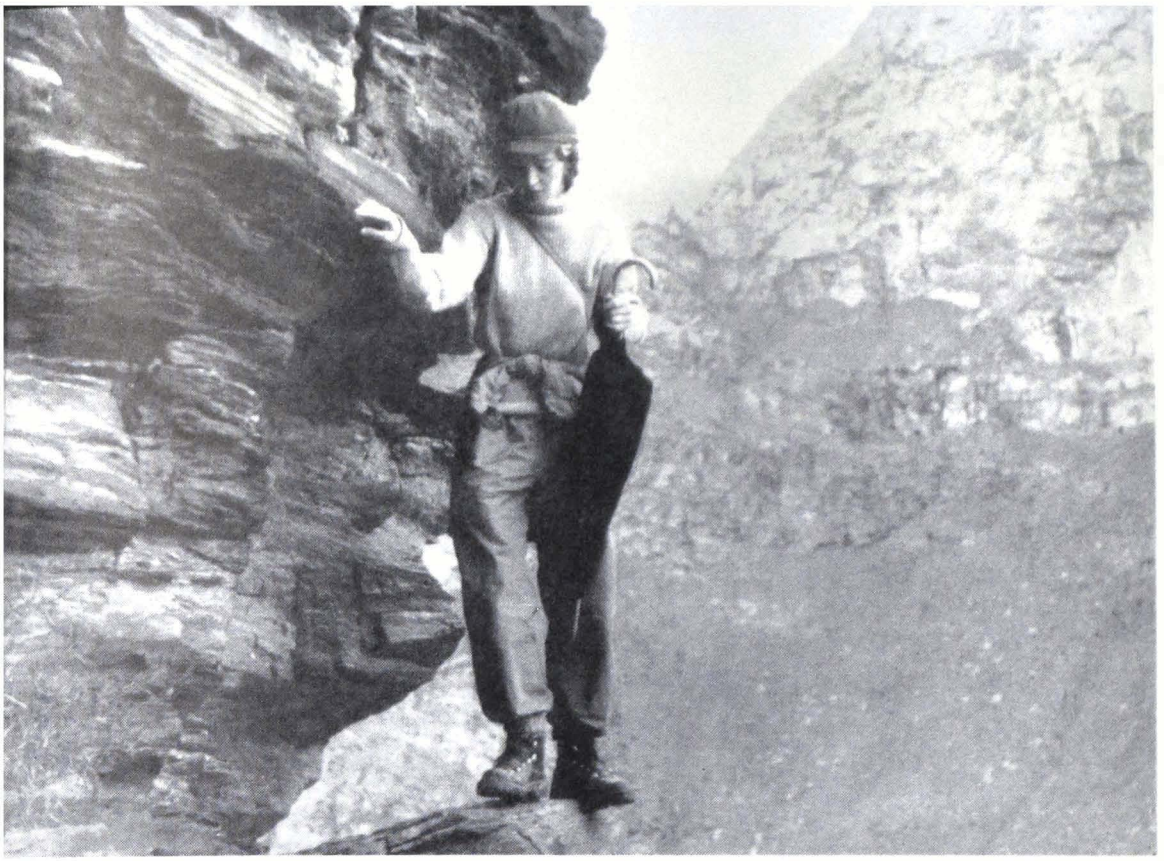
During one of these rests we were startled by the sound of horses' hooves approaching us from above. A single animal

appeared on the skyline, with two children leading it by the halter. A wild little figure came down the slope, scrambling and slipping over the loose rock. As he came within earshot he started to shout excitedly at Numgyal in a high-pitched voice. He sat down beside us and babbled away. We could make nothing of Ladakhi (which sounds rather like Chinese), and left Numgyal to converse with him while we studied him and the children, who approached shyly.

Numgyal told us his story. He was heading for Kilung and had elected to take this short cut. On reaching the top of the pass by evening he had been unsure of the direction he should follow, and had spent the night on the pass, waiting for daylight for a safe descent. Numgyal confirmed that he was now heading in the right direction, in return for which information the little man screamed at him that we were crazy to continue: we were too late for the crossing, and in any case the pass did not lead to Kurgiakh. During all this I was trying to take a photograph of his two rather sad little daughters. When he noticed my action he called them to order with windmill waving of his arms, and they all departed hurriedly. In the distance we could still hear his chattering. We considered whether in fact he was right about the pass, but he had left us with the strong impression that he had not known much more than we did about the geography of the area. There seemed little point in returning and trying to find another pass which might exist only in his imagination.

The ponies drew level and continued up the mountain-side, panting heavily and also stopping to rest frequently. Hardy as these animals were, we noticed that several of them were suffering from nose-bleeding, presumably the result of straining under their loads in the rarefied atmosphere. We followed them upward in slow stages. The climb seemed endless.

A sudden blast of cold wind showed us that we were on the top of the pass. The impact was tremendous. In a moment we had exchanged the narrow valley for a panorama of snow and soaring peaks. Ahead lay Zanskar; behind us was the province of Rupshu.



The Author negotiates a Tricky Corner

The Author crosses the Bhaga River—and the "Inner Line"—
by Pulley Bridge at Darcha

A Young Kulu Boy has a Bath

A Zanskari Woman and Children at Padam

We paused and turned slowly in a complete circle to admire the views. Fortunately the weather was fine and we could see for miles in every direction. To the south, far below us, was the valley of the Lingti Chu. We were now almost level with the mountains that had towered above us. Not until this moment had I fully grasped the motives that drive mountaineers back to the heights again and again.

On the Bara Lacha La we had been very high, but the mountains there had formed the sides of a basin in which we were enclosed. Here we were standing level with the giants. We might have been on the summit of Everest—the thrill was the same. I pulled out the altimeter. It read 18,100 feet—a good 11,000 feet below the highest mountain in the world, but the sensation must be similar. There is no question of reaching this height merely for the satisfaction of claiming "I'm the king of the castle" as in the children's game. It is a delight to see the beauty from a completely new angle. This sensation has been experienced by people at much greater heights—and at much lesser ones. It makes no difference.

The pass, later identified as the Phirtse La, was formed by two passes at right angles to each other, with three spurs some few hundred feet higher. The porters and muleteers were crouching in a little huddle out of the wind, waiting for us to come to earth again and give our instructions. Alas! our ghorawallah was no longer gay. He had wrapped his jaw in a woollen scarf and complained of severe toothache. Our compliments to him for attaining this great height went unheeded. Nowa Ram had developed a headache, and we gave them some pills to kill the pain and decided to send them to lower altitudes as quickly as possible, when their aches would disappear. I asked whether the ghorawallah had a hole in his tooth or whether the gum was swollen.

"Oh, I have had this hole for years, but it has never hurt before."

We selected one of the peaks off the pass. From this angle it seemed that we could climb it at any time, but one does not take chances, and we arranged that the equipment was to be

unloaded as planned. In truth, we could not face the thought of undertaking the climb immediately. We needed a rest. Perhaps if we had foreseen the effect of twenty-four hours at this altitude we might have rushed up to the summit there and then.

The point of descent from the Phirtse La was found to be just off to the west of the junction of the two passes which formed it. The two ponies were unloaded, and disappeared over the edge with the rest. We were left alone to pitch the tents and set up camp. In the strong wind this was not easy. We selected a site next to the cairn of stones that had been raised to mark the route of the pass. A pole had been set into the cairn, and on this were tied prayer flags. The ghorawallah added his own flag to the collection before leaving us. It looked very different from the tattered rags that fluttered in the wind, but a few days of weathering would reduce it to the same condition.

John had left his mountain tent with us. It was larger than Eve's small tent, and we were to use this, leaving the smaller tent for Numgyal. We anchored the guy ropes and tent walls firmly with large boulders and crept in out of the wind. Every effort left us breathless and seemed to take twice as long as it had at lower altitudes. Even the simple chore of pumping up the air beds took time. A mental decision was like a muscular effort. One just loses the ability to concentrate.

By mid-afternoon the wind dropped. Eve and Anne were feeling miserable and had headaches. They curled up at one end of the tent to give me space in which to cook. I threw some dehydrated minced meat, potato strips, and peas into the pressure cooker, adding water from the bucket in which we had collected snow to melt in the sun. For the next two and a half hours I pumped the kerosene stove at regular intervals, trying to get the cooker up to pressure. Between pumping I went outside to gloat over the view and to admire 'our' mountain. We had already decided on a name for it. Biwi Giri in Hindi means "Wives' Peak," and this seemed to us as good a name as any. Undoubtedly there was something very

feminine and unangular about it. Apart from the dramatic, steep north face, sweeping down for thousands of feet to an unseen valley, with an unbroken coverlet of snow clinging to the slope, it rose in an even hump to a flattish summit. It did not present too many difficulties as far as could be seen, and much of the climb would not be in snow at all.

At last the stew was ready, and we ate with varying degrees of enjoyment. Numgyal and I were not so badly affected by the altitude and put away a fair quantity. I followed up the stew with a cup of soup, but this proved too much for Anne. She withdrew quietly from the tent and returned a little later, looking very pale and confessing ruefully that she and the meal had parted company rather violently. She and Eve crept back into their sleeping-bags while I brewed up some more soup and coffee for the vacuum flasks for use in the morning.

We tossed up for the doubtful privilege of sleeping between the others. Poor Anne lost and took up the position of toad-in-the-hole, or clot-in-the-slot as Eve called it. Soon after we had settled down Eve struggled out, and noises from without indicated that her dinner was going the same way as that of Anne—back up! Throughout the night she came and went, sometimes sitting for long periods on the box by the entrance to the tent, wrapped warmly in sleeping-bag and down jacket. The only help I could offer her was to suggest drowsily that she should eat a dry biscuit each time she returned. We were all suffering from dehydration, but a constant supply of sweets and glucose tablets helped to combat this.

On one of the occasions when Eve was sitting on the box, admiring the scene, which was brilliantly lit by moonlight, she thought she noticed some movement several hundred yards away. She told us that she had heard the sound of horses, but considered that it must be part of her nightmare. We were glad to see first light in the morning. Sleep—such sleep as we had had—had not been easy, and it was a relief to rise in preparation for the climb.

It was not yet five when we gathered outside to stretch

cramped limbs. We were already fully dressed apart from our boots, knowing in advance that it is a waste of energy to observe pyjama conventions at altitude. We sipped some coffee and took stock. Anne was still suffering from a blinding headache, and Eve looked dreadful. It was suggested that she might prefer to stay behind to rest, and one could see that that was also her inclination. But it would have been very disappointing if at this stage one member of the expedition had not been present. She elected to come with us. As things turned out this was probably a very wise decision. Inactivity, coupled with the altitude, may have much to contribute to the feeling of sickness.

Together we walked down the pass to the foot of the west slope of the mountain. This face consisted of scree, broken rock, and rubble at a fairly steep angle. One by one we zigzagged up in a series of traverses, only taking care not to dislodge a minor landslip on to the path of the climber below. The scree ended in 300 feet or so, and we found ourselves on a snow slope with an easy incline. Here we took greater care.

There were a few small crevasses to avoid but on our left there was a gaping chasm where the snow on the north face of the mountain had broken away and now hung poised over the abyss. This we gave a wide berth. The snow was still fairly crisp, but it would be hard going when the sun rose. All around us the sky was tinged with pink. Again we were lucky in the weather. Apart from small clusters of clouds which hung over the scene like spun candy in a range of colours from rose to deep orange, it was absolutely clear. One by one, the distant summits came to glowing brilliance as the sun reached them. In much the same way as stars appear singly in a night sky did this landscape come alive, until with a startling suddenness the sun rose, dazzling us with full daylight.

Almost casually we came on to the summit. We had reached the point where we did not have to climb any more. That was all. There was a slight feeling of anticlimax and a sense of the ridiculous. It had been so simple, relative to our struggle to attain the pass and in spite of our fears, experi-

enced before the climb, of the possible dangers that lay above.

We planted no flag. The idea of three housewives earnestly staking a claim for their homeland on this gentle dome made us giggle. Such gestures we would leave to the intrepid conquerors of fearsome peaks and snowy Poles. The Union Jack was represented, however. From the top of the camera rucksack that Numgyal had been carrying projected a miniature banner—from which position it had fluttered throughout the trek since its presentation to our party by two husbands.

Eve recalled herself to her duties as cameraman, and brought out the tripod, on which she set the camera. We then fooled about, pretending to 'do the ascent' again, and posing grinning in a little quartet while the self-run mechanism whirred. The snow was softening quickly. Eve put her foot down in a hole up to the knee and had to be dug out. Immediately she sank down again. When it happened a third time Anne and I roared unmercifully—until my ice-axe, on which I had been sitting, disappeared to the hilt, leaving me sitting on the snow. We were hilarious, but the party was over. It was time to return to camp.

Having negotiated the snow, we found the remainder easy. Scree may be annoying in ascent, but it offers a very easy way down. One just keeps running, and the loose rock does the rest. We were off the mountain, and there remained a slight incline up to the level of the camp. This soon stilled our high spirits as we plugged up the slow slope. Numgyal reached the camp first, and helped me to light the stove to heat up the remainder of the stew when I arrived at last. Anne dragged into camp and flopped out on an air bed. Eve had still not appeared, so I took a flask of soup to her. She revived a little and joined us. There were no other takers for the stew, so Numgyal and I finished it off—not, I hope, to the discomfort of the two sufferers.

We packed up all but the tents and waited for the ponies to return. Anne fell asleep, and I did a little more filming of the camp, the mountain, and the intrepid party, who by now

were looking more fit for a recuperative holiday by the sea. Eve recovered after a short rest and began to take an interest again. I suggested that we might make jam snow, and she helped me to scrape some snow into a bowl. This is a delicacy much beloved of mountaineers, and is made simply by mixing jam with snow! Imagine my chagrin when I discovered that the anonymous tin we had packed for the emergency did not contain jam, but condensed milk. I redubbed the mixture caramel *glacé*, and it proved to be excellent—rather like a superior Italian ice! We savoured quite a few spoonfuls, and then, remembering that Anne is very fond of ice cream, we woke her up and offered the remainder. To my great surprise, she not only tasted it, but finished it with every sign of enjoyment. Flushed with this success, I then filled a flask with 'iced' coffee.

The ponies arrived before noon and we struck camp with speed, the thought of reaching lower altitudes acting as a spur to our unco-ordinated actions. The first part of the descent was again over scree, but then followed a well-defined track which skirted isolated snow slopes and led on to dry ground. Biwi Giri was lost to sight immediately, but from the floor of the valley we could look back on to the northern slope of the pass. We were startled to see in the otherwise unbroken snow on this slope a well-defined track made by the hooves of several horses. Evidently Eve's vision of the night before had not been part of a dream. A trader with good local knowledge had made a bold crossing in the light of a full moon. Now the snow was too soft, and the less straightforward normal route had to be followed.

We kept on down the narrow valley, losing height steadily and feeling better with each passing minute. The stream that rose from the snow on the pass grew by degrees into a sizeable river, fed by the streams from the snowfields and glaciers on either side. The young muleteer who had brought up the two ponies estimated the camp to be four miles ahead. Since our leaving behind the milestones alongside the jeep track in Lahoul any such estimates of distance were highly suspect,

and by now we should have learned to double them. Perhaps we wanted to believe it, and we strode on cheerfully, looking forward to home comforts such a short way ahead.

We crossed the river, not so swollen yet that particular care was needed. In another mile I realized that the four miles had already expanded and might continue to do so. I decided to speed up a little in order to reach camp and start preparations for a meal. At times the track dropped to the level of the river and then climbed steeply again. In the main, however, it continued to drop. The valley swung round, and I headed straight into the afternoon sun. This did not seem to tally with the direction of the Kurgiakh valley, but I had long since stopped worrying about where we should find ourselves.

A final steep climb brought me to a vantage-point from where I could see the camp. On the opposite bank of the river there was a small plateau ringed by hills, and here Nowa Ram and the muleteers had set up the camp. The four tents were pitched with military precision on two sides of a square, behind which the ghorawallah's encampment was situated. As compared with our lightweight cotton tents, his shelter was built up rather like a brick building. The 'walls' consisted of fodder sacks, saddles, and blankets built up on three sides. When the weather was inclement a woollen tarpaulin was pitched over these walls. The whole was a rather graceful shape, and was typical of nomadic abodes we had seen in many countries we passed through on our overland journey.

I followed the track down to the level of the river, which was now flowing very fast. I waved to the figures on the opposite bank to come down and show me the place of crossing, but my meaning was not clear. While I was casting around for the least dangerous ford Numgyal caught up with me from behind and we were soon across. Nowa Ram had come down to the river-bank to welcome us, and was immediately taken to task for neglect by Numgyal. He looked so crestfallen that I tried to show my approval of the choice of camp site and my pleasure at having arrived.

When I drew near to the camp I could see in what manner he had spent the intervening day. Little paths had been marked out with white stones, leading from a pair of 'gate-posts,' large boulders standing on end, to each tent door. Pencilled arrows on the boulders marked the entrance. I had blundered into the enclosure over an imaginary fence, but stepped back elaborately when I realized my mistake and made my way through the legitimate entrance.

At the doorway to one tent he had placed three saucepans in service as flower-bowls, with a most beautiful collection of flowers in a variety of colours but predominantly blue. Inside the same tent I found the aluminium boxes neatly arranged and roped together. Each box was sealed off at the clasps with gummed paper labels inscribed with Ladakhi characters. Tea was brewing, which explained why he had not come down to the river at my signal, and I was given a steaming mugful almost at once. In my few simple words of Hindi I tried to indicate a full measure of praise, and Nowa Ram's irrepressible grin came into being once more.

I set him to work on the blowing up of the air beds and started to assemble the ingredients for a fish curry. In a little while two very tired figures appeared. Numgyal went to help them over the river, and in a few minutes they arrived in camp. Having duly admired Nowa Ram's handiwork, they flopped out on the air beds under umbrellas and were served with tea and, later, a meal. The neat camp was shortly littered with rucksacks, and, alas! the expedition took over from the artist. We retired early, each to her own tent.

It had been some time since our last and enforced rest day. Apart from the necessity to work through the usual pile of laundry, we were in need of a day in which to recover. At a disgracefully late hour we were forced from our tents finally by the heat of the sun. Our laundry was done in time-honoured fashion by the river, with clothes laid out on flat boulders to be scrubbed and pounded until they were clean. From the river we could see down the valley. The view ended in a large snow-covered mountain which evidently marked

the position of the main river valley—that of the Kurgiakh river, we hoped.

Eve and I sorted through the contents of the boxes and repacked where possible. Two boxes were emptied, and in these we packed much of the bedding. Anne brought her diary up to date, and then typed out the list of contents in triplicate, one copy for each of us, as I had often mislaid my single list, necessitating a long search through several boxes before we could find a particular item. Now the responsibility was to be shared. Anne came in for some teasing about her self-admitted blind spot—spelling—when we discovered a typing error that rendered a well-known brand of toilet paper into a new name of "Silver Lilk." Henceforth thus it was called.

There was a general feeling of excitement among us all as we packed up the following morning. This day would give confirmation of our whereabouts, and we were all eager to start. We climbed steeply out of the basin in which the camp had been situated and continued at high level on a track which followed the contours of the mountains at a consistent height. There were no watercourses with which to contend, and we made good speed towards the end of the valley. As we approached we caught sight of a broad river flowing towards the north, as all rivers do on this side of the range we had crossed by the Bara Lacha La.

From our vantage-point high above the confluence of the two rivers we could see a number of villages on both banks of the new river. To the south there was a high wall of snow mountains. If this was indeed the valley of the Kurgiakh, somewhere among the mountains in that range lay the Shingo La, the pass by which we hoped to return to Lahoul.

Our descent into the valley was precipitous. The track wound like a corkscrew down the hillside and included several jumps off rock walls. It was quite unsuitable for the ponies, and they were led to the head of the nullah near by to descend on its banks in more gentle stages.

At the bottom we met an old man with a conical carrying

basket on his back. His nearly blind eyes peered intently in our direction. Numgyal and Nowa Ram, with slow courtesies in conversation with him, found that we had indeed come out in the Kurgiakh valley between the villages of Kurgiakh and Tanze. The old man gave the name of Tojan La to the pass that we had crossed, but we later found this to be incorrect. Other sources of information produced the name Pise La, and on our return to England we studied large-scale maps in the possession of the Royal Geographical Society, on which the name was given as Phirtse La, height unknown, and position 'approximate.'

We sat beside the old man and waited for the ponies. He told of the disaster of the previous summer when the snow had not cleared sufficiently to allow any contact with the outside world. Many animals had perished, and several people had died from exposure, but although no crops had been grown, there had been no deaths from starvation, as there had been sufficient stocks to tide the villagers over.

When the ghorawallah appeared with the ponies we discussed the future movements of the expedition. It was debatable whether there was sufficient time to go to Padam or not. Although this had been our ultimate goal as the farthermost point of the trek, we were ready to give this plan up. The old man was consulted about the length of time it would take to reach Padam. He considered that it would be four days and warned us that the track was very bad. We could hardly spare the eight days involved in travelling to Padam and back to this point. The ghorawallah entered into the discussion with a strong plea that we should head for Padam.

The fervour of his appeal was difficult to understand, until we learned that he had undertaken to carry out a small private commission as a sideline to the expedition. The mysterious three extra animals in the train were not carrying loads for the ghorawallah as we had thought, but loads for delivery to Padam. We did not consider this a decisive argument in favour of our going to Padam and asked whether he could not send one of the boys on this errand. This was out of

the question. He could not delegate such responsibility to one of the boys. What he suggested was that we should leave most of the equipment here and continue with only a few ponies and the bare necessities of food and equipment. In this way we should be able to travel fast and cut down the old man's estimate by a day each way.

We have often been asked, in facetious manner before the expedition, and more considerately since the expedition, how three women manage to reach decisions acceptable to all and continue to live in amity. Each problem was discussed fully by us all. Opinions were backed up by reasons for such opinions, and the solution lay in popular vote. However ill-considered such solutions may have seemed to the one dissentient, it was unspoken policy to act without further argument. In the mountains we always called upon Numgyal and the ghorawallah for their advice. Their wider experience and knowledge of local conditions were often the decisive factor in our plans.

Although we were sympathetic to the ghorawallah's dilemma, we had to consider whether we could stretch the programme by a few days. We studied the map and marked off the daily marches as best we could. By means of double marches in Lahoul, where the going was known to be easy, it was possible to include Padam after all. It would mean hard work for all and a severe curtailment of rest days, but it was feasible, and we did want to achieve our aims as far as possible.

There was to be no stopping here, though. The afternoon was ours, and we should try to make as much ground as we could in the direction of Padam. The matter thus settled to the satisfaction of all, we continued on our way. We passed through the village of Tanze and noticed the difference in the architecture from that of Lahoul. The houses are again built in two levels, the lower floors built with loose rubble walls. The upper walls are built of sun-dried clay bricks, often coated thickly with clay as a form of plastering. The roofs are flat and are of stone slabs laid on timber rafters and purlins,

the whole being daubed again with a thick layer of clay. Windows are few and small, but the feature of the houses lies in the inset balconies, which in winter are closed in with carved wooden screens. The ground floor is used as a shelter for animals in winter, and the single living-room upstairs is surrounded by storerooms.

The use of timber was of particular interest. Apart from one or two carefully nurtured and wind-twisted trees near villages, we had seen none at all on this side of the mountain barrier. Presumably all the timber was imported, but we could not discover from where and how it was transported.

Beyond the houses lay the fields. Here we found all the women and some of the men at work in the crops, weeding. Everywhere they stopped work as we drew level with them and made shyly towards us. Numgyal translated for us their comments. Some could remember having seen a man like us (presumably a European) many years ago, but never had strange women visited the valley. Anne lingered with Numgyal to talk to an old woman with questions about the sort of life she led. During the summer she worked in the fields, but in winter she made the characteristic long-legged hide shoes.

"And what do you do when you are not making shoes?" Anne inquired, hoping for a clue to other village crafts.

"Oh," came the reply, "when I am bored I drink Chang!"

We passed a long line of chortens and mane walls. One of the chortens was in ruins, and Numgyal leaped up the rubble and presented Eve with a small unbaked clay plaque, delicately modelled with little figures of Buddha. We dropped down to the river and crossed a bridge spanning two enormous boulders which overhung the waters. Two large tree-trunks had been placed across these boulders and anchored with piles of rocks, and the decking of the bridge was made of large rock slabs laid across these trunks.

The track became very poor indeed. In one stretch it had all but disappeared into the river, and the ponies were experiencing difficulty in traversing the crumbling surface. One

of the animals slipped and threw its load. Fortunately this occurred in the one place where there was a little level ground, and we lost neither animal nor load to the swirling river. I noted from my list that one of the boxes contained six vacuum flasks. It would be a serious loss if these were broken. To my relief, we later found them completely intact.

Finally we climbed steeply up a hill and found ourselves on a broad plateau. We threaded our way between fields of barley and lentils, squelching through narrow paths that are also used as irrigation channels in a comprehensive and communal system. Our arrival in the village of Tetha was greeted by barking dogs. Figures appeared at windows and doors, and as we passed the houses a growing line of children formed up behind us and followed.

Just beyond the houses we found a number of small circular grassed plots, which are used for threshing. Here we pitched the tents, one to each plot. Numgyal arranged the usual barricade of aluminium boxes around the doorway of our tent—a very necessary precaution, for almost immediately a large crowd of women and children surrounded us. It was quite plain that they were there to stay. We were undismayed, for this gave us the opportunity to see them at close quarters and to watch their reactions. However great our interest was in them, it could not compare with their interest in us. When Numgyal asked them if they had ever seen women like us before they answered that we were the first. Each movement we made, each new wonderful thing we unpacked, was watched and examined with care.

My gaily coloured but tattered umbrella was much admired. The zip fasteners to our anorak pockets were fingered. Anne showed them how the fasteners were operated, and left them to pull them gently to and fro, hissing amazement. They had never seen such a thing. The nylon guys on the tents and the tents themselves were stroked and discussed. The saucepans and kerosene stoves were subjected to scrutiny, and Eve as cook began to feel a little embarrassed by the unwavering surveillance of her every action. Kerosene is not unknown to

them, as it is now used in lamps, but cooking is still carried out over the primitive dung-fires. Any white powder sprinkled into the saucepans brought forth whispers of "chini" (sugar), which commodity is virtually unknown. Even our salt so little resembled their own coarse variety that it was considered to fall into the sweet category.

Anne decided that she wished to sit in comfort and brought out the pump for the air beds. This pump is in the form of cylindrical bellows with a nozzle which attaches to the rubber of the air bed. By now the village ladies were more at ease and had settled themselves on the ground by the tent, and had even pulled out some of the guys in order that they might see more. When the pump was produced a wave of amusement swept through them. One old crone, who might have been anything from thirty to fifty years of age, so hard is the life, grinned gappily and pulled up the skirt of an otherwise bare little boy standing beside her. Poor Anne blushed furiously and applied the bellows with great vigour to the air bed to show its real purpose, but she was howled down with a gale of earthy chuckles. Country humour does not vary greatly throughout the world.

In turn we made good use of this opportunity to find out as much about life in the village as we could. Numgyal was called for to act as interpreter. His opinion of the Zanskari was expressed with mild scorn. "They are jungly, memsahib." We laughed secretly, well aware that he himself would be considered this by people of the plains, and that with much more force! I had done some research into the customs of the country before the expedition, and we were interested to know how far the findings would tally.

In general, polygamy and polyandry may be found in Ladakh as in Tibet. In the case of the first this usually happens when a first wife is sterile, and polyandry is a simple means of controlling the birth-rate in a country where food is not plentiful. Both these practices were denied here. Girls marry in their late teens or early twenties, although the religion allows for child marriages. They then work out the

rest of their lives in the service of their husbands, tilling the fields and running their homes. 'Love' matches are rare, an efficient and good-natured girl being chosen in preference to one endowed with physical beauty, but their status is much higher than that among Muslim communities.

We knew that it is a religious practice to wash hands and faces before meals, but there was little evidence of such activity here; in general those surrounding us were liberally coated with layers of dirt. I was interested to see that, without exception, the children had runny noses: I had thought that the cold germ is rarely found at high altitudes. I asked Anne to find out why this was so. She could not think of the Hindi word for 'cold' in the medical sense, and used the words 'dirty noses' to Numgyal. As this question got through to the crowd a lightning movement in unison whipped mothers' fingers to the offending organs to clean them.

Except for the headdresses, the clothing for men and women alike is very similar to that worn in Lahoul. Tweed trousers, tightly fitting from ankles to calf and hanging in loose folds above, are covered with long woollen coats tied with a sash round the waist. It is doubtful whether these clothes had ever been washed, and several were liberally patched. One boy was wearing a coat so patched that it was difficult to assess which was the original colour of the garment. He was instantly dubbed "Joseph" by us. The caps we had already seen are worn by the men, children, and unmarried women.

The married women, however, wear a curious headdress. I understand that the underlying motive is that of a snake. It is called a perag, and is made of an elongated band of leather covered with cloth, and shaped to come slowly to a long narrow point below the back waist and a short blunt point on the forehead. Sheepskin ear-flaps were adopted after the reign of a queen who suffered from earache. The perag is decorated, presumably according to the wealth of the family, with rough stones, among which I recognized turquoise and lapis lazuli, and with brass and pearl buttons. Also highly

prized as decoration were rows of sewing-needles pinned in neat ranks in the headgear. The perags are removed monthly so that the hair may be washed and redressed, although again I doubted whether water assumed much importance in the operation.

Apart from the children, whose hair is often close-cropped to discourage the attentions of lice, hair is worn long. Some men even wore pigtails. The women dressed their hair in an elaborate multitude of tiny pigtails which were drawn together and pinned to their clothing at waist-level with large circular silver brooches. Around the wrists of most of the women and girls were whalebone cuffs, put there when they were children and never since removed. The whalebone is imported from China, via Tibet.

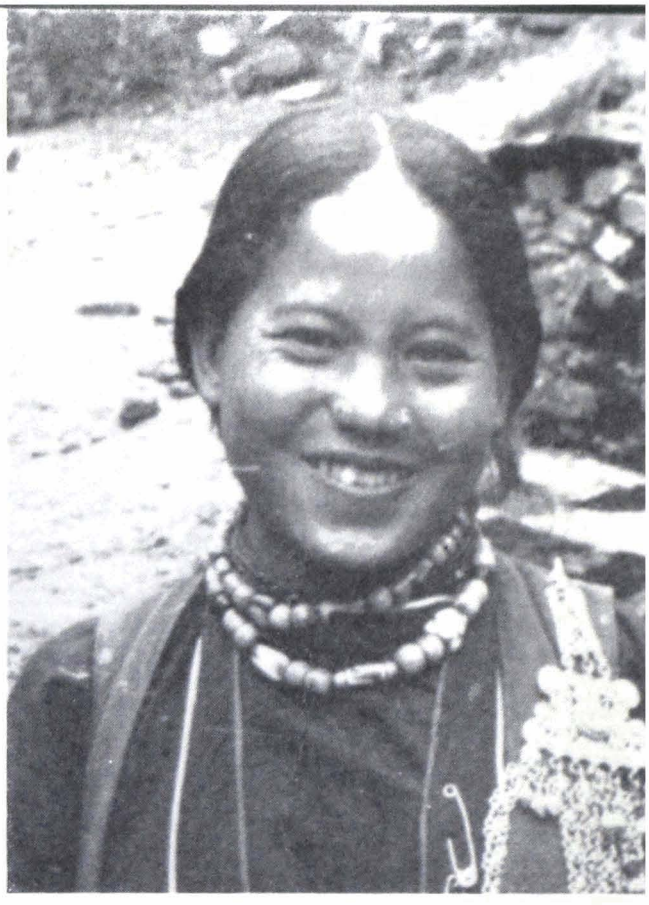
We saw several people wearing sheep or goat pelts over their shoulders, fastened with loops of hair-cord round their necks, rather in the fashion of tippets. We could not establish whether these had any significance other than the slight additional warmth they provided.

In this area the common religion is Buddhism, although in the country of Ladakh as a whole there are several communities of Muslims who are converts or immigrants over several centuries of a chequered history of invasion and conquest from the west. The Buddhist lives by five major commandments. He may not kill, he may not steal, nor commit adultery, nor speak untruths, nor may he taste intoxicating drinks. In this remote community we certainly had proof that neither the first rule nor the last is observed very strictly. Goats are occasionally slaughtered for food, and Chang is widely drunk. Nothing was stolen from us, but, then, this happy state was observed throughout our travels. We made no inquiries about the remaining two rules, but I doubt whether these are frequently broken.

Their diet consists primarily of barley, lentils, and the milk and butter they obtain from their flocks. Unlike the Tibetans, who favour rancid butter in their barley tea, the Ladakhis prefer non-rancid butter. We noticed that the crops

A Middle-aged Lahouli Woman

She wanted to accompany the expedition and see the world.

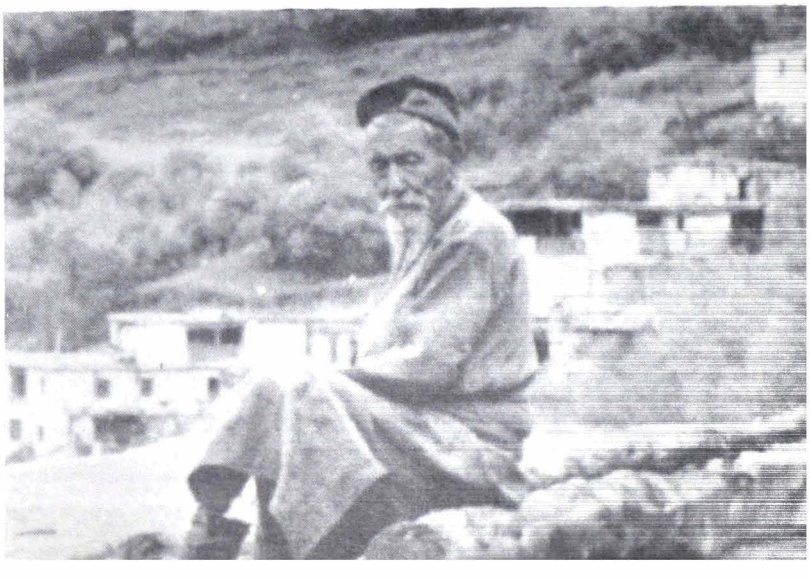


A Maiden of Lahoul

A Married Lahouli Woman near Kyelang

The women pluck their hair to give height to the forehead—a sign of beauty.

An Old Lahouli Man



Crossing a Seasonal Bridge

Bridges of this type are rebuilt every spring.

Ponies weave their Way up a Stony Hillside

are poor. Presumably the soil is poor, especially since natural fertilizer in the form of dung is used solely for fuel. Perhaps some day, with the importation of chemical fertilizers and selected seed, the yield may improve. I doubt whether crop rotation is practised.

Towards evening we were visited by the 'member,' a man appointed by the Indian Government to advise the villages and to report back to Delhi. This man was a Ladakhi, but not a native of the valley. Doubtless Tetha does not constitute a village of much importance in the calculations of a civil service already heavily taxed by lack of trained personnel, and I was not convinced that this man was truly qualified to introduce radical changes and improvements. Success in this field can be achieved only by some one with knowledge and great enthusiasm tempered by an understanding of and sympathy for the conventions of the primitive community. We were impressed by their willingness to learn, but felt that they were lacking in initiative and would have to be given practical demonstrations.

The member offered us the use of a storeroom for the boxes we should be leaving in Tetha temporarily. We accepted his offer with gratitude and presented him with a quantity of tea as a measure of our esteem for his kindness, knowing that this would be most welcome as a rare luxury. Numgyal and Nowa Ram set about carrying the boxes to the storeroom, and soon we were left with only what we should require for our journey to Padam.

With nightfall, the women at last returned to their homes for the preparation of meals. This left the field clear for the men, who were now returning from their work in the fields. They showed as much interest as the women, but, as there were relatively fewer men than women, we could relax a little from the oppression of an over-large audience.

We watched a young man fashion a rope from several lengths of thick-spun goats'-hair wool. With the aid of an old man who happened to pass he knotted the ends of the strands. The two men walked apart and strained and

straightened the yarn around stout twigs. A further passer-by was enlisted to hold one of these twigs, and to twist evenly while the young man controlled the twist with a pair of crossed twigs. The completed rope was brought to us for inspection. Of approximately three-quarters of an inch in diameter, it was surprisingly strong and resilient. We showed the rope-maker our nylon rope and told him that it would hold the weight of a yak, the large furry indigenous buffalo of these areas. His face expressed polite disbelief.

We packed up as much as we could in readiness for the morning start. We should be accompanied by five of the strongest ponies, leaving Soni Ram, nephew of the ghora-wallah, behind in charge of the remaining animals. As far as could be judged from our tiny map, we should have to cover well over 30 miles in the next three days to reach Padam on a track regarded as suspect by the inhabitants here.

8

Dash to Padam

EARLY as was the start, we found many of the villagers already hard at work in the fields and at hand to greet us as we made our way northward from Tetha. The loading had been accomplished in record time, and we skirted the fields with their gay border frills of flowers only a few minutes ahead of the ponies. Beyond a second small settlement of houses we crossed the first river of the day over a high bridge, adequate for all but the ponies, who had to ford the waters.

The track ranged high above the river, and although it was bad, it certainly did not merit the gloomy forebodings thus far. In four or five miles we came to the confluence of the Kurgiakh Chu with the Lingti Chu. The village of Char lay on the opposite bank, and from our position high above the river we could look over the intervening chasm at one of the intermediate destinations we had missed by taking the short cut via the Phirtse La.

I was intrigued by a trio of chortens in Char, built in similar fashion but in three different colours, one in white, one in dark grey, and one in dark green. According to Numgyal, this is quite common practice, but he did not know whether this had any significance other than decorative. He permitted us a short rest by a mane wall, but warned us that he had been told of a large river some way ahead which had to be forded. Already it was nearly midday, and we were driven on by his anxiety.

Not since the Chandra valley had we experienced such heat as we now found in the gorge of the Tsarap Lingti Chu. We had dropped in altitude and were now at about 12,000 feet, but the heat seemed to lie trapped, and we suffered accordingly. Our umbrellas gave some relief, but I found the

rub of the umbrella shaft against my now sadly uncushioned collar-bone very painful.

The "big water" of which Numgyal had warned us lay deep in a nullah. It was not inordinately fierce, and the others negotiated the flood quite safely. I crossed last, assisted by the ghorawallah. At the main current he turned downstream, and the flow caught me in the back of the knees, knocking me down. I made desperate swimming motions and tried to hold the Leica above water. With both hands engaged, I had to rely on my legs and the helping hands from the bank to rescue me.

I was fairly soaked from the waist down, but my only concern was for the camera. There were telltale signs of moisture in the camera, and the film showed blurs, indicating that there had been some water penetration. Both still cameras were now suspect, and we had no way of assessing the damage until we returned to Delhi. I decided against a change of clothing, since the sun was so strong, feeling that the clothes would dry out quickly and that I should come to no harm provided I kept moving.

Anne and I felt that it remained for Eve to fall into the next major river to complete the cycle of bad luck. Eve showed no enthusiasm, even when we promised a nip of medicinal brandy as a bribe, to be paid only if we were forewarned and ready with all cameras. Numgyal shared her view. We had wondered about his extreme anxiety, and learned on inquiry that on a previous expedition he had gone to the rescue of a woman who had fallen in, only to find himself swept away with her and unable to do much about it, as, in her panic, she had fastened limpet-like about his neck. The timely assistance of her husband had saved them both. To all this Nowa Ram merely grinned diabolically. He had found the mishap uproarious.

In the village that lay above the nullah on the farther bank we made a new botanical find. To our delight, we threaded our way through massses of dog-roses, clustering beside the fields. They ranged in colour from palest pink to deep rose and transformed the barren valley landscape. We soon left

the village behind, but occasional bushes of the roses continued to enliven the track. We climbed and dropped incessantly, and the pace slowed increasingly. It was with some trepidation that we approached a very deep gorge. The crumbling, sandy track plunged dizzily down one face to the very bowels of the gorge, where a river chiselled its way through the rock.

To our relief, fording was unnecessary. A natural miracle had interceded on our behalf in the shape of a gigantic chockstone which had come to rest wedged above the river in the walls of the ravine. With additional boulders a bridge had been formed, and we crossed in complete safety. Resting frequently and now in the rear, I climbed out of the gorge and stumbled across a small plateau. Again the track lay downhill, but this time, to my joy, I met the five ponies, unladen, being driven by our young muleteer to pasture.

The camp had been pitched on the track just above the level of the main river. As cook I had to employ little imagination. In the next six days we should be living off an unvarying diet of curried stew and rice for dinner—and there was little of it!

With Numgyal's ever-present fear of 'losing' one of his charges to a watery grave, and thus disgracing himself, we were on our way early next morning. However, throughout the day we found no major obstacles of this kind in our path. What we did have to contend with was the heat. I was not feeling well in any case, and already by ten in the morning I was beginning to flag. The hours passed in a daze.

In parts the track had disappeared into the river, and we were forced to skirt the cliffs on one hand and wade through the shallows of the muddied torrent rushing onward over innumerable rapids on the other. At times boulders were levered into the water to form stepping-stones, and we negotiated such crossing dry-shod. As on the previous stretch, the track rose and dipped without apparent reason. I silently cursed the whims of those who had formed the path, longing for some logical contouring.

Eve was feeling equally lethargic and kept me company. We stumbled from shade patch to shade patch, resting for short periods at each and reluctant to get to our feet again. Watercourses were very infrequent, and soon the misery of dehydration was added to our other trials. In one of the few nullahs we rejoined Anne and the porters for a meal of biscuits and jam, washed down with mugs of icy water. We were next faced with a very steep hill that seemed to stretch endlessly upward. Anne and Numgyal were lost to sight, but Nowa Ram stayed behind in order to encourage us on. This encouragement took the form of his racing ahead and later greeting us with cries of *"Aram karo, memsahib!"* ("Rest, ladies!") from the shade of an overhanging boulder.

At last we reached the top of the hill, and for a mile or two the track ran level. Around a bend in the river we came to a large tributary, on the opposite bank of which we could see the village of Reru. This tributary leads to the Poat La, a pass of over 18,000 feet, which connects this area with Chamba state. At first we could not find the way down to the water level, and were fuming at Nowa Ram's disappearance. We found a bridge and started to climb up again to the plateau of the village on a series of rock steps. In a shady niche we came across our will-o'-the-wisp guide, grinning hatefully at our pathetic cries for water and darting ahead once more.

We encouraged each other through the maze of fields with a childish fantasy of how this lesson would one day be applied to disobedient children—"Any more nonsense and you will be made to walk to Padam." Padam—a name with which to conjure. The road to Padam—worst journey in the world. In this way we managed to avoid the temptation to slake our thirst in the irrigation streams through which we were paddling, and reached the village. An old man sat at an outdoor loom, weaving red cloth for robes. In answer to our questions and gestures he pointed out the way.

Beyond the village we found Nowa Ram, and a few hundred yards farther on stood Numgyal. This meant that camp was near. At the sight of his figure ridiculous tears of exhaus-

tion and self-pity sprang to my eyes, fortunately screened behind my sun spectacles. We asked pathetically whether there was still one mile to go, and he shook his head sympathetically. A short climb led to a plain, where we found the tents. Anne had prepared tea in anticipation of our coming, and with no further ceremony we buried our noses in the mugs.

With the second pint of tea our spirits returned, and we began to take notice of our surroundings once more. The plain on which we were camped is used as a natural reservoir, and is flooded at frequent intervals as a source of water for the fields. A network of irrigation channels brings the water down from a point far up the tributary, and a subsidiary system carries it from the plain to the fields below. In the direction of the Poat La we saw a beautiful triangular peak, snow-covered and dominating the horizon.

Next morning I felt much refreshed by a good night's rest, and, together with Eve, marched smartly ahead of the ponies. At the next village we missed the track, which plunged steeply out of sight from a fork at a cluster of chortens. We continued along a well-defined path at the higher level and stopped for a rest and a cigarette. Looking back in the direction of the chortens, we witnessed the arrival of the ponies. There was some hesitation, and then they took the lower track. To our dismay, we saw that Numgyal was making his way towards us in order to retrieve the strays, but we recognized the inevitable and scrambled down the hillside.

Still ahead, in spite of our mistake, we forded a small river and clambered up some rock slabs. It was tricky manœuvring for the ponies, and I watched from a vantage-point as the ghorawallah and his son deftly swung the animals into new directions. By now my early energy had worn off, and I felt a little faint. I lagged behind and struggled on in short bursts. Numgyal stayed behind, unbeknown to the others, to watch over me. Our habit of walking at individual paces must have been something of a trial to him, but he never complained about our vagaries.

In this way I covered some miles wretchedly until I saw the towers of the Burdun Gompa (monastery) ahead towards noon. Numgyal and I crossed a plain, diverted momentarily by the antics of a large fat marmot who galumphed clumsily ahead of us to the mouth of his burrow, where he sat scolding until we had passed. A short climb led to level ground, from which rose a pinnacle of rock. The gompa was built on the rock and commanded a good view down both reaches of the river. Here we found Anne, Eve, and Nowa Ram surrounded by red-robed lamas of all ages.

They had arrived on the plateau and were admiring the view, when they noticed signs of activity in the gompa. A lama emerged from the building, collecting a few nosegays of dog-roses on the way, which he then presented to the travellers. He was closely followed by a group of six lamas, including some young boy novitiates. One man carried a metal bowl in which smouldered some pieces of coal. To this he added at intervals a pinch of dried herb, a form of incense with a pungent but not unpleasant smell. This is collected from the leaves of a low bush called Burtsa, which also provides fuel for man and fodder for animals.

We were invited to enter the gompa. Numgyal indicated that we should make a small donation, one rupee for each member of our party of five. This appears to be a standard charge for visitors. The novitiates were sent ahead hastily, and we followed the torchbearer through the gateway at the foot of the building. We climbed many stairs and wound through tortuous corridors at all levels. The building is very old, and I noticed the ends of enormous timber balks built into the stone walls, evidently in use as supporting joists to the stone-flagged floors.

We came out on to an open terrace, surrounded on all sides by rooms. In the centre of the court stood a carved wooden prayer flagmast, resembling a totem pole and surrounded by a neat pile of branches from the Burtsa bush, drying in the sun. The dust was still settling in a fine cloud, and twig brooms hastily pushed not quite out of sight gave the reason

for the boys' having been sent on ahead. On the whole they had done well in the time available, judging by the contrast between the newly swept floor and the thick layer of dust in corners less visible. Carpets had been spread on the floor under the roof of a small veranda, and we were motioned to sit on these.

The lamas gathered in the courtyard and conversed with Numgyal, who translated into Hindi for our benefit. They formed an odd assortment of types and ages, unwashed and dressed in tattered clothes. At least 50 per cent. of the male population of this country are to be found in these gompas, and since lamas rely for their existence on gifts of food and money, they must be a serious drain on the resources of the people as a whole. Boys enter the monasteries at the age of fourteen or so, and are taught to read and write, the only formal education traditionally available.

The lamas are celibate, although there are signs that this practice is slowly changing in more southern areas, and there is reason to suspect that reports of homosexual practices in the monasteries are true. Apart from their rôle in religious festivals such as devil dances, they devote themselves to prayer and reading, but on the whole are not called upon to guide the community in the active participation that is a feature of so many other religions.

Anne and Eve were conducted to the shrine, leaving me to rest. In a small dusty room they found a large collection of statues of Buddha, in all stages of neglect. In front of each statue was a brass or silver bowl of water. Everything was coated inches thick in dust, the metal gleaming only dimly in the light from the door. From ceiling and walls hung prayer flags, strange hats and masks used in the dances, gongs with their skins ripped through. A few statues had brightly painted faces—all quite expressionless. The workmanship was crude.

The lamas told of their experiences during the fighting between Pakistan and India during the Kashmir troubles. Indian troops were besieged in the gompa by a force of Pakistani soldiers who fired on the monastery, apparently

with little damage being effected. Our hosts averred that when the garrison was relieved the troops departed, taking with them some of the more precious religious emblems. From what we had seen of the ghastly vulgarities that littered the place it was doubtful whether there had ever been anything attractive enough to covet, but perhaps souvenir-hunters were numbered among the ranks of the uninvited guests.

The most interesting object on display was the prayer wheel—or, rather, the series of prayer wheels. These are drums of various diameters and heights which contain prayers on silk or paper and interlock rather like the cogs of a gear. When one is revolved it sets into motion the other drums, and countless prayers are stirred and presumably bring themselves to the notice of heaven. Another labour-saving device we were shown was a gigantic prayer bell. This was about four feet in diameter and six feet high. A complicated system transferred a single stroke on this bell into a secondary striking of a smaller bell.

A boy brought out a silver flask of icy water, from which we filled our mugs and drank. With further courtesies and expressions of admiration, translated by Numgyal for the benefit of our hosts, we rose and made our way down and out of the monastery. From windows high above us the lamas waved us on our way.

A few hundred yards down the track we came to a spring which cascaded down a rock-face. On the rock was a crude painting of Buddha, from which we surmised that this was the probable source of water-supply for the monastery. Just beyond we were horrified by the sight of a whining, struggling mass covered in flies. A sudden movement led us to recognition of a dog, probably poisoned and in its last stages. Anne was very distressed and asked whether there was something we could do for the poor beast.

I felt that we could not ask our porters to do away with it, even though they appeared to be non-practising Buddhists, and without the certainty that we could kill it cleanly I was

not prepared to undertake a bungling massacre. It was inadvisable to touch the dog as there is much dumb rabies here, possibly the reason why its shepherd owner had administered the poison, and we left it with the hope that it would die quickly.

After the long rest at the gompa I was feeling much better and walked quite happily in the company of Nowa Ram, who had been delegated to stay behind with me. We crossed two rivers, both bridged, and passed a small village with an impressive collection of mane walls in which I found several new carvings of figures other than Buddha. Nowa Ram could not identify these for me. A steep hill on our left cut out the sun, and in the shade I increased my pace still more. At the top of a small rise we stopped for a drink of water from a stream and met a group of three pretty girls. I walked on tactfully, leaving Nowa Ram in bantering conversation with them.

At a bend in the river and on the near side of a large nullah lay Padam, the capital of Zanskar. I could see, across the intervening depression, the usual group of chortens standing high above the remainder of the village. In the depression I passed a long mane wall and a group of small boys who were driving a flock of goats. A long climb brought me to the chortens and into the village beyond. Nowa Ram caught up with me, and together we were led to the house of the police chief. He spoke only Hindi but directed us on through many fields to the common grazing-grounds, where we found our camp.

Already the tent was surrounded by a fairly large crowd. For the second time Eve was forced to cook in front of an audience interested in every minute detail, but the setting sun left the way clear for a cold wind that blew down a valley from the direction of the Umasi La and cleared the site of the last lingering onlookers. While we waited for the meal we were visited by a smart police constable, who took away with him our passports and permits. These, he told us, would be ready the following day.

Numgyal was sent out on a shopping expedition. He returned in triumph with eight eggs, a clothful of peas, and some packets of "Vir Chakar" cigarettes. Eve and I had sadly miscalculated on supplies of the pernicious weed for this journey, and in consultation with Numgyal, the only other smoker and fellow-sinner, had decided to replenish our stock with a locally smoked brand. At six annas per packet of ten (about sevenpence) we looked forward with doubtful pleasure to their consumption.

We lay in a long time the next day, secure in the knowledge that we should not have to start on the return journey until afternoon. With a luxury breakfast of boiled eggs over, we did some very necessary washing and relaxed to look about us at the villagers, who had reappeared in large numbers. The porters had erected a barrier around the camp with the help of ropes and ice-axes, and here, as in Greece, the token fence was respected.

Padam is a village of about 400 people, many of whom are of the Muslim faith. There is some schooling in the medium of Urdu, and life centres around trade in addition to agriculture. We noticed many Kashmiri men and women in the crowd around us, the women dressed in their outstanding shawls of fine white wool, embroidered intricately in traditional designs. Their pale skins, hazel eyes, and near-blonde hair appeared in rather strange contrast with the predominantly Mongoloid features around them. Their presence here seeemed strange to us, but on reflection we realized that Kashmir is not very far distant from Padam and that the history of Ladakh is one of ever-changing overlords and religions. Presumably the Kashmiri had originally come as traders to Padam and had settled permanently with their families, converting the population to the Muslim faith in the course of time.

While Anne, Eve, the two porters, and the ghorawallah went to visit the police chief I stayed on in the tent in order to rest for the return journey. They were led up a flight of outside stairs on to the roof of a house in the village. Here was

built a room, no more than eight feet square, and this they entered, having removed their shoes.

Eve described the room to me later. On the mud floor sacking had been spread, and carpets had been laid in one corner. On these they squatted, cross-legged. The walls were lined with a sage-green-checked material, and the twig roof was lined with a yellow-and-black fabric. They were told that it rarely rains in this area, and in winter snow is removed from the roofs promptly to prevent leaks from developing. Pinned around the walls were photographs of Gandhi, Nehru, and several Indian film actresses.

In one corner of the room was a stack of six rifles and an enormous chain, linking a pair of handcuffs, all the insignia of the occupant's profession. Crime is rare, even in this bustling metropolis, and is usually the unfortunate outcome of an over-bibulous evening on Chang. Eve made a feeble joke in her elementary Hindi to the effect that since she was a good woman she would not need the restraint of the impressive handcuffs. The hosts laughed politely.

The sergeant twiddled with the knobs of the wireless-set, but could produce only dance music from far-off Delhi, so our curiosity about the international situation remained unsatisfied. His local wife (in addition he has another in Kashmir) was sent to prepare tea for the guests. This was served in delicate china cups on a tray, together with boiled eggs, curry powder, salt, and spoons. For the porters there were brass drinking-vessels, and no spoons for the eggs! Tea was poured from an aluminium camp kettle, and was served with ground roasted barley, or Tsampa, which tasted like Benger's Food. This is considered a great delicacy in these parts, although it forms the staple food in near-by Tibet.

Eve remembered her duty of recording our experiences on film and produced the cameras, to the delight of the hosts. She did her best in the dim light of the room, but the antics of the police sergeant, who clowned incessantly in the manner of some C-grade movie he had seen somewhere, rendered the results unusable. Our passports and permits were returned

and the visit ended. From the police headquarters they went to visit a local silversmith. We had all hoped to be able to buy some examples of the traditional Zanskari crafts, but, alas! here too the principle observed was that of commissioned work only, and they had to be content with watching the smith at work, inscribing delicate designs on Chang bowls with the most rudimentary of tools.

Anne and Eve returned to the camp to tell me of their experiences. We ordered the start to be made at three in the afternoon, which still left some time for the preparation of a light meal. While we packed our boxes and tents in readiness for loading we debated whether it were possible to improve on the outward journey and reach Tetha within the six days we had allowed. Our supplies were dangerously low, and the prospect of travelling the dreaded road on near-empty stomachs was not inviting.

Our discussion was interrupted by a woman who approached us with a young child in her arms. Numgyal was called to translate. Her request was simple: would we give her medicine for the child? In all innocence we asked for the symptoms. One look at a ghastly prolapsed anus convinced us of our complete lack of qualifications to deal with the child. With proper care and perhaps intravenous feeding the child could be cured, but there is no hospital or doctor near.

We had Numgyal explain to her that our medicine would be of no use, and that her best recourse would be to take the child to the hospital at Kargil, a march of eight days from Padam. Obviously this was out of the question. How could she be spared from her work in the fields? So the poor little devil will bawl every time he touches ground, until he is subjected to another attack of diarrhœa, which may prove fatal. We felt uncomfortably aware of our helplessness as we repeated the need for hospital treatment.

The ponies were produced punctually, and we left Padam, stopping in the village to bid farewell to the police sergeant and his colleagues. At Padam we had reached the farthermost point of the trek. From this moment on our way led

back to the Land Rover and eventually England, over much the same route as on the outward journey. The climax had been reached, for me at least, on our arrival in the Kurgiakh valley, where we had learned, to our great pleasure, of the original exploration we had so inadvertently undertaken. The miles that had passed so slowly and painfully on the outward trek were now covered at speed. Anne had gone ahead with Nowa Ram and the ponies, and we caught sight of her again on the approaches to the Burdun Gompa. A band of happy lamas surrounded her and she disappeared. Some distance behind, we were relieved to note at the spring that the dog was gone—evidently dead and buried.

In turn we were mobbed by the lamas. Rosebuds were pressed on us, but we declined them with much show of reluctance, indicating that we were in a hurry unfortunately. We made sure that Anne had not been trapped into paying yet another visit before we walked on. Later we learned that crafty Nowa Ram had deflected the attentions of the lamas by saying that Anne had no money, but perhaps the two memsahibs following were more favoured. This was a dirty trick, which might explain the eagerness with which we were greeted and the great disappointment when we insisted on continuing the journey.

On the plain below the gompa Numgyal stopped to collect twigs and bushes for firewood in the fading light. He refused our offer of help, and we walked the last mile into camp. This had been pitched in the lee of a small village. The headman called and offered to sell firewood, but Numgyal had anticipated him. We were shown the pelt of a fox, evidently a prized possession. In our visit to the gompa we had been shown the mounted heads of a wolf and a snow leopard, proof of the existence of such animals in the area.

I used up the last of the precious eggs in a curry, and we saw with dismay that we had the ingredients for only one more brew of tea. Having issued the porters and the muleteers with a half-pound each before leaving Tetha, we knew that we could borrow from them, and the situation was not desperate.

Our start coincided with first light, and we made good time over the familiar track until the heat of the day slowed us down again. It was now Eve's turn to forge ahead, which lead she maintained all the way back to Tetha. Anne and I stopped for a rest just beyond Reru, at which point we were overtaken by the ponies. Eve was similarly overtaken, but arrived in the selected camp site only shortly after they had been unloaded.

She made brave efforts in a stiff breeze to clear a site for the tent, moving great boulders, and pegging down the guys as best she could. The muleteers looked on with interest. This did not come into the scope of their work, but they offered her some very weak tea they had made, and gave some tea in order that she might brew up a drink more to our taste and hers. We found her thus.

It was still very early in the afternoon, and we took advantage of this to treat ourselves to a thorough wash in the stream a furlong down the road. Eve and I went first, leaving Anne in charge as cook. We clambered up the nullah and stripped off for a refreshing bathe. Our return enabled Anne to take her turn in the queue for ablutions and laundry. This left us much revived.

With the sun on the opposite side of the valley and a cold wind blowing, we found it necessary to seek shelter in the tent. We were roused by shouts from the village on the opposite bank, and were amazed to see a group of women and children completely naked by the waterside, making inviting signs for us to swim across the intervening torrent. Why they had disrobed remained a complete mystery, for we noticed that they did not dunk so much as a toe in the river. One woman was bright pink all over; evidently the die of her coat was not fast.

We glanced over at the porters and ghorawallah, hoping for some clue, but the horrified embarrassment on their faces precluded any questions. Anne decided that this must be a local harlotry, but I was not sure. The way to the village was much too difficult!

Our last day back to Tetha was a long one. We had about

eighteen miles to cover, but the spur of plentiful supplies of food lying in wait for us there served to increase our determination. All through the day—at least on downhill stretches—we discussed and ruminated about our favourite dishes. Anne favoured such impossible luxuries as ham sandwiches and toasted tea-cakes. We all hankered after cheese—the one omission from our rations. The cloying sweetness of condensed milk, a favourite with all, seemed irresistible. We went so far as to plan menus for a bumper meal on returning to civilization. Grilled steak featured in every one's dreams.

In this delightful fantasy the miles passed quickly. We negotiated rivers, including my fateful current, without difficulty. The hills were no less of long drawn-out ordeals, but we tackled them with hope rather than despair. The track was equally bad, the sun equally hot, but we reached the Kurgiakh Chu with the worst over and only four miles to cover. In spite of the ghorawallah's protests, we decided to continue and complete the whole distance.

A light drizzle began to fall, with the promise of more rain to follow. Anne and I brought up the rear, with Eve pushing on tirelessly, well ahead and soon out of sight. At the last village before Tetha we were accosted by a man who showed us a dreadfully scarred arm, still scabbed in places. Did we have medicine for him? In Hindi he explained that he had fallen into a fire, and he was now worried because his arm had lost strength of grasp. The arm appeared to have healed remarkably well without proper care, and there were no indications of inflammation under the remaining scabs. There are no ointments for damaged muscles and scar tissue, so we instructed him to keep the arm clean and to exercise it in gradual stages. Again our well-stocked medicine-chest was of no help.

In the last two miles to Tetha we walked through pouring rain. We were soon drenched to the skin, and our triumphal return fizzled out in a somewhat bedraggled way. The tents were up, and Eve had lit the stove in order to make the inevitable pot of tea. While we waited for the water to boil we

consumed the entire contents of a tin of condensed milk between us. We felt slightly sick as a result, which condition was not relieved by a vast meal afterwards.

The rain continued to fall steadily throughout the night. In the morning Anne and I heard a cry for help from Eve in the mountain tent. She was soaked through, and came into our tent and sat at the foot of my air bed, snuggled into her second sleeping-bag. Although we had not originally planned to have a rest day here, we had saved some time on the journey back from Padam, the five ponies were in need of a rest, and the thought of travelling on in the downpour was not very attractive. We gave word to the porters and ghorawallah that we should not start until the next day, a decision which met with general approval.

We continued to lie in our sleeping-bags, stirring ourselves only to cook breakfast and to prepare a succession of hot beverages. This inactivity began to irk Anne, and as soon as the rain stopped she dressed and made her way to the small stream near by to have as thorough a wash as was consistent with propriety. The villagers appeared immediately and watched her actions with awe. When Numgyal put the question to them that Anne wondered why they did not wash they replied, with some surprise that the reason was not self-evident: "But the water is so cold!"

Conscience drove Eve and me into clothes and out into the open. The damp sleeping-bags were draped over the tent ridges to dry in the faint sunshine. Less sophisticated than the inhabitants of Padam, the villagers crowded around again, poking and prying into everything. The rope barrier which Numgyal had erected was totally disregarded. For some time we bore their doings good-humouredly, but as they came to be more and more in the way of our every movement, so our tolerance wore thin. Eventually Anne, in a rage, asked Numgyal to tell them that if they did not stop "moving in" on us we would walk into their homes. This protest had the desired effect, and they retreated to a mutually satisfactory distance.

Our greediest efforts had not succeeded in emptying the boxes by half. We were concerned that the load still remained so great. We issued liberal supplies of jam, tea, margarine, and dehydrated fruit to the porters and muleteers, but still we were faced with mountains of food-supplies. It was doubtful whether the villagers would master the technique of producing meals from the dehydrated supplies without supervision, but we set aside tins of tea and fat for distribution among them. In addition, we determined to give away most of our sweets to the children.

Numgyal helped to sort and count the packets of various sweets, and these were piled into a polythene bucket in readiness for the morning. He gave instructions for a 'parade' of the thirty or so children of the village to take place before we left. Anne was deputed to play Lady Bountiful, with Numgyal as assistant and interpreter at her side, while Eve and I stood by with cameras at the ready.

The children and several mothers assembled promptly. We were surrounded by a circle of solemn grimy faces. There was no hint of delighted expectation. How could there be? Sweets are as remote from these children as motor-cars. Perhaps there was a shade of curious anticipation as to the next move of these strange women. With her firm belief in the motto of "cleanliness next to godliness," Anne indicated that sweets would be given only to clean hands and faces.

As this was translated a murmuring arose, and I thought that there was going to be a minor riot, but in the next moment a line of childen moved uphill to the stream and were soon splashing and rubbing in hopeless astonishment and with distinct repugnance. The older children helped the younger, surveying the results of their labours with critical eyes before drying the damp skin off on their caps. Lined up again, they were treated to a little homily on washing and the need for frequent dousings. They certainly looked more attractive, but between gusts of suppressed laughter Eve and I began to sympathize with this unwonted suffering.

Now the distribution could begin. The children stood there

with several packets grasped in their hands, completely at a loss what to do next, until we unwrapped the individual sweets and popped them into their mouths. They sucked suspiciously, but I did not glimpse any surreptitious removal or expression of distaste!

The remaining loads were packed and hoisted on to the ponies, and we set off in fine but cooler weather, southward up the valley in the direction of the Shingo La. The women bending to their task of weeding in the fields straightened as we passed to wave cheerfully. We stopped to film their activities and also to capture some of the colours of the flower borders, now past their best but still a brave display. Soon it would be time to harvest the crops, and in a few weeks more the first hints of the coming winter would be evident in renewed snowfalls on the hills and in the cold nip of the winds. We had been warned that the average date for the final crossing of the barrier which forms the Himalayan watershed was the end of August. Already one week of the month had passed.

We walked briskly along the familiar track to Tanze. Lowering clouds urged us to hurry straight through this village, and we passed the point of our entry into the valley soon afterwards. We came to the banks of the river which we had followed from its source at the Phirtse La. This we crossed on a series of natural stepping-stones, 'helped along' by additional rocks laid by the occupants of a small village on the opposite bank.

We stopped for luncheon by a mane wall beyond this village. Here we were overtaken by the ponies, who may enjoy no such rest during the day's march. A lama and boy whom we recognized from our visit to the Burdun Gompa stopped to exchange the time of day. The boy told us the name of the pass we had crossed and called the pass we should have crossed the Surichun La, a pass somewhat lower than the Phirtse La. Our ghorawallah was highly amused that we had made the mistake and survived. All memory of his toothache appeared to have left him!

The travellers passed on, and Numgyal was free to let us into the secret of his anorak, which he was carrying in a suspicious bundle. He produced from its folds fourteen of the little religious plaster plaques similar to the one he had presented to Eve, and filched from the same ruined chorten. This time Nowa Ram, being in the secret from the start, was full of smiles, and did not predict dire fates for us as he had done in Eve's case! Later we packed these in the folds of my heavy sleeping-bag in an aluminium box, taking care not to offend the susceptibilities of the devout ghorawallah by allowing him to witness the sacrilege.

A soft drizzle was falling as we approached the village of Kurgiakh. We were annoyed to see that the ghorawallah had unloaded the ponies on a meadow just before the village, as we had hoped to cover a greater mileage, but he assured us that the next day would bring us to the foot of the Shingo La. We pitched the tent and took shelter.

The shower soon passed, and as cook I started preparations for a meal. Eve asked Nowa Ram to make his chupatties (bread pancakes) in the open so that she might film the operations. We watched as he kneeded ata flour and water with a pinch of baking-soda. He then rolled a little ball of the mixture, flattened it, and pinched it into a circle. With the ball of the hands this was then patted briskly into a six-inch-diameter pancake and griddled. Anne and Eve also had a go, but their efforts were by no means the beautiful round cakes that emerged from Nowa Ram's deft fingers. I took over the filming, but was recalled to my own duties when Anne sniffed the air and declared that my onion sauce was burning.

With an unknown mileage to the foot of the pass, we made an early start the next day. We passed through Kurgiakh and climbed steadily in easy stages. For the most part our route lay over soft meadows, lush with grass and flowers and veined with streams. I look back on this day as the pleasantest of the whole trek. We were now so fit that muscular aches, breathlessness, and pounding hearts no longer troubled us. In addition, we were travelling over soft ground, under cloud-

less skies, and with a fresh breeze to complete our enjoyment.

The area was inhabited by scores of marmots, and we spotted many varieties of birds. One of these, a wader, we were unable to identify. Straight ahead of us at a large fork in the valley rose a 19,000-foot snow-covered peak which from this angle looked rather like the bows of a gigantic liner cleaving majestically the waters of the river, several thousand feet below. At noon we were caught up by the porters and stopped for a brief respite.

Nowa Ram kept offering us lifts on his back across the rivers we met with, but since he was smaller than any of us and very slight in build, we felt a little uncertain about the ultimate success of such an attempt. Disappointed, he finally offered Numgyal a ride. His offer was accepted with alacrity, and, to the accompaniment of general laughter, they crossed rather shakily. The ghorawallah entered into the spirit of the entertainment by nipping a ride on the back of one of his ponies.

We continued to keep the ponies in sight on this magical day and crossed the Kurgiakh Chu. A steep climb and a further two miles brought us into camp just below the glacier. There were still two hours or more of daylight, and, with this in all probability our last snowy background, we determined to use the opportunity to shoot off some film we had been asked to do for advertising purposes.

Eve set to work to 'produce' us. Both Numgyal and Nowa Ram were enlisted as assistant cameramen in addition to their screen rôles. We were taken through the sequences of arrival, the tents were pitched by the porters, the ponies were unloaded and played their part helpfully by rolling luxuriously in the grass. We were filmed searching in boxes and producing biscuits and a tin of "sleep-inducing" beverage with eager cries, there were some clever close-ups of Anne's hands skilfully preparing the drinks, the air beds were pumped up, and we sat nuzzling into our mugs and offering each other biscuits as the Sun Sank Slowly in the West! It

was great fun. Unfortunately conditions proved to be too dark for commercial purposes when the film was developed.

That over, we had dinner, and then collected some plants which we hoped might survive the rigours of the journey home and grow in English gardens as proud mementoes of our trip. They did not.

Numgyal approached for his usual evening conference. His technique on these occasions was masterly. This time, for example, the conversation between him and Anne ran as follows:

NUMGYAL: "We are told, memsahib, that there is much snow on the pass. The ghorawallah is concerned about the animals. We must make an early start. I suggest that we should start at three-thirty—but, of course, it is as memsahib wishes."

ANNE: "We shall start at three-thirty."

That the alarm clock went off at four and that we were not ready to start before six made no difference. The ruling had been established, and Numgyal had early learned to make allowance for our tardiness. We went to bed early, almost fully clad for the next day, as had been our practice for passes.

9

Back from Beyond

THE cold was intense when we rose in preparation for the crossing of the Shingo La. Again we were favoured with calm conditions and were able to work through our duties without the added hazard of high winds or rain. Overhead a myriad stars pierced the velvet sky to give dim light to the scene. By the time we were ready to go the stars were fading and giving way to the first hints of daylight.

We did not have to walk far to the first snows. Our way lay up a steep ice-fall, and this time we used our ice-axes to good advantage in the rough cutting of steps and as additional support. A snowfield lay between this and an even higher ice-fall. We stopped briefly for camera-work. In the few minutes during which I dispensed with my gloves in order to operate the camera my fingers went blue with cold, and soon lost all feeling.

The ponies made their way up the scree slopes skirting the snow, but we continued to cut our way straight up the centre of the cleft and reached yet another snow-covered plateau. From this a fairly gentle snow slope led to the top of the pass. The surface was very bad. Evidently there had been a recent fall of snow, probably coinciding with the rainfall in Tetha two days before. This fresh snow was very soft, and was deteriorating rapidly still further under the action of the sun, which had risen by now.

As we approached the bottom of the slope we watched the progress of a train of donkeys coming down towards us. The Zanskari muleteers had unloaded their tiny animals on the last stretch, and were bringing them down by the simple expedient of turning the animals on their backs and dragging them by the hind-legs. This was all very well on the downhill

grade, but it was out of the question for us to use this method on our much larger and heavier animals uphill.

The way up had been fairly churned up by the passage of the donkeys. We trod wearily upward and made good headway, but when the ponies started uphill they came to grief almost at once. With the loads of over 100 pounds on their backs in addition to their own weight, their tiny hoofs punctured the surface without resistance, and they sank up to their bellies into the snow. If one leaves them like that too long colic develops. We all had to buckle down to help them out of their distress.

In some cases it was sufficient for two people to grab the loads on either side of the trapped animal and to heave until the pony could free its hind-legs enough to thrust upward and flounder on. Sometimes their struggles had left them so weak that we had to unload them completely and then try again to raise them. In painfully slow degrees we struggled on. Each animal had to be rescued several times, with the muleteers alternately cursing and encouraging in their efforts to bring them safely to the top.

We were afforded a brief respite at the top of the pass, for a broad band of scree provided a safe footing for the animals. The ghorawallah hastened to add his prayer flag to the mast erected on a cairn marking the height of 16,722 feet. Not six feet from the mast lay the decomposing body of a pony, a grim warning. The Shingo La lies in a cleft between two flanking walls of the range. We could see for miles to south and north, but the sheer snowy walls cut out all vision to east and west.

Ahead lay more snow, and Numgyal and the ghorawallah reconnoitred a possible route across from several angles. In all instances the answer was not encouraging. Even the men sank knee-deep into the snow in places. The ghorawallah came back with a long face. We could not camp out at this altitude without fodder or shelter for the ponies. Either we must turn back or go on. To go back was to lose ground, and the way was beset with difficulties. To go on might be risky,

but it seemed that the slope was gradual, and with luck there might not be much snow to negotiate.

We made our way along our island of scree to a 'peninsula' that reached well into the snowfield. About fifty yards ahead lay another small patch of scree. The porters and muleteers started to lay rock slabs as stepping-stones across the intervening snow. We three followed suit, and were soon heaving and carrying with surprising energy and strength at this altitude. Numgyal was most amused at our suggestion that we could always land a job with the road-builders in Lahoul.

The bridge was finished and the ghorawallah led the first pony across. The animal hesitated, pausing to study the slippery path ahead, and then proceeded to make its way safely through the snow to the side of the stepping-stones! The others followed, floundering but not foundering in the snow, and reached the scree patch safely. From here on matters improved. By careful selection of route it was possible to avoid all but the smallest stretches of snow, and soon we had dropped below the snow-line.

As we dropped from the exposed position on the top of the pass and out of the wind we soon shed extra clothes, tying jerseys and anoraks around our waists. We met several Zanskari travellers heading in the opposite direction, driving heavily laden donkeys, ponies, or yaks before them. In all cases this would be their last trip over the pass for this season. Most animals carried cans of kerosene, supplies which would have to last for several months.

At midday we rested for a while on a small plateau, stretching out at full length to doze off in the warmth of the sun. There were still many patches of snow about us. In one instance we crossed the river on a gigantic snow bridge. Numgyal and Nowa Ram, who had gone ahead by now, thoughtfully marked out the route in one or two places with their prized miniature Union Jacks. We retrieved these carefully in order to return them to the porters.

I had covered the greater part of the trek in canvas boots. Now, unaccustomed to the climbing-boots donned for the

snowy conditions of the pass, my feet began to suffer. We were travelling on loose rock in most cases, and I was unable to control the heavy boots, turning over painfully on my ankles time and again. Eve was having the same troubles, but Anne had been travelling for some time in boots, having discarded her plimsolls, which were worn through. There was a steep drop just before the river joined the Barsi Nala river, which heads towards Darcha. On the way down we met a few yaks puffing and steaming in their progress uphill. At intervals they stopped to pant, their black tongues hanging out. They reminded me of overstuffed ottomans, with fringes of long black hair rather in the shape of loose covers.

At the junction with the Barsi Nala we turned eastward. I was on the lookout for the camp, but a series of detours around landfalls slowed us down. Eve moved on in pursuit of Anne, leaving me to stumble along. Far below I caught sight of the tents and quickened my pace. Anne had made tea, and I sat down to remove my boots with a fanciful running commentary about Florina, the brave heroine, stumbling on in the wilderness into which she had been cast by the villain. To a suitable vamping accompaniment on the piano the story unfolds. We felt a good title for the sketch would be *The Ghorawallah's Revenge*. The humour at moments of near-exhaustion verges on the hysterical, and is certainly completely inexplicable to those who read about expeditions afterwards.

Perhaps the ever-present theme of the Himalayan trek might be "one more river to cross." Although we were back in Lahoul, we were in a valley untouched by the skilled engineers and road gangs of the Public Works Department. Numgyal warned us that we should have to cross a large tributary the following morning. As far as he knew there was a twig bridge, but we should have to reach the river early so that the ponies might cross in safety.

We came to the tributary after an hour's walk from the camp. It was as large as promised; it was also the fiercest water obstacle with which we had had to contend. But of a

bridge there was no sign at all. At this point Numgyal, Nowa Ram, the muleteers, and the ponies, who had all left camp later than we had, began to catch us up. Nowa Ram was the first to reach us. He was carrying various cameras, slung around him in an expensive necklace. Without pause he leaped down to the river-bank with the obvious intention of hurling himself straight into the torrent.

Eve and I shouted a warning in our halting Hindi that, while we had no objection to his going to Darcha by the quick if submerged route, we considered that the cameras would not benefit by this treatment. A group of Zanskari, drying out on the opposite bank after an earlier crossing, rose from behind a cluster of rocks to point out the only possible fording-place. Despite our protests, Nowa Ram headed towards this with alacrity.

Anne had wandered uphill some distance, and came pounding down too late to stop him. She was left to watch, fuming, as he struggled across. For a moment we thought that he had come to grief, but he recovered his balance and gained the opposite bank in safety, together with his precious burden.

A few moments later Numgyal arrived with the muleteers and ponies. It was decided that the ponies should cross the river some 1000 feet higher up, but that the loads were to be taken across on a pulley as the track was too poor to take laden ponies. We watched as the men proceeded to erect a pulley. Eve's nylon rope came into use again, and was stretched from a point high up on the nearer bank to one just above the shallows on the opposite bank. With a goats'-hair guide rope donated by the ghorawallah, and a rope sling and two karabiners as runner, the crude bridge was completed.

Numgyal indicated that we should follow the ponies. I decided that a ducking was infinitely preferable to yet another uphill slog, and insisted that I was quite prepared to take my chance. With the help of Numgyal I crossed to a small bank midstream, where Nowa Ram stationed himself to take me over the last and lesser currents. Eve and Anne followed suit, and we all came over fairly wet to the waists but

otherwise unscathed, and in the sun we dried out quickly. We climbed a rocky outcrop to take up good vantage-points to watch the ferrying across of the boxes.

A party of Zanskari traders arrived below us. In no time they were hard at work to help in this transference, and in due course their own boxes were making the return journey. Our ghorawallah was the last load to be pulled across. Under his weight the rope stretched still more, and he did not achieve the dry crossing he had expected, much to the amusement of all, including himself.

We sat amid the pile of boxes to wait for the ponies. Time passed, and we decided to have some tea and a light meal. Another group of Zanskari arrived, and evidently were tipped off about our method of crossing. The leader approached and asked politely whether they might make use of our 'bridge.' With a little instruction they very soon mastered the intricacies and technique, and their goods were crossing at speed. The rope and karabiners were returned with many expressions of admiration for their strength and usefulness.

Eve and I tired of waiting, and decided to wander slowly onward to spy out the next part of the route. Anne elected to stay behind until the ponies arrived, and was dozing off almost before we had started out. The track was crumbling in places, but at no time proved more treacherous than anything we had hitherto encountered. In a few miles we came to a fantastic Z-shaped bend in the river, where the water had chiselled out a deep gorge in the rock. Spanning the gorge was a decidedly rickety bridge. We learned later that this had been used by the ponies when we had crossed the river downstream by the pulley bridge at Darcha on the outward journey the month before.

We sat down to wait for the rest of the train. A file of mules crossed the bridge singly as we sat there. Later a flock of sheep and goats approached, in the charge of a gaddi and three young girls. The girls were stationed at the approaches to the bridge at frequent intervals to stem the rush. As the panic increased and there appeared to be some danger that

the sheep would rush the bridge with certain heavy losses, the girls waved them back with flapping cloaks.

Anne now arrived, together with Nowa Ram. We learned that a mule had fallen into the river from the bridge on the previous day. One look at the swirling waters sixty feet below was enough to convince us that its agonies must have been brief. Nowa Ram was set to taking a sequence of us crossing, and we noted with some interest that he had completely mastered the technique of rewinding the camera.

The ponies arrived and crossed to a camp site on the opposite bank. We had not covered much ground, but the detour that they had taken had made the day a severe trial for them. A short march lay between us and the familiar track from Darcha to Manali. At Kyelang there would be mail awaiting us, and we grew excited about the prospect of news from home.

In spite of the hazards of the tracks we made excellent progress the following day. A tragedy was narrowly averted when the muleteers raced down the hillside to the rescue of a pony that had slipped; it was caught and held just before falling into the river. The ghorawallah had much by which to remember the Shingo La, and we doubted whether he would ever willingly undertake this route again.

I caught up with Eve at Darcha. Much had changed in the weeks that had elapsed since our previous visit. For one thing, the monsoon clouds had come across the mountain barrier and were now disgorging their contents in a steady stream of rain. Our umbrellas could not be used for fear that the high winds should invert them, so we crouched in the shelter of a rock to smoke a cigarette and study the progress on the bridge. Already a cable car was in use for the transportation of materials to the opposite bank.

Crowds of Zanskari were camped on either side of the old pulley bridge, complete with a group of lamas and several travelling musicians. These were playing a gay tune on tambourines and pipes, rather more elaborate than Nowa Ram's bunsuri (an instrument like a recorder), with which he had

entertained us on the trek, but stopped soon after our arrival, to our great disappointment.

Anne joined us here. She told of a delightful encounter with a Zanskari traveller who had met her on the road. As he walked along he swung a silver prayer wheel in one hand. She asked in Hindi whether he was prepared to sell this beautiful object to her.

"But how shall I then say my prayers?" he asked, in some surprise.

"You can say them to yourself as you walk along," Anne said.

"Then I must concentrate on what I am saying, and I shall surely stumble and fall."

To this piece of logic there was no answer, and she watched him continue along the track, swinging the prayer wheel from which his written prayers would be caught up by the wind and carried to heaven.

The rain stopped, and on the veritable highway of the jeep track we marched along happily at a spanking rate. At Jispa we encountered the young Sikh engineer who had given us the bad news about Iraq on our way out. He insisted that we should accompany him to the rest-house where his wife and children were now living. Unfortunately his pretty wife spoke no English, and was too shy to use her Hindi, because she averred to Anne that she had not mastered the formal address.

Tea was served, and we gave the engineer an account of our experiences. We complimented him on the fact that he had brought his wife and children with him. All too often, we felt, Indian women were regarded as too weak to accompany their husbands into remote areas. He agreed and told of the dismay with which his action had been considered by family and colleagues. The two sturdy young children dressed in warm pullovers and jeans must have given the lie to any such doubts. Eventually we managed to excuse ourselves from the warm hospitality, for there were still several hours of daylight and we hoped to cut off some more of the distance between ourselves and Kyelang.

We camped at Bho on a small plain below the mountain on which stood the Thakur's palace. We were told that he was away at the time, so made no effort to visit him. We did, however, meet the Sikh doctor again, and repeated the story of our experiences in Zanskar at his request. He was particularly interested in the lack of medical facilities, and shared our hope that these would become available as soon as more doctors could be induced to spend time in areas far removed from the amenities of the civilization of the plains.

Eve and I kept pace on the remaining miles to Kyelang. After an initial steep climb from the camp site the track continued level, high above the river. We delighted in the mass of trees that shaded the path and noticed the progress of harvesting in the fields we passed. The lush greenery was interspersed with patches of yellow where the crops had been scythed. On roof-tops the hay was spread out to dry. Everywhere preparations were being made for the approaching winter. The walls of the houses were newly plastered to seal off possible draughts, stacks of wood were laid in neat piles round the houses for easy access, and the animals were being brought in from distant grazing.

We discussed and argued a variety of subjects, including the need for selectivity in the choice of programmes for radio and theatre, decrying the easy success of the mediocre. Judging from the discussions which we had held with Warwick and John on this same stretch of road, there appeared to be some magic atmosphere conducive to philosophy and oratory in the area!

Anne overtook us as we meandered on thus occupied, striding purposefully in the direction of the post-office at Kyelang. As we neared the village we came to the site of large-scale roadworks in a big nullah. The gangers were resting, and we passed into the curve of the valley, indignantly ignoring a chorus of whistles which followed us. A thunderous explosion gave the explanation for this chorus—the whistling was aimed at our lives rather than our legs. It was disappointing to see the few boulders that popped out of the

mountain-side following the explosion. It would have been much more dramatic to see the whole mountain blow up.

We met Anne at the rest-house in Kyelang. For the next hour we sat in companionable silence, reading our letters and drinking the tea provided by the chowkidar. All seemed well, both personally and on the business side of the expedition as a whole. It was a strange moment. We read of events that seemed remote from us as we were remote from them, but there was an overriding feeling of excitement and urgency to get in touch. We tried to send a cable to Lester from the police wireless office, but the operator had no information about the charges for overseas cables, and there would be some delay while he contacted the civilian authorities. We decided to leave the sending of word of our safe return until we reached Manali.

The germs of a strange disease called stable-door-itis were now coursing through our bloodstream. I am told that it is a very common reaction at the end of expeditions generally. One's greatest instinct is to head homeward at speed. Of course, in our case we were still faced with several weeks of arduous driving, but the Land Rover at Manali represented the means and subsidiary objective.

In two and a half days we covered the ground to Khoksar, at the foot of the Rohtang Pass. We crossed the newly mended bridge at Tandi, noticing in passing that the fakir had still not returned to his cosy home under the rock. This was now in use as a cement store! The barren stretch of the Chandra valley was soon behind us, and we were greeted by the girls with whom we had made friends at Gondla. At the rest-house in Gondla we stopped for a meal and enjoyed the first eggs we had had since our lucky buy in Padam.

All along the route news of our coming had preceded us, and we were met with curiosity. Even the insect-life had been stirred to a fury of expectation. At a camp site on a village sheep corral Anne and I were attacked by a colony of fleas and scratched earnestly and ruefully for days to come.

In Sissu we ran into a party of early arrivals to a great feast.

We were told that this was the anniversary of the death of a wealthy man. The sole heir, as host, felt that his good fortune should be shared by his friends, a generous sentiment which must have been popular. Here, too, we met with the advance party of the contingent of police personnel which was to relieve the post at Kyelang. The new Chief of Police strode along dressed in pyjamas, with bandolier and revolver holster tied around his waist. Judging by the disgruntled expressions on the faces of some of his subordinates, they did not approve of his evident liking of exercise, and would have preferred to have covered the miles on horseback.

From the police chief we heard that the bridge at Khoksar was under repair. The decking had been stripped off and the cables strengthened so that jeeps might now cross. The drawback lay in an underestimation of the amount of new decking required, and it would be several days before the bridge could be used. This was a serious blow. As far as we knew, the only alternative crossing was well back at Tandi. With only eight miles to go, we decided to continue and get the latest information.

We reached a point opposite Khoksar at dusk. The bridge was only half finished, but a temporary cableway had been erected for the use of travellers. However, no ponies could cross, and we sent off the ghorawallah in search of information. He returned with the news that there was a bridge several miles eastward upstream, but the track leading to this was in a bad state and the loads would have to be taken across in the cable car. There would be two days' delay for the detour.

We were champing at the bit and could not face this added wait. There were ponies on the opposite bank which could be hired to carry our equipment to Manali, but the ghorawallah was so hurt by the thought that we should desert him at this stage that we decided to travel ahead with only a light load, leaving him to follow with the bulk of the boxes.

The work of ferrying was accomplished fairly quickly the following day, in spite of the fact that this time the cable lay

higher on the opposite bank, and it was hard going pulling the loads across. We left the ghorawallah camped in a corral of boxes to await the arrival of the ponies, and set off with Numgyal and Nowa Ram to climb the Rohtang Pass.

From Lahoul the ascent is fairly easy, and we reached the top in three hours. We were stopped by a further contingent of police, one of whom, a wireless operator, expressed great interest in our adventures. He had read of the early part of the expedition in the newspapers and wished to learn more.

"Will you do me the favour of sending me some of your publications?" Since then we have had many similar requests, and never fail to be amused at the confidence in the number of copies supplied to the authors and in their unlimited supply of funds available for postage. I began to wonder whether authors are expected to make a living from their work or not!

Most of the snow had disappeared from the pass. In one patch only did Eve and I experience difficulty when our rubber-soled plimsolls slid from under us and we crossed swiftly in a seated position. Anne followed less haphazardly in her climbing-boots. We came down off the pass at speed on a series of well-defined short cuts. A certain gaiety moved Eve and me to dance on to the accompaniment of 'hep' tunes, I singing and she humming into a comb. I suspect that we left a strange impression on various travellers we met *en route*.

The valley of the Beas had changed completely in five weeks. The daily rains of the monsoon season had encouraged a luxurious growth in the forests and fields. We walked under the greenery to the accompaniment of a lively and ceaseless buzzing, a noise we finally traced to the presence of countless cicadas. Again we were struck by the marked resemblance to an Alpine scene, with rustic bridges and timber-shingled houses set in the gentle landscape—so totally different from the bleak grandeur on the other side of the pass.

The seasonal afternoon rains started, first in the form of intermittent showers. We reached the rest-house at Kothi and took shelter on the veranda, beating the major downpour by

a short hair. Manali lay only six miles or so ahead, but we decided to spend the night at Kothi and cover the last miles in the early morning. Numgyal warned us that travellers returning from the high altitudes often found the valley unendurably hot at first, and suggested that we should complete the journey before the sun rose too high.

We kept the chowkidar stoking his wood-fire in order that he might bring us hot water, and in turn had a thorough dousing, including much-needed hair-washing. The luxury of swilling gallons of hot water over one was perhaps the most appreciated treat that civilization could offer!

Already by ten the next morning the fly-ridden bazaar in Manali was too hot for our comfort, and we did not stay long in the village before making our way up the hill to Major Banon's home. We were greeted everywhere with questions on how we had fared and congratulations on our safe return. It was extraordinary how well informed every villager was on our doings. Doubtless news had been brought by travellers we had met on the road. We were immensely cheered by the thought that we had not passed completely from memory and concern.

Major Banon met us with a warm welcome and the practical hospitality of a gigantic breakfast. Over poached eggs and home-made apricot jam thick with fruit we scanned through the pile of letters awaiting us. Love from families, concern for our welfare, congratulations on our safe return and achievements (although this was only supposition on the part of the writers), the excitement of seeing a copy of the first instalment of our story in print, and the comforting knowledge that our finances were a little less hopeless than before. It was a gargantuan meal for body and mind. We had hours of work ahead of us to answer all these letters.

Anne and I sent off a cable to Lester with the message "Aims achieved route via Phirtse La all well." This arrived the next morning, we learned later, to the intense relief of Lester and Warwick, who was on a visit to Ullswater. The word was spread by them in a series of long-distance calls

to those most closely concerned, after an exciting conference during which they traced out our route on maps. As far as they could tell, we had travelled through an area of which extremely little was known.

On the day that the ponies were expected Major Herbert Banon, Major Banon's brother, invited us to attend a religious festival in a village near Nagar, some distance down the Kulu valley. Since this event takes place only once every three years, we accepted with alacrity. The religion practised in this area is a curious mixture of Buddhism and Hinduism, and the festival to be held was in honour of a goddess 'borrowed' from the latter beliefs. Our guide sat up in front with Anne at the wheel, while Eve and I braced ourselves on the floor at the back of the Land Rover, steadily becoming coated with a fine layer of dust that swirled up in the rear of our passing.

As we drove there were frequent stops so that Major Banon might exchange gossip with several of the many pedestrians who were heading for the festival. We also picked up a number of hitch-hikers whose early appreciation of the ride cooled in the cloud of dust that covered us. We clambered down from the vehicle, for all the world like a lot of flour-sacks!

A long walk through paddy-fields brought us within earshot of insistent drumbeats that marked the site of the festival. The celebrations are stretched over four days, and combine the functions of a country fair in addition to the religious observances. We walked down a double row of stalls where junky trinkets, cloth, sweetmeats, and tea were on sale. An enterprising showman had erected a windmill built of wood and with four little chairs, in which men and women were thrilled and chilled by being spun round for a small fee. At no time did we see a child enjoying the fun of the fair in this rudimentary 'giant wheel.'

The crowd was dressed in all its finery. The women of the Kulu valley wear a sheath of woven wool pinned over the shoulders with two round shields and pins of silver, very similar to the Scottish plaid pins. Newly married women wear

a bright scarlet scarf, while established matrons are recognizable by their black head-scarves, and widows by their white headgear. Spinsters go bareheaded. Their silver ornaments were very beautiful. In most cases these are handed down for generations in a family, and many designs are now obsolete. I attempted to photograph an old woman with particularly lovely brooches and necklaces, but she became very upset, thinking I was trying to rob her.

A little apart from the gay scene lay the small stone temple. We joined the crowd of onlookers. A gilded statue of the goddess had been placed before the temple, and at her feet the priest and his acolytes busied themselves with the rituals. For the fee of two annas penitents could be cleansed of their sins of the past three years. A dozen or so were dealt with in each relay of the ceremony. They squatted round a small fire, murmuring incantations and swaying to the beating of the drums.

A lamb was slaughtered, the group began to chant—a chant which rose to a crescendo at intervals, with wild drumming, while one or two of the acolytes shook like dervishes. Grain was sprinkled in all directions, over the heads of the sinners and into the fire. In due course the purification was completed and the penitents rose, shedding their trance and grinning mischievously, apparently set for the next session of sinning.

The band had arrived meanwhile. It was a magnificent array of colourful costumes, with the players carrying drums of various sizes and shapes and large wind instruments like vast bell-bottomed heraldic trumpets which emitted mournful cow-like bellows. A priest paraded through the crowd, brandishing a fan of peacock feathers. We waited hopefully for the dancing to begin.

First a large tree-trunk had to be raised as a maypole for the dancing. A group of men made unavailing efforts, and shrugged off their lack of success with the excuse that the gods must be angry. The dancing would have to be postponed. In our disappointment we wondered uncharitably

whether the blame lay less with the gods than with the laziness of the scores of onlookers.

Back in Manali we found that the ghorawallah had arrived, and our boxes were neatly stacked in the garage. While Anne and I worked on the accounts for payment of the ghorawallah and the porters, and composed chits or references for each of the men, Eve set to work sorting out and repacking the boxes ready for loading into the Land Rover.

On our return through Lahoul Anne had come up with the bright idea that we should offer Numgyal and Nowa Ram the chance of accompanying us to Delhi for a few days. The arrangement was that we should drive them to Pathankot on our return from Delhi so that they might catch a bus from there back to the hills. They jumped at the chance. On a previous expedition they had gone through Delhi by train on their way to the Simla district, but had seen no more of the capital than the railway-station. Now they helped Eve enthusiastically, as excited about the coming trip as we had been on the eve of the expedition.

We called for the ghorawallah. He had prepared a most businesslike day-to-day account to match mine. We indulged in a bit of good-natured sparring, and honour was satisfied on both sides—mine by knocking off a supposed double march, his by a good bonus. We gave the porters a small advance, but agreed with them that it would be safer if we withheld full payment until they had escaped from the big city, where theft is an accomplishment of the highest artistry.

It was a mystery to us how the porters would find room in the back of the Land Rover once all the gear was stowed. Numgyal had worked out the problem in advance, and the two men climbed into a little pocket well padded against the bumps, and we were ready to start. On our way through Manali we dropped off two sacks of tinned foods and medicines at the hospital as a gift for Dr Watson, leaving a little more space for the porters.

The condition of the road along the Beas river had not been improved by the heavy rains, but, apart from one place where

we had to engage the low-ratio gears to clear a hummock where a landslide was yet to be cleared away, we experienced no difficulties. By driving on in turn and stopping only for the preparation of meals by the roadside we covered the distance to Delhi in good time—in two days.

Fortunately, Delhi lay under overcast skies. Even so we were all suffering from the heat, especially the porters, who found the climate of the plains very trying. Jack Hughes was about to return to the High Commission after luncheon when we drove in. We presented a pretty frightful picture, bedraggled and covered in dust and grime. Everything was ready for us, and even the unexpected addition of the porters was met with equanimity, an empty quarter belonging to Alfred Hall being put at their disposal. We were relieved to know that the two innocents were thus spared from possible sharks in the guise of doss-house-keepers!

After the moral uplift of a bath we felt ready to face the civilized world again. In the following two days we were kept fairly busy with newspaper and radio interviews and the tedious rounds of various foreign embassies to obtain return visas. Jack very kindly put a car and his driver at our disposal, and whenever possible we took Nowa Ram and Numgyal with us in order that they might see as much of the capital as possible. They were thrilled by the colour and activity in the many bazaars, they listened attentively to explanations of the function of various public buildings, they followed us across streets in true country-bumpkin fashion, scuttling like hens before the speeding traffic and laughing delightedly when they achieved the haven of the kerbs again.

On their first night in Delhi they expressed the desire to go to a cinema, the first time they had ever done so! Our host gave orders that they were to be driven there in his yellow convertible. It is difficult to say which experience they enjoyed more. At the end of the visit we asked for their opinion of Delhi. Numgyal summed up very wisely: "Memsahib, Delhi is a fine city for the man with riches, but the poor man lives better in the hills."

We had hoped to see the Prime Minister again on this return visit, so that we might report personally on the results of the trek, but, unfortunately, Mr Nehru was away. Instead I composed a letter giving the details to him and to the secretary who had issued the permits, admitting our change of route and apologizing for the mistake. Apparently this crime caused no upheaval, for we heard no more about the matter.

The local Press gave us good coverage, but we fervently hoped that one report in particular would go no farther. This included such howlers as "Trekking in the Himalaya is rather like a garden party." We were also misquoted as saying that the 18,700-foot peak we climbed was "easy."

We took the opportunity to have our cameras checked. It was a tremendous shock to learn that the shutter on Anne's camera had seized up entirely and that the Leica had been chewing up pieces of film, obscuring many of the exposures. It was plain that the area we were particularly anxious to record—that is, Zanskar—was covered only in the movie, and we hoped that nothing had gone wrong with that camera as well, unsuspected by us!

The time had come to tear ourselves away from the hospitality and comforts of Delhi. There lay ahead of us some 8000 miles, and already we were five weeks behind schedule. Once again we drove through the narrow streets of Old Delhi, getting hopelessly lost, in search of the Grand Trunk Road heading westward. For Numgyal and Nowa Ram the expedition of the three wives was nearly over. They had plans to search for a rare herb in Chamba, from which is extracted a substitute for quinine.

We reached Pathankot on the morning of August 25. The town was as hot and dirty as we remembered it, and we wasted little time in collecting the remaining boxes we had left there and sorting out a pile of surplus supplies to present to the two porters. In this way we managed to collapse some "Tracon" boxes, but the Land Rover was fairly groaning under the load.

We dropped off the porters at the railway-station and took

our farewell of them. It was a sad moment for us all. Numgyal made a little speech of appreciation for Anne to translate, and we continued to wave until the Land Rover turned from the station yard on to the Amritsar road, cutting off the last sight of the two figures standing somewhat forlornly in front of the station porch. There were lumps in our throats and tears in our eyes as we left those two very fine friends of ours. We all hoped to meet them again one day.

The Himalayan part of the expedition had now come irrevocably to a close.

10

Homeward through Afghanistan

THE Golden Temple in Amritsar is the Sikh counterpart of the Vatican, and we had promised ourselves a visit before leaving India. The few hours we spent here certainly fulfilled the glowing reports of its beauty. Apart from the temple, floating in its own reflection on an island in the centre of a large pool, we were conducted round the courts and gardens, the hostel for pilgrims, and the kitchens where volunteers prepare food for any who call in for a meal. We were told that with these amenities provided for all, begging is frowned upon, and, indeed, we saw no indications of this practice in Amritsar.

We spent all but a few of our remaining rupees on Kashmir handicrafts at the Government emporium in the city, to take back as presents and souvenirs. At the India–Pakistan border we were subjected to the usual misgivings as an efficient Customs official expressed the wish to see what was in the back of the Land Rover, but a cursory inspection of our kitchen box served to cool his interest, and we passed on into Pakistan.

In Lahore we visited our friends of Brooke Bond and the Rover agents, who undertook to service our mechanical pony train thoroughly in anticipation of the fairly gruelling stretch to Kabul. Apparently we had made a better impression on the gentlemen of the Press than we had expected, and during our stay in Lahore we were taken by one of the journalists to attend a session of the West Pakistan Assembly. We entered the ladies' gallery to the accompaniment of an uproar in the chamber below. The Speaker and a member of the Opposition had fallen foul of each other, and the member was forcibly removed by the ushers.

There was no answer to my insistent question as to whether

the central Government had been subjected to a general election yet. Shortly after we left the country General Ayub Khan's coup took place. Sad as it was to see a democratic system falling, there was little doubt that corruption and mismanagement were widespread. We were careful to avoid controversies, but many people we met in Pakistan hinted at the general dissatisfaction.

Our route from Lahore now diverged from that of the outward journey. We headed north-west in the direction of the turbulent frontier provinces, scene of so much activity during the British rule in India. At Gujrat we visited the Scottish mission doctor whom we had met in Manali. She welcomed us warmly in the compound of the purdah hospital and invited us to stay for coffee. The difficulties with which she and her staff had to contend were of a familiar pattern. All too often patients were brought to her only when the untrained midwives had done their worst. We were introduced to her assistant, a beautiful Pakistani woman with impressive medical qualifications.

Life in the villages has remained unchanged over the centuries. With the majority of the inhabitants working on the three or even four crops per year system, there is a barter system where no money exchanges hands. Every one contributes crops or services according to his job.

In Rawalpindi we camped in the garden of the Brooke Bond representative. His wife had come out of purdah only recently but even so we were a little embarrassed to find that she did not join us for meals, and again we felt like strange sexless creatures as we dined with our host and his male guests. During our stay our host took us on a tour of 'Pindi. This town still retains its orderly appearance, and formed a pleasant change from the dirty cities we had passed through in the south. We were amused to note that the walls round the brewery were higher than those of the gaol. In a country where alcohol may be bought only on permits issued on medical grounds (every one has a permit) it is clearly more important to keep criminals out than in!

Between Rawalpindi and Peshawar lie the remains of Taxila, a city which housed many different civilizations. We paid a brief visit to the museum and studied the fine collection of stone sculptures and household and agricultural implements found on the site and representative of Aryan, Hellenic, and Buddhist civilizations. Although most of the sculptured friezes depicted scenes from the life of Buddha, the technique was almost purely Hellenic.

We crossed the Indus river over the Attock bridge (the farthest point east reached by Alexander the Great) and drove through the barren highlands to Peshawar. The populated plains were now behind us, and we struck out into truly tribal country. In Peshawar we were the guests of Mr Hussein Shah, the principal of a boys' college; he had just returned from a visit to England to study youth-training under the sponsorship of the British Council. During this visit he had stayed with Lester at the Outward Bound School, and, hearing that we should be passing his home, he insisted that we should be his guests.

In this family of Pathans purdah was fairly rigidly observed, although within the confines of the house and garden our host's wife and daughters moved about with comparative freedom. The two eldest daughters were students at a college for women. A scholarship for further study had been offered to one girl, but as this meant that she would have to discard the veil, of her own free will she refused to take it up.

From Peshawar we drove towards the Khyber Pass. To Anne, whose memories of her life in India, as the daughter of an Indian Army officer, were liberally laced with accounts of frontier incidents, the once notorious pass was redolent of the dangerous and romantic. There was little evidence to be seen of its history apart from the isolated forts and the cemented crests of British and Indian Army regiments in the cliff-faces. The road was in excellent repair, and quite soon we reached the frontier post at Torkham.

At the barrier gate the fact of our entry into Afghanistan was underlined less by changes in landscape than by the

instant deterioration in the road surface. We were subjected to bone-shaking bouncing as the Land Rover hit the corrugations fierce as fluted marble. Immigration and Customs formalities were notable only for their extreme casualness. In fact, we were unable to find a Customs check-post, and deeply offended a giant of a man with a close-cropped bullet head who roared, "I not Customs; I head of all police here."

Following the course of the river Kabul through gorges and over plains, we came by dusk to Sarobi, where a firm of German engineers was just completing work on a large dam across the river. The resident engineers were horrified at the thought of our camping out in this wild country, and insisted that we should occupy an empty bungalow in the compound, and the Land Rover was put under guard in their vehicle park.

The 'highway' to Kabul was under reconstruction in many places. The vehicles in use by the road gangs were of a pattern unfamiliar to us and may have been bought from the Russians. In the course of our travels in this small country we came to the conclusion that the Soviet Union and the United States were pouring in money in the form of loans, road- and bridge-building schemes, and other elaborate projects in rival attempts to woo the allegiance of Afghanistan to one bloc or the other, while the Afghans were content to enjoy the benefits, printing their worthless money and good friends with all. The situation seemed wholly similar to Ustinov's play *Romanoff and Juliet.*

In the last five years or so Kabul has changed beyond recognition, according to reports expressed by people who have lived there in this period. Within the ruins of the historic walls that closed off the gaps between the natural fortifications of the hills and snaked along the ridges circling the town, the old town has disappeared completely behind a dull façade of new buildings. It was disappointing to find so few signs of past centuries when Kabul stood and fell to the sieges of such famous conquerors as Alexander the Great, Tamerlane, and Genghis Khan.

We made our way to the hotel, where we had been told to change our money at the open-market rate of three times that of the official exchange rate. This is absolutely normal practice apparently, and one wonders whether the banks do any business at all. The Rover agent proved to be an American, who until recently had been running the only airline service in the country. He deputed one of his staff to act as our guide, and we called first on the British Embassy.

The Consul was extremely friendly and sympathetic with our aims. Once it had been established that we had not come to the Embassy in financial trouble or with the expectation of being allowed to camp in the gardens, the welcome became even more cordial, and we were invited to various meals by the members of the staff and given many useful introductions to Afghan officials.

The question of finding a camp site in the city was solved by the Afghan president of the Travel Association, who directed us to the compound of the foreign-news agency. Here the whole staff turned out to help us carry the boxes and bags we required on to a large lawn where we pitched the tent. Throughout our stay we were never at a loss for willing helpers, and it was comforting to know that we could leave our possessions without any fear of losing anything. The director gave orders one morning for a fowl to be presented to us. We were woken by the noise of distress among the poultry who shared our camp site and the yapping of a small dog, whose major duty, it seemed, was to retrieve the 'game.'

In our early planning we had decided to return to Europe through the Soviet Union. As it was undesirable to travel through Pakistan with a U.S.S.R. visa in our passports, we had arranged in London that we should get the visa in Kabul from the Ambassador there. Our first visit to the Soviet Embassy ended in frustration. The Consul's deputy spoke no English and fell back on the procedure of filling in of forms, all of which we had hoped would be unnecessary. We arranged to meet the First Secretary the following day.

This time there was no language difficulty, and we made

application to drive from Afghanistan through Tashkent and so to Moscow.

"It is impossible. There are few roads, and those that exist are bad. There are also no hotels or facilities."

I replied that we had a vehicle built for rough ground and that we were completely self-sufficient as regards shelter and food. This evoked the real answer.

"I am sorry, but it is not permitted."

No word had been received by him from London, and we should have to make a new application to travel through from the Black Sea on the official tourist route. We were rather bitter about the general lack of efficiency and gave up hope there and then. We had no time to waste on bureaucratic stumbling-blocks.

Up to now we had seen nothing of Afghan women, apart from the cloaked figures that we met in twos and threes in the streets. We were particularly anxious to see something of them, and were very fortunate to have a tour of the women's hospital laid on for us by the director of the general hospital in the city. We were met at the gatekeeper's lodge and escorted into the compound. Once inside, the elegant pleated silk burkahs are totally discarded, and we noticed some extremely fashionable women among the groups of visitors and patients.

In a lecture-room where the nursing staff were assembled the word "Welcome" had been chalked up. We stood shyly in front of the assembled women, and I asked questions of the German-speaking doctor who stood by. The course of training for the nurses is based on that in other countries. The girls train for three years, with lectures interspersed with increasing periods of duty in the wards. The nurses do not live in, and the main difficulty is to get night staff. In this hospital with 200 beds for women and 50 for children the largest number of nurses that can be mustered for night duty is six, and this only by means of a substantial bonus. A surprising percentage of the staff were married women.

The director of the hospital and the country's only pedia-

trician met us there. He had trained in Paris but spoke good English. We toured the wards in his company. First we visited the children. In each room there are cribs and cots with an equal number of beds for the mothers. This system has had to be introduced because of the night-nursing problems. The drawback is that when the husband gets tired of managing alone he recalls his wife, and out comes the child, regardless of whether it has been adequately treated or not.

From there we went on to the gynæcological, surgical, medical, and neurological wards, stopping at the four operating theatres, only two of which had been tiled completely. Although the building was old, it was much cleaner than I had been led to believe and certainly more aseptic than what little we had seen of the main hospital. We were free to go where we pleased, and wondered whether we were mistaken for a deputation of visiting doctors or nurses! We found a refreshing lack of that anxiety to be praised which so often acts as a constraint to genuine enthusiasm.

Our tour of farewells on the morning that we left Kabul was rather protracted. Every one had something to offer for our comfort, and it became increasingly difficult to refuse. Colonel Clifford, the Military Attaché at the British Embassy, and his wife insisted on our raiding their larder for tins of tasty alternatives to our own rations, and packed these in a box, together with a number of bottles of spiritual cheer.

At the outskirts of the city we caught a glimpse of our 'tail,' a man in a battered Panama hat we had seen at intervals throughout our stay in Kabul. We waved cheerfully, but it was not the last occasion on which we saw him. The first 40 miles of the road to Ghazni were shocking, with corrugations so spaced that above a certain speed the Land Rover went into a cumulative bouncing, ending in a grand slam as heads and boxes met the roof, before settling heavily on the protesting springs again.

We drove into the compound of the hotel in Ghazni at dusk and produced a letter in Parsee from the British Consul, appealing for help. We camped beside the vehicle under the

all-night guard provided by the local police. Throughout our travels in Afghanistan word was sent ahead of us to the next police garrison. Apparently there are still embarrassing incidents of foreigners disappearing without trace, and the Government tries to protect travellers by this chain of guards. If a traveller does not reach his next destination in reasonable time a search-party is sent out to comb the district, by road and on horseback. We co-operated by calling on the police and camping under their supervision at all times.

In Kandahar we stayed with the Pakistani Consul. This may have been an unwise move in the light of the strained relationship between the two countries on the issue of Pakhtunistan, the area inhabited by tribesmen in North-west Pakistan and which was considered ripe for independence (or adoption) by Afghanistan. Whatever the faults of our diplomacy, however, we were very grateful to our host for his courteous, easy hospitality, and we took advantage of this to spend an unplanned rest day to recover from our high life in Kabul and to rest from the heat of the desert of Southern Afghanistan.

At this time the Kuchis, tribes of nomads, were making their way south from the grazing fields of the highlands. We passed many of their encampments, easily recognizable from the highly characteristic tents which are made of woollen tarpaulins on frameworks of a rather complicated nature. The Kuchi women are unveiled, a fact which seemed to bear out our earlier findings about nomadic lives.

There is much evidence of the raids and feuds which made Afghanistan so much of a risk for would-be travellers until quite recently. Each village we saw is built on the lines of a fortress, within a surrounding wall of up to 25 feet high. The architecture is very similar to that in Southern Iran, the main building material being clay.

The road from Kandahar to Farah was in very good condition. Presumably this is maintained for the transport of materials to the site of the Helmand river dam under construction by the Americans. One of our tyres was losing air, and we crawled into Farah. An imperious Afghan at a filling-

station waved us back down the high street, and we were led to a charpoy bedstead which had been brought out into the shade of a tree for our use. We were permitted to watch while three men set to changing the wheel and mending the puncture.

Tea was served to us in individual tiny pots and bowls as a reminder that this was work for men and that we should not jump out of line. Our tools were discarded contemptuously in favour of those produced from a near-by derelict truck. At the end of forty-five minutes they were satisfied that the work was done. We offered payment, and were favoured by the acceptance of the equivalent of one shilling, which included the tea. Our cigarettes were received more readily, and we departed with cordial greetings.

That there are "Coke" machines in such unlikely situations as the South Pole and the heart of the Amazonian jungle I am well aware. This expedition served to disperse any further surprise I might have had at the ubiquitousness of the Americans. On the road to Herat we were stopped at the site of a bridge under construction and asked in hurt tones, "Say, are you going to pass by without stopping for a cup of cawfee?"

We followed the American engineer to a trailer camp and stayed to luncheon. As we followed our hosts round the camp on a tour of inspection I mentally compared their standards in the wilds of Afghanistan with the average set-up in an English home. Here we found air-conditioning, electrical cookers, refrigerators, ice-making machines, deep-freeze units, and washing-machines. Our admiration was spontaneous and sincere. We were equally impressed with the standards maintained by the wholly masculine population of the camp in their habits and easy courtesy towards their visitors. Somehow I rather expected that a year of this life might have undermined the finesse.

We still had a good mileage to cover to Herat before dark, so we left shortly after the meal. In an hour or two we started to climb, leaving the desert south as we headed for the high-

lands once more. There was a noticeable cooling in the atmosphere. The road remained reasonable, although not up to the standard of that between Kandahar and Farah. It was dark before we drove into Herat, and we had some difficulty in finding the hotel.

The hotel was a rambling single-storey building situated in a large, well-established garden. There was a pool and well in the centre of the lawn in front of the building, which figured largely in the amenities, as we later discovered. Inside there was chaos. The manager explained that the entire hotel was being renovated and redecorated. The entrance hall was resplendently empty, its only furniture, a reception desk, unstaffed. We were led through glazed doors into a second hall, complete with white small grand piano.

The idea of a *thé dansant* in this setting conjured up hilarious visions of Afghan ladies sipping cups of tea through their burkhas, little fingers delicately crooked, while tearing the reputation of friends to pieces. Perhaps in the background a tired, suave pianist would be tinkling inconsequentially to the accompaniment of rattling cups and sibilant gossip. It was almost too much of a strain to control our mirth.

The room allocated to us had evidently been occupied recently. The sheets on the three beds were unmistakably crumpled and of an advanced state of greyness. In addition it was furnished with a table and three chairs and one armchair with a broken leg. An old-fashioned hatstand served as a wardrobe, and had the irritating habit of keeling over at the most unexpected moments under the weight of our clothes. A carpet dimmed by years of dust completed the furnishings, and a tiny mouse that skittered along the skirting-board at intervals provided company and entertainment.

No sooner had we carried in our rucksacks and sleeping-bags than the only other two guests in the hotel appeared on a visit, a bottle of whisky and several tooth-glasses in hand. An American and a Swiss, they were heading for India by road, and we exchanged information about conditions of the roads. They put us in the picture about the remaining ameni-

ties of the hotel. Three bathrooms and eight lavatories had been added, but so far were not connected with the water-supplies. This is where the well in the front garden came into use, and the water-carrier, when he could be found, was constantly called upon to fetch buckets of water.

We were to develop quite an affection for our temporary abode, not least because the manager and staff were so anxious to help. We set aside the following afternoon for a tour of the town with a guide produced by the manager. In contrast to Kabul, Herat retains all of its historic character. Little touched by foreign influence, it was the most charming and interesting of the cities we had seen in Afghanistan. We visited the grand mosque, the main square, and, of course, the bazaars, where Anne and Eve spent some money.

From Afghanistan we drove towards Tehran, bypassing Meshed, the Holy City, but stopping at the tomb of Omar Khayyam in Samnan on the way. Eve and I were particularly eager to test Sid Wignall's story about his visit to the tomb on his way out to India with the Welsh Himalayan expedition some years before. He maintains that his guide pointed out a rough chair which is alleged to have been used by the bard in his day. On closer inspection some of the timber was seen to bear the legend: "Fragile. Made in Birmingham."

Unfortunately we were unable to prove or disprove this delightful account as we were bawled out and turned back at the door.

In Tehran we were the guests of Mr Kaul, the Indian Ambassador-Designate whom we had met in Manali. We were eager to make a detour on the road to Tabriz via the Caspian coast to Astara, on the Soviet border, and thence inland to Tabriz. This route leads through a military zone for which a permit is required, but this was granted readily enough with Mr Kaul's assistance.

We headed towards the Elburz mountain range, which separates the desert from the verdant coastal strip. The contrast was amazing. It was as though we were entering a new country. The mountain slopes were covered with forests. On

the left of the road we passed green fields and tea plantations; on the right was the blue expanse of the Caspian, the first ocean we had come to since leaving the Mediterranean on the outward journey. Heavy rain followed us.

Just beyond the seaside resort of Chalus we drew off the road and asked permission to camp on a grassy meadow that verged on the dunes. A group of young boys gathered round to study the envelope on which I attempted to draw our request in a series of pictures. One lad spoke French, and insisted that we should accompany him to his home, where we should spend the night as his guests.

We nosed the Land Rover into a narrow muddy lane which threatened to peter out at any moment and drew up outside a two-storey farmhouse built of wood. We were led upstairs along an open balcony and ushered into a small room with an undulating floor covered completely with beautiful carpets. A table and chairs were produced, and we sat down to enjoy a glass of tea with our young host and his brothers. Of their parents there was no sign, although we had greeted a group including several women, completely unveiled in accordance with the custom in this area, on the lower floor.

A white cloth was spread out on the floor and dishes of food were laid out. We squatted round to eat the meal, which was followed with further glasses of tea. As the time drew near for retiring our sleeping-bags were scornfully rejected by our host and elaborate bedrolls were laid out on the floor for our use. It then became obvious that, far from putting him to any trouble and ejecting him and his brothers from their room, we were being treated as normal guests and were to share their food and floor in the traditions of hospitality as he knew them.

We gulped loudly, but a hint of our doubts must have penetrated the language barrier, because our host flew into a rage, assuring us that we were his 'sisters' and that we should come to no harm and that he, as host, was deeply insulted. We hastened to make it clear that no such dreadful thought had crossed our minds, lying gamely in our efforts

to calm him. Thus three emancipated women of the West crawled under a silken quilt while three young Persians turned their faces to Mecca to say their prayers before retiring to their own bedrolls. During the night Eve was woken by the foot of one of our 'brothers' in her face. She later told us, "I gave the foot a sisterly shove which did not even wake its owner!"

The whole family gathered to see us off the next morning, and we photographed them as a record of our first experience of real Persian hospitality. So much for the fate of the infidel in a Muslim stronghold. They could not have been more charming or considerate. The weather was less gracious, for the downpour continued.

Just short of Astara we were brought to a halt by a flooded river. The bridge was down, and the waters were too deep even for the Land Rover. We turned back and found that a similar situation had developed behind us. The second river was fortunately not quite so deep, and when a jeep drew up we arranged to make the crossing in convoy, comforted by the knowledge that one vehicle might pull the other out in the event of a mishap. We reached the opposite bank safely and ploughed back down the steadily deteriorating road in a detour to the main road to Tabriz, our hopes to see the Soviet Union, even from across a border, dashed.

From Tabriz we made our way through Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia, and Austria on the same road of our outward journey. We revisited friends we had made a few months before and hastened homeward through Germany and Holland. Letters from Lester gave warning of a heavy programme of Press, radio, and television interviews awaiting us in England, and we crossed to Harwich by the night ferry on October 8 in the hope of resting in anticipation of the hard work that would mark the end of the expedition.

On the quay stood Lester and John. For Anne and Eve there was a warm welcome and a joyous reunion. I looked forward to making my way out to Malaya as soon as our publicity commitments would allow, to rejoin Warwick in his

new posting. For us all this was the end of an adventure. I doubt whether it was really an end, though. We had proved to ourselves and others that we could undertake to plan and carry out a fairly ambitious expedition. Our appetite for this type of experience had been whetted, and I have no doubt that the other two share my secret aim to go again. I prefer to regard this as the end of a chapter rather than the end of the story.

To those who may ask, "But how can I raise the money for such an expedition?" I add this. We were not financed in any way by scientific or mountaineering organizations. In all, the expedition cost something in the region of £1100. Some of this we recovered on the resale of the Land Rover at the end of the expedition. Total expenditure was met by our individual contributions, the advance on the book, and the fees from the magazine, and a loan from Lester. This loan has now been repaid by means of lecture and article fees in the months that followed our return—months of hard, grinding work when the thrill is over. Should you be prepared to do this, why not start planning now?

APPENDIX 1

NAVIGATION

by Eve Sims

MY task as navigator was self-imposed, and self-indulgent too, for I enjoy poring over maps and felt that I could tackle the job of navigating to India and back with confidence. I called in the help of that most estimable organization the Automobile Association, and they provided us with an excellent itinerary. It was so complete that I realized that my work was almost over.

The Shell Petroleum Company also provides an itinerary, with petrol-filling stations marked, at which oil and paraffin can be bought also. This knowledge later dispersed many anxious moments when we realized that the petrol-tank was getting low. It can be rather worrying to start on a drive of 16,000 miles and be uncertain of petrol supplies! Actually we found that petrol was available liberally, the longest stretch being that of 200 miles on the Turkish side of the Turko-Iranian border.

I bought general maps of Europe and the Middle East, and supplemented these with large-scale maps kindly given to us by the War Office. These maps were very useful in finding camp sites and water-holes.

In the end there was very little need for a compass, or maps either, as we found that from Yugoslavia onward there was usually only one road ahead, and if there was a fork we just took the obviously major one. Otherwise we used astro-navigation.

I remember well one night when Antonia was driving through the Great Salt Desert of Iran. I had fallen into a fitful sleep which included nightmares. I awoke with a start and yelled that I was sure that we were going west—literally.

I was told snappily to go back to sleep, but I foolishly persisted. The Land Rover came to an impatient halt, and we all piled out and searched the night sky.

"There," cried Antonia triumphantly, "there is the Plough; that is north; and we are going due east."

I had to agree, as Antonia is the daughter of a former Union Astronomer of South Africa, and therefore must be right. So I argued with myself, only later to discover that the Plough was the only constellation any of us could recognize.

Road conditions on the whole were not too bad. On the outward journey we quickly adapted ourselves and our driving to the bone-shaking corrugations and the 'shake-barrier,' which we discovered was about 40 m.p.h. Occasionally we would tempt Providence and on a clear stretch of road put our foot down. Then from 15 m.p.h. to about 35 m.p.h. everything would rattle until the 'barrier' was reached. Then would come almost perfect peace, until a wadi (a dried-up river-bed) loomed in front of the bonnet; brakes applied; the shakings resumed, and I can remember that on two occasions Anne hit the roof and bit her tongue; and then the driver, crestfallen, would continue sedately at 15 m.p.h.

From Yugoslavia onward we saw signs of new roads being built throughout all countries, and I hazard a guess that in five years' time there will be first-class roads through to Tehran. The desert road south from Tehran is particularly difficult owing to sand-drifts, and the four-wheel drive was most helpful for complete independence from wayside help.

Our Land Rover was a standard long-wheelbase pick-up with a canvas cover. It had a winch on the front bumper and a trailer-bar at the rear; fortunately neither needed to be used. The only extras fitted were a double roof on the cab, which did keep the cab cooler than it might have been; two petrol jerricans on the front bumper; one spare tyre on the bonnet and a second fixed behind the cab. We also carried a third jerrican in the 'back,' which gave us a 27-gallon supply of petrol, and this proved ample, as we bought petrol whenever possible. The Rover company not only supplied us with the vehicle at a price far below its real value, but also fitted extras, sometimes at their own suggestion.

The Land Rover was serviced by local Rover agents *en route.* They kept our vehicle in first-class working order, and were, in themselves, wonderful hosts, taking us on sightseeing tours and introducing us to local foods and drinks.

Our forty-two-day outward journey was as follows:

England ..... Ullswater–Lydd.
By Silver City Airways from Lydd to Le Touquet.
France ..... Le Touquet–Strasbourg.

Germany..... Strasbourg–Munich–Salzburg.
Austria ..... Salzburg–Badgastein–Tauern Tunnel–Klagenfurt –Seeberg Pass.
Yugoslavia ..... Ljubljana–Zagreb–Belgrade–Skopje–Gevgelija.
Greece ..... Salonica–Kavalla–Edirne.
Turkey ..... Edirne–Istanbul–across the Bosphorus to Scutari –Ankara–Kayseri–Sivas–Erzincan–Erzurum–Dogu Bayazit.
Iran ..... Maku–Tabriz–Tehran–Qum–Isfahan–Yezd–Kerman–Zahidan.
Pakistan ..... Dalbandin–Quetta–Sukkur–Multan–Lahore.
India ..... Amritsar–Jullundur–Ambala–Delhi.

After our three-week stay in Delhi we headed north again, retracing our route back to Jullundur and continuing to Pathankot. Thence east to Palampur, Jogindarnagar, Mandi, Kulu, and finally Manali, where we garaged the Land Rover during our Himalayan trek.

On returning to Manali we went back to Delhi for a few days, returning to Lahore by our previous route.

Our forty-five-day return journey from Lahore to England was:

Pakistan ..... Lahore–Rawalpindi–Peshawar–Khyber Pass.
Afghanistan ..... Jalalabad – Kabul – Ghazni – Mukur – Kandahar – Farah–Herat–Kohsan.
Iran ..... Taiabad–Meshed–Samnan–Tehran.

From Tehran we made a detour to the Caspian Sea, hoping to follow the coast road to Astara, on the Iranian-Russian border, thence driving due west to Tabriz, but a few miles south of Astara we had to turn back to Resht because of flooded rivers and heavy rain. From Resht we drove south to rejoin our original outward route to Kazvin. From Kazvin to Tabriz and then to the Turko-Iranian border at Maku.

Back along the familiar road to Ankara, Istanbul, and Edirne, and through Greece, and so to Belgrade. There we met a Yugoslav businessman who suggested that we should enter Austria at the border near Graz, and so from Zagreb we went to Maribor, to Graz, and so to Salzburg. We had agreed to sail from the Hook of Holland to Harwich, mainly, I think, because we knew that we could get a night's sleep before tackling the English Customs and welcoming committee.

From Salzburg we drove along the Autobahn through Munich,

Augsburg, Stuttgart, Frankfurt, Cologne, across the border to Arnhem, then from Rotterdam to the Hook.

Our mileometer showed that we had travelled over 16,000 miles, and when my husband asked me at Harwich whether I wanted to drive his car to our new home in Oxford I indignantly declined. Nevertheless, I had to navigate our car back to Benson, and I found that job more difficult than the monster one I had just finished.

APPENDIX 2

RATIONS

by Eve Sims

I HAVE always considered that food is tremendously important. I like eating, particularly in the mountains, and it was with some trepidation that I accepted the task of feeding four people for five months. After all, I had been married only two months, and my experience was, to say the least, limited.

I knew that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food had an experimental factory in Aberdeen and were producing dehydrated foods and might make these foods available to us. I knew, too, that all expeditions approach various food firms and ask them for concessions in price. Culling information from expedition climbing books, which usually have an appendix, just like this one of mine, dealing with the names of firms and foods used on *their* expedition, I drew up a suggested ration list and sent it to Anne, Antonia, and Betty for their approval, and, apart from a change of brand of coffee, this was accepted.

I wanted a reasonably varied diet, and based it on the dehydrated meats, vegetables, fruits, and fish made by the Ministry of Agriculture. In addition there would be powdered milk, condensed milk, sugar, biscuits, jams and marmalades, sweets and chocolates, lemonade powder, mustard, bedtime drinks, potato powder, Instant coffee, and tea. The latter was overestimated somewhat, as you will have read elsewhere. In defence I say that we did not run out of anything and came back with very little surplus.

I wrote to the various firms concerned, and to my amazement and joy they replied, either giving the food or selling it at a reduced price. Shortly the stores arrived and my quiet Welsh home was full of packing-cases and invoice forms. My husband and I sorted, packed, and listed until all the stores were divided into three equal piles—one for the outward journey, one for the mountain trek, and one for the return journey, the last two parts to be sent by sea to Bombay.

The containers I used were "Tracon" collapsible aluminium boxes, manufactured by the Light Alloy Construction Company of Darlington. They sent a representative to my home and told me that we could borrow as many boxes as we needed. Soon they arrived, and at last stores could be finally packed away ready for the trip.

Once the boxes were empty they collapsed and could be stacked neatly at the front of the Land Rover. I was particularly impressed by their lightness, the fact that they could be stacked easily, and their extreme robustness. The drawback of cardboard boxes is that they do disintegrate, and wooden ones break easily as food-containers need to be opened frequently.

In addition I thought about Antonia's and my need for cigarettes. I wrote to Messrs Player and Sons, and they most generously gave us 5000. Antonia and I viewed the 100 tins with glee, and Anne then told us that the tins themselves were excellent barter and gifts for the natives of the Himalaya. This proved to be true, and Antonia and I were delighted whenever we broached another new tin.

APPENDIX 3

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

IN addition to the countless people to whom the members of the expedition are indebted for their help and hospitality both in the United Kingdom and in the countries *en route* we should like to thank the following organizations and firms, without whose combined help our task would have been so much more difficult:

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British American Optical Co., Ltd
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Brown and Polson, Ltd
Bryant and May, Ltd
Burmah-Shell Oil Storage and Distributing Co. of India, Ltd
Burmah-Shell Oil Storage and Distributing Co. of Pakistan, Ltd
Chivers and Sons, Ltd
J. and J. Colman
Condrup, Ltd
William Crawford, Ltd
Ever Ready Co., Ltd
Max Factor, Ltd
J. and R. Fleming, Ltd
Howard Flint, Ltd
Glaxo Laboratories, Ltd
Granges (Wednesbury), Ltd
Ilford, Ltd
William Kenyon and Sons, Ltd
Kimberley-Clark, Ltd
Kitty Brewster (Paper), Ltd
Light Alloy Construction Co.
Lilia-White (Associated) Co.
George MacLellan and Co., Ltd
McVitie and Price, Ltd
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Nestlé Co., Ltd
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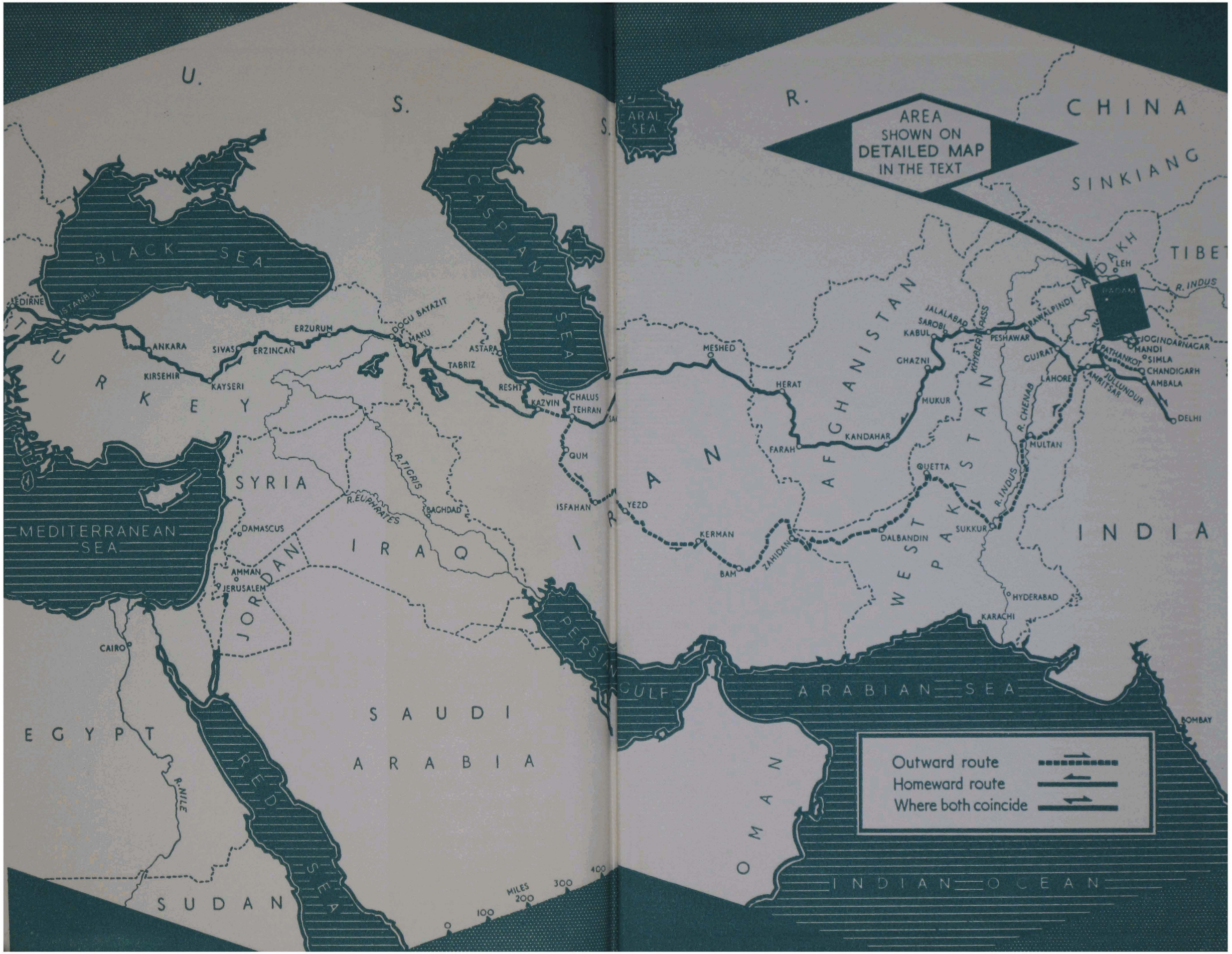
  Matas Trading Co., Istanbul
  Morrotab Co., Tehran
Shell Petroleum Co., Ltd
Smith's Clocks and Watches, Ltd
Tate and Lyle, Ltd
Thermos (1925), Ltd
Van den Berghs, Ltd
A. Wander, Ltd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ERZINCAN
ERZURUM
DOGU BAYAZIT
MAKU
ASTARA
TABRIZ
RESHT
KAZVIN
CHALUS
TEHRAN
QUM
ISFAHAN
KIRSEHIR
KAYSERI
TURKEY
SYRIA
R. EUPHRATES
R. TIGRIS
BAGHDAD
DAMASCUS
AMMAN
JERUSALEM
JORDAN
IRAQ
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MEDITERRANEAN SEA
CAIRO
EGYPT
R. NILE
RED SEA
SAUDI ARABIA
SUDAN
PERSIAN GULF
MESHED
HERAT
FARAH
KANDAHAR
GHAZNI
KABUL
JALALABAD
KHYBER PASS
PESHAWAR
RAWALPINDI
AFGHANISTAN
MUKUR
YEZD
KERMAN
BAM
ZAHIDAN
DALBANDIN
QUETTA
SUKKUR
WEST PAKISTAN
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R. CHENAB
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PATHANKOT
JOGINDARNAGAR
MANDI
SIMLA
CHANDIGARH
AMBALA
DELHI
INDIA
HYDERABAD
KARACHI
BOMBAY
ARABIAN SEA
OMAN
INDIAN OCEAN
Outward route
Homeward route
Where both coincide
MILES
100
200
300
400