

MYSTIC TIBET AND THE HIMALAYA.

BY

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Wonders of Darjeeling and the Sikkim Himalaya,
Mysteries of life unveiled, etc., etc.)



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PREFACE

A halo surrounds the charming name, Darjeeling. Had there been nothing else of interest here except the sublime snowy range looming large on the horizon, and including the mighty massif of Kangchenjunga and its most shapely satellites sharply outlined against the azure sky in a wintry day, it could boast of being the nearest point of vantage accessible to the world at large wherefrom to view the world-renowned Kangchenjunga Range, and the magnificent panorama of giant peaks with the intervening jagged lines of snows skirting the Tibetan plateau, that jealousy guard the Land of the Lamas. This panoramic view of the Kingdom of Eternal Snows that flanks the Fairyland of Sikkim on the north stretching from far east to remote west has no parallel all the world over, in beauty, towering height, and extensiveness.

An unvarnished fact underlies the expression—“For natural beauty Darjeeling is surely unsurpassed in the world.” These are words which have been penned by no less a personage than Colonel Young-husband, a great Himalayan explorer and a person great in diverse phases of greatness.

To a new-comer the journey from the deadly Terai across tropical forest and up the blue foot-hills of the Himalaya in a toy-like train, which as it winds in and out along its crooked railroad revealing at every turn fresh and unspeakable beauty of Nature, is fascinating in the extreme. Likewise the travel by rail along the high bank of the Tista River, the mightiest drainer of the Eastern Himalaya, which roars and thunders as it fights its way out over a world of rocks and boulders is an intoxicating pleasure in itself.

And all these constitute but an humble prelude to hundreds of phases of Himalayan scenery that awaits to greet the vision of a traveller privileged to penetrate into the Sikkim Himalaya, 'the Land of Lightning', where an unparalleled downpour contributes to the growth of flora and fauna in a way hardly to be met with in any part of the Himalaya or any mountainous region of the world.

The Sikkim Himalaya, the epitome of the world's mountains, embraces a wonder-land of incomparable beauty associated with its lonely vales and dales, gaping chasms and terrific gorges, purling rills and rushing streams, lakes and lakelets that seem to have snatched their lovely hues either from the blue or from that precious stone called turquoise, and which serve as clear mirrors on which the Sikkim giants crowned with perpetual snow delight in casting their ever-changing shadows.

Last but not least, is the glamour of a peep into the vast table-land of dreary Tibet, 'the Roof of the World,' from the high frontier passes that tower aloft to giddy heights and open up before a fatigued traveller new vistas of honey-coloured desert of sands and grits, of stones and pebbles, seamed with bare, undulating rocky hills of variegated colours that hardly lend themselves to description.

The sure-footed yaks and mules, the high altitude comrades of solitary travellers, play their parts well while climbing on high frozen passes, where mist is transformed into cloud, cloud into flakes of fleecy snows or drizzling rain, and rain into blinding blizzard or sweeping hail. Theirs is a most wonderful feat during a descent on slippery ice—a descent, on top of which the entrusted baggages weight down their willing backs in no small a degree.

The expeditions conducted by land and air, and directed against Mount Everest and Kangchenjunga,

the two highest peaks in the world, are replete with thrilling events.

Lastly, has been unveiled Tibet and its mystic inhabitants. Long-forgotten details of the most interesting themes on Dalai Lama's flight to Mongolia and China and the military expedition to Lhasa as given in this work will be reckoned as a speciality, as all standard works on Tibet are strangely silent over them. Most tenacious and strenuous research has enabled me to fish out facts and figures with which I have embellished this volume, in respect of these two subjects in particular.

The subject dealt with under the heading. **Alone after Everest**, has fallen into oblivion, even amongst the people of Darjeeling, most of whom labour under the impression that everything relating to Darjeeling, Sikkim, and Tibet are as widely known to them as the furniture in their cosy compartments. But, the hard fact is that even such names as Wilson, who assailed Everest alone, Csoma, that Hungarian traveller and scholar of Tibetan language whose remains were interred in Darjeeling cemetery where a monument still marks his grave, Smythe and Norton who hold record in Everest climb are as Greek to them, as alpha, beta, and gamma are to the Tibetans.

Undoubtedly, I lay absolutely no claim on originality—the flowers were there, scattered all over a great banquet-hall, forlorn and forsaken, till the task of picking up those that matter fell to the humble lot of the writer,—and here is the garland I have to present all lovers of the Himalaya with, and for that matter, my generous readers.

K. C. B.

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PART I
DARJEELING

DARJEELING,
THE QUEEN OF HILL STATIONS

“For natural beauty, Darjeeling is surely unsurpassed in the world. From all countries travellers come there to see the famous view of Kangchenjunga, 28,150' in height, and only 40 miles distant.”

SIR F. YOUNGHUSBAND, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E.,
*First Chairman of the Mount Everest
Committee of the Royal Geographical
Society and the Alpine Club.*

* * * * *

“The view of the Himalayas from the hill station of Darjeeling is world-renowned. It includes valleys little above sea level and a summit 28,150' high. Kangchenjunga is fifty miles distant and the angle of sight is only a degree or two, yet it seems immeasurably high and forms a splendid centre-piece to a host of giant peaks that project like spurs of foam-crested reef above waves of blue foothills.”

F. S. SMYTHE,
*A distinguished author and a pre-
eminent mountaineer of Everest,
Kamet, and Kangchenjunga repute.*

PART I

DARJEELING

INCIDENTS OF FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCE—1813

Prior to the year 1816, the vast territory of Sikkim belonged to the Nepalese who had won it by conquest from the Sikkimese.

The frontier policy of the war-like Gurkhas proved annoying to the East India Company. Towards the close of 1813, the Company intervened in favour of Sikkim, and war was declared against the Nepalese. There followed two campaigns, in the second of which they were defeated by General Ochterlony, whose achievements the well-known monument of that name in Calcutta towering up to a sheer height of 165 feet still testifies. The Rajah of Sikkim was reinstated in possession of his kingdom, which is in the heart of the Himalaya and covers an area of 2,400 square miles.

A strange fact is that Arjunji Nathji of Surat, the then Rothschild of India, as a mark of loyalty placed at the disposal of the Company a fabulous amount to prosecute the war to a successful issue. With the view of commemorating the honour conferred on him by the British Raj, he built a temple of Lord Krishna designating the same as the temple of Shri Balaji at a cost of Rs. 300,000.

A MEMORABLE DAY—FEBRUARY 1ST, 1835

In 1828 a frontier dispute occurred between the Sikkimese and the Nepalese. This was referred to the British Government according to the terms of the treaty signed at Titalya on February 10th, 1817. Lt-General (then Captain) C. A. Lloyd and Mr. J. W. Grant, I.C.S., the Commercial Resident at Maldah, were deputed to settle the internal factions between the Nepal and the Sikkim States.

While settling the internal feuds between these two States, principally in matters relating to the settling of

the boundary between the two territories, they were struck with the suitability of the hills, as a sanitarium for the British troops, on a summit of which they could spy from a distance the few lowly huts of the village of Darjeeling encircled by a forest.

In the long run, being deputed by the Court of Directors of the East India Company, Lloyd started negotiation with the Maharaja of Sikkim for ceding the mountainous region, now going by the charming name, Darjeeling, in lieu of money or land. Lloyd with his imposing personality succeeded in making the negotiation fruitful.

On the memorable day of February 1st, 1835, the Maharaja made over a strip of territory on the Himalaya, 24 miles long and about 5 to 6 miles wide, as a mark of friendship with the then Governor-General, Lord William Bentinck, for the establishment of a sanitarium for the convalescent servants of the East India Company.

In return the Maharaja was allowed a subsidy of Rs. 3,000/- a year, which was later on raised to Rs. 6,000/- per annum. At that time this territory yielded a pepper-corn revenue never exceeding Rs. 20/- per annum from the village of Darjeeling. It was, therefore, the giver who made a prodigious bargain out of this exchange.

AN ARROW WITH A LETTER ATTACHED THERETO—
JANUARY, 1849

The name of Sir Joseph Hooker, an eminent explorer and naturalist, who is undoubtedly the pioneer of Sikkim Himalayan exploration, will ever remain associated with the early history of Darjeeling and Sikkim at a time when the pagoda-capped Sikkim Himalaya had hardly been trodden by any foreigner.

On his return via the Islumbo Pass (11,000'), some six miles away to the north from the Singlala Peak as

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the crow flies, after the completion of an extensive tour to the most north-easterly parts of Nepal, he was told that Dr. Campbell, the then Superintendent of Darjeeling, went to visit the Rajah of Sikkim at Bhomsong, four days' march from Darjeeling and on the east bank of the Teesta. The year 1848 was then nearing its end, as Hooker had already crossed the above mentioned ice-clad pass on December 15th, 1848.

"Dr." Campbell had been authorized by the British Government to have an interview with the king. The idea behind it was to open a friendly communication between the Sikkim and the English Governments. As a matter of fact, according to the terms of a treaty, mutual protection and friendship had already been enjoined. But, for reasons best known to the Sikkim authorities, all intercourse between these two Governments had been jealously obstructed. This state of things is rather anomalous by reason of the fact that the dominions of the Rajah of Sikkim were redeemed by the Britishers from the Nepalese who had won the war.

Hooker made way to Bhomsong where he met Dr. Campbell in his tent pitched in an orange grove on the west bank of the Tista. For several days Dr. Campbell had been awaiting the arrival of the Rajah, whose movements and whereabouts were kept shrouded in mystery by the Dewan.

The Dewan, who used to trade in wares which the Britishers could supply better and cheaper, naturally did not like any foreign intrusion on his grand monopoly. The old pious Rajah of seventy years of age who was then quite aloof from the hearth and had been adhering to the cloister, was, as it has been remarked, 'a mere cipher in the hands of his ministers.'

The priests and the people who 'had long given evidence of their confidence in the English,' dreaded the Dewan.

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The Dewan did everything in his power to frustrate the meeting. At long last when the Rajah had arrived on the east bank of the Tista, the Dewan communicated with Dr. Campbell not by deputing messengers, but by his ingenious method of shooting across the turbulent river arrows to which were attached letters with their queer and conflicting contents. The arguments put forward to dissuade him from making a vain attempt to meet the Rajah were to the effect that the Rajah was ill at Tumlong, the then capital of Sikkim, that he had gone to Tibet, that he had religious rites to perform, etc., etc.

SIKKIM AND BRITAIN MEET ON THE EAST BANK OF THE TISTA—JANUARY, 1849

One day Dr. Campbell and Hooker were out from Bhomsong on an excursion up the Tista to visit a hill-stream, the Rumphiu, that takes its rise from the lofty mountain, Mainom (11,000'), noted for its beautiful rock overhangs on the track leading to its summit.

It may be mentioned here that during the Nepal war in 1787, the Lepchas defended the pass which represents a forest-clad saddle, being a depression formed by two ridges sweeping down from the Mainom peak on the north to Tendong peak (8,663') on the south.

On their way up the valley of the Tista, they were overtaken by messengers from the Dewan who brought news to the effect that the Rajah was awaiting their arrival on the eastern bank of the Tista. Forging the tumultuous torrent was out of the question. A bamboo-raft saved the situation.

What Dr. Campbell's presents consisted of are not known, but Hooker took with him some red cloth and beads to offer His Highness, as the time-honoured custom on such occasions was to exchange presents during or after an audience. Their 'wily friend, the Dewan,'

however, played deep game with the Britishers by contriving to bring the presents of Hooker and Campbell before their appearance so as to create an impression in the minds of the by-standers that the Britishers were tributaries to the King.

The audience chamber was a mere shed of neat bamboo wattle, some 20 feet in length. Clad in scarlet jackets stood two Bhutias on each side of the door with bows in their hands. As for the accommodation of the British representatives, their own chairs were carried before them. In the chamber were seated in gay attire befitting the occasion the king's relatives, kajees, counsellors, and mitred lamas. The inmates of this Sikkim Durbar held in the very lap of nature were 'mute and motionless as statues.' There were also a few spectators.

What was very peculiar was that the salutes of the sahibs as they appeared before the king evoked no response. After they had seated themselves, the Dewan came in, superbly attired in purple silk robe, and formally introduced them. The Rajah, to whom Hindustani was Greek, a rosy-cheeked Lama, named Tchebu, played the role of an interpreter. Tchebu had the reputation of being a devoted servant to the king, but like other lamas, he hated the Dewan. While Dr. Campbell and Tchebu were bent upon protracting the interview, the Dewan was anxious to expedite it by all means. It was soon clear that in the presence of the Dewan, nothing of any significance could be done, particularly in cementing the feelings between the two Governments.

The interview was an abrupt scene. Soon after, by way of a signal for their departure, white silk scarps were flung on their shoulders according to the custom prevailing in Tibet, Sikkim, and Bhutan. The sahibs were presented with China silks, wollen cloths, bricks of tea, and salt. On top of all these, ponies and even

yaks fell to their lot. Dr. Campbell and Hooker retraced their steps and branched off to ascend Mainom and visit certain monasteries on the way.

On completion of this excursion, Hooker proceeded towards Kangchenjunga, while Campbell returned to Darjeeling.

A TREACHERY—1849

Hooker undertook a journey to Darjeeling in April, 1848, when neither the E. B. Ry. nor the E. I. Ry. saw the light—the former was opened in 1862, while the latter, in 1855.

Hooker ascended Lake Cholamo, the Home of the Tista, one of the mightiest Himalayan rivers that gallops in harness through the Sikkim Himalaya. Hooker then made several attempts to climb Lama Andem (19,500'). He then made bold to use his endeavour to climb the great Sikkim giants, Kangchenjhau (22,509') and Pauhunri (23,180') that jealously guard the extreme north-eastern side of that country. Lastly, he crossed the frontier over the Donkia Pass (18,130'), and returned to the Lachung valley, whence on his way back to Darjeeling with Dr. Campbell, the Superintendent of Darjeeling, he as well as Dr. Campbell was seized and imprisoned at Tumlong, the then capital of Sikkim, although they were travelling in that land with the express permission of both the Rajs.

Hooker was placed under surveillance only and not allowed to have any communication with his companion. Dr. Campbell, however, was brutally tortured under the orders of Namgay, the brother-in-law of the aged king, and the Dewan of the State. He was confined in a small room until 24th December, 1849.

Protest on the part of the British Government proving inoperative, an expeditionary force had to be despatched over the borders in February, 1850. This expedition eventually resulted in the annexation of the

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whole of the district of Darjeeling, a territory of nearly 640 square miles and the withdrawal of the allowance.

A FINAL TREATY ON MARCH 28TH, 1861

In 1860 matters again came to such a pass that another expedition had to be forced into the territory of Sikkim under the command of Dr. Campbell. A portion of the Sikkim Giry to the north of the Ramman river was annexed.

During the same year, a meagre expeditionary force consisting of 160 soldiers only had to beat a hasty retreat from the village of Rinchingpong, forty miles away from Darjeeling, the force having proved inadequate for such an adventure.

Finally a force comprising 2,600 rifles crossed the Great Rangit on 2nd February of that year and crushed the enemy over 800 strong at Namchi, seventeen miles from Darjeeling. The British troops then forced their way into Tumlong, one day's march from and to the north-west of Gangtok, the present capital, and Nangay was expelled and finally a treaty was signed by the octogenarian Raja on March 28th, and an indemnity of Rs. 7,000/- had to be paid by the State.

A PRESENT TO HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN VICTORIA

A gentleman named Karbir Sunwar (a goldsmith by caste), a resident of Kalimpong, took a fancy to despatch a silver jar, called *tumba* in Darjeeling, to her Majesty the Queen Victoria as an humble token of kindest regards. It appears that he simply took a pride in this presentation.

After the lapse of nearly six months with the rolling back of the blue waves, so to say, reached the news from the shores of the fairyland that the whole of Kalimpong be gifted to the donor of the curio, or a sum of Rs. 1,000/- be paid to him as an alternative.

He was absolutely unprepared to receive such a news. When the news was communicated to the unsophisticated cosmopolite, he did not know whether he stood on his head or his heels. To arrive at a decision was an ordeal. At last he candidly remarked:—"What should or could I do with such an extensive territory? Let me better have in hand cash which can very well be expended on enjoyment." And so it transpired; liquid assets gave him in exchange inebriating liquid which filled up his wooden *tumbas* times out of number. Had his selection been a bit wiser, he would have been the Father of a ruling dynasty of Kalimpong, a lovely strip of territory covering an area of 524 square miles. It will be interesting to note that this authentic, historical fact has now gone out of recollection.

Although we got the story from various reliable sources, we still doubted very much as to the authenticity of this amazing event. At long last, a corroborative statement of a very old man residing in the Gajmere building at Darjeeling finally appeared to us to be definitely conclusive.

THE ASCENT OF A TOY-LIKE TRAIN

A toy like train leaves Siliguri and winding its way up the most romantic and the most crooked railroad in the world reaches Darjeeling without using cog-wheels. A giant's work it does by climbing 7,000 feet in 40 miles from Sukna, whence the locomotive ascends the Himalaya in earnest to Ghoom being the highest point it attains shortly before reaching Darjeeling.

To a new-comer the beauty that reveals itself at every turn of this charming railway simply baffles description. Blue and green foothills sharply outlined against the azure sky, stately trees ardently entangled with creepers, overhanging foliage, rocks and boulders, lovely waterfalls, extensive plain visible from time to time with meandering rivers looking like so many silver

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ribbons tell their respective tales. To the startlingly impressive scene which vision would fain to feast on without interruption is added the music of the beetles that, in a sense, enhances the solemn silence that reigns supreme in the Himalayan regions.

THE STONE OF MAHAKAL

The Stony Representation of the god Siva, now situated on the summit of the Observatory hill, and worshipped by the Hindus as well as the Buddhists, and as a matter of fact, paid homage to by many nationalities, was in the beginning inside a cave.

Orisons had been offered by Hindu priests ever since 1815, if not earlier, that is to say, at least two decades prior to the year 1835, when the district was gifted by the Maharaja of Sikkim to the East India Company. Dorje Lama who is accredited with all that is antiquarian about this hill station, and to whose name is ascribed the philological origin of the word, 'Darjeeling', appeared on the scene later than the advent of a Hindu priest—a fact which the writer has been able to gather from a reliable source.

The cave which is the crowning attraction of the station is formed of a few gigantic Sikkim gneiss rocks projecting forwards. It leads one to a subterranean region, if one would simply take the trouble of crawling down the narrow passage which is of the shape of the letter V. Inside the cave, there is just sufficient space to allow two persons to take their seats without knocking their heads on the roof of this piece of Nature's architecture.

A devotee who had been there for nearly a year, gave me to understand that he gained entrance with a good deal of hardship into another subterranean region through a cleavage at the remote extremity of the cave. It is the independent version of two devotees that each of them had the opportunity of noticing a transient glow

of light illuminating the cave at the dead hours of night.

Rather reluctantly the writer desires to place upon record a miraculous event that took place on the top of this hill in a new moon night. Palpable was the darkness all around. In the stillness the fluttering of the long Tibetan flags proved awe-inspiring. All of a sudden the whole atmosphere of the summit became surcharged with a fragrant principle. Flowers were, however, then conspicuous by their absence. Although this is not a place for digression in the realm of Yoga-philosophy, yet let us quote a few lines from the Voice of Silence by Madam Blavatsky, which has some bearing on the truth underlying.

“Behold the mellow light that floods the eastern sky. In signs of praise both heaven and earth unite. And from the four-fold manifested powers a chant of love ariseth, both from the flaming fire and flownig water, and from sweet-smelling earth and rushing wind.”

SUNRISE FROM TIGER HILL

The trip to the summit of the hill is through Ghoom, the highest railway station on the D. H. Ry. The elevation of Ghoom is 7,407 feet from sea level, while the altitude of the top of this hill exceeds that of Ghoom by 1,100 feet.

In the fast receding glimmer of the night, the spectator finds himself standing on the mound bedewed with sparkling frost, plunged in hush and silence and steeped in frigid cold.

Sweeping over an arc of a huge circle which seems to pass through an ultra-mudane region, is seen towering aloft in bold relief peak after peak of perpetual snow in a magnificent panorama wondrously beautiful in their outnumbering diversity. As one stands face to face with the workmanship of the Great Creator, a part of one's consciousness is imperceptively withdrawn, being magnetically attracted to the boundless space all

around. The eastern horizon is reached by range after range of mountains greenly clad by the Sylvan Deity from the very foot to the summit.

Soon after, appear horizontal wrinkles of resplendent colours' stretching across the celestial canopy, skirted by fleecy clouds which bring into prominence the play of ever-changing and lovely hues. The winged arrows of shooting rays of golden sheen, emanating from the hidden side of the globe, intersect the horizontal streaks of palpable colours ceaselessly changing.

Attention must not now be distracted for a moment, as the celestial disc springs up through the horizon crowning the snowy range all of a sudden. The crimson sun, as it leaps upon the bright chariot of rainbow hues, presents a soul-stirring scene. Many a globe-trotter has been unanimous in their expression when they hold that no view all the world over can compare with the one that unveils itself at the sunrise observed from the Tiger Hill.

A traveller whose vision has not been entertained with the two sights, the Taj Mahal by moonlight and sunrise from Tiger Hill, has missed a pleasure that does not lend itself to be substituted.

Although a thousand and one visitors annually flock to this summit to see sunrise, particularly in the months of April and May before the monsoon breaks out, and then again, in the dry months of October and November, most of them are more or less disappointed, as the horizon is not always clear, owing to dense and gloomy mist sweeping over the landscape in an extremely freakish way.

The scene associated with the sunrise itself also varies a good deal. It is better to see with one's own eyes, as although the writer has striven to describe it, the landscape that presents itself at the summit of the hill as well as the beauty of sunrise and the grandeur attendant upon it, simply baffles description.

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The altitude of Senchal and Tiger Hill are respectively 8,163 feet and 8,515 feet. The first glittering rays of the sun shoot ahead and shed light upon the twin peaks of Kangchenjunga and gradually paint the whole of its snow body with a beautiful orange colour. One can notice this scene from the town of Darjeeling too.

From Tiger Hill, just the top of Mount Everest (29,002') is visible, peeping out through two other peaks standing by its side. The peak that looks highest is that of Makalu (27,799'). These three peaks are seen to the north-west a little left of Phalut.

Everest looks smaller than any of its two sisters, although Everest is not only higher than either of them, but the highest peak in the world, the distance in a straight line of Everest from Tiger Hill being 107 miles. This phenomenon arises from the fact that Everest is several miles beyond them.

Kurseong is visible to the south. In hazy distance are noticeable like so many silver bands, the Tista, the Mahanady, the Balasun and the Mechi, meandering down to the south.

Chumal Rhi mountain of Tibet which is by far the most beautiful mountain in the world is seen in the north-east, 84 miles away as the crow flies. It looks like a great rounded mass over the snowy Chola Range. One comes face to face with this peak of superb beauty from Phari Jong which is 129 miles away from Darjeeling.

THE MAHANADY RIVER—ITS UNDERGROUND FLOW

The Mahanady River has its source near Mahaldiram hill to the east of Kurseong. As soon as it debouches through a gorge of the Himalaya, it runs through a subterranean stratum of sand for a distance of nearly four miles before heaving into sight again. In the rainy season, this queer phenomenon disappears with

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the rushing in of a mighty torrent from the hills, which makes the river overflow its banks. This river has been spanned by an iron bridge to the north of the town of Siliguri. At a distance of four miles from the bridge, and in the downward course of the river, it receives its contribution from the Balasun river which flows past the valley below Kurseong.

THE TISTA RIVER—THE MIGHTIEST DRAINER OF THE EASTERN HIMALAYA

The Tista, the most magnificent river in the district, has its source in Lake Cholamo, situated at an elevation of 17,500', which exceeds twice the height of the well-known Tiger Hill of Darjeeling by 500'. This lake lies to the north of the Donkia Pass near Shetschen, wherefrom the summit of the pass is about 5 miles' ascent. The lake is 74 miles away to the north-east of Darjeeling as the crow flies.

On its way, contributions are made to it by streams which rise in Thangu, Yeumthang and Donkia La ranges far far away from and due north of Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim. Then, as it approaches the Tista Suspension Bridge, which joins Kalimpong with Darjeeling, it receives a mighty torrent of water from a stream called the Great Rangit. From this confluence of the two rivers, the aforesaid bridge is nearly 4 miles.

The Tista river debouches through the gorge at the Tista bridge, at an almost imperceptible gradient, taking a southerly course and finally enters into the plains through Sivoke, where it has been spanned by the famous Coronation Bridge.

It would be of much interest to many a reader to mention here that this river passes through the Jalpaiguri and the Rungpore districts and falls into the great Brahmaputra at Fulcherry or the Tista Mukhi (mouth) Ghat. The combined waters then flow on to Goalundo, where the Padma, uniting with them forms the

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unbounded expanse of waters known as the Meghna (skyblue) river, over 60 miles in width, so that as the steamer plies on through the mid-stream, the tall palm trees on either bank look like so many tiny plants or even dots.

In the hilly region, the bed of the Tista is rocky and its banks precipitous, but as it enters into the plains, its bed becomes sandy and flat being slightly sloping. The Kalimpong railway line passes along its right bank. Although one bank of the stream is at a stone's throw from the other, the mighty torrent, it appears, would frustrate the attempt of a tusker to ford it over. A few miles from the Tista Bridge, the Rangli Rangliot flows into it through its right, while the Rilli of Kalimpong through the left bank.

The Tista valley is one of the most fascinating valleys in the world, while the Tista River is the mightiest drainer of the Eastern Himalaya.

THE GREAT RANGIT

The Great Rangit takes its rise from the glacier of Kabru, and proceeds southwards till it meets the Ramman river coming down from its source near Phalut in the Singalela range. The combined waters, after traversing just a quarter of a mile, take up a further tribute from the Little Rangit hailing from the base of the Tonglu spur in the Singalela range, and therefrom the Great Rangit flows on for a distance of about nine miles till it merges into the Tista river. On its way, it is spanned by the historically famous Manjitar Suspension Bridge below Badamtam, connecting Darjeeling with Sikkim.

THE CONFLUENCE OF THE GREAT AND THE LITTLE RANGIT

While proceeding down the Takvar road which leads to the Singla Bazaar, all of a sudden at a bend of the

road the lovely valleys of these two streams meandering over a level tract of land encircled by mighty hills on all sides greet the vision of the spectator from an elevation of nearly 1000 feet.

The Great Rangit presents to the view bright green colour very nearly resembling that of emerald, while the little Rangit wears a bright blue face. From that elevation the well-composed landscape that revealed itself to the writer appeared to him to have snatched a beautitude beyond the reach of art. Even the yonder Suspension Bridge itself spanning the Little Rangit in that lovely association of sceneries looked picturesque to a degree which can better be imagined than described. The graceful mountain cows grazing on a lawn by the side of the bridge, the cluster of huts of the Singla Bazaar on the plain bosom of the valleys looming at a distance of nearly a mile as the crow flies, the tropical trees, scrubs, and exuberant foliage characteristic of the vegetations of such low elevations that cover the slopes in front of the spectator, the lovely delta covered with sands, scrubs and long grasses, the attractive windings of the streams, looking artificially coloured, the towering ranges of prodigious heights standing like sentinels over the valleys,—all combined together to form a landscape which does not lend itself to description.

On top of all these, when one reaches the right bank of the Great Rangit, after traversing a further distance of nearly two miles, one finds to his great astonishment pebbles of variegated colours very closely strewn over the right bank of the river. There are pebbles of green, blue, yellow, chocolate, black, white, violet, brown, indigo, and red colours which are all of distinct hues, each pebble representing a single colour except a few around which run veins of a different shade. All that we can say is that here is a scene which must be seen to be believed.

The Great Rangit is not fordable at any time of the year. During the rainy season the beauty of the bank is lost as it is then overflowed and these pebbles are not visible.

The Tibetan plateau itself is seamed with interesecting ridges of undulating and barren hills, the denuded rocks of which are of various colours. This being the case, it is easy to surmise that these pebbles are the finished water-worn products of stones which had slipped away from Kabru and its satellites during the occurrence of rock avalanches in ages long gone by, and were in the course of time swept away by the glaciers of Kabru.

The gradient of the rocky and boulder-strewn bed of the Great Rangit near Singla Bazaar is not perceptible, but still the current is very strong. In 1914 when Mr. G. P. Robertson, the then Municipal Engineer of Darjeeling, while engaged in surveying the river in a jolly-boat in connection with the installation of an electric power station was drowned in the river nearly a mile from Singla Bazaar along the downward course of the stream. The boat which had been going off like a shot had to ere long confront the fearful turbulence of waters at a place where they struck against a huge boulder peeping out of the water surface. The whirl-pool proved more than a match for the frail specimen of the floating craft which at short notice sank down leaving no trace of those who were on the boat.

And, the Great Rangit has not so far been harnessed to provide motive power to be utilised for illumination.

PHALUT, THE SUPERB VIEW-POINT OF THE HIGHEST PEAKS

Phalut is the world-renowned view point of Mount Everest and the mighty Kangchenjunga group of mountains.



HIS SERENITY THE TASHI LAMA

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The forest-clad range (Singlela range) that marks the western boundary of the town of Darjeeling and separates it from Nepal seems to be very close to the town, not more than, say, a couple of miles away. As a matter of fact, the nearest peak of the range, viz., Tonglu, is fully 11 miles from Darjeeling, while Phalut is 19 miles distant as the crow flies.

This apparent proximity of the mountain is one of Nature's illusions, which on the Tibetan plateau has attained its climax, so much so that distance seems to have been almost annihilated. This state of affairs is due to extreme clarity of air in Tibet. Photography in that land of wonders is a failure, as everything seems to be equally distant—it appears, for instance, that there is no space between ranges, and consequently the perspective effect of distant landscape is entirely lost. Rain sweeps down all dust particles floating in the atmosphere and makes it abundantly transparent. This is why, when after several days' rainfall a day breaks fine over the ranges far and near, this nearness asserts itself in a positive degree.

From the high valley of Manaybhanjan at an elevation of nearly 5,000 feet from the sea level, the steep ascent to the Tonglu peak which towers up to a height of 10,074 feet by traversing a distance of eight miles is a unique experience in itself. The climb is alluring. It is a climb that carries with it an impression as if one is making a journey to another planet—an impression which is intensified by the stately trees and foliage that in some places screen the skies from sight.

Those who come to Darjeeling for a pleasure trip, and after visiting, say, the Tiger Hill and the Senchal Lakes retrace their steps without taking the trouble of climbing at least the first summit of this range carry in their mind a rather poor reminiscence of only hills and dales, and not, if we may say so, mountains. Darjeeling, which has an elevation of 6,812 feet when viewed from

Tonglu, appears to be lying far below 'without a leg to stand on'—such is the lamentable effect of an altitude difference of 3,000 feet only.

There is a good bridle road all along from Manay-bhanjan Valley to Phalut, the extreme North-west point of Darjeeling. This road naturally takes a zigzag course.

The short cuts to Tonglu are very tempting, but they lead to treacherous scree, which, so to speak, infest the slopes at certain places—these are pebbles which by some divine arrangement lie scattered all about almost totally covering the slopes in some regions. Although keeping one's balance on the steep hill sides is not often a difficult task, the pebbles tend to give rise to unstable equilibrium and a slip undoubtedly means a disaster. Once a climber inadvertently sets in motion one or two of these embodiments of passive resistance while trampling on the same, a host of others will follow up in earnest, and an involuntary glissade will ensue. The resulting and ever-increasing momentum produced by gravitation, if not arrested by some means or other, will eventually prove disastrous to the human frame in a short time.

Tonglu (the Hill of Fire) is 23 miles distant from Darjeeling, of which the first 15 miles are motorable.

The next stage is Sandakphu, 14 miles from Tonglu. On the way to Sandakphu will be seen forest of gigantic trees. The forest scenery at Kalpokhri on the way to Sandakphu is marvellous. To the Western Himalaya, where bare rocks are in full play, such stately forests are unknown.

Here silence reigns supreme, and any sound or noise becomes greatly magnified by being resounded by an echo. These echoes are often cheering to solitary travellers.

One must be acquainted with the fact that this forest abounds in big snakes including pythons. But, fortunately these are rarely met with. Hill bears sometimes come into view and are with truth a menace to trespassers in this wild region under the banners of the denizens of

the forest. Tigers which are very rarely found have long and shaggy hairs.

Enquiry for years from the people dwelling on the Singelela spur enabled the writer to get this definite information, which in the course of his studies was found corroborated by the authentic observations of Sven Hedin and Landor in other parts of the Himalaya. In order that these animals are able to withstand the extreme rigor of these high altitudes, Nature has endowed them with such befitting coats.

Trees, scrubs, and all vegetations in these regions are by the Providence similarly protected from extreme cold by the exuberant growth of mosses that cover them up thickly almost from head to foot.

The consciousness of mosses evidently is of a much lower grade than that of other vegetations. To the thoughtful the following sayings of a Persian mystic in which science and philosophy unite and melt into one will be significant and suggestive. "God sleeps in the mineral, dreams in the vegetable, wakes to consciousness in the animal, to self-consciousness in man, and will awake to divine consciousness in the man made perfect."

Sandakphu means 'The Home of Aconite'. Aconite goes by the name of Monkshood, deadly night-shed, or wolfsbane. These flowers turn over and look like a hood thrown over the head, and hence the name, monkshood. Aconite itself means 'without dust', and so it is, because of its growth on dry rocks, where there is very little earth about to enable it to take root. The root is far more poisonous than the plant. It is said that in some parts of Switzerland Aconite is grown in rows along the streets, and the tops are cut off and eaten by the people. Perhaps under domestication plants like animals lose their vicious attributes.

The sweet smell of the flowers of this plant when in bloom in this region is in itself highly poisonous, so much so that it may prove fatal. Inhalation of camphor

acts as an antidote to the poisonous effect of an olfaction of Aconite. The writer is almost sure of this fact, although he cannot cite any instance in his favour.

Ponies, cows, and goats happening to nibble the shrub while grazing are sure to die. The poisonous action of Aconite whether eaten or inhaled is sudden and violent, and soon death closes a scene.

Under the rigor of cutting, icy-cold winds, the plants thrive with impunity. It is an astonishing fact that no matter what an ailment may be, if the onset is sudden and violent, or it is caused by exposure to dry cold wind, Aconite in infinitesimal doses very often cures the malady with a rapidity which characterises the onset of the same. On the Himalayas such causation of diseases is evidently very common; it thus appears that Aconite grows here according to a Divine plan. The Homœopathic system of treatment has taken advantage of these facts, and Aconite when indicated comes into play in innumerable diseases which are often cured under its action as if by the touch of a magic wand.

It would be interesting here to note a few facts about this deadly poison. We quote the following lines from Dr. J. H. Clarke: "Teste mentions that it has the reputation of being much more poisonous to carnivorous animals than to the herbivora. This he partly endorses, and it has recently been apparently confirmed by a vain attempt to poison an elephant with Aconite in this country. A carrot was scraped out and enough Aconitine to poison 2,000 men was put in. The elephant ate it readily, but nothing at all happened, and three hours later a large dose of prussic acid had to be administered, which proved fatal in a short time."

Honey is available in this region in great quantity. But, unfortunately, when Aconite is in bloom, bees carry the honey of these flowers too with the result that if the quantity of Aconite honey be negligible, it proves intoxicating, otherwise it may prove fatal. Cases of death by

taking honey are on record. These are due to the presence of Aconite in the stuff.

It is hardly known to the tourists as well as most people of Darjeeling that apes and even devils, a kind of vicious animal, called by the hill people "Satan", infest these forests, but fortunately they are hardly met with in the day-time; besides they inhabit the denser and more remote regions of the woods.

In the region from Tonglu to Phalut, a great number of yaks are reared by shepherds. Yaks to a certain extent resemble in appearance the American bisons. A tourist has given a funny appellative to this beast, which, he says, is a buffalo in petticoats.

There are many lovely grazing grounds in the tract extending from Tonglu to Phalut, where viewing the undulating waves of long grasses flooding the slopes and plateaus at some places of this lofty region, is in itself a fascination.

Here some hillmen easily earn their livelihood by rearing goats, sheep and yaks only. The writer is under the impression that these independent people removed far away from the toils and turmoils of urban life and quartered in the very lap of nature where every phenomenon speaks of unending peace and happiness, the birth-right of the humanity, really feel the pulsations of life.

On the way to Sandakphu unexpectedly comes into sight a beautiful pool with a small clusters of huts at its edge. From here, passing through 25 steep zigzags, one reaches Sandakphu after a hardy march of 6 hours or so. This is the highest peak on the Singlila Range lying within the British territory.

At Sandakphu, owing to strong gales and extreme cold, the rhododendrons and other trees cannot grow up to their full height. From here a splendid panoramic view of the snowy range of Nepal (not visible from the Observatory Hill) is obtained, apart from the snowy range that catches the sight of a spectator stationed at

Darjeeling. This Nepal range includes the peaks of Mount Everest and Makalu.

The next march is to Phalut, just 12 miles away. Phalut means 'the Denuded Peak' and so it is. Tourists from different parts of the globe flock to Phalut, the extreme north-west point of the British boundary over the Singalela Range, with the object of having a complete view of the kingdom of snows comprising the peak of Mount Everest, the highest pinnacle of eternal snow, standing like a sentinel with all its superb beauty between the two closed lands of Nepal and Tibet.

Connecting the highest peaks of the world, Everest and Kangchenjunga, will be seen a jagged line of snows which skirts for a distance the vast table-land of Tibet, so as to keep the roof of the world hidden from the gaze of the world at large—a divine arrangement quite in the fitness of things. This panoramic view of the vast snowy range has undoubtedly no parallel all the world over, in beauty and massiveness, height and extensiveness.

In the months of April and May when the whole region extending from Tonglu to Phalut is ablaze with brilliant flowers of rhododendrons, one feels as if one is passing through a fairyland.

A tourist who would not grudge undertaking excursions in the neighbouring regions of Phalut will be amply rewarded by many charming finds, such as fascinating flowers decorating secluded spots below rock overhangs where direct rays of the sun hardly penetrate.

On the western slopes in Nepal will be found a huge rock inhabited by a pair of pigeons. The Nepalese from distant villages come here to worship at this place regarded by them as holy. Here is the source of a river.

SARAT CHANDRA DAS,
'THE HARDY SON OF SOFT BENGAL.'

The name of Sarat Chandra Das will ever remain associated with the Queen of Hill Stations.

He was born in a Hindu family in the town of Chittagong, very aptly called 'the Garden of Bengal'. While he was a college student he attracted the notice of Sir Alfred Croft who became later on the Director of Public Instruction of Bengal. Sarat Chandra had a great deal of patronage in his hands in matters relating to his geographical and literary works.

It was through Sir Alfred's representation to the Government of India that his hopes of making a journey to Tibet became translated into action.

In 1874 Lama Ugyen-gyasto, who had some relation with the then ruling family of that State and who had been from the age of ten a lama in the Pamionchi monastery, visited Darjeeling for the first time as a person in attendance of the Raja of Sikkim. In 1874 at the request of Mr. Edgar, the Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling, he filled the post of Tibetan teacher at the said school. He was thenceforth instructed in survey training by Colonel H. C. V. Tanner of the Survey Department of India, and in 1874 deputed to Tibet with presents from his lamasery to be offered to the great monastery of Tashilunpo at Shigatse, the second greatest town of Tibet and the premier seat of Tibetan culture and learning. He succeeded in getting a passport from the Prime Minister of Tashi Lama authorising Sarat Chandra Das to enter Tibet.

Accompanied by Ugyen-gyatso who acted as Secretary and Surveyor, and armed with these credentials, Sarat Chandra safely reached Tashilunpo for the first time on July 7, 1879, where he stayed for six months. During this period he was able to study many Tibetan works and explored countries north and north-east of Kangchenjunga. He brought back with him quite a number of books, both Tibetan and Sanskrit.

The year 1880 was most profitably spent in writing many articles particularly on history, religion and ethnology of Tibet, which were published in the Journal of the

Bengal Asiatic Society, and in that of the Buddhist Text Society founded by himself in 1892.

At night on November 7, 1881, Sarat Chandra left Darjeeling in disguise of a lama and crossed the turbulent torrent of the Great Rangit at Singla Bazar, somehow or other supporting his body on three bamboos loosely laid over the stream.

On November 19, he crossed the Kang Pass to the north of the Kang Peak which is distinctly visible from Darjeeling, being the last snow-peak to the north-west of a spectator from that hill station. On his way to Tashilunpo, the 22nd day was extremely trying. He writes: "November 29—And so with neither food nor drink, placed as if in the grim jaw of death in the dreary regions of snow, where death alone dwells, we spent the most dismal night. * * * The very remembrance of the sufferings of that dreadful night makes me shudder even now, but I quickly recover under the inexpressible delight I feel at the consciousness of my great success. This was the most trying night I ever passed in my life." On the way sometimes he had to glissade down snow-slopes. He reached Tashilunpo on December 9, after making a journey of a little over one month.

In the estimation of Mr. F. S. Smythe, one of the most renowned mountaineers, who with his colleagues had to pass through Kang La and Kangbachen in Nepal during the Kangchenjunga Expedition of 1930, the journey of Sarat Chandra was a feat. He writes: "In 1879, S. C. D. (Babu Sarat Chandra Das), the best known of the "Pandits", crossed the Kang La, 16,373 feet, from Sikkim to Nepal, passed up the valley of Kangbachen, traversed the Jongsong La, 20,000 feet, and the Choten Nyima La to Tashi Lhunpo in Tibet. This is certainly one of the boldest journeys on record in that part of the world, and the crossing of the Jongsong La, a high glacier pass, was a great feat. Two years later, in

1881, he crossed the Namgo La, north of Kangbachen, and continued to Lhasa."

In his second visit to Tashi Lhunpo, he took immense trouble in reaching the very important monastery of Sakya to the west of the city on the further side of the Brahmaputra (known in Tibet as the Tsanpo), just where Sven Hedin's Trans-Himalayan ranges begin. He also visited Samye and Tse-tang Lamaseries in the east.

Sakya is a wonderful monastery, as here, so to speak, percolated Sanskrit literatures in ages long gone by through the Manas region, the birth place of the Great Vedanta philosophy, lying on the threshold of the closed land of Tibet on its westernmost side. Sarat Chandra took with him a 'booty' of Sanskrit works from the monastery which for hundreds of years had been extinct in India where they took birth.

In his second journey to Tibet, he himself surveyed the famous Scorpion Lake, the Yamdo-tso, with its curious mountainous peninsula, water of which is said to be unwholesome, although animals drink it with impunity, and its strange inner lake, called Dumo-tso or Female Demon Lake. It may be mentioned here that this very extensive Lake which lies on the way to Lhasa is 81 miles from that capital and 197 miles from Darjeeling. This was a discovery made by Sarat Chandra with accurate calculations as to the true dimensions and shape of the lake which also goes by the name, Lake Palti.

The explorer in honour of Sir Alfred Croft named the lake 'Yamdo Croft'. Sir Alfred struck with the importance of this discovery despatched Ugyengyatso to have the lake accurately surveyed once again. This survey, the result of which was essentially the same as that of Sarat Chandra, simply went to enhance the credit of S. C. D.

While at Lhasa Sarat Chandra was not shown round many places of interest of the mystic city.

In 1885 the Government of India decided to send a mission to Tibet and Hon'ble Colman Macauley was deputed to Peking to have the contemplated embassy duly authorised. Sarat Chandra made his stay in China for six months, during which period, it is said, he rendered to Mr. Macauley invaluable service with the result that on return to Bengal he was given the titles of Rai Bahadur and C.I.E.

Later on in 1881 came forward rather late the Royal Geographical Society to honour the personage for his geographical researches in the closed land of mysteries, which previous to him was trodden by Nain Singh in 1866 and by Kishen Singh in 1880.

Rai Sarat Chandra's voluminous work, Tibetan-English Dictionary, is in itself an ever-lasting monument to his genius and erudition.

William Woodville Rockhill, an illustrious American scholar, a singularly impartial critic of the works of native explorers in Tibet, and who has very aptly penned the following words which refer to himself: "Tibet has been my life's hobby", has left behind him the following lines of appreciation about Sarat Chandra.

Personally I am under a lasting debt of gratitude to him for the valuable information which he gave me while in Peking, and which has been later on of great use to me during my explorations in Tibet, and I hold myself particularly fortunate in having been chosen by the Royal Geographical Society to edit his reports, as it is a means of publicly expressing my indebtedness to him, and also, I trust of helping him to take the place, he so justly deserves beside Csoma de Koros, as one of the greatest pioneers of exploration and discovery in Tibet."

A few words must here be said about the Lama who accompanied Sarat Chandra to Tibet. During his first journey to Tibet he was accompanied by his wife and could do no better than to play the part of a pilgrim in this forbidden land. He even penetrated to Bhutan,

but being harassed had to come back to Lhasa. Here his note books were burnt. His wife could somehow manage to keep his survey instruments hidden. He was fortunately allowed to re-enter Lhasa, but as ill luck would have it he was recognised by a Darjeeling porter. He managed to save himself by taking refuge in the house of a Chinese soldier.

A tragedy! Soon after Prof. Sarat had left Tibet, it was rumoured that he smuggled himself into and out of Tibet. The Tibetan Government forthwith threw all the party connected with his visit into prison, particularly the Prime Minister of Tashilunpo who had secretly furnished him with a passport, another man in whose house he lodged and boarded, and the great Lama Sengchen Dorjachen, the tutor of Rai Sarat Chandra, during his stay at Tashilunpo.

The great Lama was not only the tutor of the then Tashi Lama, the Pope of Tibet, but was a pillar of Buddhism in that land. He was not only one of the most enlightened but also one of the holiest persons that ever lived in Tibet. Tibetan Buddhism, however, did not spare him; he was accused of having divulged national secrets to a foreign emissary.

Surrounded by a throng of sympathisers and sobbing people, the body of this Tibetan priest weighted down with a large stone was slowly lowered into the raging torrents of the Tsanpo (the great Brahmaputra) after he had finished reading some sacred text. It is said that he looked perfectly serene and composed—his expression did not betray the least sign of fear. He was lowered into the turbulent waters from a high rock and then after a while pulled up, but to their astonishment it was found that life had not departed yet. The priest was then drowned for a second time without any better result. The executioners themselves then hesitated to proceed any further in the matter.

At this juncture, to the great surprise of the multitude of people on the spot, the Lama gathered sufficient strength and then spoke out: "No use mourning my death! My task is done; I must now depart. Make haste and sink me under the water. When I will be no more, let Buddhism flourish in Tibet in ever-increasing degree." Death closed the scene of this most unmerited and inhuman punishment. Inscrutable are the ways of God!

More mysteries were unveiled with the unveiling of Lhasa in 1904, three days after Colonel Young-husband at the head of the Military Mission to Tibet had rode through the Pargo Kaling gate of that mystic city on August 4 of that year. After a treaty was signed on August 7 in the throne-room of the Pope King of Tibet, who had already deserted his trust at that national crisis by leaving Lhasa by a back-door, Colonel Young-husband, while releasing all prisoners of war, demanded as the first token of peace that the Tibetans would set at liberty all those who had been imprisoned on account of dealings with the Britishers. What followed would be best appreciated on going through *The Unveiling of Lhasa*, written by Edmund Candler, who had accompanied the Expedition and was an eye-witness to all that took place.

Candler says:

"An old man and his son were brought into the hall looking utterly bowed and broken. The old man's chains had been removed from his limbs that morning for the first time in twenty years, and he came in blinking at the unaccustomed light like a blind man miraculously restored to sight. He had been the steward of the Phalla estate near Dongste: his offence was hospitality shown to Sarat Chandra Das in 1884. An old monk of Sera was released next. He was so weak that he had to be supported into the room. His offence was that he had been the teacher of Kawa Guchi, the Japanese traveller who visited Lhasa in the disguise of a Chinese pilgrim. We who looked on this sad relics of humanity felt that their

restitution to liberty was in itself sufficient to justify our advance to Lhasa."

It is all over with Sarat Chandra and his saintly teacher, but they still abide in the memory of hundreds of their admirers.

ALEXANDER CSOMA DE KOROS,
'AN ENIGMATIC MAN.'

Very few people in even Darjeeling have ever heard the name of this queer personage. While writing his "*Darjeeling at a Glance*", the writer left no stone unturned in possessing some knowledge about this mysterious man. The result was absolutely meagre. He was enabled to simply pen the following words: "It would be of interest to many readers that Csoma de Koros, a native of Hungary, a philologist, who died at Darjeeling on 11th April, 1842, at the age of forty-four (his tomb is to be found in the Old Cemetery) on his way to Lhasa, to resume his philological researches compiled his Dictionary and Grammar of the Tibetan language. To his lot, however, fell the patient bearing of privation for four years."

Later on, he came across the following lines of Prof. Roerich.

"The teachings brought from Shambhala often find their way into the works of European scientists. For instance, in the cemetery of Darjeeling is buried an enigmatic man, Hungarian by birth who lived at the end of the eighteenth century. He came walking from Hungary to Tibet, remaining many years in unknown monasteries. In the thirties of the last century, Csoma de Körös, as he was called, died. In his works he pointed out the teachings from Shambhala, designating the next hierarchy to succeed Buddha. It is very characteristic that this savant came from Hungary. His activity was entirely enigmatic."

His life history still remained an enigma to the writer. In the course of his studies on the sublime Himalaya in the Imperial Library in Calcutta during the winter of 1942, he happened to come across not a single line about Csoma, except the following lines.

“Kanam is a celebrated place; in one of its modest monasteries, there lived for sometime the pioneer of Tibetan studies, Csoma de Körös, who having left Hungary at the age of twenty-four, traversed on foot a great part of Europe and Asia, and who arrived in this country instigated by the desire to find in Central Asia the origins of the Hungarian language, etc., etc.”

On the last day while bidding adieu to the grand reading room and the great Library of the East, he became painfully conscious of his failure in fishing up an account of his life. While retracing his steps slowly, his eyes were most mysteriously directed to a book styled ‘Tibetan Tales’. The moment it was opened, the much-coveted name of Csoma de Körös, with those couples of fantastic, foreign dots met his eyes. At long last was revealed the secrets of his life which so far remained a sealed book to the writer.

This is perhaps an instance of affinity of thoughts when brought into focus. The courteous readers would not, it is hoped, take him to task for such an apparently egoistic digression for the simple reason that it is a book on the mystic Himalaya, here the phase of mysticism being attached to the digression itself, which he is tempted to prolong a little.

To study all about the mighty Himalaya and the epic events that unrolled themselves in missions, explorations, expeditions, and many other dramatic incidents that took place in this world of snows would evidently necessitate years of continuous studies. This being the case, the writer in haste missed Csoma de Körös in the very last few pages of Volume III of Sven Hedin’s *Trans-Himalaya*, while perusing the same. This overlooking

again was later on mysteriously compensated by a valued friend of his, M. M. Robertson of Edinburgh, now in Nizam's dominions, who took the fancy of placing order with a firm in Bombay advising despatch of the three volumes of Sven Hedin's immortal book, *Trans-Himalaya*, direct to my address at Darjeeling.

These volumes which have been long out of print I look upon as Godsend, especially because here is found valuable informations about this saintly scholar whose life is shrouded in mystery.

Sven Hedin writes: "His greatness and his reputation survive in the works he published. But his personality and his life are little known, and hence the mystical charm surrounding his name."

Dr. Sven Hedin has left recorded in his monograph, *Trans-Himalaya*, a sketch of the life of Csoma, following the account given by Dr. Th. Duka in his book, *Life and Works of Alexander Csoma de Körös* (London, 1885), *A Biography compiled chiefly from hitherto unpublished data*. This book has long been out of print. So the following life history of this wonderful man is based on what we possess in Sven Hedin's *Trans-Himalaya* and the introduction to the *Tibetan Tales* by W. R. S. Ralston.

Körösi Csoma, Sandor or Alexander Csoma de Körös was born on April 4, 1784. According to another finding, he was thirty years old in 1820 when he left his country for ever. This datum works out at 1790 as his year of birth.

In his youth he devoted himself with indefatigable energy to the study of Oriental languages, theology, geography, and history of the world. He studied in a college for many years with the idea of taking orders.

When he was thirty or thirty-six years old he left his mother country for good with the view of ascertaining the origin of the Huns, as he had been under the

impression that the Huns were the forefathers of the Hungarians.

It will be of interest to readers to know that this fierce and indomitable tribe of Central Asia invaded India in the sixth century.

With this life's mission in view, the Hungarian traveller set out on foot on a long, long journey, trying and perilous in the extreme. He travelled on foot to the Balkan countries, sailed to Alexandria, thence proceeded to Aleppo on foot. Thereafter he traversed to Baghdad which he reached on foot and by water on a raft. From Baghdad he had the fortune to travel on horseback up to Teheran, the capital of Persia. Here he spent four years receiving English hospitality from the Europeans attached to the embassies. In the spring of 1821 he left Teheran in Persian costume and took the ancient caravan road to Meshed, Khorasan, Bukhara, Balk, Kulm, Bamian, and Kabul. He did most of the distance on foot.

Dr. Sven Hedin writes: "In the year 1890 I travelled along the same road as Csoma and can very well imagine the privations he must have endured seventy years earlier."

At Khorasan he spent six months. On his way he had the unique opportunity of making acquaintance with Ranjit Singh's French officers, General Allard and Ventura. He accompanied them to Lahore. It was through their patronage that he obtained permission for an entry into Kashmir wherefrom he had the intention of proceeding to Yarkand.

It was, however, found out that the journey to Yarkand was not only difficult but very expensive. He, therefore, travelled to Leh, the Capital of Ladak.

It may be mentioned here that Leh is the great gateway to Tibet proper from the far west just as Sining Fu flanking the Koko-Nor depression is the grand north-

eastern approach from the Chinese territory into the closed land of Tibet.

On his journey back from Leh he met Moorcroft, a great Himalayan explorer, near Kashmir frontier in July, 1822. Incidentally, it may be mentioned here that Moorcroft is one of the most enthusiastic pioneer who had explored the sublime region of the holy lake, Manasarowar, and tried his level best to unveil the mystery underlying the existence of a channel joining the holy lake with its adjoining neighbour, Rakhas Tal. Mr. Moorcroft rendered him valuable assistance by giving him money, books and letters of introduction. Csoma, before penetrating into Tibet, deemed it worth while to first study the Tibetan language. Through Moorcroft's patronage he was enabled to spend sixteen months in the monastery of Yangla. Previous to this he learnt the language while at Ladak. Then he spent a few months at Sabathu in Kulu (here at Kulu in the heart of the Western Himalaya is the ashram of the world-renowned Prof. Roerich).

Lastly he came to learn that all the volumes of Tibetan Texts were to be found in the monastery of Kanam on the high valleys of the Sutlej.

At Kanam in a monk's cell he plunged himself in the studies of the Tibetan Texts for three years from 1827 to 1830 under a highly erudite Lama, named Bande Sangs-Rgyas PHun-Tsogs.

He made a very significant discovery that the 320 volumes which constitute all Tibetan learning and religion are but a translation of an Indian Sanskrit original.

Great privations and dire poverty fell to his lot. It has been rightly observed that 'Poverty had no power on him.' While at Kanam, Csoma was offered a monthly remuneration of 50 rupees a month by the Government of India, on the understanding that he would place at the disposal of the Government the results of his

investigations. He was not, however, very sanguine about Government appreciation of his works, but he expressed a hope that his task would be finished on the day he would be able to make over his Tibetan Grammar and Tibetan Lexicon to the Government, and that, that day would be the happiest day in his life, and he could thereafter die in peace. Out of the 50 rupees a month, his only income, he paid to his tutor 25 rupees, his servant received 4 rupees, and his cell cost him 1 rupee per month. With the poor balance of 20 rupees he had to with great difficulty arrange for his food, clothing, writing materials, and so forth at that high altitude of 9,500 feet where everything was comparatively very dear, not only by reason of elevation, but also due to great distance of the place from the nearest trade mart.

At about this time Dr. Gerard, who had rendered valued services in connection with the geography of the Himalaya happened to pass by 'this little romantic village of Kanam.' Gerard relates that he had seen this learned Hungarian philologist in his solitary cell at Kanam and that under most deplorable circumstances he took infinite pains in collecting 40,000 Tibetan words. In spite of his poverty Csoma had characteristically a high sense of dignity and self-respect which prevented him from accepting from Gerard an offer of rice, sugar, clothes, and even English newspapers. At Gerard's earnest entreaty he could be prevailed upon to keep with him an English Bible, which he read through in eight days a Latin and a Greek Dictionary.

Dr. Sver Hedin visited Kanam on his way back from Tibet. Here while making an investigation as to the history of Csoma on the very threshold of his cell, Dr. Sven Hedin was informed that there once lived a lama from Europe.

Hedin writes :

"A lama from Europe ! It sounds very improbable and yet it is quite true. A wonderfully entrancing

human story is indissolubly connected with the monastery of Kanam. A true story, in which the wildest adventures of Hajji Baba are combined with superhuman patience and the finest example of the suppression of self in the interests of science."

Csoma buried himself for fully three years in his celebrated cell studying the Tibetan literature of which he acquired an exhaustive knowledge. It is said that he never went out except while fetching more volumes from the library to his cell. In summer he put on coarse garments and in winter he wrapped himself up with a sheep-skin. Winter proved trying to Csoma; the monk's cell could not be kept heated—he had no money for fire and light. In the rigor of winter when Csoma and his good tutor used to read Tibetan Texts, it became problematical when the question of turning over a leaf arose after a page was finished. The two readers would then nudge each other's elbow, each thereby tacitly directing the other to extend his helping hand both in the figurative and literary sense of the expression. Each of them was keen about avoiding exposure to his hand in the extreme temperature reigning outside their long-furred sleeves designed to protect the outstretched part of the limbs from being frost-bitten.

In 1831 Dr. Campbell met him at Simla, "dressed in a coarse gown, extending to his heels, and a small cloth cap of the same material. He wore a grizzly beard, shunned the society of Europeans and passed his whole time in study."

In May, 1832 he came to Calcutta, where he was very warmly received by many scholars, especially Prof. H. H. Wilson and Mr. James Prinsep. He was soon appointed Assistant Librarian of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. At this time he superintended the printing of his large quartos, Tibetan Grammar, and Tibetan Dictionary, which were being published at the expense of the Government.

Here, he also took a great deal of trouble in translating parts of the Bible into Tibetan for the missionaries. Csoma also translated in brief both the Kangur and the Tengur, and thus covered the whole ground of the Tibetan Texts.

He made his stay in Calcutta for a few years, during which period he took no part in society functions. He was not even seen in the street. He "shut himself up among his own papers in his room, where he lived like a hermit and a misanthrope."

"The great Himalayan explorers, Moorcroft, Gerard, Wilson, Prinsep, Hodgson, Campbell and others came in contact with him. The singular taciturn student could be lively and talkative when any one spoke of Hungary with kindly interest."

Early in 1842 Csoma left Calcutta with the view of travelling to Lhasa for ensuring perfection of his Tibetan learning and thence to Central Asia where he would find the original home of the Huns. He thought that his native country was once conquered by the Huns and that the Hungarians are their descendants, and he guessed that his ancestors in the nebulous past lived somewhere in the north-eastern Tibet beyond Kham on the Chinese frontiers.

The landscape surrounding Csoma's dwelling at Kanam is depicted by Hedin in these words which end in pathos :

"One of the finest landscapes on earth was displayed to the eyes of the student when he stepped out on the verandah. Deep down at the bottom of the valley the narrow wild Sutlej winds through abrupt corridors, and in the background rise the sharply cut pyramids of the Kailas group. Dark-green patches are seen on some slopes—coniferous woods. How often must Csoma have looked at these mountains and valleys during his years of solitude! I could not gaze at them long enough, monuments erected to his memory as they seemed to me."

DARJEELING

On March 24, 1842 Csoma arrived at Darjeeling, where Dr. Campbell was holding the Post of Superintendent. Campbell was struck with the sterling worth and vast erudition of this extraordinary scholar. Csoma, holds Campbell, knew a number of languages, and "was conversant with still more—Hebrew, Arabic, Sanskrit, Pushtu, Greek, Latin, Slavonic, German, English, Turkish, Persian, French, Russian, Tibetan, Hindusthani, Maharatta, and Bengali." When Campbell met him at Darjeeling he had with him four boxes of books which included a dictionary of every language.

Twenty-two years of his life were spent in travelling—this is possibly a world-record amongst Europeans so far. Dr. Campbell says that this lama of Europe never drank wine or spirit, or used tobacco or any stimulant. He used to live upon rice and buttered tea being the Tibetan preparation of this liquor.

On April 6, that is 12 days after his arrival at Darjeeling, Csoma fell ill. It was undoubtedly a pernicious type of malaria of the deadly terai which he contracted while crossing the region before climbing the Himalaya. On the 11th he died a victim, as Prof. Max Muller has said, "to his heroic devotion to the study of ancient languages and religions."

At one time the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Calcutta proposed an offer of a sum of Rs. 50/- per month for the maintenance of this indefatigable pilgrim fighting all the time with dire poverty and wretched privations, but he was offended by the mode of expression of the proposition and refused it.

Now, then, when the sad news of his death reached Calcutta, the Asiatic Society of Bengal forthwith remitted a sum of Rs. 1,000/- to Dr. Campbell for the erection of a monument above the remains of this Hungarian scholar, and martyr to the cause of Science.

The study of the Tibetan language was to him a means to an end—his mission in life was to probe into

matters underlying the origin of the Hungarians. But, man proposes, God disposes. It was just at the time when he was making necessary preparations for an entry into Tibet via Darjeeling with the ultimate object of exploring the country of the Huns beyond the province of Kham in the north-eastern Tibet, where, as perhaps pictured in his mind, his revered forefathers in ages long gone by used to ride about on wild horses, that death closed the scene of this distinguished savant of the west.

After the death of this great Hungarian traveller, when his countrymen at long last came to know of the achievements of a son of their soil, so far 'unknown, unhonoured and unsung', they began to dig for informations about this man of their land with whom then all was over. Research revealed the fact that when Csoma left his country "clad in a thin yellow nankin dress, with a stick in his hand and a small bundle", on being accosted by Teleky, an old Hungarian, as to where he was going, he answered: "I am going to Asia in search of our relatives."

Darjeeling boasts of bearing the remains of this selfless pilgrim of the west whose funeral procession was honoured by the attendance of all the Englishmen present in the town. Just a little over a century has now rolled by since the day when prayers were read by Campbell as the coffin was lowered to leave the hero in peace amid his well-earned rest after a most fatiguing career imaginable, and wholly dedicated to the cause of researches.

PART II
KANGCHENJUNGA

KANGCHENJUNGA

is "one of the world's
most massive and spectacular mountains,
and still a virgin peak."
—*First over Everest*

"KANGCHENJUNGA

is the very queen of mountains.
The view of it from Darjeeling
is the finest in the world.
No other can compete with it."
—*Everest the Challenge*

The writer is under special obligation to the authors of the following works from which have been gleaned for the most part facts and figures in compiling this portion of the book.

KANGCHENJUNGA ADVENTURE, by *F. S. Smythe*.
FIRST OVER EVEREST, by *P. F. M. Fellowes and others*.

PART II

KANGCHENJUNGA

PRELUDE

To a spectator from the Observatory Hill who runs the eye over the great Snowy Range that in a magnificent cirque borders the horizon from east to west, Kangchenjunga appears to be a mighty unheaval of snow and ice from the interlinking system of the main Himalayan Range. The phenomenon is, however, an illusion. The dazzling whiteness of snows coupled with distance mars the perspective effect of comparative proximity and remoteness.

Kangchenjunga is a mass of mountains projecting southwards from the main chain that skirts the extensive Tibetan plateau. Mr. Smythe writes: “ ** ** it juts out like a rugged peninsula from the main mountain coast.”

In a clear wintry day when the whole range displays its naked beauty, proximity of the great Kangchenjunga massif as compared with the principal range will be distinctly manifest to one who will see it through a binocular. It is, therefore, an independent mountain possessing its own glaciers which, radiating from its five summits and pushing their snouts far down to the verge of tropical forests, give rise to torrents of waters almost as cold as ice.

Godwin Austin, named K2 by the Survey-Department of India, is its only rival claiming to be the second highest peak in the world. Whether K2 or Kangchenjunga stands second to Everest in height, the loftiest peak in the world, is not yet definitely settled, as would appear from the following figures.

MYSTIC TIBET AND THE HIMALAYA

Figures recognised by the Survey of India.

| | | |
|-------------------|----|---------|
| 1st Mount Everest | .. | 29,002' |
| 2nd Godwin Austin | .. | 28,250' |
| 3rd Kangchenjunga | .. | 28,156' |

Figures according to Col. Burrard's calculation.

| | | |
|-------------------|----|---------|
| 1st Mount Everest | .. | 29,141' |
| 2nd Kangchenjunga | .. | 28,225' |
| 3rd Godwin Austin | .. | 28,191' |

Colonel S. G. Burrard, Superintendent of the Trigonometrical Survey of India, taking special care in taking into account the errors of refraction, attractive forces of mountains, etc. arrived at the foregoing figures, according to which Kangchenjunga wins by 34 feet, and is not defeated by 94 feet as under the other umpireship.

It goes without saying that mathematical calculations are of absolute accuracy. Why then should there be difference in calculations in arriving at the heights of the Himalayan peaks?

If one side and two angles of a triangle, or two sides and one angle of a triangle are known, trigonometry enables us to find out the remaining sides and angles of the same. Taking advantage of these two facts, particularly the former, it is possible to accurately calculate the height of a peak from the level plains wherefrom the peak is visible, no matter whether it be, say, one hundred miles or more away.

But errors creep in from various sources beyond a computer's control while measuring an angle, which is observed by means of an instrument called theodolite. This instrument must evidently be set up horizontally prior to observing an angle. This seems to be an easy affair, as it would simply necessitate the levelling of the instrument to the horizontal with the spirit-level attached to it. But the immense mass of the Himalaya attracts the liquid in the spirit-level towards itself to an appreciable extent, and as a result thereof, it does not show the

horizontal, and evidently the theodolite would not be levelled to the same. Consequently in the measurement of an angle inaccuracy creeps in giving rise to difference in calculations as to the heights of peaks.

It may be noted here that the phenomenon of attraction is no new thing, as we all know how the moon attracts our oceans. Moreover, it has been proved conclusively that the Himalaya also attracts the waters of the Indian Ocean quite appreciably. The extent of attraction of the spirit-level from the different places of observation mentioned above was not accurately known at the time of computation and hence no requisite allowance could be made for that.

Of the six very potent factors that lead to errors in calculations one has just been dealt with. Space forbids us to dilate upon the others. But the most potent factor that gives rise to quite a formidable error and which may be of much interest to the reader is explained at some length in the paragraph that follows.

The subject is refraction of the atmosphere. It is a great problem that presents itself for solution to the scientists while calculating heights of peaks. It is a well-known fact that with the increase of altitude the density of air decreases, so much so that at the summit of Kangchenjunga the density of air is only one-third of the density of air at sea-level. This is why a ray of light proceeding from a peak to an observer's eye through the telescope of a theodolite does not travel along a straight line owing to varying density of air it has to pass through. It assumes a curved path concave to the earth. The observer naturally thinks that the ray of light is coming from the direction which is tangential to the curve at the point and evidently the peak seems to be situated in the same direction. Consequently the height becomes over-estimated, or in other words, the peak appears to be higher than it really is.

There are no means of correctly calculating the

allowance to be made in this connection so as to avoid the error in full. Although the calculations by Colonel Burrard were made very pedantically and are in all probability far more reliable than the others, the latter figures are still enjoying recognition of the Survey Department of India.

Godwin Austin in the Western Himalaya, which is a mountain of rock and ice standing in majestic isolation, unlike Kangchenjunga, has the advantage of towering aloft above very high glaciers and snowfields of the Karakoram Range.

Kangchenjunga is engirdled by three territories: Sikkim in the south and east, Nepal in the west, and Tibet in the north. No State can boast of this Monarch, which is surrounded on the Sikkim side by almost impenetrable jungles and on the other sides by wildernesses of mountains, and on nearer approaches most jealously barricaded by high glacier passes and strongly defended by ice towers and pinnacles and even at some places by ice-overhangs, the very sight of which is forbidding and awe-inspiring in the extreme.

Kangchenjunga is not a calm and serene mountain as it appears to be when viewed from Darjeeling. Both ice and rock avalanches of incredible dimensions frequently thunder as they roll down precipitous slopes of this mighty massif. Last but not the least is wind of hurricane force, one of the deadliest of Kangchenjunga's weapons which plays havoc with any intruder who ventures "to walk the heights of gods." It is the southwestern as well as the western face of Kangchenjunga, which is subject to terrible attacks of extraordinarily violent wind, which leaves its weird effect in erosions manifested by holes and fissures on rocks, the leeward sides of which necessarily remain smooth.

Five summits adorn this Monarch. The name is derived from the Tibetan words, *Kangchen* and *Dzonga* meaning 'Five Treasuries of the Great Snows.' While

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the highest summit is 28,156 feet, the Second highest peak is 27,820 feet, thus falling short of the former by 336 feet only. To attempt to describe this stupendous mass of rocks and ice with the view of carrying an impression to the reader's mind as to its depth, girth, height, extensiveness, and other dimensions of this monstrous massif would be preposterous.

No inference or conclusion can be drawn from mathematical figures. A mountaineer creeping up a ridge of this Himalayan giant loses his identity and feels himself to be no better than a microcosm, while a spectator from the Kabru-Pandim Gap beyond Dzungri while viewing the mountain yet twelve miles away feels staggered, so immeasurably high it looks therefrom. It appears 'terribly beautiful'. This wording though grossly incompatible is up to the mark in expressiveness.

Four colossal ridges of inconceivable dimensions of rocks, ice, and snow abut upon this massif, which culminates in a peak 28,156 feet high. These ridges are named according to their respective directions with reference to the great centrepiece to which they are attached.

There is absolutely no direct route to any of these summits, which are accessible, if at all, by first ascending any of these ridges, and then, say, reaching some ice terraces suitable for camping, and lastly attempting the summit.

The final climbing to the rock pyramid may possibly mean a comparatively easy affair, although this ascent of a vertical height ranging from 1,000 to 1,500 feet is extremely trying, as at that tremendous altitude every step upward is devitalizing to an incredible extent.

From the east, Kangchenjunga is assailable through the gates of Sikkim via Lachen and the Zemu Glacier. Here two mighty ridges, the East Ridge and the North Ridge, seem to stand prepared to dispute an assault.

From the west this Monarch is climbable by having recourse to the North Ridge (evidently from its western side) or the North-western Ridge. The route to reach these ridges is roundabout and is the lengthiest. It is via Nepal, a land forbidden to the Europeans. The glacier that requires traversing at the foot of the massif in establishing the lower camps is known as the Kangchenjunga Glacier.

To attack the Western Ridge an extra traverse on the Ramthang Glacier is needed.

Lastly comes the south-western face of the mountain, so distinctly visible from Darjeeling. This seems to offer an access from the Talung saddle, after the head of the Yalung Glacier is ascended. This last route is through the country of Sikkim, necessitating, however, a brief march along the skirts of independent Nepal.

INTERLUDE

During the latter half of the nineteenth century when the intrepid native surveyors of the Survey Department of India known as "pundit" penetrated into the various regions of the Himalaya undergoing extreme hardship and confronting the danger of losing their life at almost every step of their journey across the Tibetan Plateau, they were put to a peculiar difficulty in matters relating to the names of the highest peaks which were sadly wanting. This is principally due to the fact that the highest peaks often look less imposing than the smaller ones by reason of remoteness of the former. Even the Sanskrit name, Himalaya, itself is Greek even to the educated people in Tibet. Only two names were found to be definitely known in those days in the Eastern Himalaya—one was Kangchenjunga and the other was Janu. The name Kabru was also to a certain extent known from the Tibetan side of the Himalaya. It was only Kangchenjunga which was very widely known

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by that name, or rather under its exact Tibetan nomenclature, *Kangchen Dzonga*, twelve miles to the north of which as the crow flies lies the Tibetan frontier guarded by snow-clad passes of giddy altitudes.

Sir Joseph Hooker, a renowned botanist, is the first European who not only explored a great part of the Sikkim Himalaya, but extended his exploration to the neighbouring regions of Kangchenjunga, so far unknown in Europe.

In 1848 Hooker traversed the Tamber Valley lying to the west of the Singalela Range, and running almost parallel to it from north to south, and visited the Wallan-choon village whence Kangchenjunga is nearly twenty-eight miles away to the east as the crow flies. On his return journey he reached Kangbachen, the last village in the north-eastern Nepal, whence Kangchenjunga is ten miles to the east in a straight line. This village lies on the route to the Kangchenjunga Glacier, on which the lower camps of the 1930 Expedition to the mountain were pitched. From Kangbachen he managed to reach the Singalela Range via the Yalung Valley to the west of Kabru and came back to Darjeeling.

In January 1849, he reached Jongri with the intention of entering into Nepal via Kang La, but his progress was checked by snow and blizzard. He then retraced his steps far to the east and traversed up the Tista Valley to Lachen, and made several unsuccessful attempts to climb Lama Andern, 19,250 feet, a peak between Chomiomo and Kangchenjhou.

Thereafter he tried in vain to reach the Zemu Glacier to the north-east of Kangchenjunga. So much enthusiastic this great pioneer of Sikkim Himalayan exploration was that he even made bold to cross over the crests of the two great Sikkim giants, Pauhunri, 23,180 feet and Kangchenjhou, 22,509 feet that jealously guard the north-eastern part of Sikkim where the Tibetan frontier begins. Unsuccessful though these attempts

were, they were great feats on the high Himalaya at a time when the mountaineering world did not as yet spring into action.

It may be of interest to the reader to know that systematic mountaineering as a sport is dated from Sir Alfred Will's ascent of the Wetterhorn in 1854, that the Alpine Club was founded in London in 1857, and lastly, that so late as in 1892 Sir Martin Conway is found for the first time exploring the Himalayas or rather the Karakoram Himalayas and climbing a peak of 23,000 feet.

To return to the subject, Hooker then reached Tso Lhamo Lake. Lastly, he crossed the Donkia pass which forms the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet. Over the Pass he could view the extensive plateau of Tibet as well as "some immense snowy mountains, reduced to mere specks on the horizon." These were evidently in the very remote mountain chain far far away to the north of the Tsanpo (the Brahmaputra), which chain Sven Hedin has so aptly designated as the Trans-Himalaya.

In 1878 Captain H. J. Harman of the Survey of India undertook several journeys in Sikkim. He endeavoured to reach the Talung (meaning the Stony Valley) monastery in a remote and desolate region of Sikkim, five days' march from Gangtok, the capital of the State. From Singhik the route is through wild and charming scenery. Very few Europeans so far visited this far off, secluded monastery built in 1789 A.D. and inhabited by nearly 100 monks. In view of the hostile attitude of the inhabitants, he had to retrace his steps. Later on he used his best endeavour to reach the foot of Kangchenjunga, but his journey through the tropical valleys of Sikkim told upon his health and he was forced to return.

Captain Harman is perhaps remembered more for deputing his subordinate Kinthup to trace the

course of the Tsanpo, the river that rising from the Manas region in the Western Himalaya runs along almost the entire extension of Tibet from west to east, than for the survey he himself conducted.

Pundit Kinthup carried out his orders when most people would have taken to their heels for self-preservation. He was to cut special types of blocks of wood, and throw into the Tsanpo. Harman, for fully two years, had the river named the Brahmaputra that flows through the dense forest of the Abor Savages in Assam watched for the blocks which Kinthup were to throw into the Tsanpo.

No block, however, made its appearance on the Brahmaputra. Harman fell ill and left India, and with his departure the watch was abandoned.

Kinthup was sold to a Tibetan Lama by the Chinese priest whom he accompanied. He had the good fortune to serve successively two masters in Tibet as a slave. At last after four years when he was set free, he made a long journey reaching a place, fifty miles from the plains of Upper Assam, where he floated on the Tsanpo some five hundred logs of required description to facilitate identification, but there was then no one to watch them floating on the turbulent waters of the great river.

The account of his romantic adventure was disbelieved by many, but the Survey Department of India accepted his report as true. The Royal Geographical Society honoured him while the Indian Government gave him the order of Commander of the Indian Empire and the gift of a prosperous village.

In 1883 a mountaineering party appeared for the first time in the Sikkim Himalaya under the leadership of Mr. W. W. Graham. Graham first visited Jongri, and climbed Lampheram, 12,827', the most symmetrical and cone-shaped peak which from Darjeeling looks farthest, dark blue and loftiest in the Singalela Ridge. It may be noted here that it is not actually on this ridge

although it seems to be so. He was then forced to return to Darjeeling in the middle of April. After six months in the month of October he renewed his adventures and ascended Jubanu, 19,350 feet, a peak in the Kabru Range as also a peak west of the Kang La. Lastly he attempted Kabru, 24,002 feet. He claimed to have reached one of the two summits, but it is doubtful whether Kabru yielded to him. Possibly he ascended to the crest of the Forked Peak or Kabur which two peaks seem to be situated just below the eastern summit of Kabru.

Mr. Douglas Freshfield's party followed in the wake of Graham. Freshfield succeeded in making a complete contour map of Kangchenjunga after negotiating snowy passes with altitudes varying from 20,000 to 23,000 feet, and took quite a number of beautiful and illustrative photographs of different parts of this mountain. Freshfield's extensive exploration round Kangchenjunga is replete with valuable data which were fully utilized by the Kangchenjunga Expedition party of 1930 to its great advantage.

Unfortunately, Mr. Freshfield's classical literature, *Round Kangchenjunga*, published by Edward Arnold in 1903 is out of print. All copies in stock with the publishers were one day burnt in a disastrous fire that broke out.

Just a sentence is here quoted from the author of *Round Kangchenjunga*. Referring to the Kangchenjunga Glacier which stretches for a distance of 15 miles and lies to the north-west of the massif he writes: "It has its origin in a snow-plateau, or rather terrace lying under the highest peak at an elevation of about 27,000 feet, that is only some 1,200 feet below the top, the final rock ridges leading to which look very accessible."

During the period from 1889 to 1902, Mr. Claude White, the then Political Officer in Sikkim, undertook many adventurous journeys in the Sikkim Himalaya.

KANGCHENJUNGA

Although he did not penetrate into the close neighbourhood of Kangchenjunga, he traversed the gorges between Pandim and Simvu mountains. In 1890 he crossed the Guicha La beyond Jongri and the north of Pandim.

Of all the Himalayan climbers in the early days of mountaineering Dr. A. M. Kellas's name stands out most pre-eminently. Mr. F. Spencer Chapman who climbed that most beautiful peak in the world, Chomalhari, says: "Dr. Kellas, an amazingly enterprising climber who for many years conquered many peaks in a single season that most people attempt in a lifetime." Kellas who was attached to a hospital in London used to visit the Himalayas every summer during vacation. He never advertised before setting out on his cherished journeys.

Dr. Kellas is also renowned for his having trained the Sherpa porters in mountaineering. Mount Everest Expeditions owe a great deal to this great pioneer of Himalayan mountaineering for the ready-made high altitude porters whose services they so easily got.

Kellas attempted the Nepal Gap, a 21,000 feet pass, the pass being the lowest point on the ridge separating the Zemu and the Kangchenjunga Glacier. This he did no less than four times from the Zemu Glacier. In his first attempt made in 1907, he after having reached the altitude of 18,000 feet was forced to retreat in view of a thick mist shrouding the pass. The second attempt made in the same year was frustrated by impassable crevasses barring his way, while his third, in 1909, was brought to naught at 20,000 feet by a blizzard. In his last attempt in 1910, he desparately reached almost the top of the pass, between which and the climber a small rock wall intervened.

Simvu peak, 22,360 feet, did not yield to his assaults made three times with European guides in 1907. Each time he was forced to retreat owing to bad weather. He succeeded in climbing the Langpo peak, 22,800 feet,

in 1909. A peak of 21,240 (or 21,700) feet known as the Sentinel Peak, east of the Choten Nyima La, was ascended by him in 1910. A number of summits below 20,000 feet easily yielded to his efforts.

It may be mentioned here that Kellas conquered the three Sikkim giants, Chomiomo, 22,300 feet, Kangchenjhou, 22,509 feet, and Pauhunri, 23,100 feet, towering up on the extreme north-east of Sikkim.

In the year 1921, Kellas conquered the massive Narsing, 19,130 feet. In this climb he was forced to exert himself to the utmost.

Soon after he spent several nights in Camps over 20,000 feet on the frozen slopes of Kabru. Thereafter when he arrived at Darjeeling, just a few days before the starting of the Mount Everest Expedition of 1921, he was completely done up and had no time at his disposal to recuperate.

Sheer love of heights urged him to join the Expedition, but his wrecked constitution could no further bear the strain, and he breathed his last before reaching Kampa Dzong in Tibet. In the great arena of battle all around Kangchenjunga his life was spared, only because—so it now seems—his grave was destined to be placed on a high slope of the Dzong (fort hill) which “looks out over the plain to the great mountains he climbed, and is in sight of Mount Everest.”

Kabru, 24,002', the highest of the five imposing satellites of Kangchenjunga, the other four being Kabur, the Forked Peak, Pandim and Jubonu, attracted the notice of two Norwegians, Messrs. C. W. Rubenson and Monrad Aas, who attempted this tent-like mountain in October, 1907.

Although Kabru with its two summits looks calm and serene and easily accessible, the problem of assault is quite different even at its base where the Kabru Glacier is barricaded by ice-falls of monstrous dimensions. These mountaineers had to cut their way through

the meshes of ice-pinnacles, on top of which treacherous crevasses had made the whole affairs awfully complicated. It was not until a height of 21,500 feet was reached that this obstacle could be got through, and soon after they pitched their camp on the shelf between the two summits so distinctly visible from Darjeeling.

From this camp they made an attempt to reach the eastern summit. In their first attempt a late start defeated the purpose. Thereafter, they camped themselves at an altitude of 22,000 feet and renewed their assault. After nine hours' struggle at 6 p.m., they attained a height which was 200 feet below the summit. But then, a considerable horizontal distance intervened between them and the top. Here their progress was checked by a terrible west wind. Immediately with the sundown, the temperature fell down alarmingly, and they were forced to beat a hasty retreat.

While descending Rubenson, who had not been on a mountain before, slipped in the ice, but was fortunately held on rope by Monrad who was behind him. The jerk on the rope was so severe that four out of its five strands gave way. It was a greatest piece of luck that the expedition did not end in a disaster.

This dissertation will be incomplete if the achievements of Captain J. B. Noel be left out of account by reason of his exploration being round rather distant regions of Kangchenjunga. It was with the idea of approaching the immediate neighbourhood of Mount Everest that he undertook the adventure in the year 1913. He did the journey alone; he was only accompanied by his three servants named Adhu, a Bhutia, Tebdoo, a Sherpa Nepalese, and Badri, "a little man from the mountains of Garhwal." Noel mainly drew his inspiration for this exploration from the writings of the Surveyor Hari Ram, Hooker, and the last but not the least, Sarat Chandra. He writes: "I planned the route from the writings of Sarat Chandra.

In disguise of a Mohammadan, he negotiated the Choten Nyima Pass which he writes is "a cleft in the mountains, blocked by debris of rock avalanches." We need not follow him any further as on crossing this pass he entered Tibet which does not come under the purview of this part of the work. This pass is to the north of Kangchenjunga and is nearly 17 miles away as the crow flies.

It may be of interest to readers to know that it was this arduous exploration which brought him to Tashirukpa wherefrom Mount Everest and Kangchenjunga were 45 and 35 miles away respectively and beyond which he could not advance owing to fierce resistance of the Tibetans that paved the way to the four epic expeditions of Mount Everest.

It would be of interest to note that while the Mount Everest expeditions hit upon the easier though unknown route of the Tibetan plateau higher up and far to the north, Noel was proceeding along a route never traversed by any European before through mazes of mountains buttressing up the table-land from the south.

CROWLEY EXPEDITION, 1905

It was in August, 1905 that under the leadership of an Englishman, Mr. Aleister Crowley, a party of Swiss mountaineers consisting of Dr. Jacot-Guillarmod, M. Reymond, and Lieutenant Pache attempted for the first time an ascent of Kangchenjunga. Mr. D. Righi, an Italian hotel-keeper of Darjeeling, was also attached to the expedition in order to render assistance in matters relating to supply of food.

This expedition took the direct route to Kangchenjunga, a route which to a cursory observer from Darjeeling looks quite easy, undeviating, and alluring as one makes a mental survey of it along the undulating ridges of the Singalela Range which unswervingly runs towards the great mountain. This expedition traversed

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the Singalela Range and then entered into the Yalung Valley after crossing the Chumbab La. A long march along the Yalung Valley brought them to the Yalung Glacier, on ascending which they attempted to attack the South-western face of Kangchenjunga quite exposed to view from Darjeeling. Those who have carefully observed this face from this hill station with even unaided eye might have been struck with the great steepness of the face. This steepness becomes far more pronounced when a mountaineer comes face to face with it. Then there are precipitous granite walls covering most part of this invulnerable face. The only access to the slopes of the mountain is through the head of the Yalung Glacier just at the place above which a snowy shelf is conspicuous from Darjeeling. If the Western Ridge of the mountain be reached through this shelf, a mountaineer can at best climb the third highest summit of Kangchenjunga which this ridge leads to. Thereafter, is to be traversed a desperately long intervening ridge that separates the third highest and the highest summit.

A Camp was established at 20,343 feet. Some members of the party claimed to have climbed 1,000 feet higher, but realising this face to be formidable and inaccessible, they retraced their steps down a snow slope, when two porters in the middle slipped, thereby dragging with them Pache and another porter who were behind, and pushing down two other members of the expedition who were in front. This slip would not have probably been fatal to any one of them, as mountaineers often descend down ice-slopes by a glissade, as was the case with Dr. Somervell and his companions in the Mount Everest Expedition, but this slip started a large avalanche of snow with disastrous results, culminating in the burial of all (three) the porters and Pache in the avalanche. So this direct route through the Yalung Glacier is absolutely worthless for attacking Kangchenjunga.

FARMER EXPEDITION, 1929

The attempt of Mr. E. F. Farmer of New York in 1929 is a romantic one. His was a lone attempt on Kangchenjunga which very much resembles that of Maurice Wilson of Bradford, "the lone climber of Everest." His was the second and a very desperate attack on Kangchenjunga. The mountaineering experience of this youth was very limited and he had never before visited the mighty Himalayas. He never allowed his plan to leak out. Having obtained a pass for entrance into Sikkim with the provision that he would not enter into either Tibet or Nepal, he set out on his journey.

Being accompanied by expert Sherpa and Bhutia porters under the guidance of Sirdar Lobsang, he left Darjeeling on May 6, 1929, crossed Sikkim, entered into Nepal and secretly avoiding the village of Tseram in the Yalung Valley of Nepal by passing through higher forest-slopes, crossed the Kang La (pass).

After 20 days' march when they were climbing up Talung Saddle, Lobsang, because of insufficient clothes and inferior boots provided for the porters, was reluctant to proceed any further and advised a retreat. Farmer ordered them to halt and continued the climb against advice. His figure shrouded in mist at times made its appearance from great heights with the freakish clearing of the fog. The porters waved hands signalling for his turning back without avail. With the approach of the eventide he was seen no more. The porters then returned to their camps and off and on signalled during the night with an electric torch. Next morning, on climbing up some distance, the porters caught a glimpse of his figure on a steep snow slope, appearing as if he was coming down with arms stretched. The whole day, they were expecting his arrival but in vain. On the following morning, they turned back, as their food fell short. Thus ended the tragedy.

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When the porters returned to Darjeeling without the man whom they accompanied, naturally, it devolved upon the police to probe into the matter to detect iniquitous design if there were any. The depositions of each porter were committed to writing and then scrutinisingly compared with those of all others. All this simply went to show the porters in their true colours : they were as good as their words.

PAUL BAUER OR THE BAVARIAN EXPEDITION, 1929

The Bavarian Expedition to Kangchenjunga is undoubtedly an epic assault on the mountain, as is also the expedition that followed in its footsteps under the leadership of Professor Dyhrenfurth.

This pick of mountaineers belonged to Munich, the home of the most adventurous young mountaineers of their time. The Expedition consisted of nine members of whom the leader was Dr. Paul Bauer. This Expedition was split up into two parties, the second party following the first party two days later. On August 8th, both the parties met at Lachen, nearly eight days' march away from Darjeeling. The way onwards was through precipitous rocks, jungles, and lastly snows. They made their way through the jungles by trail making, so dense it was in places. After doing an arduous journey for ten days, they were enabled to establish their Base Camp on Green Lake Plain at an elevation of 14,126 feet. Although this was their Base Camp wherefrom they finally advanced to attack the mountain, two other permanent camps had to be established, one at the end of the Zemu Valley and another ahead of that, and consequently the Base Camp was really Camp Three.

This Lachen route evidently brought the party to the north-east side of Kangchenjunga. From here they first began to explore the north-eastern region of the mountain. One party ascended the Simvu Saddle and

thence made an attempt to climb on a clear day. Bad weather forced them to retreat. The other party first explored the East Ridge of Kangchenjunga with a view to ascertaining whether it was climbable. This Ridge appearing invulnerable, their plans for an attack fell to the ground.

There then remained only one alternative and that was to attack the North Ridge of the mountain which was assaulted from the other side (western) by Professor Dyhrenfurth's party in 1930. The North Ridge of Kangchenjunga which is nearly four miles long culminates in a peak known as the Twins Peak, 23,350 feet in height. The Bavarians discovered to their utter disappointment that even the lowest point on the North Ridge between Kangchenjunga and the Twins was hopelessly beyond the power of any assailant. Precipices stretching upwards looked formidable. A subsidiary ice ridge known thenceforth as the Bavarian Ridge was found to lead up to the North Ridge. This Ice Ridge, it may be noted here, joins the North Ridge at a point about 1,500 feet below the summit of Kangchenjunga where a conspicuous snowy terrace runs across the Northwest face of the mountain.

Was it then a very easy route? Far from it—it has been observed by Smythe: "No such formidable route had ever been tackled by any other party on any other peak in the world." This route was traversed for want of any better route discernible. It is covered over with heavy layers of ice, and on top of the almost invincible character of its knife-like crest, towers and pinnacles of ice desparately barricade the ridge route. Over and above all this, overhangs of ice look menacing in the extreme, and great avalanches thunder down the precipitous slopes to the Zemu Glacier in the east and Kangchenjunga Glacier on the west. The only advantage of attacking this ridge is that it is, unlike the North Ridge, sheltered from the terrific west wind

which is not only demoralising in effect, but is apt to be disastrous at any moment. The party speculated that if the crest of the Ice Ridge could be attained, they would have succeeded in conquering the summit. But the traverse up the Ice Ridge is in itself an extremely difficult affair.

The Base Camp was fully occupied on August 25th. The call of the heights was readily responded to. The very base of the Ice Ridge was found defended by an ice-fall towering up to a prodigious height of seven hundred feet. It was surmounted and at an altitude of 18,696 feet was established Camp Six wherefrom the party had to confront the 2,800 feet wall which runs up to the crest of the ridge. By the time they were nearing it with great difficulty, bad weather forced a retreat.

Another attempt on the following day was made by the party of four members and three porters who were equipped with bivoac requirements. Incidentally it may be noted that so far either in assaulting Mount Everest or this mountain, no mountaineer thought it worth while to have recourse to bivouacs. While confronting some difficulty, the party went so far as to be spread-eagled one above the other on slippery ice slope. Anyway they could reach this formidable ridge.

On the following day Allwein and Thoenes succeeded in climbing the ridge which necessitated a very risky ascent on a steep ice gully. But this was of no avail as the carrying of goods by the porters along the route was plainly out of the question. At this juncture it was decided to abandon the Ice Ridge and consequently the North Ridge of Kangchenjunga. Their attention was then directed to the East Ridge as being the only possible solution to the climbing problem for the season. Apart from a series of obstacles that lay in wait for the assailants, this East Ridge was considered too long for the traverse of an expedition party. Taking

it for granted that the entire distance of the ridge has been done, does it mean victory? The East Ridge leads to the second highest summit having an altitude of 27,820 feet, between which and the goal a formidable ridge intervenes.

But every cloud has a silver lining. Determination grew stronger with the failure. And one more desperate attempt was resolutely decided upon. They endeavoured to drive matters to an extremity by storming an ice curtain and pressing onwards in the teeth of all obstacles. They even utilized icicles of the thickness of a piece of bamboo in hitching a rope round the same. To a distance they were enabled to make their headway with the porters, but unfortunately Kangchenjunga "was very wrath and his countenance fell", and flew at the party with a heavy snowfall which forced a retreat to Camp Six. The attempt was renewed, but another snowfall, and on top of that, avalanches paralysed all activity. With great difficulty they could save themselves by returning to Camp Six through fresh and heavy fall of snow.

September 13 dawned fine over Kangchenjunga, and the clearness of weather became an incentive to a fresh attack. Step-cutting was strenuously conducted for two days and after a devastating struggle the party set their foot on the crest of the Ice Ridge which is now known as the Bavarian Ridge. And from the top a scene of superb beauty greeted their vision so felicitously depicted by Dr. Paul Bauer in his accounts in the *Alpine Journal*, translated into English by its editor thus: "Nearly vertically below lay the Twins Glacier, while slopes of sixty degrees led downward, on the farther side of the Zemu Glacier. Icy and shining pinnacles led upwards for 6,500 feet. In a wide cirque above us towered the icy slopes of the Tent Peak, the Twins, Kangchenjunga, Simvu, above the two mighty glacier basins. Avalanches thundered in continuous icy

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cascades down these faces. Behind us swept endless glacier shapes into the dim and cloudy distance."

On reaching the crest of the Ice Ridge they were immediately confronted with three ice towers through which they made their way after struggling for two days. Thereafter, was seen an extensive sweep of a precipitous step with a snowy ledge which they hoped to reach, and then to establish Camp Eight. Being overtaken by night they were frustrated in their efforts to get to it. A place was, therefore, scooped out for a camp in a cornice. To one who has thoroughly studied the accounts of all the Everest and Kangchenjunga Expeditions so far conducted, this Camp would appear to be the most miserable and most precariously situated of all Camps ever pitched on these mountains. It was occupied by Beigel and Dr. Bauer while the other members and the porters were compelled to descend to Camp Seven. The spot itself revealed its true character when through a hole formed by an axe deeply driven in ice, the Twins Glacier opened itself to their view down below in the abyss of death. The place then must have been something like a suspension bridge of ice.

On the following day they could force a way up after hacking out layer after layer of ice from the slope. A névé slope was attained having a tremendous angle of fully 70 degrees. This slope was ascended by cutting a deep zigzag track. The snowy ledge was attained and Camp Eight was established. One of the porters who followed the party right up to the highest Camp was Chettan who figures so splendidly in the annals of Himalayan climbing.

Camp Nine and Camp Ten were also established. From the crest of the ridge beyond Camp Six to Camp Ten was a far cry, and it is more so by reason of the time factor extraneous in the extreme, and which was out of all proportion to the corresponding figures in the Mount Everest Expeditions. It had been a

continuous struggle from September 13 to October 2 that resulted in the establishment of four camps ending in Camp Ten.

As regards the height attained from Camp Six, 18,696 feet, to Camp Ten, 22,288 feet, is only 3,592 feet in 20 days. But figures in the higher Himalayan climbs are misleading and utterly fail to represent the struggle involved. Not only that, comparison of the Kangchenjunga and the Everest figures brings out little or nothing on which to base one's judgment as to the work accomplished, and as a matter of fact the expression that comparison is odious is perhaps nowhere so poignant as here.

Fighting the way from Camp Six right through to Camp Ten was on the one hand highly technical in character and the most arduous and extremely risky on the other. Mr. Smythe in his classical work entitled *Kangchenjunga Adventure* says: "Such hard work as this has never before been accomplished at such an altitude." The route was highly complicated with monstrous ice towers, ice pinnacles, and formidable slopes not even encountered in any Himalayan Expedition so far. What was very disappointing was that these obstacles presented themselves in a number of ways—in a word, every step onward was not only arduous but problematical. One who has taken the trouble of carefully studying all the Himalayan climbing literature will be struck with the fact that this was an expedition involving both ice technique as well as icemanship in a degree nowhere paralleled in any other Himalayan climb and for that matter in any mountaineering adventure all the world over. From Camp Eight to Camp Ten it was imperative to carve ice caves in the solid ice spacious enough to accommodate six to eight persons. The temperature inside the caves rarely sank below 26°F to 28°F while outside it was on an average about 14°F by day and 10°F to 25°F below zero by night.

While sinking in knee-deep into the snow Allwein and Kraus set out to reconnoitre the route above Camp Ten. In an hour they were able to ascend about 350 feet, a no mean progress. They retraced their steps from an altitude of 24,272 feet, which was the highest point attained. There now remained an altitude of nearly 4,000 feet to conquer. It is desperately stupendous, especially in view of the fact that altitude begins to assert itself with telling effect from 24,000 feet upwards. Apart from this combat with altitude they were to face terrific western wind soon after crossing the Ice Ridge advantageously sheltered from it. Lastly, who can vouchsafe, when all had been done, the possibility of the crowning ascent of steep rocks towering up to a sheer height of nearly 1,000 feet that gallantly defend the final pyramid?

To return to the adventure. The conquering of the summit seemed to them an accomplished fact. The following day, October 14, dawned sulkily. Snow began to fall heavily and it upset the project, threatening derangement of food transport and the cutting off of camp communications. And, if the worst would come to the worst, stores dumped outside the tents might be so deeply buried in snows as to be lost for good. Two members of the party accompanied by Lewa and Chettan were forced to descend in order to save food. They gave voice to their feelings. "We began to realise with heavy hearts that the ascent of Kangchenjunga was now hardly possible." The proposition of fighting their way to the summit had to be abandoned.

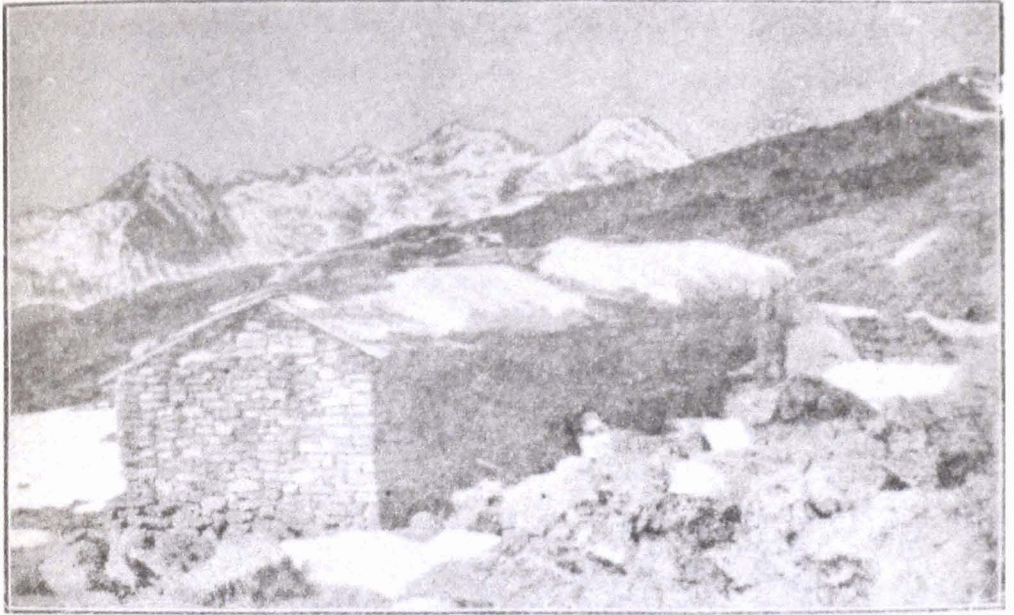
At long last they decided to make an attempt to reach the North Ridge with the object of catching a sight of the unknown north-west side of the mountain. The proposition proved impracticable; even such an attempt was beyond the bounds of possibilities. Nearly four hours' nerve-racking work enabled them to attain a height of 24,000 feet. Snowfall was so immense that

they sank in thigh-deep. They then retraced their steps. A stupendous cloud bank came into being, skirted above by a sky of sea-green colour—an ominous sign heralding a terrific storm. On the following day to their utter dismay they found the entrance to the cave completely blocked with snow which so far had fallen to a depth of seven feet and was still falling. People of one camp were completely in the dark as to what was happening in another.

The party in Camp Ten was placed as between Scylla and Charybdis. Wrestling a descent appeared impossible while staying meant starvation and death. So descend they had to under the most adverse circumstances imaginable. Splendidly the porters plied their task while being weighted down by some eighty pounds each. Many a fall they had in holes wherefrom they had to be pulled out. The leader was tightly held by ropes while descending. Many ice slopes were dislodged under the feet of the leader as he gallantly proceeded downwards, and the groove made by avalanches thus set in motion formed the route of the party in their descent.

In one instance of an avalanche all the members would have met their grave had not Dr. Bauer saved the situation by making desperate efforts which resulted in so terrible exertion that all lay motionless for ten minutes.

Even when they reached Camp Nine being completely played out, they had to open the entrance to the cave lying beneath seven feet of snow. The porters at last became so unnerved that transport became problematical. More than half of the loads were jettisoned and down they went an appalling precipice of 5,000 feet till the Twins Glacier arrested the tremendous momentum thus generated. This sort of desperate throwing-down-business never marked any similar adventure on the Himalaya.



By courtesy of Mr. M. Sain.

THE JONGRI HUT (13,200')

(The last reminiscence of human workmanship at the threshold of eternal snows represented by the Kangchenjunga group of mountains.)

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By courtesy of Mr. M. Sain.

THE LACHEN DUK-BUNGALOW
(In winter when the trees are leafless.)

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The porters now being disburdened to a great extent could prolong the struggle. Being awfully exhausted and deprived of their morale, they fell down continually. Although all were roped up, a slip on the part of a mountaineer proved too much for the others who failed to check his speed and all were being hurdled down the snowy slopes. The presence of mind of one of the porters who was then passing by the side of a ridge saved the situation. He leaped across the ridge on its reverse side thus balancing others on the rope to which he was attached. Although they narrowly escaped death, they had to bivouac that night without the aid of their bivouacing equipment which with their rucksacks and provisions slipped down precipices in the course of that nasty slip. During that night Beigel was severely frost-bitten in the feet.

Thereafter Camp Six was reached to their great relief. It took four days to descend to the Base Camp through very deep snow. A procession of exhausted sahibs and porters with Beigel carried on a crude stretcher made of two tent poles broke the silence of the Zemu Glacier hardly trodden by any human feet till they reached its snout. Even here, they were overtaken by rain and snowstorm with the result that fighting one's way through the snow-clad bamboos and rhododendrons proved quite a difficult affair, so much so that poor Beigel was constrained to walk. Lastly a heavy, long trudge brought the party to Lachen. "Dishevelled, dead-beat, our nerves worn out with the wild struggle against nature, with unkempt beards and covered with muds, we trod with heavy feet into the brilliantly lit dining room of the Lachen bungalow."

One of the epic struggles for Kangchenjunga was now over. It had been an adventure terribly exacting and desperate to the last degree. Though futile, it was none the less a glorious failure.

DYHRENFURTH EXPEDITION, 1930

The Members of the Expedition :—This Expedition which was an international one consisted of the following climbing members. Professor Dyhrenfurth who had in his younger days bagged outright so many as seven hundred peaks in the Alps and Hope Tatra was placed at the head of these aspirants to Kangchenjunga. Professor Dyhrenfurth was then forty-four years of age. Although it is not advisable that mountaineers should be on the wrong side of forty, notable cases are on record where climbers far advanced in age behaved magnificently in tackling first class peaks. Smythe says: "Mountaineering begets longevity and longevity begets mountaineering."

Monsieur Marcel Kurz was an expert in winter ascents. Besides being a climbing member he was also attached to the expedition as a cartographer. Herr Hoerlin and Schneider who were the younger members of the expedition had at their credit brilliant climbing records. Schneider who hailed from Tyrol was a geologist. Hoerlin was a student of medicine and was a renowned German mountaineer. He was also the president of the Akademischer Alpen Club, Berlin. Wood Johnson, was an English mountaineer, and so was F. S. Smythe.

Colonel Howard-Bury, the leader of the Mount Everest Expedition, 1921 in one place writes: "Each one has his own inner aptitude which he aches to give vent to and bring into play." Wood Johnson ached to play the role of a Himalayan climber. In his early youth he made a number of ascents on rocks in the English Lake District, and became in due course an expert rock climber. From the accounts of the Mount Everest Expeditions he drew his inspiration for Himalayan mountaineering. With the view of translating his thoughts into action he decided to take up tea-planting

in the district of Darjeeling, so that he would have at least the opportunity of making ascents on the Sikkim Himalaya, and if possible to join a future Everest Expedition. With these ideas uppermost in his mind, he took to learning Nepali so that he might with advantage handle the porters and all the natives of an expedition. Although he had no Alpine experience he was invited to join this expedition. What Mr. Smythe writes in this connection is very significant: "Alpine experience counts for little on the Himalayas without knowledge of travelling conditions, and an expedition undertaken by him in 1929 to peaks around Dzungri was to prove of more value to our expedition than any amount of Alpine experience."

Smythe, the eminent and seasoned mountaineer of Kamet and Everest repute, was an invaluable acquisition to this expedition as also to the Everest Expedition of 1933. He is not only one of the most renowned Himalayan climbers, but a man of great literary talents. He has enriched mountaineering literature to an exceptional degree. Ruttledge in his *Everest, 1933* says: "We had, therefore, 'in Smythe a mountaineer of established reputation, of great experience in all branches of the art, and splendidly acclimatised.'" Such was the personnel of the expedition.

Preparations:—Professor Dyrhenfurth did not base his decision in matters relating to the choice of boots and clothing on the valued experience gained by the pioneers on the field. Besides facilitating ventilation of the body two, three, or more layers of clothing of lighter stuff are for obvious reasons warmer than one layer of heavy material. This was not recognised by the leader whose choice unfortunately fell upon heavy clothing and unwieldy boots to the great detriment of movement on higher altitudes.

Crampons supplied with these boots were not only comparatively heavy, but by reason of quite a number

of nails entering into the mechanism facilitate conduction of cold from outside to the feet inside the boots. Although an ice-axe weighed only two pounds, crampons for a pair of boot weighed fully four pounds, a highly embarrassing weight for a high climb.

Each climber had not only to carry his own body weight against gravity, but in a sense was also expected to shoulder an additional burden of clothing, footwear, and a rucksack holding some equipment weighing a little over thirty-two pounds. Bearing in mind the fact that even smoking at 16,000 feet is a decided exertion and even lighting a match at this elevation quite a business, one can well imagine what a tremendous effort it means to climb the last 1,000 feet to the summit when a mountaineer has already been played out in his campaign against cold and altitude. Incidentally it may be added here that at altitudes above 14,000', one feels the effect of rarity of air, and what is called mountain sickness makes its appearance with such symptoms as nausea, giddiness, loss of appetite, headache, prostration, etc. Mountain sickness appears to be the first token of sentiments to a lover of heights who is mountain-sick.

Among many items entering into a number of paraphernalia of the expedition a few only may here be dealt with at some length. Quilted eider-down sleeping bags with slits at the top for gaining entrance therein served their purpose splendidly. Synthetic rubber ground sheets having a thickness of one-third of an inch were used to lie on. They were not only dry but also impervious to cold, and at the same time competent to bar out stone-devil to a considerable extent. Kashmiri puttees were recommended by General Bruce. It does not impede circulation to the slightest degree and affords excellent protection against the onslaught of leeches which pest infests not only the tropical Sikkim, but sometimes places having a maximum altitude of 8,000 feet on the Sikkim Himalaya. Ordinary bottle-green or

dark-yellow snow-glasses behave splendidly in protecting the eyes from snow-glare. Looking at resplendently white sheets of ice and snows, and even at the faces of rocks and boulders results in that most painful ailment known as snow-blindness, which is caused by the *ultra-violet* rays of the sun which are terribly intense at high altitudes. Solar heat during the daytime when the sun is ablaze has a scorching and blackening effect on the exposed face which feels as if the skin is being stripped off. This is principally due to the merciless *ultra-violet* rays of the sun at high elevations. If no adequate precaution is taken in this respect, the face and the lips become puffed up and then the skin cracks and exudes a thin fluidic substance, and lastly, nasty sores develop. For this reason the climbers should be equipped with scientifically prepared face-creams which are potent enough to greatly absorb these rays.

The writer has gathered from a reliable source that several tourists who had been negligent in being equipped with this stuff had to suffer the consequences, their rosy complexion giving place to a dark one characteristic of the tropical zone.

Porters and Sirdars:—Nashpati, Gyaljan, Narsang and Lobsang are the four sirdars who were engaged by the expedition. Of these sirdars Lobsang of humble origin has been very highly extolled by Mr. Smythe who writes: "The work of the chief sirdar, Lobsang, was invaluable, and was equal in intelligence and trustworthiness to that of a sahib." The porters who made their mark in the enterprise were Nemu, Lewa, Sonam, Tsinabo, Ongdi, Narsang, Kipa, and Nima. Nemu had been Irvine's servant on Everest in 1924. Lewa performed magnificent work in the Bavarian Expedition. Tencheddar was highly praised by the Bavarians, and was appointed cook not only in this but also in 1933 Everest Expedition. Chettan or "Satan", the immortal porter, was a seasoned mountaineer and was recruited

by Schneider. Lewa who had lost both feet through frostbite in this adventure is still alive. Narsang died in 1941. Tencheddar died in 1935 or so. Sonam ran mad and died in 1937. Nima is the only one amongst these porters who is still living. He is at Sonada, ten miles away from Darjeeling.

The route to the Base Camp:—The Expedition preferred the route through the north-eastern Nepal to the Lachen route taken by the Munich Party the previous year. Since 1899, when Douglas Freshfield traversed round Kangchenjunga no European made his way through the valleys to the west and south-west of Kangchenjunga. The Lachen-Zemu Valley route trodden by the Bavarians had perhaps little charm with them, not to say anything about the eastern side of the North Ridge, or the Bavarian Ridge which proved vicious in the extreme to the Munich party. But then, the Eastern Ridge of Kangchenjunga, not assaulted by the 1929 party, could have been attempted with advantage, as by so doing, at least a good deal of time in reaching the battle zone would have been saved. Anyway, Professor Dyhrenfurth preferred to choose the longest route to Kangchenjunga *via* north-eastern Nepal. As a matter of fact, as Mr. Smythe points out, the Ice Ridge (*i.e.*, the Bavarian Ridge) leading to the North Ridge “was the only line that offered any possibility on the Sikkim side of the mountain.” This being so, the idea of attacking the mountain again by the self-same route would naturally be repulsive. But as nothing was as yet heard from Nepal, it became incumbent on the party to change the plan of attack, and as a result thereof, it was decided to take to the Lachen-Zemu route. When they had got through all the preparations, a letter was received from the Maharaja of Nepal conveying his assent to an entry into the Nepalese territory with the view of approaching the mountain. The prospect for adopting the Zemu Glacier route was at once abandoned in favour of the

one *via* the Kangchenjunga Glacier which was originally under contemplation.

Up to Dzungri on the threshold of the snows, the route followed by the expedition is the same as described elsewhere in this book. The last portion of the journey from Yak-sam to Dzungri which is a steep ascent of 5,000 feet proved terribly trying. Smythe writes: "The trudge, or perhaps it would be more correct to say stagger in my case up to Dzungri remains in my mind as the most severe physical effort I have ever been called upon to do." They encountered deep snow below 10,000 feet. This was disquieting. They wondered whether the bare-footed porters would be able to negotiate the 16,373 feet Kang Pass, which was ahead and must have been snow-covered. Dzungri which boasts a height of 13,200 feet is indeed a good starting point, or in other words a splendid Base Camp for assailing the surrounding peaks; Kabur, 15,480 feet, to the north of Dzungri, Little Kabru, 21,970 feet, Simvu, 22,360 feet, Pandium, 22,017 feet.

The party left Darjeeling on April 7 and reached Dzungri on April 15. Dzungri is an undulating grassy plain strewn with boulders and is in the midst of a wilderness of savage snow and rock peaks. The party was overtaken by a blizzard on Dzungri. To the Bhutias and particularly the Sherpas this fury of the elements was intimidating. The Nepali porters began to tremble like an aspen leaf and refused to proceed to the Kang La. Being barefooted and clad in cotton clothing, they had every justification for their refusal to traverse the snow-clad Kang Pass.

Fifty Nepali porters abandoned their loads and returned to Darjeeling. With great difficulty the loads were carried over to the Kang La by relays of porters.

The route traversed was along the south-west slopes of Kabru and down the series of steep zigzags into the Rathong Valley clad with luxuriant vegetation.

They could penetrate into the jungle by trail-making. This valley leads to Kang La. They camped at an altitude of 13,000 feet.

Thereafter remained a steep climb to the Pass on the way to which was the junction of two glaciers. The ascent was trying in the extreme not only in view of highly rarefied air, but also due to direct heat and the *ultra-violet* rays of the sun so keen and telling at high altitudes. The effect of reflected glare of sun's rays from the snows is also terrific. To an unacclimatised body an ascent to 13,000 feet and upwards is far more trying than a climb to 20,000 feet to an acclimatised body. Porters were carrying a load of sixty to eighty pounds each, as against a load of thirty pounds or so carried by the Alpine porters.

Unfortunately, the party went without being equipped with protective glacier face cream in lieu of which they were constrained to use ordinary face cream which, however, proved almost completely useless. The result was that their skin dried up and was most miserably scorched.

As the party was slowly making for the high pass, Hoerlin and Schneider who had left earlier in the morning with the intention of climbing the Kang Peak, 18,280 feet, were seen like dots creeping up the final snowy slopes of the peak so clearly visible from Darjeeling. Kang La which is to the north of the Kang Peak is not exposed to view from Darjeeling. The moment one climbs to the top of the pass, if the weather is clear, the north-eastern Nepal presents itself to the view of the weary traveller. Schneider and Hoerlin joined the party over the Kang La after conquering the Kang Peak. The region was shrouded by deep mist. As it cleared up for a moment they caught a glimpse of 25,304 feet Janu to the east—it must have been a glorious view.

While descending the snowy slopes of the Kang La

on the other side of it, Mr. Smythe took a fancy to try his luck on ski. Down the slopes, and then down the snow-filled valley he glided down with unconscious speed. It was an exhilarating movement. Suddenly, however, "both ski came off together." The scene changed deplorably; the pilot arose after being hurt. "From above was borne down faintly a roar of laughter, the prestige of the flying machine had vanished for ever." The allusion here is to the impression the ski made on the porters.

The next proposition was to cross the Mirgin La. But coolie ration was running short and it became imperative that some should meet the local Subadar to arrange for food. Smythe and Wood Johnson set off for Tseram in search of the Subadar.

The first descended to the Yalung Valley which was traversed by Farmer and his porters nearly one year ago *en route* to the Yalung Glacier for assailing Kangchenjunga. The party had already been advised by wire to make all possible enquiry and search for this young historic climber, and, in particular, to visit the Decherol Monastery, which was located in the map some way up the Yalung Valley. This desolate valley showed no sign of habitation. On ascending the valley they happened to meet a boy and his old father and mother. The old man was the yakherd of the valley hemmed in by giant mountains. From them they learnt that the monastery in question had some thirty years ago lain in ruins. No trace of Farmer could be discovered. Neither could any information be gathered as to his traverse. Farmer and his porters for fear of being detected avoided the village of Tseram on their way to the Yalung Glacier. Therefore, no news of any importance could be expected from the old man or from any villager in Tseram.

Lastly on April 22, after spending a few days at Tseram, the party was off again to reach Khunza after

crossing the Mirgin La Pass, 14,853 feet. The ascent to Mirgin La was trying. Hailstorms were falling as they reached the Pass. Among the local porters were several women who carried expedition loads over the Pass. Mr. Smythe writes: "In weight carrying powers they were the equal of a man, and their powers of endurance were prodigious."

After crossing the Mirgin La, the party had to descend to the Kangbachen Valley, far to the north of which lay the village of Khunza boasting a cluster of houses. The party here visited the Khunza Monastery which is a branch of the famous Kampa Dzong Monastery in Tibet. The monastery is a wooden structure.

On the ascent from Khunza to Kangbachen they were first confronted with giant rhododendrons which they had to clear with *kukris*. On the way was seen a big boulder, some fifty feet high. Under this huge rock was found "a cave with fire blackened roof, and a small patch of cultivated ground outside which suggested that it was possibly inhabited by a hermit, for there was no grazing ground handy for yaks."

As the forest region ended, the snout of the Janu Glacier made its appearance. The snout is 1,000 feet high and is bordered by a huge moraine. All were feeling the effects of altitude, although it was less than 15,000 feet. On reaching the other side of the mountain they could see the Kangbachen Valley, treeless and devoid of vegetation. While trudging down the moraine, came into view through an opening in the mist Janu towering aloft to some 10,000 feet from the level of the spectator. We wonder if Smythe's description can be excelled. He writes: "A tiny window of blue sky was disclosed, and in it was thrust a summit, red hot from the furnace of the setting sun."

Kangbachen is the last village of Nepal in that part of the Himalaya and is situated at the junction of the two rivers, the Kangchenjunga and the Thangchen.

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The Thangchen river flows down a valley which leads to Tibet. The route along this valley was abandoned long ago owing to political reasons.

The real thrill of the journey began from Kangbachen onwards. After a traverse up the hill sides, there appeared a stony waste formed by the terminal moraine of the Kangchenjunga Glacier. They had to climb up steep slopes strewn with most unstable boulders some of which were gigantic. It was a place where rock falls threatened to a great degree. At last the Kangchenjunga Glacier was reached, but it is so preponderantly covered with moraine that to a novice it does not suggest itself to be a glacier. It seems at best to be a stony upland where snows have at places made a lodgement. The extensive terminal moraines on the Himalayas so lavishly strewn with boulders clearly demonstrate how Nature's forces are always at work in dragging down the proud and majestic peaks of the Himalaya.

After a strenuous journey of five hours the sahibs reached a little cluster of huts marked in the map as Ramthang at an altitude of 15,431 feet. Smythe remarks: "The march from Khunza had also been a tiresome one, whilst the march from Kangbachen to Ramthang is better forgotten." Less than half of the porters, all of whom are habituated to bivouacking, arrived, while the rest had taken shelter below boulders. A heavy blizzard broke as the day ended and at night it continued. On the following day the way lay over flat, stony pastures. As the sun's rays struck against the fresh layer of snow that fell on the previous night, their exposed faces forthwith demanded serious care.

Protection against the *ultra-violet* rays, intensely active in these high altitudes and intensified by reflection from the dazzlingly white snows became imperative. The route along the upper part of the Kangchenjunga Glacier as also any other Himalayan Glacier is

exceedingly tedious and tiresome, as the glacier surface is unusually bumpy. Tourists usually take to the trough as far as they can. A trough is a convenient depression between the edge of the glacier and mountain side. The party, therefore, ascended the trough till it was lost in rocks and boulders. In the trough, however, what is called the glacier lassitude is felt to a very marked degree. Whatever little quantity of rarefied air there may be in this confined area is to a certain extent perhaps absorbed by the ice therein, and gives rise to a greater degree of glacier lassitude. But, as one climbs up a slope or a peak near by, this depressing feeling soon leaves the body. On their way a flat shelf of coarse grass was met. This bleak and desolate spot possesses quite a sonorous name, Pangperma.

The Assault:—It was proposed to attack the western face of the mountain, the foot of which was some 5 miles away from the Base Camp. Mr. Freshfield was of opinion that it was the western face only which offered any possibility of a climb to the summit. But his words are highly depictive of almost utter despair: “the whole face of the mountain might be imagined to have been constructed by the Demon of Kangchenjunga for the express purpose of defence against human assault, so skilfully is each comparative weak spot raked by ice and rock batteries, * * * *”

The scheme as it appears superficially is quite easy. Camp One was to be established higher up the Kangchenjunga Glacier where a tributary glacier meets it from the east. Then Camp Two was to be pitched on the upper part of the said Eastern Tributary Glacier just beneath the ice precipices that most jealously barricade the path. After climbing these precipices Camp Three was to be established at the eastern end of the lower ice terrace. Therefrom, they were to proceed farther to the east and establish themselves at Camp Four which was to be somewhere near the lowest

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point where the two ridges from the Twins Peak and the highest summit of Kangchenjunga sweep down at a moderate angle to a loop or depression called col. Thereafter, the party was to follow the North Ridge which the Bavarians failed to reach from the other (eastern) side, and establish Camp Five somewhere near the Ridge and to the east of the upper terrace. This being done a suitable place for Camp Six would be required above the upper terrace, wherefrom to reach the highest summit would mean a desperate dash to gain a further altitude of 1,500 feet. It is a fascinating proposal no doubt. A mental survey of the route might keep one's spirit up and hope may tell a flattering tale, but all the same the obstacles of Kangchenjunga are many and prodigious, appalling and terrific.

If Everest would yield to a climbing expedition in this century, Kangchenjunga may bid defiance to the attempts of its intruders possibly for many centuries to come. It may even remain unassailable till Nature and Time contribute their quota and at least tumble down the formidable armours that defend the citadel of both static and dynamic power.

The right side of the Glacier where it was pouring over a low rock cliff was dangerous. The accumulated masses of ice that lay on the rock in unstable equilibrium thundered down the slopes off and on. The party, therefore, climbed up the other side which was extensively covered with moraine. Trudging up this glacier slopes a level terrace of snow was at last gained. They could not traverse up the centre of the glacier terribly exposed to the scorching sun. Smythe's description here is graphical: "On those concave snow slopes we would be like flies in the middle of a burning glass." The trough to their left was followed up to their great advantage. The heat here was not very intense and was mitigated now and then by gusts of cold wind. Crevasses treacherously concealed by layers of snow had

to be encountered. These layers often betray their real character by slight undulation and depression. The view that revealed itself from here was not only disappointing but menacing.

In front rose ice walls towering almost vertically aloft. Climb of Kangchenjunga in less than no time seemed a hopeless proposition. Only the final rock pyramid to all appearance seemed practicable. It was surmised that if the lower terrace above the ice wall could be reached the party could possibly after traversing to the left for some distance climb a slope of some 1,500 to 2,000 feet, and reach the crest of the North Ridge. The route from the terrace to the North Ridge did not present to the view any difficulty, but to reach the terrace (the lower terrace) was a great problem.

When they climbed far up, the whole face that intervened between the crest of the North Ridge and the Eastern Tributary Glacier seemed absolutely beyond the bounds of possibility. The only alternative that remained to be tackled or rather offered itself for consideration was the great ice wall that runs for some three miles across the face of the mountain. It is an almost vertical ice band having an appalling height of 600 to 800 feet, a most forbidding barrier imaginable. Towards the North Ridge the ice wall is rather alluring as on that side a sloping shelf on the upper portion of the wall seems to invite an ascent. But then, above it there are overhanging masses of ice pinnacles that threatened a terrific fall at any moment. As a matter of fact, the boulders strewn over and below the shelf were a clear indication of sweeping avalanches that occurred in the past from time to time.

Camp Two was situated on the Kangchenjunga glacier on a pleasant spot. It, however, lay under a disadvantage by reason of the fact that a few concealed crevasses were rightly suspected in the neighbourhood.

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The porters were, therefore, seriously warned against moving more than a yard or two from the tents.

In the evening a faint shout was heard. It was first ascribed to the members of the second party who were toiling up the snow slopes. Was it their shout of joy on sighting the Camp? It was not a shout, but a series of shouts or rather cry at the top of one's voice, only subdued by distance. It would be foolish to surmise that a man would take delight in shouting when at nearly 20,000 feet one gasps for breath. "An eagle perhaps?" or "Perhaps it is a Mi-go!" By Mi-go is meant a snow-man.

They wondered if the porter Ongdi had arrived. On enquiry it transpired that although he had arrived, there was no trace of him. Smythe and Wieland soon reached the spot—a small hole not more than two feet in diameter. A moan from its depths though faint spoke loud and clear as to what had happened. Forthwith they hastened back to camp. Wieland returned with ropes and porters. Smythe strapped on crampons to his boots so that if the worst would come to the worst he might go down and tackle the situation. Meanwhile a rope had been lowered which Ongdi readily put to use by fastening himself to it. Six sturdy porters soon dragged him out. He had fallen some thirty feet sheer. He was not only severely wounded but the shock he felt had terrible effect on him. He had been in abyss of death for fully two hours. Had not his awfully cold extremities been thoroughly massaged by the sahibs, he would have been badly frost-bitten. Ongdi survived the catastrophe. Smythe writes: "It must have been a terrible experience for him, and many men less tough would most likely have succumbed."

It was then decided that they should attack the North Ridge by first climbing the ice wall, and then reaching the lower terrace just above it, would proceed

along it to the left and lastly attempt an ascent to the crest of the ridge. The way to the ice wall lay over heavy ice fall and treacherous snow concealing perilous crevasses one of which gave way under the feet of Wood Johnson who would have succumbed had not Smythe who had him tightly on a rope dragged him up.

That was a dreadful night. Great ice avalanches many times thundered down mountain sides. "It was terrifying to be disturbed from sleep in this way; one felt pitifully small and helpless amid these vast and wrathful mountains. The porters felt something of the same, but in a different way. In the avalanche they heard the voices of the gods, in the moan of the night wind the jeering of the Snow Men. Once I heard a mutter from their tent, a low intonation rising and falling—they were praying."

Morning of May 4 dawned with relief—it was sunny and windless. Professor Dyhrenfurth was forced to return to the Base Camp owing to a very bad throat caused by the dryness of the air and breathing through the mouth under the spur of necessity at high altitudes. Trudging up over knee-deep snow slope and avoiding the side suspected to be the play-ground of avalanches, they reached the base of the great ice wall on a level terrace of snow intersected longitudinally by a large crevasse which was crossed over an unreliable snow bridge by means of rope with which a handrail was made. By step-cutting they made their way up steep ice slopes from which the upper part of the ice wall looked formidable. Smythe says: "The beautiful is often dangerous. Strip Kangchenjunga of its icy robes, and it would become weak and defenceless, a mere rocky skeleton. In its dangers lie its beauties, and no right thinking mountainer would have it otherwise."

They returned to Camp. Deplorable news were awaiting them. The porters sent from Khunza to help Colonel Tobin far from carrying the loads from Dzongri

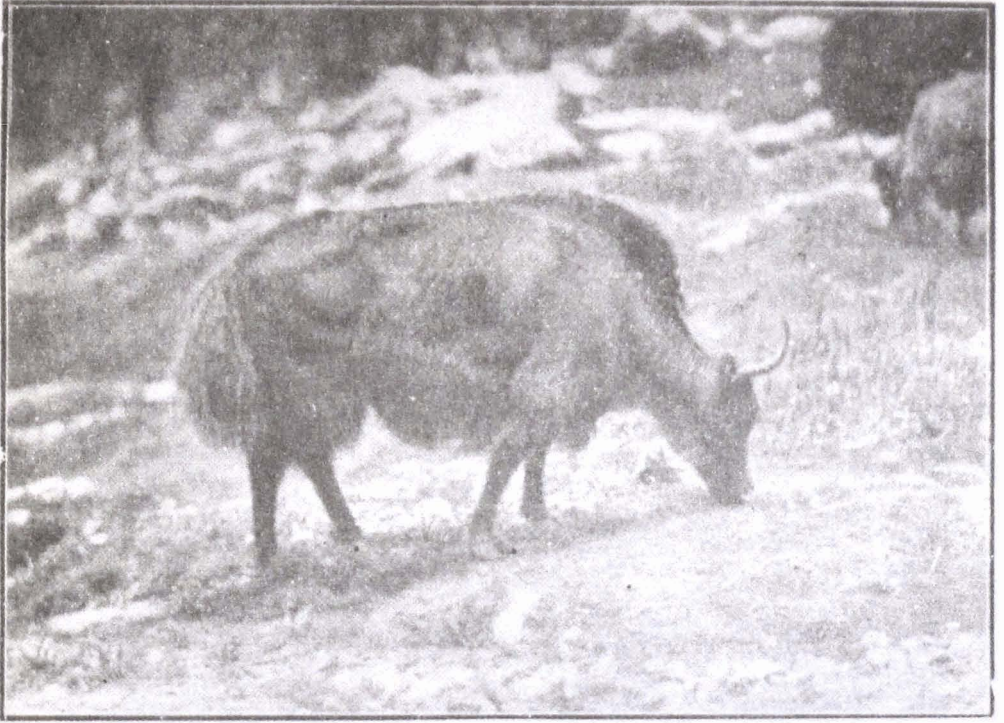


By courtesy of Mr. M. Sain.

KANGCHENJHAU IN MOONLIGHT

(One of the three Sikkim giants of coloured rocks.)

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By courtesy of Mr. M. Sain.

THE YAK

(This sure-footed animal thrive on heights ranging from 8,000' to 12,000'.)

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to Kang La, looted a dump of stores at Dzongri. Tobin's assistant sirdar had died of exposure on the Kang La, whilst his chief and well known sirdar, Naspati, fell ill and was compelled to return to Darjeeling. Sirdar Lobsang who had been sent back from Tseram was now assiduously engaged in getting the loads carried over the Kang La by relays of porters. In the mean time, sahib's food ran short. At that high altitude the very idea of having yak's meat as an alternative was revolting, moreover it could not be digested, as their power of assimilation was impaired to an incredible extent by high altitude climbing. Wood Johnson and Hannah were asked to leave Kangchenjunga in order to solve the food problem.

Morning of May 5 broke fine. With seven hundreds of feet of rope and two or three dozens of pitons Wieland, Duvanel, and Smythe resumed the assault on the ice wall. In five days they could rise to a height of 500 feet. The object they had in view was to climb the ice wall by step-cutting and running pitons into the hard ice so that a rope passing through the rings of the pitons may serve as a hand-rail to catch hold of while ascending or descending. It was doubtful whether the track with steps and hand-rail would stand firm after a heavy snowfall. There was every chance of the track being obliterated by a fresh fall of snow. Should, however, a part of the ice collapse, the situation would be appalling. Even if the terrace is gained, would it be possible for the porters to carry loads up there, not once but severai times when higher camps would be established? On the terrace, Camp Three was to be pitched and at least three more camps would be needed between Camp Three and the summit, if not more.

Taking it for granted that after Camp Three had been well established on the terrace, and thereafter a heavy snow-fall were to mar the route for good, would not Camp Three be mercilessly cut off from the party

below? Even if a descent be after that somehow or other possible, would it be a harmless one? And supposing that camps had been pitched higher up would matters not prove much more problematical both in respect of transport, and, if occasion would so warrant, a descent with the view of retreating?

Their hearts sank as they gazed on the ice precipices, but an honourable retreat at this stage would not mean a mountaineering adventure. At long last Hoerlin and Schneider climbed the slope at the foot of the final wall—it was a great feat and a nerve-racking enterprise too. The following words of Mr. Smythe speak volumes: “During the day we watched them, mere specks crawling upwards with the slowness of an hour hand.” They returned. It was considered that the work would be completed on the following day and would be gained the terrace wherefrom to begin their semi-final match with Kangchenjunga. Should they win, the North Ridge would be reached. Thereafter remained the glorious future of the final game—a climb to the upper terrace and, therefrom, a pilgrimage of the body as well as of the spirit to the heaven-kissing peak by breasting the final rock pyramid some 1,000 feet high.

Their surmise was right. On one occasion, a snow-storm obliterated the upward steps as well as the fixed ropes. It was a difficult situation to tackle. This groping-in-the-snow-business for a hold and footing down sheer precipices is no joke.

Duvenal, the last man down, slipped before he could catch hold of the hand-rail. He was roped on to three sturdy porters. One of them, an old Everest “Tiger”, who was next to him and tightly anchored rose to the occasion, and held him and arrested his momentum before he had slid down more than ten feet. It was a splendid piece of performance. But this slip had some demoralising effect on other porters, one of whom slipped in the wake of Duvenal. He slipped till

he reached a platform wherefrom he was, so to speak, fished up on the rope by two porters.

Once an ice step collapsed under the feet of Smythe, who saved himself by arresting the momentum by cleverly driving into the snow the pick of his ice-axe.

That night Mr. Smythe was "writting up a sadly overdue diary and also a dispatch to *The Times*," which last concluded with these very significant words that foreshadowed events ahead: "As I write, avalanche after avalanche is roaring off Kinchenjunga each one seeming to proclaim defiance and warning."

The night before the day dawned for the final struggle to climb up the ice wall and gain the terrace was an ominous one. Avalanches roared and thundered all night from time to time. It was May 9. Smythe crawled out of his tent and looked at the ice wall. He felt not at all inclined to assail it; he was both mentally and physically unfit to do so. Schneider, who was prepared for anything, set out for the battle zone with his renowned servant, Chettan, nick-named "Satan", the pick of Himalayan porters, the Tiger of "Tigers". Altogether four sahibs and twelve porters were off to ascend the ice wall.

After half an hour or so, Smythe who was in his tent was startled by a deafening roar enough to wake the dead. As he hurried outside, the roar kept on and he witnessed a scene which he writes is indelibly engraved on his memory. It was an avalanche of cataclysmic dimensions. "Huge masses of ice as high as cathedrals, were still toppling to destruction; * * *" In a moment it seemed that the party looking like so many dots got engulfed by the sweeping avalanche. "The avalanche that on May 9 ended our attempt to reach the North Ridge of Kangchenjunga covered about a square mile of snow-field with debris several feet thick, which weighed at a rough estimate about 100,000 tons." It was fortunate that the avalanche did not sweep the

camp away. The edge of the avalanche where it stopped was some 200 yards away.

Smythe and his cook with ice-axes in their hand hurried to their rescue, although their surmise was that not a soul was surviving. Schneider very narrowly escaped the disaster. The avalanche missed him by five metres. Others were also providentially saved. Chettan was missing. Wieland was found "approaching something sticking out between the ice blocks. It was Chettan's hand." He was dug out. They had recourse to the system of artificial respiration for over an hour. All was in vain. It was all over with this hero of many a Himalayan expedition. According to the version of those who climbed highest, another crack manifested itself on the ice wall which threatened another catastrophe "possibly greater even than the first." Before hastening back to Camp One, they buried Chettan. Sahibs stood round with bear heads; porters muttered prayers; snow was shovelled into the grave and lastly an ice-axe was driven in to mark the spot. Smythe writes: "We lost not a porter, but a valued friend. We left him buried amid one of the grandest mountain cirques in the world." Thus ended the first attempt on May 9, a tragic day in the annals of Himalayan mountaineering.

The last alternative was to attempt the Northwest Ridge, wherefrom the western tributary of the Kinchenjunga Glacier takes its rise. This ridge ends in an ice terrace, 24,000 feet, below the Kangbachen summit of Kinchenjunga, having an elevation of 25,782 feet. Even if this terrace is reached, at best the Kangabachen summit could be climbed, as to reach the highest summit would be out of the question by reason of both distance and obstacles which were appalling. About the Ridge of Kangchenjunga Symthe writes: "no ridge I have ever examined affected me with the same feeling of utter and complete hopelessness as that of the

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North-west Ridge of Kangchenjunga." It is a ridge rising up to a height of 4,000 feet. The crest of the ridge is as keen as the edge of a knife and there are deep gaps into these edges—it was like a saw of ice on which stood rocky towers hundreds of feet in height.

The Bavarian Ridge armoured with ice pinnacles is indeed formidable, but on the North-west Ridge spiky rock pinnacles hopelessly bar the way. By means of a binocular such spiky rocks are visible to a spectator from Darjeeling as he turns his eyes to the range east of Kinchenjunga.

It was decided to attempt the Ridge by toiling up a snow-filled couloir about 600 feet high, leading upwards to one of the gaps in the crest of the ridge. They shifted their camps close to the North-west Ridge at a place which was calculated to be beyond the reach of any avalanche. This place also seemed to be sheltered from the strong west wind. The raging storm seemed strong enough to blow away the tents. It was a luck that none was deprived of his tent that night. Above all other things, it is wind that has the most demoralizing effect on the porters.

The North-west Ridge of Kinchenjunga is mainly built of sharp rocks on which by reason of steepness snow cannot precipitate. The greatest drawback of most of these rocks lies in their unstable equilibrium. Two parties consisting of three climbers climbed on two ropes. Among them were two Everest "Tigers." One was Nima while the other was Lewa. Lewa was an excellent rock climber and without difficulty got to the top of a dizzy pinnacle, 20,800 feet high, which imparted a distinct tremor under the feet if rudely behaved. It was a sensational spot. Nima, however, floundered every now and then, and had to be left on a ledge. It was by driving pitons and fixing ropes to the rocks that the climb was accomplished.

Schneider and Wieland rendered valued service to

the rest of the party by fixing ropes. Smythe very nicely describes a feat of this young mountainer, Schneider, while ascending a rock. "It was not a place to linger over, and Schneider did not linger. A foot scraped on the wall, a hand wedged in the crack, a quick upward caterpillar-like movement with nought but tiny hand holes to prevent a backward topple, and the hardest part had been accomplished." In two hours they could gain a height of 200 feet. During this ascent on the North-west Ridge many an unstable rock was dislodged which on their way hurled down other rocks until "a perfect torrent of crags" set up tremendous vibrations which were answered by echoes roaring from the pyramids of Kinchenjunga.

Further ascent was abandoned, as it would have served no purpose. Reaching the terrace itself reigning supreme at a height of 24,000 feet now seemed to border on the impossible. The grimness of the face of the North-west Ridge strongly suggested a descent.

They bid adieu to this mighty mountain and began to descend in earnest when Kangchenjunga so far choked with suppressed wrath voiced its feelings in a thundering avalanche. Millions of tons of ice were dislodged and were thundering down the Ramthang Glacier. Straightway like a volcanic eruption immense masses of snows whirled up and enveloped the party far above on mountain side in a choking atmosphere of powdered snow and blizzard. They hastened their steps and lastly glissaded down the lower part of the couloir the party ascended while gaining height on the Ridge.

May 17 of 1930 witnessed the final defeat on the invulnerable North-west Ridge of Kangchenjunga.

The aspirants had made a great effort. And although Kangchenjunga hurled down against them monstrous avalanches and once took the offensive by one of its deadliest weapons, wind of hurricane force, it was,

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however, neither its ice or rock avalanches nor the strong western wind that thwarted the attempts. Leaving aside the impossible granite walls, the ice-armoured precipices of this mighty massif proved not only invulnerable but too stupendous for any human endeavour.

Regarding Makalu, Everest's 27,790 feet high satellite, Smythe writes: "When Everest has been climbed, Makalu may defy many generations of future mountaineers, for it is one of the most terrific peaks in the world." Kangchenjunga evidently is equally invulnerable at the present age. And from a study of mountaineering involved in the ascent of Kangchenjunga and Mount Everest, it appears that while there is quite a good chance of the King of Heights yielding to human endeavour, Kangchenjunga is most likely to ever remain a virgin peak.

While facing the snowy range from Darjeeling, it is highly gratifying and enthralling to imagine how man has attained the height of the heaven-kissing Kangchenjunga when nearing the base of the final pyramid of Mount Everest. It is at the same time equally disappointing to note that the three highest peaks of this awe-inspiring mountain, "the Five Treasures of the Snows," are destined to reign supreme for ever in their inviolate majesty.

HOUSTON EXPEDITION, 1933—BY AIR

While the sturdy mountaineers of the Mount Everest Expedition, 1933, led by M. H. Rutledge were struggling hard to attain the highest summit in the world from the Tibetan side, the last stronghold of nature was also being assailed from the Nepal side by aeroplanes.

The Houston-Mount-Everest Expedition, as its name implies, was directed to the King of Heights. It was on April 3rd of 1933 that the splendid aircraft of the

Houston Expedition first flew over the peak of Mount Everest. The meteorologists surmised that the fine weather that presented itself on April 3rd to the aspirants who sailed over Everest on that date could not be on the face of things expected to continue much beyond the 4th. Although a second flight to Everest was soon contemplated by reason of the fact that they failed to take a continuous strip of vertical photographs required for scientific purpose, further sanction of the Nepal Government had to be awaited before embarking upon second ærial warfare against Everest.

In the mean while it was deemed worth while to take advantage of April 4 which dawned fine, as clear weather over the Himalaya is not the rule but the exception. It was decided to fly over the summit of Kangchenjunga which they depict in words: "one of the world's most massif and spectacular mountains, and still a virgin peak."

Before describing in brief the flight over Kangchenjunga, it would not be out of place here to narrate in brief the history of these ærial enterprises. The idea of flying over Everest first flashed upon Major Blacker. Colonel R. T. Etherton, a born organiser, espoused the cause of Blacker. The Council of the Royal Geographical Society endorsed the plan in due course, and through proper authorities it was brought home to the stern Government of Nepal that the purpose of the Expedition was austerely scientific—that its success in mapping an impassable region extending for nearly 20 miles south of Everest by means of air cameras would not only place before the world at large important knowledge of this stupendous fortification of bewildering intricacy, but also pave the way to efficient survey of impenetrable region from the air in other parts of the earth's surface. The Government of Nepal proved sympathetic and the enterprise at once sprang up into action.

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The Committee of the Expedition approached Lady Houston, D.B.E., whose munificence had already made a noise in the world of British aviation. The ambitious project appealed to her, and, although contributions were to a certain extent forthcoming from the public, it was her open handedness that at last brought the dream within reach.

A flight over the highest peaks of the Himalaya is not only a great adventure but highly problematical. A series of scientific experiments highly technical in character had to be made not only in the laboratory, but also in cold chambers of intensely low temperatures as well as in steel chambers of highly reduced pressure in order to ascertain the limit of endurance of the human organism under the most exotic conditions both in respect of temperature and atmospheric pressure. The expedition was principally to be a fight on the one hand with altitude almost fringing on the stratosphere, and, on the other, with extreme rigor, the terrestrial atmosphere can have at its command.

Besides these two embarrassing factors, they were to contend with wind of "hurricane force" at high altitudes, the velocity of which near the summit could not be determined, although meteorologists persistently endeavoured to do so from observations made on the velocity of inflated India-rubber balloons let loose from the foot of the Himalaya. While the Himalayan climbers get themselves acclimatised in their slow ascending marches from camp to camp, the pilot as well as the observer of an aircraft has to bear the terrific effect of both cold and altitude at a moment's notice. In less than three quarters of an hour temperature would change from the sweltering heat of the plains to inconceivably low temperature reigning supreme at an altitude almost verging on the stratosphere. And, within that short period of time, a man subjected to the pressure at sea-level is to suffer a pressure which is almost one-third of

that. This abrupt change in pressure is apt to cause rupture of blood vessels, and bleeding from various outlets of the body as well as cerebral hæmorrhage.

Of the many problems science had to solve before wings could be put in action on Everest, we would mention here just a few. More details would be found in the author's "*Darjeeling at Glance*". Scientists devised means to eliminate every trace of water vapour from oxygen obtained by separating it from liquified air, as otherwise in very high altitudes it would freeze while passing through a valve which would be clogged, resulting in failure of the oxygen apparatus. The moment oxygen would cease to flow, the pilot and the observer would gasp for breath in the highly rarefied air even at an altitude of 20,000 to 22,000 feet and immediately disaster would ensue. Clothes, goggles, and all other equipments had to be electrically heated. The heat in the electrically heated cock-pit of the aeroplane would be sufficient to bring about an explosion of the film of the cameras. A mica covering was found to afford protection to this sensitive stuff. The freezing of petrol in the carburetter had to be guarded against. This problem yielded to a series of highly technical experiments. Petrol of a special quality had to be used. To this Benzol was not mixed to an appreciable extent as is usually done, by reason of the fact that Benzol freezes at 60°C. Benzol was practically ruled out and tetraethyl lead was found to be an excellent substitute for it. Sound loses its intensity in rarefied atmosphere. This factor, together with the fact that as an aircraft would be flying through the din and roar produced by the sweeping wind dashing against it voice would be inaudible, had to be recognised. A microphone for facilitating communication between the pilot and the observer was therefore installed. But at those tremendous altitudes microphone did not behave well. Cameras had to be devised with automatic exposures which could

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be regulated as to intervals between two consecutive exposures. These intervals, again, had to be determined with reference to height at which a 'plane would be flying through different regions. For this, among other things, an apparatus was so devised as would continually register readings of heights.

When every problem was solved, they had to look out for a sufficient drop in the wind-velocity over the peak to be surmounted. This is not all. Necessary fall in the wind-velocity should also be made to synchronise with clear atmosphere, as clouds or mists enveloping either the mountain or even the low valleys would frustrate scientific observation, that is to say, the taking of a series of overlapping vertical photographs and not oblique cinema-photographs of mountain scenery which although much appreciated by the world at large are useless for scientific purpose.

Anyway, the 4th day of April dawned fine over the mountains, and everything looked favourable. An attempt to assail Kangchenjunga was hastily planned. The Expedition was equipped with two big 'planes for flying over Everest and three small 'planes for reconnoitring purpose over the foothills of the Himalaya. In this flight over Kangchenjunga, the aircraft called Houston-Westland was occupied by Fellowes and Fisher, while in the Westland-Wallace the crews consisted of Ellison and Bonnett.

Although the scheduled time for start from Purnea was 8 A.M., the take off was delayed by fully two hours owing to diverse adjustments that had to be made with precision before sailing for the unknown. Those who have watched from Darjeeling how often the clear morning aspect of Kangchenjunga and its satellites becomes marred by immense masses of heavy white clouds, which rising from the lower valleys, envelop the mountains before one can say 'Jack Robinson', would

realise what time factor would mean to a successful flight over the summits of Kangchenjunga.

The delay in this case was disappointing in its effect. The pilot steered their flight heavenwards. The dust-haze extended to a tremendous height of 19,000 feet. As the aircrafts emerged from this hazy atmosphere, Kangchenjunga burst upon the view in all its clearness and magnificence. The whole region was perfectly free of cloud. From Purnea Kangchenjunga is nearly 126 miles as the crow flies, whereas Everest which is to the North-west of Kangchenjunga and is separated from it by a distance of nearly 71 miles is 143 miles from Purnea. Now by the time the aircraft approached Kangchenjunga by flying at a speed of over 120 miles per hour, a huge bank of cloud 1,500 feet in height completely enveloped the summits.

After reaching an altitude of 12,000 feet the pilots pulled their oxygen masks up to their faces. The masks which behaved so satisfactorily while they had been on the aerodrome proved a nuisance in the practical field when they called for adjustments at every movement of the head while looking at or manipulating any instrument.

The first fifty miles of the journey are over the plains of Hindustan. As they flew they could evidently view the Koshi River of Nepal to the left while the Mechi which marks the boundary between Nepal and British India to their right. Thereafter they crossed the blue foothills of the Himalaya for a number of miles having elevation up to 5,000 or utmost 6,000 feet. Fellowes remarks that these hills though imposing when viewed from the ground looked insignificant from the air.

It was decided to first find out from the air the well known confluence of the Great Rangit below the Tashiding Monastery, nearly seventeen miles as the crow flies to the north of and four days' march away from

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Darjeeling, with the object of flying straight on towards Kangchenjunga from this confluence and taking during the flight a series of photographs beginning from the confluence and ending in the highest peak. Fellowes writes: "I wondered if I would be able to recognize it, hampered as I was by goggles and oxygen masks."

To one who had the opportunity of travelling through these regions of Sikkim seamed with and furrowed by many a valley amid bewildering mazes of blue mountains capped with a number of monasteries, it would appear that to discover from the air this confluence would be embarrassing. Besides there are quite a number of confluences in these regions including the most imposing and enchanting confluence of the Great and the Little Rangit at Singla Bazar, one day's march from Darjeeling.

Owing to the accumulation of a mass of clouds between the foothills and Kangchenjunga, completely blotting out the area intended to be photographed, the project fell to the ground. The confluence could not be discerned.

From the local people inhabiting the valley of the Great Rangit at its junction with the Little Rangit, the writer came to know that a 'plane appeared over the region in 1933. It was evidently one of these two aircrafts which after fruitless reconnaissance headed towards the mountain-peak." Anyway, they decided to take a series of overlapping vertical photographs of the snowy regions which would be of scientific value.

As the mountain was drawing nearer and nearer, and a distance of nearly thirty miles separated them from the summit, the mountain-top looked blurred. The writer's surmise is that at this time the aircraft would be somewhere over the Pamionchi Monastery. The scene that now greeted their vision is better described in the words of Mr. Fellowes.

“Then a look round revealed a wonderful scene. I was amazed. Behind lay the plains of India, cut in all directions by the broad and winding sand-courses of the many river beds flowing from the Himalayas and constantly forming new channels for themselves. Nearer still lay the green hills of Sikkim with their mane of trees and vegetation, their heights varying from 4,000 to 7,000 feet. Irregular in formation, being deeply cut off by deep valleys, gorges and river beds, it was strange at this moment to ponder how these hard and knobly-looking hills grew the plant that provides the homely cup of tea. Directly beneath the aircraft was a sea of clouds and looking forward as the mountain came nearer and nearer, great peaks of over 20,000 feet upreared themselves from the main range. We were now looking down on scenes never before viewed by the eye of bird and man.”

Fellowes further writes:

Kangchenjunga is “mighty beyond imagination bounded on all sides by such awe-inspiring scenery as human eye can rarely gaze upon. To attempt to describe it by saying that in these directions lay a stretch of snow peaks, glaciers and tumbled valleys, giving the appearance of a terrific sea, imparts little idea of the unspeakable reality of what lay beneath us. Still less can the camera convey the wonderful impression of the illimitable magnificence and immensity of the scene.”

Ultimately they penetrated into the immense mass of clouds that formed on the top of the mountain, through which by reason of closeness they could cast a glance almost vertically down over the summit. Thereafter they began to circle the great peak. But while flying round this 28,156 feet pinnacle they gradually lost height for reason which could not be made out. Fellowes ascribed it to “slightly inaccurate flying or to a down draught.” Soon after they had to confront a “severe disturbance” which Fellowes for reasons best

known to him does not describe. It was of course wind, but possibly something else!

Fellowes writes:

"It was so sudden that for a time I seemed to lose all control of the ailerons and rudder, and did not know what was going to happen. The machine rocked, twisted and shook in a way I had never experienced before in eighteen years' continuous flying. Once it seemed certain we must drop in a spin. However, after what seemed an eternity, but was probably not more than half a minute, we ran into still air with only a trifling loss of height, and renewed our efforts to go over the top."

After this bad shaking Fellowes experienced a blurred feeling. Soon after this occurrence the two machines became separated and, Fellowes lost the companionship of Ellison, the pilot of the other aircraft. Having sailed to and fro for another quarter of an hour in the vicinity of the mountain, the emblem of both passive and dynamic defence,* he gave up all hope of clearing the summit, and headed south for the aerodrome at Lalbalu, ten miles to the west of Purnea.

In his homeward flight he could not discern the exact direction he had to follow to reach the aerodrome, which he holds he could have easily gained in normal conditions. It was lack of proper supply of oxygen caused by his ill-fitting mask that brought about the waning of his reasoning faculties. "There are no sign-posts in the sky." He preferred to fly due south, and after flying for some distance while he was under the impression that he was too far west, he was in reality much too far east. To his great disappointment he could not recognize the country lying below him. After flying along a railway line (evidently the Assam line) he at long last alighted on a field by its side, and to his

* This refers to avalanches, which are hinted at in the following rhetorical words: "There is an artillery of the elements sweeping the approaches to the final stronghold vaster than gunner ever served."

utter dismay found himself "surrounded by thousands of wildly gesticulating Beharis". These people, however, were not Beharis, but belonged to the district of Rangpur in Northern Bengal. Most luckily, he found an individual in the crowd who could not speak, but understand English and "more wonderful still read a map". It was this "singularly intelligent" person who pointed out Shampur in the map which was their position.

Herefrom he sailed for Dinajpur, as with the insufficient supply of petrol at his disposal, reaching Purnea would be a proposition bordering on the impossible. He landed on a maidan narrowly escaping by inches a dash with a school house. After he had alighted on the vast field he was surrounded by a surging mass of people. They wired to their headquarter at Purnea about their arrival at Dinajpur, wherefrom after the arrival of Ellison with petrol on the following morning, they were enabled at long last to breathe freely and return to Purnea which offered the party hospitality and reception with exquisite floral and other decorations so highly appreciated with gratefulness by the Expedition.

In concluding this epic flight, it would be interesting to note that Mount Everest could be cleared by 100 feet when Blacker flew over it on the memorable day of April 3, 1933. Three circuits were made around the summit. While passing through the leeward of the peak, they entered the 'plume' of Everest. The aircrafts battled their way into this region of flying fragments of ice, which literally bombarded the 'plains and "rattled violently into the cockpit." No 'plume' was, however, encountered, while flying over Kangchenjunga.

PART III
SIKKIM

S I K K I M

**comprises every phase of
Himalayan sceneries
in all their glorious
combinations, scale, and magnificence.**

SIKKIM

A SHORT SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF SIR JOSEPH DALTON HOOKER

Joseph Hooker is the second son of the late Sir W. J. Hooker, Director of the Kew Gardens in London. He was born in 1817, at Halesworth, Suffolk. After completing his medical studies at the Glasgow University, Hooker obtained in 1839 the medical degree, M.D. At this time his father was professor of botany.

He accompanied Sir James Ross who led the famous Antarctic Expedition of 1839-43 to which he was attached as an Assistant Surgeon. But he says that he on his part devoted himself to botanizing in the Antarctic regions. The results of his botanical studies were later on published by him in six volumes. Hooker was a man who was far ahead of his contemporaries, and he went so deeply into the subject that on the basis of comparative studies of plant life in those regions with reference to those already accomplished in other parts of the world, he came to many novel conclusions which unveiled the laws governing the apparently bewildering growth and distribution of plants over the globe.

He was bent on acquiring more knowledge of botany. Two opportunities soon presented themselves to this aspirant. He was either to proceed to the Andes or India for scientific exploration. Happily enough, his choice fell on India, and it was a piece of great fortune that the matters eventually took shape in a Government mission for which a sum of £400 per annum was granted by the Treasury for three years. Hooker had, however, to spend nearly double the amount for the enterprise. The Sikkim Himalaya was selected for him both by Lord Auckland and Dr. Falconer, the Superintendent of the Botanic Garden at Calcutta.

Hooker left England on November 11th, 1847 and sailed for India. On his way he spent some days in Egypt, at Aden, Ceylon, and Madras. He arrived at Calcutta in January, and began to botanize in the hills of western Bengal. Thereafter he travelled across the mountains of Birbhum and Bihar to the Soane valley, wherefrom his traverse lay over the Vindhya Range leading to the Ganges at Mirzapore. From Mirzapore he reached Bhagalpur by boat and finally struck north to the Sikkim Himalaya.

Aid and patronage of two personages on the spot proved invaluable to him. One was the self-made man, Mr. Brian H. Hodgson, B.C.S., who had been for many years the Resident at the Nepal Court. Rising from the status of an ordinary man he rose to the eminence of a man of science by dint of dogged perseverance. Fully twenty-five years were spent in research on various branches of science, including ethnology, zoology, and the study of birds and animals of the Himalaya. In appreciation of his valued assistance both direct and indirect, Hooker says: "To be welcomed to the Himalaya by such a person, and to be allowed the most unreserved intercourse, and the advantage of all his information and library, exercised a material influence on the progress I made in my studies, and on my travels."

The other was Dr. Campbell, the Superintendent of Darjeeling, and 'the Governor-General's agent, or medium of communication between the British Government and the Sikkim Rajah.' Campbell not only accompanied him in many of his tours in the Sikkim Himalaya, but left no stone unturned in ensuring his success. Without Campbell's aid Hooker could not have possibly secured permission to enter into eastern parts of Nepal as well as to reach the Tibetan passes thereof. Excluding Khatmandu, the capital city of Nepal, this land was strictly forbidden to the Europeans. It was all due

to Campbell's friendly influence on the then Nepal Minister that made the negotiation fruitful.

Hooker conducted scientific exploration in the Khasia Hills as well as in many parts of the world. The honour conferred on him are too many to mention. Space and scope of the book forbid us to enter into any more details in matters relating to his career.

A great contemporary of Hooker was the world-renowned Darwin, who propounded scientifically the doctrine of evolution of living creatures. Hooker who was a friend of Darwin not only played the part of a friendly critic in connection with the elucidation of his speculations on the origin of species, but probed into the corresponding phenomena underlying evolution in plant life. In 1868 in his presidential address at the Norwich meeting of the British Association, Hooker while dealing with Darwin's views of evolution of animal life, brought out botanical facts which made Darwin's expositions stand out in clearer definition. Hooker's ideas naturally made immediate and a very great appeal to the audience.

Sir Joseph Hooker published his valued work, *The Himalayan Journals*, in 1854, being an account of his expeditions in Bengal, the Sikkim and the Nepal Himalayas, the Khasia mountains, etc. It is a store-house of information and is a classical work on the subject.

HISTORICAL—SEARCH FOR A KING

The civilization of Sikkim, it is said, began from a village called Yuk-sam, situated at its extreme north-western part. It is the last inhabited place towards Kangchenjunga, which lies to the north of this picturesque level tract of land. Beyond Yuk-sam is a dense forest chocked with scrubs and heavy undergrowths where sunshine cannot penetrate. Yak-sam is a Lepcha word

meaning "three monks" or explicitly "the meeting place of three lamas."

Probably towards the end of the seventeenth century, a Buddhist monk named Lhatsen Chembo travelled from Tibet to Yuk-sam where he was met by two other lamas who hailed from the south and the west. At that time the country was in a wilderness of dense forest and peopled by the primitive Lepcha folks. These lamas introduced for the first time Buddhism into Sikkim.

The name of the first would-be king of Sikkim was predicted. It was "Pun-tsok." So messengers were deputed to all parts of the surrounding country in order to search out a man of that blessed name. Pun-tsok was at last found out and after being annointed with holy water was crowned king of Sikkim. Being seated on a rough huge stone his coronation took place amid the Lepcha community of Dubdi and the Pamionchi region. This story seems to be of legendary origin. Probably Hooker is correct when he writes that these lamas "were the means of introducing the first Tibetan sovereign into the country."

The temple of Yuk-sam is situated on a lofty hill at an elevation of nearly 1000 feet above Yuk-sam. It is called the *Dubdi* monastery. It was built in 1701 A.D. and has the reputation of being the oldest monastery in Sikkim, although it appears that the Sangachelling monastery, three day's march away from Yuk-sam, came into existence in 1697 A.D. These dates given in the Gazetteer of Sikkim are, however, not reliable, as according to some authorities, who were in direct touch with the literatures of Sikkim and Tibet, the most famous Pamionchi monastery of Sikkim wherefrom Dubdi is just two days' march away was built in 1450 A.D. If that be the case the Dubdi temple must have been built still earlier, and consequently the King who first held the sceptre of Sikkim was throned a little earlier than

the time of establishment of this oldest sanctuary. That this latter view is authentic would be evident from what follows.

The red-mitred lamas of Tibet suffered persecution in the hands of the dissenters, the Yellow-capped monks, who were the followers of the great saint, Tsong-kha-pa. This persecution was evidently set on foot soon after, if not earlier, the Golden monastery hidden in a circle of mountains twenty miles away from Lhasa had been founded by him in 1409 A.D. Undoubtedly the three lamas in question hailed from Tibet being persecuted by the reforming party. This being so, the history of Sikkim can well be traced back to the time of Tson-kha-pa which means at least the beginning of the fifteenth century.

The lamas of the Pamionchi monastery once compiled the history of Sikkim and preserved the same in this temple. In the year 1787 when Pamionchi was the capital of Sikkim, the Nepalese waged war against the Sikkimese, and plundered all the monasteries to the west of the Tista. It was at this time that this valuable history was destroyed by the Gorkhas with the exception of a few sheets with one of which Dr. Hooker and Dr. Campbell were presented, when they visited the Pamionchi monastery in 1848.

Dr. Hooker writes :

“This remarkable and beautiful manuscript was written on thick oblong sheets of Tibetan paper, painted black to resist decay, and the letters were yellow and gold. The Nepalese soldiers wantonly employed the sheets to roof the sheds as a protection from the weather.”

LAMAS WITH RED MITRES

In 641 A.D. Sron-tsan-gampo, the then king of Tibet, invaded China. The king Taitsung of China came to terms with him and gave his daughter

Wencheng in marriage with him. Two years later he married Bhrikuti, a princess of Nepal. These two royal consorts, initiated in Buddhism, won the heart of the king, and Buddhism was then destined to be the State religion of Tibet where the people were worshippers of devils and demons.

It was Santa Rakshit, a prince of Jessore (Bengal), a hermit and a learned Buddhist teacher, who first carried the gospel of Buddhism into the closed land of Tibet. After the death of the king, Sron-tsan-gampo, his son, Thri-sron-de-tsan, ascended the throne, and being ordered by the hermit, Santa Rakshit, who was held in high esteem by the Tibetans, invited Padma Sambhava from India to visit Tibet.

Padma Sambhava ("Born of a lotus") was the adopted son of Indradyumna, the king of Orissa. Professor Roerich writes: "At the birth of Padma Sambhava all the skies were aglow and the shepherds saw miraculous tokens. The eight-year-old Teacher was manifested to the world in the Lotus flower."

Padma Sambhava was a *Tantric* Buddhist priest. And as *Tantrism* pertains to the mystical practices in mediæval Hinduism, Padma Sambhava was an occultist too. In the Tibetan Scriptures, are mentioned his various psychic powers, such as flying in the air, vanishing like air, making a serpent harmless, summoning the rain, etc., etc.

Tantrism does not lend itself to exposition in the hands of the sceptics who are not prepared to study the subject at the feet of a master. The application of common sense or erudition relating to other spheres of knowledge count for little or nothing in realising the inner significance of the doctrines of the *Tantras*.

The criticism of the ignorant is consequently devastating. It is, therefore, quite natural why, say, McGovern in his "*To Lhasa in Disguise*" represents this Teacher as "polygamous, wine-bibbing Padma

Sambhava," and in another place as "the sensual founder of Lamaism". The Japanese priest, Kawaguchi, in his "*Three Years in Tibet*" found his doctrines so obscene that he was constrained to keep the literature under lock and key. These travellers, no doubt, voice the feelings of the uninitiated, and on the face of things their criticisms are quite justified. But as the poet sings: "and things are not what they seem," so is the apparent anomaly of the Tantric philosophy, the real interpretation of which is shrouded in mystery.

Be that as it may, the followers of Padma Sambhava who wear read conical caps now hold the sceptre in the hierarchy of not only Tibet but also of Sikkim and Bhutan.

In 1038 a great Buddhist saint named Atish Dipankar at the age of sixty entered into Tibet and preached the gospel of Buddhism free from the taint of Tantrism which lays special stress on the acquiring of occult power. It is said that on his way to Tibet he rode upon a horse in such a way that he was always found seated in the air, nearly half a cubit off from the saddle. Atish, after living in Tibet for thirteen years, passed away at the age of seventy-three in 1053 A.D. He left behind him nearly one-hundred original works on Buddhism.

Prof. Roerich's research tells of a mysterious event which took place when Dipankar passed by the retreat of Milarepa, a mystic poet of Tibet (1038-1112 A.D.). The Tibetan saint intending to put the worth of Atisha to the acid test "appeared sitting on the end of a blade of grass." In response to this occult manifestation, Atish made a similar demonstration. While the blade of grass on which Milarepa was seated became slightly bent, that under Atish showed absolutely no sign of drooping. On being accosted by Milarepa, the great Teacher smiled and said that although his knowledge was on a par with that of the Tibetan hermit, the very

consciousness of the former having hailed from a country where the Blessed Buddha himself lived and preached his doctrines exalted him.

Although the adherents of Atish Dipankar who put on yellow caps number very few in Tibet, and are conspicuous by their absence in Sikkim and Bhutan, this great Teacher, known as Palden Atisha in Tibet, is held in great esteem in all these countries.

Towards the end of the fourteenth century Tson-kha-pa appeared on the scene and took the whole of Tibet as if by storm enjoining very strict discipline on the priests as well as his followers. He forbade the monks to take to the culture of occultism as it is calculated to hamper spiritual progress. He rose against the red-mitred lamas and their creed, and the Yellow Caps became predominant by degrees. What now follows has been gleaned from M. Huc's *Travels in Tartary, Tibet and China* who accomplished his extremely arduous journey during 1844-46.

The Buddha Chakdja, the then head of the Red Caps, finding his authority repudiated was determined to visit the reforming lama. Tson-kha-pa took no heed of Chakdja as he entered his chamber. He did not raise his eyes, but continued telling his beads. Chakdja's red cap struck against the beam of the door and fell to the ground. He then abruptly entered into discussion "by a pompous eulogium of the old rites." Tson-kha-pa interrupted him in these words: "Let go cruel man that thou art, let go the louse thou art crushing between the fingers. I hear it cries from where I sit, and my heart is torn with commiserating grief." Chakdja had really at that time seized a louse under his vest and was "endeavouring to crack it between his nails." Chakdja amazed at this occult powers of Tson-kha-pa prostrated himself at his feet and acknowledged his supremacy.

Thereafter the followers of Tson-kha-pa or the Yellow Caps fell foul of the Red Caps who could not

be easily persuaded to accept the doctrines of the new sect.

Hooker gathered the following facts. The lama of the Phodang monastery (the chapel royal) headed the dissenters and persecution was rampant in Tibet. The Red Caps were caught and their "mitres plunged into dying vats kept always ready at the lamaseries." The red-mitred lamas thereupon took refuge in Sikkim and Bhutan. It was at this time, in my opinion that the history of Sikkim began in a lovely corner of the land skirted by impenetrable jungles lying to the south of Kangchenjunga.

Although there is many a John Doe and Richard Roe amongst these *Tantric Lamas* who practically does nothing but rotates a prayer-wheel in accompaniment with the sonorous intonation of "Om mani pemay hum", there are, however, only a few who are adept in occultism.

THE LAND OF LIGHTNING

Why Sikkim is called the Land of Lightning can be well imagined from the following words of Dr. Somervell of Everest repute.

"Sikkim with its continual mists and heavy rainfall is one of the most fertile countries in the world. Something grows on every square foot of ground, and the jungle is so thick below the immense and the stately trees as to be well-nigh impenetrable."

For nearly five months in a year lightning continually flashes on the gloomy canopy of heavens surcharged with rain-cloud that dashing against the far-flung ramparts of the Tibetan plateau depletes itself into unparalleled downpour. It is this heavy rainfall coupled with prolific flashes of lightning in the atmosphere helping in the formation of nitric acid that has enriched this part of the Himalayas with the exuberant growth of both flora and fauna.

Sikkim can well claim the appellation: "the Garden of the Himalaya." It may also be called the herbaceous border of the Eastern Himalaya. In the months of April and May the country is an abode of flowers. Orchids seem to be conscious of glory as they cling to trunks and branches of stately trees. The country is ablaze with brilliant flowers of rhododendrons of which there are thirty species in this country. These trees proportionately dwarfed by cold and altitude vary in size to an incredible extent. While in the tropical Sikkim they tower aloft to forty feet, on the high snowy passes and in the regions bordering on glaciers they barely rise to two or three inches above the ground, and one would at best then call it a prostrate shrub.

THE MONASTERIES

The very names of the Sikkim monasteries are noble. A few of the many names of lamaseries that crown almost all the prominent hill tops of Sikkim are given below with their respective meanings.

Sanga Chelling—The place of secret spells or meditation.

Dubdi—The hermit's cell.

Pamionchi—The sublime perfect lotus.

Tashiding—The elevated central glory, or the valley open to heaven.

Senam—The suppressor of intense fear.

Phensang—The excellent banner or good bliss.

Phodang—The sublime victor.

Dubdi which is undoubtedly the oldest monastery in Sikkim is very picturesquely situated. It is to the south of the Pandim peak but slightly to the west. Dubdi is the first monastery to the south of Kangchenjunga and is 25 miles distant from that mountain in a straight line. It may be noted that Kangbachen in Nepal is the nearest monastery on the western side of Kangchenjunga, the distance being 10 miles as the crow flies, and these are the two lamaseries closest to this mountain.

On the top of a lofty hill at a height of 1,000 feet from the lovely plateau of Yuk-sam the temple and the convents of Dubdi are situated, being shaded by weeping cypresses. Fir-clad mountains tower up and form a charming back-ground. One of the weeping cypresses measures nearly eighteen feet in girth and these stately trees are beautifully decorated by white orchids clinging heavily to the branches. Yuk-sam boasts a little lake which is eighty to a hundred yards across and is circular, its depth in winter being nearly four feet, increasing to some sixteen feet during the rains. There is no outlet. Its drainage is probably subterranean. Several feet above its surface is, however, seen an old water channel. The lake is surrounded by big boulders of gneiss and is buried in a forest of tall oaks and laurels, which rear their heads aloft in order to struggle for light. A ruined temple marks a spot nearly a mile off. A chorten (relic-tomb) called "Nirbogong" fully forty feet high makes the scene impressive in another part of the village. It is the largest relic-tomb in Sikkim.

Katsupari monastery is noted for its big lake, situated at an altitude of 6,040 feet above sea level. It lies buried in dense forest and the scenery is charming. During the rains it may be three to five hundred feet across. At other times it is on an average 200 feet wide. There is no outlet to this lake. The temples occupy a spur nearly 500 feet above it. Katsupari is a day's journey from and to the west of Dubdi.

Pamionchi (7,083') was once the capital of Sikkim. The Rajah's palace was on a flat to the south of the temples. The ruins of the palace are still there. Pamionchi is not only noted for its great antiquity, but also for its sanctity, in respect of which latter Tashiding is said to excel it. It is also the most wealthy of all Sikkim monasteries. Walls and ceilings of the monastery are painted in *frescos* of gods and demons in brilliant colours. Hooker nearly a century ago wrote :

“The square end of every beam in the room is ornamented either with a lotus flower or with a Tibetan character, in endless diversity of colour and form, and the walls are completely covered with allegorical paintings of Lamas and saints expounding or in contemplation, with glories round their heads, mitred, and holding the *dorje* and jewel.”

It is, however, a deplorable blemish in the sanctity of this renowned temple that the image of Lord Buddha should here be conspicuous by its absence. It is said that Padma Sambhava never visited this monastery, yet it is in this monastery only that the relics of this great Teacher have been preserved. Prof. Roerich writes: “The things are kept sealed but on some occasions are shown; a garment, headdress, beads, bells of a wondrous chime, two magic daggers and a small exquisite image of Buddha.”

To Brigadier-General Bruce under whose leadership the second Mount Everest Expedition left Darjeeling in the spring of 1922 was once displayed here by the then Head Lama of this monastery the efficacy of spells. He was seized with a colic pain as prophesied, and it lasted for exactly the same period as foretold.

Tashiding hill is conical in shape and is the termination of a long spur that runs from a fir-clad shoulder of Kangchenjunga. This hill which is densely covered with forest is very precipitous, and is in the very heart of the land of Sikkim. The climb in some places necessitates trail making and is quite arduous. At a point at the foot of the hill the Great Rangit receives the waters of its tributary, the Rathong, which rises from the south face of Kangchenjunga. The confluence of the two rivers meeting at an acute angle constitutes a charming scenery. The hill top is crowned with a monastery which stands in majestic isolation. The painting inside this temple is much finer than those of Pamionchi.

Lord Ronaldshay was very much impressed with the glorious paintings and decoration of this monastery, which is a day's march from Pamionchi. The "carvings on the casements are fairylike."

As the day dawns on the first full moon after the sun has passed the first point of aries, the holiest day of the Buddhist, is opened an ancient wooden chalice which was in the presence of witnesses hermetically sealed after it had been partly filled with water just one year ago on the corresponding day of the year. Sometimes the water diminished and sometimes increased considerably.

Professor Roerich writes : "In the year of the great war the water tripled in quantity, which meant war. Now the water has diminished by half, which means famine and disorder."

At Sunnok higher up on the same spur are convents of the lamas. On the way up there is a fissure wherefrom hot vapour rises.

The scriptures of Buddhism which are found in their entirety in the principal monasteries of Sikkim, in the opinion of the Calcutta University Commission, presided over by Sir Michael Saddler, K.C.S.I., "comprise materials so vast as to furnish ample occupation to an army of scholars and investigators for generations."

On the way to some of the monasteries will be found prayer-cylinders fitted with water-wheels and so ingeniously installed that the force of mountain streams makes them revolve without intermission.

THE SNOWY RANGE

Stand on the observatory hill and look towards the snowy range, spreading east and west. The loftiest and the most massive mountain on the north (slightly to the left) with two prominent peaks close to each other is Kangchenjunga. Between these two peaks is seen just the top of another peak of the mountain only when the weather is very clear. The peak next to and to the west

of Kangchenjunga is called the Talung peak, while the depressed point where the two ridges running from Kangchenjunga and Talung meet is known as the Talung Saddle. While making an attempt to climb this saddle, Mr. Farmer, an young American, lost his life

To the west of Talung and next to it stands the well known Kabru with its two summits, the eastern and the western, looking like a tent. On a clear day is visible below the eastern summit of Kabru a domelike peak. This is called Kabur or the Dome Peak (15,827'), which is two miles north of and above Jongri.

The peak very close to and a little below Kabur is the Forked Peak. The peak to the left (*i.e.*, west) of the western summit of Kabru is the Little Kabru.

To the left of the Little Kabru stands the gigantic peak of Janu which is in Nepal. Janu will be very easily recognized by the fact that its crest seems to be cut down slantingly to a considerable distance with the effect that it looks like an armchair. Janu is the last eternally-snow-clad mountain to the west which is visible from Darjeeling.

To the west of Janu is the Kang La which in the beginning of winter appears to be seamed with intersecting lines of snow here and there until in the mid-winter it is entirely snowed over. The Kang Peak seems to be like a dining table meant for the demons of Kangchenjunga group of mountains.

The massive mountain standing at the end of the long eastern ridge of Kangchenjunga is known as Pandim. To the east of Pandim is Jubonu. Next to Jubonu on the east is seen just the top of the distant Simvu. Just next to Simvu is another unnamed peak, to the east of which rises a long snowy ridge which appears to possess three terraces leading to the summit. This is Narsing. Next to Narsing towers aloft the beautiful and very precipitous peak known as Siniolchu, or D², being the name given to it by the Survey Department of India. It

has also another name which is now forgotten—Liklo. To the east of Sinolchu is an unimportant peak called Pakichu.

Thereafter the range shows a gradually descending and rather abrupt outline for a considerable length, and on reaching the lowest point it rises up to form a conical peak of impressive size and shape. This is Lama Andern, to the left (west) of which are visible two conical peaks of lesser heights standing side by side. Of these two the one to the east is Chomiomo. Beyond Lama Andern to the east after an intervening flat outline stands rather inconspicuously Kanchenjau with its flat top. Lastly, running the eye over a jagged line of snowy peaks for an angular distance equal to that which intervenes between Pandim and Siniolchu is seen a conical and quite a symmetrical peak. This is Donkia Rhi.

Now stand just facing Donkia Rhi and turning your eyes to the left see Kangchenjunga and soon after turn them to the right to the exactly same degree, when your eyes will fall upon Gipmochi, a very prominent and shapely peak and very decently outlined by an undulating curve on its western side. Gipmochi marks the boundary of three territories, Sikkim, Bhutan, and Tibet. This mountain is also recognizable by the fact that it is the last apparently highest peak to the remote east of the snowy range. Hills to the east of Gipmochi are all low and lie in Bhutan.

One more peak, Chomal Rhi, and we finish this subject, dry to many but exceedingly interesting to the real lovers of the heights. To the east of Donki Rhi is seen a jagged line of snows at the end of which rises a peak, the western ridge of which forms an undulating outline. This is called the Black Rock peak. Beyond this after an intervening flat outline rise three peaks of some size and shape. The middle one is called Dopen-dikang or Chumango. At the foot of the eastern ridge of the next peak (unnamed) is the direction of the Chola

Pass, the peak just to the right of which being Chomal Rhi (not very prominent), the most beautiful peak in the world.

By the way, the well known Jelap Pass is to the west of Gipmochi, the angular distance between which and the pass being a little over that subsisting between Pandim and Narsing.

The summit of Pandim is built of white rocks rounded in shape. Below this top lie precipitous gneiss rocks.

Kangchenjunga exposes to view even when unaided by glass rocks bare of snow. This is because snow cannot precipitate on steep rocks. Most of the rocks are grey, but there are many white rocks as well. The three summits of the mountain as visible from Darjeeling run north-west and not due north as it appears to many. The foot of the western ridge of Narsing when viewed from the Observatory Hill points due north.

To the west of Lachen is Siniolchu which may be called the Nilkanta of the Eastern Himalaya. In "*The Mountain Scene*", Smythe writes: "What Siniolchu is to the Eastern Himalayas Nilkanta is to the Central Himalayas." Nilkanta is visible from Badrinath. On the way towards Siniolchu stands Takchan which Hooker holds is not identical with Col. Waugh's D³ having an altitude of 19,200 feet. Hooker ascended Takchan several times in order to see the top of Kanchenjau, but it was only on one occasion that the flat snowy top of Kanchenjau greeted his vision.

From Lamteng, a village to an extreme northern region of Sikkim, it is possible to reach the foot of Siniolchu, which is to the west of Takchan. Hooker endeavoured to penetrate into the region by following the course of the Zemu river. He could not even reach the foot of the Zemu Glacier. The "rhododendron thickets below and the cliffs above defeated all endeavours to reach the drier climate beyond * * *"

He reached an altitude of 13,300 feet only up the Zemu valley.

Hooker writes: "The Zemu continued an impetuous muddy torrent, whose hoarse voice, mingled with the deep grumbling noise of the boulders rolling along its bed, was my lullaby for many nights." While ascending the Zemu River (very precipitous) Hooker saw with glass some wooden sheds on a broad grassy valley, but no cattle or people. To reach these meant crossing the Zemu across a snow bridge which was carried away by the daily swelling river.

On his way he passed through the region of the great red rose, being the flower of *Rosa Macrophylla*, a single flower of which is as large as the palm of the hand. Towards the Zemu Glacier on open grassy valleys gigantic arums grow in abundance, a redeeming feature of this desolate valley. Further down the confluence of the Zemu and the Lhonak rivers is a land of flowers, where the gigantic lilies when in full bloom scent the air. Red roses (called *chirring* by the Tibetans) and *Neillia* when in bloom present almost a tropical luxuriance and beauty.

THE CONFLUENCE OF THE GREAT RANGIT AND THE TISTA

Prior to the British possession of this Queen of the Hill Stations, the Great Rangit was spanned by a cane bridge at Manjitar. A Himalayan cane bridge is a highly skilful object of art. Its beauty and ingenuity lie in its extreme simplicity. The cane bridge at Manjitar when it existed consisted of two parallel canes on the same horizontal plane which were attached to an available tree on one bank of the river and a stone pier on the other. From these canes hang loops of canes at regular intervening distances, and on the loops lay two pieces of bamboo which served as flooring. Lest the horizontal canes stretched across the stream might not come closer to one another while the bridge would be trampled, the extremities of the pieces

of bamboo which were made to pass underneath the loops were tied to the ends of the loops. This kind of bridge makes awful noise while a traveller walks over the bamboos and on top of that swings almost like a pendulum. The pedestrians also feel an uncanny undulating sensation as they coax the bridge to stand in good stead. The bridge which was about 80 yards long was suspended at a height of nearly 40 feet from the river-bed.

From Manjitar the confluence in question is six miles away, the route lying over the right bank of the Great Rangit. At every turn of the valley, fresh beauty reveals itself through the stately forest and luxuriant vegetation which fringe the road on the right, and the lovely windings of the river-bed on the left lavishly strewn with coloured pebbles, stones and boulders presenting an ever-changing scene.

The view of the place where these two mighty drainers of the Himalaya meet is magnificent. The Great Rangit which takes its rise in the glaciers of Kabru and its sister peaks here combines with the Tista which rises in Cholamo Lake. A rocky peninsula thrusts itself at the apex of an acute angle formed by the junction of the two rivers, the difference in temperature of which being quite appreciable. The temperature of the Tista is always nearly 7 or 8 degrees below that of the Rangit.

The difference in colour of their waters is incredibly conspicuous for a distance of some one hundred yards. The Tista is sea-green and slightly muddy while the Great Rangit is dark green and clear. The latter is principally fed by rain waters of the Singalela spur and other mountains for a great distance and hence its water is warmer and clearer. The Tista being not only fed by a number of glaciers for a longer portion of its course, but running south and walled in by precipitous hills standing on both sides, thus having less of the sun, is cooler. The torrents of the Tista are far more turbulent

than those of the other. The speed of the Tista nearly 10 to 14 miles per hour during the dry seasons.

THE JELAP PASS

The stages are: 1st day, 33 miles to Kalimpong from Darjeeling by light car; 2nd day, 12 miles to Pedong; 3rd day, 8 miles to Ari; 4th day, 12 miles to Sendochan; 5th day, 15 miles to Gnatong; 6th day, 6 miles to Kupup; 7th day, 6 miles to the Jelap Pass and back to Kupup, as there is no rest-house on the top of the pass.

The journey from Kalimpong to Pedong amid rural sceneries, involving no steep ascent or descent, is enjoyable. It takes, however, fully five hours to do this distance of 12 miles. A steep descent to the river, Rangpo Chu, spanned by a strong suspension bridge, and then a steeper climb brings a traveller to Rhenok, which is the gate-way to Sikkim, Tibet, and Bhutan. At Rhenok there is a post and telegraph office, and a small bazaar. Rhenok is 5 miles from Pedong.

From this frontier village one road leads to Gangtok, and another to Tibet and Bhutan. From Rhenok to Ari the road ascends steeply on stonestairs through a secluded region under a canopy of stately trees. From here one feels as if one is off at last towards the roof of the world. Everything now speaks of bliss, ecstasy, and peace in this desolate region which admits of no worldly elements to be borne along. The scenery all around is singularly impressive.

Passing the night at the Ari bungalow (4,700'), one has to proceed to Sendochan as early as possible, as although the distance to be covered is only 12 miles, the journey requires some 8 or 9 hours to accomplish. The last part of the journey after crossing the Rongli river at 2,700' is a trying climb for some 5 or 6 hours. The road is exceedingly stony and very steep with hollows and rough rocks where one's ankles are apt to be twisted.

A tourist was much delighted and regarded it as a good sign when he happened to pick up a horse-shoe on the way up Sendochén, but soon after he made out that an inexhaustible treasure of this token of fortune is to be met with all the way. This is evidently the time, when both Ferrum and Aurum are, in a sense, equally scarce and costly, to explore this region and bag outright all the wealth lying scattered on this stony floor of the Himalaya which plays havoc with the shoes of donkeys, horses, and mules carrying on their backs all the commodities of trade all the year round passing between Tibet and India.

The next trip is to Gnatong *via* Lingtu, up to which the climb for 8 miles is very arduous. A little below the summit of Lingtu are the remnants of an old Tibetan fort, which was jealously guarded by the Tibebans towards the close of the year 1887, thus necessitating the forcing of an expedition into Tibet in 1888. Not being able to resist the attack of the British regiment, the Tibetans moved backwards and in one night built a stony wall fully three miles in length and some three or four feet in height at Gnatong, whence they beat a hasty retreat without fighting. Gnatong (12,210') is 7 miles away from Lingtu (12,617'). It is situated in the middle of a swampy valley. At Gnatong there is a village of the Bhutias, a sub-post office, and also a telegraph office.

The climb from Sendochén to Gnatong is not only trying, but the region being infested with leeches is troublesome. In 5 miles the road ascends to 5,000 feet above the height of Sendochén, and thereafter one is perfectly immune from these pests. Here is a wonderful zone of rhododendrons, the flowers of which show every shade of orange and red. The flowers are pink, scarlet, yellow, white and cream coloured in different shades. Colonel Howard-Bury, the leader of the first Expedition to Mount Everest, 1921, writes: "It was impossible to imagine anything more beautiful, and every yard of the

path was a pure delight. Among the smaller flowers was the large pink saxifrage, while the deep reddish-purple primula covered every open space."

Gnatong which is 7 miles from Lingtu is a small desolate village. The altitude of Gnatong is 12,210 feet, and even in the last week of March, it is often found buried in slushy snow.

The stage next to Gnatong is Kupup which is 6 miles away to the north. While the Dak-bungalow at Kupup is still more than a mile ahead, nearly half a mile to the right will be seen a lake called Bidang Tso. It is also called Lake Kupup. The lake is nearly one mile and a half in circumference, and is situated at an elevation of 12,700 feet.

From Kupup Jelap La is attained by a very trying and steady ascent of three miles. The meaning of *Jelap La* is significant. It means "the lovely plain pass", and so it is, having a length of nearly 150 feet. Its sister pass, the *Nathu La*, means "the pass of the listening ear." The meaning is not very clear, but it seems to have some reference to the peculiar solitude and character of its own. *Nathu La* is singularly gloomy, but it boasts of a kithless signpost giving the two very sharp directions: TO LONDON—TO LHASA. To the exhausted traveller it has undoubtedly a tickling effect "on the mental palate".

This lake has a moraine on the north-west side. No sign of life in and about the lake is in evidence except that of the red-billed choughs.

The top of the pass (14,390') is a nice flat ground, 150 yards in length and marked by a heap of stones which form a massive cairn. Prayer-flags attached to sticks flutter day and night in the strong wind that blows continually across this bleak and desolate pass. One thing that mars the beauty of the pass is an intruder, a mark of civilization—a telegraph post.

From the Jelap Pass is visible for the first time that enticing cathedral of snow far away in Tibet called

Chomal Rhi, unanimously said to be the world's most beautiful peak. From the Jelap Pass one can run the eye over the distant honey-coloured plateau of Tibet, about which Mr. Candler writes: "In the distance all the land was yellow and brick-dust colour I had often seen in pictures and thought exaggerated and unreal."

THE NATHU PASS

The stages are : 1st day, 57 miles to Gangtok from Darjeeling, by motor car; 2nd day, 10 miles to Karponang; 3rd day, 10 miles to Changu, 4th day, 8 miles to Nathu Pass.

The Nathu Pass is nearly three miles away to the north of the Jelap Pass and lies on the top of a range that runs north to Tibet. Both these passes are on the frontier between Sikkim and Tibet.

Nathu La means 'the pass of the listening ear'. The meaning of this pass is not very clear, but it seems to have some reference to the peculiar solitude and character of its own. The meaning of Jelap La is, however, quite significant. It means 'the lovely level pass', and so it is, having a length of nearly 150 yards.

From the bungalow at Gangtok the zigzag track finally leading to the pass meets the vision of a spectator. The first 5 miles are along a broad cart-road, at the end of which appears a bridle path. As one progresses along this track the path becomes steeper and steeper and the scenery becomes wilder and grander.

From Karponag they become steeper and grander still. On the way many a waterfall descends down mountain sides and enriches the scenery. After a few miles the bridle path could no longer be extended and a very narrow and extremely steep track leads up the giddy precipices in a precarious way, the only redeeming feature of this, so to say, hanging path being a rough wooden railing. A climber when looking behind him

down this almost perpendicular piece of engineering is apt to lose his nerve.

On completion of this sensational feat one is entertained by the scene of an easy country till an ascent all of a sudden presents to the view a calm sheet of water amid a dismal scenery. It is the lake of Nuk Tanyi, at a remote end of which stands the solitary bungalow of Changu. This lake is also called Changu Lake. Overhanging cliffs and boulders skirting a side of the lake along which the route leads to the bungalow lend a gloomy aspect to this bleak region. The lake is nearly a mile long. Anyway, to reside for a day or two in this rest-house overlooking the lake is a delight to the weary traveller.

The next march is to the Pass and back again to Changu. It is just when the pass is two miles ahead, a pool lying on a bed of stones and boulders will be noticed. The ascent from here right up to the pass is considerably steep and through very impressive scenery.

As soon as the pass is reached, the great plateau opens up before the spectator. A road is seen descending down the steep sides of the mountain which running for a distance equivalent to a day's march meets a similar road that starts from the summit of the Jelap Pass, and thereafter the united track runs up to the Chumbi Valley in Tibet wherefrom the high table-land itself is some 40 miles away. These two sister passes leading to Tibet are to the northwest of Darjeeling, and are to the west of Gipmochi, an exceedingly conspicuous peak visible from Darjeeling.

Nathu La is unlike the Jelap La not open all the year round and is rarely used for entering into Tibet. While telegraph posts accompany a traveller from time to time on the way to the Jelap Pass, and at least one post towers in the air on the very summit of Jelap and, if we may say so, relieves to a certain extent the feeling of desolation one experiences on this lofty and

unsheltered spot, the Nathu Pass offers no such vestige, and as a matter of fact looks dreary.

The following three passages from John Easton's "*An unfrequented highland through Sikkim and Tibet to Chumolaori*" contain graphic description relating to the negotiation of the Pass.

While ascending to the pass :—

" * * * there was much stumbling and holding up and whistling and halloing by all concerned."

While on the summit of the pass :—

"The wind swept, cold and pure, cut against our faces whistled in our ears, filled our eyes with tears, but all unheeded as we gazed at the marvel stretched before us. For all doubts faded, and all fears were dispelled: before us stretched immortality, purification, a revelation of the world as God sees it, where no man has stepped to mar it—Om mane padme hum !"

While descending down the Tibetan side of the Pass :—

Slush, mud, water, snow : we splashed through it all. We ran down the mountain side, jumped, slid, a medley of men, mules and ponies, until we reached the valley.

THE DONKIA PASS

| <i>Stages.</i> | <i>Intervening distance.</i> | <i>Altitude in feet.</i> | <i>Remarks.</i> |
|-------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Darjeeling | — | 6,812 | |
| Gangtok | 57 | 5,800 | |
| Dikchu | 13 | 2,150 | |
| Singhik | 11 | 4,600 | |
| Changthang | 14 | 5,350 | <i>Via Toong (4,800')</i> |
| Lachen | 12 | 8,800 | |
| Thangu | 13 | 12,800 | <i>Last dak-bungalow</i> |
| Gyagong | 11 | 15,750 | <i>Via Sitong</i> |
| Tso Lhamo | 13 | 18,131 | |
| Donkia Pass | 3 | 17,500 | |

The Donkia Pass is thus 8 days' march away from Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim. In this journey, a traveller meets with every phase of Himalayan scenery

including all the items contained in the route to the Jelap and the Nathu Pass and offering others to which one acquainted with the last two passes is perfectly a stranger.

This is called the Lachen route to the Donkia Pass. There is another route too which is called the Lachung route. These two routes commence from Changthang where the two rivers, the Lachen and the Lachung meet to form the Tista, the mightiest drainer of the Eastern Himalaya. Each route follows the banks of the corresponding river. Whereas the Lachen route takes up a more westerly course, the Lachung route adopts a north-easterly course from Changthang for nearly half of the way to the Pass. Thereafter, they approach the Pass by making circuits from opposite directions.

The Lachen route is much easier, because of its less steep climbs. On reaching the Donkia Pass, the traveller may better come back by the Lachung route *via* Momay Samdong, Yumthang, and Lachung from which last stage, Changthang is just ten miles away. The Lachen valley route ascends to the Pass more or less gradually, so that one does not feel the effect of the high altitude so much as in the other route, the last 21 miles of which involve an exceedingly trying climb from 13 to 18 thousand feet.

To understand the nature of the journey from Gangtok to the Donkia Pass, it would be easy if it is divided into three parts. The first part of the journey from Gangtok to Changthang covers a distance of 38 miles, the altitudes of the country lying between these two stages generally varying from two to five thousand feet, there being altogether four stages in this path. Except in winter it is not advisable on the part of a tourist to cross these low elevations without being armed with a mosquito curtain. These are the regions which are not only infested with mosquitoes, but also with

leeches which are no respecters of persons. By keeping dried tobacco leaves inside one's boot and stockings these pests can be avoided.

The second part of the traverse is from Changthang to Thangu covering a distance of 25 miles, in the course of which altitudes range from 5 to 13 thousand feet. There are six dak-bungalows up to Thangu, after which travellers must carry their own tents, as there is no sign of habitation from this desolate spot onwards.

The third portion of the journey is from Thangu to the Donkia Pass, the distance intervening being some 27 miles.

In a light car, one can reach Gangtok from Darjeeling in one day, covering a distance of some 57 miles *via* Peshok, and the Tista bridge.

From Gangtok a broad cart road leads to the pass called Penlong La, 4 miles away from the capital of Sikkim and some 500 feet above it. A little below the path the cart road ceases to extend itself any further, which then meets a bridle path that reaches Gyagong after covering a distance of some 70 miles.

From Gyagong onwards, it is a traverse on a trackless, desolate, and most inhospitable region of stones, pebbles, and boulders decorated here and there with mountain tarns and lakes which are the remnants of glaciers that formed in some remote geological age.

On turning back from the prominent Penlong Pass, a traveller is greeted with an imposing panoramic view of Gangtok. On the remote side of the pass, after having done a distance of 4 miles, a road will be seen crossing a narrow bridge spanning a water-fall. From this place a subsidiary path branches off down the mountain to Tumlong, the site of the old capital of Sikkim, where Dr. Campbell and Dr. Hooker were brought as prisoners in 1850 when they were returning from the Donkia Pass *via* the Lachung valley.

Nine miles away from the Penlong Pass is the insect-infested bungalow of Dikchu at an elevation of 2,150 feet above the sea-level. The bungalow is reached after crossing the snow-fed stream, the Dikchu, the "staggering water."

The next day's march to Singhik is quite interesting as it necessitates the crossing of the Tista at miles 17 from Gangtok. Here a suspension bridge spans the raging torrent of the Tista. At mile 19 comes into view quite a romantic gorge which is crossed by a suspension bridge some 250 feet long and hanging in air at a giddy height of some three hundred feet from the boulder-strewn bed of a tumultuous stream that cuts and runs through the Sikkim Himalaya.

When Singhik bungalow is just one mile ahead, Talung gorge with the steeply falling Talung river looking like a white snake greets the vision of the traveller.

The march beyond Singhik towards Toong which is 8 miles away is characterized by a very enchanting display of nature in lovely foliages, brilliant orchids, and overhanging rocks. The stage next to Singhik is, however, Changthang which is 5 miles from Toong.

The description left by Mr. Freshfield of the fantastical scenery all around as one proceeds towards Toong is a splendid word painting.

Freshfield writes: "The nearness of the great mountains begins to make itself felt. Precipitous cliffs break the smoothness of the hill-sides, the ridges rise above the forest level, and lift bare bluffs of rock against the skyline. The track, a terrace high above the cataracts of the river, circles round deep wooded bays, in the heart of which the foaming torrents that have hollowed them continue their ceaseless labour. Nothing can be imagined more romantic in mountain landscape than these frequent recesses in the hills whence sheets of broken foam break out through the unimaginable foliage

of the virgin forest; where not only is every inch of soil fought over by flowering weeds and shrubs, but every forked bough or hollow trunk is siezed on by parasitical ferns and orchids, wreaths of ferns and plumes of orchids."

At Changthang, which means the marriage of the rivers, the Lachen and the Lachung unite. Changthang is a lovely plateau brought into being by mighty avalanches which in a remote age crushed down the towering peaks in the neighbourhood with the violence of an earthquake.

Twelve miles away from Changthang is the lovely village of Lachen where health and beauty join hands to rear up maidens of superbly tall stature and exquisite form, grace and elegance. Smythe writes in his *Kangchenjunga Adventure*: "These Lachen people are remarkably handsome, with finely chiselled features and smooth, clear skins."

Lachen lies on hill slopes on the right bank of the Lachen river, on one or the other bank of which runs the route from Changthang to Tso Lhamo Lake. This desolate hamlet is just 50 miles from Gangtok and is far above the Lachen valley. Originally this village was situated above the valley, but the thundering sound of the river (the Lachen Chu) carrying with the sweeping current boulders of considerable dimensions proved annoying to the villagers who by joint consents shifted to the higher terraces of the mountain side. The people of this place earn their livelihood by rearing sheep and yaks.

It is curious that a modest and unostentatious Finnish Mission had been conducted here among the villagers for quite a number of years till 1940. Miss Hurtz and her successor, Miss Kronquist, "self-exiled in solitude" were placed at the head of this mission at Lachen. The latter breathed her last in 1939. This organization did quite a good deal of good to the people.

This mission used to make rugs and blankets of pure Tibetan wool, charmingly dyed with variegated colours.

The real thrills of the journey, however, begins from Lachen onwards. Two miles ahead is the Zemu river, the bridge spanning which is at times washed away by the floods of this glacial stream.

Hooker followed the course of this river, the Zemu Chu, and proceeded towards west. He nearly reached the extensive Zemu glacier to the west of which towers up the five pinnacles of Kangchenjunga.

The next stage is Thangu which is due north of Lachen. The peak of Lama Andem is some 4 miles away to the west of Lachen. This peak is clearly visible from Darjeeling, so that from here it is possible in one's mind's eye to look at the position of this lovely place of the Sikkim Himalaya.

A step forward from Lachen towards Thangu, the last dak-bungalow of Sikkim, is a step onwards to the far north leaving Kangchenjunga behind.

Five miles away from Lachen is a scene of nature's devastation of bewildering dimensions in days long gone by, when a land-slip of huge boulders swept a deep forest and dammed the river, thereby forming an artificial lake which has at the present time dwindled down to a lakelet. The portions of the forest that were then submerged is now conspicuous by its skeleton-like remnants.

Traversing a distance of 13 miles from Lachen, one reaches Thangu dak-bungalow, which crowns a hill top at mile 63.

Thangu (12,8000') is a wind-swept, dreary, and an extremely cold place, the gate-way to the region of rocks and boulders where vegetation is conspicuous by its scarcity. The bridle path here ends and the traveller has to cast his dice for his helpless march for Tso Lhamo and the Donkia Pass. The journey henceforth is over

a rough track amidst rock and boulders that border Tibet on the south.

Covering a distance of 11 miles, a tourist will reach the next stage, Gyagong, which is the first camping ground on the way to the pass. From Thangu, tourists have to arrange for yaks to carry their rations as well as tents and other necessaries of life required for this inhospitable region of glorious solitude. The march to Gyagong is not a steep ascent for in 11 miles the altitude increases by 3,000 feet. Gyagong is on a plain of pebbles and boulders. During a raging storm, on this high plateau called Yeumtso plain, small stones fly almost like bullets.

A little distance beyond the usual camping ground of Gyagong the track bifurcates, the one which runs northwards leading to Kampa Dzong of Tibet. This route on which falls the Sebu La, a high pass, often found deeply snow-bound may be adopted in order to reach Tibet by covering the minimum distance, but should the Sebu La become impassable, the traveller will have to make a very lengthy and awful detour *via* Gangtok and the Nathu Pass at the cost of time and stamina, the most embarrassing factors involved in an Himalayan tour.

The track (as a matter of fact, hardly any track is visible) that swings to the east leads to the Donkia Pass. Nearly 8 miles of the journey is along a level tract of country strewn with rough stones and boulders which wear off the soles of the best footwears more quickly than one can imagine.

Unless a traveller be hardy and perhaps to a certain extent acclimatized, this march of 13 miles from Gyagong to the bank of Tso Lhamo is exceedingly trying. One cannot walk like a snail; one feels burdened with heavy loads as he trudges on. Therefore, it is advisable that one should halt for a day at Choptra almost in the middle of the journey from Gyagong to Tso Lhamo.



By courtesy of Mr. M. Sain.

THE JELAP PASS (14,300')
(Chomal Rhi peeping out of the far off horizon).

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By courtesy of Mr. M. Sain.

ON THE WAY TO JONGRI

(Rhododendron thickets bar the way covered with snow.)

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When rising higher than 10,000 feet and particularly 12,000 feet, one feels the effect of high altitude. This is due to the highly rarefied air at high elevations. The local people ascribe this condition to what they called the *La-druk* or the poison of the pass. One feels that the air is dead, and is not adequate to sustain life. Climbing becomes a very arduous business. One feels astonished at the lack of energy to lift one's body weight against gravity. Giddiness, headache, and nausea are the general symptoms of what is known as mountain sickness.

From this camping ground of Choptra will be seen a ridge running towards the south. On climbing this ridge 1000 feet higher up from the plains of Yeumtso, will be seen to the east a very big lake which is half as big as Tso Lhamo lake and situated 500 feet higher than the elevation at which Tso Lhamo lies. This is called the Gordama lake. As a matter of fact, in and around this Yeumtso plain will be found quite a number of smaller lakes which are nothing but the remnants of glaciers which melted and swept away from mountain sides to form glacial streams in ages long gone by.

From Choptra the next march is to the north-eastern side of Tso Lhamo, wherefrom the Donkia Pass is just three miles away. It is a gradual ascent on boulder-strewn ground till the foot is reached wherefrom the ascent is quite steep and rough. The last portion of the climb while nearing the saddle is across a scree-covered path where one is apt to slip down. From the middle of October till almost the end of May the pass is often snow-bound. During this time the snow-clad screes prove treacherous when trodden and, consequently, this is not the time to attempt a negotiation of the pass.

The summit of the pass is marked with cairns and weird prayer-flags of the Tibetans. Here a new world opens up before a spectator. The extensive plateau of Tibet, seamed with long and undulating, coloured hills

and bordered on the far horizon by the snowy peaks of the Trans-Himalaya looking like so many white specks all of a sudden burst upon the view. What is most miraculous is that not a patch of snow is seen lodged anywhere on the high table-land. Extreme clarity of the atmosphere causes the perspective effect of the distant landscape to be lost.

Blandford's description of the scene as is found in the journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1871 is worth noting.

"It is one of the most remarkable landscape in the world . . . Cho Lhamo in front, beneath the feet of the spectator, beyond is a desert with rounded hills. Further away, range after range of mountains, some of them covered with snow, extend to a distance the eye cannot appreciate. The total change of colour and form from the valleys of Sikkim, the utter barrenness, the intense clearness of the atmosphere, produce such an effect as if one were gazing upon another world in which the order of this is no longer preserved, where a tropical desert is seen amongst snow-capped peaks beneath the unnaturally clear atmosphere of the arctic regions."

TSO LHAMO LAKE

This wonderful lake is practically speaking the home of the Tista that gallops in harness across its boulder-strewn bed through the Sikkim Himalaya. The three principal tributaries of this mighty river are the Lachen, the Lachung, and the Great Rangit. Of these the first two have their rise in Tso Lhamo Lake. It is extremely surprising that none of the several Mount Everest Expeditions had the privilege of ever catching a glimpse of this beautiful lake, either from the Donkia Pass which they had sometimes to cross or from their route that at times lay by the eastern side of the lake itself. Undoubtedly mist enveloped the lake making it invisible even from a short distance.

It has already been noted that the lake is 7 or 8 marches away from Gangtok and 87 miles away from it. As for the distance from Darjeeling, it will be interesting to readers to know that it is 144 miles, while the distance as the crow flies is 72 miles only, which is just half of the route distance.

This lake which lies on the Tibetan side of the pass is one mile long and half a mile broad. The waters look bluish. From its northern side rises the Lachen river which after running for a distance of some 14 miles towards west, takes up a southerly course from Gyagong right up to the Brahmaputra.

Hooker writes:

"Cholamo lake lay in a broad, scantily grassed, sandy and stony valley; snow-beds, rocks, and glaciers dipped abruptly towards its head, but on the west bank a lofty brick red spur slopped upwards from it, conspicuously cutting to terraces for several hundred feet above its waters." * * * "The landscape about Cholamo lake was simple in its elements, stern and solemn; and though my solitary situation rendered it doubly impressive to me, I doubt whether the world contains any scene of water 17,000 feet above the sea, with the shadows of mountains 22,000 to 24,000 feet high, sleeping on its bosom."

Hooker's very expensive and arduous travel over the Himalaya seems to have been duly rewarded on the banks of this mountain lake. Most felicitously he gives vent to his feelings thus:—

"* * * and there, with the pleasant sound of the water rippling at my feet, I yielded for a few moments to those emotions of gratified ambition which, being unalloyed by selfish considerations for the future, become springs of happiness during the remainder of one's life."

Antelopes with their sleek skin roam on this sandy flats as if they find here food in abundance. Animal life representing waterfowl, goats. Tibetan marmots, foxes,

wild asses, and hares get sustenance in this almost bleak region. While setting his foot on Bhomtso, the hill of red rocks, nearly five miles as the crow flies to the north-east of Tso Lhamo lake, Hooker's aerial survey from the altitude of 18,500 feet finds expression in the following depictive words:—

“ * * * the kite and raven wheel through the air, 1,000 feet over head, with as strong and steady pinion as if that atmosphere possessed the same power of resistance that it does at the level of the sea. Still higher in the heavens, black long V-shaped trains of wild geese cleave the air, shooting over the glacier-crowned top of Kangchenjhou, and winging their flight in one day perhaps from the Yaru to the Ganges, over 500 miles of space, and through 22,000 feet of elevation.”

The sloping of the surrounding region can be best gauged in one's mind's eye when one knows that from its source to Gyagong the fall of the Lachen river is only 60 feet per mile, being almost equal to that of the river from Gangtok to the plains of India. The fall is, however, considerable from Gyagong to Gangtok, it being nearly 150 feet per mile.

The amazingly transparent atmosphere in this high region will evince itself to any traveller who would take the fancy of pelting a stone at the wild fowl swimming on its bosom. He will have the impression that the birds are at very close quarters, but soon after he has thrown a stone at them, he will find himself befooled. His idea of proximity will at once prove to him to be an illusion. Geese swimming at a distance of some 100 feet will seem to him to be not more than 10 or 12 feet away. This is a phenomenon which must be seen to be believed.

TO JONGRI (DZONGRI) AND THE BEYOND

The stages to Jongri are: 1st day, 20 miles to Chakung from Darjeeling; 2nd day, 14 miles to Rinchingpong; 3rd day, 11 miles to Pamionchi; 4th day.

a march to Tingling; 5th day, to Yuk-sam, the last village; 6th, 7th, and 8th day, three days' march to Jongri.

The first day's march from Darjeeling to Chakung is via the Takvar Road and the Singla Bazaar on the bank of the Great Rangit. From Chakung the direction of the route right up to Jongri is almost to the north. Before ascending to Pamionchi one has to descend to the valley of the Kulhait river, one of the loveliest valleys in Sikkim. The fourth day's march to Tingling (6,000') through the cultivated valley of Rathong is a very interesting one. On the way there is a monastery called *Malli gompa* which was built in commemoration of the halt of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Pope King of Tibet, in the course of his tour in Sikkim. Tingling is a very small village. Here there is no bungalow. One can get accommodation in the headman's house on payment of occupation charge of Rs. 2/- per day. Fifth day's march leads one to the village of Yuk-sam in Sikkim, already dealt with elsewhere in this book.

The last three days' march from Yuk-sam to Jongri is not only very arduous but risky too, particularly in view of the pest that infest this region. What this pest is, the reader will soon be able to make out from what follows.

A tourist of exceptional stamina can do the journey from Yuk-sam to Jongri in two days, ordinarily three days being required in completing this tour. Marching onwards from Yuk-sam, the tourist finds himself merged in dense forest, choked with scrubs and heavy undergrowths where sun shine cannot penetrate—a canopy of vegetation, set with blind but bold and clever leeches, which being guided by smell shower down and play havoc with any passers-by that may happen to pass by this most irksome track. Rotting leaves, turned into leaf mould, thickly and treacherously covering rough stones, make footsteps unsteady and uncertain. Long gaps between boulders necessitate jumping from one to

the other. Tracks are oppressed with thick vegetation, creepers and branches of trees, which must be lopped off to enable one to push on further. Miasmatic and offensive odours of decay, narrow and hardly discernible tracks crested on giddy precipices, fear of wild animals and even of dreaded Snow Men hidden in the impenetrable depths of this chocked region, stealthy attacks of leeches from below as well as from above, vicious stinging of nettles hidden in the thick walls of wild vegetation pressing from both sides, etc., are some of the obstacles and abominable features of this trudge from the last village towards Jongri. In one word, flora and fauna reign supreme in this region, and actively and desperately resist for the last time, passage of human beings, attempting to lay their feet on the forbidden region of snows.

A few miles from Yuk-sam is a small open spot called Nibitha. At a distance of four miles from Nibitha, the track crosses the river Praig-chu at an elevation of 7,000 feet. After ascending for a further vertical height of 3,000 feet, one is beyond the forest zone. From here Pandim and Jubonu are visible.

Lastly a very steep, violent and nerve-racking climb for four hours through a vertical height of 7,000 feet through a region of incredibly dwarf rhododendrons (may be called thickets) and stony slopes, one reaches Jongri.

On completion of this ascent, two rough and primitive stony sheds for two yakherds for summer attract the notice of the tourist—the last reminiscence of human workmanship in this bleak region, and though quite insignificant and standing in splendid isolation is geography-making, being a definite site on the threshold of the snows, suitable for a climbing centre for the Kangchenjunga group of mountains. The word 'Jongri' slightly deviates from 'Chaunri' meaning yaks. The elevation of Jongri is 13,200 feet.

Jongri is an undulating grassy field, at places covered with huge boulders. It is a wind-swept plateau where in all seasons except the fleeting summer, blizzard and hailstorm play havoc with both animal life and vegetation. Though very difficult to reach, it is a romantic site. On rising up a ridge the snowy range all of a sudden bursts upon the view. From such close quarters the sight of the mighty peaks is awe-inspiring, and one feels overwhelmed and staggered at the towering presence of the snow giants. As one faces Jubonu in the east, the Pandim massif is seen on the left, while on the right a long line of granite piers run down to the "Darjeeling Gap". The scene created by these highly precipitous and jagged mountains is, if we may say so, dismal and ghastly. Snow cannot precipitate on the spiky rocks by reason of sheer steepness of their faces, and it is why these rock piers reveal themselves to the solitary spectator with all their nakedness. The fierce wind as it strikes against their exposed surface burrows into it, and these hollows lend a weird aspect to these rock pinnacles. On the leeward of the rocks the surface is quite smooth.

The "Darjeeling Gap" mentioned above has a bit of history attached to it. Through this gap in 1899 the people of Darjeeling were surprised to see a bonfire of moustrous dimensions that Mr. Freshfield kindled to signalize the completion of his epic tour round Kangchenjunga. Whether this bonfire has a bearing on the catastrophe that befell his classical work, "*Round Kanchenjunga*", all copies of which were burnt in a disastrous fire that broke out shortly after its publication in 1903, is a subject that cannot be lightly dispensed with.

Jongri is at the threshold of the snows, while the march beyond this pasturage to the next stage, Alukathang, seems to the traveller to be a march for the unknown amid the very wilderness of mountains. The

track to the north-west along the right bank of the Praig Chu is to be followed when it will be seen that the traveller is heading towards the foot of Pandim. At the top of a ridge a few prayer-flags mark the desolate spot and indicates a descent. Thereafter by crossing this torrent and reaching the left bank the traveller is to steadily ascend the valley of this glacier-fed river until the valley opens out on to a level ground on which a wall-like structure of stones with the holy formula, "*Om mani padme hum!*" is inscribed on it. It is this place which possesses the attractive name Alukathang.

From Alukathang a short march leads to Chemthang. On the way one has to pass around the snout of a glacier that takes its rise from Pandim and then, the way winds along the bank of a beautiful mountain tarn. Another glacier and soon after another lakelet come into view; and a narrow gap by the side of the Kabru glacier leads the weary traveller to a more or less level ground, being the lovely camping site of Chemthang (15,250'). The view from Chemthang is enticing.

The next march to the Guicha La Pass and back to Chemthang covers a distance of 8 miles in all. The climb is over grassy slopes for some distance after which massive boulders forming a stupendous staircase seem to bar the final ascent to the pass, the height of which is 16,400 feet, the pass being a depression in the spur running from Pandim to Kabru.

The direction of the pass is apparently the meeting point of the two ridges which descend down from the summits of Kangchenjunga and Pandim as it appears to a spectator from Darjeeling. As a matter of fact the two mountains do not merge one on the other as it appears from Darjeeling, the intervening distance between them being nearly 10 miles. From this gap the massif of Kangchenjunga looks terribly stupendous, although it is still about 12 miles away. If one intends to view this great mountain in all its magnificence, one

should reach this pass which is hemmed in by towering peaks of Kangchenjunga and its satellites.

Jongri as well as the Guicha La or 'lock pass' may be reached by following the ridge of the Singlala Range. To the north of Phalut at a place the track runs over a knife-like rock ridge which is very difficult to cross owing to slippery moss covering the rocks.

The shepherds allow their sheep and mountain-goats to first negotiate the crest, so that the moss clinging to the surface of the route (nearly one foot broad) may fall off and subsequently the track may become rough and facilitate the crossing. One is apt to be unnerved in this perilous journey from one end to the other of this emblem of passive resistance which appears to say: "Thus far and no further."

A slip from here means a disastrous glissade down the precipitous slope to the abyss of death. Further on, the track is along the mountain-side of appalling steepness. Fortunately some mountaineering party in the past in order to make the ascent an easy one drove iron-rings into the slopes through which evidently they passed ropes which served as a handrail while climbing the precipice.

While the main fascination of the trip to Jongri lies in the glories of the snows, and the staggering heights of towering peaks that reveal themselves, in the neighbourhood in all their nakedness, the attaining of the Donkia Pass rewards a weary traveller with the amazing views of Tso Lhamo Lake and the great plateau of mystic Tibet.

SNOW MAN

Whether there are on the Himalaya the so-called Snow Men is open to discussion.

Some of the members of the first Everest Expedition, 1921, while climbing the North Peak of Mount Everest from its eastern side, detected footprints resembling those of human beings on the snows at a very high altitude

where no man would have any business to ascend. Besides, this region is in the lap of the wilderness of snowy mountains. The height at which the footprints were discernible must be something like 21,000 feet, and the mountain sides were so precipitous that the parties were proceeding being roped up. The coolies jumped to the conclusion that the footprints were of Metokangmi "the wild man of the snows."

In another case a Mount Everest Expedition party came to learn from the villagers of Rongbuk, 12 miles from the foot of Everest, that *Shukpas* were found by them occupying the higher camps pitched by the previous expedition party. They were so much frightened that they ran pell mell to the Head Lama of the Rongbuk monastery to ask of him forgiveness for having transgressed some imaginary laws by their ascending higher slopes with the view of visiting the old camps.

Some of the porters of the Kangchenjunga Expedition, 1933 assured the Sahibs that they had seen the Mi-go (Snow Man) on high snowy regions.

Then on their way to Jongri from the last village, Yuk-sam, the awfully dense forest through which they could make their way with extreme difficulty suggested that it was a befitting place for the habitation of the dreaded Snow Man.

Professor Roerich mentions in his "Altai-Himalaya" how an English Major during one of his Himalayan Expeditions "to his astonishment beheld a tall man almost naked, standing, and leaning on a high bow." The moment the Snow Man's attention was directed to the Major, he disappeared with wild leaps over the rocks.

In spite of all the foregoing statements, one very much doubts whether such creatures, even if they exist, can eke out an existence in the dreary region of snows. The words "leaning on a high bow" suggest that at least

the creature does not come within the category of gorillas : it must belong to a higher rung of the ladder of evolution. If Major's statement is correct, then Snow Man is something different from what is known as *Shukpas* in this part of the Himalaya.

The following is, however, an authentic account of a *Shukpa*. The writer is indebted to Bombahadur Chhetri, a resident of Darjeeling, a living witness to the incident narrated herein. Some twelve or fourteen coolies in the employment of the Telegraph Department who were encamped at Chummithang nearly 3 miles from the Jelap Pass were one day found mysteriously missing from their tents. In spite of the best efforts of the other coolies as well as the British troops stationed there, the missing men were not traceable. But at long last was detected the culprit hiding himself under the roof of big overhanging boulders on the bleak and barren mountain side. The soldiers first encircled this prodigious living thing, called *Shukpa*, and then put an end to him with their rifles. It was then brought to the Dak Bungalow wherefrom the dead body was taken to Gangtok by Sir Charles Bell, the then Political Officer of Sikkim. It is said that thereafter it was despatched to London to be preserved in the British Museum. It looked almost like a man. The figure was some ten feet tall. The whole body was covered with shaggy hairs some two or three inches long. The extension of the feet was backwards—a great peculiarity. Does this kind of queer formation of the lower extremities facilitate rock-climbing?

BONSO, THE KING OF THE FOREST

A horrible description is ahead ! But no help, as *Bonso*, called the King of the Forest, should not be left out of account in this part of book, although it is not in reality the king, but is the pest of the forest.

Bonso is a kind of wild dog always living in herds, and is generally met with at an altitude varying from 8,000 feet to 12,000 feet. The Singlala Range abounds in this animal, which by reason of its extreme swiftness is called the king of the denizens of the Himalayan wilderness.

Once while a herd was shooting past a headman on the Tonglu spur, he being by chance armed with a rifle at that time, shot at it, apparently without any effect. In nearly 1½ hours after this occurrence a *bonso* was detected before sundown on the summit of Phalut lying dead—a shot had pierced through one of its legs. Fully two days' journey involving arduous ascents and descents covering a distance of 26 miles on the hills was thus completed in this incredibly short time by means of three legs instead of four. The hillmen hold that wind lags behind when a herd of this animal flies with the swiftness of an arrow, no matter, if it be over hills or dales.

They are after such animals as goats, sheep, cows, and ponies, but fortunately not after men whom they are afraid to approach.

Once a few hillmen of the Daragaon village below Phalut tethered a goat to a tree with the view of watching the tricks of these animals. While they were lying in ambush, they noticed that the animals were afraid to approach the goat, which evidently seemed to them to be under the supervision of human beings.

On another day a goat was let loose on a suitable spot on the hill. A few *bonsos* appeared on the scene as advance guard and staying at a distance began to simply thrust out their long tongues from time to time, quite possibly in anticipation of the good supper ahead—the licking and sucking up of fresh blood. The men who hid themselves inside a thick bush at some distance allowed events to develop. In due course a number of other *bonsos* were found to surround the poor animal

from all sides, although keeping themselves at quite a respectable distance.

One of the *bonsos* then made water on the pasturage at the particular spot where the goat was grazing. The virulent urine at once deprived the goat of its sight, and forthwith proceeded the abominable operation which took the shape of ferociously biting the anus and thrusting a hand into the rectum, succeeded by the taking out of the entrails and sucking of blood from every source possible.

Strong mountain cows, and even sturdy ponies are perfectly helpless against this terrible process of aggression which invariably ends in disaster. The hill cows of the infested regions in most cases know their tricks, and this is why they offer every possible resistance while pressing their hind part against trunks of trees. Without human aid, however, it is difficult for cows to protect themselves in the long run.

To return to our story; a few *bonsos* were at long last shot dead on the spot after the men had watched with interest as well as with terror these queer and cruel tactics.

THE COMRADES OF HIGH ALTITUDES

In the Sikkim Himalaya the wild yak which is a sturdy beast almost like the American bison is as a rule not met with. These supreme progenitors of the tame yaks are found in Tibet.

A yak has been very aptly called a buffalo in petticoat. Its shaggy black hairs and its bushy tail serve as a great protection against both wind and cold. The animal is quite indifferent to cold, snow and ice, and cannot stand the temperature of even a height of 7,000 feet. They do well on heights ranging from 8,000 to 14,000 feet.

When in winter snow falls heavily and obliterates the path along mountain sides, yaks and mules are first

allowed to proceed, as these animals can easily discern the most genuine track and are clever enough to avoid false ones concealed beneath snows. Men follow their routes and thus avert a catastrophe.

The rich milk of the yak constitutes the wealth of yakherds. It is also used as a beast of burden and can do a distance of twenty miles per day, while carrying two maunds of goods on their back. The hair is spun into ropes with which sometimes a hanging bridge is made. These are also woven into a covering which is not only rain-proof but also wind-proof, and thus very serviceable in covering tents. The clever lamas who live upon the fat of the land also reserve to themselves the right to ride them: its shaggy warm coat and easy paces are thereby very well enjoyed by these priests.

Brigadier-General Hon. C. G. Bruce in the *Assault on Mount Everest, 1922*, writes :

“It was curious to see yaks contentedly chewing the cud, the whole of their weather-side being a mass of frozen snow. They seemed to be quite as happy lying out in a blizzard as though they had been ordinary civilized cows in a barn.”

The Mule is a very hardy animal and is a very useful beast of burden on both low and high elevations. What to say of mules, even the role played by donkeys in crossing high Himalayan passes with heavy loads on their backs cannot be too highly extolled. Their descent down steep snow slopes while being weighed down by heavy burdens is really a wonderful feat.

In *The Fight for Everest, 1924*, Lieutenant Colonel E. F. Norton referring to donkeys writes :

“These tiny creatures carry the same load as a yak—160 lbs.—at a distinctly faster space and for any distance up to 25 miles a day over passes rising 3,000 feet above the plains. How their legs—no thicker than walking sticks—can do it, is a mystery.”

In the above passage, by plains is meant the Tibetan plateau, the average height of which being some 14,000 feet.

The above animals are evidently the valued comrades of the Himalayan tourists.

THE MUSK DEER

The musk deer, called "*kosturah*" by the hill people, or "*Kosturi Mriga*" in Bengal is an animal which lives at an elevation ranging from 8,000 to 13,000 feet on the Himalaya. Musk is contained in a pouch below the navel of the male, with an orifice in the middle. Into this pouch is secreted a substance rather like blood and is gradually solidified into small pellets of different size. The animal is as large as a lamb and in shape resembles a hare, but has longer legs. It has very short horns and picked ears, and two of its teeth show a little on either side of its mouth. It is only the male which has two small tusks.

The Tibetans are adept in the art of taking out at least a portion of the musk from the pouch, and thereafter closing the orifice in such a way that the buyers fail to suspect any trickery.

The scent of the musk is ascribed by the hill people to its feeding upon the roots of an aromatic herb. Hooker observes that although *Delphinium glaciale* smells strongly and disagreeably of musk, it grows at a tremendous altitude of 17,000 feet, far above the zone inhabited by these creatures.

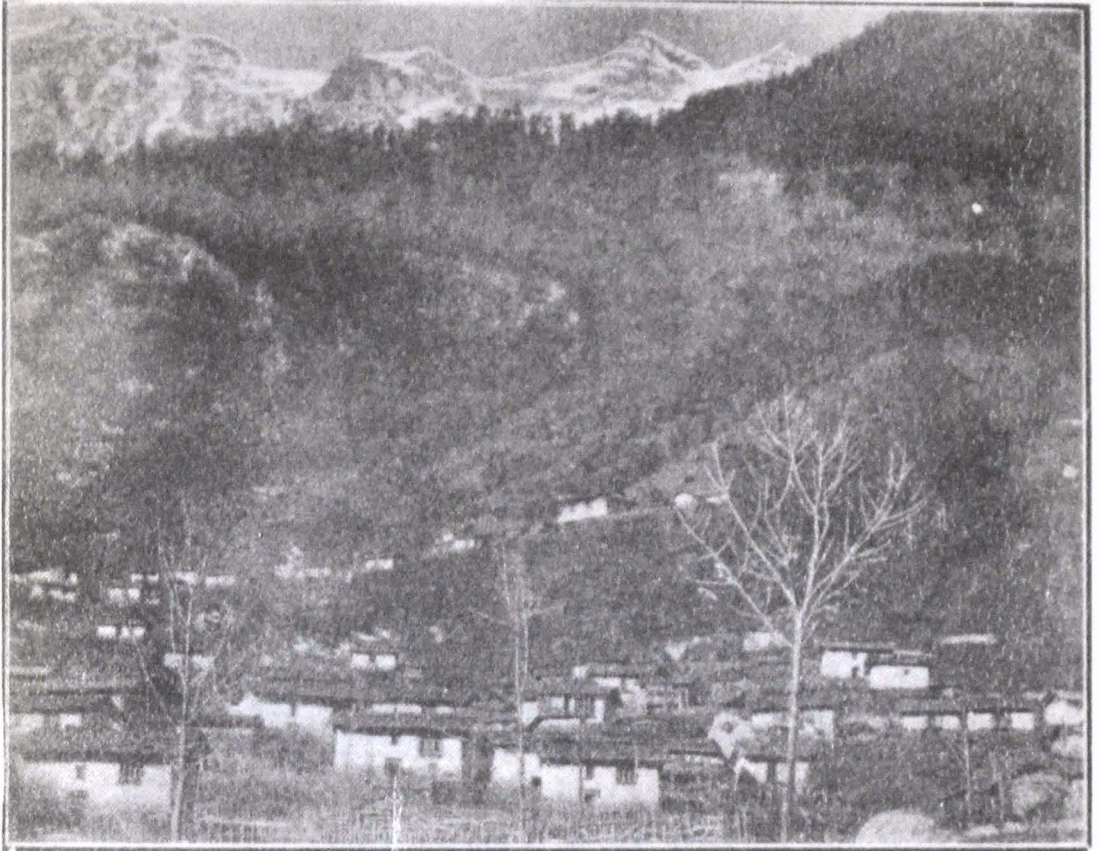
Real musk—the perfume—in some produces fainting by the mere smelling of it. This aromatic substance when genuine scents the air for hundreds of yards.

The Tibetans know how to test the genuineness of musk. The process is a sealed book to the world at large. They are also adept in the art of taking out at least a portion of the musk from a pouch and adulterat-

ing the rest in such a way that the buyers fail to suspect any trickery. How they do all this is rather astonishing.

Mr. Sain had the good fortune to probe successfully into the matter. And here is divulged the whole secret. They take out a certain portion of the musk contained in a pouch by means of a hypodermic syringe, and introduce in its place yak's blood, which soon solidifies in the extreme cold of Tibet.

While, however, testing musk, they penetrate into the pouch a needle through which passes a thread which was previously made to absorb juice of garlic as much as possible. If the thread after passing through the musk retains the odour of garlic on it, the musk must be adulterated, if not, it is genuine, the reason being that pure musk has the effect of completely masking the smell of garlic.

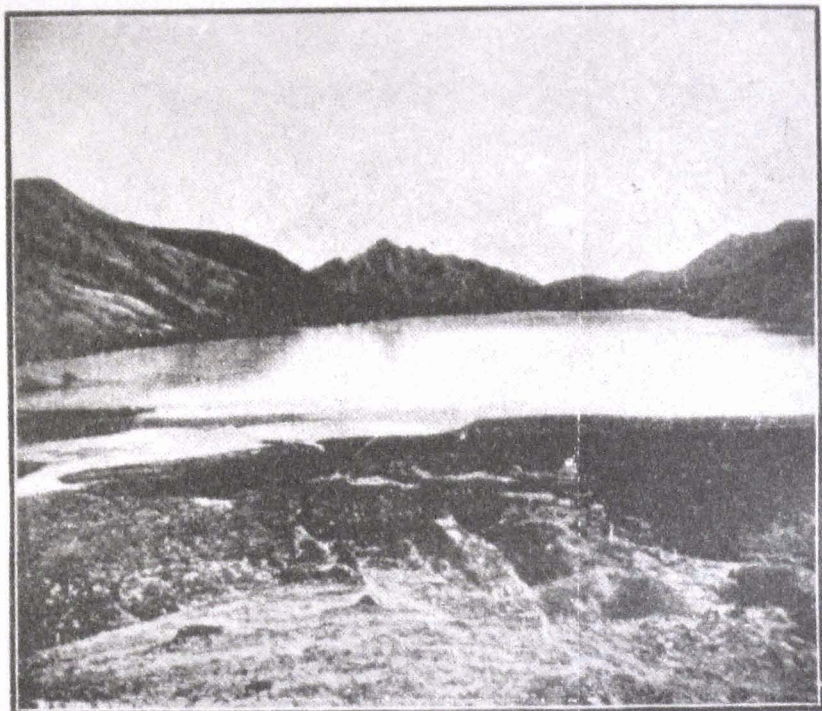


By courtesy of Mr. M. Sain.

THE LACHEN VILLAGE

(In the land of apples, health and beauty.)

To face page 160



By courtesy of Mr. M. Sain.

LAKE KUPUP OR BIDANG TSO

(On the way to the Jelap Pass and about one and a half mile long and one mile broad.)

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PART IV
THE HIMALAYA

“THE HIMALAYA

is as holy to Hindus as the Holy Land is to Christians. For thousands of years their profoundest thinkers have found its deep recesses suitable ground for meditation and the practices of spiritual exercises. There they have attained to knowledge of the Absolute and realized God. The most revered saints have had their abode in its recesses.”

THE HIMALAYA

THE HIMALAYA—ITS SIGNIFICANCE

The Himalaya! Indeed, this very sonorous word seems to be freighted with mystical significance. To a real lover of this holy mountain, the very utterance of the word carries with it some inexplicable thrills—thrills that pass from the mind to some deeper plane of consciousness.

Is it simply the blinding effect of love for the sublime Himalaya that holds human heart captive at the very vocalization of the word? I think not. If there is music and significance in the sweet rustling of the palm trees, in the voice of the humming wind, in the whisper of balmy breeze and in the soundless purring of myriads of never-wearied insects, the dwellers of the blue foothills of the Himalaya, I see no reason why this word itself which has its spring from the mother of all the aryan languages of the world should not be pregnant with meaning.

I would prefer to ignore its etymological meaning which is simply "the abode of the snows." Three consonants, H, M, and L play their role in its resonance. H and L combine to usher in the root, *hlad*, wherefrom we get *hladini*, the power that generates ecstasy, while the letter in the middle is the nucleus of the eternal word, "Om", the most simple, the most sweet, and the most entrancing sound that is capable of being uttered, the holy sound which to the Hindu seers of yore represented the Absolute and which to the Westerners can be interpreted as synonymous with the music of the spheres, inaudible though it is by virtue of the incomprehensible intensity of its vibrations. The immeasurable sweetness of this central letter has found universal response in the unprejudiced cradle life in the very first endeavour to establish relation with the loving mother.

Thus the "Himalaya" resolves itself into two factors, Joy and the Divine Spiritual Potency.

On very close and reverent study of mountain literature, I have been deeply impressed with the philosophic trend of mind of two great westerners. They are Colonel Younghusband, a great Himalayan explorer and F. S. Smythe, one of the greatest of Himalayan climbers, and an eminent writer, who has as a result of his close touch with the epic heights of the world imbibed their greatness and have realized the real thrills of life in the peaceful lap of Nature.

The following are a few of the best passages which I am tempted to quote in this connection.

"* * * * I can gaze at a high hill and know its beauty, and sense my destiny in the quietness and peace of Nature. If this is spiritual progress then ours is a gracious and glorious journey, * * * *"—F. S. Smythe.

"There seems inherent in hills a Presence of Peace, and this Presence is perceptible to those who listen with all ears. To the true philosopher Peace is discernible anywhere, but for most men this is impossible because of their physical environment, and they must seek it in quiet places far removed from the activities of their fellows. It is from this lower grade that the hermit, the monk, and the nun come. Theirs is a confession that they have failed to find spiritual peace, because of their own incapacity to do so. They are afraid to face up to the problem of finding it in the company of their fellow men, and prefer to seek peace rather than to make it."—F. S. Smythe.

"Mountains, perhaps more than any other aspect of Nature except the sea, bring men into touch with those universal forces which in their summation men call God."—F. S. Smythe.

"Renouncing all worldly possessions, severing all family ties, Hindus of the highest intellectual eminence and recognized social position will delight in making

the pilgrimage. They will cheerfully endure incredible hardships from rain, frost, ice, and snow in order that, in the depths of the Himalaya, their hearts may be purified and they may experience God. Some of them will pierce through the Himalaya to the sacred mountain of Kailas in Tibet, and there spend months in meditation till they have attained to such a degree of sanctity that holiness positively radiates from them.

“Can we Europeans not see in this custom of the Hindus a hint of the spiritual enjoyment which we also might derive from the Himalaya? * * * * Through a deepening union with the Spirit of which the mountains are but the symbols and outward manifestations, the European pilgrims may experience that ineffable bliss of which the Hindu sages, modern as well as ancient, have always told.”—Sir F. Younghusband.

The best part of their philosophy, that one can glean from these significant literary expressions, hinges on that one function of life which may be interpreted as “spiritual refreshment”, the outcome of exquisite susceptibility to impressions such as Nature, particularly in her two aspects, the superb upheavals, both static and dynamic, that is to say, the mountains and the sea, has to offer to her lovers.

At the climax of such realization, Colonel Young-husband in his thoughts merges in those of Sree Hamsa whom he depicts in the following words.

“Here, and on his journey through the lesser ranges, he enjoyed the fresh breeze, the calm nights, the beauty of the forest and the mountain; and a flood of bliss would spring up in his heart such as those alone know who are accustomed to meditate upon God.”—Sir F. Young-husband.

“One day after his daily meditation was over, while he was gazing at a bird singing and hopping from bough to bough, the adorative mood suddenly rose within him. He passed into rapture. No tongue can describe his

joy. It can be known only to those who have experienced this inexpressible bliss. So he affirmed."—Sir F. Young-husband.

To pass into such a state of rapture is no wonder, although it is extremely rare. Once in my life, I experienced just for a while such enthralling ecstasy of delight that does not lend itself to description. I would have been the very last person to disclose such a fact for obvious reasons, but in order to make the point I am driving at stand out in clearer definition, I have been constrained, in a sense, to expose myself. It was *Brahmananda* or God-originating-ecstasy. Nothing can compare with it. It was a transport of joy which is terrible in its character. This word, terrible, though apparently incongruous, is, to my mind, the nearest approach to a description of any worth. It was something like an ocean flooding a river, as if the order of things has suffered a drastic change all on a sudden. It had been too immeasurable to be sustained in a human frame, which seemed to me as if it was being shattered to microscopic fragments. I would not enter into any further details, particularly in a book like this.

But, what I would like to impress upon my readers is something diametrically opposite to the ideas that have passed current, even among most of the Hindus.

Justification in the glorious phenomena and manifestations of Nature lies not in the realization of their beauty, neither in absorbing the peace and tranquility that apparently radiate from them. Use your endeavour to be submerged in this apparent peace and ecstasy of delight which the Himalaya can offer you; you succeed for the time being, no doubt, but ultimately your efforts will be futile. And as soon as the glamour passes away, even your spiritual meditation will not be of any consequence. Seekers of peace in this seemingly direct fashion will not find it. Like a mirage beauty of nature captivates the heart, but it has the tendency to recede

from you as you endeavour to approach it. It will simply lure you away. And, ultimately, you will find yourself at the very point where you started from.

It is, indeed, at best, "spiritual refreshment" and not devotion—devotion that has the diametrically opposite tendency to offer all you possess, to ravish not your own senses, but to give pleasure to the senses of the Supreme Lord by thousand and one ways that only flash upon a true devotee who has surrendered himself to Him unconditionally. Devotion is a thing that can be realized with the aid of instinctive knowledge which is not the birth-right of everybody that walks the face of the earth. As a matter of fact, although this spontaneous longing is latent in everyone of us, it manifests itself in its true colours in but a few persons.

It is not in the character of devotion to be bewitched by the glory of Nature. Devotion does not yearn for transport. And, lastly, merging in the Supreme Being or the Over-soul cannot be interpreted as devotion. All this is simply what may be designated as pseudo-devotion, at the source of which no man, no angel, no hermit will ever meet with perennial Bliss.

Leaving aside the instance already cited and which quite naturally, as it appears, made a profound impression on Colonel Younghusband, I would prefer to illustrate the point at issue from the writings of no less a personage than Rabindra Nath Tagore.

In his immortal Gitanjali he writes: "*Esho gandhe, barane, esho gane, esho pulakamaya parashe*, etc. It means: Appear before me through fragrance, through play of colours, through melody, and send a thrill of joy into my heart by your divine touch. This is nothing but an aspect of what may be called self-gratification. It is one's own pleasure that is consulted, and not the pleasure of the Supreme Being, who only has the exclusive right to enjoy everything He has created, and as such, this sort of emotional feeling cannot come in the

category of devotion or love. The reason is not far to seek. Our cup is often found full to the brim; the sparkling champaign that cheers and also inebriates loses its charm and potency for the time being; and, that is why life is sometimes booked for another realm for a fresh quota of ecstasy from a novel source unknown and unknowable though it is. It is, nevertheless, nothing but the appeal of a self-seeker, although the appeal has something apparently ennobling about it.

This being so, it is useless to seek for real peace even in the inspiring presence of nature, which is a delusion. Browning says: "Some think, Creation is meant to show Him forth. I say it is meant to hide Him all it can."

Then, wherein lies the justification of the enthralling spectacles of the Himalaya is the great question. But before I would confront the poignant question, I should make at least two more points clear. Although there may be a touch of love element in meditation, meditation being simply an egoistic endeavour to hold communion with the Divinity, cannot belong to the category of pure devotion, the distinctive characteristic of which is not to fall into raptures, but to fill with delight the Adored Object of love and this characteristic of devotion is simply a spontaneous inclination or in other words an expression of selfless love. The path of meditation principally leads to the attainment of various psychic powers as we find in many ascetics of India both past and present. Meditation in its climax brings about realization of the Aura of the Supreme Being, which generates at best divine ecstasy, which is by no means the *summum bonum* of life and, being transitory in character, cannot be termed as Real Peace.

Real Peace which is Bliss Eternal is simply a by-product of devotion, or in other words an incidental acquisition in the path of pure devotion.

And, what is most astounding is that devotion does not even welcome divine transport of delight. Daruk,

THE HIMALAYA

the attendant of Lord Krishna did not even like that thrills of joy should overcome him in the least, as he found that such delight was detrimental to the execution of his task of fanning the Supreme Lord.

The word, Himalaya, therefore stands for joy, which is not to derive pleasure from anything, but to yield pleasure to the Beloved; it stands for joy (HL) which is not for extraction, but for administration. That means that endeavour not to extract anything from the Himalaya, but administer all that the Himalaya has to offer you to the Beloved. In like manner, the Himalaya is not suggestive of injection, but it invites projection. Or in other words, project all that is enchanting in nature to the Great Projector, but inject not that into you.

All this sounds both anomalous and enigmatical, but, at all events, these are hard facts; and, facts are often stranger than fiction.

The Himalaya stands for detachment and not for attachment.

THE COLOSSAL RANGE

The Himalayan range of mountains has been very aptly called by Noel the backbone of the world. Extending over a distance of over 1,500 miles, it girdles India on the north. Kalidas, the greatest poet in the world, who once adorned the court of the king, Vikramaditya, (380 A.D.) compares the Himalaya with the beam of a balance meant for weighing the earth.

In the confused mazes of mountains with spurs running in bewildering intricacy, it is difficult to make out the unifying design that runs through all these anomalous variants. Survey has brought out the fact that the Himalayan system consists of two main ranges which are parallel. But there is still one more range beyond the Tibetan plateau which Sven Hedin first dis-

covered. This is, as designated by him, the Trans-Himalaya. How these colossal ranges of mountains came into being is an interesting subject for study.

A startling finding of the geologist is that this stupendous range of the Himalaya was once beneath the sea. "Odell, a geologist and a climbing member of the 1933 Expedition of Mount Everest found fossils at a height of 25,000 feet," which, it has been estimated, "belonged to a period over one hundred millions of years ago when the Himalaya had been below the level of the ocean."

What about the ocean then that once reigned supreme in this region? Scientists are led to believe that a force or thrust coming from the north made the ocean move towards the south, and that this force had its origin from contraction of the inner parts of the earth as a result of loss of heat. Another force was also at work in some remote age which acted from below earth's surface upwards resulting in mighty upheavals of rock pyramids composed of granite, gneiss, and crystalline rocks, which welled out from the depths of the earth.

HISTORICAL

Alexander who invaded India in the year 327 B.C. called the Himalaya "Emodus".

Ptolemy who surpassed the old Greeks and Romans drew a masterly map of India with its hydrography, but Tibet or the rivers taking their rise from Tibet found no place in his maps.

The ancient Indo-Aryans were not in the dark as to the great range of mountains to the north of the land. The great Epics of India, the Ramayan and the Mahabharat, which were written during the period from 1400 to 1000 B.C. comprise descriptions of the Himalaya. These national epics as well as the Puranas which came into being in a later age sing the glory of Manas-sarovar,

though masked by allegories from the beginning to the end.

Kalidas, that jewel of poets, whose rapturous poesy touches the most exquisite strings in rhetorics all his own and transports the heart to a region of emotion which nothing else on earth can lead to, describes the superb Himalaya in no equivocal terms. The first chapter of his immortal poetical work, *Kumarasambhava* begins with an eulogy of the Himalaya. His *Meghaduta*, "the Cloud-Messenger", the most fascinating expression of love, which when just out of a London press sold almost immediately, depicts the Himalaya in a way that can be better imagined than described.

THE HIMALAYA—DEPICTED

If a few words, absolutely insignificant and faltering for the purpose though they be, were to depict the Himalaya, they would be what follows. Heaven-kissing peaks of perpetual snow; rock peaks of different shades which do not admit snow precipitation on portions of their almost perpendicular and sometimes overhanging faces, thereby revealing their amazing colours; fearfully precipitous black, jagged rocks standing like giants on boulder-strewn plains of tremendous altitudes (16,000') on which snow never precipitates and whose knife-like edges and staggering heights, and, last but not least, their seemingly unstable equilibrium combined with their pointed tops looking like sharp pikes or teeth of some imaginary animal and their wind-wrought seared faces which strikes terror in the heart of those who even look at them from a distance; glacier-and-spring-fed rivers that cut across almost level valleys, descend rapidly down boulder-strewn rocky beds, or in some places tumble down in thundering cataracts through awe-inspiring gorges; valleys thickly carpeted with blooming flowers of different shades; bleak level plain of sands and pebbles devoid of vegetation and running hundreds of

miles around; crags and rocks rearing up to some three or four thousand feet upon the highest plateau each displaying a different colour which must be seen to be believed; river-banks strewn with pebbles of varied colours; séracs of ice moulded in infinite variety of forms and gleaming with exquisite tints, the whole spectacle representing a fairyland; vast regions of long grass growing in wild profusion; lakes of all sizes, some simply studding the region while others having a circumference of fifty to one hundred miles and over, some looking blue and some green, some abounding in fish and some not, and some completely frozen over in winter; hot springs bubbling up through rocks at an elevation where the surrounding waters freeze during winter and sometimes in summer; gigantic waterfalls that in cold months assume the shape of a frozen pillar of ice, fantastically formed; vast and pathless regions of snows, rocks, sands and pebbles stretching away for hundreds of miles which are absolutely bleak, barren, and desolate, where solitude reigns supreme and where the sound vibrations produced by a pistol-shot may even set in motion a great avalanche fastening itself to a neighbouring crag in an almost unstable equilibrium.

THE HIGHEST PINNACLE OF THE WORLD—
A DRAMATIC DISCOVERY

The Trigonometrical Survey of India while triangulating Hindustan brought out an interesting fact having far-reaching consequences.

Lieutenant-Colonel Valentine Blacker, the historian of the Mahratta wars of 1817-19, was appointed the first Surveyor-General of India in 1823. He held the office till the year 1826, on the 4th February of which year, he met with a tragic death in Calcutta as a result of a duel in which both the combatants shared the same fate.

He is the author of the first complete map of India. Lieutenant Everest, a disciple of Colonel Blacker, who

later on became Colonel Sir George Everest and Surveyor-General of India carried on Blacker's work, in which the positions in space of some of the highest Himalayan peaks were calculated and taken advantage of in the great and most tedious triangulation work which ultimately resulted in an accurate map of India, now so easily handled by a layman. India was triangulated and innumerable mathematical data were recorded for further calculations on the basis of the same.

In 1849 observations about many Himalayan peaks were made. These were worked out three years later. Amongst a number of Himalayan peaks, an unknown peak was marked Peak XV on the triangulation chart. Many observations as to its height were taken from six different places in 1849 and 1850, the distances of which stations from Everest varying from 108 to 113 miles.

In 1852 when the computation was being carried on Radhanath Sirdar, a Bengali, the then Chief Computer of the Survey Department of India, surmised from his calculations that the Peak XV is the highest peak in the world.

The authors of the *Houston Mount Everest Expedition, 1935*, however, sarcastically remarks: "The story of the Bengali computer who rushed into Sir Andrew Waugh's office about 1852, crying out: "Oh, sir, oh, sir, I have discovered the highest mountain in the world!" is probably a subaltern's mess-room yarn, but it is good enough to go on with."

The authors of the "*The Reconnaissance of Mount Everest, 1921*" write in an altogether different strain: "The observations were recorded, but the resulting height was not computed till three years later, and then one day the Bengali Chief Computer rushed into the room of the Surveyor-General, Sir Andrew Waugh, breathlessly exclaiming, "Sir! I have discovered the highest mountain in the world."

Captain Noel, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, gives credit for this discovery to the computer. As to the consequences expected of this histrionic find, Noel very aptly writes: "The sequel was to be a struggle with gods and demons—existing only in the minds of the dwellers in the remote country of the mountains, but none the less the real opponents. It was to be a contest with Nature in her cruellest moods, waged where the earth surging upwards, thrusts herself, stark, bleak, and lonely, through her enveloping atmosphere into the Great Void."

NAMING THE PEAK, A TOUGH JOB

After it was discovered that the Peak XV is the highest in the world, Sir Andrew Waugh, the then Surveyor-General of India, named the mountain after George Everest, his predecessor, under whose directions the triangulations of India had been started, a result of which was the discovery of the highest peak in the world.

Although this mountain was named Everest, it was not only being persistently called Gaurisankar by the natives of India, but also by many foreign states. Even in that gigantic and the most attractive work, *Encyclopædia Americana*, we find the name Gaurisankar retained. In Captain Rawling's work, *The Great Plateau*, we find that this novel nomenclature dissatisfied many people and many used their endeavour to change it in most cases to Cho-mo Kangkar or Gaurisankar.

At long last, Captain Wood was deputed to Katmandu, the capital of Nepal, with the view of settling the vexed question whether the mountain had any native name in Nepal or not.

This very shy and retiring mountain, which makes no appreciable impression on the native onlookers from the prominent parts of Nepal, was an unnamed mountain almost lost in the mazes of apparently higher peaks towering up more superbly under the delusive effect of

proximity. They also ascertained that a very beautiful mountain over one hundred miles away from Everest was known as Gaurisankar. In the Mount Everest Expedition of 1921, its Tibetan name came to the knowledge of the explorers to a certainty. Gaurisankar (23,440') known in Tibet as Chomo Tsering or Trasi Tsering is the westernmost of a group of five very sacred peaks which were distinctly visible from the holy Rangshar region. This group of five very sacred peaks is collectively known as Tsering Tse-nga. The names of the remaining four peaks are: Tingki Shalzong, Miyo Lobzang, Chopen Drinzang, and Tekar Drozang.

All the foreign states of the world were then informed by formal state announcement under the signature of Colonel Burrard that the Peak XV was to be called Everest and not Gaurisankar as had been done in most cases, and they were requested to observe this uniformity in naming the mountain on which much ink was being spilt by writers and geographers all the world over, and over the name of which much confusion prevailed for many years. It is recorded that Colonel Burrard obtained promises from many nations to substitute "Everest" for all names so far used.

Considering the history of the discovery, evidently the whole credit and honour go to Radhanath Sikdar. We would like to propose that the name of this superb peak of the Himalaya should have a significant name. Mount Radhanath would be, undoubtedly, by far the best name for this glorious pyramid of the Himalaya. On one hand the name would be in commemoration of its worthy discoverer, and on the other it would mean the Supreme Being, inasmuch as Radhanath means Lord Krishna, the One without the Second according to the Hindus.

The authors of the Houston Mount Everest Expedition 1933 by air most significantly give vent to their feelings in regard to the tackling of the superb height

in the following words. "Possibly the venture was from the first looked upon kindly by Krishna himself, that pilot of aery chariots of the old Sanskrit pantheon. So Mount Everest, unknown even by name to our ancestors, is not only the culminating pinnacle of the world, but as befits its tall majesty, marks the frontier between the two most numerous races, the two great cultures, the two great philosophies, and the two great ways of life of this planet."

Quite a number of times the eminent Everesters declared that unless the mountain looks upon them favourably, this towering pinnacle cannot be attained. This being so, why not name it Radhanath which means Krishna, so that a future "venture" by land "may be looked upon kindly" by both the mountain and Krishna.

Furthermore, that this particular mountain should have a spiritual name is indirectly suggested by the following very thoughtful expression of F. S. Smythe. "Other mountains may be climbed by an application of mere force and skill, but Everest will ever remain a pilgrimage of the spirit as much as an adventure of the body."

For all these weighty reasons, my suggestion is that the present very harsh name of the mountain may be substituted by the very significant and appealing name, Mount Radhanath. We simply invite an attention of the present India Government in this matter which may seem quite trivial when judged superficially, but is at least something which can well claim certain amount of consideration.

ITINERARY OF ROUTE BETWEEN DARJEELING AND THE FOOT OF MOUNT EVEREST

The existence of a rest-house is denoted by an asterisk. By the serial number is meant the number of days required to accomplish the corresponding journey.

THE HIMALAYA

| <i>Stage</i> | <i>Intervening distance</i> | <i>Altitude in feet</i> | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| | | 6,812 | |
| 1. Darjeeling* | — | | |
| 1. Kalimpong* | 33 | 4,100 | |
| 2. Pedong* | 12 | 4,900 | |
| 3. Ari* .. | 8 | 4,700 | |
| 4. Sedongchen* | 12 | 6,500 | |
| Lingtu .. | 8 | 12,617 | |
| 5. Gnatong* | 7 | 12,210 | |
| Kupup .. | 6 | 13,200 | |
| Jelap Pass .. | 4 | 14,390 | |
| 6. Yatung* | 13 | 9,400 | |
| 7. Gaitsa* | 12 | 12,500 | |
| 8. Phari* | 16 | 14,200 | Beyond is Tibetan plateau. |
| Tang Pass .. | 12 | 15,700 | Here road bifurcates to Lhasa. |
| 9. Shabra Shubra .. | 5 | ? | Near Chomal Rhi. |
| 10. Lunge Bur .. | 10 | ? | |
| Donkya Pass .. | 6 | 18,131 | |
| Chago Pass .. | 3 | 17,200 (?) | |
| 11. Limbu .. | 3 | ? | |
| 12. Tatsang .. | 12 | 16,000 | |
| 13. Kampa Dzong .. | 22 | 14,000 | First town in Tibetan plateau. |
| 14. Linga .. | 16 | ? | |
| 15. Tengye Dzong .. | 13 | 13,800 | Second town on the plateau. |
| Bahman Dopte Pass | | | |
| 16. Khenga .. | 18 | | } From Khenga to Kyishong, average altitude is 14,000'. |
| Dochen .. | 10 | | |
| 17. Jikyop .. | 20 | | |
| 18. Trangso Chumbab | 18 | | |
| 19. Kyishong .. | 18 | | |
| 20. Shekar Dzong .. | 16 | 14,617 | Third town on the plateau. |
| Pang Pass .. | — | 17,000 | |
| 21. Tashi Dzong .. | 16 | ? | |
| 22. Cho Dzong .. | 15 | ? | |
| 23. Rongbuk .. | 20 | 16,500 | Everest 16 miles away as the crow flies. |
| 24. Base Camp .. | 4 | 16,800 | |
| 25. Camp I .. | 4? | 17,800 | 3 hours' journey from Base Camp. |
| 26. Camp II .. | 5? | 19,800 | 4 hours' journey from Camp I. |
| 27. Camp III .. | 3? | 21,200 | Foot of Everest. The summit is two miles from here as the crow flies. |

From Darjeeling to
foot of Everest 400 miles

Via Kalimpong-Jelap-Phari-
Donkya-route.

TO MOUNT EVEREST—THROUGH EVERY PHASE OF MOUNTAIN SCENERY IMAGINABLE

It is just the peak of Mount Everest that is discernible from Darjeeling (Tiger Hill) towards north-

west on the far off horizon. It seems to be very shy and hardly betrays itself. From here although it seems to be pretty within reach, it is 107 miles away as the crow flies.

The foot of the mountain closest to Darjeeling and at the same time accessible to men is at a distance of fully 400 miles. Arduous though the journey is, it is one of the most amazing and fascinating travel that man has ever been privileged to enjoy on the face of our terrestrial globe.

This part being in the Eastern Himalaya, the journey is at first through a world of vegetation and along forest-clad mountain-sides, and lastly, through bleak, barren and most inhospitable region of stones and boulders which almost exclusively fall to the lot of a traveller in the Western Himalaya, hardly favoured by rain clouds.

If it were possible to cross the higher ranges of mountains that skirt the Tibetan plateau on its southern side, matters would have been quite different. That is why this part of the Himalaya is uniquely lavish in the display of all possible phases of sceneries that this superb range of mountains has to offer to its lover.

The route to Mount Everest stands out in three well-defined natural divisions. The first is almost a northerly march to Kampa Dzong, a town in Tibet. This northerly route *via* Thangu, the remotest Sikkim dak-bungalow on the north of Gangtok, is the most direct one, but it necessitates crossing the Sebu Pass (nearly 17,000') which is often found closed by snow and ice. If this high pass is not found snow-bound in the summer months, Kampa Dzong can be reached quite easily by negotiating this pass.

As would be found elsewhere in this book, the camping site of Gyagong (15,750') can be reached in one day from Thangu, the last rest-house in Sikkim. From Gyagong, the path is over stony plains where there is

hardly any vegetation. By doing a distance of 8 miles over an undulating plain with scarcely perceptible dip and rise, a low flat spur is reached having an elevation almost equal to Gyagong.

This spur where the rocks are chiefly of reddish quartz marks the boundary between Sikkim on the south and Tibet on the north. The pass is marked by cairns of stones and "votive rags", hanging on wands of bamboo.

Hooker writes: "To both Donkia and Kongra La, I had every right to go, and was determined, if possible, to reach them, * * * *"

He made the following observations on this frontier pass in the month of June. Altitude, as determined by the barometer worked out at 15,745'; whereas, as determined by the boiling-point thermometer, 15,694', the water boiling at 184.1 degrees. Thermometer recorded a temperature fluctuating from 41.3 to 42.5 degrees between 2 and 4 P.M. The great botanist further adds: "Isolated patches of vegetation appeared on the top of the pass, where I gathered, forty kinds of plants, most of them of a tufted habit characteristic of an extreme climate."

Hooker rode a sure-footed pony on his way from Thangu to Kangra La and back, which, he says, did not even tumble once, though the path was rugged and crossed by many rapid streams.

Then a gradual ascent to Sebu La (17,000'); in three miles one rises one thousand feet higher. The descent to Giru at the foot of Sebu La on its northern side is a route of six miles.

The golden plateau of Tibet although bleak and inhospitable has an entrancing fascination for the tourists. This is what may be called the lure of the Himalaya. Crossing Sebu La on their return from Mount Everest proved painful to the members of the 1933 Expedition.

The following lines of Rutledge depict a deep sense of pathos. They constitute a dramatization too.

“On our last morning in Tibet we slowly breasted the six-mile slope up to the Sebu La, at a height of about 17,000 feet. One felt reluctant to be leaving the country which had afforded an unforgettable experience, a country, moreover, which we might never see again; for entry to Tibet is not easily arranged. Sikkim in all its beauty lay before us, yet our footsteps lagged. Forgotten, for the moment, even the long marches in the teeth of gales, the dust, the bitter struggle on Mount Everest, the failure of our hopes. We remembered only the feeling of a great endeavour, shared alike by Sherpa, Bhutia, and Englishman, the friendly people, the companionship of months, the ever-changing loveliness of ridge and plain, of rock and ice and snow. What had civilization to offer instead? I saw more than one porter turn in his tracks, to take a last look across the roof of the world. He, like ourselves, would gladly return.”

The other route to Kampa Dzong is *via* Jelap Pass, Phari, and Donkya Pass. The itinerary of this route has already been given.

Up to the Tang Pass *via* Jelap and Phari, the path is along the Kalimpong-Lhasa trade route. On the 9th day of one's trip from Darjeeling to this high pass, the Tang La (15,700'), which is 143 miles away from Darjeeling, can be crossed.

From here Kampa Dzong is at a distance of 61 miles. On the way, the highest elevation is crossed at Donkya Pass (18,131'). In that extensive journey of fully 400 miles from Darjeeling to the foot of Mount Everest, these sixty-one miles constitute the most troublesome journey imaginable, especially in view of extreme bitterness of cold and sweeping gales. This is the region of the two snow-capped Sikkim giants, Donkya Rhi and Pauhunri and is the home of blizzard, which plays havoc among travellers all the year round. Snow, mist, and

blizzard are embarrassing in the extreme. This is why, perhaps, the sahibs of so many expeditions could not have a glimpse of Cholamo Lake which they could not detect on the right of their path soon after descending from the Donkya Pass.

It was in this region while being carried on a litter over a high pass of 17,200 feet on the way to Kampa Dzong that Dr. Kellas died of heart failure. His death was most lamentable; the mountaineering world lost in him a keen lover of heights. He had been a physician attached to a London hospital. Each year in summer without in any way announcing anything about the enterprise under contemplation he used to visit the Himalaya to undertake independent exploration with the view of climbing some giant peaks. In the year 1921 Kellas exerted himself to the utmost in conquering Narsing, a well known massive peak in the neighbourhood and lying on the east of Kangchenjunga. Narsing which towers up step after step as it seems from Darjeeling yielded to the efforts of this great mountaineer. Later on he spent several nights at extremely low temperatures in the camps over 20,000 feet on the slopes of Kabru, a satellite of Kangchenjunga. And before he had time to recuperate he had to respond to the first call of the King of Heights when after a short stay at Darjeeling he took upon himself the task of joining the first Mount Everest Expedition which left that Queen of the Hill Stations on May 18.

On the day following his death he was buried on the slopes of the hills to the south of Kampa Dzong. It was quite a befitting place for the final well-earned rest of this most enthusiastic explorer of the snowy heights of the Himalaya. It commands a view of the mighty snowy range out of which to the south on the yonder horizon the three Sikkim giants, Pauhunri,, Kangchenjhau, and Chomiomo tower aloft to heaven-kissing heights, which Kellas alone had climbed. From

the same spot over a hundred miles away is seen Mount Everest glittering in its yellow robe which distance alone can lend.

Negotiating the Donkya Pass at that giddy height of over 18,000 feet is the crux of the distressingly long and arduous trip from Darjeeling to the foot of Mount Everest. Ascending this pass is the highest climb in the course of the whole journey.

After crossing the bitterly cold and dreary uplands of Donkya La region, it is a pleasure to spend a few days at Kampa Dzong at an elevation of nearly 14,000 feet which is the average height of the great plateau.

Every time Expedition suffered greatly while negotiating the high passes of the Donkya region. In 1924 Beetham had a severe attack of Dysentery. Mallory had disquieting symptoms, and Somervell "suspected the possibility of appendicitis." With reference to the 1922 Expedition, General Bruce writes: "What was very much brought home to us was the absolute necessity of windproof material to keep out the tremendous cold of these winds."

The march onwards from Kampa right up to Shekar Dzong is a westerly one. Although the routes adopted by the different expeditions from Tengkye to Shekar vary to a certain extent, they are essentially the same. In 1921 when the first Mount Everest Expedition was conducted, the high plateau of Tibet, westwards from Kampa Dzong, was practically unknown.

From Kampa Dzong right up to the Base Camp, it is practically a long march over the Tibetan plateau, where no track is in most cases recognisable. On the way, only two high passes are to be crossed, one being on the way to Shekar, while the other appearing soon after leaving that town. The latter pass is called Pang La. From the top of this pass Mount Everest heaves into sight from a distance of 35 miles as the crow flies. The

former is called the Bahman Dopté Pass which is rather hard to climb.

The scene that presented to the view of the Expedition members from the top of a low pass, a mile or two beyond Kyisong, finds felicitous expression in the words of Ruttledge which run thus: “* * * * we looked across a wonderful landscape of plain and hill to the single pyramidal rock on which Shekar stands. Had the western geographers known of this place, it would certainly have been included among the wonders of the world. ** ** Even more than Kampa, it is a setting for a fairy story, a place of enchantment .”

While nearing Shekar, the march is principally along the Bhong Chu Valley shut in both sides by limestone hills which rise to some three to four thousand feet above the river. Norton described the scenery thus: “As we neared Shekar these grew always more completely barren and desolate until one could picture oneself among the mountain scenery of the moon; utterly devoid of vegetation, they were of every shade of colour, from lemon yellow to rust-red or purple.”

The Bhong Chu in this part of Tibet which is called the Arun as it enters into Nepal and Koshi as it emerges from the hills and enters into the plains is here fully two hundred feet broad, and the valley is flat and delightful. This Bhong Chu which is only second to the Tsan Po (called the Brahmaputra in the plains of India).

On a rocky mountain that seems to pierce through the blue vault of heaven with its sharp conical top stands the towering monastery with its innumerable buildings and fort which soars above them all. The whole edifice from a distance appears to be embossed half way up the turreted hill. The buildings of the fort are picturesque and bear a striking resemblance to Gothic architecture. There is a colossal image of the Lord Buddha in the monastery.

In *The Reconnaissance, 1921* is written: "This was by far the largest and most interesting place that we had yet come across." Shekar is a great monastery where some four hundred monks reside. About Shekar Dr. Somervell in his *After Everest* writes that it is "the largest town and monastery hereabout with wonderful buildings and evidence of very definite civilization."

Shekar means "shining glass..". It is an apt appellative. All the houses on the hill-sides and at the foot of the rock on which the mighty edifices stand are white, the whiteness being all the more exaggerated by reason of the contrast with the brilliantly coloured hills all around, which are mainly red and dark brown.

From Shekar an Everest Expedition is to strike off due south. The foot of the mountain is just four marches away from this picturesque castle of western Tibet. From Shekar the real thrill of the journey begins. The scenery all the way across the valley of the Dzakar Chu and that of Rongbuk wears altogether a new aspect, and throws out hint as to the nearness of the King of Heights.

On the second day's journey from Shekar is crossed the Pang La, a pass of 17,000 feet. It is a steady pull to attain a height of 3,000 feet from its foot on the plateau. This is the last pass that is negotiated before entering into the threshold of the battle zone which is only three marches away from here. On the way to Everest, Panga La is the last towering height that commands a glorious view of the "King Cold," some 35 miles away as the crow flies.

The northern face of the entire topmost portion of Mount Everest heaving up to a height of 6,000 feet was found in April almost bare of snow. It is undoubtedly due to the sweeping north-west wind that lashes mercilessly at the precipitous slopes of the rocks forming the great pyramid. The following lines of General Bruce are informative: "*** ** on this

occasion the mountain was almost clear of snow and gave one a very different impression. We have recognised the fact that Everest, on its north face, is essentially a rock peak. Unfortunately for us, it did not remain clear of snow for long, rough weather again coming up; the next time we saw it we found it clothed from head to foot in snow."

The last village on the way to Mount Everest is Cho Dzong, wherefrom the Rongbuk monastery is 20 miles away. It lies in the barren valley of the Dzakar Chu. This river rises from the snout of the East Rongbuk Glacier, on which the members of different Everest Expeditions had to pitch their first three camps (Camps I-II-III).

The stage from Cho Dzong to Rongbuk is characterized by utter desolation. It has been depicted by General Bruce: " * * * the final march from Chodong to the Rongbuk Monastery being extremely interesting. There is only one word for it: The valleys of Tibet leading up to the Rongbuk Monastery are hideous. The hills are formless humps, dull in colour; of vegetation there is next to none."

A redeeming feature of the utter desolation of this last stage is the big monastery of Rongbuk. Norton's description is very interesting: " * * * * it is a cheerless desolate valley suggestive at every turn of the greater desolation it leads to. The valley is narrow and the river is absurdly small to represent the drainage of four great glaciers with some dozens of smaller tributaries. The hills on both sides are ugly brown humps of limestone devoid of any beauty of colour or form. For 10 to 15 miles on either bank of the river-bed stand the great moraines that once flanked the now shrunken glacier, for all the world like interminable railway embankments."

These gigantic moraines are composed of white crystalline rocks, their whiteness being enhanced by the

brown hills that shut up the valley on both sides. These crystalline rocks evidently fell from the cliffs of Mount Everest and its satellites in ages long gone by.

Even during the last week of April bitterly cold wind comes sweeping over this valley from the extensive snow-fields that lie ahead giving one to understand that the land of ice and snow is drawing very near. The valley narrows a good deal as the hill sides come closer and closer. Even grass is conspicuous by its absence. The scenery all around speaks of complete desolation. The go was over the snow-sprinkled track closed in on either side by gigantic moraine shelves.

A turn in the valley all of a sudden reveals the great mountain which seemed to dam up the valley further to the south, and almost simultaneously the Rongbuk monastery figures close by to one's great amazement. I shall deal with the Rongbuk monastery in the part assigned to Tibet.

The Base Camp (16,800') was established by each of the three climbing expeditions at a delightful spot four miles away from the Rongbuk Monastery up the valley of the Dzakar Chu. The approach to this camp is along the debris of the tumbled moraines, and finally over the hard ice of a frozen lake. Nearly one mile further to the south from the site of the camp is the snout of the East Rongbuk Glacier. Mount Everest is still twelve miles away.

From the altitude of Rongbuk (16,000'), height asserts itself with no uncertain voice. Finding one's way into a sleeping bag is tiresome, wriggling affair, while the lighting of a match is quite a business. Even the strain in smoking is exasperating.

At Rongbuk the sahibs had to say good-bye to their good little ponies, who offered their ungrudging backs for the large part of their journey of nearly 400 miles from Darjeeling. Yaks, however, carried loads up to the Base Camp. Onwards up to Camp II the task of

carrying goods fell upon the local porters, to whom, however, beyond that camp, the going over the flat open glacier is intimidating on superstitious grounds. Devils are supposed to have found lodgement inside the crevasses of the ice-field.

Noel in his *Through Tibet to Everest* has very aptly written that the Base Camp stood at the gateway of "The Dead World." In the region below there is manifestation of life, while above is the most dreary zone of rock, ice and snow, where life, if forced in, suffers lassitude and deterioration, being the combined effect of an array of devitalizing factors—cold, wind, altitude, discomfort, loss of appetite and of sleep. But, hereafter, everything has its redeeming feature—every step forward is a revelation.

Every step beyond the Base Camp is a step higher. Soon after a start from the Base Camp for Camp I, the way lies over a flat waste of stones. Towards the end of the march appears the black (so is the colour of the ice here) humpy snout of the West Rongbuk Glacier.

Some distance away to the south from the snout, appears the East Rongbuk Glacier which is here quite close to the West Rongbuk Glacier. It is here that the Expeditions selected their site for Camp I wherefrom the snout of the East Rongbuk Glacier is only four hundred yards off. It is a sunny and delightful spot and is greatly sheltered from wind. Hereabout are seen "pillars of rocks fashioned by the wind almost into the shape of man."

The trip to Camp I is painful and arduous. An ice-axe feels heavy. It will be of interest to readers to know that I had once the opportunity of lifting an Expedition ice-axe; it was ridiculously light as compared to its size.

Norton says: "Walking is labour, and in the keenest air there is no exhilaration; rather is there an indefinable feeling of discomfort and distress." This

sort of striking unpleasantness is due to great lack of the vitalizing principle in the air—oxygen.

The approach to Camp I is imposing. From the corner where the Dzakar Chu Valley meets the West Rongbuk Glacier, an array of picturesque, blue séracs running for miles to the west of Everest emerge to the view. In front comes into view the rugged grandeur of the rounded tongue of the East Rongbuk Glacier strewn with hard-featured boulders. It has been observed: "The contemplation of such scenery tends to ease the first strain of life at these altitudes."

From the Bast Camp onwards one must, because of the great intensity of the ultra-violet rays, use snow-goggles.

Camp II which lies at an altitude of 9,800 feet is a sun-trap by day and is protected from the howling wind by high ice-ridges on the west. But with the sundown the temperature falls down all of a sudden to an inconceivable extent. Noel's description in his *Through Tibet to Everest* is fascinating. "The tropical sun lowered itself behind the mountains. There is no twilight. Evening jumps to night. The mercury runs down as if you had made a hole in the bulb." One has not a moment to lose—it is the cordial call of the sleeping bags. "Fifty degrees of frost were our portion on the first night in the camp." (Ruttledge).

Above Camp II lie huge masses of ice crowned with fantastic pinnacles or séracs varying in height from fifty to a hundred feet. Everest, unlike Kangchenjunga, here seems to be leniently disposed to its assailments. By a freakish fancy, so it seems, Mount Everest offers two deep ice-channels known as troughs which descend relentlessly from the upper reaches of the glacier. But for these troughs the making of one's way through this sea of ice would have been difficult in the extreme. Even then, the route through the ice-pinnacles of bewildering intricacy is no joke. When the

trough is reached, the go is nevertheless not an easy affair, the depth of the trough is on an average some fifty feet, so that a descent to the bed of the troughs is a problem. Then again, the smoothness of the bed of the troughs is only apparent. While marching along these glacier troughs, one is affected with devitalizing lassitude, which Rutledge ascribes to stagnancy of air. But it is not so much the stagnancy of air as the lack of oxygen in the troughs held in solution by the ice slopes that is responsible for this very trying state of things.

The expression of Noel—"The Base Camp stood at the gateway of the Dead World,"—nowhere so impresses one's memory as here, where the very breath of life is not.

At the head of a trough one reaches the open, upper glacier where boulders are conspicuous by their absence, but then, crevasses come into play their role in a treacherous way..

Odell's description of this sérac-skirted trough is enchanting. He writes: The trough "will ever be remembered as a fairy scene, of the greatest beauty and highest artistry, by those privileged to use it as a highway to the precincts of the throne of the great Goddess—Chomolungma. Imagine a corridor up to 50 feet deep and 100 feet wide with ice of exquisite tints of blue and white and green, and paved at intervals of ice-covering of charming glacial lakelets, out of the surface of which were growing here and there clusters of ice-pinnacles, themselves sculptured into an infinity of forms."

The scenery here has admirably lent itself to photography, but none but an artist can depict the play of colours that mark this kingdom of icy pinnacles. When the sun shines these pinnacles appear to be of gleaming whiteness, while in shade they betray their colours.

This sérac-skirted trough phenomenon commences at an altitude of 20,000 feet, and after continuing

uninterruptedly for a distance of nearly two miles, extend as far as the boulder-covered lower end of the glacier.

Camp III was in an exceedingly unpleasant spot, huddled among moraine boulders, at the edge of the open glacier below the North Col. Snow-drifts and blizzards play havoc with this icy region all the year round, and progress towards it up the open glacier is sometimes tantamount to ploughing knee-deep in soft snow. It is a place where one's spirits sink to zero. It is a "truly horrid spot."

Being an advanced base within sight of the summit and lying at the very foot of the gigantic massif, it seems as if Everest is eyeing it all the time with unabating indignation.

ON THE THRESHOLD OF REAL ASCENT
—THE NORTH COL.

The first Expedition conducted in the year 1921 had as its objective the finding out of a practical route to the summit of the mountain. It had been a long-drawn-out struggle of nearly six months since their start from Darjeeling for the hitherto unknown journey to the foot of the King of Heights till their coming back to that hill station after covering a distance of over 1,000 miles in all. Out of these six months, fully three months were spent in the region of glaciers and in climbing grim and formidable mountain sides in order to find out a route leading to the only practicable ridge out of three that extend to the foot of the final pyramid of Everest at a height of some 28,300 feet wherefrom the summit is still 700 feet higher.

It struck clever Mallory that a loop (Chang La as called by the Tibetans or North Col. as designated by the members of Mount Everest Expeditions) lying to the north of the said North-east Ridge of Everest once

reached would lead to this ridge, which in turn would lead to the foot of the final pyramid of Everest.

After a continual struggle of three months with cold and rain, precipices and altitude, Mallory succeeded in bringing his party to this depression at a tremendous height of 23,000 feet, which is even 500 feet higher than the towering peak of Siniolchu which from Darjeeling seems to prick the blue vault of the heaven at an ethereal height.

It was the discovery of this col. known as the North Col. that enabled the subsequent climbing expeditions to assail the mountain.

The ascent to the col. from Camp III is the last chapter in the episode of the Lower-camps adventure. The last 1,000 feet leading to the col. proved exceedingly difficult and is said to be the crux of the Everest climb. It is of appalling steepness.

The North Col. is just a mile and a half from Camp III as the crow flies, and is higher than this camp by fully 2,000 feet.

The final slope leading to the North Col., it may be said, is one of the most formidable armours with which Everest has equipped itself. And gaining the col. is as good as receiving a hard-earned passport for the real, prospective climb.

This final slope is nothing but a steeply falling glacier. It can only be negotiated by step-cutting, a business not at all commendable at this exasperatingly short-winded height, where every step onwards is exacting.

An ice-axe which itself proves to be a no mean burden to its possessor at over 22,000 feet is called into play for step-cutting, an affair that must here tax the body-engine to an incredible extent. Side by side workers have to drive in pitons or stakes, round which are fastened rope which subsequently serves as a hand-rail.

In step-cutting, first of all the snow lying on ice is

to be cleared away. Then is to be removed the flaky coating of ice beneath it. Lastly is to be cut a step into "the honest ice beneath."

It was on the historical day of June 7th, 1922, that a climbing party consisting of Mallory, Somervell and Crawford with fifteen sturdy porters left for Camp IV from Camp III at 8 a.m. The climbing party was some 600 feet below Camp IV. The weather was calm and bright; in the stillness of the scene, laboured and quick breathing was audible. Was it a lull before a storm?

Mallory writes: "We are startled by an ominous sound, sharp, arresting, violent, and yet somehow soft like an explosion of untamped gunpowder." It was the growl of an avalanche. In a moment Mallory and Somervell found themselves sliding down as if on a sledge. The movement was slow, but all the same the end seemed imminent. Somervell after a while realised to his utter surprise that the avalanche had ceased to move under his feet. Crawford's experience was similar to that of Somervell. A miracle it seemed to him. But with Mallory events turned out otherwise.

While sliding slowly down the slope, his motion was suddenly arrested by reason of the tightening up of rope which was attached to his waist. A wave of snow came rushing over him and he was buried. By thrusting his arms out of the snow and by some sort of swimming movement he could save himself.

When all was over, four of the fourteen porters, who were following the climbing members with loads, were found standing some 150 feet below Mallory. So it was conjectured that the rest must have been buried underneath heaps of ice and snow. The sahibs took the initiative, and all set to work to dig out the ill-fated men. Loosening the snow with the pick of an ice-axe and shovelling it with the hands required tremendous exertion. Nine out of ten porters were dug out. One body was not found. Six of the porters thus extricated

had already expired. Three only survived. Of these three, one was buried upside down, but although buried for nearly 40 minutes, survived the casualty in a miraculous way. It was just before making this (third) attempt to climb Everest, that the Holy Lama of Rongbuk forebode evil.

In honour of these seven porters who lost their lives on this Everest's great ice slope, a cairn was built at the site of Camp III. Ruttledge in *Everest. 1933* ascribes this unexpected snow-slip to the warm winds of the monsoon.

It was not money but a genuine enterprising spirit that dictated the porters to respond to the challenge of the heights. They had come in for a share in the enterprise. As Mallory has observed, "these men died in an act of voluntary service freely rendered and faithfully performed."

Later on, General Bruce, the leader of this Expedition, received a letter expressive of condolence from the Maharaja of Nepal. In this has been pointed out in felicitous diction that the people of the Hindu country of Nepal attributed the tragic consequences of this historic adventure to the divine wrath of the god and goddess, Shiva and Parvati, whose abode according to the Hindu mythology is on this highest snow-clad pinnacle.

RECORD CLIMB OF NORTON, 1924

In 1924 the first attempt was made by Norton and Somervell who reached Camp V without incident. On the previous day (June 1) Mallory and Bruce (not General Bruce but Geoffery Bruce) had established this camp for them. This advance party made the route recognizable by strips of coloured cloth to serve as sign-posts.

On June 3 Norton and Somervell were up at 5 a.m. The previous night some stones had fallen from the

platform of the climbers' tent and cut Lobsang Tashi's head and Semchumbi's knee. The porters were all found in a comatose condition and "were packed like sardines" in their tent. None showed the slightest sign of getting up and holding on his course. Norton induced them to be up and doing by saying: "If you put us a camp at 27,000 feet and we reach the top, your name will appear in letters of gold in the book that will be written to describe the achievement."

At long last Narbu Yishe, Lhakpa Chede, and Semchumbi agreed to climb up to establish Camp VI. The weather was fine. They proceeded along the North Ridge which leads to the final long ridge (North-east Arête) that in its turn leads to the foot of the final pyramid of Everest. After midday they passed the highest point reached by Mallory, Somervell, and Norton two years ago in 1922.

Camp VI was established at about 26,800 feet. Just two years ago the scientists debated as to the possibility of the existence of human beings doing without oxygen at 25,000 feet. But what is all very well in theory may suffer deviation in practice. Norton spent a very good night at Camp VI.

An hour's journey beyond Camp VI brought them at the bottom of that reddish-yellow band of sand-stone that crosses horizontally the whole North face of Everest. This was easily climbed by crossing it diagonally as it was made up of broad ledges. Towards noon they reached the top of that majestic reddish-yellow band (22,800').

They were now approaching the big couloir or gully which vertically seams the mountain side and runs down the great northern shoulder till it cuts the base of the final pyramid. They had been all the time following a line of approach which was nearly parallel to and some five hundred feet below the crest of the North-east Arête.

At midday Somervell was in a deplorable state. His throat trouble rose to such a climax that had he not been able to hawk up bloody morbid matter from the throat, he would have been suffocated to death. It was an awful predicament. Somervell seated himself under a rock just below the topmost edge of that yellow rock-band.

Norton followed the top edge of the band rising up in a very easy gradient till he reached the big couloir, the final rampart of Mount Everest. On the way he had to turn the end of a formidable buttress by following the lower route without endeavouring to climb it up. This is called the second rock step.

For some distance the going was precarious as the foothold ledges here were perniciously narrow, not more than a few inches in width. The whole face of the mountain was found to be composed of slabs resembling a tiled roof. The couloir was filled up with powdery snow into which Norton sank to the knee, and in places to the waist. So loose was the snow here that it was absolutely useless to offer any support in the event of a slip. The going beyond the couloir gradually worsened to an alarming extent. The progress now depended upon "the mere friction of a boot-nail on the slabs."

Even here Norton unfurls the banner of optimism. He pens these words: "It was not exactly difficult going, but it was a dangerous place for a single unroped climber, as one step would have sent me in all probability to the bottom of the mountain."

What with exhaustion and what with eye trouble which was getting worse, Norton was miserably overpowered. It was almost clear to him that an ascent of some 200 feet would bring him to the north face of the final pyramid whence, it was surmised, the summit would be easily accessible. It was now 1 p.m. The summit was still some 800 or 900 feet high up. Norton was defeated.

But it was a glorious failure. The height of the point from which Norton had to retrace his steps was subsequently fixed by a theodolite as 28,126 feet, an altitude which is only 24 feet below the height of Kangchenjunga, the third (probably the second) highest point in the world.

The point of the second rock step at which Mallory was last seen was at an altitude of 28,230 feet as subsequently determined by theodolite from the Base Camp by Hazard. In case the above point was on the top of the first rock step, Mallory had attained a height of not more than 28,000 feet. In the latter event Norton must be said to have made the known altitude record by climbing up to 28,100 feet.

MALLORY AND IRVINE
—TRAGIC STRUGGLE FOR VICTORY

At 8-40 a.m. on June 6, 1924 Mallory and Irvine accompanied by eight Sherpa porters left Camp IV, each porter carrying 20 to 25 lbs. After establishing Camp V on that day, four of the porters returned to Camp IV at 5 o'clock.

On June 7 Mallory's party was to go to Camp VI, and Odell the same day with Nemu followed up in support to Camp V. When Odell reached Camp V, four porters of Mallory were found coming down from Camp VI (the highest camp). They brought a letter from Mallory, the last sentence of which is: "Perfect weather for the job!"

On June 7 while Mallory and Irvine were spending their night at Camp VI being the highest camp wherefrom they were to set out for the summit on the historic day of June 8, Odell was that night occupying Camp V, 2,000 feet below Camp VI. Odell's porter, Nemu, was affected with mountain sickness, and had therefore to be sent down. Odell was consequently the monarch of

all he surveyed—he was nestled into this high camp in majestic isolation.

After doing the day's work the sun was just bidding adieu to this side of the hemisphere. To the west heaving above the West Rongbuk Glacier, were seen wild mazes of peaks culminating in the towering Cho-uyo (26,750') and Gyachung Kang (25,910') "bathed in pinks and yellows of the most exquisite tints." To the eastward, one hundred miles away was seen "floating in the air", the snowy top of Kangchenjunga, while only some twenty miles away to the east "the beautifully varied outline of the Gyankar Range that guards the tortuous passages of the Arun in its head-long plunge towards the lowlands of Nepal" presented to the view.

Odell pens these words: "It has been my good fortune to climb many peaks alone and witness sunset from not a few, but this was the crowning experience of them all, an ineffable transcendent experience that can never fade away from memory."

That night Odell slept almost well. On June 8 he got up at six, but could not start earlier than eight. Carrying some provisions in a rucksack he made his solitary way up the steep slopes of snow and rocks and ultimately reached the crest of the North Ridge. While Odell was now bound for Camp VI, Mallory and Irvine were making their historic ascent to attain the world's highest summit. It was the eighth day of June, 1924.

While proceeding to Camp VI Odell at about 26,000 feet climbed a little crag nearly 1,000 feet high. As he reached the top, by a freak of nature the whole atmosphere cleared off. Odell noticed a tiny object moving on a snow slope and approaching a rock step. A second object followed the first, which latter was seen climbing on the top of the step. It was indeed a dramatic scene. Odell was not quite sure whether the second figure joined the first on the top of the rock

Undoubtedly these figures were of Mallory and Irvine. Odell was greatly surprised to see them so late as 12-50 p.m. at a point which, if it were the second rock step, they ought to have climbed by 8 a.m. at the latest. Had it been the first rock step, they ought to have tackled it much earlier.

Odell saw a considerable quantity of new snow covering some of the upper rocks near the summit ridge. Possibly, therefore, snowfall might have caused delay in the ascent! Mist and cold, and to a great extent snow-covered and débris-sprinkled slabs might have impeded their progress!

At 2 p.m. Odell arrived at Camp VI which was in a concealed position walled in on one side by a small crag. Snow commenced to fall, and Odell thought that under the prevailing conditions the climbers would experience considerable difficulty in finding out the camp. So he scrambled up the mountain side to a height of about 200 feet, and whistled to attract their notice in case they should be within hearing. Soon a driving blizzard made it imperative for Odell to take shelter for sometime behind a rock. Any use waiting for Mallory! Through deep fog Odell retraced his steps to Camp VI. After a while the fog blew away, and soon the whole north face of Everest burst upon the view bathed in sunshine. No trace or any indication of Mallory and Irvine could be made out.

An idea suddenly struck Odell as quite possible; he remembered the request made in his last note to the effect that Odell should evacuate Camp VI that day and return to the North Col Camp and, if possible, to Camp III, as he himself wished to reach the North Col, and even Camp III in case the monsoon should suddenly break.

Besides all this, the small tent at Camp VI being just sufficient to somehow accommodate two men, Odell had no other alternative but to evacuate it by all means,

as should Mallory and Irvine return from their crowning adventure to Camp VI, bivouacing would evidently fall to the lot of one of them, and sleeping outside exposed to the full *rigor* of the King Cold at that tremendous altitude would simply be courting a disaster.

Odell left Camp VI at 4-30 p.m., and while descending the solitary slopes on his way down to Camp V off and on cast the eyes in vain on the upper rocks for some signs of the climbers. A steady descent and finally a standing glissade brought him to Camp IV at 6-45 p.m.

It was then surmised that Mallory and Irvine being far behind their scheduled time when last seen might have succeeded in reaching Camp VI or possibly Camp V before darkness. The evening was clear, and they had been watching late at night for some signs of Mallory and Irvine's return, or if the worst would come to the worst, an indication by flare of distress.

The day of Mallory and Irvine's attempt to reach the summit was now lost in the dead past. The tiny tents of V and VI were now watched through field-glasses. No sign of movement anywhere till noon when Odell decided to climb the mountain once again in search of the party. A code of signal was planned, under which was arranged the placing of sleeping bags in different ways against the snow in the daytime, with the view of communicating different news. For the night a code of flash signals was arranged.

SEARCH FOR THE HISTORIC CLIMBERS

Accompanied by two porters Odell left Camp III at 12-15 p.m., and reached Camp V in $3\frac{1}{4}$ hours. During the ascent two sherpa porters faltered a good deal. Mallory was not there. What now remained to be seen was Camp VI. There was no time to proceed to Camp VI that evening even if the porters could be

persuaded to climb up. That night wind was boisterous, and threatened to blow away their small tents. Owing to intense cold and wind Odell was unable to sleep even inside two sleeping bags.

June 10 dawned with raging winds. The porters at Camp V were disinclined to stir. They simply showed signs to the effect that they wanted to descend. So they were ordered to go to Camp IV. Odell with great difficulty went up against terrific wind and cold, now and then taking shelter behind rocks. He had with him oxygen cylinders and apparatus, but he derived no benefit therefrom. He took large quantities and longer inspirations, but the effect seemed almost negligible. So he proceeded with the apparatus on his back without taking any advantage of the same. Odell's words are graphic. He writes: "I seemed to get on quite well, though I must admit the hard breathing at these altitudes would surprise a long distance runner."

At last Camp VI was reached with the hope of finding Mallory there. Bitter disappointment was in store for Odell. What more was humanly possible for poor Odell! What more remained to be done! Hoping against hope Odell proceeded further up along the probable route Mallory and Irvine might have taken. He struggled on for nearly two hours and continued the search on that "vast expanse of crags and broken slabs." This most bleak and inhospitable region seemed to turn a cold shoulder upon this solitary traveller climbing in search of the missing party.

Further search was not possible for a single man, finding no other alternative Odell had to retrace his steps and on his way back dragged two sleeping bags from Camp VI. Placing against a steep snow-slope two sleeping bags in the prescribed form of the letter T, Odell signalled down to Hazard at the North Col Camp the fact that no trace of the missing party could be found. The signal was distinctly noticed from the North Col,

4,000 feet below Camp VI. Hazard's answering signal owing to bad weather could not be made out by Odell.

While leaving Camp VI Odell cast a glance at the towering peak. Here the words depicting his feelings are replete with philosophy of no mean order. "It seemed to look down with cold indifference on me, mere punny man, and howl derision in wind-gusts at my petition to yield up its secret—the mystery of my friends. What right had we to venture thus far into the holy presence of the Supreme Goddess. * * * And yet as I gazed again another mood appeared to creep over her haunting features. There seemed to be something alluring in that towering presence. I was almost fascinated. I realized that * * * he who approaches close must ever be led on, oblivious of all obstacles seek to reach that most sacred and highest place of all. It seems that my friends must have been thus enchanted also; for why else should they tarry?"

Odell returned to the North Col and was pleased and relieved to find a note from Norton that he should return and not prolong his search in the mountain.

ALONE AFTER EVEREST

Every age has produced most gallant and dauntless adventurers. Of these valiants who have undergone extreme hardship in qualifying themselves to befittingly undertake the task of staggering adventure, in all probability, none has so far excelled one Englishman from Bradford. (Captain) Maurice Wilson was the name of this remarkable intrepid man.

He was inspired by the writings of the members of the first three Everest Expeditions and made up his mind to climb alone the loftiest peak of the world. It was a crazy enterprise, no doubt, but by no means there was anything crazy about the man who had the iron determination to pit himself against the monarch of mountains.

It was a stupendous task and a most silly one too for a single man to even dream of ascending to the top of this unscalable pyramid. But, the way in which Wilson contemplated to assail this highest pinnacle cannot be expressed in terms of eccentricity or any mental aberration. He matched himself against this giant, this unconquered, and perhaps, unconquerable giant.

His spirit was indomitable. He was fully conscious how even the most tenacious attempts of an well organized body of climbers, supremely trained in mountaineering techniques, armed with most scientific equipments, and provided with thousand and one tins of delicious articles of food for their high climbs, supported by a few dozens of magnificent Sherpa porters, capable of carrying the loads of tents and provisions required for their dash in several stages from one higher camp to the other proved abortive and, prohibitively appalling. He studied books on Everest and was fully alive to the highly resourceful preparations for conducting a climbing expedition.

He must have read about asbestos-lined and felt-sided boots, wind-proof overcoats, eider-down sleeping bags, orange-tinted goggles, ferocious crampons being a steel-pointed device which when tied to a boot enables a climber to walk on fairly steep ice, coils of rope made of silk, oxygen apparatus, ice-axes for cutting steps on ice, and when needed, capable of playing the role of a saviour during a glissade, be it voluntary or not, rope-ladders, folded ladders to cross crevasses, and a hundred and one varieties of queer equipments. He knew full well how with the idea of being in clover on the way to Mount Everest, were called for a few hundreds of pack-ponies, mules, and yaks to carry the tents and provisions, besides an array of enterprising coolies, and last but not least, "an imposing heap of yak-dung" to serve as fuel on the Tibetan plateau.

Quite apart from all this, he must have studied the most precarious climb up the most steeply falling glacier,

working almost perpendicular and towering to a height of some one thousand feet above the site of Camp III, where the climbers could only proceed by roping themselves up, so that in case of one undergoing a slip, the other climbers could have sustained him by the joint efforts made by hacking up ice by means of their ice-axes. A lone climber on this horrible ice-slope leading to the saddle called North Col is a venture not warranted by any sane judgement. And yet, he contrived to undertake this climb alone.

It was, nevertheless, not a venture of the type of Farmer, a young American, who leaving his porters at the foot of Kabru, began his ascent of Kangchenjunga. That was no better than a childish attempt to catch at the moon by stretching up one's arms.

In one respect, however, Farmer and Wilson seem to have run in pairs. Both of them were unacquainted with the art of mountaineering. But, as we shall see later, the way in which Wilson made preparations for the Himalayan enterprise was uniquely unprecedented in the history of adventures.

Maurice Wilson was the son of a manufacturer. For the valiant services rendered in the First Great War, he was awarded the military cross. Spirit of adventure associated with immense physical strength, and indomitable courage, impelled him to take upon himself the supremely venturesome task which may defy quite a series of brave and well organized struggles for perhaps many generations to come.

His preparations for this most hazardous and Herculean task had been in the main a training of the system to adapt itself to arduous and prolonged fasting. He cultivated this habit to such a degree that he could fast for a week and even more with impunity and without hampering his bodily activities.

When he had been in Darjeeling, he used to roam about all over the town and far beyond while taking

little or no food for days. He used to live upon Quaker oats for quite a number of days, and, that too, he used to partake of in mimickingly small quantity a day. To be above suspicion, he thought it wise on his part to throw overboard on many occasions dishes that used to be served in the White House, of which he had been a boarder for nearly a month or so in Darjeeling.

It had been a self-imposed ordeal by starvation to test his fitness for the venture.

Wilson argued that a single mountaineer can conquer Everest, provided he travels fast and light, so that if he could eliminate carrying with him several pounds of tinned food, victory would in all probability be his. He had immense confidence on his own capabilities.

Wilson believed that, if at all, Everest will yield to the attempt of a man of the type of a *yogi*, who had curbed his desires and reduced his physical necessities to a minimum. Furthermore, he cherished a belief that an ascetic climber is likely to be helped by some unseen hand from the Beyond as in the case of F. S. Smythe in his record climb while nearing the altitude of twenty-eight thousand feet on Everest.

While Smythe was climbing alone, he had been under a strong impression that he was being accompanied by a second person. Not only that, it seemed to him, as if he was tied to his companion by a rope, and that in case of a slip he would be held by the unseen person. The phenomenon appeared to him to be of unimpeachable reality, and he constantly glanced back over his shoulder. The thought of his companion was so vivid and uppermost in his mind that when on reaching his highest point he stopped for a while to eat some mint-cake; he divided it so that both of them might partake of the same. He even turned round with one half in his hand—so much haunted was his mind. He was surprised to find no one behind him to share

the cake with him. He felt the friendliness of his invisible comrade, who followed him in his return journey till Camp VI was sighted, when the connecting link was snapped and he forthwith felt alone, although Shipton and the Camp were at a stone's throw.

Wilson had the privilege of having similar experience in his adventures and held that the Beyond had prompted and inspired his lone and ascetic climb on Everest.

But, there were many obstacles on the way to getting a permit from the Tibetan Government to enter Tibet with the view of reaching the foot of the King of Heights, after traversing a distance of nearly 250 miles on the golden plateau of Tibet. Tibet is a forbidden land and its passes are jealously guarded by the Government of the Pope-king of Tibet against any foreign intruder, no matter what his mission may be.

Wilson's, therefore, at the first instance, was a project to fly to the foot of the King of Heights some 350 miles away from Darjeeling, and then, to scale the mountain alone. Tibet is a table-land, no doubt, but would any portion of this undulating and stony land be fit for landing an aeroplane? Possibly he was fit for any job which seems impossible for others. In his early flying career, he managed to scramble free from a machine which crashed as it struck against a tree.

His plan was to take off quietly from England under the seal of secrecy, presumably on a flight to Australia, and reach Purnea, the base of the Houston Flight over Everest, wherefrom it was intended to fly to the base of the mountain without the permission of the Nepalese Government.

The Air Ministry somehow or other managed to be on the scent and inquired of him if the recent reports were true, at the same time informing him that there was hardly any chance of getting a permit from the Nepalese Government to fly over the territories.

In his letter to the renowned writer, A. J. Russel, Wilson writes: "I replied foolishly perhaps, that the information was true, though their attitude would have been more appreciated had they offered assistance. Then came a two-page letter which I ignored and, twenty-four hours before leaving, a two-page wire of warning, which I also ignored."

"The gloves were off; what next?"

"I took off on May 21, 1933....."

Wilson flew through Persia and at long last reached Karachi ignoring all the time the necessity of being armed with a pass-port which was denied him at different landing stations.

Wilson further writes in his letter to Russel:

"After a wonderful night under star-lit skies I reached Karachi. Here again they tried to stick me up with results as before—I flew on and on. The same at Allahabad, on I went underterred and arrived at my base, Purnea, to lay up for a day or two before my last hop to the foot of Everest.

"But here officialdom won. At 7 A.M. on the morning after my arrival came the local magistrate and the chief of police with the unpleasant information that my 'plane had been seized by the Government and that I would not be allowed to use it until further notice; the further notice was the arrival of the monsoon. Twenty-one days later when this had truely arrived, my aeroplane was released."

Meanwhile Wilson had received an invitation from a Major Kent to visit his aerodrome some two hundred and fifty miles away. From here he took off to Lucknow where he managed to dispose of his 'plane to a planter. He had now no necessity for the machine which would be of no avail in his project—the Everest climb.

Here is the concluding paragraph of his historic letter written to Russel.

"I came up to Darjeeling with a view to getting through on foot to Everest. Here the local Government official appeared to take great pleasure in telling me that his orders were to block me. In view of these hold up doesn't it seem to you somewhat uncanny that I am as optimistic as ever about my job of climbing Everest, *the one I've been given to do.*"

Wilson requested Russel to make an endeavour to get permission from the India office to allow him to climb Everest alone. Such permission could not be obtained and Russel thought it wise to advise him to abandon the project. His friends and acquaintances did the same thing. The impossibility of the project was being constantly harped on. But nothing daunted the undaunted Wilson. He observed that victory would fall to the lot of the man who could travel least encumbered and fast.

Russel writes: "Amundsen had beaten Scott in the race to the South Pole by lightning dash. He, like Amundsen, was perfectly fit, possessing sufficient endurance to reach the physical limits of the world's altitudes."

Wilson carried no ropes to facilitate climbing. A small cylinder of oxygen, a height recorder, a camera to take the photograph of the summit in order to enable him to prove that he had actually reached it, a small tent and warm clothing were the only things he took with him.

From the favourite starting place of all Everest expeditions, Darjeeling, slipped out one fine morning this intrepid son of Britain to conquer Everest alone. Local authorities were in the dark as to his movements.

Through the silent orchestra of insects on the blue foot-hills of the Sikkim Himalaya, Wilson made his way *en route* for Everest.

For fear of being detected, he travelled in a most unostentatious way, being accompanied by only three porters. Previous to this, for nearly a dozen of climbers,

some one hundred porters and some three hundred baggage animals were required to carry the varied paraphernalia of surpassing worth and cordiality.

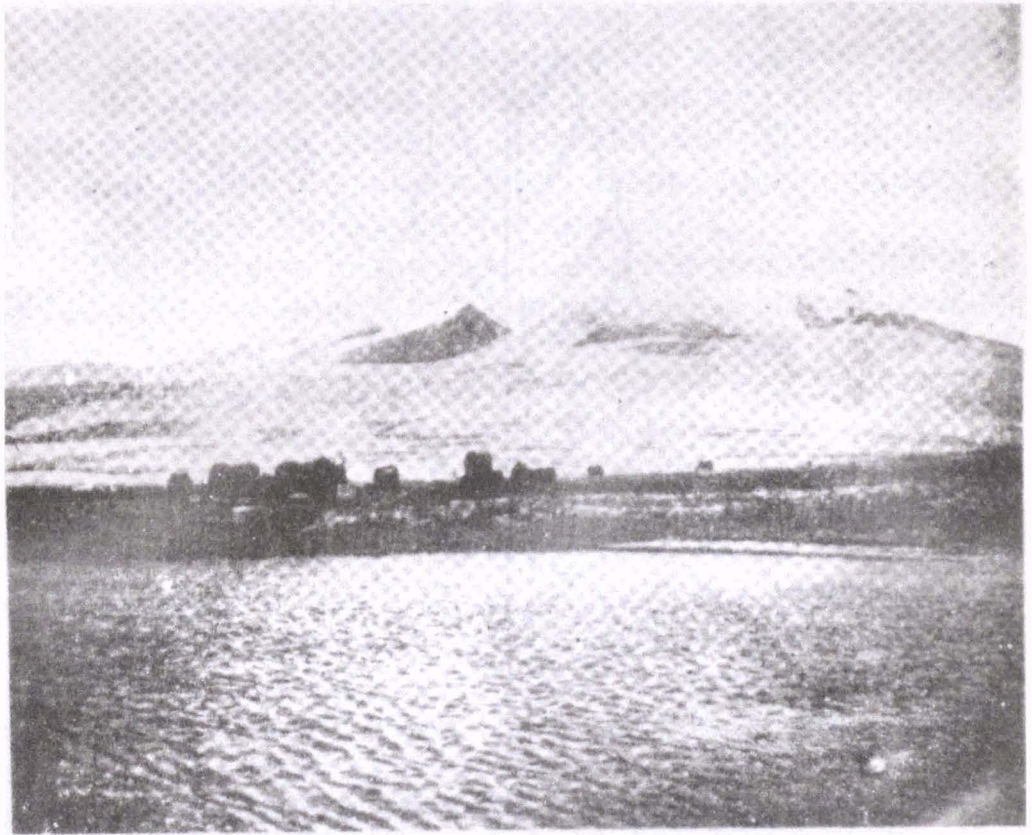
It did not now take much time for reports reaching London that Wilson had at long last slipped away from Darjeeling in the disguise of a porter to fulfil his life's mission. He travelled fast enough to be overtaken by means of any conveyance practicable in that unfrequented and inhospitable region. Travelling hard by night he soon managed to cross the Sikkim Himalaya. While on Tibet, he resumed his English costume.

Covering a distance of some three hundred and fifty miles on the high Himalaya, Wilson entered the arena of assault. It was Rongbuk, situated at an elevation of 16,500' and celebrated for its monastery occupied by some three hundred monks, being probably the highest permanently inhabited place in the world.

The thrilling march for the battle zone was now over. In twenty-five days this hardy adventurer covered the distance which took ten more days for the previous expedition to traverse. That was, by no means, an ordinary feat—nay, it is in itself an achievement of a very high order, considering the fact that Wilson had been trekking on at chill-blasted nights of the wind-swept Tibetan plateau.

In that Rongbuk monastery, the Head Lama of which had been in the past so friendly with the expedition members and showered benediction on the porters and sahibs, Wilson felt, evidently, as snug as a bug in a rug, but physical comforts he had learnt to enjoy by its denial. So he tarried not; after staying there for one day only, he pressed forwards to reach the Base Camp of previous expeditions lying at an elevation of 16,800' and some four miles away from the monastery.

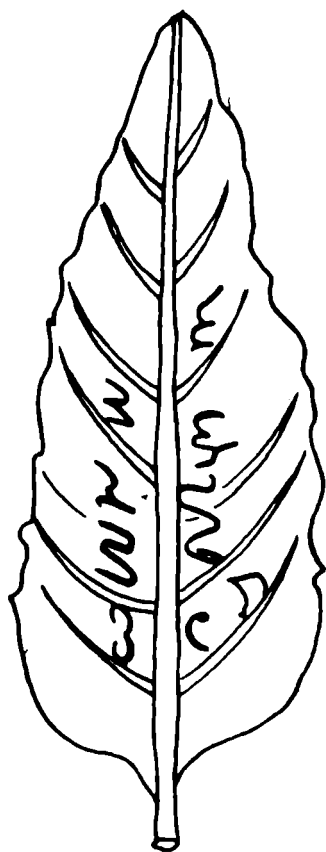
The Base Camp had always been in the past a place of retreat for a few days for the climbers; a place where to relax their highly strained muscles after a nerve-



\\ LAKE MANAS-SAROVAR

From a photo by Sven Hedin

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MIRACULOUS LEAF

(A sketch by the author from the work of Huc and Gabet.)

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racking journey through the high Himalayan regions, remarkably desolate and inhospitable. Wilson reached this Base Camp on the memorable day of April 19 of 1934.

From the site of that Base Camp, Wilson must have viewed with delight the final rock-pyramid of Mount Everest that seemed to have pierced the blue vault of heaven. The mountain from here reveals two silent lines (ridges) of attack. These are the north-west ridge and the north-east ridge. And as a matter of fact only three main ridges descend from the foot (28,000') of the final pyramid to the glaciers below, and constitute the only route leading to the summit.

That traverse to the Base Camp was over the débris of tumbled moraines, past a nunnery and a hermit's cell. Mount Everest which now seemed so near was still twelve miles away.

From the altitude of Rongbuk, height asserts itself with no uncertain voice. Finding one's way into a sleeping bag is a tiresome, wriggling affair, while the lighting of a match is quite a business. Even the strain in smoking is violent. Human organism accustomed to high pressure at about sea-level requires queer adjustment of the vital force which is achieved by a slow process of acclimatization. Although two or three days' stay at a particular altitude is not at all sufficient to get oneself acclimatized, there is, however, no other alternative but to make haste, as all the previous expeditions had been a race in earnest with the monsoon, which in this part of the Himalaya reaches about the middle of June. On the other hand, an early arrival at Rongbuk would have meant an exhausting campaign against intolerable cold of the plateau, to say nothing of the high Rongbuk alley, where icy cold blast of wind plays havoc all the year round.

Wilson cared not to tarry in any camping ground. His was not a race in earnest with the monsoon, but

was a race in earnest with his ambition, which had been spurring him on since he left England on May 21, 1933.

At the Base Camp Wilson had to say good bye to all signs of life. Ahead is the most dreary zone of rock, ice and snow, where manifestation of animal and vegetable life is almost conspicuous by its absence.

Every step beyond the Base Camp is a step higher. Wilson with his three porters reached one after the other the sites of previous years' Camp I and Camp II. But onwards, real mountaineering difficulties present themselves in the shape of crevasses and glaciers, claiming in places considerable care backed by experience.

Lastly, he had to pass through a spectacular world of ice. Intricate and bewildering are the ways to Camp III. Huge masses of ice crowned with fantastic pinnacles or séracs varying in height from forty to a hundred feet bar the way to it. Fortunately two very deep ice-channels known as troughs facilitate to a certain extent approach to this remotest of the three glacier camps. At all events, the going through the troughs is difficult. Besides a descent down their appallingly steep icy sides is risky. Wilson passed through these séracs as well as crossed the trough of an average depth of some fifty feet, suffocating for lack of oxygen therein.

In previous expeditions, it had been necessary to organize advance parties to find out route to Camp III; Wilson required no help to have the route chalked out.

He was now at an elevation of 21,200 feet, where in 1924, temperature at night fell down to 53 degrees of frost.

Not far off is the foot of the steeply falling glacier that rises like a stupendous wall forbidding a climb. The porters were reluctant to approach the foot of this ice wall; the going was arduous, and difficult too. The leader somehow or other managed to induce them to push forward, but on reaching the foot of that formid-

ably steep glacier of an appalling height of fully eight hundred feet, the porters gave in.

They would not advance any further. Climbing that awe-inspiring ice-slope of prohibitive steepness without ropes was too much for them. They had so far not known what rest is. That sort of continuous forced march all along from Darjeeling right up to the last glacier camp had already sapped their vitality. Nothing could spur them on to undertake the risky climb, which in previous expeditions entailed joint mountaineering feats of a supreme order. As a matter of fact, the ascent to the top of this stupendous ice-fall is "the steepest and most dangerous part of the whole way to the summit." It is seamed with crevasses and its surfaces are liable to be swept by avalanches at any moment.

This precipitous ice wall led up to a narrow crack or chimney all the more menacing. Its sides consisted of smooth, blue ice, and it was a bottomless crack. The climb of fully two hundred feet up this grim crack took an hour of exertion, arduous in the extreme. Besides, as Norton has pointed out, "it was something of a gymnastic exercise, and one is little fitted for gymnastics above 22,000'." Eighteen inches long pickets (very light hollow wooden pegs) were driven in the ice, and the route was established by a system of fixed ropes. Loads had to be pulled with ropes up this chimney. On the way up, a great sérac or an ice-pillar was taken advantage of in 1924 by tying a rope round it.

Was there any likelihood of those porters to negotiate the ice-slope without the help of ropes, and above all, a few other porters to help them in fixing pickets and doing other works involved in the ascent? At all events, they could not be persuaded to assail this hanging glacier, the crux of the climb.

From here the summit is still two and a half miles away horizontally and some 7,000 feet still higher. They were now at an altitude of 22,000 feet.

Should Wilson take his chance alone to do the rest of the job himself? Such an attempt beggars human imagination. But, Wilson's was a mission to climb Everest alone although, in all probability, not from the foot of this hanging glacier offering greatest obstacle to the climb from the base to its saddle-like top which is the key to the whole ascent.

Wilson tarried not. He had cast his dice while he had been in England and he was now prepared to achieve alone what has been so far impossible for well-equipped and well-organized expeditions to accomplish.

Giving his three porters orders to wait for a fortnight for his return, Wilson proceeded to climb up the ice slope leading to the saddle, called the North Col, reigning at an altitude of 23,000 feet above sea-level.

It was May 17, 1934, a historic day in the annals of mountaineering. Wilson carrying with him three loaves, two tins of porridge, a small tent, a camera, and a Union Jack to plant on the summit in case he could climb it, resumed his epic ascent. We say "epic", as these are events which should not be measured with success and conquest. It was the unbounded enthusiasm and burning zeal coupled with the training given to the body to remain active with starving diet to conquer the hitherto unconquerable that set to the adventure the seal of supreme distinction.

Porters watched this obdurate adventurer as he fought his way up the ice precipice, until he was seen no more, vision being obstructed by some ice-cones and chimneys which barricaded the way at some distance.

Wilson vanished from the world's gaze. Would he ever come back after planting his little coloured flag on the unconquered pinnacle? Three solitary porters of Wilson in that dreary "Dead World" of snow, ice, and blizzard where temperature was some 50 degrees below zero had been all the time directing their eyes to higher

slopes and ridges of Everest with eagerness to see their sahibs emerging from the regions masked from their view in his final dash for the summit.

Will Wilson ever appear before the gaze of his friendly porters silhouetted against the ice-slope of the final pyramid, reigning in solitary glory and dominating all the region around?

A week has glided by in eager expectation. No sign of the venturer. Hopes which had run high once have now vanished like dew drops before a tropical sun.

Was there any necessity any more to wait for their master? Could he still be alive? But Wilson was not an ordinary man. He had unbounded store of spirit, resoluteness, courage, grit and, above all, power of endurance. He might have possibly found some of the stores left behind by the previous expedition and was for that reason lagging behind his time.

What climbers and porters with their joint efforts and mutual help in their various stages of climb could not achieve was going to be carried into effect by a solitary man who had never before been a mountaineer in his life. Could he have got to the top of the saddle? In all probability he has met his death by slipping down some ice-slope.

But in case he had succeeded in reaching that saddle, he might have been thenceforth helped by the unseen hand of the spirit that had accompanied Smythe in his record climb of Everest. Wilson anticipated such help. He held that a *yogi* man is entitled to such supernatural aid, and he was one of such men.

Wilson's three porters waited there for a full fortnight. Disappointment was in store for them. They were now free to return. No one could be expected to wrestle with the giddy ice-clad precipices for any longer period. But the porters knew that it was possible

for their master to attempt impossibilities and chain victory to his car.

Knowing all this it would not be in the fitness of things on their part to forsake him so soon. Patiently the porters waited for another week and, still another. A full month was now over.

Everest looked as cold and grim as ever. Not a sign of Wilson's making his way back to the forlorn porters.

Monsoon was nearly to break out. All prospects now seemed dismal. With heavy heart the poor porters now decided to return to Darjeeling. One can easily realize what extreme hardship they had undergone by their so long a sojourn in this home of snow and blizzard, armed as they were with their limited equipment and provisions.

Rain-clouds were then racing from the Bay of Bengal to veil the mountain. No good tarrying any more. Wilson's three porters retraced their steps; and returned to Darjeeling. When accosted by the authorities there, they laid bare all the facts, confessing that they had taken part in an unauthorized enterprise—the Everest adventure, and that they had last seen Wilson toiling up the hanging glacier that leads to the Chang La or the Chang Pass saddle, designated North Col by the expeditions.

Referring to Kangchenjunga, Colonel Young-husband writes in his work, *"Everest the Challenge"*: "That looks far beyond the reach of any human being. Yet here were men who dared attain the unattainable. And they were no inexperienced enthusiasts like the ignorant young man to climb Mount Everest by himself, whose body has just been recovered." The last line evidently refers to this poor Wilson who has earned for himself the two epithets—"ignorant" and "inexperienced", through the pen of this illustrious personage.

Those who are either directly or indirectly connected with the epic assault on Everest, as some people here in Darjeeling presume, never liked the idea of Wilson's putting his hand to the enterprise; for should he succeed in reaching the summit, the adventures of the well-laid expeditions would incur irremediable disgrace in the eyes of the world at large. They contend that it is these people who made their best endeavour to put all sorts of obstacles in the way of Wilson by influencing the authorities concerned, both in England and in India.

Truth, indeed, lies in a sealed box. But, be that as it may, one fact is clear that Wilson was not certainly in the good books of Colonel Younghusband who had been for years the president of the Everest Committee. Younghusband hardly thought it worth while to even mention the name of this intrepid man in his "*Everest the Challenge*."

But, Wilson's name still remains engraved on the snowy bosom of Everest and his body still remains interred in ice, and is still as fresh as a daisy, for the high Himalaya stands out for immortality, decay and deterioration being things unknown in that region of eternal snow.

Nearly two years later, mystery of Wilson's climb on Everest was unveiled by Shipton of Everest and Nanda Devi repute, the leader of an Everest advance party. He discovered the dead body of Wilson lying on the snow at some distance from his little tent which evidently would not stand in the teeth of gale that often blows hard on the towering heights of the Himalaya. Shipton buried his body in a crevasse adjacent to the spot where it was found.

Wilson had not died of hunger, as he found out the provisions left by Ruttledge in the year 1933. Evidently it appears that after his tent had been blown away, he was frozen to death.

Wilson's diary which was found in his pocket was brought back to Darjeeling and made over to the police authorities. It had been the privilege of Mr. Edward Paul who runs a commercial institute to handle this diary. Mr. Paul told me that he had been asked to make a typed copy of what was written by him in that queer diary. The writing was one of English letters very sparingly interspersed with unintelligible curves and flourishes, being evidently Wilson's self-designed secret symbols, which nobody could make out.

That young man of Bradford, the so-called "ignorant" and "inexperienced" enthusiast had at least accomplished the most difficult part of the climb alone, and had reached the saddle of Chang La, perched on that dangerous ice-fall which had once swept away in an avalanche so many as eight porters of an expedition.

Wilson is the third of the three Everesters who had lost their lives in their attempt on Everest.

In reviewing the life of this apostle of adventure we cannot help remarking that if it were at all possible for a man to climb that superb peak alone, undoubtedly, that luck would have been Wilson's.

To Wilson's admirers and to onlookers of this most forbidding struggle, all is veiled in a haze of cruel disappointment; but it is a disappointment that tends to infuse that spirit in man that brings men closer to that perennial source of all hopes and disappointments.

PART V
TIBET

TIBET

"I do not think it is exaggerated to say that its landscapes surpass, in all respects, those imagined by the fanciful architects of gods' and demons' worlds.

"No description can convey the least idea of the solemn majesty, the serene beauty, the awe-inspiring wildness, the entrancing charm of the finest Tibetan scenes.

"Often, when tramping across these solitary heights, one feels like an intruder. Unconsciously one slackens pace, lowers one's voice, and words of apology for one's unwarranted boldness come to the lips, ready to be uttered at the first sight of a legitimate superhuman master on whose ground one has trespassed."—ALEXANDRA DAVID NEEL.

TIBET

TIBET

Tibet is amazingly fascinating. Stretch of human imagination has ever endeavoured to conjure up a vision of this roof of the world, having a mean elevation of 13,000 feet above the sea-level.

Tibet has earned for itself a number of charming appellatives, such as, "The Closed Land of Mysteries," "The Forbidden Land," "The Hermit City," "The Roof the World," "The Land of the Lamas," etc.

Tibet is bounded on the north by Mongolia, on the south by Bhutan, Assam, Sikkim, and Nepal, on the east by China, and on the west by Kashmir.

Although the secret of romance often lies in remoteness and inaccessibility, Tibet, even when stripped off these romantic phases, stands out in ever clear definition as a dream-land where everything is amazingly different from similar things one finds in other regions of the globe. It can well be said that Tibet is in another planet, where life, atmosphere, and environments conform to quite a different order of rules and plans.

Tibet covers thirteen times the area of England, its area being 651,700 square miles.

In three significant divisions Tibet displays itself in all its singular beauty. In utter silence reigns the Chang Tang, a vast table-land furrowed here and there by valleys, through which run streams and rivers most of which are lost in lakes. Chang Tang or "the Northern Plains" is bounded on the north by Kuen Lun range and the Mongolian steppes of Tsai-dam while the Tsan-po (called the Brahmaputra as it enters Assam), the great river that runs from the remote western to the far off eastern parts of Tibet, engirdles it on the south.

This northern Tibet is the most barren and inhospitable region in the Asiatic world. It is wind-swept, storm-beaten and barren. It has been written that this part of Tibet is "sun-baked and storm-swept, frozen and

roasted by turns." Chang Tang is too high and too cold. Though intensely cold, it is occasionally baked by more than summer heat under the most scorching sun.

Chang Tang is studded with lakes which are fed by streams. It is intersected by ridges towering aloft to some two or three thousand feet above the plateau.

Here trees are conspicuous by their absence. Only three kinds of bush including the willow is found in northern Tibet. The abnormally high altitude of the Chang Tang which is on an average some 15,000 feet, associated with extreme coldness disfavours plant life. The only vegetation that keeps this elevated desert animating is grass. This grass is of some three or four varieties and is very scanty. It is marvellous that it is adequate for the sustenance of enormous herds of such wild animals as sheep, yaks, asses, goats, gazelles and so forth. And, as a matter of fact, it is this hardly perceptible grass that lends its quota indirectly to the thriving of wolves. It is interesting to note that Tibetan wolves have shaggy hairs which evidently protect them from the rigor of the climate. The flora and fauna of northern Tibet have been described scientifically by the great Russian explorer, Prjevalsky, who made so extensive tour on Chang Tang that it could hardly have been accomplished by quite a band of giants.

Chang Tang is sparsely inhabited by Mongolian nomads, who tend herds of yaks and flocks of sheep. These nomads get their supplies of grains, such as barley, from Southern Tibet.

The second division is the western half of Tibet having higher elevations than those of Eastern Tibet, for Tibet slopes from west to east, being the direction of the course of the life-artery of Tibet, the Tsan-po. This Western Tibet is very sparsely populated, the population being something like one person per square mile.

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This portion of Tibet comprises the province of Ladak with its capital, Leh. What is most fascinating in Western Tibet is the holy mountain, Kailas and the heavenly lake, Manas-sarovar.

In the easternmost part of Western Tibet lies the well-known pass, the Marium La, in about east longitude 82° , and some 50 miles away to the east from the Manas lake. It may be noted here that the Marium La is reached by crossing a few passes from Kashmir.

Beyond the Marium La to the west is the great undulating stone-dusted, honey-coloured plains of eastern Tibet, in which the road often loses itself. From the Marium La right up to Gyantse, one of the greatest towns in Tibet, there are no passes to negotiate, but the want of grass and forage for animals is lamentable. Towns and monasteries are met with after travelling for quite a number of days.

According to Savage Landor the height of the afore-said pass is 17,500 feet, but as found in Sven Hedin's map, it is 16,899 feet. This pass is a grand land-mark, the source of the great Tsan-po or the Brahmaputra being on its south-eastern slopes. Here Landor was forbidden to enter into Tibet. The Tibetan soldiers said: "That yonder is Lhasa territory and we forbid you to enter it." It may be noted here that Landor took no notice of the protest, but proceeded to the eastern side of the pass, thus entering into real Tibet.

The third division which comprises the eastern half of Tibet is fairly populated, although the word, "fairly", when attributed to Tibet should be taken with a grain of salt; it is tantamount to sparsely. It is only when one comes to the lower elevations of Tibet in its south-eastern parts that life seems to have some value attached to it. Nourishing barley, wheat, and peas grow here in fair abundance, and sustain the life of the Tibetans and the cattle of Tibet. The Western Tibet which has a mean elevation of 15,000 feet above sea-level is naturally

too cold and too high for crops to ripen, and this is why population in this part of Tibet is so meagre. It is only in the south-eastern parts of Tibet, as Chumbi Valley, for instance, that the growth of grains is exuberant. In certain places the hill-slopes here yield maize and even rice, a welcome intruder in this inhospitable region. At all events, Tibet is a rationed area of Nature which is so abominably cruel here that life seems to be a hardest struggle imaginable. Noel writes: "Life in Tibet is life at the hardest."

Eastern Tibet is accessible from Koko Nor, and Koko Nor is easily accessible from China. In 1885 Needham, that plucky political officer, penetrated into Eastern Tibet through Ri-ma which is 150 miles from Sadiya in upper Assam. From Ri-ma he followed a route which is parallel to the Brahmaputra (the Tsan-po of Tibet) and ultimately joins the official Junglam route. Journey is adventurous to an immense degree, but what is terribly risky is to cross that 35 miles which intervene hills which part Miri Padam from the Assam frontier. The Mishmis and the Abor tribes of these hills are a menace to any intruder trespassing their homes, jealously guarded by bows and arrows.

The main gate from Kashmir leading to Western Tibet and Ladak is the Zoji La (11,500 feet) some five miles from Baltal. It is the lowest depression on the Himalaya for many hundred miles on either side, and across it lies the main trade route connecting Kashmir with Central Asia. This pass is so deeply snow-bound in winter that it defies negotiation. Snowfall on Eastern Himalaya is appreciably less, and there passes of higher altitudes are negotiable in winter.

The population of Tibet has been estimated at four to six millions only, although the area it covers is nearly seven hundred thousand square miles. An overwhelming majority of this population lives in that portion of Tibet

which lies between Lhasa, its capital, and Sining-fu on the Chinese border.

Whereas in Sikkim rainfall is on an average 200" per annum, in Tibet it does not exceed 14". Rain-clouds that sweep on to Bengal and Sikkim and enrich these lands with exuberant flora and teeming fauna are hardly able to cross the lofty ranges that hedge in this extensive plateau.

Timber is not at all available on the plateau of Tibet. This is imported from Nepal, Bhutan, and Sikkim. It is found in the Chumbi Valley of Tibet, which falls on the way to Lhasa from Kalimpong. It may be noted here that this valley was formerly included in Sikkim.

The only fuel the Tibetans have consists in dried dung of yaks, and this is scanty too,—nay, miserably insufficient for this cold country. In some parts of Tibet they get fuel from scrubs and thickets. When they feel colder, they put on more clothes, and never use their precious fuel for warmth. Ablution is a thing almost unknown in Tibet, for where is sufficient fuel to heat the ice-cold water!

Inordinately insufficient though its rainfall is, Tibet at least boasts of being the mother of most of the greatest rivers of the vast continent of Asia. What are the Indus, the Sutlej, the Brahmaputra, the Irawadi, the Salween, the Yangtse Kiang, and the Hoang Ho? They all take their rise in this closed, lofty region.

The Tsan-po (meaning "Purifier") is navigable for some four hundred miles. On its placid surface glide boats or coracles made of the hide of yaks and other cattle. The Tibetans often row on for some ten miles a day upstream. These hide-boats are not frail and fragile as they seem, but are strong enough to carry several persons and their light loads.

As to how these boats are made, Sven Hedin writes: "These Tsangpo boats are both simple and practical.

A skeleton, or rather framework, of thin tough boughs and laths is tied fast together, and is covered with four yak hides sewed together, which are attached to a rim of wood forming the gunwale—and the boat is ready.”

The exhilarating effect of moving down the Tsan-po on such a light boat in a region where come-and-go business is tedious and not in the least smooth-sailing makes itself felt as we read the following excellent lines from the pen of Sven Hedin. He writes: “What an intoxicating pleasure to be borne along eastwards by the Tsangpo! Is the river one of the forbidden paths of Tibet? If they come now and stop me I shall reply: “I am not in Tibet; I am on the holy river of the Hindus; let me alone.” The view changes with quite perplexing frequency. We have a dark wall of rock in front of us; at the next turn it has disappeared, and another comes into sight on the opposite side of the stream. We often wonder what above and below means here; we seem to remain motionless while the panorama revolves round us.”

Wind runs wild and howls an hour before noon till sundown, and sweeps along the plateau for miles with dust-devils consisting of sands and small stones. Bolts from the blue join hands and thunder from above, and particularly play havoc with trees worn, stunted and dwarfed by weather and curved by hurricanes, that would still dare to raise their heads in the bleak regions, skirting the plateau of this “land of the thunderbolt.”

In Tibet everything is astonishing. Their copper coin, *sho*, is smaller than half-*sho*, and the quarter-*sho*.

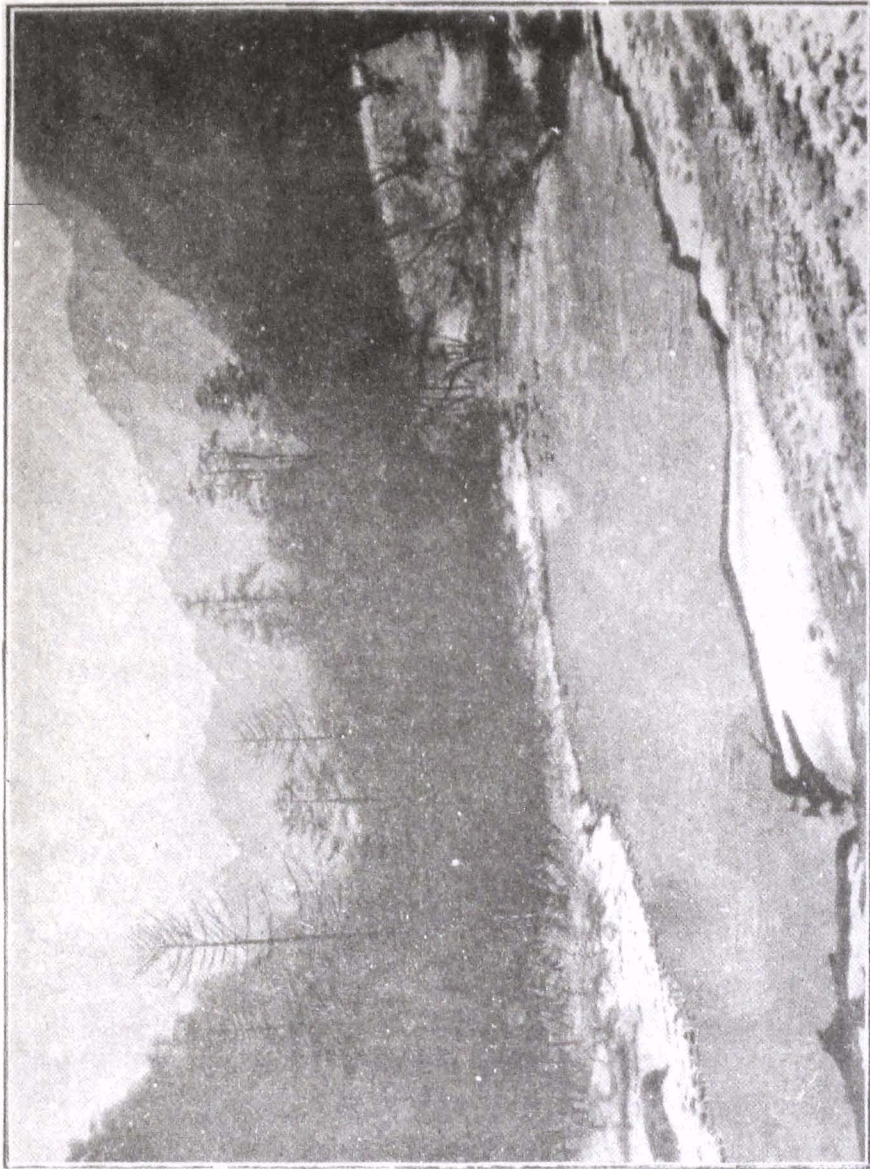
There is practically no road in Tibet. The travellers have worn out for themselves a settled route. When a route is snow-bound, it is the yaks and mules that can negotiate it with impunity—it is the dictate of instinct. How they avoid dangerous tracks concealed by good-looking snows is a great wonder.



By courtesy of Mr. M. Sain.

KANGCHENJHAU
(The holy mountain of Sikkim)

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By Courtesy of Mr. M. Sain

THE LACHUNG RIVER

(Nearly 9,000' above sea-level.)

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Tibet has, practically speaking, no flower to boast of. This is why perhaps cairns formed of artistically arranged stones and pebbles atone for flowers and floral effect.

Stretching for sixteen thousand miles from east to west, four to five hundred miles from north to south, and raising itself to an elevation of thirteen to sixteen thousand feet above the sea-level, strengthened by blasts of icy-cold wind, mercilessly rationed by nature, this land of the lamas stand as a most effective barrier on the north of India. The maximum breadth of Tibet is 700 miles, while the minimum which is towards west being 150 miles.

Nearly all of the Tibetan cities, such as, Shigatse, Gyantse, Lhasa, etc. are all situated on one or the other bank of the Tsan-po or any of its tributaries.

Tibet is studded with lakes, some of which are very small. Only one writer (McGovern) in his "*To Lhasa in disguise*" has written: "Tibet is a land of lakes." He has further noted: "One can scarcely make a day's march without meeting one or more sheets of water, mostly shallow ponds, or scooped out basins on the hills. More often than not the lakes appear in groups, strung out one after another, or in batches in a circumscribed area."

Koko Nor is the largest lake in Tibet. Its meaning is "Blue Lake." It is 168 miles in circumference. Huc who penetrated Tibet through China has recorded that it occupies in maps a far greater space than it really possesses. Its water is bitter and salty. There is a small island towards the western portion of the lake. In 1845 when Huc visited this region, this island was inhabited by twelve contemplative lamas, who dwelt in a most modest temple on the island. There was then no boat on the lake. During the winter, when the lake is frozen over, shepherds go there in pilgrimage. Plains all around this lake are extremely fertile. Here grass

grows to a prodigious height. There is, however, no tree here. The Mongolians set up their tents in this magnificent land of pasture and "tend their cattle on horse-back, lance in hand, fusil in sling and sabre in belt," in order to guard themselves against sudden onslaughts of hordes of Eastern Tibetans, known as Si-fan. To foil their raids the Mongolians have even to shift their tents from place to place in the extensive land where tents seem sunk into the raging sea of grass.

This Koko-Nor region is the home of the worst brigands (*chukpas*) in Asia. It is the remote north-eastern part of Tibet.

Tengri Nor is in the heart of Tibet proper or the Eastern Tibet, and is just nine days' march away to the north of Lhasa. Its area is about 1,000 square miles.

The highest lake in the world is perhaps Hora Tso, having an elevation of 17,930 feet above the sea-level. This is in the North-western Tibet. The highest European lake is at Nenchatel in Switzerland, its altitude being 1,437 feet. The Guatapuri Lakes in Columbia hold the record, their elevation being 13,700 feet.

All the Tibetan lakes were in ages long gone by much larger than what they are now. Evaporation has made them shrink to an inconceivable extent and the waters have become quite saline. Lakes in Tibet are mostly the dessicating remains of ancient snow-fields.

Some lakes of Tibet are saline, some not. These saline lakes hardly freeze. These lakes are not, as a rule, navigable, at least during the daytime when wind blows exceptionally hard. About this wind McGovern writes: "They are generally regarded as the most terrible and devastating, steady winds known anywhere in the world."

It is only the river, the Tsan-po, that admits of navigation. It flows at an elevation ranging from some 12,000 feet to 13,500 feet. World-record of the highest navigation in other parts of the globe is attached to

Lake Titicaca on the borders of Peru and Bolivia, which is systematically navigated, its altitude being 12,500 feet. The Tsan-po in matters relating to navigation beats this lake by fully 1,000 feet.

The discharge in the low season of this great river, which runs diagonally across almost the entire extension of Tibet for a distance of over 1,500 miles, has been estimated at 35,000 cubic feet per second just below its junction with the Lhasa river, the Kyi-chu. This is about seven times that of the Ganges at Hardwar (where the river leaves the Himalaya) under similar conditions. The Tsan-po has broad valley for nearly 1,300 miles.

Tibet is extremely dry. Excessive dryness of the climate obliges the inhabitants to cover the wooden parts of the buildings, the pillars, doors, etc. with cotton cloths in order to prevent them from cracking. Even Mahogany furniture that had withstood the climate of Bengal for years was found to be cracked and fissured and useless after sometime.

Woolen clothes are not sufficient to keep out the wind on the Tibetan plateau, so over and above such clothes skins are used as wrappers. The Tibetans are often garbed in heavy skin coats. They often put on only one sleeve at a time, while half the chest and the other arm are left bare. When the sun shines one feels terribly roasted on the sunny side and frozen on the other.

The air on the high plateau of the Chang Tang seems much charged with electricity. Bower writes what he actually experienced at an altitude of 15,348 feet. "On stroking a dog, sparks are given out with a crackling sound; the same thing happens often with cats in other parts of the world, but I have never before known it happen in the case of dogs." Noel describes how "in the high, dry atmosphere everything is highly electrified." Due to slight friction which is inevitable while loading a plate, or when rolling the celluloid film, or when

developing negatives in the dark-room of a tent, sparkling sets in, with the result that the negatives get befogged. Even the contact of the fingers with the celluloid brings on a spark.

Tibet boasts a telegraph line which extends from Kalimpong to Lhasa. This was laid to Gyantse by the 1904 Military Expedition and continued to Lhasa by the British Engineers in 1921. As far as Gyantse, the line belongs to the India Government, but onwards it is under Tibetan control.

Tibetans are keen and energetic traders. Although other parts of the world around Tibet, such as China, Mongolia, and India are practically speaking inaccessible to these people, their zeal for trade seems to be almost unbounded. To the east a trade route stretches itself *via* Batang and Litang to Tachienlu, a trade land-mark between China and Tibet. Sheep wool of Tibet is exchanged for Chinese brick-tea, which contains, besides tea, butter and soda. Taste, after all, is a thing which cannot be accounted for. From Lhasa a great trade route runs north to Urga, the capital of Mongolia, thereby connecting it with the plains of Siberia. This route goes past Nag-chuka. From Simla starts an excellent road which reaches the Tibetan frontier at Shipki and there joins the route that extends from Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir, to Leh, the capital of Ladak. But the grand trade route to Tibet is the well-known Kalimpong-Lhasa route.

Tibet stands in magnificent isolation. On its honey-coloured plateau rise ranges of hills which divide the country into basins, forming political units under the charges of Dzongpens (Head of an administrative district). Lakes and coloured stony crags of various shades—red, yellow, white, grey, green, etc.—lend a charm to the landscape which has perhaps no parallel all the world over. The beauty of the distant towering peaks of eternal snow, often yellowed by vast distance, which

greet the vision through the extreme and unparalleled clarity of the atmosphere, is certainly incomparable.

The atmosphere of Tibet is crystal-clear. It has to be seen to be believed. But during storm that daily rages at 10 A.M. and totally subsides at sundown, the atmosphere is enveloped in a cloud of sands and grits. In either of the two aspects, Tibet stands second to none. On account of almost absolute clarity of its atmosphere, distant landscapes lose their perspective character to an incredible extent. The art of photography, therefore, cannot store up its unique sceneries by mere clicks of shutters as they do elsewhere.

As against its perfectly transparent atmosphere vitiating perspective effect of landscape, the display of colour in Tibet is astonishing. In the distance, a whole amphitheater of snowy summits rears up in gleaming whiteness, relieved by yellow, yellowish brown or dark coloured bands that lend a fairy-like embellishment to the scene. Candler writes: "In the distance all the land was that yellow and brick-dust colour I had often seen in pictures and thought exaggerated and unreal." Below is the limitless expanse of the naked brick-coloured plateau, on high is the celestial canopy of the deepest blue, studded with stars with their magnified dimensions and intensified brilliance for reasons not clearly known, while in the foreground the bare and undulating rocky mountains of not more than 3,000 feet in height of variegated colours creep on like huge reptiles.

Such is Tibet, a land of colours, but deplorably bleak, and sternly inhospitable, but again, amazing, fascinating, and soul-stirring.

Bare and barren though Tibet is, it teems with flora and fauna as already hinted. Besides, feathered songsters pass and repass through the air, spring up and soar aloft in wanton wings. Insect life thrills with joy. Extreme rigor of the climate appears to leave no seal on the animal kingdom, although the process of winter-

ing is a most trying one. The animal and insect life during this period of the year is more dead than alive.

Insufficiency of fodder in the winter reduces the domesticated animals, particularly the yaks, to a skeleton. The poor animals drag on their miserable existence till summer brings in its train some vegetation which fattens them nicely—a redeeming feature of Tibet. The small animals and insects, such as mice, butterflies, etc. in their cosy shelter beneath sands and in fissures of stones eke out an existence by subjecting themselves to a process of hibernation. In winter they remain totally inactive, eat and drink nothing, do not stir in the least, till rigor of the climate wears off, when they slowly begin to thrive by partaking of what little food they have kept stored up in their home. It is interesting that small birds knowing and taking advantage of these facts take shelter in such fissures during the winter and play havoc with the grains stored up by other animals for their subsistence after the hibernating period is over. Men can achieve the same results by practising what is known in India as *Kumbhak Yoga*.

Grazing on the Tibetan plateau is a brisk scene—a scene that invites cinématography. Blades of grass are few and far between. A grazing flock of goats and sheep by their brisk movement multiply themselves to the eye of a spectator from a distance.

The sleekness of the animals, their clean bill of health, their agility and liveliness, all clearly betray the real character of the land they inhabit.

Extreme clarity of atmosphere calls for divine protection. In the distance every minute thing draws attention, so distinctly is everything visible from afar. Dr. Longstaff has written: “ * * * for a distance of a couple of miles a prowling wolf was easily discerned.” Slightest movement anywhere at once attracts the notice of an observer. All this would have been highly deleterious in effect for animal life, had not Nature

(?—Providence) stepped in with its ingenious plan of protective colouration.

The weaker animals are all protectively coloured. The shades of their skin or feathers resemble that of the region or the rocks they frequent. Protective colouration is, however, denied to the stronger animals and birds who can look to their own safety. On the other hand some of the birds that prey upon other birds and animals have inner sides of their wings brilliantly coloured, so that they may serve as, so to say, a flash-lamp against the blue. Thus protection is afforded against undue ravaging by colouration in two different ways. Is thorniness of Tibetan plants another aspect of the plan of protection elaborated by Nature?

If in a few words one is desirous of knowing what sort of country Tibet is, then he must read the following lines of Hingston of the Indian Medical Service who accompanied the 1924 Everest Expedition. "The plateau of Tibet is a great desert at a height of about 14,000 feet. It is a broken desert, a Sahara elevated and crumpled into mountains with characteristic features of its own. * * * The vast empty spaces, the brown barren hills, the tracts of loose and crumbling sand, the cloudless skies, the penetrating light, the wide extremes of temperature, the scanty rainfall, the dry air, the fierce winds, the low thorny monotonous vegetation: these are some of the most impressive features in this cold and elevated tract."

What is this penetrating light of Tibet? The intensity of light of this towering tableland is overwhelming in character. Just as its wind penetrates through coats and overcoats and makes one feel as if one has not put on any clothes whatsoever, so its light vibrations often pass through barriers which in other parts of the globe are quite light-proof. It is why the camera man must be over-cautious in matters relating to the keeping out of light from films.

The ultra-violet rays of the sun are fiercely active on this high altitude. Even a short exposure to the sun's rays on Tibet darkens the complexion. From a prolonged exposure face gets cracked. That is one of the reasons why in particular the womenfolk of Tibet besmear their face with an ointment of grease and soot, which also protects them from the evil eyes of the stern sex. They look as black as a negress.

One wonders why Tibet has not so far been called the Land of Gold. Whereas there are gold mines in other parts of the world, Tibet boasts of having gold dusts and even nuggets embedded in the earth, not more than two or three feet in depth. Sometimes gold is found in surface soil. Apart from ready accessibility of gold in Tibet, in all probability, no country is richer in gold than this elevated land. In course of thousands of years gold has been washed out of the surface of the earth by the crudest processes and distributed to India *via* Kashmir or Kumaon, northward to Kasgar, eastward to China. It is said that most of the Tibetan gold has found its way to Peking to fill its treasures of fabulous worth. Every river having its source in Tibet carries with it gold. Thokjhalung which is some 200 miles from the Ladak frontier and some 150 miles away to the north of Manasarovar is a gold-field at a height of 16,340 feet. It is one of the highest inhabited places in the world.

From the place Sven Hedin reached in the Manas region Thok-jhalung was still some 100 miles away. About this gold-field he writes: "Pema Tense has often been there, and told me that in the summer 300 tents sprang up out of the earth, for at that time gold-diggers came thither from Lhasa and other places. During the winter only some thirty tents stood there. It is bitterly cold, and often a storm of powdery snow sweeps over the broad expanse." Swami Pranavānanda who explored the Manas region writes that the extensive gold-fields of Thok-jhalung, Munakthok, Rungmar, and other places

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are some twenty days' march northwards from the shores of Manas.

Thok-jhalung is to the east of Simla and is in N. lat. $32^{\circ} 24' 26''$ and E. long. $81^{\circ} 37' 38''$.

Another auriferous tract is to the south-east of Yamdrok Lake on the north of Bhutan at the source of Subarnasri, the "Golden" river of Assam, in the lower reaches of which are found many colonies of gold washers. See **THE ROYAL ROAD TO LHASA**.

Prjevalski has placed on record that gold is very plentiful in Northern Tibet, and that the gold-diggers do not reach deeper than 2 or 3 feet, and that in the Koko Nor region gold is almost invariably found "under a pebble bed of 20 feet in thickness, resting in nuggets (vary in size from a turnip seed to a pea) on a bed of hard rock."

Gold mines here are sometimes 25 to 30 feet deep. Littledale tells of the remnants of hundreds of superficial mines.

Rawling and Ryder while carrying out reconnaissance from Gyantse to Simla via Gartok in course of their scientific exploration met with extensive area of gold-mines for many miles of country. It has been written: "Indeed at every step almost of this eventful journey, the explorer acquired fresh evidence of the extraordinary richness of the alluvial soil of the plateau in gold and borax. Gold is still found in the edges of Lake Manas and the Sulej Valley.

EARLY HISTORY OF TIBET

We are indebted to Princep, Csöma, Schlagentweit, and Sarat Chandra for the earliest records which may be called historical. They include list of legendary kings who are supposed to have ruled from the 1st century B.C. to the 7th century A.D. As a matter of fact, the early history of Tibet is wrapped in a shroud of obscurity

and mystery. They principally deal with myths, miracles and religion. What is interesting in these records is the various stages of the development of their religion from demonology to Buddhism; or rather Tibetan Buddhism in its growth and unfoldment as they understood from various preachers, preaching on different lines.

Tibet or at least Western Tibet was definitely known to the Indians in the most ancient times, the age of the Ramayana. The subject has been dealt with under *Manas* and *Kailas*.

Tibet seems to have been vaguely known to the Arabs during the time of the Calips. It was the musk-deer which led to the unveiling of Tibet to a certain extent. In the year 1154 A.D. Edrisi, a renowned Arabian Geographer, hinted at the sacred lake of Manas-sarovar.

Alberuni, the renowned Mathematician and Astronomer who adorned the court of Sultan Muhmud, wrote a valuable historical book on India in Arabic in the year 1030 A.D. In this book on India is mentioned the Manas region, but the details in this connection deplorably lack any appreciable degree of distinctness, and are heavily weighted with descriptions gleaned from the Puranic works of the Hindus.

Abul Fazal, the distinguished author of *Ain-i-Akbari*, in his noted work gives us some information about Tibet which, however, covers only those portions going by the name of Baltistan (so called by the inhabitants) or Chota Tibet (as called in Hindusthan) and Ladak. The frontier of Baltistan is nearly 12 days' march away from Kashmir. So, even at this time nothing was known about Tibet proper, the vast and the highest plateau lying to the east of Ladak.

It is, however, Mirza Haidar, a cousin of Babar, the founder of Moghul Empire in India, who for the first time recorded some definite information about a greater part of Tibet. In 1533 A.D. when he had been ruling

in Turkestan, he attempted an invasion of Tibet through Ladak. Although at the first instance he was able to advance a long way through the heart of Western Tibet, he had to retrace his steps as hastily as he had pressed on, and, was completely defeated.

But, what is highly interesting is that Tibet did not escape the notice of Herodotus, the Father of History. In the fourth century B.C. Herodotus recorded how in the extreme north-west of India, a race of enormous ants was engaged in digging out gold. It was said that they were as a rule more than a match for any intruder. Traders mounted on swift camels at times succeeded in snatching away the gold collected by these ant diggers. While riding away with the gold, they were pursued by these ferocious creatures who slew them if they could catch them. These ants are none but the Tibetan gold-diggers of Thok-jhalung who worked with their body bent forward in the gold-fields clothed in their black yak-hair blankets, thereby looking like so many queer sorts of animals or some enormous insects. Such blankets were a necessity in the teeth of devastating wind and cold of that exceedingly high elevation, which is some 2,500 feet higher than the mean height of the Tibetan plateau. These diggers were always attended by Tibetan watchdogs whose ferocity is almost proverbial and who would certainly give the robbers quite a good chase and attack them in the manner described by Herodotus.

With the end of the role of legendary kings, an epoch of civilization dawned upon Tibet. In seventh century we find king Sron-tsan Gam-po ascending the throne at the age of thirteen. Buddhism had then some footing in Tibet; it was there for two hundred years. But the impression it had made on Tibet was not as yet appreciable. During his reign Upper Burma and Western China were conquered. The emperor of China was forced to give a princess in marriage to the victor

of this land of snows. Subsequently he seized the opportunity of marrying a princess of Nepal, named Bhrikuti. These two queens being Buddhists, were greatly instrumental in the spread of Buddhism in Tibet, and as a matter of fact, henceforth Buddhism became the State Religion of Tibet. Some of the Buddhist scriptures were then brought from India. But, at all events, Buddhism here in these days was nothing but an admixture of demonology already prevalent in Tibet, Nature-worship then practised in Nepal, and Buddhism of India as it had been percolating into Tibet through the medium of scriptures imported from India.

Another famous king, during the latter half of the eighth century, was in the throne of Tibet. He is Tisong De-tsen. He invited the Tantric Buddhist, Padma Sambhava (Born of a Lotus) to come to Tibet and preach the doctrines of Lord Buddha. What Padma Sambhava preached in Tibet is meagerly associated with real Buddhism, it being nothing but the mystical aspect of Hinduism, which relates to charms, miracles, and occultism. As a matter of fact, Buddhism was at that time conspicuous by its absence from India, the land of its birth, to which it had bidden adieu and had taken shelter in China and Japan.

Padma Sambhava seems to be more honoured in Tibet than Lord Buddha himself. In hundreds of monasteries will be found this priest's image occupying the central position, while to that of Lord Buddha, always represented by a much smaller image, is assigned a less conspicuous place, and is practically speaking thrown into the shade. This fact struck Sir Charles Bell. He writes: "For the people say that Buddha would be helpless without the priests who spread his doctrines and the books in which those doctrines were expounded."

During the reign of these two kings many books on religion, medicine, astronomy and astrology were translated from Sanskrit and Chinese, as also during the reign

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of another king of repute, Ral-pa-chan, ruling in the latter half of the ninth century.

In concluding this subject, it should be mentioned that quite a large part of Tibetan literature is simply translation of works originally written in India in Sanskrit. The original Sanskrit books in most cases have been lost long, long ago, so that research scholars of ancient Indian literature should take the advantage of the Tibetan canons in order to know the customs and thoughts of olden times.

THE ROYAL ROAD TO LHASA

Many of my generous readers will perhaps like to know something about the itinerary of route between India and Lhasa, the capital of Tibet.

A tour to Jelap Pass has already been described. The rest of the journey is dealt with here.

The following is the list of various stages of the trekking involved.

| <i>Stages</i> | <i>Intervening distance in miles</i> |
|--------------------------|--|
| Jelap | — |
| Yatung | 13 |
| Phari Dzong | 28 |
| Tuna | 24 |
| Kala-shar | 25 |
| Samando | 16 |
| Khangmar | 18 |
| Gyantse Dzong | 24 |
| Gobshi | 15 |
| Ralung | 19 |
| Dzara | 17 |
| Nangar-tse Dzong | 15 |
| Palde Dzong | 16 |
| Dzim-khar | 27 |
| Nethang | 22 |
| Lhasa | 16 |
| Total | 295 |

From Jelap Pass is visible for the first time that enticing cathedral of lily-white snow called Chomal Rhi, unanimously said to be the world's most beautiful peak. From this pass the route runs through the prosperous villages of Rinchengong, Phema, and Chumbi till Yatung is reached which the Tibetans call Shassi. The Chumbi valley is perhaps the richest valley in Tibet. Barley, wheat, and potatoes are grown here in large quantities. Apples and pears thrive well here. The road below Jelap on the Tibetan side is a descent of over 6,000 feet in eight miles, and what is appalling is that the route is straight without a single bend up to Langram, three miles away from Jelap.

The natural scenery at Yatung has been most graphically described by Edmund Candler. He writes: "The valley (Yatung) is beautiful beyond the beauty of the grandest Alpine scenery, carpeted under foot with spring flowers and ablaze overhead with flowering rhododendrons." He further writes about the Chumbi Valley (comprising Yatung): "Paradise would be easier to describe." "But what irony, that this seductive valley should be the approach to the most bare and unsheltered country in Asia."

The following lines of Millington about this lovely valley will not be out of place. He writes: "The valley itself was a delightful spot to have reached. After the unpleasantness of those heights that one had traversed, this valley seemed a sheer Garden of Eden. It was a place to dally in, in which to wander about accompanied by your best girl, picking wild flowers for her, and listening with her to the humming of the bees, and the bubbling of laughing brooks, rather than a place in which to concentrate an army for an advance into the enemy's country." This last part of the quotation alludes to the 1904 Military Mission to Tibet.

Some three or four thousands of men inhabit the Chumbi Valley. Rainfall at Chumbi is 50". Its

elevation is 9,980 feet. Almost daily at noon a world of mist creeps up from the valleys of Bhutan and a constant drizzle is the result

The Chumbi mules are sure-footed, and the feat they perform in climbing and particularly descending down snow-bound passes is really wonderful. They make out track by instinct.

The next stage is Phari which is a long way off from Yatung. The path follows the banks of the Ammu Chu. Gautsa is 12 miles from Yatung, on the way to which is Galinka, a flourishing village with a wealth of barley fields. On the route is seen a very impressive waterfall frozen over almost all the year round. The fall is a sheer drop of some 300 feet. Thereafter an extensive plain comes into view. It is the Lingmatam plain. On crossing a river and going up a spur, one reaches the Donkia monastery, which was once the seat of Geshe Lama, a man of great learning.

One can ride at a gallop on the Lingmatam plain, at the end of which the valley narrows and the path runs close along a bank of the rushing stream, the Ammu Chu, which extends to Madarihat in the plains of India where it is called the Tursa, which finally empties itself into the Kalchini river. The way along the bank of the Ammu Chu lies through a forest of tall trees, such as birch, juniper, silver fir, and so forth. Lastly the stage rest-house of Gautsa, the last village in Chumbi, appears at the bottom of a steep and terrific gorge.

Gautsa is a small straggling village of less than a dozen of huts. Air here is scented with the fragrance of pine trees. A small level plain which Gautsa boasts had been once the scene of a kind of rustic football game and once of a three-a-side polo. Football at this height (12,000 feet) is tantamount to playing the game at the ordinary level of the earth's surface while being weighted down with an eighty pound load on one's back.

With the march onwards from Gautsa, the wild savagery of mountains and the dense forest growth lag behind. In summer rhododendrons dwarfed by cold and altitude to an extent of one foot in height continue to blossom in pure whiteness and in pink up to an elevation of 1,000 feet from Gautsa, beyond which the purple variety decorates the hill sides to a certain height in an ever-decreasing luxuriance, till flowers are conspicuous by their absence.

It is just after a slow and a long climb of eight miles from Gautsa that the undulating treeless, open plateau of Tibet bursts upon the view of a lover of heights with startling suddenness. And the moment one sets one's foot on the threshold of the Great Plateau, icy cold blast of the west wind comes streaming as it were to forbid the traveller to enter the forbidden land of Tibet.

Diffidence originating in the rigor of the Phari plains suffers an eclipse under the shadow of Chomal Rhi, "the Lily-White Mother of Snow", that standing in splendid isolation towers aloft abruptly to an incredible height of 9,000 feet above the roof of the world. A more shapely and entrancing peak cannot be imagined. It dominates the Phari plains and stands like a sentinel bearing 33° from Phari over the sandy downs of limitless horizon.

After nearly two miles of journey forward, Phari appears in the distance. Although it looks just two miles away, it is still six miles off, and is very close to the base of Chomal Rhi.

At Phari there is a fort which was built in 1792 A.D. It is the highest town in the world, but it is at the same time, in all probability, the dirtiest and the most filthy town in the globe. Its streets are buried in an abominable mixture of the droppings of ponies, mules, pigs, yaks, and sheep, and snow to the depth of fully four feet so far, to which has been added accumulated filth of ages. In the houses are huddled together human beings,

pigs, yaks, fowls, and what not. *Phari* means hog, and *Dzong* means hill, so that Phari Dzong eventually boasts of a most appropriate appellation. About Phari Manning has composed the following lines.

“Dirt, dirt, grease, smoke;
Misery, but good mutton.”

The altitude of Phari is 14,200 feet. Customs duties are levied at Phari. Much vigilance is brought to bear upon all persons who pass through Phari.

Tang La (15,700 feet) is reached by a gradual and almost imperceptible ascent, covering a distance of 12 miles. At Tang La the great snowy Himalayan ranges are crossed at the foot of Chomal Rhi. The traveler is now definitely on Tibetan plateau which is only intersected here and there with mountain ridges rising up to a height of some two to three thousand feet.

Tuna is inhabited by very poor and dirty folk. It is nevertheless a historical place as we shall see later. Tuna is abominably cold and windy.

Next day's journey to Kala-shar is most trying. One has to combat gravel under foot, steady, fierce wind, and scorching sun. The route is through a series of broad valleys embroidered here and there with patches of vegetation which thrive from June to November. Otherwise the country is mostly barren.

From Tuna to Dochen is a ride of twelve miles along a sandy plain scattered with rounded pebbles along the hill sides, being a distinct evidence of lakes which had dried up long, long ago.

Some nine miles away from Tuna is a place called Guru where Tibetans opposed the march of the 1904 Mission and were the first to take the offensive with the result that Guru witnessed a scene of a most fierce battle. Guru is the name of a place not marked by any houses. It is discernible by its pasturage and many streamlets that flow down some neighbouring hills at the foot of which this historical place is located.

Three miles ahead is Dochen (14,700 feet) where there is a stage rest-house near the shores of a lake (Bam Tso) suffocated at places with the weeds of various colours. Behind the lake snow-and-glacier-covered mountains form a lovely background. Bar-headed geese and Brahminy ducks swim on the still sheet of water on which the neighbouring mountains cast a picturesque shadow. The country here is very marshy. About this lake Col. Howard-bury writes: "Never have I seen a lake with so many colours in it. It was very shallow, and the shades varied from deep blue and purple to light green, while in places it was almost red from a weed that grew in it."

The trade route to Lhasa from Darjeeling proceeds northwards from Dochen which is 160 miles from Darjeeling, while the aspirants to Mount Everest are to strike off westwards leaving behind the telegraph line connecting Kalimpong with Lhasa. Dochen boasts no house or inhabitant, but is noted for its springs and that coloured lake.

Kala-shar (14,750 feet) stands by a swiftly flowing river having its rise in a lake lying to the north of Bam Tso. This lake is called Kala Tso. Further north will be seen the Nyang-chu, an affluent of the Tsan-po.

The next stage is Samando which is at the junction of two narrow valleys. A cluster of houses here make a hamlet. Further on are seen some deserted settlements.

After covering a distance of 18 miles the village of Khangmar is reached. Bogle calls it Kanmur, while Turner spells it as Ganga-mar. A few willows are seen round this hamlet. A cross trade-route to Lhasa strikes off to north-east from Khangmar and joins the main track between Gyantse and Lhasa at Ralung, thereby minimising distance by 30 miles. But this route necessitates negotiation of some lofty passes. Besides the traveller will miss that beautiful town, Gyantse Dzong.

Just beyond Khangmar the plains are less bleak and sterile. There are rivers where wild fowls and ducks are plentiful. Four miles away are met some hot springs wherefrom water having a temperature of 100°F. gushes out by fits.

The next is a long march of 24 miles till the blooming town of Gyantse makes its appearance as a relief to a weary traveller all the time trudging on through a world of desolation. But when Gyantse is still 4 miles ahead, a prosperous village of quite a number of houses surrounded by irrigation streams greets the vision of a trekker. Cultivation is here done with no sparing hand. The soil is alluvial and crops are plentiful. Two monasteries of olden times enhance the beauty of the spot.

Gyantse is at an elevation of 12,895 feet. Its latitude is 28°54' N and longitude 89°—29'—20" E. Bogle spells it as Gian-su, Turner as Ghansu, Manning as Giansu, while Hooker as Gian-tchi. Gyantse is a large town standing on the right bank of Nyang-chu. This broad valley abounds in cultivation, barley being the main crop. Here the Tibetans are not at all at the mercy of rains, for they maintain an excellent system of irrigation. The yearly rainfall here is generally ten to twelve inches. What they need is cloudy nights which are evidently fostered by frequent rains. It is the skies overcast with clouds that ward off frost which plays sad havoc with crops, not so much ravaged by even hailstorms which are, therefore, not much dreaded.

The Gyantse Dzong or fortress built on a lofty rock with its many turrets is an imposing edifice. To the north of the castle is a famous monastery, the Palkhor Chñoide. A British Trade Agent is stationed here. From Gyantse onwards the country, in a sense, comes under the special category of land forbidden to foreigners. Letters reach Lhasa from Gyantse in 2½ days, the distance intervening being 147 miles.

Gobshi which means "the Four Gate", is a village with some 50 houses. It is 15 miles from Gyantse. Then comes Ralung, 19 miles away from Gobshi. Here is a comfortable rest-house.

The next stages are Dzara and Nagar-tse. The journey is tiresome to the last degree as not only much steep grounds have to be covered, but it also involves crossing half-frozen stream beds at frequent intervals. Many yaks are to be seen on the way grazing on ground which does not seem to be very much inviting. At a place the track skirts a glacier. Then is reached the Karo La, a pass having an altitude of 16,600 feet, being the highest elevation that is encountered on the way from Yatung to Lhasa. It may be noted that this altitude is almost equal to that of the Rongbuk monastery on the way to Mount Everest as already mentioned elsewhere in this book.

Nagartse is situated on the west shore of the famous Scorpion Lake, the Yamdrok Tso, about which something has already been said in Part I of the book. This lake is about 50 miles long and almost as wide. It is not so far known whether any other lake in the world has mountains rising aloft on an island of a lake. As a matter of fact this is not an island but a peninsula which is 20 miles long and is joined by an isthmus near Samding. This peninsula itself contains quite a big lake.

Nagartse is on a fertile plain tract of land engirdled with swamp and grass and lies at an elevation of 14,100 feet. Wild geese (*ngang-pa*) and long-billed cranes (*tung-tung*) are quite abundant in this part of Tibet. To the west of this lake is to be seen a village of some 200 houses. About this Sarat Chandra writes: "We obtained enough of yak-milk, eggs, butter, and flour, and all at a comparatively low price."

The next trip to Palde Dzong (14,200 feet) is interesting. It is 16 miles from Nangar-tse. One has to pass by the eastern coast of the lake, Yamdrok Tso, and

after traversing a distance of 9 miles arrives at the base of a mountain called Khamba La Rhi. It has to be ascended by a steep and tortuous track till the Khamba pass is reached. The descent therefrom is great and arduous. By covering a distance of 5 miles one descends to the valley of the Upper Brahmaputra, the Yaru Tsan-po, or simply the Tsan-po, the valley being 1,100 feet below the pass. When nearing the village will be seen wild roses growing in profusion. Here is a circuit house which overlooks the Tsan-po flowing placidly but swiftly some 300 feet below this spot. On the way leading down to the valley the hill-side is aglow with a white-washed monastery called Palchenchhu-wo-ri, wherefrom is visible in the distance a bridge spanning the Tsan-po. It is a chain bridge. Two massive rusty chains about 4 feet apart run from one bank of the river to the other, their extremities being fastened to huge logs of wood fixed in the masonry of two huge pyramid-like structures. Planks are tied to loops of yak-hair ropes at very short intervals, and once used to stand in good stead in matters relating to traffic and transport. The height of the bridge from the water-surface varies from 70 feet in the extremities to 50 feet in the middle of this suspension bridge.

The fixing of such unwieldy, long, and massive chains to the masonry at either bank of the river some 500 years ago is indeed an engineering feat of no mean order. The bridge has been in a dilapidated condition ever since 1880 or so, from which time onwards it had been discarded. People now have taken to ferry (*tru-kha*) by means of both wooden and yak-hide boats. Wooden boats (*Sing-gi*) can carry some 50 persons, but they are usually meant for carrying animals, such as, ponies, cattle, and sheep. The hide-boats (*ko-a*) are much smaller as has already been described under TIBET.

About the ferry over the Tsan-po at this place Sarat Chandra writes: "The waves were furious, yet the hide-

boats steered with wonderful agility. * * * We were a dozen in one of them like a shallow wooden box 20 feet or more in length and 8 feet broad, the planks joined by nails. Indeed, Tibetans seem perfectly ignorant of boat-making. * * * One of the crew baled out the water accumulating from the numerous leaks by means of a hide-scoop. We paid the captain at the rate of one *tanka* (6 annas) for each pony and two annas for each man."

On crossing the Tsanpo, Chaksam Chh'ori is reached, but usually one does not halt there but proceeds further for half a mile and rest at Dzimkhar (11,290 feet) or may proceed to Chhusul, a village a little further down the course of the Tsan-po. This village can be easily recognized by its ruined fort standing on a craggy ridge overlooking the Tsan-po. Beyond will be seen the river Kyi-chu (River of Happiness) that flows past Lhasa. Here it flows across a marshy tract.

The landscape here betrays the characteristic Tibetan desolation. Bushes and trees growing here and there, sand-heaps formed by the sweeping wind and lying near about the Tsan-po, hamlets engirdled by willows and poplars and perched on mounds amid the marshy tracts are some of the distinguishing features of this almost unique spectacle. One feels as if one has left behind the inhospitable regions of Tibet, and that the transition holds out prospects. Somewhere near the great river is Tsha-bu-nang where Manning and Nain-singh halted after crossing the Tsan-po. The latter had been here in 1866.

The last stage before reaching Lhasa is Nethang, 22 miles away from Dzim-khar, and for that matter, the same distance apart from the Tsan-po. It is a sacred place, for here died Atish Dipankar, a Buddhist missionary and a saint who came from India to preach the real doctrines of Lord Buddha in Tibet.

TIBET

Four miles away from Nethang the track leads to a gravelly plain strewn with stones, boulders, and rocks. Then appears the large village, Toilung, with a stone bridge 180 feet in length. This is built upon wooden piles and, in places on stone piers. The bridge spans the Thi-chu, an affluent of the Kyi-chu. Lastly is reached the famous Drepung monastery holding some ten thousand monks. A quarter mile from Drepung is the temple of Nethang where dwells the State Oracle who is consulted on all important matter and whose hints and verdicts go a great way towards the selection of each successive Dalai Lama.

From a distance of 14 miles after leaving Nethang a traveller can from a particular point of vantage catch a glimpse of Potala, the palace of the Dalai Lama, but when Lhasa is within a distance of four miles, Potala becomes clearly visible—the first sight after having undergone untold hardship of journey of this superb edifice would be a revelation. Sarat Chandra writes: "It was indeed a superb sight, the like of which I never beheld in India."

Lastly is reached the mystic city of Tibet marked by quite a number of water courses on marshy tracts, many of which can be crossed by riding. Long grasses add to the beauty of Lhasa meadows, along which meander streamlets like so many silver ribbons.

It is possibly evening when a traveller, fatigued and weather-beaten to the last degree, approaches Lhasa; and in the lull of Nature is heard from a distance the sonorous orchestra of drums and flutes that echo clearly and sweetly all around the stream-insected land of the lamas, wrapped in an atmosphere of mystery.

TIBETANS

The vast plateau of Tibet has been shared in ever competitive number by the lamas (monks), nomads,

brigands, tradesmen, shepherds, and cultivators. It is not only a monk-led country, but a country of monks where one man out of every four is a recluse. Boundless area of undulating tableland, sternly inhospitable in character, and weather-beaten to the last degree, where life is one of the hardest struggle imaginable naturally suggests a nomadic state. And, Tibet is to a considerable extent frequented by nomads who, as a rule, tend cattle and sometimes play the role of brigands.

Wheat, rice, ghur (sweet paste), and sugar are bartered in large quantities in exchange of Tibetan borax, salt, and, in particular, wool of sheep and yak, and, last but not least, musk. Interchange of these products keep life vibrating in this barren land, where life is as much "a pendulum betwixt smiles and tears" as it is elsewhere. Glamour of life is there; human being is human being everywhere, but Tibet and Tibetans have a seal of some strangeness and queerness hardly met with elsewhere in the globe. Both kissing and winking the glad eye are things unknown in Tibet. But, nevertheless, the combined effect of cold and altitude cannot mar the prospect of love. Even a Dalai Lama is seen flying swift on the downy pinions of tender passion.

Two stanzas are quoted from a love-poem written by the sixth Dalai Lama, Tsang-yang Gyatso, towards the end of the seventh century. These are from the English rendering of the poem by Sir Charles Bell.

My heart's far off: the nights pass by
 In sleeplessness and strife;
 E'en day brings not my heart's desire.
 For lifeless is my life.

It is not far off that I shall roam,
 Lend me your wings, white crane:
 I go no further than Li-tang,
 And thence return again.

Severe cold of the high tableland, cutting icy-cold, ferocious wind which sweeps out the thin warm layer of air that surrounds the body, thereby making one feel as if one is uncovered from head to foot, and, last but not least, abominably strong ultra-violet rays of the sun—all conspire to play havoc with Tibetan health and complexion which latter can hardly be preserved. Ladies of the Tibetan aristocracy, therefore, do not leave their houses much, and, when they do so, they wrap themselves up heavily, and are very particular about their complexion. When attending ceremonies, which they are very fond of, they very much delight in display of jewellery, gorgeous head-dresses, and precious stones, as also their costly Chinese silks. It is on such occasions that they throw off all their wrappings, no matter whether the wind is howling outside, or it is the early ice-clad winter morning which predisposes cosiness. The complexions of these ladies are indeed very well-preserved. They seem to have snatched the hue and glow that kiss the snowy summits of the Himalaya in the fleeting few moments of the rosy dawn.

Whereas in other parts of the world the number of females exceeds that of the males, in Tibet it is just the reverse. It has been written by Savage Landor: "To an average of fifteen male children who are born and live in Tibet, only one female child is healthy enough to survive." He further adds: "First the food diet of the parents, which certainly has marked effect on the production of one sex more than another; secondly, the greater mortality among the weaker female children."

This shortage in the production of female children has led to the practice of polyandry, especially in the Kham districts of Tibet and in the Gya-de tribes in eastern Tibet wherefrom it has progressed to other parts of the country.

On divorce, the husband takes the male offspring, whereas the daughters then belong to their mother.

The husband is made to contribute to the upkeep of the daughters.

Relationship established through marriage in Tibet has something romantic about it. Landor writes in his *In the Forbidden Land*: "A Tibetan girl on marrying does not enter into a nuptial tie with an individual but with all his family, in the following somewhat complicated manner. If an eldest son marries an eldest sister, all the sisters of the bride become his wives. Should he, however, begin by marrying his second sister, then only the sisters from the second down will be his property. If the third, all from the third, and so on. At the same time, when the bridegrooms have brothers, they are all regarded as their brothers' wives' husbands, and these one and all cohabit with her, as well as with her sisters if he has any."

Landor adds: "The system is not simple and certainly not very eddifying, and were it not for the odd *savoir faire* of the Tibetan woman, it would lead to endless jealousies and unpleasantness; owing, however, largely, no doubt, to the absolute lack of honour or decency in Tibetan males and females, the arrangement seems to work satisfactorily as any other kind of marriage." Landor further notes: "I asked what would happen in case a man marries a second sister, and so acquiring marital rights over all her younger sisters, if another came and married her eldest sister, would all the brides of the first man become the brides of the second? No, they would not, and the second man would have to be satisfied with only one wife. However, if the second sister were left a widow, and her husband had no brothers, then she would become the property of her eldest sister's husband, and with her, all the other sisters."

When a bride has several brothers, the method of participation in conjugal congress lies in despatches made by the bride of those husbands not required at

the moment "on different errands in every direction, to look after yaks or sheep, or to trade," only one remaining in the house. Claims on children are made by rotation commencing from the first husband.

About the lamas Landor remarks: "The lamas swear to celibacy when they enter a lamasery; but they do not always keep these vows, and they are besides addicted to the most disgusting of all vices in its very worst forms, which accounts for the repulsive appearance of the far-gone depravity so common among the middle-aged lamas."

As regards the nuns Landor observes: "In Tibet, as in other Buddhist countries there are nunneries besides lamaseries. The nuns, unattractive in themselves mostly, and looked down upon, shave their heads and practise witchcraft and magic, just as the lamas do. In some of these nunneries strict *clansura* is enforced, but in most of them the lamas are allowed free access, with the usual result that the nuns become the concubines of the Lamas. Even apart from this, the women of the nunneries are quite as immoral as their brethren of the lamaseries, and at their best they are but a low type of humanity."

But again, undoubtedly, there are lamas and lamas. Landor once enquired of a high lama as to what are the evil qualities to be mostly avoided. The answer was: "Luxury, pride, and envy." We shall deal with the subject relating to Lama and Lamaism later on.

The Tibetans are fiercely jealous of every intruder. And as to Lamas, McGovern notes: "It is the monks who are fiercest in hatred of outsiders." Even when one is victorious in entering Lhasa, they insist on immediate return. This hatred for intruders whom they call as foreign devils is ingrained in their very character. They have never seen other peoples' countries and never care to see them, and, naturally, they are devoured by desire to remain in splendid isolation.

That is why they cannot tolerate any intrusion, and this is more so in the case of lamas who are afraid lest foreign intrusion may lead to their losing hold on the illiterate folk of the land on whose income and production they and their agents live and prosper.

About the Tibetan monks Sven Hedin writes: "These pious men are the parasites* of Tibet, living at the expense of the working population. And yet they are endured and treated by everyone with the greatest consideration and respect. . . . Scarcely any other land is so completely under the thumb of the priests as Tibet. And while the people toil, the monks gather around their tea-pots and bowls of *tsamba* at the summons of the conch." It may be interesting to note that as a rule lamas in their monasteries swallow up (for they hardly drink tea as other people do) in one breath, so to say, a cup of tea which is offered to them at a regular interval of one or even half an hour or so.

The desires and aversions to food amongst the Tibetans are indeed very peculiar. Milk which is universally relished and is extolled as a high class diet is regarded by the Tibetans as something which is no better than urine. Tibetan repugnance to milk is more than

* In this connection I am tempted to observe that while some of the lamas may not be quite up to the mark and do not come in the category of monks entitled by virtue of their religious practices to live upon the offerings of their brethren, they are at least not like those prowling monks of the plains of Hindusthan with their fascinating saffron robes and imposing turbans who are adepts in the art of spreading net not only on the eagle (gold), but also on the nymphs. They are the so-called aristocratic monks who assume the character of some Indian *yogi* of continental reputation, and designate themselves as *Swamijis* in contradistinction to *Sadhujis*, as the latter hackneyed appellation meaning saintly men is not appealing to their refined taste and character, they being the lords of the human race, for what else can *Swamiji* mean! They naturally trace their supremacy back to their divine heritage which they put down to their special aptitude in identifying themselves with the Over-Soul, for they foster the theory that man is God, the moment one can realize one's divine nature. Fortunately, such artful protagonists, who from time to time invade domestic houses under the mask of religion, are not met with in Tibet. The penning of these words has pained me immeasurably, but I had to yield to the dictates of my conscience.

counteracted by their conflicting fondness for butter, which is abominably rancid and repulsive to the last degree. There is, indeed, no accounting for taste. In this connection Landor writes: "A Chinese gentleman considers an egg which is literally black with age a peculiar delicacy, but until we had rid ourselves of our taste for game and cheese which are more than "high", we shall hardly be in a position to criticize oriental preferences."

Barley, wheat, dried flesh, butter are the most important items which enter into Tibetan dietary. Rice, peas, and vegetables are hardly available, and are a luxury.

Their signs of salutation and surrender would be decidedly revolting to perhaps all the people of the rest of the world. They salute by protruding their tongues, while as a sign of surrender they clench their fists and elevate the thumbs.

The Tibetans are adept in the art of poisoning. McGovern writes: "Poisoning has been made into an accomplished art in Tibet, and is very frequently employed by the Tibetans. Such poisons are completely unknown in European toxicology."

There are people in Tibet who are noble and magnanimous. Had it been otherwise, it would not have been possible for Sarat Chandra to learn their language from a lama of a high order and to smuggle himself into Lhasa.

Landor writes: "It must not be argued that because the officials of Tibet—the Lamas particularly—show intense cruelty, especially to foreigners, everybody in Tibet is to be cruel. On the contrary, there are many folks in Tibet who possess generous hearts. The people are charitable to a degree, even the poorest sharing what little they have with their strangers poorer than themselves. During my captivity in Tibet, on my first expedition, on many occasions individual Tibetans

showed sympathy and consideration, when, had it been discovered, it would have cost them their heads."

Tibetans are artists and architects of no mean order. The palace of the Pope-king of Tibet and the fortress at Shekar-dzong situated on a high sharp-pointed mountain can well be reckoned as wonders of the world. The very photograph of Shekar-dzong in *Mount Everest: The Reconnaissance, 1921* has something entrancing about it. Professor Roerich writes: "Another ancient place: Shekar-dzong. When the Tibetans were bold eagles, they were not afraid of soaring up to the steep rocks to mount their stronghold-sanctuaries upon the sharp promontories. There is a wealth of decoration on towers, passages and temples." It is indeed a precarious engineering feat. Ruttledge writes: "It seemed as if it might come crushing down at any moment."

THE DALAI AND THE TASHI LAMA

Lamaism had its birth in Tibet in the eighth century when Padma Sambhava preached what may be called as Tantric Buddhism which delights in occultism, demonology, and other cultures in black and mystic arts. In the fourteenth century there rose up in arms the Luther of Tibet who introduced real Buddhism in that country in 1390 A.D. He was Tson-kha-pa, born in 1358 A.D., about whom something has been said elsewhere in this book. By 1410 three huge monasteries accommodating some 30,000 monks had been built. His sect is called the Yellow Hats. Tson-kha-pa's successor was his nephew, Ge-dun-dup (Ganden Truppa) who founded the famous monastery of Tashi-lunpo, which eventually became the residence of the Tashi Lamas. By Tashi Lama is meant the second Grand Lama of the Yellow Sect. After Ganden's death in 1474, his spirit was held to have passed into a child who was born two years later. It was during this period that

Mirza Haidar, a cousin of Babar, attempted to conquer Tibet which he entered through Ladak.

The next incarnation of the Head of the Yellow Sect was Sonam Gyatso, who spread the religion of Tson-kha-pa not only in Tibet, but also in many parts of Mongolia and received the title of *Dali Lama Vajradhara*, "The Ocean of Wisdom; the Holder of the Thunderbolt." It is extremely astonishing how that pure Sanskrit word, *Vajradhara*, crept into the Mongolian title.

The system of such reincarnation readily came into vogue and each subsequent reincarnating Head Lama was known as a Dalai Lama.

The fifth in succession or, in other words, the fifth Grand Lama of Tashi-lunpo, was Lob-sang Gyatso, a son of a poor man at Chung-gye, two days' march away to the south-east of Lhasa. This fifth Grand Lama of Tashi-lunpo was the first to receive the title of Dalai. He secured the temporal power by inciting the Mongols to invade Tibet and subdue the Red Hats. The Mongols did as he desired, and in 1641 he was declared to be the priest-king of Tibet. Although he was a most unscrupulous ruler, he is known as the "Greath Fifth", while the others are referred to merely by their serial number.

Candler writes: "Since the assumption of temporal power by the fifth Grand Lama in the middle of the seventeenth century, the whole history of Tibetan hierarchy has been a record of bloodshed and intrigue." A full history of such blood-curdling events is to be found in the book, *An Account of Tibet*, by Ippolito Desideri of Pistoria who was the first European to traverse the high valley of the Tsan-po across a long, long way almost through the entire extension of Tibet. While at Lhasa, which he reached in 1715, he was an eye-witness to the most dramatic and lamentable incidents that unrolled themselves in a series of weird films

undoubtedly unparalleled in the history of the world in respect of cold-blooded murder, general massacre and plots upon plots, heinous to the extreme degree on the one hand, and most ingeniously laid on the other, so much so, that perchance by their side the world's best film productions would sink into insignificance both in scenic and stratagic effect.

This fifth Dalai Lama established his claim to Avalokitesvara (the God of Mercy). This he did by tampering with the Buddhist history and canons. His old tutor was made Tashi Lama or the Grand Lama of Tashi-lunpo and was considered to be an incarnation of *Amitabha* (*Chen-re-zi* in Tibetan), meaning "Boundless Light". But as *Amitabha* is on a higher spiritual level, it follows that the Tashi Lama is senior to Dalai Lama in spiritual affairs. This is, as a matter of fact, the belief of most of the Tibetans, particularly, of those who belong to the Shigatse district (*i.e.*, Tashi-lunpo) of Tibet. But as Dalai Lama lives at Lhasa, the religious and the political capital of Tibet, he is regarded as both religious and political head—the Priest-King of Tibet. It has been well remarked by Spencer Chapman that the Dalai Lama is the active and the Tashi Lama, the passive element of the Godhead.

Having in his clutches the temporal sovereignty of Tibet, Lobsang started to build the Potala Palace on the rocky eminence where lay the early edifice of the king, Song-tsen Gampo. Lobsang died in 1680 A.D. The Potala was completed a few years after his death.

About this Potala Candler writes: "The Potala towers superbly. Its golden roofs, shining in the sun like tongues of fire, are a landmark for miles, and must inspire awe and veneration in the hearts of pilgrims coming from the distant parts of Tibet, Kashmir, and Mongolia to visit the sacred city that Buddha has blessed."

McGovern writes: "Though we had seen the rear of the palace many miles back, this sudden appearance

of the main building was most impressive, and I halted almost dumbfounded by its splendour. It is a building wrought partly in stone and partly in sun-dried and white-washed brick. Nine hundred feet in length and more than 7 feet higher than the golden cross of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, it possesses a simplicity but stateliness of style that cannot but impress even the most sophisticated. The upper central part of the building was red, the remainder white."

About the Potala, the palace of the Fifth Dalai Lama and his successors, Chapman writes in his *Lhasa, the Holy City*: "Certainly the Potala is one of the most astonishing buildings in the world, whether it is seen from afar perched on the summit of the eminence which rises from the level plain of Lhasa, with the sun striking flame from the golden pavillions of its roofs, or, whether riding out before dawn, you see the moonlight thrown back with unearthly brilliance from the white-washed wall of the immense southern face.

"From the other view-points it leans back unduly; it is stupendous, awe-inspiring, but not in equilibrium. Buildings in other countries may challenge comparison with the Potala, but to my mind no edifice, so perfect in itself, is placed in such incomparable surroundings."

He further adds: The Potala contains "accumulated wealth of centuries, golden images, exquisite gems and jewellery. No man knows the extent of this treasure-house of the Dalai Lama."

Such is the Potala, the Palace of the Pope-King of Tibet, an eight-storied edifice, a glory of Asia, standing on the highest table-land intersected with glacier-fed streamlets meandering through lovely meadows all around. The Potala indeed lends to its heritor an additional quota of charm and dignity that could hardly have been acquired otherwise.

The Sixth Dalai Lama, an incarnated successor of the Great Fifth, was that Tsang-yang Gyatso, we have

already referred to, that young man of a poetic turn of mind who led a life of pleasure and love-making. He was executed by the Chinese on account of his profligacy.

Later on, most of the Dalai Lamas (at least the ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth) were found to have died prematurely. It is believed that they were assassinated by their Regents and the Ambans. They had the opportunity of enjoying eleven, twenty-three, seventeen, and twenty summers respectively.

The most prominent of these Dalai Lamas, and quite a historical figure was the thirteenth Dalai Lama who was born in 1876 just one year after the death of his predecessor, and was brought to Lhasa from his mother at the age of three years when he was identified. His Holiness died in 1933. His death was enquired into by the Cabinet Ministers, for there was some cause of suspicion that he had been poisoned. Shortly before his death he was given some medicine by the State Oracle at Netchung.

The Dalai Lama is regarded as a Bodhisatva, that is, an *arhat* or an adept who has earned for himself the right to Nirvana (salvation), but deems it worth while to be reborn for the spiritual good of the humanity at large.

Three or four years after a Dalai Lama has ceased to manifest himself in the physical world, that is to say, after his death, the Tashi Lama and the prominent Lamas of the three great monasteries of Sera, Ganden, and Drepung, the State Oracle at Netchung and the Oracle at Sam-ye decide as to the particular tract of country in which he will reincarnate. The Oracles go so far as to predict the details of the house in which the new Dalai Lama will be born, giving at the same time many hints as to his parents. Being guided by such hints, as a rule, three or four young boys are found out. The bell, the thunderbolt, and other religious accessories of the departed Dalai Lama mixed up with quite a number

of similar other articles are placed before these candidates for Dalaiship. I have been told by the Head Lama of the Ghoom Monastery that the reincarnated Dalai Lama, who must be one of these few boys, will not fail to recognize and pick up the things that belonged to him in his past life, thereby demonstrating his identity.

Captain C. G. Rawling, led by Major W. F. O'Connor as the representative of the Indian Government paid a state visit to the Tashi Lama at Shigatse in 1905, when the Dalai Lama had fled to Mongolia and for that reason the former was at the helm of religious affairs in Tibet. About Tashi Lama he writes: "He is a young man twenty-three years of age, exceptionally fair in complexion, with high cheek bones and finely chiselled features, bespeaking the Mongolian race and aristocratic lineage. His voice is low and gentle, and when speaking a perpetual smile plays about his face. The hands are extremely white, and the fingers long and thin. He looks healthy but not robust, for the life of seclusion he leads is not such as would give vigorous health to anyone—gentleness, goodness, and bland innocence of the ways of the world being the chief characteristics. The otherwise perfect lines are a little marred by slightly prominent teeth and a rather weak jaw."

In appreciation of the Tashi Lama Sir Charles Bell writes these very depictive words: "Truly the Tashi Lama has a very wonderful personality. Somewhat short in stature, with a fair and healthy complexion, the smile with which he regards you is touched with the quiet saintliness of one who prays and works for all mankind, but it is at the same time the smile of a friend who take a personal and sympathetic interest in your own concerns. It is not surprising that he should be loved by his people. It is good that there is such a man in Tibet; it is good that there are such men in the world."

What Sven Hedin, that prince of the Himalayan exploration, has written about Tashi Lama is charmingly

graphic. Armed with pen and brushes, Sven Hedin had assailed Tashi-lunpo, and here is his trophy.

“His complexion is fair, slightly inclining to yellow; he is somewhat below the middle height, is well proportioned, looks healthy, and at his twenty-fifth year, lately completed, has every prospect of attaining a good old age. In his small, soft, delicate hands he holds a rosary of red beads. ** **

“Wonderful, never-to-be-forgotten Tashi Lama! Never has any man made so deep and ineffaceable impression on me. Not as a divinity in human form, but as a man, who in goodness of heart, innocence, and purity approaches as near as possible to perfection. I shall never forget his expressions: it is displayed in unbounded kindness, humility, philanthropy; and I have never seen such a smile, a mouth so delicately formed, so noble a countenance. His smile never left him: he smiled like a sleeper dreaming of something beautiful and desirable, and whenever our eyes met, his smile grew broader, and he nodded kindly and amiably, as much as to say: “Trust in my friendship implicitly, for my intentions are good towards all men.

“** ** The Tibetans believe that he knows not only what is and has been, but also all that is to come. Can he be Amitabha himself? This much is certain, that he is a very extra-ordinary man, a singular, unique, and incomparable man.

“** ** I left the Labrang, his cloister palace, intoxicated and bewitched by his personality. ** **”

When all has been quoted from Sven Hedin's and others' appreciation of the Tashi Lama in question, one has to revert to that Swedish traveller and quote the following words, thereby giving a finishing touch to the picture so far drawn of the Sixth Tashi Lama whose name is Tubden Choki Nima Geleg Namgyal. Hedin writes: “** ** he was one of those rare, refined, and noble personalities who make other people feel that

their lives are fuller and more precious. Yes, the memory of the Tashi Lama will cleave to me as long as I live. His friendship is sincere, his shield is spotless and bright, he seeks for the truth honestly and humbly, and knows that by a virtuous and conscientious life he renders himself a worthy temple for the soul of the mighty Amitabha."

I have heard of the supernatural powers of that Tashi Lama whom Sven Hedin, Major O'Connor, Rawling, Wood, and Bailey had the unique opportunity of meeting in his monastery at Tashi-lunpo. While once asked to show some of his occult powers, Tashi Lama smiled, and, all on a sudden disappeared from a throng, only to reappear in the same spot as miraculously as he had disappeared.

Here I am tempted to quote a few lines from Chapman. But before I do so, a few preliminary words by way of introduction is needed.

In 1774 Warren Hastings had deputed Bogle as ambassador to the third Tashi Lama, with the view of obtaining some information of the closed and forbidden land, and, if possible, to open up friendly commercial relation. Again in 1783 he had sent Turner to the fourth Tashi Lama. After the 1904 Military Mission to Lasha had accomplished what was entrusted to it, Captain (Now Sir Frederick) O'Connor who played the role of the Chief Interpreter to the Mission was stationed at Gyantse as the first British Trade Agen in Tibet. Sven Hedin paid a visit to the Tashi Lama three years later.

Now the following quotations from Chapman will be easily intelligible. "As O'Connor was the first European ever to visit him he was somewhat surprised when His Serenity said what a pleasure it was for him to renew his previous friendship with British Officers. O'Connor suddenly realized that he was referring to the reception afforded more than a hundred and thirty years

previously to the two officers sent up by Warren Hastings. The Tashi Lama was indentifying himself with one of his previous incarnations."

It would be interesting to note that the Tashi Lama referred to in the foregoing paragraphs, living in a cloistered life in strange aloofness and given up to prayer and meditation should have gone so far as to descend from the cold and giddy altitudes of the Tibetan plateau to the plains of sweltering heat in 1905. Accompanied by 300 monks His Serenity left for India with Captain O'Connor. He left Tibet in a palanquin through a route lined for a great distance by villagers who hailed from far off places. It is said that these people who are seldom moved to tears wept with emotion as the Head of their Church passed by. This unprecedented trip to India was in response to an invitation from the Government of India to meet their Royal Highnesses the Prince and the Princess of Wales (late King George V and Queen Mary).

Chapman writes: "Although the Tashi Lama had never before spoken to any woman except his mother, he conversed for sometime with their Royal Highnesses and impressed everybody by his quiet spiritual voices and charming natural manners; ** **"

When Samuel Turner entered Tibet through the Buxa Bhutan route in 1783, Tashi Lama was then a princely child of only eighteen summers. Turner saw him seated on a throne with his father standing on his left hand. Although he could not speak he could understand one saying something to him. His predecessor visited Peking where he died of small-pox. Turner said that the Governor General of India on receiving news of his decease in China was overwhelmed with grief, and now that he had made his appearance once again the British nation was elated with joy. What subsequently transpired should better be noted from the lines of Holdich. "The infant looked steadily at the British

envoy with the appearance of much attention, and nodded with repeated but slow motions of the head as though he understood every word. He was one of the handsomest children, Captain Turner had ever seen, ** **” We have embellished this book with a picture of this renowned Tashi Lama whose memory will be treasured up by lovers of works on Himalayan explorations, and, for that matter, of works bequeathed to them in particular by Sven Hedin, perhaps the most conspicuous luminary on the firmament of Himalayan expeditions so far conducted.

Now about the monastery of Tashi Lama which accommodates some 4,000 monks. This superb and colossal edifice was founded in 1445 A.D. by Ge-dun-dup, the nephew of Tson-kha-pa. Sven Hedin writes that volumes would be required to enter into details as to its intricate conglomeration of stone structures making provisions for all sorts of accommodation as to its complicated organization in spiritual and temporal affairs. He further notes that such a description could only be compiled after one has deeply studied Lamaism, and that such a study can be accomplished only by devoting a whole lifetime, for, Sven Hedin writes, “those who would penetrate deeply into the mysteries of Lamaism must gain a thorough knowledge of Buddhism and its relation to Brahminism and Hinduism, and understand the influence which Sivaism has exerted on the religion of the Tibetans, and must be familiar with the elements of the ancient Bön religion, and its fetichism and Shamanism, which have crept in and corrupted the Lamaistic form of Buddhism.” By the word, *Sivaism*, Hedin means *Trantrism* or mystic practices in medieval Hinduism. Shamanism refers to the mystic practices of the Tartar or Mongolian priests of the old Bön religion of Central Asia which deals with demonology. These adepts in black art are found mostly in Siberia and its immediate surrounding countries.

The grand library at Tashi-lunpo is called Kanjur-lhakang. It contains 108 volumes of the Kanjur. In all there are 320 volumes of Tibetan canonical works which, as found out by Csöma de Köros, represent a translation from the Sanskrit originals made in the ninth century.

DALAI LAMA'S FLIGHT TO THE THREE CORNERS OF ASIA

No one walks the face of the earth on whom fortune never frowns. Even the Dalai Lama (1876-1933), that Pope-King of Tibet reigning supreme in his gorgeous Potala walled in by mountain barriers, guarded on all sides by vast snow-besprinkled expanse of the highest plateau on earth stretching away for hundreds of miles on all sides, defended by atrocious cold and ferocious wind, had no escape from what was fore-ordained by cruel destiny. What an irony of fate that a pontiff of such an order in whom unites the suzerainty of such a vast territory where his right there was none to dispute, and who, is so uniquely placed in his spiritual city, should have to confront circumstances that threw him aside from his high position as a Pope, and made him fly for the security of his precious life to three distant corners of Asia—Mongolia, China, and lastly, India.

When all conciliatory measures failed to impress on His Holiness, and the British Mission of 1904 had to proceed to Lhasa and at last reached that holy city on August 4, 1904, it was found that the great pontiffical chair was vacant. Unprecedented state of affairs these.

When the members of the British Military Expedition of 1904 were approaching Lhasa, the Dalai Lama, then 28 years of age, fled to the north as fast as his horse could carry him. In due course he arrived at Urga, the capital of Mongolia, where he stayed for a year. His presence there was to a certain extent embarrassing to Bogdo Khan, Lama King of Mongolia.

After the British troops had been withdrawn, His Holiness started on his journey back to Tibet, presumably to Lhasa. It was then the autumn of 1905. In the early part of 1906 he arrived at the great mystic monastery of Kum-bum which will be dealt with later. In this monastery he resided for two years. It was now evident that the Dalai Lama had then no intention to return to Lhasa, as he had already gone far too east to Kum-bum leaving Lhasa behind. In the spring of the year 1908 he visited the famous monastery of Wut'ai Shan in Shansi Province of China where he remained for a short time. Herefrom he proceeded to Peking at the invitation of the Chinese Government.

On September 28, 1908 Dalai Lama reached Peking by train from Honam. He was lodged in the Yellow Temple which was once shared by his predecessor who visited China in the seventeenth century. After entering into some argument he was permitted to kneel down instead of prostrating himself on the ground before the Emperor and Empress Dowager. From the very beginning to the end under the pretence of showing him honour, his position as a vassal had all along been made to stand out in clearer definition. It had been the intention of the Chinese authorities to belittle him as much as possible.

On that unfortunate date, November 3, 1908, under an Imperial Decree, new honours and titles were conferred on the Dalai Lama who was then appointed as the Emperor's loyal and obedient representative. Directions for his conduct on his return to Lhasa were laid down. The word of command was given to the effect that the Dalai Lama was to address memorial to the Throne of China on all matters through the Amban, and with an attitude of due respect await the Imperial decision whatever it may be.

A few lines of the Imperial Decree of November 3,

1908 as translated from the Government Gazette by Eric Teichman are noted below

“His Holiness the Dalai Lama, having come to Peking for Audience, has to-day invoked blessings upon Us, and has given expression to his inmost feelings in a manner which merits Our esteem. An additional Title of Honour is hereby conferred upon him as a mark of exceptional distinction.”

“His Holiness already bears, as a mark of the Imperial favour of former times, *the Title of Great Good Self Existent Buddha*. We now confer upon him the additional title of Our *Loyal Submissive Vice-Regent*.”

All ideas of the ceremonies that were now to follow in commemoration of the Dalai Lama's visit to China had now eventually to be dropped by reason of sudden and unexpected deaths of the Emperor and the Empress of China.

Peking was certainly now not the place for the Dalai Lama to tarry any longer. On December 21, 1908 he left Peking and reached Sining-fu in the spring of 1909. From here he traversed the Koko-Nor region and at last arrived at Lhasa in November, 1909, after being self-exiled for five years.

It is rather very strange that Sir Charles Bell, the late British Political Representative in Tibet, Bhutan, and Sikkim in his authoritative work, *Tibet: Past and Present*, does not say anything about Dalai Lama's flight to China and Mongolia. Strenuous research for years enabled me at long last to dig out particulars as to what befell His Holiness when he withdrew himself from the holy city.

Early in 1910 Chinese troops made their appearance in Lhasa. Getting scent of their approach, the Dalai Lama this time deemed it worth while to fly to India, and arrived at Darjeeling on February 24, 1910, where he was accorded stately hospitality by the British Government with the understanding that he would have

nothing to do with any political affairs in course of his sojourn in India. Having failed to capture the Pope-King of Tibet, the Chinese Government issued an Imperial Proclamation on February 25, 1910, deposing the Dalai Lama, as they had done once soon after the British Military Expedition of 1904 had entered Lhasa. The grounds put forward by the Chinese in this connection was that the Dalai Lama was proud, extravagant, slothful, vicious, and oppressive towards the Tibetans.

The Dalai Lama remained in India for more than two years. The total cost of upkeep of His Holiness and his entourage was less than five thousand pounds—that is what Sir Charles Bell writes. His Holiness wrote to the Emperor of India for protection, and also to the Czar of Russia. The replies he received were something of an evasive character.

The year 1912 was a year when His Holiness's star was in the ascendant. Revolution in China brought about the collapse of the Chinese power in Tibet in 1912. In response to the clarion call of his country, the Dalai Lama penetrated Tibet in July 1912, where he was received with a warm welcome, and tarrying on the way for quite a considerable time on the banks of the Yamdrok-tso till all the Chinese troops had been removed he entered Lhasa triumphantly towards the end of the year. The Government of China now recognized him once more as the Head of the Lama Government in Tibet.

AN ARMED MISSION TO THE HIDDEN CITY

Tibet was not quite a strictly forbidden land during the last four centuries. Fear of the Europeans never haunted the minds of the Tibetans till they had the reason to suspect the intentions of the Britishers who deputed Sarat Chandra to explore not only their monasteries, but also their holy city. They were furious when they came to know how this foreign emissary smuggled

himself into and out of Tibet. Their suspicion reached its climax when the Chinese brought home to them that such intrusion had at its object the introduction of Christianity in their country. Designs upon their world-famous gold mines were also strongly suspected.

China also represented that invasion of their country by the Gurkhas towards the end of the eighteenth century took place at the instigation of the Britishers, and had they had not driven back the Gurkhas by coming to their assistance with a superior force, their country would have been subjugated by the Nepalese. She suggested, therefore, strict aloofness on matters relating to communications of all sorts with India. Tibet was advised to most jealously guard the passes against any incursion by white men.

In 1774 Warren Hastings deputed George Bogle as ambassador to the Third Tashi Lama to obtain information about the country, and also, if possible, to establish friendly commercial relations with the Tibetans. Once again in 1783 he sent Samuel Turner to the fourth Tashi Lama with similar objects in view. Although both of them were cordially received, a complete conciliatory understanding with Tibet was frustrated by reason of arrogant and obstinate attitude assumed by the Regent and the Chinese Agents at Lhasa.

In 1785 Warren Hastings was recalled. His successor, Lord Cornwallis, was unmindful in the matter and allowed the subject to lie on the table. In 1792 Nepal declared war against Tibet. How it came to an end has already been noted. In 1885 Colman Macaulay, a Secretary to the Government of Bengal, got Chinese endorsement to the conduction of a Commercial Mission to Lhasa. In 1886 Lord Dufferin ratified the Mission. The Mission advanced into Sikkim. Mr. Macaulay met Tibetan officers of low grade on the Sikkim-Tibet frontier. As they did not represent the Tibetan Government, the position of Macaulay proved not very secure;

consent of the Government was deemed as essential. The Government now recalled the Mission.

This withdrawal of the Mission was attributed to weakness. Candler observes: "This display of weakness incited the Tibetans to such a pitch of vanity and insolence that they invaded our territory and established a military post at Lingtu only seventy miles from Darjeeling." Lingtu (12, 617') is 23 miles and just two or three days' march away from Rhenock, lying on the Sikkim-British frontier.

Such military occupation of Lingtu in the protected state of Sikkim could not certainly be overlooked by the British Government. They referred the matter several times to the Chinese Government without achieving any result. Threats administered to the Tibetans proved inoperative. Tibetans would not move an inch from their firm hold for more than a year on that high cliff, Lingtu.

In March 1888 General Graham attacked the fort which was declared invincible by the Ne-chung Oracle at Lhasa. The Tibetans were defeated in three different engagements; were driven from their position and pursued as far as the frontier at Chumbi some twenty miles off from Lingtu. In order to avoid incurring displeasure of the Chinese, the British troops were recalled without delay to Gnatong lying within the territory of Sikkim.

However, the demonstration of power by the British Expedition, scant though it was, had its far-reaching consequences. It sounded the alarm and put the Chinese on their guard. It also awakened them to a sense of responsibility, and brought the Chinese Amban to India. But full one year rolled by in the process of fruitless negotiation. The Chinese were then informed that the British Government had preferred to close all matters under discussion as far as they related to China. Such dropping of the incidents in question was interpreted

pessimistically to forebode evil. It raised apprehensions; they grew anxious to resume negotiation. The Sikkim Convention was then concluded in 1890 between Great Britain and China. Tibet took no part in the negotiations, Great Britain dealing with and taking China as the suzerain of Tibet.

This Convention recognized a British Protectorate over Sikkim, defined the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet, subscribed to a reciprocal understanding between the contracting parties (Tibet and Sikkim) to the effect that both the parties would prevent acts of aggression across the frontier.

Tibet remained as stern and inflexible in her mountain fastnesses as before and deemed the Convention as something having nothing to do with them, as they had been not a party to it. So, practically speaking, no treaty was concluded with Tibet. The Tibetans then proceeded to mutilate or overthrow the boundary pillars that were erected after the Convention, violate grazing rights, and erect guard-houses at Gyagong to the north-western corner of the territory of Sikkim wherefrom one day's march enables one to cross the Sebu pass to Tibet. Trade was obstructed. The situation grew embarrassing day by day. The supposed Chinese control over Tibet dwindled to the vanishing point. The Sikkim Convention now proved to be a dead letter.

In 1899 Lord Curzon, then Viceroy of India, armed with permission to directly settle affairs with the Tibetans, arranged to communicate with the Dalai Lama. He made Kazi U-gyen Gyatso, a man of rank, to the Dalai Lama suggesting that he should depute his representative to discuss questions as to trade and frontier. The reply he received was disheartening. Another letter of the Viceroy to the Dalai Lama despatched through the Governor of the Western Tibet was returned after six months. Lastly, Kazi U-gyen himself was deputed to Lhasa with another letter from the

Viceroy which His Holiness refused to receive and was subsequently brought back unopened. Teichman writes: "All attempts by the Authorities in India to open friendly relations with the Tibetan Government were frustrated, peaceful messengers were maltreated, and letters returned unopened."

Soon after this, the Dalai Lama in order to strengthen his position in Tibet wrote a letter and dispatched an Envoy to the Tsar of Russia. The Mission was a successful one, as it was warmly received.

The situation proved rather menacing to the British Government. And, at long last, Lord Curzon deemed it worth while to dispatch a mission to Tibet in 1903 with an armed escort in order to arrive at definite settlement regarding trade, frontier, and other questions. In June 1903 the thought was translated into action when a British Military Mission under the leadership of Colonel Younghusband was deputed to Kampa Dzong, an important town of Tibet, lying to the north of the Sikkim territory, some four days' journey away from Gyagong. As to the location of Gyagong refer to TSO LHAMO LAKE in Part III of the book. The Mission remained at Kampa Dzong from July to November with no good whatsoever. As a matter of fact, the Tibetan and the Chinese delegates after having entered into some fruitless discussions shut themselves up in the fortress of Kampa, and declined to have any intercourse with the members of the expedition, whether official or social. It came to the notice of the authorities that the Tibetans were mobilizing themselves and were determined to oppose them in cases they would endeavour to advance further. They believed themselves in no way inferior to the British troops and even went so far as to expect something from the intruders. The Commissioners of the Expedition were informed by Colonel Chao, a Chinese delegate, that the Tibetans were counting upon Russian assistance.

The Mission had to be recalled from Kampa Dzong and at the same time an Expedition to Gyantse was announced, for it was now clear that the Tibetans meant fighting and nothing short of that. The escort had to be made 2,500 strong. It was then decided that in case the Tibetan authorities would not come to terms with the Mission at Gyantse, the Mission would have to push on to Lhasa.

Colonel Younghusband crossed the Jelap Pass into Tibet on December 13, 1903. No opposition was forthcoming, and Phari Dzong was reached on the 20th. There was a procession of soldiers in one file extending for five miles. The Tibetans surrendered themselves without opening fires and there was no cause for a shot being fired. It has been remarked: "The fortress would hold the whole Tibetan army, with provisions for a year. It was evacuated the night before we reconnoitered the valley." The fort was found to be almost choked with dirt of ages. It has been written: "When Phari was first occupied, eighty coolies were employed a whole week clearing away refuse. Dirt and religion are inseparable in Tibet."

Thereafter the Mission crossed the Tang Pass in January 1904 and was now on the northern or the Tibetan side of the Great Himalayan Range of eternal snow. Beyond was the most inhospitable, intensely cold, and wind-swept plateau of Tuna at an elevation of 15,300 feet. There the Mission had to stay on for three months. Wintering at that ice-bound place could not be avoided, as any retrograde movement with the view of sojourning in Chumbi which is not regarded as Tibet proper would be misconstrued as an act of fear. It has been observed: "A more miserable place to winter in than Tuna cannot be imagined." Here temperature fell to 25°F below zero.

Tuna sadly boasts a few deserted houses. Colonel Younghusband utilized the halt at this abominably cold

place in cementing friendship with Bhutan. Even Tongsa Penlop himself, the ruler of Bhutan, accompanied the Mission to Lhasa, in order to play the role of a mediator between the Dalai Lama and the British Government.

Candler writes: "Had the Tibetans attacked us in January, they would have taken us at a great disadvantage. The bores of our rifles were jammed with frozen oil."

About an hour after leaving Tuna, messengers rode out of their camp to interview Colonel Younghusband. In an excited mood they chattered a good deal, "like a flock of frightened parrots". Many a time was heard the word, Yatung, uttered in what they said—they advised an honourable retreat to Yatung. With the retreat of a batch of mounted men, appeared in the scene another group of chattering Tibetans, and so on; it was like the unrolling of a long film

That snow-clad expanse of miserable Tuna was once privileged to witness the spreading of a rug on the ground to inaugurate the interview between Colonel Younghusband and the Lhasa Depon. And, according to the Tibetan custom, they had to sit on it. The Lhasa dignitary only repeated what the mounted messengers had already entreated and added that they would have a hard time if they advanced any further.

What Colonel Younghusband now said to Captain O'Connor is something very terse and to the point. "Tell him that we have been negotiating with Tibet for fifteen years; that I myself had been waiting for eight months to meet responsible representatives from Lhasa, and that the mission is now going on to Gyantse. Tell him that we have no wish to fight and that he would be well advised if he ordered his soldiers to retire. Should they remain blocking our path, I will ask General Macdonald to remove them." The Lhasa Depon said

that he had no desire to fight and would see that his men do not open fire.

The military escort moved onwards till a place called Guru was reached. It was a small pasturage intersected by a few streamlets. Here the two armies met and no body knew what was in store for them. The Tibetans were encircled. Strict order was given by the Britishers not to fire unless they were fired upon. The Tibetans were given to understand that if they would give up arms, they would be allowed to peacefully retrace their steps. Soon Guru turned into an unprecedented scene of jostling and wrestling for the possession of swords and matchlocks of the Tibetans. It was something ridiculous with an element of humour attached to it. Nobody could scent grim visaged war that was in the air.

All of a sudden the Tibetans attacked the British army consisting of Shiks and Gurkhas. Candler got a few wounds and had to be brought back to Darjeeling in a doolie. They attempted to assail General Macdonald and his escort. Probably the Lhasa General fired off his revolver first as a signal for a general attack. It might have been an act of a desperate man having no idea of what might ensue. At all events the Lhasa General was placed between horns of the dilemma, between the hammer and the anvil. To return to Lhasa with his army disarmed and disbanded without offering the least resistance by opening fire would have certainly meant decapitation, whereas firing with their not very efficient matchlocks in the teeth of improved guns and rifles of the Britishers meant disaster and defeat.

A dreadful fight ensued, and in the thick of it, both the parties were bewildered as to where the wind was blowing. Tibetan gallantry and dash were admirable.

What followed must be given in the words of Candler for some obvious reasons. "As my wounds were being dressed, I peered over the mound at the rout.

They were walking away! Why, in the name of all their Bodhisats and Munis, did they not run? * * * they were exposed to the devastating hail of bullets from Maxims and rifles, * * * Yet they walked! It was the most extraordinary procession I have ever seen. My friends have tried to explain the phenomenon as due to obstinacy or ignorance or Spartan contempt for life. But I think I have the solution. They were bewildered. The impossible had happened." He adds: "Prayers and charms, and mantras, and the holiest of their holy men, had failed them. * * * They walked with bowed heads as if they had been disillusioned in their gods."

Sven Hedin writes a very significant line in his *Trans-Himalaya*: "The Tibetans may be forgiven for beginning to doubt the infallibility of the Dalai Lama after the butchery at Guru and Tuna, though the priests were ready with plausible explanations of these events."

Candler writes that the Tibetan casualties were at least seven hundred. Yes, they were bewildered. But, why should the British army be bewildered as well when the Tibetans had been slowly retracing their steps? They had acknowledged defeat, their very gait betraying it. Well, then, what in the name of the Holy Christ, they had to be treated with merciless hail of bullets! We think, we have the solution too. They were intoxicated. The unwarrantable had happened.

The wounded Tibetans were brought to Tuna where a hospitable was opened in an abandoned dwelling house. Of 168 men who were admitted to the hospital only twenty died. As to the rest they were all sent to their houses on hired yaks after they had come round.

The peace delegates were of opinion that the Britishers had fired the first shot at Guru. In this connection it has been pointed out that if the Tibetans be given the benefit of doubt, the responsibility of keeping up the hostilities devolves on the Tibetans.

On April 7 it was found that the Tibetans had been occupying the village of Samando, 41 miles away from Tuna. British troops had orders not to fire. The Tibetans were asked to come out and discuss terms, but the enraged Tibetans opened fires most treacherously. The scouts on errands had to beat a hasty retreat and take shelter behind boulders. No casualties. Six Tibetans who were peeping from a roof with their heads appearing above the parapets were shot dead by the British troops. It has been observed that leaving aside what had transpired at Guru, the Samando affair is a positive proof of Tibetan intention to oppose their advance.

After advancing for a distance of some 17 miles they met a wall built across a valley near Kangma. It was occupied by some 1,000 men. Next morning the wall was evacuated. The Tibetans are adepts in the art of wall-building which is an instinct with them. They make it overnight and leave it the next morning. This is something perplexing.

They marched early to Naini where the battle continued whole day. What happened here is best described by Millington. "Most of the fights in Tibet involved not only street-fighting, but house-fighting, and this species of fun generally began immediately after a steep climb of several hundred feet. I can imagine few greater physical and moral trials in modern warfare, than that endured by the officers and men of ours, who while gasping for breath after a race up a steep slope in that rare air, penetrated in small parties first through narrow streets then into dingy court-yards, and lastly into byres and store-rooms and living rooms that were generally pitch-dark, not knowing from what hole or corner, with what murderous form of clumsy firearm they might not at any moment be fired upon by any unseen foe at close quarters."

On their way to Gyantse they had another fight with

the Tibetans stationed on a ridge some 2,000 feet above the valley. The hardy Gurkhas were despatched. They were fired upon, but none was shot. When after three hours' struggle in scrambling up hill-sides they almost reached the top, the Tibetans took to their heels. Thirty of them were shot down, and fifty-four men who had been hiding themselves in caves were made prisoners. On the summit seven men were found dead and four wounded. On the opposite side in a gorge another fight took place. This time the Shikhs advanced and drove them away, the Tibetans casualties numbering some one hundred. It was found that the prisoners were mostly peasants who had been compelled to fight the Britishers by the Lamas.

It has been observed: "Their matchlocks must have been as dangerous to their own marksmen as to their enemy; their artillery fire, harmless and erratic; their Lhasa-made rifles left no mark on our men."

At Gyantse which is 83 miles from Tuna and four marches away from it, a letter was received from the Amban stating that he would certainly reach Gyantse within next three weeks accompanied by competent and trustworthy Tibetan representatives. Nearly half of the troops now returned to Chumbi. Incidents at Gyantse were of varied nature. With extraordinary terseness Millington writes: "The ten days or so spent at Gyantse were occupied in fighting, in waiting, through periodical armistices, for the results of negotiations which came to nothing, in sight-seeing and in foraging for our present needs and for the advance to Lhasa."

Millington remarks that Gyantse plain is very rich. He noticed that the villagers were clever in hiding their stores of grains in walls, wall-painting betraying the area allotted to hidden stores. In a lofty room alone was discovered 8,000 maunds of barley bagged and bearing Tibetan official seal.

On the arrival of the Expedition, however, at

Gyantse, there was no trouble. Lamas surrendered at the mere asking. But after sometime troops from Lhasa, Shigatse, and in particular from the far off district of Kham, troops poured in. A prolonged and devastating fight took place. The Palkhor Chhoide monastery adjacent to the fort of Gyantse was cannonaded under most adverse circumstances. The Gurkhas crept up with great difficulty while stones were being hurled down. Twelve of them were killed. Lt. Gordon was killed by a shot which penetrated into his head. And at long last after a desperate fight the monks and soldiers deserted their holy shrine.

Meanwhile on May 3, Colonel Brander left Gyantse with his column of 400 rifles accompanied by other captains and their escorts. On the third day they reached the base of the pass which was then only 2 miles away. Captain Bethune was shot through the head and he succumbed. Their present enemies and their weapons seemed to be of a different order and type. The men appeared to be quite trained; they were using no longer their antiquated muzzle-loaders. Could it be that in most cases on previous occasions they had been firing blank cartridges?

A terrible fight under most deplorable and untoward circumstances is ahead. From the base of the Karo La pass to the pass itself the altitude ranges from a little less than that of Mont Blanc to just one thousand feet higher than that European giant, with the result that walking or running here is like advancing at an ordinary level with some one hundred pounds of load on one's back. But to the acclimatised Tibetans, this altitude had no effect. This highest barrier on the way to Tibet was being guarded by some 2,000 Tibetan troops who also built too long walls some 2,000 feet below the summit of the pass. Further reinforcement to Tibetan army was subsequently made by 500 men. It was, therefore, a struggle of only 400 against 2,500 men.

Candler writes: "The Gurkhas had accomplished a most difficult mountaineering feat under a heavy fire; they had turned the enemy out of their sangars, and after four hours' climbing they had scaled the heights everyone thought inaccessible." Millington writes that the Tibetans "began firing and kept up an intermittent cannonade for several hours." The British artillery fired a great many rounds, but it could not be ascertained as to whether they had any effect on the enemies. Millington writes: "It was apparent that the brunt of the fighting during this phase of the the action would fall upon the right party of Gurkhas, who now in the distance as they climbed steadily up the steep cliffs to our right front looked like a string of tiny ants."

In the long run the Tibetans fled away. Mounted infantry followed them "like terriers on the heels of a flock of cattle." There were three casualties in the British army, whereas 300 Tibetans were killed.

The Tibetans would have, however, crushed the whole Expedition if they had been just a little more clever and waited to see how the cat jumps. It was "a formidable device of the Tibetan warfare." "An artificial avalanche of rocks and stones is so cunningly contrived that the removal of one stone sends the whole engine of destruction thundering down the hill-side. Luckily the Tibetans did not wait for our main body, but loosened the machine on an advanced guard of mounted infantry, who were in extended order and able to make shelter behind rocks.

The Mission finally left Gyantse for Lhasa on July 14. Peace negotiations fell through. When Gyantse and Káro La fights had been so terrible who could foresee what was in store for the Expedition at Lhasa inhabited by over 40,000 lamas besides citizens. From Nagartse onwards they had to confront tedious delegates who all the time forbade them to advance any further. Colonel Younghusband was quite stern in his attitude. While

the Tibetan representatives placed in forefront their silly reason that in case they were allowed to proceed to Lhasa without opposition, they would be finished. Young-husband adduced similar grounds. "He, too, had orders from his King to go to Lhasa; if he faltered, *his* life also was at stake; decapitation would await him on his return. That was the impression he purposely gave them. It curtailed palaver."

After crossing high passes while gasping for breath at every step onwards, advancing amidst greatest odds, being sustained by Tibetan barley and meat that walked on all fours carrying provisions till it was killed, and, after having overflowed the villagers on the way principally with rupees en faced with the head of Queen Victoria which were more easily approved in a country where trade mostly goes on by barter than those with that of king Edward on grounds that the Queen's face stands for the genuine trade mark of the East India Company, and lastly, having fought all the time with cold and altitude under which latter food had to be coolly relished in their semi-boiled state for the simple reason that the boiling point of water could not be coaxed to rise above 60° to 70°F, the British Military Mission reached at last the outskirts of the hidden city on August 3, 1904. Here they camped.

A dismal and panic-stricken Lhasa stood a mile in front of the victors. The Pope-King had already deserted Lhasa. The lamas confined in their cloisters wore a sullen face. They were now like a ship without a rudder; their Dalai Lama was now conspicuous by his absence.

I do not know whether the Mission had now noticed from afar that mighty edifice of Dalai Lama spitting fire on them by protruding its crimson tongues all around—for why should the dome of that cathedral have been painted brilliantly scarlet!

And, what did they find! "We found the city squalid and filthy beyond description, undrained and unpaved.

Not a single house looked clean and cared for. The streets after rain are nothing but pools of stagnant water frequented by pigs and dogs, searching for refuse."

On that historic day, August 4, 1904, Colonel Young-husband entered Lhasa through the Pargo Kaling Gate. At the request of the Abbots, the Mission condescended to refrain from entering the monasteries on condition that the monks should supply them barley and other provisions which would be paid for at a liberal rate. What was promised was never supplied. Three messengers were deputed with a letter written to the effect that in case supplies were not forthcoming within an hour, the monastery would be raided. The lamas refused to accept the letter and hurled stones towards them.

An army of troops with guns and ammunitions was displayed nearly three quarters of a mile from the Drepung monastery. An hour glided by in vain. When military operations seemed imperative, a group of lamas appeared with a white flag carrying baskets of eggs and a red scarf as a token of compliments. They held out hopes by saying that if they would retire at once, they would endeavour to come to a decision as to the supplying of provisions to their camp on the following day. Candler depicts the Tibetan character in a way which can hardly be excelled. "The lamas are trained to wrangle and dispute and defer and vacillate. They seemed to think that speech was made only to evade conclusions."

Five minutes more and they would attack the monastery. In a critical moment issued forth a number of red-robed monks, each carrying a bag of grains. Crisis was thus averted.

Now about the settlement with the Tibetans. For a long time no responsible delegates could be traced. The Shapes held that any treaty made would result in their disgrace later on. For days together Tibetan authorities debated among themselves as to the procedure

to be adopted in dealing with the Britishers. Conclusion arrived at was that should the English prefer to retire, a treaty could be signed which would be binding on the Dalai Lama should he return. When the terms of the treaty were disclosed, the first thing they did was to turn the tables on the English in such a way that they were dumbfounded. As to indemnity that was to be paid to the Britishers, they contended that as they had invaded their country, exploited their land and ruined their monasteries, it was evidently incumbent on them that they, the Britishers, should bear the cost and not the Tibetans. Construction of roads could not be endorsed on the grounds that the hammering of the soil would infuriate their gods and bring on troubles over the heads of the people. The telegraph lines were also objected to on religious grounds.

A few words have already been written as to what had transpired in matters relating to the release of pro-Britishers under SARAT CHANDRA in part I of the book.

Two paragraphs from the address of Colonel Young-husband after the treaty had been signed in the Potala on August 7, 1904 are worth recording. Here is the address.

"We treat you well when you come to India. We do not take a single rupee in custom duties from your merchants. We allow any of you to travel and reside wherever you will in India. We preserve the ancient buildings of the Buddhist faith, and we expect that when we come to Tibet we shall be treated with no less consideration and respect than we show you in India."

"As the first token of peace I will ask General Macdonald to release all prisoners of war. I expect that you on your part will set at liberty all those who have been imprisoned on account of dealing with us."

On August 14, 1904 a proclamation was posted in the streets of Lhasa by the Amban to the effect that the Dalai Lama was deposed by the authority of the Chinese Emperor in view of his forsaking his people and

shaking off all responsibilities in times of impending national calamity.

Soon after treaty had been signed, largess was freely distributed to more than one thousand babes, each having its quota of a Tibetan tanka worth 5d.

The following lines of Candler have certain amount of pathos embedded in them. "I think the Tibetans were genuinely impressed with our humanity during this time, and when, on the eve of our departure, the benign and venerable Te Rinpoche held his hands over General Macdonald in benediction, and solemnly blessed him for his clemency and moderation in sparing the monasteries and people, no one doubted his thankfulness sincere. The Golden Buddha he presented to the General was the highest pledge of esteem a Buddhist priest could bestow."

Some three years later Sven Hedin's conception of the missionary aspect of this expedition percolates through his almost non-comittal dictum as we find in his *Trans-Himalaya*. In an inspired moment he penned these words: "My long journey backwards and forwards over the Trans-Himalaya cannot be regarded as more than a cursory and defective reconnaissance of a country hitherto unknown. It is easier to go to Lhasa with a force armed to the teeth, and shoot down the Tibetans like pheasants if they stand in the way, than to cross Tibet in all directions for two long years with Governments and all the authorities of the land as opponents, twelve poor Ladakis as companions and not a single man as escort."

After all has been said and pointed out in regard to this expedition, one who has studied the whole situation from all different standpoints will find nothing deleterious not only in the despatching, but also in the various activities of the mission. But in the same breath its must be said that the British army went beyond limits

of military decorum, when the Tibetans had been peacefully retracting their dignified steps from Guru.

WONDERS OF TIBET

Rongbuk.—We have referred to Rongbuk in Part IV of the book while dealing with Everest Expeditions. This place is some 380 miles away from Darjeeling and is reached by 23 hardy marches along the Phari route to Everest.

Rongbuk is perhaps the highest permanently inhabited place in the world. Its altitude is 16,500 feet. More than 300 monks reside here. Of these some twelve monks inhabit the monastery permanently. Others come in periodically, and stay here for uncertain periods. These associated lamas are mostly well off, and they invest sufficient money with the villagers of the surrounding countries in return of which the villagers regularly supply them with requisite food stuffs, such as barley, eggs, milk, etc., and fuel. The maintenance of these migrating lamas does not, therefore, represent a drain on the resources of the villagers. Anyway, how these men of the thinly populated countries around can maintain this army of monks buried in the temple, round which icy-cold winds howl throughout the year, passes one's comprehension.

The Rongbuk, particularly the upper Rongbuk Valley, is sacred. Its sacred character is neither legendary nor rests on its remoteness or its splendid seclusion and isolation, but is well-founded. The tameness of the ashram-deer is proverbial in Hindu Mythology. There are even hundreds of instances on record in which it has been observed how ferocious animals, such as tigers, instantly lose their ferocity the moment they happen to come within the range of the aura that emanates from a perfectly holy man. Rongbuk upholds the truth underlying this mystic records of yore. It is in the fitness of

things that the valley which leads right up to the foot of the highest mountain in the world is sacred.

A few quotations from the narratives of the various expeditions will be convincing to the readers. From the narratives of the 1921 Expedition we find: "At the entrance of the valley, we passed some very tame burhel within a few yards of the path, * * * "Every animal we saw in this valley was extraordinarily tame. In the mornings we watched the burhel coming to some hermits' cell not a hundred yards away from the camps to be fed and from there they went on to other cells. They seemed to have no fear whatsoever, of human beings. On the way up the valley we passed some females that were so inquisitive that they actually came within ten yards of us in order to have a look at us. The rock pigeons came and fed out of one's hand, and the ravens and all other birds here were equally tame; it was most interesting to be able to watch all their habits and to see them at such close quarters."

From those of the 1924 Expedition: Wild sheep and burhel roam about near the base camp. "Sometimes they came within 20 yards of our tents, even when people were moving about in camp. Higher up on the mountain was a hermit's cell and we were told that the sheep used to visit this sanctuary, where they took food out of the hermits' hands." Norton in *The Fight for Everest 1924* writes: "The birds walked about all around our feet, the hill rock-dove, the Alpine chough, the little brown accentor—true friend of man like all his species—Adam's snowfinch and Brandt's ground-linnet, most of them actually resting in the vicinity. And one day a herd of "burhel"—one of the shy and wild sheep of the Himalayas—grazed within 25 yards of our tents, all fear of man banished by the fact that the solitary lama inhabiting the hermit cell just above the camp made a practice of feeding them. Fully to appreciate these things you must have spent some six weeks up the East

Rongbuk Glacier in the land of rock and ice where life is not."

Further up the valley, along the gigantic moraine shelves are a nunnery, and some secluded cells and caves where hermits lead a life of meditation and somehow eke out an existence. These recluses are offered scanty food fairly regularly from the monasteries and nunneries. How without any food or drink and even fire in this miserably cold region life-blood keeps on running through their veins is unaccountable. "Their cells are very small and they spend the whole of their time in a kind of contemplation of the Om, the god-head, and apparently of nothing else" writes General Bruce. He also adds: "* * * but how it is possible for human beings to stand what they stand, even for a year, without either dying or going mad, passes comprehension."

Rongbuk means "the valley of the precipices or steep ravines". In the Upper Rongbuk Valley which is regarded as extremely sacred, killing of animals is strictly forbidden. The great prayer-wheel that lies at the mouth of the valley opposite to the village and monastery of Chobu marks the limit beyond which to the south animals are not allowed to be killed.

Mount Everest which illusively seems from here to be quite near and accessible is in reality sixteen miles away. Filling up the southern end of the valley, Everest towers aloft in commanding majesty.

Rongshar Valley:—In the year 1921, a party of mountaineers reconnoitred Mount Everest from all directions except from its southern or the Nepal side which is inaccessible. One day a small party proceeded to the Rongshar Valley lying to the west of Mount Everest. This valley is looked upon as very sacred. Here many hermits and nuns were found wrapped up in meditation in their respective caves. They were told of a hermit who after meditating for ten years would be living on ten grains of barley a day and the Tibetans

were anxiously looking forward to that day. A female anchorite who lived for 138 years forbade killing of animals in this holy valley. It has been pointed out that "that was the reason why the flocks of burhel we had passed were so extremely tame". They walked 7 or 8 miles down the valley. "The rose bushes were charming all the way. In July this valley should be called the valley of roses."

In the sacred valley of Rongshar is the celebrated temple of Lapche Kang containing many images of Buddha. Lapche is the home and the birth-place of Mila Repa, a wondering monk, who lives in Southern Tibet in the eleventh century. He taught people by songs and parables. His writings are still extant and are highly enlightening. Owing to the sacred nature of the Rongshar Valley, the slaughter of animals is strictly forbidden. It is written: "We were able to buy a sheep on promising not to kill it until after quitting the valley."

From the Rongshar Valley is seen to the west the beautiful peak of Gauri-sankar, regarded as holy by the Hindus, in whose mythology this peak finds a great place. In Tibet this mountain is called Chomo Tsering or Trashi Tsering.

To know something of Milarepa, an Orpheus of the Himalaya, something of Atisha should be said by way of introduction. Of the many teachers who penetrated into Tibet before his time, Atish Dipankar was by far the most learned and saintly. He was born at the village called Bajra-yogini in Bikrampur (Dacca, Bengal) in 980 A.D. He studied all the Buddhist literatures as also the philosophical books of the Hindus together with *Tantra Shastra* (scriptures on mystical practice in medieval Hinduism). Dipankar even went to Pegu in Burma and there studied all the Buddhist scriptures at the feet of the preceptor, Dharma Kirti. Being invited by a king of Tibet (La-lama-je-shesodhe)

he left the royal monastery of Vikramshila where he was the then presiding preceptor and started for Tibet at the age of sixty in the year 1038 A.D. It is said that on his way to Tibet, he rode upon a horse in such a fashion that he was always found seated in the air, nearly half a cubit off from the saddle. He was undoubtedly endowed with many occult powers.

Dipankar preached in Tibet pure Buddhism free from the taint of *Tantrism* which lays special stress on the acquisition of occult powers. Atish Dipankar, after living in Tibet for thirteen years, passed away at the age of seventy-three in 1053 A.D. in the Nethang monastery wherefrom Lhasa is 16 miles further away. Here his relic tomb still exists. He has left behind him some one hundred original works of great value on Buddhism free from the taint of *Tantrism*. These are written in Sanskrit and Tibetan.

It has been written: "In the most fertile part of the Kyi-chu Valley, where the fields are intersected in all directions by clear running streams, bordered with flowers, in a grove of poplars, where doves were singing all day long, I found Atisha's tomb. It was built in a large, plain, barn-like building, clean and sweet-smelling like a granary, and innocent of ornament outside and in. It was the only clean and simple place devoted to religion I had seen in Tibet. * * * But this was the resting-place of the Reformer, the true son of Buddha, who came over the Himalayas to preach a religion of love and mercy. * * * If his teachings had lived, how simple and honest and different Tibet would be today!

Prof. Roerich's research tells of a mysterious event which took place when Dipankar passed by the retreat of Milarepa. The Tibetan saint intending to put the worth of Atish to the acid test "appeared sitting on the end of a blade of grass". In response to this occult manifestation, Atish made a similar demonstration. While

the blade of grass on which Milarepa was seated got slightly bent, that under Atish showed absolutely no sign of drooping. On being accosted by Milarepa, the great teacher smiled and said that although his knowledge was on a par with that of the Tibetan hermit, the very consciousness of the former having hailed from a country where the Blessed Buddha himself lived and preached his doctrines exalted him.

Kum-bum:—Amidst pastoral life of Eastern Tibetans was born in the country of Amdo to the south of the almost ultra-mundane region of Koko-Nor that saint of the higher order, Tsong-khapa, who could speak soon after his birth, although he spoke little. Such a statement is apt to excite feelings of distrust and even slander in the minds of sceptics, but often truth is stranger than fiction.

Lombo-Moke set up his tent at the foot of a mountain named Tsong-khapa. He led a pastoral life with his wife, Chingtsa-Tsio, in the wild solitudes of Amdo. Many years of childless life rolled by. One day while engaged in drawing water from the bottom of a ravine, Chingtsa-Tsio fell senseless on a large stone bearing holy inscriptions in honour of Lord Buddha. When she came to her senses, "she felt a pain in the side and at once comprehended that the fall had rendered her fruitful." In the year of the Fire Hen (i.e., 1357), nine months after this significant and mysterious event, a son was born unto them, whom Lombo-Moke named Tsong-khapa after the mountain at whose foot they encamped themselves for the last seven years. At the age of three, the holy child announced to his mother his intention to renounce the world. Chingtsa-Tsio did not, however, raise her voice against her son's determination. She then shaved his head and threw his long flowing hair somewhere adjacent to their black tent. Straightway there sprang up a tree, the wood of which emitted an exquisite fragrance all around, and each leaf

of which revealed on its surface character of the sacred language of Tibet.

Tsong Khapa revolutionized the cult of pseudo-Buddhism then rampant in Tibet. At his birth-place there still exists the sacred monastery of Kum-Bum where many monks used to dwell in caves wrapped in meditation. The word, Kum-Bum, means "Ten Thousand Images" and is quite significant, as it has allusion to the mysterious tree of the fascinating legend.

The Himalaya can at least boast such a tree about which let two eye-witnesses, who were westerners, and, above all, reputed Apostles of Christianity, who made a desperate attempt to reach Lhasa via China and the Koko-Nor region to preach the Gospel of the Son of God, tell you in their own words what they actually witnessed and what their experience was like. We are here speaking of the Lazarist missionaries, Huc and Gabet, who reached Lhasa in 1846 in the disguise of lamas after eighteen months' wandering through the unknown regions of China and Mongolia.

In their book, *Travels in Tartary, Thibet and China, 1844-56*, they write: "As the foot of the mountain on which the Lamasery stands, and not far from the principal Buddhist temple, is a great square enclosure, formed by brick walls. * * * Our eyes were first directed with earnest curiosity to the leaves, and we were filled with an absolute consternation of astonishment at finding that; in point of fact, there were upon each of the leaves well-formed Tibetan characters, all of a green colour, some darker, some lighter than the leaf itself. Our first impression was a suspicion of fraud on the part of the Lamas; but after a minute examination of every detail, we could not discover the least deception. The characters all appeared to us portions of the leaf itself, equally with its veins and nerves; the position was not the same in all; in one leaf they would be on the top of the leaf; in another, in the middle; in a third, at the

base, or at the side; the younger leaves represented the characters only in a partial state of formation. The bark of the tree and its branches, which resemble that of the plane tree, are also covered with these characters. When you remove a piece of old bark, the young bark under it exhibits the indistinct outlines of characters in a germinating state, and what is very singular, these new characters are not unfrequently different from those which they replace. We examined everything with the closest attention, in order to detect some trace of trickery, but we could discern nothing of the sort, and the perspiration absolutely trickled down our faces under the influence of sensations which this most amazing spectacle created."

"Its trunk can scarcely be embraced by three men with outstretched arms." Not more than eight feet in height. Extremely bushy. "The leaves are always green, and the wood, which is of a reddish tint, has an exquisite odour, something like that of cinnamom. The Lamas informed us that in summer, towards the eighth moon, the tree produces large red flowers of an extremely beautiful character. They informed us also that nowhere else existed another such tree; that many attempts have been made in the various Lamaseries of Tartary and Tibet to propagate it by seeds and cuttings, but that all these attempts have been fruitless." "The Emperor Khang-Hi when upon a pilgrimage to Kounboum constructed, at his own private expense, a dome of silver over the tree of the Ten Thousand Images; * * * "Khang-Hi also endowed it with a yearly revenue, for the support of three hundred and fifty lamas. We have gathered from Rockhill that the Chinese name of the tree is *T'a-errh-ssu*."

Sven Hedin visited Kum-Bum to see this mysterious tree. He writes: "Unfortunately my own visit to Kum-Bum was in the winter of 1896 when the holy tree was leafless."

Madame Alexandra David Neel, a French lady of great erudition and unbounded courage, had been to Kum-Bum. She writes: "For years I have dreamt of far-away Kum-Bum, without having dared hope I would ever get there. Yet the journey is decided, I will cross the whole of China to reach its north-western frontier into Tibetan land." Impossibility was a word not to be found in her lexicography. She had even crossed the highest pass in the world, the Choten Nyima La, having an elevation of 24,000 feet, negotiated so far by only two foreigners, Sarat Chandra and Noel. At all events, her mission was triumphant at long last. She gathered from the Kum-Bum chronicles that the miraculous tree was after it had grown was wrapped in silken robe, and that a temple was built around it. Madame Neel's point of contention is whether a tree could thrive being deprived of light and air in a temple, and, whether for that reason Huc and Gabet could at best have seen the dried skeleton of the tree. But she says that their description is that of a living tree.

Anyway, Madame Neel, although she has written so much of the miraculous tree, is very strangely silent over the existence of alleged marks on the leaves of the tree. It is, however, clear that disappointment was in store for her. She writes that she had the opportunity of seeing an offshoot of the miraculous tree surrounded by a railing, and adored to a certain extent. Another larger tree which is believed to have been originated from the original tree was seen before the lamasery. Her surmise is that it is one of these trees that Father Huc and Gabet saw on their way to Lhasa. She adds that some Europeans residing on the border of the province in which Kum-Bum is situated had told her that they had read *Aum mani padme hum!* on the leaves of the living trees.

The aforesaid contention of Madame Neel falls to the ground when one finds what Huc and Gabet have

written. She was labouring under the impression that the temple was nothing but a conical chhorten pointed at the top which can never contain a tree. The Lazarists have clearly said that it was a big brick enclosure, and, as such, a tree could thrive well within its walls.

Madame Neel remarks: "It is difficult to find one's way amongst these conflicting accounts." The truth is perhaps this. With time the tree ceased to display its miraculous character. What can make its appearance mysteriously, can for that matter, vanish in the name of wonder. What do you say to that!

Hemis Monastery:—The sacred monastery of Hemis which is 25 miles from Leh, a small town on the Himalaya, fifteen days' march from Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir, and situated on the south bank of the Indus still bears testimony to Christ's journey over the Himalaya. Jesus Christ lived in this monastery for some time. He travelled through India from the age of fourteen to twenty-eight and returned to Jerusalem when he was twenty-nine years of age. Credit for the discovery of the valuable manuscript in Tibetan language in the Hemis Monastery embodying the life history of Jesus Christ is originally due to Dr. Notovitch, a Russian tourist.

While, in America, the Swami Abhedananda had been reading Notovitch's work, styled *The Unknown Life of Jesus*, his imagination was fired by an aspiration to visit the monastery himself. His thoughts were translated into action in the year 1922, when he took great pains in reaching this monastery. The Swamiji got a few passages translated from this epoch-making manuscript with fourteen chapters. The facts enumerated about the life of Jesus bear a striking resemblance to what we learn from the Bible, in which significantly enough, his life history of the aforesaid period is wanting.

Later, in the year 1925, the well-known Archæologist, Prof. Roerich of America, whom one is tempted

to designate "an Apostle of lofty sentiments" visited Hemis while conducting an American Expedition to Central Asia. His exhaustive research in this connection is clearly demonstrative of Christ's long sojourn in Tibet. A few pithy words from that towering painter and profound philosopher gleaned from his *Altai-Himalaya* and we finish the dissertation.

"Yet Buddhists preserve the teachings of Jesus, and the lamas pay reverence to Jesus who passed and taught here."

"Many remember the lines from the book of Notovitch, but it is still more wonderful to discover on this site, in several variants, the same version of the legend of Issa. The local people know nothing of any published book, but they know the legend and with deep reverence they speak of Issa."

"Leh is a remarkable site. Here the legends connected the paths of Buddha and Christ. Buddha went through Leh northwards. Issa communed here with the people on his way from Tibet."

A. R. Heber and K. M. Heber had been to Hemis and had the opportunity of attending the "Mystery Play" of the monastery. They write: "Hemis monastery lies in the foothills on the south side of the Indus, and is one-and-a-half marches from Leh, and is reached by a good road on either side of the river. * * * Hemis itself is hidden from the valley behind a spur of mountains, but the gorge in which it lies is indicated by the long *mani* walls and white chhortens which line the approach."

Kailas and Manas-sarovar:—The Great Epics of India, the Ramayana, and the Mahabharata which were written during the period from 1400 to 1000 B.C. comprise descriptions of the Himalaya. These national epics as well as some of the Puranas, especially, the Manas-part of the Skandha Purana, which came into being in a later age sing the glory of Manas-sarovara.

The Skandha Purana embodies a most charming description of the Holy Kailas and Manas Lake, though masked by allegories from the beginning to the end.

The region of the Himalaya which is perhaps by far the most glorious is that of Mount Kailas with Manasarovar not very far off from it. It is here, Prof. Roerich holds, that the great Vedanta once crystallized. It means that to the great seers of yore was revealed the Great Truth that underlies the Infinite Creation and the Goal of Existence. It is a place surcharged with spiritual vibrations of the highest order. Here Nature has displayed her wealth of beauty in a way she has never done elsewhere on the face of the globe. There is a magnetic attraction in this glorious landscape. Sven Hedin's two lines ring in our ears. "Even the first view from the hills on the shore caused us to burst into tears of joy at the wonderful, magnificent landscape and its surpassing beauty. * * * Yes, already I felt the strong fascination which held me fettered to the banks of Manasarowar, and I know that I would not willingly leave the lake before I had listened, until I was weary, to the songs of its waves."

Among foreigners, Edrisi, an Arabian geographer, is the first, in whose writings, we have a glimpse of the Manas region. Van Twist in 1638 for the first time definitely mentioned the name of Manasarowar which he called Masoroor.

It is said that amongst the Europeans, Father Desideri is the first who visited and described the lake, and discovered Kailas. In his posthumous work first published so late as 1932, he writes about Mount Kailas: "Close by is a mountain of excessive height and great circumference, always enveloped in cloud, covered with snow and ice, and most horrible, barren, steep and bitterly cold. In a cave hollowed out of the live rock, Urghien (Padma Sambhava) lived for sometime in absolute solitude, self-mortification, and continual

religious meditation." This is the English translation of his MSS. He has also recorded that this cave was then a temple which was consecrated to that mystic preacher and that there a Lama and a few monks were dwelling. In December 1715, he reached the lake, Retoa (Manas-sarovar). From his writings another fact is gathered that on the banks of Lake Retoa a large quantity of gold is collected which he holds is washed down from the Mountain Ngari Giongar (Kailas) by heavy rains and melting snow.

Mount Kailas is 240 miles from Almora. It towers up to a height of 22,028 feet, while the other peaks of the Gangri chain to which it belongs look incredibly dwarfed before its majestic upheaval of 7,000 feet sheer above the surrounding plain which is about 130 miles from east to west and nearly 100 miles from north to south. Kailas is a Triton among the minnows. The special beauty of this snowy peak lies in its peculiar domy shape and the sharp contrast of dazzling ice and snow with precipitous and bare rock faces, exposed to view in artistic lines of demarcation giving an impression of titanic masonry, nowhere excelled in the whole Himalayan range. The circumambulation of the mountain takes thirty-two miles. It has five monasteries around it. The foot of Kailas is two days' march from the lake. Landor writes: "The Tibetans, the Nepalese, the Shokas, the Humlis, the Jumlis, and the Hindoos, all have a strong veneration for this mountain, * * *"

The Holy Lake stands to the south of Mount Kailas. Sven Hedin calls it "Heavenly Lake of the Throne Mountain". The Gurla range is to the south of the lake. Hedin writes: "Gurla is a splendid background to the holy lake—no artist in the world can conceive anything more magnificent and interesting. * * * Its water "has in reality the taste of purest, most wholesome spring water. Its crystal purity and dark greenish blue colour are as beautiful as the flavour, and to the pilgrims from

a distance the water of Manasarowar is preferable to sparkling champagne." It is a strange fact that most of the Tibetan lakes are saline, and as a matter of fact all the lakes in the Kailas region are noted for their salty water.

The altitude of the surface of the lake is 14,950 feet. It is almost oval-shaped. It is 54 miles in circumference, and one can circumambulate the lake generally in three days. Its area is nearly 200 square miles and its maximum depth is not less than 300 feet. There are some 80 monasteries around the lake.

Near the lake water boils at 185°F. The maximum temperature of the region which is reached at the end of June is something like 65°F. while the minimum temperature recorded in February is—20°F.

A very interesting fact noticed by Captain C. G. Rawling on December 1, 1904 was that although the cold was intense, the surface of the lake was only frozen to a distance of 100 yards or so from the edge, the central portion being quite free from ice. What was all the more striking and enigmatical was that Gun-chu Tso, an extremely salt lake was found at that time "frozen over from shore to shore to a depth of several inches." One explanation that has been put forward is that the lake is fed by hot springs, and the other is that the lake is excessively deep. Landor writes that when he recalls the Manas-sarovar, he cannot help thinking that it is the home not only of the gods, but also of the storms. In the first few editions of my *Darjeeling at a Glance*, I had published the photograph of a *sadhu* who is still living on the top of the Observatory Hill of Darjeeling. This wandering monk had been to Kailas. His description of the region is exactly as we find in the writings of various authors. He had been there in winter and had a dip in the water of the Holy Lake. He says that on getting up from the water, he felt as if his physical body had left him, so terribly cold was the water. He told me another

very interesting and instructive fact that after several days' march on the inhospitable plateau of Tibet, he lost weight appreciably, but he felt so light and energetic that he could undertake this most fatiguing journey with a certain amount of ease. He could feel that all superfluous flesh he had in his body were off to his great advantage. His agility was increased. As to the necessity of food, he said it was then reduced to the minimum. He also gave me to understand that he met that channel under controversy which joins the two lakes there, and he had to ford it over on foot. On being asked as to the names of the two lakes, he said that one is called Manas-sarovar and the other as Rakshasa Sarovar or Ravana Sarovar, or Bindu Sarovar. He is right.

There is another lake adjacent to Manas. This is known as Rakshas Tal or Ravana Sarovar, where Ravana, the king of Ceylon, did penance with the view of propitiating the god Shiva in the nebulous past some 1,500 years before the advent of Christ. A beautiful undulating ridge of an average altitude of 1,000 feet from the level of the surrounding country intervenes these two lakes. The distance between these two expanses of water varies from $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 6 miles. Rakshasa Tal (Devil's Lake) is called in the Puranas Bindu-sarovar.

The statements made by a number of tourists who visited and explored this region as to the existence of a channel through which surplus waters of Manas flow down to the other lake are not only conflicting but contradictory, some advocating its existence, some admitting the existence of its dry channel only, while some emphatically protesting either of the statements. As a matter of fact these contradictions are apparent. As pointed out by no mistakable terms by Sven Hedin, the said overflow is a periodic phenomenon, depending on the rainfall on the Himalaya. The length of the channel connecting the two lakes is a little over three miles and it winds through a narrow undulating land. When there

is an overflow, the stream is quite large, being 100 feet in breadth and 3 feet in depth. It is a well-defined channel which runs from east to west.

With the view of settling this controversial matter on which much ink has been spilt, Ryder, and Baily made a long journey in this region and found that no water was then flowing from the lake, but that the small partly frozen stream they noticed was flowing from a hot spring. The discovery of this hot spring has some bearing on the interesting phenomenon noticed in respect of the freezing of the lake Manas as already mentioned.

Kalidas, the greatest poet in the world, has depicted the Manas region in his *Cloud Messenger*, that immortal love poem that thrills in rythm with the ripples of Manas, and overlooks into the very depths of amorous hearts from that most towering and enchanting throne of nature, Kailas, where the clouds of an aching heart are at last arrested to tell their own tale before they sail for the unknown and the Beyond. It was nothing miraculous that Wilson's work, an English rendering of the romantic poem, should have passed into the readers' hands with the swiftness of a lamp-lighter.

Illusions:—In 1897, the year of the Great Earthquake in India, while crossing a pass (17,000') which overlooks the Holy Lake, Manas, Savage Landor had the privilege to notice a wonderful phenomenon. This happened when he reached the summit of the pass. The larger stars and planets looked exceptionally brilliant, and seemed to him as if they were swinging to and fro in the sky. They described short arcs of a circle by sudden and rapid jerks, and soon after they returned to their respective positions. Landor put it down to some defect in his vision, but his companions were also greeted with the same spectacle. What was all the more astonishing was that the stars close to the horizon disappeared behind the mountain range to reappear as quickly as they had passed beyond vision. This is

regarded by Landor as an optical illusion. This strange incident took place soon after a storm had entirely settled down, and lasted for a short period. After a while the vibrations diminished, and eventually these luminaries resumed their legitimate positions, and shone with remarkable brilliance.

The same author in his *Tibet and Nepal* has described two more cases of illusions. This was in connection with shadows through mists. He writes: "The sun was rather low behind us, and it projected our shadows, well defined but in an elongated form of some hundreds of feet, on the sheet of pure white mist beyond. It had quite weird effect, when we were gesticulating to see our movements magnified in the shadows to such gigantic proportions. Another beautiful effect I observed on several occasions when enveloped in mist of immense white concentric circles with a luminous centre, caused by the sun penetrating through different layers of mist."

Hooker in his *Himalayan Journal* gives another instance of similar character. He writes: "From the elevation of 19,300 feet, which I attained on Donkia, I saw a fine illustration of that atmospheric phenomenon called the 'spectre of the Brocken', my own shadow being projected on a mass of thin mist that rose above the tremendous precipices over which I hung. My head was surrounded with a brilliant circular glory or rainbow."

Here is another very curious instance of eastern sunset. Hooker writes: "Every night that we spent in Tibet, we enjoyed a magnificent display of sunbeams converging to the east, and making a false sunset. ** **
As the sun set, broad purple beams rose from a dark bank on the eastern horizon, and spreading up to the zenith, covered the intervening space: they lasted through the twilight, from fifteen to twenty minutes, fading gradually into the blackness of night."

Illusion as to the height of landscape. From the Donkia Pass when Hooker directed his vision towards the plains of Tibet, it clearly seemed to him to be sloping downwards in descending steppes to the Tsanpo, some 100 miles away from the pass as the crow flies. With the help of a theodolite, Hooker found out that the Tibetan plateau was in gradual ascendant. Hooker observes: "This wonderful view forcibly impressed me with the fact that all eye-estimates in mountainous countries are utterly fallacious, if not corrected by study and experience."

A. E. Pratt in his *The Snows of Tibet* published in 1892 refers to a phenomenon which is called the Glory of Buddha by the Tibetans and the Chinese. This phenomenon makes its appearance from time to time from the summit of Mt. Omei having an elevation of 11,100 feet. It is in China and is on the way to Tibet. The summit of the mountain can be climbed in one day, but it is a tiresome climb. People from the distant parts of the world come to see this astonishing phenomenon. About this Pratt writes: "On two occasions I saw the celebrated Glory of Buddha from the precipice at 'the Golden Summit'." "This extraordinary phenomenon is apparently the reflection of the sun upon the surface of the clouds beneath, and has the appearance of a golden disc surrounded by radiating bars bearing all the colours of the rainbow. These are constantly moving, and scintillate and change colour in a very remarkable manner. It is uncertain when the Glory can be seen. ** ** It is held in great respect by the Buddhists, and thousands of pilgrims, some coming from great distances, visit the mountain in the hope of being able to see it. A considerable number of them are so overcome by the excess of religious feeling on beholding it, that they throw themselves over the frightful precipice into the clouds upon which it appears, their bodies as a rule falling upon an

inaccessible spur covered with forest, perhaps a mile or more below."

There are many temples on the summit of the mountain. If it were a simple case of illusion, how is it that similar cases are not met with elsewhere on the Himalaya? I have ransacked almost all the works on the Himalaya, but in none of them I have found a similar instance like that of the Glory of Buddha. Besides, this spectacle is not a case of rare occurrence, as is evident from what Pratt writes, he having seen it twice. Can it be the thought vibrations of any mystic who had formed it while meditating on an imaginary Glory of Buddha which has now become fettered to the region and manifests itself from time to time under certain hidden laws which cannot be fathomed?

Other cases of illusions are to be found in the author's *Lure of the Himalaya*.

A few words on Himalayan glacier and we dismiss the subject. None has depicted it so vividly as Landor has done. He has penned these words: "Indeed, a Himalayan glacier seems to be the home of noises of all kinds. The wind blowing among the pinnacles and recesses produces weird melodies like solos and immense choruses of human voices; you can hear shrill whistling all round you when sharper blades of ice cut the current of air, and roars like those wild beasts, only stronger, when the wind penetrates into some deep cavity. No sooner were you closing your eyes again for a much-wanted sleep than it thunders so loud that it made you jump, startled you, but when you peeped out of the tent there were brilliant stars and a limpid sky everywhere above you."

Mysticism:—Tibetan Lamas are wonder-workers. There is as much truth in this as there is falsehood. From Swami Pranavānanda's work, *Exploration in Tibet* (Calcutta, 1939), we find that although he had visited about 50 monasteries in the Manas region, and met not

less than 1,500 monks, he could never discover any *Siddha* or a *yogi*, worth mentioning. And yet Madame Neel's book, *With Mystics and Magicians in Tibet*, bristles with instances of occult powers displayed by Tibetan lamas, of psychic forces which they are supposed to wield. She has, however, in one place admitted what is the real state of affairs there. She writes: "False pretence and sham mysticism have long ago crept into the world of Tibetan anchorites. Even on the shiny snowy ranges, one can meet the hypocrite. Under the guise of *gomchens*, boasting of secret knowledge and supernormal powers, they deceive simple-minded peasantry or tent-dwelling herdsmen."

Tibetans have unbounded faith in their Oracles. Oracles at Nechang and Samye are celebrated for their infallibility. But here again, the Tibetans had to acknowledge defeat, when all prophecies in their favour betrayed them when the British troops were marching into the very heart of their hidden country in the year 1904. Even their Dalai Lama did not then prove to be of unimpeachable merit. Sven Hedin writes: "The Tibetans may be forgiven for beginning to doubt the infallibility of the Dalai Lama after the butchery at Guru and Tuna, though the priests were ready with plausible explanations of these events."

Hundreds of years ago, a Buddhist saint predicted in his book, *Ma-ong Lung-Ten*, that Tibet would be invaded and conquered by the *Philings* (*phiringis* as we say in India *i.e.*, Europeans). It was further written that thereafter Buddhist religion would find its shelter in the Chang Shambala, the Northern Paradise (Siberia), and will be totally extinct in the country. This book is still available in the book shops at Lhasa.

The Tibetans of yore had been following the footsteps of the Shamans, the demon-worshippers of Siberia. Later on, they learnt through their Tantric

Buddhist teachers something about *Tantrism*, with the result that their religion is steeped in sorcery, black magic, necromancy, and so forth.

The Tibetan oracles are as a rule amazingly vague. One can hardly make any head or tail of them. McGovern seems to be the only traveller except Madame Neel who has been fortunate in having something substantial from a lama of Chumbi monastery in connection with prophecy. He writes: “** ** it is remarkable that half-way through the great world-war he foretold the exact year and month in which the hostilities would cease. He adds: ”I observed the Chumbi oracle very closely, and found that his method correspond in general to those used by mediums in the west. He goes into an ecstatic trance, frequently accompanied by epileptic symptoms, and when thus obsessed delivers semi-coherent words which foretell what is to happen.”

Madame Neel whose “perfect knowledge of Tibetan has allowed her to get directly in touch with the amazing Tibetan mystics, anchorites and magicians whom she visited in their very homes—city-like wealthy monasteries crowned with golden roofs, weird caves, or lonely hermitages on the high snowy mountains,” mentions how in one instance a very strange prophecy relating to the Tashi Lama, the person next in importance to the Peking of Tibet, made two and a half years ahead, proved true. She writes: “I listened with the utmost incredulity, and jokingly asked him in how many centuries the event would take place. My bard, who was a rather enigmatic person, seriously declared that I should see the fulfilment of the prophecy, and that the Tashi Lama would leave Shigatze before two and a half years had gone. This seemed to be still more improbable, even absurd, and yet there I was, in the heart of Tibet, hearing about the flight into the northern solitudes of the mystic lord of Tashilhunpo, which actually happened just two years and one month after the prophecy.”

Mystics in Tibet in overwhelming majority seek to defy nature by acquiring supernatural power with the aid of demons, whom they endeavour to enslave. They at times invoke the aid of deities. These practices are nothing but *Tantric* ones which are apt to be viewed with the jaundiced eyes by the westerners. But why conclude that there is nothing beyond solid, liquid, and gas? There are entities of quite a different line of creation in the very space we occupy. Conceive of a piece of sponge which has absorbed water which holds in solution, say, ammonia gas. Where there is sponge there is water, and, where there is water there is the gas as well. It is in similar fashion that this world of ours is being inhabited by myriads of invisible subtle bodies, without their coming under our comprehension.

The Tibetans hold—for that is the principle of *tantrism*—that if a channel is made to join an expanse of water containing fish with a tank containing simply water, that channel will facilitate the entering of fish into the latter. Concentration opens up such channels and brings one in contact with the storehouse of occult forces in the custody of supernormal beings.

Another method is to rouse one's own powers latent in him by mastery over breath which leads to concentration, and eventually to the diversion of one's own energy thus developed to channels where psychic forces are called for in the fulfilment of certain objects. No miracle is recognized.

As a matter of fact, there are in Tibet hundreds of adepts in the secret lore and they practise such things as are given in the following list which is not at all exhaustive.

Prediction as to what is stored in future.

Awakening of a corpse.

Walking with unprecedented swiftness, as if an elastic ball is rebounding. People who practise this are called *Lung-gom-pas*.

The art of keeping oneself warm without fire in snowy regions (achieved by concentrating on fire and its effects).

Telepathy.

Projecting one's etheric body (*Linga-sharira* in Sanskrit, etheric double in Theosophy) on places where desired.

Creation of any kind of phantom (*tulpa*) whether men, dieties, animals, etc. This is achieved by concentration, and is what is called visualization or thought-form creation.

Vanishing in the air (by making mind void).

In conclusion I cannot do better than to quote a few lines from Madame Neel. She holds: "Everything that relates, whether closely or more distantly, to psychic phenomenon and to the action of psychic forces in general, should be studied just like any other science. There is nothing miraculous or supernatural in them, nothing that should engender or keep alive superstition."

