1. *Author with his Hualgno Chin orderly, Thang Tin Chhuah. Rangoon, 1948*

FAR FRONTIERS

People and Events in

North-Eastern India

1857–1947

by

John Whitehead

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Foreword

Far Frontiers is the thirteenth in a series of books about Europeans in South Asia, written by a BACSA member, published by BACSA for BACSA members with a wider public in mind, and particularly for those who have been involved in that area – either in peace or in war – and others who may want to know more about this oft-forgotten frontier of India.

The author, John Whitehead, first became involved during the Second World War when after serving with the Mahrattas during the latter stages of the Burma campaign he was posted as training officer to the Chin Hills Battalion, then being converted to an artillery regiment, in which capacity he remained in Burma until 1948. During that period he travelled in the Chin and Lushai Hills and formed the ambition, frustrated by events, to make a career in the Burma Frontier Service. Later, while practising as a lawyer first in Chittagong, then in New Delhi, he paid a number of visits to the Chittagong Hill Tracts and northern Assam.

Since his return to the United Kingdom he has made a special study of the north-eastern frontier of India, and BACSA is very pleased to present the fruits of his research on this historically neglected part of South Asia. In a lively narrative he describes some dramatic incidents concerning the Lushais, Nagas, Lakhers, Abors, Chins and those responsible for pacifying and administering them, concluding with his own personal memories of the Chins.

John Whitehead has also published a number of other works which are referred to on the back cover.

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in memoriam
A.C.W.
1928 – 1957

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Introduction

There are no more fascinating people in the world than the tribes who inhabit the ruckle of hills on India's North-East Frontier. In the northern tract where its border marches with those of Tibet and China, and through which the Dihang, Dibang and Lohit rivers flow south to converge at the eastern extremity of the Brahmaputra, live the Abors, Miris and Mishmis. Thence the hills loop south-west and south to form, successively, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram. The last, known in the old days as the Lushai Hills, comprises part only of an extensive block of upland and merges into the Chin Hills across the Burma border to the east, the Chittagong Hill Tracts to the west in what is now Bangladesh, and the Arakan Hill Tracts to the south, also in Burma.

Politically, the whole area is a vast jigsaw puzzle whose irregularly shaped pieces do not closely conform with the territories actually occupied by the various tribes. Nagas are not confined to the Indian state of Nagaland and are found also in Manipur and over the Burma border. The Lakhers, who are closely related to the Haka tribes of the southern Chin Hills, have no separate homeland of their own and reside in southern Mizoram and also the Arakan Hill Tracts. During the British period these anomalies were of little practical significance but, as a result of the partitioning of the sub-continent in 1947 between predominantly Hindu India and predominantly Muslim Pakistan, East Bengal – including the Chittagong Hill Tracts with its non-Muslim population of Chakmas, Maghs, Mrungs, Kumis and other tribes – became the Province of East Pakistan. It has since seceded, taking the Hill Tracts with it, to become independent Bangladesh. In consequence of losing East Bengal India's only access to its North-East Frontier and the Brahmaputra valley of Assam is by means of a corridor eighteen miles wide between the southern boundaries of Sikkim and Bhutan and the northern boundary of Bangladesh.

The sweep of hills with which this book is concerned was created by a peripheral ripple of the seismic upheaval that threw up, further

north, the vast bastion of the Himalayas. The tribes who have settled there are of Tibeto-Burman stock. Only a few centuries ago they began migrating south and west from some unidentified source in eastern Tibet or neighbouring China, urged forward by others following close on their heels, deflected from their course when they encountered those who, having begun their trek earlier, had already staked a claim to their chosen sector, brought to a halt where the highlands give way to the densely populated plains of Assam or Bengal or the Chindwin valley of Burma. Gradually the mosaic of tribes settled into the pattern now shown on the atlas.

Although of the same ethnic stock, the tribes through living in isolation from one another have each developed its own idiosyncrasies of language, custom and culture. The religion they brought with them into the hills was animism, whose basic tenet is the belief in a multitude of malevolent spirits dwelling in all natural phenomena, which require to be propitiated by the sacrifice of domestic animals. Most of the tribes also believed in a supreme deity and in a hereafter, closely resembling one of their own villages, to which souls repair after death. Inroads were made in this primitive religion from two directions. In the eighteenth century the people living in the Manipur plain were converted to Hinduism; and since the late nineteenth century Christian missionaries have effected conversions among the Nagas, Lushais, Lakhers and other tribes. Those living in the hills overlooking Bengal were never attracted to Islam, nor the Chins of Burma to Buddhism.

In early days the tribes showed a strong tendency towards savagery, which first found expression in inter-tribal feuding and later extended to carrying out lightning raids on villages in the plains. Many of them acquired the taste for headhunting, a grisly practice motivated either by the desire to win prestige – in some tribes no girl would marry a man who had not taken a head – or by filial piety, the laudable wish of a dutiful son to provide his deceased father with a ghost-slave to see to his needs in the Village of the Dead. Raids on the plains were also undertaken for the purpose of acquiring living slaves, either for the kidnapper's own use or, if sold to someone else, as a source of wealth. They were not badly treated, as the punitive expeditions sent into the hills to release them found to their perplexity; for many of the captives, especially if taken as children, having settled down happily among their captors, had no wish to be forcibly returned whence they came.

But for this persistent raiding the British, who had their hands full keeping law and order elsewhere, would have been glad to leave the tribes to their own devices. There were no resources in the in-

hospitable hills whose commercial exploitation would justify the expense of subduing and administering their inhabitants. The history of the early dealings of the governments of British India and, after the annexation of Upper Burma, of British Burma with the hill tribes is one of forbearance based on the desire not to become involved on the one hand and on the other increased savagery on the part of the tribes, who interpreted forbearance as a sign of weakness. British policy was once summed up, rather plaintively, as the wish 'to leave the tribes alone, if only they would consent to be let alone'.

It was not to be, and reluctantly and on a piecemeal, unco-ordinated basis the British were forced to adopt a more positive policy. The pattern of events, spread over a period of fifty years and across the whole range of hill country, became depressingly familiar. Raids on villages in the plains would elicit, for reasons of financial stringency, an inadequate response, which encouraged increased raiding. A massive punitive expedition would follow, villages would be burnt, the tribes responsible fined, and a fortified outpost established in the midst of the disturbed area. Gradually the loose political control thus established would be extended until the whole tract was brought under direct British administration. The attitude of the government towards these troublesome tribesmen was characterized throughout by a complete lack of vision or statesmanship, symptomatic of the ambivalence that underlay British rule in India.

When in 1857 the Mutiny starkly exposed the incompetence of the East India Company to deal with a major emergency the home government had no alternative but to assume direct rule itself. It did so reluctantly, and parliament at Westminster was never at ease with a system whereby it delegated much of its power to a Viceroy over whom it could exercise little effective control. It may even have occurred to the more thoughtful that, in the very nature of the case, they were confronting the Viceroy with a moral dilemma it was impossible for him to break out of. The acknowledged purpose of empire was to provide an impartial administrative framework within which the people of India could go about their lawful occasions, backed by a police force sufficient in normal circumstances to ensure internal law and order and by a military presence whose dual function was to supplement the police in case of need and to guard India's frontiers against external aggression. But that was only one side of the coin. The obverse side was the true but unacknowledged purpose of empire, which was to enable British businessmen to exploit the country's resources both for their own enrichment and for the benefit of the British economy. The two purposes were irreconcilable: it could not

in the nature of things be for the benefit of the people of India for the British to enrich themselves at their expense. There was no way out of the moral dilemma in which the British expatriates, from the Viceroy downwards, found themselves entrapped.

And because the majority of the British whether civil or military who devoted their lives to service in India were honourable men, it was psychologically necessary for them to convince themselves that there was in fact no such dilemma; and the way they relieved their consciences was by despising the 'boxwallahs', the contemptuous nickname (borrowed from that of native itinerant pedlars) they applied to their fellow-countrymen who had come out East, not to serve, but to shake the pagoda-tree. It is with some of the honourable servants of the British *raj* that the following narratives are concerned.

They do not amount to a history of the North-East Frontier, for which those interested are referred to the books by A. Mackenzie, L.W. Shakespear and Sir Robert Reid listed in the Select Bibliography at the end of the book. Nor is it an anthropological treatise on the tribes, for which the reader is referred to the books by J. Butler, E.T. Dalton, J.H. Hutton, N.E. Parry and others, whose scope is sufficiently indicated in their titles, though I have drawn freely on the relevant historical and anthropological works, as well as on the personal reminiscences of the people concerned. What has been attempted in assembling these loosely linked narratives, spanning the period from 1857 to 1947, – that is, from the Mutiny to Independence – and dealing with various tribes and territories, is an impressionist portrait of the North-East Frontier, to do for that frontier what several writers have sought to do for the better-known North-West Frontier. I have wanted to convey to the general reader something of its special flavour, and with that in mind have selected seven episodes, all of them dramatic, which may be considered representative of a hundred others. They provide the occasion for bringing back to notice the personalities of a number of Europeans – administrators, soldiers, explorers, missionaries – of exceptional calibre who devoted their lives to the people of the hills. The narratives show the tribes themselves at a crisis in their development when their primitive, savage way of life first came into contact with, and had to adjust itself to, a culture more technologically advanced than their own. In every case the relationship between the tribes and the British began in bloodshed and ended in reconciliation, and what emerges strongly from these, and from the hundred other similar stories that could be told, is that the tribes and their conquerors came to have an extraordinary affinity with one another.

The episodes have been arranged in roughly chronological order, so it is a fortunate accident that in the first of them this curious mutual attraction finds its most profound expression. Of all the administrators who won the trust and abiding affection of the people among whom they had the good fortune to serve the greatest was surely Tom Lewin. In dramatic contrast there follows an account of the siege of Kohima of 1879, the disastrous consequence of the failure of the civilian officer in charge of the Naga Hills to gauge correctly the temper of the people. The bizarre incident of the Manipur massacre in 1891 is a cautionary tale with several ramifications and provides the book with one of several attractive heroines. The events in the Lushai Hills that took place in 1892 would surely have been avoided had a man of Lewin's stature been there to nip the revolt in the bud. Not nearly so much has been written about the Lakhers as about the Nagas and the Lushais, and the story of Reginald Lorrain's ministry to them has been introduced as providing uniquely an account of what happens when animism and Christianity meet head-on. The supernatural intrudes in a different way in the story of the riddle of the Rainbow Falls. The final narrative concerning the Chin Hills will explain the book's origin, for it has been written in belated response to a request made to me more than forty years ago:

New Songs for Farewell

Lo kir leh mai rawh, Kapu Whitehead,
Rawn sawm ve la Adjutant leh kan C.O.
Suih lung kan mawl em i tel lo chuan.

*

Dam tak in kal rawh, Kapu Laldang,
Van hnuai mi hril England tual nuam ah chuan in,
Chin Hills Battalion ti zel ang che.

* * *

Acknowledgements

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Earlier versions of 'Lewin of the Lushais' and 'Naga Battle Piece' were printed in *Blackwood's Magazine*.

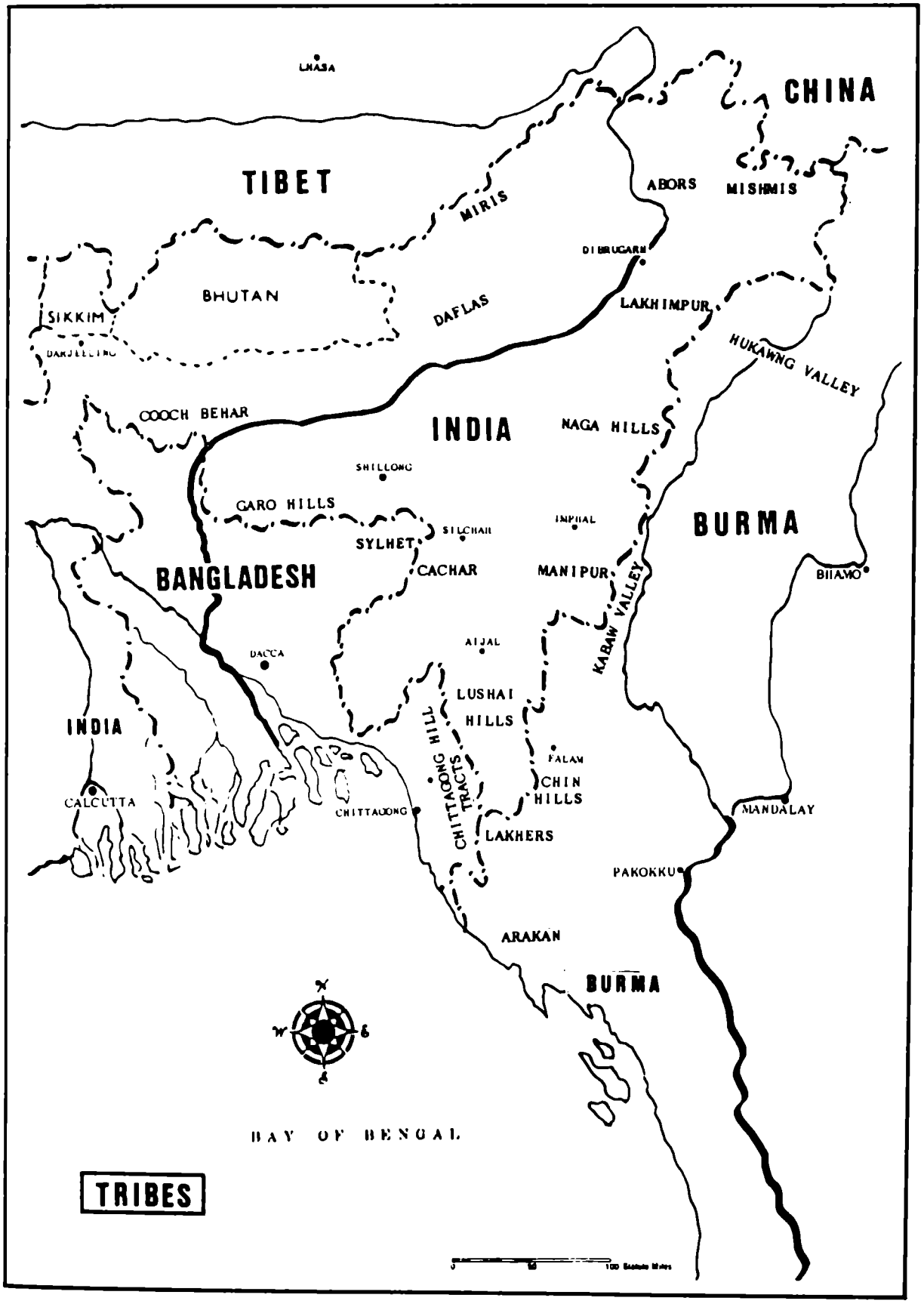
J.W.

Munslow,
December 1988.

Glossary

apong rice-beer (Abor)
banniah shopkeeper (Hindustani)
bimraj racquet-tailed drongo: crow family (Hindustani)
biri wholeleaf cigarette (Hindustani)
boxwallah businessman (Anglo-Indian)
chapati unleavened bread (Hindustani)
chaplis sandals (Hindustani)
chaung stream (Burmese)
chinthe stone leogryph (Burmese)
chu stream (Tibetan)
dah chopper (Burmese)
dak mail (Hindustani)
damdim stinging fly (origin unknown)
dhal lentils (Hindustani)
dhan unhusked rice (Hindustani)
dhoti loose trousers (Hindustani)
doolie hospital stretcher (Hindustani)
drabi muleteer (Hindustani)
durbar (1) place where a public levee is held; (2) levee; (3) executive government of a Princely State (Hindustani)
dzong fort (Tibetan)
dzongpön district administrator (Tibetan)
fakir holy man (Hindustani)
feringhi European or half-caste (Hindustani)
gaddi throne (Hindustani)
gam headman (Abor)
ghat landing-place (Hindustani)
ghee cooking oil (Hindustani)
gompa monastery (Tibetan)
havildar sergeant (Hindustani)
hoolock whitebrowed gibbon (Hindustani)
jemadar native officer (Hindustani)
jhum hillside field (Arakanese)

keddah	enclosure for the capture of wild elephants, hence elephant hunting (Hindustani)
khel	clan (Naga)
khud	hillside (Hindustani)
klang	hill (Lai Chin)
kukri	Gurkha chopping knife (Hindustani)
la	pass (Tibetan)
longyi	skirt (Burmese)
lotah	brass pot (Hindustani)
maidan	open space (Hindustani)
mithan	*bos frontalis* or gayal, a cross between gaur (wild buffalo) and domestic cattle (Assamese)
moshup	bachelors' house (Abor)
myook	minor official (Burmese)
nabob	(ex. *nawab*) bigwig (Anglo-Indian)
naik	corporal (Hindustani)
nautch	dance (Hindustani)
palki	a litter (Hindustani)
panji	sharpened bamboo spike stuck into the ground for defence (Hindustani)
pagri	turban (Hindustani)
pice	pennies (Hindustani)
posa	subsidy (Assamese)
sawbwa	hereditary ruler of a Shan state (Burmese)
sepoy	soldier (Hindustani)
shikar	hunting (Hindustani)
sirdar	leader (Hindustani)
subadar	native officer (Hindustani)
takin	*budorcas taxicolor*, a species of goat-antelope (Mishmi)
tat	(short for *tattu*) native-bred pony (Hindustani)
thana	police post (Hindustani)
tonga	horse-carriage (Hindustani)
tsamba	parched and ground barley mixed with butter or tea (Tibetan)
va	river (Lai Chin)
zawlbuk	bachelors' house (Lushai)
zu	rice-beer (Lai Chin)
zufa	milky rice-beer (Lushai)
zureo	rice spirit (Lai Chin)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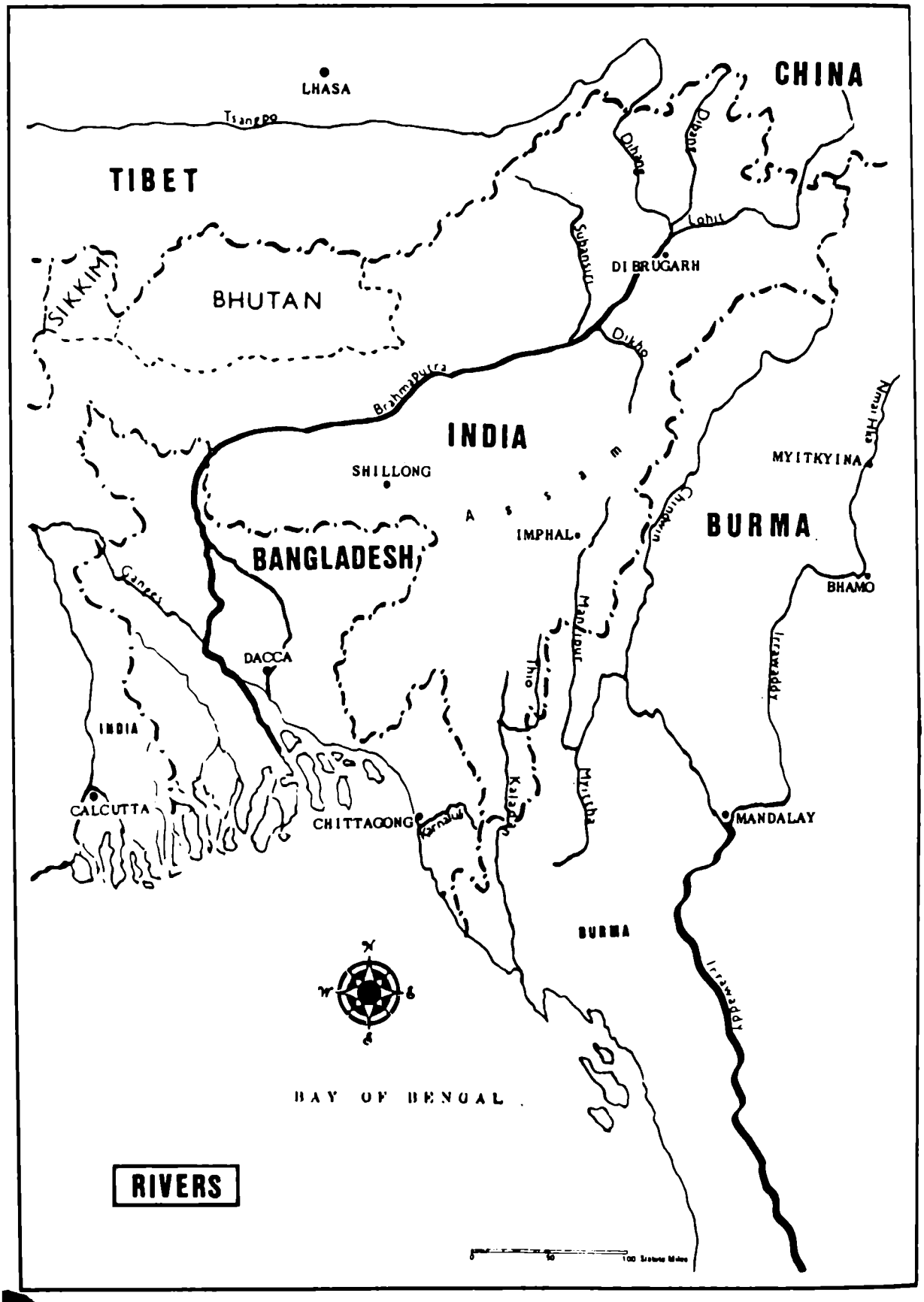
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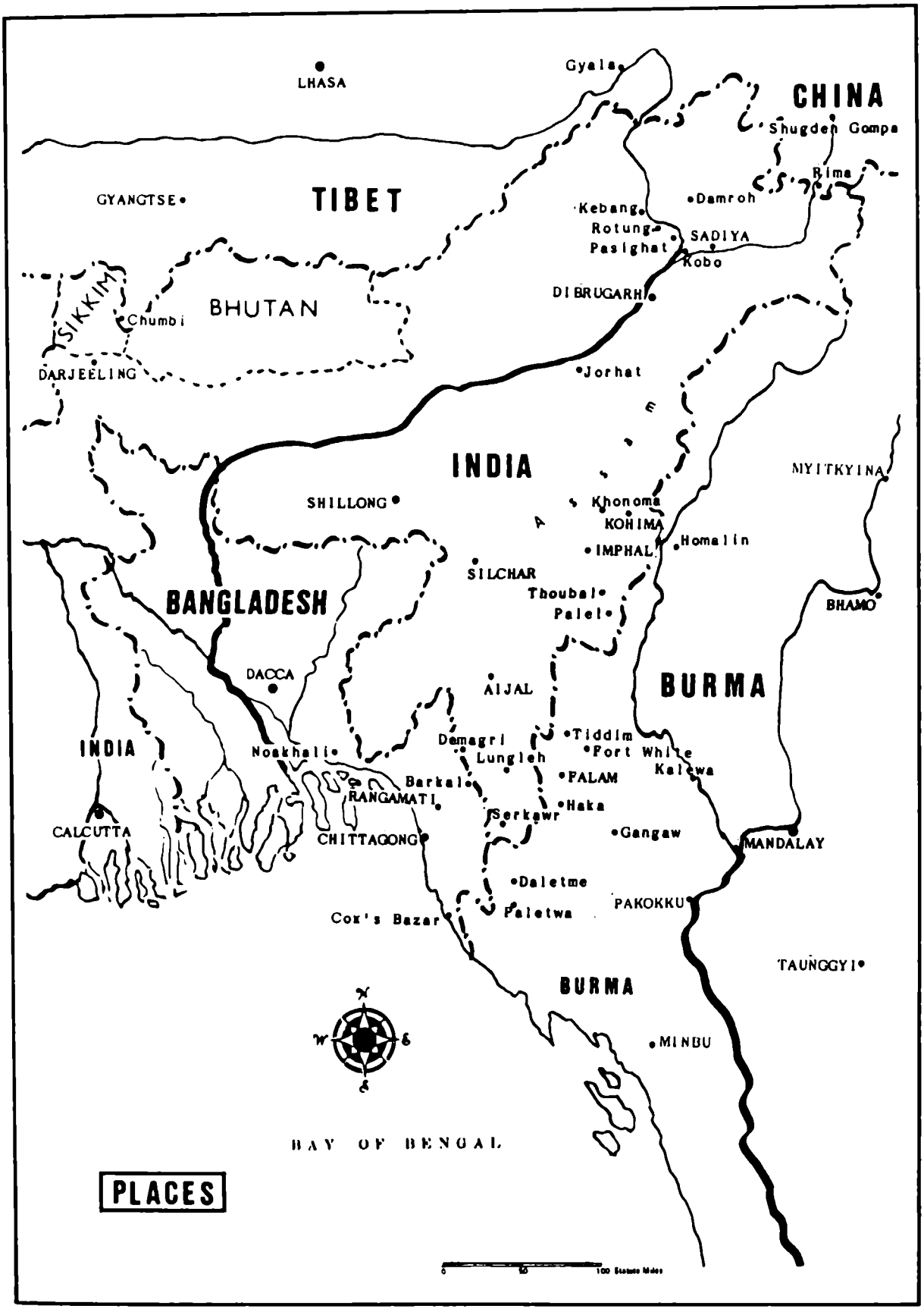
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Serkawr
CALCUTTA
CHITTAGONG
Gangaw
MANDALAY
Daletme
PAKOKKU
Cox's Bazar
Paletwa
TAUNGGYI
BURMA
MINBU
BAY OF BENGAL
PLACES

1

Lewin of the Lushais (I)

In middle and later life Thomas Herbert Lewin – Thangliena to the Lushais – became much preoccupied with his ancestry, to such an extent that his old aunt Frances counselled him against devoting himself exclusively to tombstones, dust and buried memories. She had long since gone to her rest when Lewin at the age of seventy caused to be privately printed in 1909 *The Lewin Letters: A Selection from the Correspondence & Diaries of an English Family, 1756-1885*, two large volumes valuable not only for the light they shed on Lewin's own character but also as social history.

The foundation of the prosperity of the Lewin family, which was of Kentish yeoman stock, was laid by Richard (1719-1810) who went to sea young, rose to the command of a merchantman of the East India Company, and on his retirement acquired an estate of four hundred acres near Bexley. His eldest son Thomas, born in 1753 who also lived to the age of ninety, obtained through his father's influence a writership, as a clerkship was then called, in the East India Company and made a modest pile at Madras. He had a gift for languages, which helped him in his profession, and was an accomplished violinist, talents which would be inherited by his grandson with whom this study is concerned. On his return to Europe in 1780 Thomas was implicated in a parliamentary investigation into irregularities in the Company's affairs, but seems to have emerged from it unscathed, for he returned to his duties in India for a few years more, now accompanied by his wife Mary, a general's daughter who was to bear him twelve children. He left India in disgust – as his grandson was to do many years later – having been denied advancement due to nepotism in high places, and settled with his increasing family on a small estate near Southampton.

One of his daughters, Harriet born in 1792, wrote when in her sixtieth year some reminiscences of her early life which throw a curious light on her parents. The marriage had been arranged between her father and the general without affection on her mother's side,

which explained, Harriet believed, why her mother had always behaved coldly towards her children: 'her heart had become, as it were, dried up for want of suitable channels during the ripening season of womanhood'. Despite their numerous progeny, she felt no more warmly towards her husband, who treated her rather as a pet slave than as an equal. Though attracted to other men more congenial to her, sometimes causing her husband uneasiness on this account, she remained faithful to him.

Thomas was of a full-blooded disposition. Attractive to women, he had sowed his wild oats as a young man, but managed to avoid the coarser forms of debauchery. Of his pre-marital mistresses, on whom he spent a great deal of money, the most colourful was Madame Grand, a French Creole lady, the daughter of a Pondicherry ship's captain. Noel Catherine Werleé had married at fifteen, in 1777, a Frenchman in the Company's service, whom she left the following year to become the kept woman of a rich nabob Philip Francis who, having been discovered in bed with her, set her up in a separate establishment at Hoogly, a seduction leading to an action for divorce that was to cost him £5,000 in damages. Two years later she sailed for Europe, without her protector, in the same ship in which Thomas Lewin was returning to England with despatches. They became lovers on the voyage and afterwards lived together, first in London, then in Paris where they moved in the best society. They once saw Marie Antoinette dance a minuet with the future Charles X. Noel Catherine is described as being tall and slight with delicate features, her hair tumbling about her shoulders in golden ringlets. Her beauty was matched by her silliness, and it was said of her that she 'had all the desirable qualities necessary for one possessing perfect mental vacuity'. Silly she may have been, but she was after bigger game than Thomas Lewin and later had the satisfaction of becoming Princess Talleyrand.

Harriet in her reminiscences is surprisingly indulgent to her father's memory, calling him 'perhaps one of the more faithful husbands', because he committed fewer infidelities than could be expected from a man so coldly treated by his wife. About 1794 there had been a connection with a person living in St. Martin's Court in London, and nothing else, so far as Harriet knew, until 1826 when at the age of seventy-four he was led into an intimacy with a designing married woman, with the encouragement of her husband who was after money, a liaison lasting several years that was only brought to an end by reason of the old man's infirmity.

The tenth child and fifth son of the marriage was George Herbert, born in 1808, whose instability was a sore trial to his family, so much

so that there came a time when his father threatened to have nothing more to do with him unless he mended his ways. Precisely what his 'misconduct and folly' amounted to does not emerge, but in 1829 one of his brothers, a high-minded prig, wrote to him upbraiding him for being inattentive to his duties as an articled clerk with a firm of London lawyers and profligate with money, which he accused him of spending on 'immoral connections and serious expenses incident thereon'. George was given to periods of lassitude darkened by fits of depression, perhaps associated with his troubled atheism; but in 1830 his sister Harriet reported him as taking 'the most vehement interest' in the French Revolution, so that she 'never saw him so radiant, so inspirited'. He succeeded in pulling himself together sufficiently to become manager of the business of a city gentleman, then to work for a clever and dashing attorney with a good practice. Things seemed set fair when in 1837 he married, for her money, Mary Friend, the daughter of a sugar broker. 'She is a good, nice girl,' wrote Harriet to her sister Frances, 'quite a lady in her manners, tolerably personable, and very wholesome. I consider [George] particularly fortunate in having got such a wife. I hope he will run steady now.' They had four children, the eldest being Thomas Herbert the subject of this study.

Towards the end of her life Frances promised her nephew to write out for him what she could remember of his father's career but, if she ever did so, the memoir is not included among the family papers in *The Lewin Letters*. It appears that after his marriage he did run steady, for he stuck to his work in London, though there is mention of him gallivanting in Paris in 1845 with his younger brother Edward. Then, in 1851, he was stricken by illness and seemed on the point of death, and next year Harriet reported to Frances that he was in a somnolent condition, substantially *non compos mentis*, but that being otherwise healthy he might live on for years. In fact he lingered on for another five years, dying in 1856, the year before his eldest son, an eighteen-year-old fresh from Addiscombe College – the East India Company's seminary – joined his regiment in Cawnpore as an ensign in the Company's service. That was the year in which the old British India was being brought down in the blood and flames of the Mutiny.

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Lewin was at once engaged in the heavy fighting and during the ensuing months took part in the wide-ranging operations that finally broke the power of the rebels. There followed a period of peace-time soldiering in Central India, but he found the restrictions of military

life irksome; 'it was,' he said, 'like going back to school again, with a commanding officer in place of the master'. His strong individuality of mind required an ampler field of action, in which he might think and act on his own initiative; and to this end he obtained a posting as adjutant and second-in-command of a battalion of Military Police stationed at Rampur, then the centre of the Bengal indigo industry. His energy and efficiency earned him the approval of the Inspector-General of Police, and in 1862 he was promoted District Superintendent at Hazaribagh. Here he found plenty of action, running down the gangs of dacoits that preyed on travellers using the Grand Trunk Road; and here also he had his first of many brushes with authority, who disapproved of unorthodox methods however successful the result. There followed a dull spell of duty at Noakhali in East Bengal, made tolerable by the station-school library which provided him with volumes by Steele and Addison, Rabelais, Sir Thomas Browne, Charles Lamb and de Quincey. The loss of the use of the library was his only regret when, with Grabber his bull-terrier bitch, he left to take up his duties as Superintendent of Police in a new district.

Chittagong lies in the armpit of the Bay of Bengal, its environs subject to frequent hurricanes that cut swaths of devastation through the flat, rice-growing countryside. The population is predominantly Muslim Bengali, but the proximity of Arakan has introduced a Mongolian strain, and the *longyi* replaces the *dhoti* as the standard male costume. In Feringhi Bazaar the half-caste descendants of Portuguese freebooters of the seventeenth century form a close-knit community round the Roman Catholic cathedral. The fortunate live above the teeming stench of the town, in bungalows perched on the tops of the little green hills that are a picturesque feature of its geography. The place is an ornithologist's paradise. The sound – one cannot say song – of birds is all about one: the croak of house crows, the mewing of kites and buzzards, the barbet striking its little copper bell, green parakeets shrieking as they arrow by overhead, the demented vocabulary of the jungle owlet, the Burmese-speaking cuckoo – *'yauk-hpa-kwe-kaw'* – and the koel's far-carrying cry: 'You're ill, *you're ill,* YOU'RE ILL'. Bounded on the west by the sea, to the south stretches the pleasant beach at Cox's Bazaar; to the north lies the mosque of Sultan Baijid with its tank of green, stagnant water full of gross, meat-eating turtles; and away to the east, blue in the distance, rise the cool Hill Tracts.

From the first Lewin found his new district, socially as well as officially, to his liking. The small European community consisted of tea-planters, rice-merchants, and officials like himself. The District

Commissioner, who became a firm friend, was a keen musician and eagerly enlisted Lewin as bass viol to complete a string quartet, of which the other members were the Assistant Magistrate and the Commissioner's Feringhi assistant. It is pleasant to think of those four friends solacing their evenings in that bizarre backwater of the Indian Empire a century and a quarter ago, with chamber music. And Lewin never forgot the Commissioner's friendly advice:

'Remember, Lewin, if you come to a passage you can't play, don't get confused, but just sway away upon G.'

As much time as he could he spent touring his new district, accompanied only by an interpreter (for at that time he spoke only Hindustani and Bengali, which were of no use in the Burmese-speaking south or in the hills), a boy to carry his revolver and hunting-knife, and Grabber. Dressed in a suit of grey flannel and wearing soft yellow boots, his rifle on his shoulder, he travelled by jungle paths to the most distant villages, where he made a momentous discovery: 'that at least one-half of my district was peopled by men and women of a like nature to myself, I mean those of Burmese origin and the hill tribes; they were pleasanter to deal with, more manly, more easy to understand, than the cringing, cowardly, lying, litigious Bengalis. . . .' More and more often, back in Chittagong from his tours, his eyes would be drawn towards the blue, distant hills in the east, a *terra incognita* inhabited by tribes variously known to the plains people as Kukis, Shendus, Mrungs, Lushais. Little was known of them beyond the fact that from time to time raiding parties would emerge from the hills on a foray into British territory, killing, burning, kidnapping, taking heads. There were whispers of monkey-men with tails who lived in villages built in trees. Lewin decided to find out the truth for himself.

His application to the Inspector-General for leave, supported by his friend the Commissioner, was granted and, being authorized to spend a sum of money on presents for the hill-folk, he laid in a stock of scarlet broadcloth, beads, brass rings, bracelets of lac and tinsel and – since the hillmen were reputed to be great drinkers – bottles of spirits. He was given to understand, unofficially, that he might go into the hills for ten days or so, at his own risk. There was a farewell party at the Commissioner's when the quartet played Weber's *Der Freischütz* and at dawn next day, 14 October 1865, Lewin set out on his first journey into the unknown.

Having no maps, he could make no proper plans, but had formed a vague idea of marching south and then east into the hills in the hope of reaching Burma on the farther side of them. With him went an escort of six Bengali policemen under Havildar Fyzullah Khan

('Fuzlah'), a Punjabi who had followed his fortunes since Hazaribagh days, and his Magh cook Tobe-dhun ('Toby'). For the first six days, travelling by way of Cox's Bazaar, they were accompanied by two baggage elephants, but these had to be left behind at Manikpur, whence they continued by dug-out canoe to a riverside Mrung village, whose headman Tuekam Thonglien received them hospitably. His goodwill was engaged over cups of spirits and firmly cemented when he was persuaded that, since Lewin and he shared the same name (Tom Lewin / Thonglien), they must belong to the same clan. A party was held in Thonglien's house where, after an aperitif of rice-spirit, pork and rice were served on wooden platters by his wife and daughter who wore in the house, Lewin noted, only brief petticoats; and later there was music and dancing, Lewin delighting the company by joining in on his violin.

Next morning, with Thonglien for guide and their baggage carried by coolies from the village, they set out on their first hill march, climbing steeply to the crest of a hill, then descending precipitously the other side: a process interminably repeated until they reached the banks of the Sangu river, tired but – except for the Bengali constables – exhilarated. Here Lewin said goodbye to his namesake, who returned home with a present of broadcloth and bracelets and taking with him the unsatisfactory constables. The expedition, now much diminished in numbers, proceeded downriver, at one point having to shoot the rapids in their canoes, and disembarked where a small tributary, the Ramakri, enters the Sangu. Leaving the boats behind, they marched east across the hills, beset by leeches and stung by giant nettles, and camped by an unfriendly village – perhaps Labawa – on the Pi Chaung. The villagers, who lived in fear of attack from the neighbouring Lakhers, the name (pronounced Luck-airs) by which the Shendus came to be known, had built a fortified look-out post high up in a tree, a practice which Lewin surmised had given rise to the legend of monkey-men. On 7 December they crossed the border into British Arakan and reached Daletmé, a village on the Kaladan river. Here the method of defence was to build broad rafts which could be pushed off into the stream in the event of attack by the Lakhers, who were afraid of water.

The Daletmé villagers, having overcharged Lewin for food and boat-hire, directed him upriver to a Kumi village, whose headman allowed him to proceed to a strongly fortified village on the edge of the Lakher country. Here the elderly chief, Te Nuai, came with a retinue to meet them at the river-bank, wearing a fine plaid, his top-knot bound with cloth in which were stuck the long tail-feathers of

the *bimraj*. He assigned to the travellers a bug-ridden house in the village, which they soon abandoned for a hut by the river, entertained them with *zu* and promised, after sacrificing a mithan in order to seal the oath of friendship, to pave the way for their entry into Lakher territory. Messengers were accordingly despatched to Ke Nung, the nearest chief.

On the evening of 15 December, after the oath-taking ceremony was over, Lewin was sitting cross-legged on a tribal shawl spread on the floor of the hut, his back to the entrance, contentedly playing his violin and singing 'The blue hills' secret shall yet, shall yet be mine', when a blow knocked him into the air, and he fell over in sickening pain, blood pouring from the wounds made by a bullet which had struck him below the hip, ripped through the length of his thigh, and emerged just above the knee. Fuzlah and Toby, rushing in, carried him to a canoe and, procuring rowers from the village, set them paddling furiously downriver. Having seen his wounds, Lewin concluded that he must die and lay on the bottom of the boat cursing his luck, until he lost consciousness.

He was still alive three days later when they reached Akyab in British Burma, three hundred miles to the south, where in the house of the British major who was the local Superintendent of Police he received medical attention – 'Seldom seen a more lengthy flesh wound,' observed the doctor, 'most interesting case' – and quickly recovered. While convalescing he was visited by Sir Arthur Phayre, Chief Commissioner of Burma and later the author of the first English-language history of the country, who listened to his story with interest and asked if he still wished to visit the Lakher country. According to Toby, the shot had been fired by one of the guides who had led them across the hills to the Kaladan and, since Te Nuai and his people were not implicated, Sir Arthur must have felt it important to re-establish relations with the chief at once, before misunderstanding could lead to hostility.

Three weeks after the shooting, on 5 January 1866, Lewin and the Major with their personal servants, hill coolies to carry their baggage and a small dog belonging to the Major's wife who was away in England, set out from Akyab.

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(It is necessary to interrupt the narrative of Lewin's adventures at this point in order to enter a note of caution. Although wherever possible it has been checked against other sources, it is based primarily

on the account given by Lewin in his book *A Fly on the Wheel or How I Helped to Govern India* (1884). A valuable contribution to the history of the North-East Frontier as well as being extremely readable, there nevertheless exists evidence that the text as printed is not in all respects as Lewin originally wrote it. Among the letters included in *The Lewin Letters* are two which were written to him by John Ruskin soon after the publication of the book. In the first, dated 12 February 1885, he wrote: 'I am beyond everything I can say interested in your book and in you, but I have a feeling that you have lowered the tone of it by making it too much of a hunting story book. . . . You write always like an amiable, reckless, jest-loving, generous schoolboy. . . .' What Lewin wrote to him in reply is apparent from the vehemence of Ruskin's second letter, written on 10 March 1885.

> Again, those cursed publishers are the pestilence of literature. They have made you destroy the dignity and simplicity of your book, and robbed it of half its historical value. . . . Surely an edition might be brought out in a reduced form, with not a word in it that was not your own, and yours deliberately.

Faced with this evidence that, at the insistence of the publishers, Lewin's manuscript was touched up in an endeavour to widen the book's appeal, the biographer is obliged to treat with reserve some of the taller stories and more lurid descriptions it contains. Nevertheless, of the essential truth of what he wrote there can be no doubt.)

*

The Lakhers (known to Lewin as the Shendus) – the tribe calls itself Mara – are closely related to the Chins of the southern Chin Hills and had only recently migrated from the neighbourhood of Klangklang to the area they have since occupied in the southern Lushai Hills and northern Arakan. Of the two groups into which these tribes are divided – the *Poi* whose menfolk tie their long hair in a topknot over the forehead, and the *Mar* who tie it in a chignon at the nape of the neck – the Lakhers belong to the *Poi*, the Lushais to the *Mar*. In Lewin's day the Lakhers were virtually unknown to the British, but feared by their unwarlike neighbours as slave-raiders and headhunters. A Lakher chief and his followers had been introduced to Lewin in Te Nuai's village before the shooting, and he had carefully noted the cloth with which he bound up his hair and the women's elaborate costume consisting of long petticoats of homespun and decent chemises. He did not mention that, like the Haka Chin women, their skirts were supported by heavy girdles of brass coil extending from

waist to hip. When he gave the chief's wife a present of beads and a pocket mirror, she had offered him in return, from a small gourd, the tobacco-water obtained from the small hookah she smoked: hillmen find it refreshing to hold the water in the mouth for a while before spitting it out. A less friendly gesture awaited them from the Lakhers as they set out with Te Nuai and Ailong, the son of the Lakher chief, Ke Nung, for whose village they were bound.

The first day's journey was by canoe up the Kaladan, the water-fearing Lakhers taking a landward route and reappearing at sundown at the camp-site where the Sala Chaung enters the big river from the east. The next day they marched some fifteen miles in a north-easterly direction across forested hills, the silence broken only by the sound of the barbet striking its little copper bell. They camped in the forest and pushed on next morning, marching hour after hour, until about two in the afternoon they encountered three Lakhers armed with spears and flintlocks coming from the opposite direction. They were the advance guard of a considerable force of Lakher braves out on the warpath. Looking back, Lewin saw that the hill coolies, abandoning their loads, had taken to their heels, and soon Ailong, too, slipped away. Te Nuai, after pleading in vain with the taciturn Lakhers, himself turned and quietly retreated after the coolies. Besides the small dog, whose name has not been recorded, only four people remained with Lewin and the Major: Fuzlah, two orderlies, and Toby – armed with a toasting-fork.

They could see more Lakhers moving in the forest around them, and Fuzlah reported that some were loading their flintlocks from the inlaid powder-horns at their waists. As Lewin and the Major discussed the situation, a Lakher behind a tree aimed his flintlock at the Major and then, perceiving that he was himself covered by Fuzlah's rifle, lowered it and scratched his head in an embarrassed sort of way. When one of the Lakher advance guard tried to snatch an orderly's rifle, the six of them, at the Major's command, began slowly to retreat, rifles at the ready. Not a shot was fired, but soon they noticed that they were being outflanked to left and right and, coming upon denser jungle, they ran for it, past the abandoned baggage amongst which Lewin glimpsed with regret his pipe, his diary and his beloved violin. Hearing firing to the front, they dived off to the right and, noticing a hollow place surrounded by undergrowth, crept inside, determined to sell their lives dearly; while the searching Lakhers called to one another all round them. A rustling in the bushes above them caused the dog to growl, putting them in instant danger, and Lewin drew his knife intending to cut her throat; but the Major put her in the breast of his coat and quietened her.

As darkness fell, the shouting and firing died away, and all was quiet except – though the sounds may well have originated in the fertile mind of Lewin's publisher – for the scream of wild elephants and once the low cough of a tiger. When the moon rose, they struggled on through thick jungle searching for the path and at last, torn and exhausted, halted on the slopes of a high ridge where they slept until morning. Expecting to strike the Kaladan on the far side, they toiled up the hillside for five hours to the summit, hungry and thirsty, only to see, instead of the river, range after range of hills stretching away into the distance. Now they decided to make for the Sala Chaung, for without water they could not survive, and so retraced their steps down the slope, disturbing a sleeping tiger on the way and, worse, nearly blundering into a group of Lakhers guarding the path. Once more they retreated up the hill and hid, listening to the voices in the valley growing fainter and fainter until they died away. At nightfall they resumed their march, chancing upon a stream at which they drank deeply; then pressed on until, cold and now very hungry, they halted in a small hollow shut in on all sides where, with Lewin's last match, they lit a fire. The decision was then taken that, if they failed to find food on the morrow, they would kill and eat the unfortunate dog.

Next morning their luck changed, and they found not only the path to the Sala Chaung but, along the bank, an abandoned canoe in which, with the reprieved dog, they paddled to the junction with the Kaladan and so through the rapids again to the security of Te Nuai's village.

*

Far from bringing upon himself official censure, the escapades just described, which extended over four months, marked the turning-point of Lewin's career. Shortly after his return to Chittagong the *Calcutta Gazette* announced his promotion to the rank of captain and his appointment to officiate as Superintendent of Tribes in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Primarily an administrative post, it carried with it the powers of magistrate with authority to try criminal as well as civil cases.

In April 1866 he travelled up the Karnaphuli in the Commissioner's river-steamer to his headquarters at Chandragona. The official bungalow stood on a small hill overlooking the river to the west and south, while to the north and east lay unexplored hill country. Below was the court-house and the treasury under police guard; and further down on the river bank sprawled a small bazaar, with nearby the mud huts of

the police barracks housing fifty reserves, now placed under the command of Sub-Inspector Fuzlah.

Lewin took up his new responsibilities with characteristic energy. That he soon acquired expert knowledge of the district is evident from the monograph he published in 1869, *The Hill Tracts of Chittagong and the dwellers therein; with comparative vocabularies of the hill dialects*, a pioneer study which must have proved, and perhaps still proves, of great benefit to his successors. He was now known to the hill people by his vernacular name Thangliena. His meeting with Sir Arthur Phayre in Akyab had led to his applying for a posting to the Burma service, but the Bengal government refused to release him and, instead, appointed him permanently as Deputy Commissioner and Political Agent of the Hill Tracts of Chittagong.

A photograph of him, taken some years after this time, shows him seated outside a whitewashed house, one leg across the other, well turned out in pale trousers, a dark smoking-jacket with piping on the lapels, a bootlace cravat and elastic-sided shoes. The face, lightly moustached and whiskered, the full hair brushed back, is strikingly handsome, with its well-modelled mouth and eyes under heavy lids: pale-coloured, direct and rather daunting – the eyes of a man who keeps his own counsel and is not to be trifled with.

The greatest problem Lewin faced was posed by the Lushais, who lived in the far hills but continually raided into the territory under his jurisdiction. The fear they inspired had created a no-man's-land fifty miles wide between themselves and the tract-dwellers. In July, during the monsoon season, Lewin received a report of a Lushai raid south of Chandragona in which eighty people had been carried off into slavery; but, although he at once set off in pursuit with a detachment of police, he failed to catch up with them. What was needed was either a military expedition or the creation of a permanent line of defence along the frontier, but since there was no immediate likelihood of any such expensive measure being taken, Lewin decided to try and put a stop to the Lushais' persistent raiding by acquiring personal influence over the tribe.

The nearest chief was Rothangpuia – Rutton Poia in the old spelling – whose village lay a few miles south of Demagri. In 1860 he had led a savage raid into Tripura when one hundred and eighty-six British subjects had been killed; and for this an expedition had been despatched against him, which burnt his village to the ground. It was this now-chastened chief whom Lewin first sought to win over.

All the Lushai chiefs claimed descent from Thangura, who had lived in the early eighteenth century in a village in the central Chin

Hills. His six sons – Rokum, Zadeng, Thangluah, Pallian, Rivung and Sailo – had migrated westwards with their people, probably under pressure from the Chins, into what later became known as the Lushai Hills, now Mizoram. By Lewin's day, the Sailos in the north had established themselves as the most powerful of the Lushai clans, and they remained so until the hereditary chieftainships were abolished in recent years. Rothangpuia belonged to the minor Thangluah clan.

With twenty men under Fuzlah and friendly Lushais as guides Lewin went by canoe up the Karnaphuli, the boats needing to be dragged through the Barkal rapids, and the party camped for the night at Utanchatra. A hard march next day across the hills brought them to a defile commanded by a tall rock, on which two Lushais with flintlocks stood guard. The hill where Rothangpuia's village was sited was reached by means of a precarious bamboo ladder stretched across an abyss of several hundred feet. Arrived safely on the other side, they climbed towards the summit and encountered forty or fifty surly Lushais, armed with spears and muskets of George III vintage, each wearing a single cloth, white with a blue transverse stripe or dark blue striped with crimson or yellow. Their long black hair was gathered at the back in a chignon, and some had coloured feathers thrust through pierced ears. The guides who had gone ahead returned to report that the chief would admit Lewin, but not his armed escort.

Taking with him only Fuzlah and his hill boy Adupah as interpreter, he advanced towards the village, the entrance being approached through a stockaded passage lined with armed men. The houses were scattered at all levels over the hillside, but what appeared to be the main street, thronged with people, led to the *zawlbuk*, or bachelors' house, which faced that of the chief, a thatched barn-like structure whose front verandah was adorned with blackened animal skulls. A meal of pork and rice was sent to them in the *zawlbuk*, where they spent an anxious night, Lewin and Fuzlah taking it in turns to sleep and watch. They were startled at dawn by the bellowing of mithan being led out of the village to graze in the forest.

Soon after sunrise Lewin was summoned to the chief's house and, stooping to enter through the low doorway, found himself in a long room, the walls of which were lined with seated figures. *Zu*-pots stood in a line down the centre of the room. In a recess at the far end surrounded by lesser chiefs and elders sat Rothangpuia, a small, dark, athletic man with melancholy eyes, huddled in a shawl of homespun against the morning chill. In silence, a mat was indicated where Lewin should sit, and for a while no one spoke. Then with a grunt Rothangpuia opened the proceedings by asking Lewin, through the interpreter,

why he had brought armed men to his village. He listened expressionlessly to the explanation that the men were for protection against the dangers of the road. Even when Lewin displayed the presents he had brought – scarlet broadcloth, cotton sheeting, beads and mirrors – the chiefs still sat impassively.

'I am glad to hear,' said Lewin, 'that Rothangpuia had no part in the recent outrages. I am come in consequence to confirm the friendship between us.' Receiving no response, he continued: 'The prevention of such occurrences is my duty. When not preventable, we can punish our enemies – as Rothangpuia knows is true.'

The chief took a gulp of rice-spirit from a brass cup, then – this is one of Lewin's taller stories – asked if it were true that the British had a charm against shot and steel. Lewin, who had made careful plans to demonstrate just such a power, confirmed that it was true. Calling for a gun, he had it charged with powder, then took a bullet which he marked with a cross. He rammed it home and had the gun primed.

'Now,' he said, 'fire it at my chest.'

A Lushai took the weapon and, at a nod from Rothangpuia, took careful aim from a range of ten yards – Lewin meanwhile covering his eyes with his arm – and fired. Lewin staggered, then putting his hand to his mouth took from it the marked bullet and handed it round amid cries of astonishment.

The idea for 'that juggling trick', as Ruskin called it, had come from an account Lewin had read of the exploits of the French conjuror Robert Houdin among the Arabs. It required no more than the palming of the real bullet and its replacement by one made of wax and coated with black lead, which disintegrated when the gun was fired. Assuming the story is true and, if so, that Rothangpuia was taken in – either of which may reasonably be doubted – the joke broke the ice, and before the day was out an alliance had been concluded between them, duly ratified by the sacrifice of a mithan and further sealed by the consumption of quantities of *zu*.

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Unfortunately, though true to his oath, Rothangpuia had no influence over the Sailos, with whom his tribe was at enmity. Lewin's hopes of reaching some accommodation with them rose when messengers arrived from Savunga, the most powerful of their chiefs, saying that he wished to talk with him; but only minor chiefs turned up at the rendezvous, and all they wanted was presents of gunpowder and money, so despite much oath-taking nothing tangible came of the meeting. For the most

part the Lushais remained aloof in their far hills, beyond Lewin's jurisdiction, and it was clear that military measures would have to be taken one day if the reality of British power was to be brought home to them. Meantime, he seized every opportunity of learning their customs and language – like his grandfather he was a fine linguist – so as to be prepared when the moment for action came.

Problems now began to crowd upon him nearer home, in his own Chittagong Hill Tracts, for in attempting to better the lot of the people entrusted to his care he ran foul of the three most powerful rajahs in the district, who saw in his activities a threat to their own prerogatives. First they caused forged complaints about his administration to be laid before the Commissioner at Chittagong and, when this failed of its object, had poison-pen letters sent to the seat of government in Calcutta – familiar tactics, doubtless instigated by the Bengali lawyers who were a major pest in the province. An inquiry was held and, on Lewin being exonerated, one of the rajahs – in fact the Chakma rani whose name was Kalindi – sent men to his house one night to spear him. Luckily, he was a light sleeper, and a few shots from his revolver saw off his would-be assassins. Rothangpuia, hearing of his troubles, invited him to take up residence in his own territory, where he could protect him, an invitation which, though touched, Lewin had to decline.

Lewin's reforming zeal also failed to find favour in government circles. They grudged every rupee he succeeded in extracting from them for the founding of schools and other welfare schemes in the Hill Tracts, and his style of administration was anathema to the bureaucratic mind. But Lewin was convinced that the only way of dealing with the tribes, to whom printed regulations meant nothing, was through personal influence, and the benevolent despotism he exercised over them was a form of rule they understood. Was he not their chief? Perhaps Lewin's greatest service to the people was to have all Indian money-lenders and lawyers expelled and permanently debarred from the hills. In criminal cases he looked to tribal custom rather than the penal code, and in civil cases also he exercised his powers with humanity. He liked to cite as an example of enlightened administration of justice a case that had been heard by one of the chiefs.

A young wife had presented herself before him, pleading for a divorce from her husband on the ground of his unreasonable jealousy, which the husband had sought to justify by giving examples of her flirtatiousness with other men. It happened to be the cold season, and the chief hearing the case ordered the pair to be stripped, only allowing the wife to retain her shift, and shut up together for the night

in an empty guest-house, saying he would pronounce judgment next day. On their clothes being returned to them in the morning, instead of presenting themselves before the chief to hear his verdict, they slipped away together, hand in hand.

At this time Lewin began, on informal occasions, to adopt the dress of the hill people, wearing a coloured waist-cloth instead of trousers and going barefoot. He stayed in their houses, ate their food and, as will be seen, appears to have bound himself even more closely to them. 'Going native', such behaviour would have been called in Calcutta, and it is true that only an Englishman of unusual integrity could have met the hill folk on their own terms without losing caste; but Lewin was such a person. 'Wherever I went among the people I was hospitably entertained, fed, and fêted; in return I kept open house for all who came to see me.'

He obtained permission to move his headquarters from Chandragona forty miles further into the hills to Rangamati, a site pleasantly situated in a bend of the Karnaphuli, where on a cliff overlooking the river the local tribes built him a house of bamboo fastened to wooden posts, its floor made of withies. Nearby were constructed police barracks, law courts and treasury, a bazaar sprang up, and soon a little township came into being. Still the rani pursued him with her malignity and sent her son to Calcutta to lay further accusations against him before the Lieutenant-Governor, demanding Lewin's dismissal. A second inquiry was ordered, and again he was exonerated, though his tendency to cut corners in breach of the sacred regulations was duly noted. Lewin went on as before, undeterred, ruling his little kingdom according to his own lights, determined to help the people raise themselves at their own pace without letting in the evils of civilization, a word Lewin always used in a depreciatory sense.

Then his health broke down, and in 1869 he was ordered to England on leave.

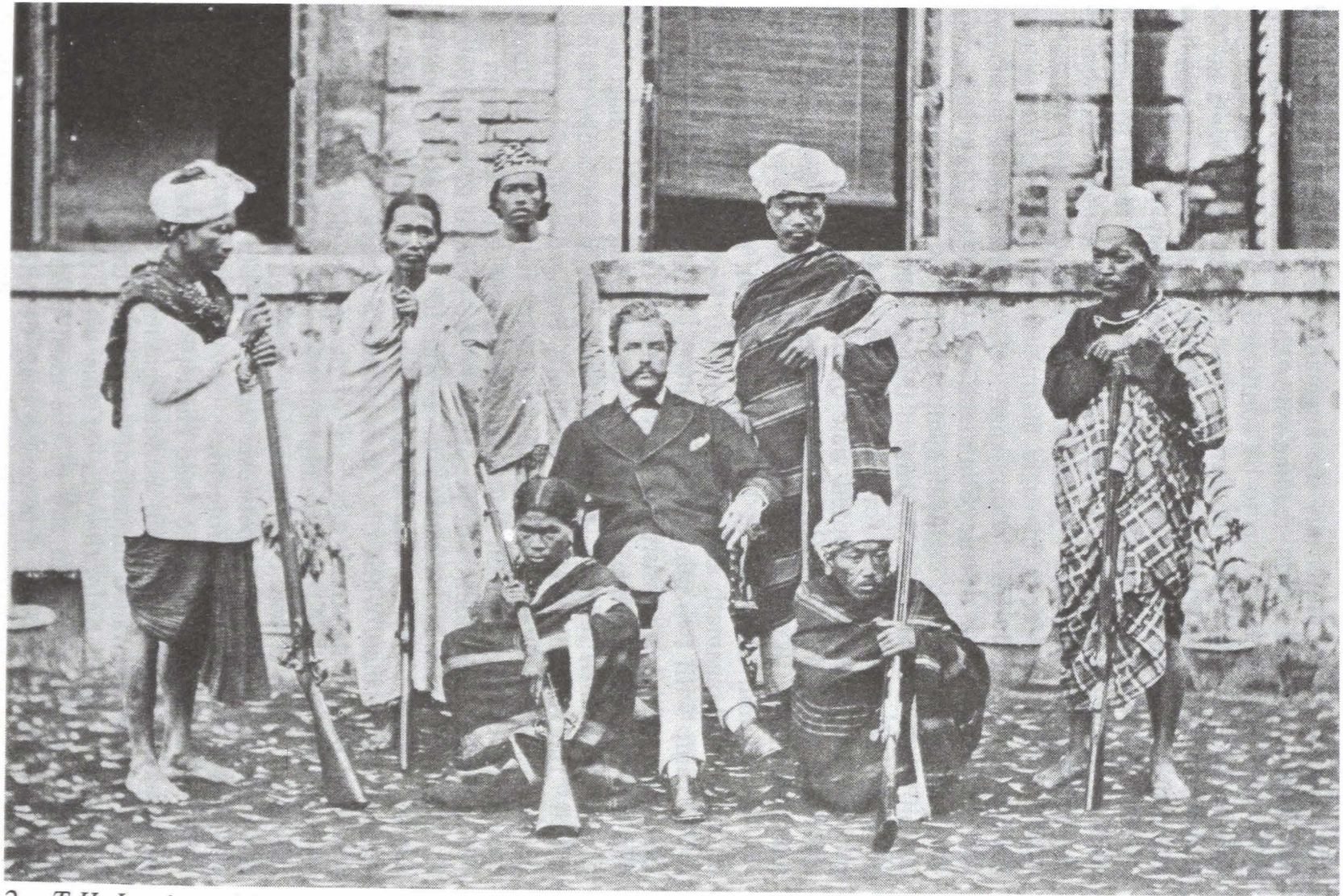
2

Lewin of the Lushais (II)

Back in Calcutta in January 1871, Lewin learnt that his frontier was in a disturbed condition, and he was ordered to return to his post at Rangamati at once. There had been Lushai raids along the Cachar and Chittagong borders, tea gardens had been destroyed, and a number of people, Europeans as well as garden labourers and frontier police, had been killed. Dr Winchester had been killed on his own tea garden at Alexandrapur when it had been attacked by men of the Haolong clan, and his six-year-old daughter Mary carried off with other captives to their distant hills. At last, Lewin was informed, when the rains were over a full-scale expedition was to be mounted against the Lushais. Although one of its tasks was to punish the villages responsible for the recent raids, its main objectives were not retaliatory but to secure the release of the captives and, by convincing the tribes of the reality of British power, to establish friendly relations with them on a permanent basis.

The Lushai Expeditionary Force was to consist of two columns. The Left or Cachar Column under Brigadier-General Bourchier and having Mr Edgar the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar as its Political Officer would advance from Silchar and proceed against the villages of chiefs Lalbura and Vanolel and those of Vanolel's sons Lenkam and Poiboi in the north and north-western parts of the hills. Its Senior Staff Officer was Colonel Roberts, later Field-Marshal Lord Roberts of Kandahar. The Right or Chittagong Column under Brigadier-General Brownlow and having Lewin as its Political Officer would travel by various river-craft up the Karnaphuli and strike north-west across the hills towards the villages of the Sailo clan, in particular that of its most powerful chief Savunga, and then against those of the Haolongs who had kidnapped Mary Winchester. It is with the fortunes of the Chittagong Column that this portrait of Lewin is concerned.

From the moment of his return to Rangamati he was constantly on the move, visiting the widely scattered villages in his tract in order to enrol guides, interpreters and above all coolies to accompany



2. *T.H. Lewin and Lushai chiefs*

the column. At headquarters the augmented Frontier Police had to be drilled and trained in readiness for the expedition. His alliance with chief Rothangpuia had to be confirmed, for Lewin envisaged his playing a vital rôle in the operations that lay ahead. It was a hectic period during which Lewin's health suffered; and, to depress him further, his new violin fell to pieces owing to the damp.

On 28 October he went down to Chittagong to report to General Brownlow, whom he found to be 'a gentlemanly, refined-looking man in the prime of life, with a genial smile and a kindly blue eye, which occasionally shot forth an eagle gleam'. From the despatches the general sent back during the campaign to Army Headquarters in Delhi for the information of the Commander-in-Chief his own character emerges as that of a thoughtful, sympathetic person, capable of firm action when the situation demanded it, but preferring to achieve his ends by negotiation and forbearance. Under Lewin's guidance he quickly discarded the accepted view of the Lushais as cruel savages and came to regard them with an amused affection. His despatches are also sprinkled with welcome touches of humour.

The column assembled at Kasalong seventeen miles up the Karnaphuli from Rangamati, and on 12 November Rothangpuia turned up in the camp with two minor chiefs and was introduced to the general. Having promised his assistance he was assured that after the soldiers had left the hills a police guard would be stationed at his village as a portection against reprisals. He stayed three days in the camp, 'during which,' the general noted, 'he was chiefly engaged in drinking rum'. Canoes paddled by the hillmen Lewin had recruited took the force upriver to Demagri, which had been cleared and stockaded as an advanced base. An incident not reported by the general in his despatch to headquarters was his visit with Lewin to Rothangpuia's village nearby, when a mithan was killed in his honour and *zu* drunk to cement the alliance. When the general had gone back to camp Lewin remained behind to attend a council of the village elders which, their tongues loosened by the consumption of more *zu*, lasted well into the night. When it was over the chief's wife led up her ten-year-old son and placed his hands between those of Lewin in token that she accepted him as the boy's protector.

Being at enmity with the Sailo chiefs, Rothangpuia was unable to undertake messages to them. Besides making inroads in the force's stock of rum, he availed himself of the medical treatment provided at the field hospital, but otherwise at this early stage proved, in the general's words, to be an ally of the most passive description. For Lewin it was particularly frustrating that, despite all his efforts, the

Sailos kept their distance, refusing to parley.

Beyond Demagri there are rapids and falls which had to be circumvented by dragging the boats and stores over timber slides constructed on the hillside. Camp was made at a deserted village, from which the column advanced via Vanhnuna's ghat to the Belkai *jhums*. By good fortune on 9 December Liangura, a minor chief belonging to Rothangpuia's clan and married to a daughter of Savunga, was captured in an ambush. His wife and child who were with him were made over to Rothangpuia to be held as hostages while Liangura was sent to a neighbouring chief, Vanhlula, with the message that the Sailos would not be harmed if they surrendered the captives they held and allowed the column to advance unopposed into the Haolong country. The reply he brought back was uncompromising: they would not treat with the general concerning the release of the captives until the last soldier had left the hills. Vanhlula's attitude was made unmistakeably clear when Lewin, strolling one evening towards the village, was sent hastily back to camp with a bullet whistling past his head. The village was attacked on the 14th and destroyed, several Lushais being killed in the skirmish, whereupon Vanhlula and his people decamped northwards.

By now the river had been left behind, and the force was wholly dependent for its supplies on the corps of coolies plying back and forth along the mountain paths. In order to cut down on their loads the soldiers were lightly equipped, no tents being taken and baggage reduced to a minimum. The rations they carried were augmented by stocks of grain and the occasional mithan looted from the villages they visited. Christmas Day was observed in traditional English style, the officers dining with the general at advance headquarters which had been moved up to the captured village, on fare which included a Christmas pudding made of marmalade, blackcurrant jam, mithan suet, crushed army biscuits and ginger essence, crowned with flaming brandy.

Since the Sailos still declined to treat, detachments were sent out to destroy their villages and burn all the grain found in the *jhum*-houses. By the end of the month the force had ascended the Taurang Klang which overlooked on all sides a turbulent sea of hill ranges intersected by forest-clogged valleys. From this point of vantage it was hoped to communicate by heliograph with the Cachar Column operating to the north of them, but there came no answering flash to their signals. Instead they observed in the distance their next objectives: Liangura's village and a little further away Savunga's larger one. The seven-mile march to the former, which took as many hours, was

described in the general's despatch.

> Where the path did not ascend or descend at an angle of 35° it followed the tortuous bed of a mountain torrent overhung by trees and precipices, and blocked up with rocks and boulders, through which we waded and stumbled for three miles, chilled by the cold clammy atmosphere, and feeling that fifty determined men might do as they liked with us, for there was no possibility of protecting our flanks.

Before being attacked the village was shelled by the two guns of the Mountain Battery, a display that impressed Rothangpuia who, watching the shells explode, exclaimed to Lewin: 'You fire one gun out of another – who can fight against you?' The village was stoutly defended, and in the assault on it, which was made on 3 January 1872, the column suffered ten casualties. But the bursting shells had also impressed the Sailos, who at last gave signs of wanting to parley; though it was not until Savunga's had also been shelled and taken that the chiefs started to come in and submit.

The column made camp in Savunga's now deserted village high on the hillside commanding a view of Bengkhuaia's and Sangbunga's, the Haolong villages thought to be harbouring Mary Winchester and the other captives taken in the tea-garden raid the previous year. It was at this stage of the campaign that Rothangpuia, whose wife was a Haolong and whose sister was married to a Haolong chief, proved the value of his alliance. His first attempt to persuade the chiefs to parley was unsuccessful. Accompanied by Lewin and with an escort of Gurkhas he made for the nearest village but, as they approached, the inhabitants, following the example of the Sailos, set fire to their own houses and melted away. Though impatient at the delay, the general agreed to stay his advance into Haolong country for a little longer, to allow Rothangpuia one more chance to reach them by a more southerly route. He made use of the delay by bringing up much-needed stores, sending out survey parties, and destroying the last remaining Sailo village, that of Savunga's youngest son Laljika.

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Meanwhile Rothangpuia, having sent messages ahead, set out with Lewin's police subadar Mahomed Azim for the Haolong villages, and on the way they met emissaries bringing with them Mary Winchester, whom they handed over. She is described as being a pretty child with hazel eyes and a fair complexion – though she was Eurasian – dressed in a brief skirt of blue cloth. While Rothangpuia went on to try and win over the Haolong chiefs, Azim conducted Mary to Rothangpuia's

village, from which place it was arranged she would be collected by an officer from Demagri and taken into the care of the Commissioner at Chittagong. Legend has it that, when he arrived, he found her sitting on a log, lording it over a group of Lushai boys at her feet. She appeared to have forgotten the English language until the officer, putting his hand into his pocket, asked her if she would like a sweet, at which she unhesitatingly put out a grubby hand.

Azim then rejoined Rothangpuia and, ignoring the orders he had received not to place himself in the power of the Haolongs, accompanied him to the village of Saipuia, a brother of Vandula the principal chief of the southern Haolongs. From there he sent back a message to the general, still kicking his heels at Savunga's, saying that the chiefs were ready to submit and hand over the rest of the captives, but again urging him not to advance, for fear they might misinterpret the move and change their minds. It is to his credit that, although further delay entailed serious logistical problems, the general once more agreed to restrain his impatience, though according to Lewin he chafed like a caged lion. Rothangpuia and Azim returned to camp and were congratulated on their successful mission.

The general was sitting in his shelter a few nights later, playing bridge with Lewin and some other officers, when shots were heard outside followed by a cry, and rushing out they found a Gurkha sentry with a serious gunshot wound in the chest. A party of Lushais had stolen up in the darkness, fired at point-blank range, and made off again into the jungle. Since there had been no sign of the chiefs coming in, the general, unable to tolerate inaction any longer, ordered an advance to be made across the Dalesari valley into Haolong country. Rothangpuia was once more sent ahead to try and induce the chiefs to submit, and once more an attempt to make contact with the Cachar Column failed. Not far from the Taldang stream a halt was called, and the force made camp at the village of Chungmama.

That night as he lay asleep in his shelter Lewin was woken by a voice speaking in Lushai from the darkness:

'Thangliena! Thangliena! Is it peace?' Then, when there was no answer: 'The great chiefs will be at the Taldang stream at dawn, but you must come alone, without any soldiers. Thangliena! Do you hear?'

His hand on his revolver, Lewin replied: 'I hear'; but when he got up to question his visitor, there was no sign of him.

Early next morning while the camp still slept he made his way alone to the Taldang and, looking over his shoulder, saw that several Lushais had emerged silently from the jungle and were following

him. A felled tree-trunk served as a bridge over the stream, some twenty feet wide, and where the slope rose on the far side a crowd of Lushais were standing, armed with guns and spears. An old man led him by the hand through the throng that murmured his name as he passed, 'Thangliena! Thangliena!', and brought him before the chiefs, seated in a clearing surrounded by their followers. They rose to greet him, Bengkhuaia presenting him with the sword from his waist, his brother Sangbunga with his gun. In exchange, Lewin ceremoniously handed over his sword and dagger, and as they seated themselves Lewin knew that the game was won. He told them the general's peace terms – that they must give up their captives, allow free access to their villages, and take an oath to raid no more – allowing them until the morrow to make up their minds, then returned to camp at Chungmama.

One might be tempted to conclude that the account of Lewin's tense meeting with the chiefs by the Taldang stream, as told in his book, had been heightened at the publisher's request, were it not for a passage in the general's despatches which brings Lewin vividly to life. The chiefs had succumbed, he wrote, to the 'animal magnetism of Captain Lewin' – a remarkable tribute for a general to pay to one of his relatively junior officers – and the phrase surely reveals the secret of Lewin's extraordinary power over the hill people. He possessed to an unusual degree what today would be called charisma.

When the oaths had been taken with due ceremony Chungmama was invaded by crowds of Lushais – men, women and children – bringing with them for barter such local produce as chickens, eggs, cloth and pipes and showing a childlike interest in the many strange marvels the soldiers had brought into their country from the big unknown world outside. All enmity forgotten, they were eager, voluble and friendly. In his last despatch General Brownlow, having described with dry humour seeing some of the captives led into camp 'weeping bitterly at parting from their captors', wrote of the Lushais:

> Their domestic and tribal arrangements appear most happy; so much so, that I am not surprised to hear the majority of the captives, whom they treat as their own people, would look upon a return to civilization as a doubtful boon.

One can only wonder what the anti-slavery lobby at Westminster made of his words, if they ever read his despatches. Watching the Lushais making free of his camp, the men wearing plaids of a dark tartan set off by a highland-type sporran, he noted their fine physique indicating health and freedom from want, their natural intelligence and character,

and their genial disposition. It looks as if Lewin had been exercising his animal magnetism on the general, so to bring him round to his own view of his beloved Lushais.

When, having established a small stockaded post at Demagri, the column began its long journey back to Chittagong, the memory of the refined-looking, gentlemanly general who took so much interest in them must have done much to ameliorate any bitterness the Lushais felt over the destruction of their villages. Moreover, they learnt with satisfaction that Thangliena himself was to settle permanently among them, as their chief of chiefs.

The general was able to report that his force had accomplished all the tasks that had been entrusted to him. Two powerful tribes had been brought to submission, the guilty villages had been punished, the chiefs had sworn the oaths required of them, three thousand square miles of unknown country had been mapped, and more than one hundred captives had been, however unwillingly, rescued. Among them had been Mary Winchester, who had been taken from Chittagong to Calcutta and thence to Scotland, where she was brought up by her late father's family. Ten years after her release she is heard of again as having passed with credit an examination at the Royal Moray College; and in a private letter written on 5 October 1912 Field-Marshal Lord Roberts informed his correspondent that he had heard that Mary was married and living in London. Clearly she had taken no harm from her sojourn among the Lushais.

*

General Brownlow in his final despatch had been fulsome in his praise of Lewin's services during the campaign.

> It is due to Captain Lewin's strong personal influence over these tribes, his knowledge of their language and habits, added to his patience and sagacity in dealing with them, that a single chief submitted or a single captive was recovered.

This testimonial was echoed in the pages of the Calcutta *Observer*, which ascribed the success of the expedition, not to the soldiers, but to the influence over the tribes

> . . . of a political officer, Captain Lewin – but for whose tact and good luck on the occasion, both the columns would have had to return to quarters with the satisfaction of knowing that they had left the work of the expedition unfinished, and perhaps so much so that another expedition to reduce the Haolongs would still be a necessity. The military commanders did their work well, but assuredly it was the political officer

with the Right Column who gave to the expedition its claim to be considered to have completely effected all that had been expected of it.

Yet when decorations and promotions were showered on others who took part in the operation, including Mr Edgar the Political Officer with the Cachar Column who received the insignia of the Star of India for his services, Lewin's name was significantly omitted from the lists. His services were accorded no official recognition whatever. This deliberate slight might possibly be accounted for by the ill-will which Lewin's independent manner of administering his tract of hills had generated in the corridors of bureaucracy in Calcutta. But, as Lewin's aunt Frances wrote to him many years later, the injustice of the government's conspicuous failure to recognize his services during the Lushai Campaign remained 'mysterious'. An attempt will be made later in this chapter to elucidate the mystery.

Lewin returned to Rangamati, his prestige among the hill people greatly enhanced, and resumed charge of his district. It had been decided, so as to encourage the Sailo and Haolong chiefs to stay true to their oaths, to establish a permanent post at Demagri, and at the beginning of the rains Lewin travelled there up the swollen Karnaphuli in order to choose a suitable site for it. Considerable stocks of rice had been left by the expedition, and these he allowed the Lushais to draw on, since most of their own stocks had been destroyed by the soldiers. Before he left the place he visited Rothangpuia's village and found him in great heart, his prestige also much enhanced by the part he had played in the campaign. He was to receive a Certificate acknowledging his services written in gold letters and signed by the Viceroy himself, which to his regret was later destroyed during a Lakher raid on his village. He died in 1876.

At Rangamati during the rains Lewin's work prospered. 'Numbers of our quondam enemies, the Sailos, came in to visit me,' he wrote, 'for my name had become great in Lushai-land: they called me father, and named children "Thangliena" after me, it being, as they averred, a name of power and good fortune.' In the winter he made an exhilarating tour through unknown country to the south in order to demarcate the boundary with Arakan and then returned to Demagri, where the new post was under construction.

It rested in a bend of the river where it flows through a narrow gorge forming a still pool known as the Tlabung Licheng at the foot of two small falls, a range of hills to the east sheltering it from the cold winds. A police barracks and a hospital were built on the tongue of land formed by the loop in the river, a stout stockade across the neck protecting it from attack. Lewin's house was for some reason located

outside the stockade, on a small hill overlooking the pool and the bazaar on the far side of it. A smaller, Lushai-style house was built for him by Rothangpuia's people on the Sirte Klang to the west, a thousand feet higher than Demagri, a place whose loneliness and wild grandeur held a fascination for Lewin. The house was made of undressed logs, the walls being mud-plastered outside and lined with bamboo matting on the inside. Pleasantly cool in summer, though draughty, it was uninhabitable at the height of the rains. His household consisted entirely of hill people.

At this point the biographer is tempted to go beyond the written evidence and rely on hints, inferences and hearsay; for there is a tradition in the hills that Lewin had taken a Lushai wife. It seems absolutely in character that he should have done so, and done so openly. What greater proof could he show of his love for the people? That it would be regarded with disapproval by his fellow Europeans in the service of the government of India, who preferred that these things should be done surreptitiously, would have counted as nothing with him. Such a supposition would provide a solution of the 'mystery' of his receiving no recognition for his services during the Lushai Campaign; for in such underhand ways do bureaucrats vent their spite on those who do not run with the herd. And would it not also explain the pleasure he took in his lonely house on the Sirte Klang if his household there included a girl whom he loved? Tradition has it that he called her Dari, which is the diminutive of a number of Lushai girls'-names – Darthuami, Darthluangi, Dartangi – and that she was a village girl, not a chief's daughter.

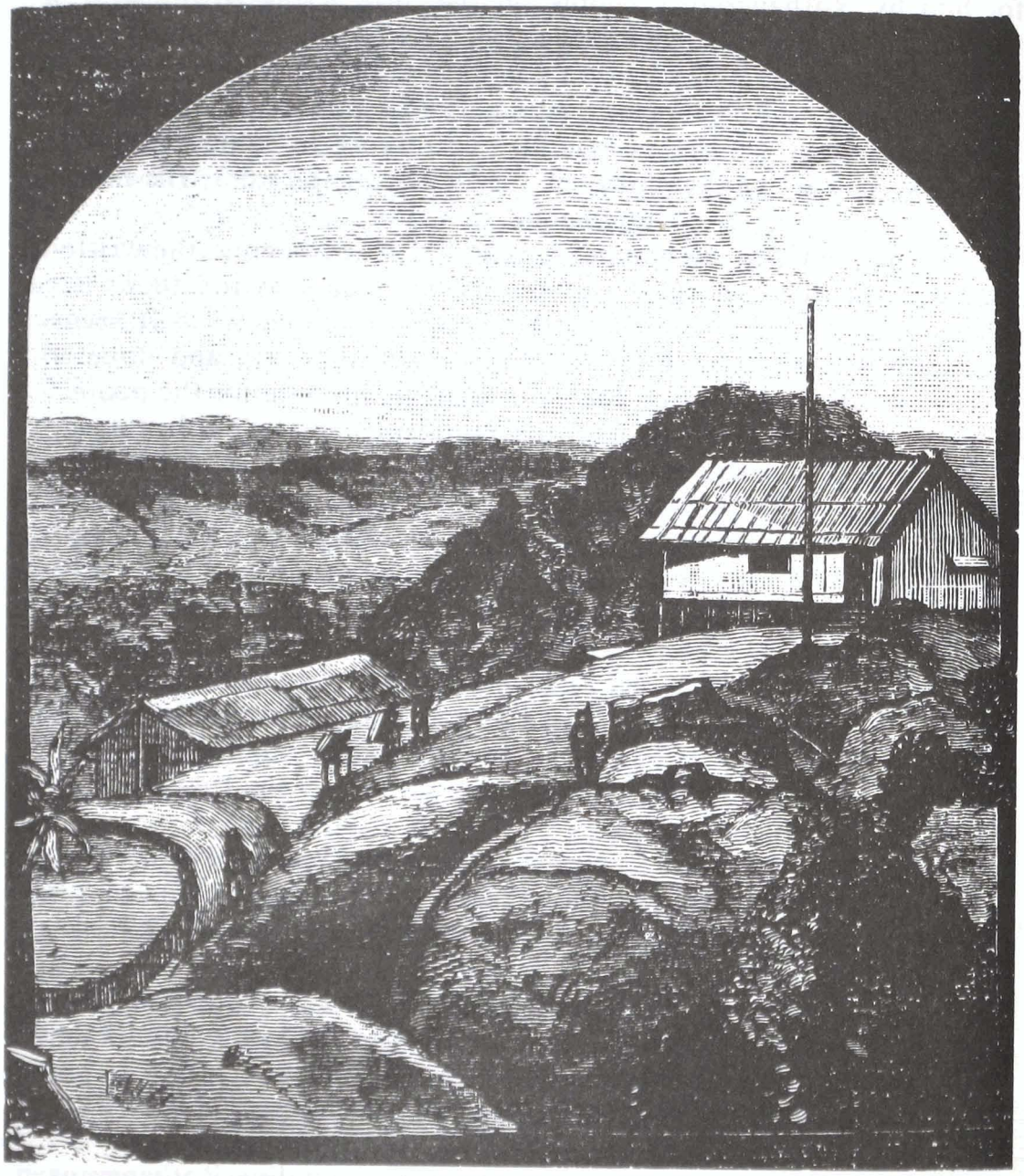
Lewin had long entertained the notion of taking some of the Sailo and Haolong chiefs on a trip to see the sights of Calcutta, in order to put their little world of hills in its proper perspective. They took a great deal of persuading.

'You say that the big chief in Calcutta, the Gubnor Gendel, is more powerful than you are?' said Saipuia, the Haolong chief. 'Is that the case, Thangliena?'

'Yes, the Viceroy is very great, certainly more powerful than I am.'

'Well, then, suppose he orders Saipuia to be speared?'

Saipuia was not among the seven chiefs, including Rothangpuia, who with twenty followers made the journey by steamer from Chittagong to Calcutta in the cold weather of 1874. Apparently unimpressed by whatever they saw, they remained highly suspicious, never allowing Lewin, the only person they trusted, for a moment out of their sight. Tent accommodation had been provided for them on the open *maidan* in Calcutta, and having seen them safely there Lewin had turned to



3. *Lewin's house on Sirte Klang*

mount the *tonga* that was to take him to the comforts of his club when he felt his coat-tails clutched firmly from behind. The chiefs had borne the sea journey with impassive fortitude, but this was too much. Another tent was pitched on the *maidan*, for Lewin.

The chiefs were received by the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, but declined to meet so powerful a personage as the Viceroy. They showed no emotion when they were shown the sights, and only shed their impassivity when taken for a hair-raising ride in a railway-engine made available to Lewin by the Traffic Manager of the East India Railway. They slept little, but sat together in one of the tents talking deep into the night, longing for their far-off hills. After a fortnight of it they were glad to set off for home.

But Lewin did not accompany them, was never to see them or their hills again. Instead, he acted for a short period as Superintendent of Cooch Bihar, then returned to England, for good. There is another mystery here. It is true that he was disappointed that the proposals he had put forward for a reconstruction of the administration of his frontier had been turned down by Whitehall, so that he 'saw no chance of being able to carry out efficiently the work on which I had set my heart, to which I had pledged my faith, and for which I had worked so long'. Moreover, the strenuous life he had been leading for several years had seriously affected his health. At thirty-five his hair was already grizzled. But there must have been more to his abrupt departure than he chose to reveal in his memoirs. Dari, it is said, resumed her simple life as a village girl, refusing to be treated as the wife of a high official.

Soon after his return to England Lewin retired from the army with the honorary rank of lieutenant-colonel and a small pension, which he was able to supplement with his modest patrimony. In 1876 he married a widow Margaret Elliot whose daughter Daisy later married George Meredith's son. Both his wife and step-daughter were musicians. They settled at Parkhurst near Abinger Common in Surrey and had three children.

His work on behalf of the Lushais was not forgotten. In 1912 Colonel John Shakespear (who will be encountered in a later chapter) dedicated to him his study *The Lushei Kuki Clans*, referring to him as one 'who, after an absence of nearly forty years, is still affectionately remembered by the Lushais'. And in the Envoi to the 1912 edition of his own memoirs Lewin quotes a long letter, dated 25 April 1899, from the Reverend J. Herbert Lorrain, Missionary to the Lushais and compiler of the first dictionary of the Lushai language, who will also feature in a later chapter:

Your own influence with the Lushais is still felt. I do not think there is a man or woman in all those hills who does not know the name of Thangliena. . . . It is handed down from father to son, and they are never tired of singing your praises. . . . Some few we have met could boast that they had actually seen the great Thangliena in the flesh. One of them you will I am sure remember, the chief Savunga. He was very old, when first we knew him, and died about two years ago. . . . His grandson . . . still cherishes the double-barrel gun which his father, Lalngura, received from you when he accompanied you to Calcutta.

The Times of Thursday, 16 February 1916 carried a note at the foot of page 11 under the heading 'Indian Army Veterans', briefly recording Lewin's death, and in 1919 the Lushais erected a monument to him at Demagri on a site overlooking the Tlabung Licheng, a simple structure of stone with a portrait-bust of Lewin affixed to it and, underneath it, this inscription:

IN MEMORY OF

Lt. Colonel TOM HERBERT LEWIN, B.S.C.,

once Superintendent of these Hill Tracts

Born 1839. Died 1916.

He came to this people in 1865 & worked among them & for them nine years, when loss of health compelled him to return to England.

The people trusted & loved him for his sympathy & sense of justice, for his untiring interest in their welfare, & for his intrepid & dauntless courage.

He travelled in their unknown land, visiting their Chiefs, their villages, & their homes, alone & unafraid.

He was the first to interpret & write down their language preparing the way for schools & progress.

He studied & improved their agriculture & their laws & helped them in their difficulties.

The people knew him as THANGLIENA, Tom Lewin, & honoured him as a Chief.

They called him the LUSHAIS' FIRST WHITE FRIEND.

They built a home for him voluntarily in token of their devotion.

Their children now have voluntarily brought stones here
near where his house once stood & have helped the
one who knew him best of all, & who knew how
his heart was ever with the people, to build up
the stones to the memory of

THANGLIENA.

The monument may also serve to perpetuate the memory of the Lushai girl who for a while shared Lewin's life and characteristically preferred to remain anonymous.

3

Naga Battle Piece

Mr Damant was not a superstitious man. When he set out from Kohima that morning with his escort, leaving his wife in the care of the few other Europeans in the Station, his mind was on the expedition he planned to make soon into the Hathiagoria country. This was to be merely a precautionary visit to the Naga villages a few miles to the west whose inhabitants, members of the powerful Angami tribe, had in recent months shown signs of hostility towards the British garrison which the previous year had established an unwelcome headquarters in their hills nearby. There had been difficulty in procuring local coolies to carry supplies up from the plains. Stones had been thrown at the stockades, and a policeman shot. More recently, ominous rumours had reached him that arms and ammunition were being brought secretly to Khonoma, one of the villages he was now making for. It was as well to make sure that nothing serious was brewing so near his headquarters before starting on an expedition which would deplete the garrison of a large part of its fighting strength; but he was not unduly worried. The fact that it was the thirteenth of the month escaped his attention – 13 October 1879.

Guybon Henry Damant was more a scholar than a man of action. He had served in the Indian Civil Service in Cachar, Manipur and the Garo Hills, earning respect for his ability and high-mindedness, and for some months now had been Political Agent in the Naga Hills. He had published articles in learned journals on sword-worship in Cachar, the Manipuri alphabet, the rights of succession among the Garos and, concerning the Nagas, the curious Thangkhul ring. Amongst his papers in Kohima were a study of the Angamis and the Manipuri dictionary he had compiled, neither destined to be published.

His escort that day comprised twenty-one sepoys and sixty-five police; three of his domestic servants accompanied him. The rainy season was nearing its end, and the air was crisp as they made their way down the hill and along the road that led between elaborately terraced rice-fields on the slopes of the surrounding hills towards

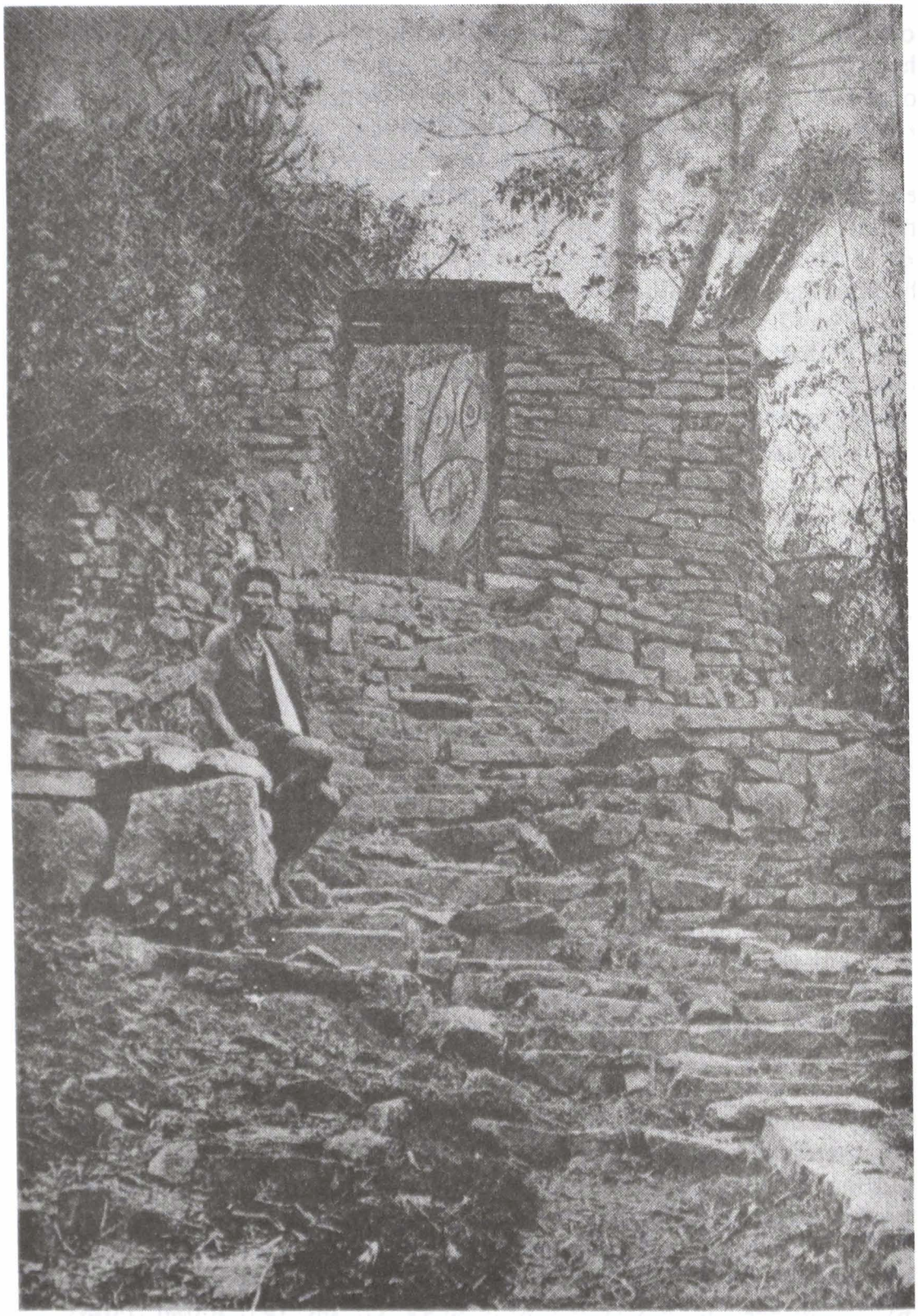
Jotsoma, an Angami village three miles away, where they camped for the night. Word had already been sent forward requiring the villagers to collect materials for the huts the party would need, and to provide coolies to carry the baggage on the next day's march to Khonoma.

Angami villages were divided into separate *khels*, or clans, often at feud with one another, and in the morning Sata, the spokesman of a friendly Jotsoma *khel*, stopped Mr Damant on the road and urged him not to approach Khonoma by the lower path, through the quarter of the Marema *khel*. Falling on his knees in front of him, he caught him by the hand and pleaded with him; but Mr Damant assured him with a smile that there was no danger, and Sata knowing what lay ahead could only shrug and turn away. He had done his best. The warning had, however, impressed the officers of the escort, who suggested that, if he was not willing to take the higher route, he should summon the chiefs to meet him at the village boundary. But Mr Damant stubbornly resisted them and, like the doomed hero in a Greek tragedy, advanced wilfully to accomplish his destiny.

Khonoma was a strongly fortified village of some 500 houses built on a high ridge. For twenty years its people had harboured a smouldering resentment against the British, who to curb an outbreak of Naga raiding into the plains had despatched a punitive expedition which attacked the village and burnt down many of its houses. The knowledge of this ill-feeling did not deter Mr Damant, who left the baggage and half his escort at the foot of the ridge and led the rest up the steep narrow track towards the village. The path, miry after a fall of rain, was flanked on one side by a high drystone wall, the hill falling away precipitously on the other. Taking no precautions whatever, he walked up to the village gate, on which were carved magic symbols designed to deter evil spirits and more tangible enemies. He found it barred.

There was a shot and then, as Mr Damant taking his rifle from his orderly raised it to his shoulder, another, the bullet striking him in the head, killing him instantly. A hail of bullets from the walls sent the forward escort scrambling for cover as a bugle sounded the Retire. Mr Damant's orderly bent over the body and took back the rifle but, already encumbered with his own and uncomfortably exposed to the withering fire, he gave up his attempt to remove the revolver from the dead man's belt and made off down the hill as the Nagas swarmed out from behind their defences.

All was confusion in the valley where the survivors assembled. Thirty-three of the escort had been killed, another nineteen wounded. Two of Mr Damant's servants were dead. Of the two Indian police officers one was dead, the other, Kare Singh, shot through the body.



4. *Khonoma gate and wall*

The jemadar in charge of the military detachment, who had only been in the hills a few days, was unable to impose his authority on his men, now thoroughly panicked and shot at from all sides. Without any order being given they broke up into small parties and scattered. Some sought refuge at Jotsoma where, chancing on a less friendly *khel* than Sata's, many were massacred. The wounded Kare Singh, who was a heavy man, was carried for some distance by his men, but as they were risking their lives he ordered them to abandon him. With the rest they took to the jungle, and those who were not hunted down by the exulting Nagas began to straggle back towards Kohima.

*

The Angamis were the most powerful and warlike of the Naga tribes, inhabiting a fertile tract of rolling country amid picturesque hills. Their population distributed amongst forty-six villages numbered about 30,000. Since the early eighteen-thirties they had fiercely opposed every British attempt to penetrate into their hills, and for forty years had responded to the official policy of concession and forbearance with insult, outrage and murder. Their villages built on the summits of hills were strongly fortified with ditches and walls loopholed for musketry, the approaches boobytrapped with pitfalls and *panjis*, sharp bamboo stakes driven into the ground at a slant, point outwards. A narrow path led up to a gate barred from within, surmounted by a guarded look-out post.

Tall and handsome, they cut their hair in a fringe over the forehead and tied it at the back in a knot bound in white cotton and beautified with hornbill feathers. Their dress was a kilt of dark blue or black cotton which, as a sign that they had killed a human being, they decorated with rows of cowrie shells; and a brightly patterned plaid thrown across the shoulders. They favoured ear-ornaments of various kinds, from the tusks of wild boar pointing backwards and fixed in place by a button dotted over with green beetles' wings and white seeds from which flowed a streamer of red-dyed goats' hair, to simpler ones made from feathers, brass or bunches of white cotton. Many materials could be threaded to make necklaces, and they wore arm-bands of ivory and leggings of red and yellow cane-work. Their womenfolk, pretty in early youth but through hard work in the fields and at home quickly fading, were less flamboyantly clothed; until marriage their heads were clean-shaven.

Although there were hereditary chiefs in each village, their power was limited, all important decisions being taken by committees of

elders and warriors of the exogamous *khels*. They did not, like other hill tribes, practise the wasteful slash-burn method of cultivation known as *jhumming*, but raised their rice crop in irrigated terraced fields shaped with great labour on the slopes of the neighbouring hills. A favourite item of their diet was dog-meat.

Their religion was animism, based on the belief that malevolent spirits inhabited all natural phenomena and had to be appeased by sacrifice. Their way of life centred on the blood-feud which involved them in an endless process, continuing from generation to generation, of senseless revenge-killing. A man's status was in proportion to the number of people – men, women and children – he had murdered; indeed, a special kudos attached to the killing of women and children, since that implied that the killer had penetrated into the very heart of the enemy's village. The victim's head was cut off and, after removal of the hair for personal adornment, later buried.

The Angamis did not act from premeditation but upon impulse, and it is doubtful whether the sequel to Mr Damant's murder was the result of any deliberate plan.

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A year after its establishment the Station at Kohima had still not been put in a proper state of defence. The settlement straggling along the top of the ridge had been enclosed by two irregular-shaped stockades, each some 1200 feet in circumference, constructed of rough wooden palisades between eight and ten feet high. Loopholes had been cut every few feet but, since the stockades were not stepped, a man could only fire through them straight to his front; besides, it would have needed 400 men to defend the entire perimeter. There were broad gateways, but no gates had been made for them. Work had been begun on a defensive ditch, but this extended only to part of the eastern stockade, which enclosed the Regimental Lines of the detachment of the 43rd Assam Light Infantry and the unluxurious bungalow of their commanding officer Captain Reid, the coolie lines and court-house, and the well-appointed bungalow of Mr Cawley, the District Superintendent of Police and Assistant Political Officer. Within the western stockade lay the Police Lines and ammunition store, the bazaar, Mr Damant's bungalow, and the bungalow intended for the Civil Surgeon when one should be posted to Kohima.

The garrison after the departure of Mr Damant's escort consisted of sixty sepoys of the 43rd and seventy-two men of the Frontier Police, thirty-two of them recruits who had never handled a rifle. The

non-combatant camp-followers numbered more than three hundred, of whom four were English – Mrs Damant, Mrs Cawley and the two Cawley children.

The eastern stockade was overlooked from the north-east by the Naga village of Kohima containing some nine hundred houses built on a hill four hundred feet high overlooking a narrow valley. In the late afternoon of 14 October it was reported to a head constable who was up in the village that firing had been heard from Mozema, a village lying more or less in the same direction as Khonoma, but it was not until some hours later when the first survivors came in that the garrison learnt of the disaster. Their own perilous situation was at once realized and the Station, so far as possible, put in a state of defence. Letters calling for assistance were hastily written by Mr Cawley and despatched by the hands of police constables who volunteered for the service, one to Mr Hinde the Extra-Assistant Commissioner at Wokha fifty-seven miles to the north, the other to Colonel Johnstone, Political Agent in Manipur more than a hundred miles to the south.

The decision was taken to abandon the western stockade, since there were insufficient men to defend them both; and because the buildings there would give cover to an attacking enemy Mr Cawley – who assumed command since Captain Reid was apparently ill – spent an exhausting night with his police tearing down houses and supervising the removal of the camp-followers of many races to the eastern stockade. The Nepalese coolies were set to work bringing across arms, ammunition and stores. It was a scene of mud, darkness and chaos, made worse whenever more survivors struggled in, to be surrounded by the distraught wives whose wailing added to the night's turmoil.

In the small hours – the Nagas' favourite time for attack – the soldiers and police, tired and mud-stained, stood-to along the perimeter of the stockade, but the expected attack did not materialize. The men of Khonoma weary of the hunt had returned to their village with the spoils and were celebrating their victory.

The garrison was to have one day's reprieve, which was spent in improving the defences by digging trenches and constructing earthworks, in instructing the police recruits how to fire a rifle, and in taking stock. Due to the difficulties of transport, the only food stores in the civil quarter were 240 lb. of rice and some Naga *dal*, a coarse bean used for cattle fodder, which were insufficient rations for a single day. With more foresight, the 43rd had a month's food in stock, but shared with the police and camp-followers even on half-rations this would last for less than a fortnight. The water situation was even more

desperate. With total disregard for the possibility of a siege, the Station was supplied by means of a wooden aqueduct which carried spring water from a hill two and a half miles away. No more than a nudge would be required to cut off the supply. About thirty yards down the hill facing Kohima village was a sluggish spring surrounded by jungle from which the water seeped into a small excavated pool. There were no storage tanks.

That night the Nagas from Khonoma crept up to the western stockade and, with difficulty owing to the rain, set fire to the dismantled buildings. Fortunately, the wind blowing from the east carried the flames away from the eastern stockade, but Mr Cawley was taking no chances and ordered a party of police to put a match to Mr Damant's bungalow and the one intended for the Civil Surgeon, which were dangerously close. So perished Mr Damant's manuscripts.

In the morning the Nagas, now reinforced from other hostile villages, encircled the stockade and from the surrounding jungle kept up a continuous rifle-fire, so that the Regimental Lines, Captain Reid's bungalow, the court-house and the coolie lines all had to be evacuated. While the sepoys and police manning the trenches returned the attackers' fire, many of the non-combatants were led by Mrs Cawley to her bungalow where they cowered and wailed. In the first days of her widowhood Mrs Damant officiating for the absent doctor took charge of the wounded. When resting from their work the English ladies found shelter in a small house where the Cawley children had been left in the care of some sepoys' wives. Boxes, tables, bundles of clothes and empty tins were piled round the walls as a protection against the spent bullets that came singing over. The firing died down in the evening, and everyone snatched a few hours sleep, disturbed from time to time by the bugle calling the Alarm.

On the morning of the nineteenth it was seen that the Nagas to the west of the stockade were massing in strength for an attack. A sally was made by men of the 43rd which broke them up, but soon the attackers reassembled in even greater numbers. Later, a skirmishing party was sent out against the Nagas attacking from the east, to allow the Nepalese coolies to fetch water from the spring. It was quite inadequate for the garrison's needs but, muddy as it was, served to keep them alive for a little longer. The police and camp-followers had been on quarter-rations, the military on half; now all were placed on quarter-rations.

Survivors continued to come in. One of them was the orderly who had retrieved Mr Damant's rifle, another his Naga bearer boy, who was later taken into service by the Cawleys. Miraculously, Kare Singh was

able to crawl from the jungle and across the open space under a hail of bullets to the stockade, where he was taken in and his wounds tended by Mrs Damant. Sata from Jotsoma brought in seven more of the fugitives.

Tired, hungry and thirsty, the besieged garrison were heartened when Mr Hinde with seventy police arrived unscathed after a gallant march from Wokha. It had been the watchers on the roofs of Kohima village who had given warning of their approach by calling to the attackers: 'Lots of sepoys coming. Hide yourselves'; which made the Nagas hold back for long enough to allow the party to slip through. This development so disconcerted the Nagas that they left the garrison alone all next day, enabling the weary men to cook and eat their *chapattis* in peace. Water was again fetched from the spring and stored in groundsheets and any available tins: a wise move, because that evening it was found that the Nagas had tried to poison this meagre water-supply by throwing into the pool a decomposing human head.

*

Colonel Johnstone (later Major-General Sir James Johnstone, KCSI), the Political Agent at Manipur more than a hundred miles to the south, was a stocky, bullet-headed man of thirty-eight with a spade-shaped beard. During his twenty years in India he had fought in the Bhutan Campaign of 1864-66, had been in charge of elephant *keddahs* in Orissa, and for three years had been Political Agent to Keonjhar State where at his own expense he had introduced new methods of rice and flax cultivation, established a herd of pedigree cattle, founded schools and provided clothes for the women who had hitherto worn no more than Eve had done after the Fall. He later served as Political Agent in the Naga Hills based at Samaguting. In character he was forthright, independent and inflexible, never flinching from disobeying an order he knew to be wrong, and invariably, against whatever opposition, getting his own way. He believed firmly that the administration of British India should be by the old-fashioned method of personal rule and was scathingly critical of the 'machine system' which was then spreading its uniform mediocrity throughout the Indian Civil Service.

Early in the morning of 21 October he received a report from the Manipuri outpost on the borders of the Naga Hills that Nagas had attacked either Kohima or a British party elsewhere and had killed a hundred men. Even allowing for inaccuracy and exaggeration, there was an air of authenticity about the report that spurred him into instant action. Ordering his permanent escort of the 34th Bengal

5. *Angami Naga*

Infantry to stand by, he demanded an immediate audience of the Maharajah from whom he secured the promise of 900 Manipuri soldiers with coolie transport. Word was at once sent out to the outlying villages. Before the next sunrise Mr Cawley's letter had been placed in his hands informing him of Mr Damant's death and of the siege of the garrison at Kohima.

The efficacy of personal rule was now amply demonstrated. His increased demand for 2000 soldiers was conceded by the Maharajah, who ordered the five alarm guns mounted on the palace walls to be fired as a signal to bring in every able-bodied man to the capital. Next Colonel Johnstone despatched a messenger to Cachar for more troops and a doctor and made arrangements for assisting them on the road. Two hundred Manipuri soldiers were marched off to a village in the rear of Khonoma to create a diversion, while a man he could trust was sent to Mozema to secure its neutrality. His Naga interpreter set out for Kohima village to spread dissention among its *khels* and to prevent their uniting against him, taking with him a letter to Mr Cawley begging him to hold out until the relief force arrived. Colonel Johnstone lent him a pony and told him to ride until it dropped, then to march on foot for his life.

Sending his escort on ahead with the Manipuri troops, he remained behind to arrange for their supplies and to get off official letters and telegrams. Then, saying goodbye to his wife and baby son Arthur (who was to die during his absence), he rode out on the twenty-third and caught up his men that evening forty miles from Manipur.

The march through mountainous jungle country by this motley force was sustained entirely by Colonel Johnstone's furious efforts. Having lent his own pony to a naik who had been routed out of hospital to join the column, he would continually halt to urge on the stragglers, then run to the front again. The Manipuris who were unused to such exertions begged to be allowed to halt for a few days but, seeing him determined to press on with only his own escort if necessary, reluctantly resumed the march. At the Mao river which they forded he drew his revolver and threatened to shoot anyone who dawdled, and so urged them up the hill on the farther side. Passing the village of Viswema he demanded hostages to ensure its neutrality.

On the twenty-ninth seven Nepalese coolies from Kohima, starved and terror-stricken, were brought in and reported that the garrison surrounded by six thousand howling Nagas had run out of food and ammunition, and that early that morning they had seen smoke rising from the stockades. He was even more concerned to learn that Mr Cawley was treating with the Nagas for a safe passage to Samaguting.

In the early hours of the following morning he addressed his men, not minimizing the dangers ahead, but assuring them of success. If he should be killed or wounded, he said, they were to leave him and press on to relieve the garrison. At dawn two more coolies from Kohima came in with slips of paper hidden in their hair, on which were written:

> Surrounded by Nagas, cut off from water.
> Must be relieved at once. Send flying column
> to bring away garrison at once. Relief must
> be immediate to be of any use.
>
> H.M. Hinde
> A.P.A. Kohima. 25.x.79

and

> We are in extremity, come on sharp.
> Kohima not abandoned.
> Kohima not abandoned.
>
> H.M. Hinde
> A.P.A. Kohima. 26.x.79

With sixty of his escort and fifty Manipuris, all who could still manage a rapid march, Colonel Johnstone pushed on towards Kohima.

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The attacking Nagas had been steadily tightening the noose round the beleaguered garrison. On the road to the west they had constructed a barricade of wood and stone from behind which they could snipe with impunity. A party was sent out and destroyed it, but it was rebuilt the following night. Nagas were also entrenched in the abandoned western stockade and from there tried by various means to set fire to the buildings in the eastern stockade. At the cost of the life of a coolie who was hit by a stray bullet most of the thatch was torn off the roofs and burnt, which greatly reduced the danger. But still the Nagas persisted, now lobbing over grenades made from the hinges from the doors of Mr Damant's bungalow stuffed with flaming cloths, now hurling burning spears. A continuous rifle fire was kept up day and night, the attackers moving slowly forward behind their barricades, and the air rang with their howls and war-cries. Repeatedly they tried to pick off the British officers as they moved from trench to trench encouraging the now exhausted defenders. Since no building was safe, the wounded had been carried into the open where Mrs Damant gave

them what comfort she could. Of all the hardships suffered by the two Crawley children perhaps the one they felt most was thirst.

There was little resistance left in the garrison when the sun rose on the twenty-fourth. Short rations, scarcity of water, lack of sleep and the strain of being constantly under fire had begun to tell on them. Mr Cawley and Mr Hinde worked indefatigably, but they too were on the point of exhaustion. It is clear from Mrs Cawley's account of the siege that there was some dissension among the garrison, an inter-service rivalry between the soldiers and the police, and she allows herself a number of disparaging remarks about the military. It may be significant that, except for the statement that the detachment of the 43rd Assam Light Infantry was under Captain Reid, her account makes no other mention of this officer whatever, though the activities of her husband and Mr Hinde are described in detail. Colonel Johnstone in his account of the relief expedition does not refer to Reid either, and the official history of the Assam Rifles merely states that he 'was ill at the time'. Faced with what appears to be a conspiracy of silence, the reader is free to imagine what he pleases about Reid's conduct during the siege. Whatever the truth of the matter, had the Nagas that day come out from behind their barricades and rushed the stockade, they must inevitably have taken it.

Instead, about 11 a.m., they suddenly and unaccountably stopped firing, and the noise of battle died away. Presently, elders from friendly *khels* of Kohima village came over as intermediaries to say that the attackers wished to break off hostilities and parley. Unknown to the garrison, they had received word of Colonel Johnstone's approach and sought to achieve by guile their objective of exterminating the garrison to the last man, woman and child.

It was a welcome respite, for they were now virtually waterless, and, knowing that every hour gained could be decisive, Mr Cawley protracted the negotiations as long as he could. As a condition of their evacuating Kohima he demanded a promise that they would be safely escorted to Samaguting, the place which until the previous year had been the Political Agent's headquarters. The promise being given, he then raised the question of transport for the women and children, and as they talked coolies were sent out quietly to bring water from the polluted spring. By nightfall the question had still not been resolved. After a night spent in improving the defences, burying the coin from the treasury and burning official papers the women and children were assembled next morning as if in readiness for the journey. When the Nagas realized that the rest intended to remain behind until they had news of their safe arrival at Samaguting they lost patience, and it

seemed that the attack was about to be resumed. By then it was too late for any move that day, and the uneasy truce was maintained. In the evening Colonel Johnstone's Naga interpreter arrived with his letter, and the news of his approach had also reached the attackers who silently drifted away, back to their villages.

Mr Damant had set out on the thirteenth of the month, and the siege had lasted for thirteen days.

Colonel Johnstone was a man who believed in doing things in style. Rounding the spur of a hill on the morning of the twenty-seventh, he could see the eastern stockade of Kohima in the distance, still apparently intact. A few miles further on he grouped his force and, although there was not a hostile Naga in sight, ordered the Advance to be sounded; then, with the Union Jack streaming in the van, he led his men across the valley and up the steep slope to the stockade. There was a cheer from the garrison, and many rushed out to greet the man to whom they owed their lives. Mr Cawley and Mr Hinde – but not, apparently, Captain Reid – grasped Colonel Johnstone's hand and, the garrison forming a guard of honour on either side, the relief column marched in.

Johnstone never forgot a little incident that took place a little later. He was talking to Mrs Cawley, haggard after her ordeal, when one of her children came up to her and asked for some water. 'Yes, my dear,' she had replied, 'you can have some now.'

In the morning Mr Damant's head which had been brought in from Khonoma – his body was never recovered – was buried with full military honours.

*

There followed the inevitable punitive expedition, under Brigadier-General Nation, which succeeded, after a battle that lasted all day, and at the cost of many lives including those of two British officers, in taking the village of Khonoma. It was the severest fighting these hills were to know for sixty-five years. The Khonoma Angamis retreated to a strongly fortified position on the crest of the Barail Range to the south, which the General decided to blockade. They surrendered the following year.

Their punishment was to have the village razed to the ground, their terraced fields confiscated, and their people distributed piecemeal among other Angami villages. In the ensuing year, reduced to the status of homeless wanderers dependent on the charity of their neighbours, many fell sick and died. They resisted all pressures to settle

them elsewhere, no one was willing to take over their fields, and at last the Government relented and allowed them to return home.

And Khonoma rose again from its ashes. In his introduction to Mrs Crawley's story, which was eventually printed in the *Surma Valley Magazine* in November 1927, Mr J.P. Mills then Deputy Commissioner at Kohima wrote of it:

> It now flourishes as of old, however. The sword has been exchanged for the pen and parties now go forth to seek rupees instead of heads. From Khonoma has come the first Naga Magistrate, and its enterprising black-kilted traders travel as far as Bombay and Rangoon. But the old customs are still kept up and the old songs sung and tales told. The best of the old spirit remains. . . .

In 1943 during the great battle of Kohima, which marked the turning-point in the fortunes of the Japanese army in Burma, the descendants of the Nagas who had taken part in the events of 1879 provided invaluable assistance to the British forces, again under siege, as guides, stretcher-bearers and coolies under the imperturbable leadership of the Deputy Commissioner Mr Pawsey (later Sir Charles Pawsey).

After the British quit India in 1947 the Nagas again rose in rebellion, their aim complete independence for Nagaland, and after many years of savage guerilla warfare during which the hand of oppression bore heavily upon them they have so far achieved statehood within the Union of India. Perhaps even that is not the end of the story: dreams of freedom die hard.

4

Manipur Massacre (I)

The unconstrained authority exerted by the Viceroys deputed by the British Crown to rule over India's teeming millions was for long tantamount to that of an absolute monarch. The executive and legislative councils through which their decisions were promulgated were no more than consultative bodies, akin to the durbars which used to give effect to the will, or the whims, of the Mogul emperors. From the first the office was filled by a succession of grandees who, being above the temptation to seek personal profit or further aggrandisement, had no reason to exercise their power otherwise than with restraint and benevolence. Glittering figures, they surrounded themselves with a pomp and pageantry that dazzled and, it must be admitted, delighted the populace.

Even after the laying of an undersea cable between England and the Indian sub-continent in 1870 had opened up instant telegraphic communication between Whitehall and the Viceroy's palace in Calcutta, his day-to-day activities remained exempt from any practical control by the home government seven thousand miles away. At worst some action he had already taken might be subjected to criticism, for the most part uninformed, by one or other of the houses of parliament at Westminster, but usually the Secretary of State responsible for Indian affairs was able to head it off. Even if the criticism were upheld, any rebuke of the Viceroy had to be muted – for was he not the Crown's personal representative? – and also private, so as not to diminish the lustre of his prestige, on which his effectiveness as a ruler over a subject people so largely depended. For although, with a considerable army (which since the Mutiny had been stiffened by a substantial European component) at his disposal, he had always in reserve the ultimate recourse to armed force, the holding of India in subjection by Great Britain was, in the last analysis, the most spectacular display of the art of bluff the world has ever seen.

When Lord Curzon became Governor-General, that is to say Viceroy, in 1894 the number of Europeans in the administration was

6,500 as compared with 218,000 Indians. The key members of the Indian Civil Service (the ICS), an elite body only entered through the narrow portals of a competitive examination, were the district officers – Collectors or Deputy Commissioners – who numbered 250 in a population which by 1871 had reached 206,000,000 and was to rise to 294,000,000 in 1901. On any view it was an astonishing feat that a handful of foreigners from a distant island should be able to govern such a huge, heterogeneous and generally acquiescent country for so long. The secret lay in the concept of prestige, in other words bluff.

A subject in which Viceroys traditionally took a special personal interest was the relationship between the Government of (British) India and the neighbouring Princely States whose territories lay beyond its jurisdiction. It is necessary to keep in mind that there were tracts of the Indian sub-continent, large and small, over which Great Britain never exercised direct rule, sovereign states to the number of seven hundred or so, ranging in size from such extensive states as Mysore or Hyderabad to petty chieftainships of a few acres of paddy-field, ruled over by an assortment of hereditary maharajahs, nawabs, nizams and the like. A few of them were governed wisely, but most were subjected to every kind of tyranny and misrule. Their inhabitants, who included a hundred different races speaking as many languages, were at every stage of social and political development. Obviously the stability of the sub-continent as a whole depended to some extent on the neighbourly behaviour of these eccentric states, which made it necessary for the Government of India to reach some accord with their rulers.

Recognizing this, one of the earliest and ablest of the Viceroys (1798-1805), Marquis Wellesley (the eldest brother of the future 'Iron' Duke of Wellington), instituted a policy of entering into alliances with the native princes under which, in return for guaranteeing them protection against external aggression and internal rebellion, they undertook to make no wars and to form no other alliances without the knowledge and consent of the East India Company, the body through which Great Britain then ruled their portion of India. The treaties would provide for a British Resident (sometimes called a Political Agent) to be installed in the prince's territory in order to safeguard his government's interests, with a detachment of sepoys of the Indian Army for his protection. The house in which he lived and worked came to be known as the Residency. The value of these alliances was more than vindicated at the time of the Mutiny when the active support or in some cases the mere neutrality of the Princely

States played a significant part in enabling the British to put down the disturbance and restore law and order.

When therefore Queen Victoria in 1859 issued a Proclamation taking upon herself the government of the territories hitherto held in trust for her – so the wording ran – by the East India Company, she gave an assurance to the princes that all treaties and engagements made under the authority of the Company would be scrupulously maintained.

As time went on the functions of the Residents underwent, without there being any corresponding amendment of the treaties, an unacknowledged but fundamental change. From being no more than diplomatic agents of a foreign power, residing on sufferance in the territories of sovereign states, they began to behave in an executive capacity as the instruments whereby the princely rulers were bribed, cajoled or bullied into acquiescing in the wishes of their vastly more powerful neighbour. However repugnant to the ruler those wishes might be, compliance could always be enforced as a last resort by the threat of annexation, the current euphemism for military conquest. In fact the Government of India in most cases wished to avoid the trouble and expense of bringing more territories under its own direct rule, finding it more convenient to attain their objectives indirectly by means of the treaty system. Not surprisingly, many of the princes thus reduced to the status of *de facto* vassals suffered a moral deterioration, squandering their surplus revenues on various modes of self-indulgence – dancing-girls or catamites, new-fangled toys and amusements – leaving the business of governing their states to their durbars, or ministers, acting under the 'advice' of the British Resident.

To assist the Viceroy in his dealings with the Princely States a secretariat was established called the Political Department, answering directly to him and staffed by hand-picked officers of the specially created Indian Political Service, seconded either from the ICS or from the Army, both British and Indian. Its agents – the Residents and Political Agents – residing in the states were controlled from its headquarters situated, so as always to be at the Viceroy's elbow, either in Calcutta (until the seat of government was moved to Lutyens' New Delhi in 1911) or among the cool hills of Simla, whither the whole paraphernalia of government was accustomed to repair for the hot summer months.

One of the unilateral innovations introduced by the Government of India into their relationships with the princes was the assertion of a prerogative with regard to successions to the *gaddi* – the cushioned mat that in the states served the purpose of a throne – declaring that

no such succession was 'valid' unless and until it had been accorded formal recognition by the paramount power, as it was now pleased to style itself. The specious casuistry by which it sought to give legal colour to this alleged right rested on the new concept (of its own devising) of 'paramountcy', the notion that as the strongest power it had the 'right and duty' to settle successions to the *gaddi* in the Princely States in order to fulfil its responsibility for ensuring law and order throughout the sub-continent. This claim to have a legal right to decide who reigned in the Princely States was, of course, all eye-wash, the language in which it was formulated a piece of doubletalk designed to bamboozle the world into believing that its acts of interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states were done in pursuance of some (figmentary) right and duty. It was the kid glove intended to hide the knuckleduster.

Sometimes its bluff was called. The Mutiny is a case in point, the Amritsar affair of 1919 another, though in the latter instance the blame is usually laid on the wrong shoulders. What follows is an account of a third such episode, one that took place in the late nineteenth century in a small and remote Princely State and which, in all its unfolding horror, provides a convenient illustration of the realities of empire.

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Manipur, once known as the Cinderella among political agencies, consists of a fertile valley sixty miles long and thirty wide, 2,600 feet above sea-level, entirely surrounded by a collar of hills rising from five thousand to ten thousand feet high, the whole state comprising an area of eight thousand square miles. From north to south down the centre flows the Manipur river which discharges itself southwards through a narrow gorge in the hills. The climate is various owing to the great differences in elevation. At the time of the events shortly to be described its capital Imphal with a population of 60,000 was an agglomeration of villages each enclosed by a bamboo hedge, the whole complex spreading over fifteen square miles. The houses, shaded by trees, were flimsily built with thatched roofs, more substantial structures being inappropriate in a land subject to frequent earthquakes.

The people of the rest of the valley outside the capital, to the number of another 60,000, cultivated a patchwork of paddy-fields, parched in summer and flooded during the rainy season. Exotic flowers rioted in the waste places, wild life abounded in the foothills and swamps, including tiger and leopard, and on the scattered lakes

would gather thousands of wildfowl, the state being famous for its duck- and snipe-shooting. The inhabitants of the capital were the only 'pure' Manipuris, a misleading epithet for they were a mixed race of Indo-Chinese stock which had been converted from Buddhism to Hinduism in the eighteenth century, in consequence of which a caste system was observed, the royal family enjoying almost divine status. The people, who subsisted mainly on a diet of rice and sun-dried fish supplemented by vegetables, were clever, industrious, friendly, abstemious, and volatile.

In villages high on the slopes of the encircling hills on which flourished oak, chestnut, teak and other species of trees, lived various hill tribes to the number of some 100,000, mainly belonging to the Naga and Kuki groups. Animists and still given to headhunting, they practised the wasteful slash-burn method of cultivation. They had little in common with the Manipuris of the plain and were closely related to the tribes occupying the hills on the other side of the state borders. For Manipur lies tucked away in isolation between the Naga Hills to the north, the hills of north Burma abutting on the Chindwin valley to the east, the Chin-Lushai Hills to the south, and Cachar District of Assam with its many tea-gardens to the west. Remote from the rest of the world, its people were content to mind their own business, following their traditional ways. Most of their energies were expended on the annual cycle of rice-growing, what remained finding an outlet in sport – athletics, boat-racing on the palace moat, hockey-on-horseback (Manipur was the birthplace of polo) – and on their many religious festivals in which dancing played a major and graceful part.

To understand the narrative that follows it is necessary to sketch briefly the earlier history of the relationship of the British Indian Government with the princes of Manipur. It can be said to have begun when at the time of the First Anglo-Burmese War (1825-26) Gambhir Singh, a member of the ruling family in Manipur, furnished 500 troops to assist the British drive the Burmese out of Cachar, for which service he was formally recognized as the Rajah. The force was increased to 2,000 sepoys, named the Manipur Levy – paid, equipped and supplied with ammunition by the British – and placed under the command of a British officer. Treaties were entered into in 1833 and 1834 putting the relationship on a legal footing and providing for the transfer of the Kabaw Valley, a long-standing bone of contention, from Manipur to Burma in consideration of the payment of monetary compensation. The Levy was later disbanded as serving insufficient purpose to justify its expense.

On Gambhir Singh's death in 1834 he was succeeded by his two-year-old son Chandra Kirti Singh, while the Senapati, or Commander-in-Chief (they went in for high-sounding titles), Nur Singh was appointed to act as Regent during his minority. Attempts on the *gaddi* had been made by various princes and put down with help from the British when in 1844 the dowager Rani, having tried unsuccessfully to have the Regent assassinated, fled the country taking with her the twelve-year-old Rajah. The boy was treated as having abdicated, and the Regent recognized as Rajah in his place. He survived a number of attempts to oust him before dying peacefully in 1850, to be succeeded by his brother Debindro Singh. But the ex-Rajah Chandra, who had by now come of age, chose this moment to reappear on the scene and to reassert his claim to the rajahship.

Faced with the rival claimants, the Government of India on the advice of the Political Agent in Manipur, Captain McCulloch, decided to recognize Debindro as Rajah and, in order to give him a clear run, sanctioned the arrest of Chandra and his mother and their removal to British Bengal. These machinations came to nothing, because Chandra succeeded in escaping from his guards and eventually in toppling Debindro, thereby becoming *de facto* Rajah himself. McCulloch now shifted his position, and on his advice the Government of India in 1851 publicly avowed its intention of upholding Chandra in the rajahship and of punishing anybody who attempted to push him off the *gaddi*. As a *quid pro quo* the new Rajah was required to submit to the Political Agent keeping a general check on his administration. It must be admitted that the paramount power showed considerable ineptitude in its handling of the disputed succession, and the legality of its arrest of one of the claimants with a view to his being forcibly exiled would surely have been brought into question if the attempt had not so lamentably failed.

The Rajah under McCulloch's watchful eye managed to keep things more or less on the rails for the next decade despite the condition of suppressed turbulence endemic to the State; and when he learnt in 1861 that on McCulloch proceeding on leave it was not intended to replace him, he made an urgent plea to the Government of India to change its mind, believing the presence of a Political Agent to be essential to the tranquillity of his realm. The Government acquiesced, being satisfied that the post served a useful purpose, and redefined the functions of the Political Agent as: to arbitrate frontier disputes between Manipur and Burma; to use his influence to check lawlessness among the hill tribes; and to prevent the Rajah from oppressing his people. McCulloch went back after his leave, to

be succeeded in the post by several officers, the most notable of them Colonel Johnstone, later responsible for the relief of Kohima described in the previous chapter.

He had been awarded one of the last cadetships in the old East India Company, arriving in the country just in time to take part in the heavy-handed punitive operations that followed the Mutiny. Transferring to the Political Service, he was posted to Keonjhar State in the Cuttock District of Orissa, managing the affairs of the State during the Rajah's minority. Here, as already recorded, he gained valuable experience – clothing savages, establishing schools, improving the local breed of cattle, organizing *keddahs* for the capture of wild elephants – and made his name as an able and forceful administrator. After further service as the Political Agent in the Naga Hills based at Samaguting, he was in 1875 transferred in the same capacity to Manipur where he remained for the next ten years, interrupted by absences in England on the ground of ill-health. He presented a formidable figure with his dark spade-shaped beard, receding hair and cold, relentless eyes. In 1872 he had married into a family long allied to his own, and his wife bore him several children, the two youngest – a fourth son Arthur and a daughter – being born in the Residency at Imphal.

He was under no illusions about what he was up against. 'The government of Manipur,' he once wrote, 'has always been a pure despotism tempered by assassination and revolution.' When he arrived Chandra Kirti Singh, whose earlier history has already been sketched, now elevated to Maharajah, had occupied the *gaddi* for twenty-four reasonably tranquil years. He was a thick-set man in his early forties about five feet five inches tall with a fair complexion. A capable ruler, he had an interest in the mechanical arts and was well aware that his prosperity and that of his State depended on his keeping in the good books of the Government of India. He had ten sons by various wives, which augured ill for the succession on his death.

In accordance with custom these sons bore honorific titles in descending order of seniority, so that when the eldest succeeded to the maharajahship a game of musical chairs took place, each of the younger brothers moving up one chair and assuming the former title of the one immediately senior to him, a practice fraught with pitfalls for the unwary student of the history of Manipur, in which the princes are often referred to only by their titles. The heir-apparent to Maharajah Chandra Kirti Singh was Sur Chandra Singh, an amiable youth of weak character who, as Yuvraj (for long spelt Jubraj), or crown prince, was destined to succeed him. Next in line came Kula Chandra, an ignorant and uncouth boor who in the troubles to come would occupy

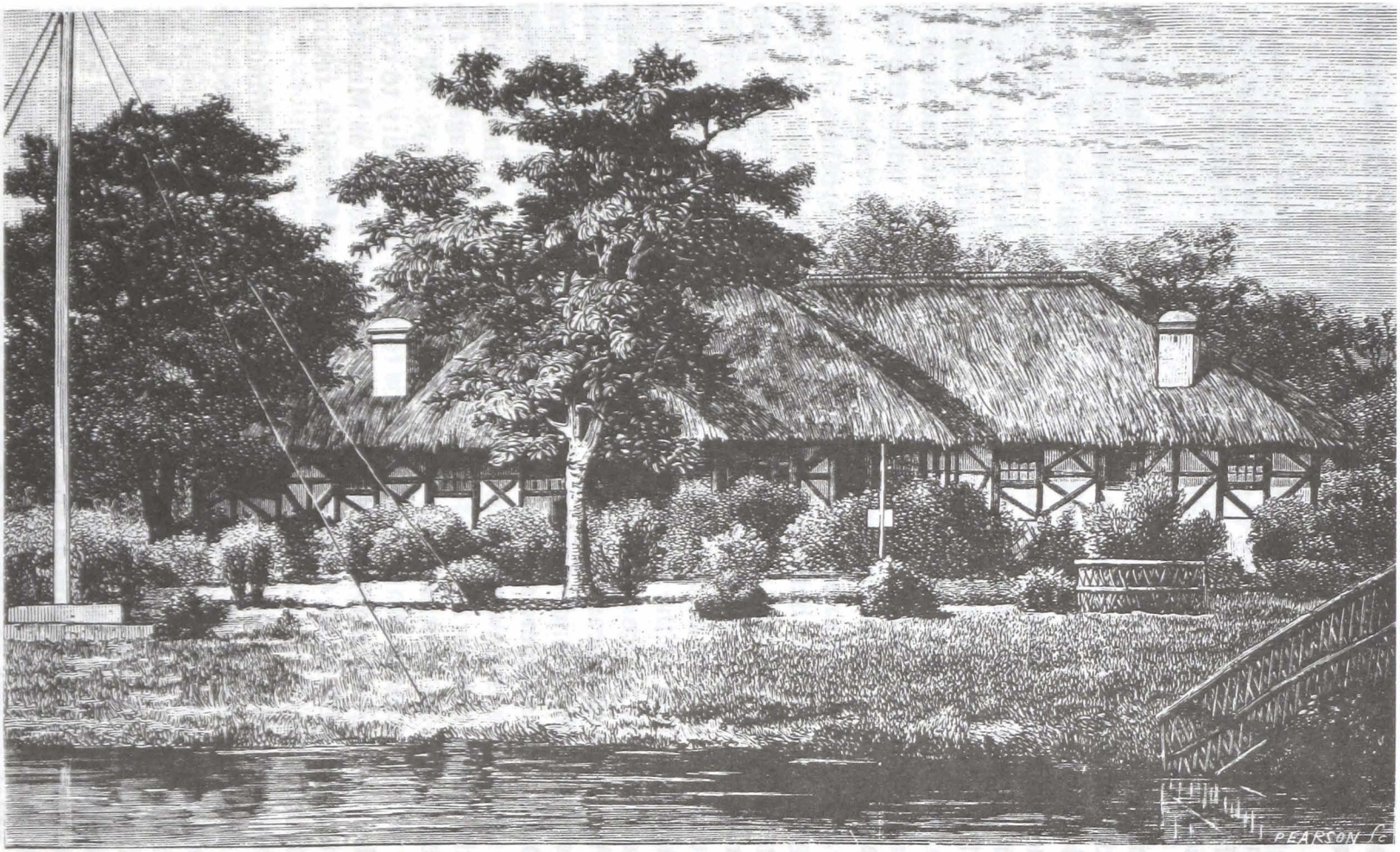
the position of Regent. The one who became most notorious was Tikendrajit Singh, whom Johnstone described as

> . . . always a bad character, cruel, coarse and low-minded. From early childhood he was given to foul language, and was absolutely dangerous when he grew up. His mother had been unfaithful to the Maharajah, who used to say that the son was worthy of her.

On several occasions Johnstone had to use his influence in having him rebuked or punished for violent conduct, as once when he had beaten senseless with his stick an unoffending Naga he had met by chance on the road. On another occasion he had had three men so severely beaten up that one of them had died, for which at Johnstone's insistence the Maharajah banished him for a year to an island in the Logtak Lake some miles from the capital and to temporary degradation of caste. Much will be heard of this unsavoury character, under the title of the Senapati, or Commander-in-Chief, in the pages to come.

It is unnecessary to name or describe the younger brothers, though it may be mentioned that the one who bore the title Pakka Sana, or Master-of-the-Horse, was, appropriately enough, the champion polo-player. And of the non-princely members of the Maharajah's durbar, or council of ministers, only the Thangal Major need be singled out, his title consisting of the name of the Naga village in attacking which he had first won notice as a soldier, coupled with his rank in the Manipuri Army. He was nearly sixty years old when Johnstone first came to Manipur. Short and stubby, his skin darker than usual among Manipuris, he had piercing eyes and a prominent hooked nose. Well aware that he was unscrupulous, indeed capable of anything, Johnstone did not believe he was fool enough to take arms against the British, a view he continued to hold to the end of his days. All the same, he had to exert all the powers of his forceful personality to curb the Thangal Major's high-handed ruthlessness when acting as Minister for Burmese Affairs, an office he insisted on the Maharajah taking away from him.

Considering that the old Residency building some two hundred yards from the palace on the opposite side of the road was inadequate to sustain the prestige of the Political Agent, Johnstone had caused to be built on the same site a new one that was more in keeping with the dignity of his office. Half-timbered in style on the model of old English houses, it consisted of a single floor raised on a solid brick foundation, approached on all four sides by masonry steps. The walls of the basement were made of stone, not for fear of attack, but so as to be proof against any stray bullets which might come over in the



6. *The Residency at Imphal*

event of trouble between the supporters of rival princes. The basement was divided into compartments connecting with one another which were used as store-rooms, the area below the veranda of the durbar-room serving as the sleeping place for the sepoys of the Political Agent's guard. The durbar-room, which was 24 feet square, was intended as a ceremonial audience hall for receiving the princes and ministers on formal occasions. There were fine drawing- and dining-rooms, airy bedrooms and an office, all equipped with fireplaces and stoves for wintertime.

The building stood in the middle of an eighteen-acre compound surrounded by a mud wall and ditch capable of being defended, the wall being pierced by four gates, the main one opening on the road which ran between the Residency and the palace. Flower-beds and a kitchen garden were laid out, ornamental trees planted, and a large lake excavated in the grounds which in winter was covered with many species of wild duck and geese. In the north-east corner were built the lines for the Political Agent's escort of 50 men of the 4th Bengal Infantry under a subadar.

So as to have a place to which he and his family could retire from the ceremonial life of the capital and relax, Johnstone built a small bungalow at Khan-jhub-khul on a spur of a range of hills five thousand feet above sea-level some fourteen miles away. There they made a small garden and planted Khasia pines, and in time it became an enchanted spot, as much appreciated by his successors as by his own family. It was here, too, when his two-year-old son Arthur fell ill and died in 1879 – while Johnstone was away at the time with a Manipuri contingent, restoring order in the Naga Hills after lifting the siege at Kohima – that they chose a site for the child's grave.

The events of the closing years of Johnstone's agency can be briefly told. In 1880 when the Maharajah was seriously ill with an abscess behind the ear, from which in the event he slowly recovered, Sur Chandra Singh the heir-apparent was formally acknowledged as his successor, in an attempt to forestall strife between rival claimants when the time came. While they were on leave in England in 1883 Mrs Johnstone died, and Johnstone's stay was extended to enable him to see his surviving children settled. During his absence the princes had got above themselves and on his return showed signs of truculence towards him, but were soon brought to heel in his usual masterful way. His final exploit was to lead his escort and a force of a thousand Manipuri sepoys on an expedition into the Chindwin valley during the Third Anglo-Burmese War (1885-86), after which worn out by twenty-eight years of strenuous service he proceeded to England and, as Major-

General Sir James Johnstone, KCSI, an honourable retirement.

One of his last acts in Manipur was to visit Arthur's grave which was marked by a stone memorial tablet protected by iron railings in the garden at Khan-jhub-khul looking out across a valley towards wooded hills.

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A few months after Frank Grimwood, ICS, had brought his young English wife out to India, where he held a junior position at Sylhet in East Bengal, he was offered the post of Political Agent in Manipur. Not only would this be welcome promotion, but the job promised to be a congenial one. He had passed through the State some years before and remembered the polo-ground and the snipe-shooting. They set out with high hopes in April 1887, and even the tedious journey of sixteen days could do nothing to dampen their spirits. On the way they spent a few days at Silchar, the headquarters of the Cachar District of Assam, where they soon made new friends, for they were an attractive couple, and then proceeded on horseback towards their new home. They crossed the Jhiri River which formed the boundary between Cachar and Manipur, from there continuing with a small escort of Manipuri sepoys over the rugged hills towards Imphal, at every *thana*, or police post, the guard turning out to Present Arms. From the crest of the last range overlooking the plain they could see the capital in the distance, the walls of the palace shining white and the golden roofs of temples glinting in the sun. Immediately below them lay the Logtak Lake with its little islands, and all over the plain stood villages nestling in green groves amid a chequerboard of paddy-fields.

At the foot of the hill ten elephants and a guard of fifty sepoys in tatterdemalion uniforms under a Manipuri colonel were waiting to accompany them on the last two stages of their journey. Seven miles outside the capital they were met by four of the princes, one of them the Senapati, and as they neared the palace a salute of twelve guns boomed a welcome. The ceremony over, they turned into the gateway of the Residency.

Great changes had taken place in the State since Johnstone's day. Maharajah Sir Chandra Kirti Singh, KCSI, had died full of honours in 1886, having occupied the *gaddi* for thirty-five years. Sur Chandra Singh, the Yuvraj in Johnstone's day, had succeeded him, unopposed by his brothers, and there had followed the usual game of musical chairs, Kula Chandra moving up to become Yuvraj, Tikendrajit becoming Senapati. It is interesting to compare Mrs Grimwood im-

pressions of the princes with Johnstone's assessment of them which has already been given. The Maharajah she described as a short, fat, ugly little man with a face between that of a Burmese and a Chinaman, fairer than the natives she had seen in Bengal, but much pitted by smallpox.

> He was dressed very simply in white – a white coat with gold buttons, and a very fine white muslin Dhotee. He had a large white turban on his head, in which was stuck a spray of yellow orchids. Grey woollen stockings covered his legs, fastened at the knee with blue elastic garters with very fine brass buckles and little bows, and his feet were encased in very large roughly-made laced boots, of which he seemed supremely proud.

His younger brother the Yuvraj she described as a second edition of the Maharajah, only stouter and uglier. In contrast to these two, she thought that the Senapati, a man of five foot eight, had a pleasing countenance with nice eyes and a pleasant smile somewhat marred by broken teeth. This first impression he contrived to maintain by constant and calculated attentions to the Grimwoods' wellbeing. He had a stable of fine ponies on which he used to take them riding, and regularly twice a week he would invite Frank to take part in a game of polo. In the cold weather he would arrange shooting parties for them, providing elephants to take them to the jungle. Hearing that Ethel had expressed the wish to see the guns which comprised the State's artillery being used, he laid on a special field-day at the rifle range: every shot, she noticed, took effect. He was a frequent visitor at the Residency, often bringing with him from the palace some of the young princesses, who loved best to be taken into her bedroom where she let them try on her clothes, marvelling how narrow her waist was in comparison with their own. They would be allowed to pick flowers in the garden and to play with Ethel's pet monkeys and rabbits, and once she had given a water-party on the lake in the grounds when from rowing-boats they had pelted each other with flowers. The only drawback was that, for reasons of caste, she could offer the children nothing to eat or drink. The Senapati with his nice eyes and pleasant smile became their especial friend.

Johnstone's old acquaintance the Thangal Major, now promoted General, was still going strong though well over seventy. She admired his fine old face with its lines and wrinkles set off by snow-white hair and eyebrows. He reminded her of an eagle, and it perhaps gave her a little thrill to be reminded of his bloodthirsty past when he had, in his own words, '*nautched* [danced] through many villages' causing havoc among the tribes. He was stubborn, Frank told her, and, if any

proposed course of action displeased him, something was bound to occur to obstruct it; but if he promised to do something, it was done.

She enjoyed their trips to the Logtak Lake crowded with water-birds, when Frank would stand up in one boat banging away while she sat in another collecting the dead and wounded birds. She accompanied Frank on his tours of the outlying parts of the State, enjoying the freedom of camp life. In summer they would retire for a few days to the bungalow Johnstone had built at Khan-jhub-khul. Altogether it was a pleasant life free from anxiety, and it was a shock when after ten months Grimwood was told he was being replaced as Political Agent by a more senior man who was out of a job.

Mr Heath when he arrived showed himself far from pleased with his new appointment, dreading the lonely bachelor life it offered; but he did not have to put up with it for long, for he suffered from chronic dysentery from which he died after a few months. Grimwood who had been posted to Jorhat in Assam was once more offered the Manipur agency, and Ethel seeing how pleased he was had not the heart to tell him that the prospect filled her with a sudden unaccountable dread, and though she would have liked to persuade him not to go back she put a brave face on it.

And somehow, when she rejoined him at the Residency after spending the hot weather at Shillong, a pleasant hill-station among the Khasia hills, things were not the same as they had been. It was not only that she missed the company of the officers of the 44th Gurkha Rifles stationed at Langthobal four miles from Imphal, whose battalion had been ordered away to take part in operations in the Chin Hills described in a later chapter, leaving only a detachment of a hundred rifles behind. It did not help that from her bedroom window she could see in the grounds, beside the older graves of Trotter, an earlier Political Agent who had died of wounds, and of Lieutenant Beavor whom fever had carried away while being looked after at the Residency, the newly dug one in which lay the remains of the unhappy Mr Heath. Sometimes now when Frank was on tour he left her alone for as long as a fortnight at a time, and she found herself worrying that, apart from him, the nearest European was more than a hundred miles away and only a small Gurkha guard outside the house.

There were rumours of contention among the princes, especially between the Senapati and the Pakka Sana, both of whom had cast a lustful eye on the same girl. Maipakbi, reputed to be the most beautiful girl in Manipur (though Ethel demurred), was the sixteen-year-old daughter of a rich goldsmith who was also a member of the

Maharajah's durbar. Tall for a Manipuri and very fair, she had masses of long black hair and adorned herself with bracelets and necklaces of solid gold. One night the princes were invited to a *nautch* the Grimwoods had arranged in the durbar-room at the Residency, in which Maipakbi had performed as the principal dancer, and so great was the tension set up between the suitors that the Grimwoods vowed never to invite the two of them again at the same time.

Things went from bad to worse, the princes forming themselves into two factions, the Maharajah at the head of one of them which included the love-lorn Pakka Sana, the other under the nominal leadership of the Yuvraj but in fact controlled by the Senapati. It was while this cauldron was simmering that Grimwood learned that the small detachment of Gurkhas remaining at Langthobal was to be withdrawn – though they did not in fact leave until January 1891 – his own guard being increased from sixty to a hundred men.

Then, at 2 a.m. on 2 September 1890, while Ethel was away in the hills for the hot weather, Grimwood was woken by his bearer and told that fighting was taking place across the road at the palace, news at once corroborated by the sound of bullets whining over the roof. A few minutes later the Maharajah, with a mob of armed Manipuri sepoys and followers carrying swords and *dahs* at his heels, stumbled into the Residency goggle-eyed with terror, begging for sanctuary.

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Grimwood went out in his dressing-gown to meet the trembling Maharajah and taking him to the durbar-room persuaded him to lie down and tell him what had happened. It appeared that one of the young princes, Zillah Singh whose official position was ADC to the Maharajah – he had been nicknamed the Poem by the Grimwoods on account of his wayward grace – had been quarrelling with the Pakka Sana who, exasperated beyond endurance, had persuaded the Maharajah to exclude him from his durbar and to deprive him of certain minor offices of state. Incensed, the Poem had put his case to the Senapati and, presumably on his advice, gone that night with some companions to the apartments where the Maharajah was sleeping and fired some shots through the windows. Making his escape from the palace by a back way the Maharajah had sought refuge at the Residency.

From his subsequent actions it is clear that the Political Agent was in two minds about what should be done. He first telegraphed to Langthobal for the detachment of Gurkhas there to come with all

7. *Colonel Johnstone and Manipuri princes*

haste, his idea being to summon further troops from the Kohima garrison five days' march away in the north and put down the rebellion by force. This the Maharajah would by no means agree to, but after some hours spent in fearful hesitation – during which time Grimwood had got into day clothes and the Langthobal detachment had turned up – declared his intention of abdicating and proceeding on a pilgrimage to Brindaban, a holy city far away on the Ganges.

For thirty-six hours the Maharajah brooded over his situation, impervious to the arguments put forward by Grimwood that he should continue to assert his rights, at the end of which period he wrote out a formal letter of abdication in favour of his brother next in line, the Yuvraj, and had it taken over to the palace. Whoever received it – almost certainly the Senapati – it was not the Yuvraj, for he had found it prudent to repair to Bishenpur seventeen miles away, there to await the outcome of events. Grimwood's advice to the Maharajah to resist having fallen on deaf ears, he decided to forward the Maharajah's departure into voluntary exile in every way he could, providing him with an escort of Gurkhas and going to the Residency gate nearest to the Cachar road to see him off. Some of the ministers joined the crowd assembled there to pay their last respects to the Maharajah and watched his party, which included the Pakka Sana and two of the other princes, disappear down the road. Perhaps in their bones they felt that, weak monarch though he had been, the future might have something worse in store for them.

A glimpse of the princely fugitives at the next stage of their journey was recorded by Miss Wright, nanny to the small son of a tea-planter in Cachar. Still affected by the shock of the recent news of the death of Captain Browne, treacherously ambushed in the Lushai Hills, the inhabitants of Silchar were greatly curious when the Maharajah passed through their town on his way, not after all to Brindaban, but to Calcutta.

> Nearly all the Manipuris in Cachar assembled at Silchar station to see and say 'farewell' to their King. He told the multitude that he was going to turn fakir when in reality he had no such intention, the object of his journey being to get an interview with the Viceroy and complain of the ill-usage he had received at the hands of his brothers, and also to receive assistance to regain the throne he had so foolishly vacated. He was beginning now to repent of his hasty decision.

Although Miss Wright was not an eyewitness of the events in Manipur shortly to be described, the account she wrote of her stay in Cachar faithfully records the local gossip and rumours which gained currency

at the time and will therefore be drawn upon for the occasional detail not given in the other sources.

On reflection Grimwood came to the conclusion that the abdication had been a blessing in disguise and accordingly recommended to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Mr J.W. Quinton, ICS, that the Yuvraj should be temporarily acknowledged as the Regent until such time as the Government of India had accorded him formal recognition as the new Maharajah, believing that with the support of the Senapati his reign would be a strong and popular one. Quinton concurred with this arrangement, and the Yuvraj blandly returned to the capital from Bishenpur where he had been timidly sitting on the fence and took over the rule of the State as Regent, the title by which he will henceforward be called in this narrative. His adherent brothers once more took a turn at musical chairs, but in order not to confuse the reader the Senapati will continue to be referred to by that title.

Ethel Grimwood came back from her stay in the hills in November, and it was soon noticeable to her that there was now a strong hand at the helm in Manipur, nor was it difficult to make out whose hand it was, for the Regent was clearly content to take a back seat. Roads which had long been in a bad state were repaired, long-needed bridges were built across the rivers, and the business of the durbar was transacted in a more workmanlike way than before. The people seemed contented, the princes at peace with one another. At Christmas the Grimwoods put on a magic-lantern show in the durbar-room at the Residency for the amusement of the princes, the most popular slide being a photograph of Maipakbi, whom by now the Senapati had made his tenth concurrent wife. Everything in the State appeared to be going swimmingly.

In January 1891 Frank and Ethel went up to Kohima to meet Mr Quinton, who was touring his outlying districts with his daughter, and doubtless learnt from him of the difficulty he was having in persuading the Political Department in Calcutta to agree to his proposals, as recommended by Grimwood, for regularizing the succession to the Manipur maharajahship. The bone of contention between them was the Senapati, a man the Government knew from Johnstone's reports in their files to have shown himself in the past to be cruel and dangerous. From Kohima the Grimwoods took a pleasant trip to Tamu in the Kabaw valley, Ethel's first visit to Burma, whose people she found charming. To their surprise they heard from the *Myook*, a minor Burmese official, that there was an Englishman, a military sahib, living nearby, and soon he came up to their camp to introduce himself, somewhat informally dressed since he had no notion of

finding one of his countrywomen roughing it in the jungle. Lieutenant C.J.W. Grant was in charge of a detachment of the 12th Madras Infantry stationed at Tamu, and they marvelled that he could be so jolly and cheerful living alone far from civilization with only his men for company. He and the Grimwoods became good friends, going for rambles together in search of orchids and offering each other such hospitality as their respective camps could provide. Once he and Ethel, using the limited cooking facilities available, tried to bake a cake and thought it a great joke when it suffered the same fate as King Alfred's. It would be strange if the young officer was not somewhat smitten with the handsome wife from Manipur.

That winter the Grimwoods had two visitors staying with them at the Residency. Lieutenant W.H. Simpson of the 43rd Gurkha Rifles had been detailed to inspect some stores left at Langthobal when the detachment there had been withdrawn. Ethel had known him well in Shillong and delighted in his piano-playing, for he was a fine musician. He and Frank became firm friends and often went together on shooting parties organized by the Senapati. Mr Melville of the Telegraph Department in Assam only stayed for three days, promising to return on his way back from a visit of inspection to Tamu.

On the evening of the day Simpson turned up, Sunday, 21 February, Grimwood's peace of mind was disturbed by a telegram he received from the Chief Commissioner containing the bare information that he proposed to come to Imphal shortly. Obviously his visit had to do with the succession, but what had been decided? Five and a half months had gone by since the Maharajah had abdicated, and Grimwood knew that he had been in Calcutta urging the Viceroy to help him regain the *gaddi* from which he claimed to have been summarily ejected by the Senapati. He had also learnt from private sources that the armoury behind the palace walls, already well stocked with arms and ammunition including eight 3-pounder brass guns and two 7-pounder mountain guns, had recently been augmented by order of the Senapati.

Since arrangements had to be made for Mr Quinton to be suitably received, Grimwood informed the durbar of his imminent visit, which naturally gave rise to the wildest speculation. Time and again the Senapati and the Thangal General tried to get out of him what decision the Government of India had reached, but the fact was that Grimwood was equally in the dark himself. Simpson, sensing a fight in the offing, obtained permission by telegraph from his colonel to remain where he was. But what was to be done about Ethel? A steamer booking had already been made for her to go to England on leave, and Frank was in

two minds whether to cancel it or to accelerate her departure. When the princes and the durbar heard that he was thinking of sending her away before the Chief Commissioner's visit they were appalled – what could such a precipitate move portend? – and begged him to allow her to stay. It was her own wish, which probably proved decisive, to remain with her husband 'and see the fun', and so the steamer booking was cancelled.

Grimwood received only a week's notice that the Chief Commissioner would be accompanied by an escort of 400 men of the 42nd and 44th Gurkha Rifles under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel C.McD. Skene, DSO, of the 42nd, and several other British officers. The information was conveyed to him personally by Lieutenant P.R. Gurdon, Assistant Political Officer on the Chief Commissioner's staff, who had ridden ahead for the purpose. Ethel's main concern was to ensure that there would be enough to eat for such a large influx of officers, civil and military, which she calculated, counting Simpson and Melville (now returned from Tamu), would mean seating fifteen in the Residency dining-room.

Still they were kept in ignorance of what was intended, and it was not until Grimwood rode out, on Saturday, 21 March, to meet Mr Quinton at Sengmai, his last halting-place on the road from Kohima before reaching Imphal, that he was enlightened. The information can have done nothing to allay his uneasiness.

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The current occupant of the *gaddi* at Calcutta was the Marquess of Lansdowne whose orders, made in the name of the Government of India and on the advice of his Political Department, were (a) that the Senapati should be removed from Manipur, (b) that the Yuvraj now acting as Regent should be recognized as the new Maharajah, and (c) that the Chief Commissioner should personally visit Manipur and make known the Government's decision on the spot.

Ethel heard the news from her husband in strictest confidence on his return to the Residency after meeting Mr Quinton at Sengmai; neither Simpson nor Melville was to be told. Grimwood's uneasiness increased when he heard from her how, when she was out riding with Simpson earlier that evening, they had come upon a crowd of Manipuri sepoys pouring in at the palace gateway in such numbers that they had had difficulty in forcing their horses through the crush. Nevertheless Mr Quinton's clear instructions had to be carried out, and with a heavy sense of foreboding he sat down and wrote a letter to the

Regent telling him that the Chief Commissioner would hold a durbar in the durbar-room at the Residency at noon next day, at which the presence of all the princes was required. The decision to carry out the Viceroy's orders in just this way had been reached at Sengmai earlier in the day, at a conference attended by Mr Quinton, Colonel Skene, Mr W.H. Cossins, ICS, Assistant Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, and Grimwood. Conversation at dinner that night at the Residency, with only the Grimwoods, Simpson and Melville sitting round the table, is likely to have been subdued.

All was ready for the reception of the Chief Commissioner next morning. Tents had been erected in the grounds of the Residency, under the wall by the ornamental lake, as a camp for his considerable escort. A salute of twelve guns fired from the palace rampart boomed out as his entourage came in sight down the road. It was a beautiful day, clear and sunny, and the only event of ill omen that occurred was the sudden death of the goat Ethel had with difficulty procured and was fattening up to serve at dinner that evening in place of mutton, which was not to be had. Having given orders for the animal to be buried, she hurried to the porch of the Residency in time to receive Mr Quinton and Colonel Skene who had come ahead with Grimwood while the other officers saw their men settled into camp. Of these, though she had met a few of them before, only Lieutenant L.W. Brackenbury of the 44th Gurkha Rifles was an old friend, having been stationed at Langthobal when the Grimwoods first came to Manipur.

She noticed that her husband was unusually silent at the breakfast table amid the animated chatter of their guests, and while he was putting on his formal uniform for the durbar found out what was worrying him: Mr Quinton had given him the distasteful job of arresting the Senapati after the Viceroy's orders had been read out to the assembled princes.

Careful arrangements were made to ensure that, once apprehended, the Senapati would be unable to escape. All the doors of the durbar-room except the one by which the princes would enter were locked and guarded by sepoys, others being situated at strategic points round the building. Just as Mr Quinton and the others of his party were about to take their seats in the durbar-room – the military officers laughing and joking among themselves – it was remembered that the princes did not understand English, making it necessary for the Viceroy's orders to be translated into Manipuri. Clerks were at once set to work, but the translation was still unfinished when the princes arrived at the gate with a following of Manipuri sepoys who, while the princes were impatiently kicking their heels waiting to be admitted, had a

look round the compound and doubtless noticed the Gurkha sepoys at their posts round the Residency. It seems probable that, on being told of this, the Senapati began to smell a rat for, leaving a message that he was too ill to stand about in the sun, he slipped off quietly back to the palace with his younger brother the Angao Sana.

So when at last things were ready for the princes to be admitted the only members of the royal party to process along the red carpet towards the Residency steps were the Regent, the Poem, the old Thangal General and some unimportant ministers. The Senapati had neatly sidestepped the Chief Commissioner's trap. When he heard what had happened Mr Quinton had no alternative but to send a message to the Regent by Grimwood that the durbar could not be held without the presence of the Senapati, presumably adding 'and the Angao Sana' in order to allay suspicion. The Regent having agreed to send for his brothers – he was the sort of person to agree to anything – his party was invited into the Residency to await them. In one of the oddest and most vivid scenes in Ethel's account of her experiences she describes how she had gone into the drawing-room and found the Thangal General, who she had noticed was looking particularly seedy that day, 'asleep on the floor and got him to lie down on a sofa with a pillow under his head, where he very soon slumbered peacefully'.

A message now arrived from the Senapati regretting that he was too ill to attend the durbar, so Mr Quinton again had no alternative but to postpone the proceedings until eight o'clock next morning, first having it explained to the Regent that it was necessary for *all* the princes to be present, an emphasis which must finally have let the cat out of the bag.

Fifteen sat down to dinner at the Residency that Sunday evening, entertained by the local band which had been hired for the occasion, and Ethel felt very conscious of being the only woman present. Everyone retired to bed at eleven so as to be fresh for whatever the morrow, 23 March, might bring. What it did not bring, as might have been expected, was the Senapati who at 8 a.m. sent another message that he was too ill to attend the postponed durbar. So once more it was put off, this time until midday, but with the same result; and Mr Quinton was forced to consider some other means of carrying out the Viceroy's orders.

The best he could think of was to send the ever-willing Grimwood to the Senapati's house within the palace walls to communicate to him personally what the Government of India had ordered. He was to try and persuade him to come quietly, telling him that his banishment would not last for ever and that – though the Chief Commissioner had

no business to give such an assurance, which he (and the Senapati) must have known was worthless – if he behaved himself he would be recognized as the Maharajah on his brother the Regent's death. Grimwood was accompanied only by Lieutenant Simpson when at 4 p.m. he set off on this thankless embassy, the two friends having to brave their way through a milling press of Manipuri sepoys in order to gain entrance into the palace precincts. Only the fact that he brought with him no other escort can have induced the Senapati – who appeared to be genuinely indisposed and had himself carried downstairs in a litter – to see Grimwood at all. But when he returned to the Residency with Simpson at 6 p.m. he had to report to Mr Quinton that his mission had failed. And they had noticed as they came back that there was not a soul to be seen on the usually well-frequented road between the palace and Residency wall.

Diplomacy – if that is the right word – having failed, it was now the turn of the military; and at a council of war held that evening it was decided that the Senapati's house must be attacked and the man apprehended by force. While the eyes of the military officers sparkled at the prospect of a scrap, Ethel remembered with dread that Mr Melville of the Telegraph Department had insisted on setting off alone that afternoon for Sengmai *en route* for Kohima where he had a job to do. Nature now added her own theatrical effects to the unfolding drama by staging at 7 p.m. a mighty thunderstorm with blinding flashes of lightning, bringing early darkness. Scenting danger, the Residency servants began one by one to steal away.

In the hour before dinner, while Mr Quinton and three others were playing a game of whist, Ethel went to the kitchen to oversee the preparation of quantities of soup and the roasting of some chickens so that, if all the kitchen staff left, there would be something to eat next day. At dinner there was little talking, and afterwards Lieutenant Brackenbury entertained the company with comic songs sung to his own banjo accompaniment.

Later, when everybody else had retired to bed, Frank and Ethel went for a stroll in the garden. The clouds had by now dispersed and it was bright moonlight, and as they wandered arm-in-arm among the flower-beds they suddenly heard the voice of the sentry challenge someone at the gate. It was a messenger from the palace asking if they still required the dancing-girls to be sent across for the *nautch* that had been arranged for the entertainment of their guests that evening, and which had been forgotten amid the day's anxieties. Having sent him away, they returned to the house, Frank to sleep soundly, Ethel

to lie awake listening to the quarter-guard gong sounding the hours. At 3 a.m. she woke him.

*

In the bitter cold and darkness of the early morning of Monday, 24 March, Ethel put on a warm, tight-fitting dress, saw to a scratch breakfast of eggs and bread-and-butter for those who had not already gone off to their companies in the camp, and then learnt to her dismay that Frank was to accompany Colonel Skene when the attack went in, as his unofficial *aide-de-camp*. Unwilling to be left alone in the Residency, she went with Mr Quinton and his Assistant Secretary Cossins to the telegraph office by the gate in the wall fronting the palace. It was a strongly made building, the stone-walled basement of which the Chief Commissioner chose as his headquarters. There was a similar building housing the treasury on the other side of the gateway, which the soldiers had appropriated as an ammunition store.

Upstairs in the telegraph office they were watching the clerk try to tap out a message to Calcutta when shots were heard from the direction of the palace. This was a large enclosure encircled by a ditch and rampart some two hundred yards from the wall of the Residency compound and containing besides the palace itself the durbar hall, temples, the princes' residences, quarters for the Manipuri troops quartered there and other accommodation for the court and its followers. The north and south faces of the rampart were pierced by large timber gateways, and over each an upper storey had been constructed for defence, on which guns had been mounted. Probably Ethel was unaware how heavily outnumbered and outgunned was the escort commanded by Colonel Skene. Besides having no artillery to deal with his opponents' 7- and 3-pounder guns, his force of 400 men plus the small Residency guard with only a limited stock of ammunition faced an army of an estimated 4,000 to 5,000 Manipuri sepoys armed with rifles and muskets for which there were huge reserves of ammunition in the palace armoury.

The sound of firing from the direction of the palace continued to reach them, and at sunrise – while the clerk was still trying to send out the telegram, unsuccessfully because the wire had been cut – they were startled when a bullet shattered the window of the telegraph office and smacked into the opposite wall. Hurriedly they descended to the basement below whose stone walls provided protection, and Cossins went back to the Residency to observe from its thatched roof what was going on round the palace, but found his view of the

8. *Ethel Grimwood*

Senapati's house was hidden by another building. From time to time a Gurkha sepoy would run out into the road, but it was impossible to see what was happening.

At 10.30 Grimwood came in briefly with a detail fetching more ammunition from the treasury and told them the news that the main palace gateway and the Senapati's house had been taken by storm and many prisoners taken, but he had heard rumours that Brackenbury was either killed or wounded. At midday Mr Quinton and Ethel went back to the Residency for tea and sandwiches – nearly all the servants had gone by now – and, as they ate, stray bullets could be heard striking the outside walls. Before lunch she had taken the opportunity to change her winter dress for a blue serge skirt and white silk blouse. When before one o'clock they returned to the telegraph office she took with her a book to read: one would dearly like to know what it was. Grimwood was back again at one, bringing with him Colonel Skene and some of his officers, all of them looking worried – this was not the 'outing' the colonel had bargained for when he chose the size and component of the force to accompany the Chief Commissioner on his visit to Manipur. The news they brought was that Captain Butcher and Simpson were in possession of the Senapati's house, but that there was still no definite news of Brackenbury.

They all went over to the Residency and, while the others were having some lunch, Frank asked Ethel if she would get hold of some food to be sent over to Simpson and Butcher. She was cutting sandwiches for them when a bullet splintering through the kitchen window above her head sent her scurrying back to the dining-room, to find that everyone had left. The Residency guard could be heard engaging the Manipuri sepoys who had managed to infiltrate behind the house and were firing from that direction, and soon they were driven off; but the whole place was now dangerous, with bullets raining in from all sides through the windows and the upper walls that were only made of lath and plaster. In the dining-room some crockery on the dining-table and glass on the sideboard had been smashed, and wandering disconsolately from room to room Ethel found that many of her and Frank's most cherished possessions, here a picture or photograph, there a vase or other ornament, had been broken.

At 4.30 the bombardment began as the artillery on the palace ramparts opened up and began pounding the Residency, though owing to bad gunnery many of the rounds were 'overs'. By this time Ethel was dully aware that the Gurkha sepoys and most of the officers had come back from their raid beyond the palace walls and were now occupied in the defence of the Residency and its outbuildings,

including the telegraph office and adjoining treasury and the small hospital in the grounds some distance away. The noise of shell-fire and musketry all round them was continuous.

Since the hospital being of plaster offered little protection to the wounded, it was decided to move them, when opportunity offered, into the basement area of the Residency, and Ethel was sent to collect as many sheets and blankets as she could from the bedrooms and whatever else she thought would be of use. The cellars in the basement area were made up of a number of compartments connecting with one another, and in one of these as evening fell Mr Quinton, Colonel Skene, the Grimwoods, Cossins and Gurdon foregathered. Counsels were divided. After discussing the situation quietly with the colonel in the doorway Frank came over and told Ethel they would have to evacuate the Residency and try to make their way to Cachar. There followed another general conference when it was decided first to try and make a truce with the palace, and a letter signed by the Chief Commissioner was sent over by the hand of one of the Manipuri sepoys sitting on the Residency wall:

> On what condition will you cease firing on us, and give us time to communicate with the Viceroy, and repair the telegraph?

While this was being drafted the colonel ordered the bugler to sound the Cease Fire, and soon after the Gurkha sepoys had complied the Manipuris followed suit. The unaccustomed silence was almost tangible.

A few minutes later, before the letter could have reached the palace, a message was brought that the Regent wished to see the Chief Commissioner and talk things over, and this was followed in due course by an acknowledgement written in Bengali of Mr Quinton's letter, proposing that they should surrender their arms if the Manipuris were to agree to extend the cease-fire. Some difficulty was encountered in translating the letter, and it was Mr Quinton's naïve suggestion that the Senapati, with whom it was assumed they were corresponding, should be asked to come over and explain the passage to them. Whether seriously intended or not, the idea was not pursued, and instead Mr Quinton, the colonel, Cossins, Grimwood and Simpson (who insisted on staying by his friend's side) went across to the telegraph office by the entrance gate and waited while the Regent's letter was translated into English by a clerk.

Frank would not allow Ethel to accompany them, believing she was safer where she was. Before saying goodbye he told her to keep a brave heart: peace would soon be restored; she should try to get some sleep, for she was looking very tired.

5

Manipur Massacre (II)

The assault on the Senapati's house had been a fiasco. The attacking party consisting of seventy men under Captain Butcher and thirty under Lieutenant Brackenbury with fifty men under Lieutenant Lugard in support had forced the palace gateway and stormed the house, only to find that the Senapati had slipped away. They did not reach the house unscathed, three Gurkhas having been killed, and Lugard and fourteen Gurkhas suffering wounds. Brackenbury mistaking the way and leading his men down a cul-de-sac had been severely wounded, but managed to crawl away to the river bank to the north of the palace where he had lain all day, his body offering target practice to any Manipuri sepoy who happened to see him. Several attempts to rescue him failed, in one of which a jemadar was killed, but eventually he was brought out through the gallantry of a bugler, who was awarded the Order of Merit for his act. At 4 p.m. he was carried into the Residency with terrible injuries, both his arms and both his legs being broken and his body hit in many places.

After a tough fight a detachment under Captain Chatterton had succeeded in seizing the south gateway in the palace wall, from which they were in a position to bring down fire on the whole line of the rampart facing the Residency; but owing to some mistaken order they later withdrew and, with the other survivors, straggled back to the Residency under heavy fire.

This was one of the occasions when bluff failed to pay off.

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Mrs Grimwood was aroused from the fit of depression she had fallen into when her husband had left her, by the doctor, who had taken the opportunity afforded by the truce to have the wounded carried up from the hospital in the grounds to the basement area of the Residency, where a cellar had been made ready to receive them. Soon they were lying side by side occupying every foot of space, and Ethel was

kept busy ransacking the shell-shattered rooms for more coverings for them, preparing their food on a small stove she had set up on a table in the corner, and giving what help she could to the doctor performing operations by lantern light. She augmented the soup she had made the previous day with the contents of several tins, the resultant brew proving a general favourite, as was the mixture of condensed milk and water she heated on the little stove. All around her were scenes of horrifying ghastliness, none more so than Brackenbury's prolonged agony; and from time to time the doctor asked her to go outside while a dead body was removed in order to make room for one more of the wounded.

At ten-thirty she scraped up some sort of meal for the unwounded officers who were not on duty outside, though nobody had much of an appetite, and left most of them dozing in chairs on the veranda. After giving further help in the makeshift hospital she walked disconsolately through the rooms of the house and found she was unable to open the door of her bedroom because a shell had brought the roof down inside, blocking it. She went down the steps leading from the veranda into the flower-scented, moonlit garden, desperately worried about what had happened to Frank, then returned to the veranda where she dozed off in a chair.

The big guns from the palace rampart opened up again at midnight, jerking her awake, and after a momentary paralysis of nerve she ran through the house and down to the basement again, where everyone had collected. It is not clear exactly what now took place, but it must have been remembered that Colonel Skene the previous evening had contemplated a retreat towards Cachar, and it was eventually decided that this offered them their best chance. There had been no definite news of Mr Quinton and his party, though according to one report a voice from the palace ramparts had been heard some time earlier calling out: 'The Chief Commissioner will not return'. Whatever information Major Boileau, the senior officer present, had received of their fate that prompted the decision to withdraw was never passed on to Ethel, who throughout the ordeal ahead clung to the belief that Frank and the others were being held in the palace as hostages and would one day be ransomed and released.

The doctor and his assistants began moving the wounded into the garden so that those who were unable to walk could be put into doolies and carried. The move proved too much for Brackenbury who died almost as soon as he was placed on the grass, and his body was carried back to the cellar. Just before the fugitives moved off Ethel went back and covered his face and body with a sheet.

It is impossible now to make out what orders were given, but two hundred and seventy Gurkha sepoys – presumably under the command of junior European officers but, if so, their names have not been recorded – were left behind to 'hold the Residency', by which is probably meant 'hold off the enemy', while the rest made good their escape and set out for Silchar and safety. The retreating party was composed of Major Boileau, Captain Butcher, Captain Woods, the subadar-major, one hundred and sixty Gurkha sepoys, seventeen wounded carried in doolies under the care of the doctor, numerous servants and followers, and Mrs Grimwood.

Shells were bursting all round them when at 2 a.m. they assembled in the Residency compound, and there was confusion everywhere, the officers having difficulty in getting their men into some sort of order for the march, the non-combatants milling about and knocking each other over in their eagerness to save their skins. Ethel, who had been told by an officer to stay on the veranda until he came back for her, had a sudden panic that she had been forgotten, but eventually he returned and told her it was time to go. The skirt and blouse she had changed into at lunchtime were ideal for walking, but she had had no time to go back and fetch outdoor things. On her feet were thin patent-leather slippers, and her stockings were of the flimsy kind.

She had not gone many yards from the house, following the general drift of the fugitives, when a shell burst almost at her feet, slightly wounding her in the arm. They were leaving the Residency grounds by the back gate making for the Cachar road, which entailed their negotiating a thorn fence that separated the formal garden from the outer compound, and on this she managed to scratch her hands badly and to tear her stockings. Coming up against the wall with its six-foot drop into a ditch on the other side she scrambled to the top and sat there hesitating until someone gave her a push from behind and she slid down, landing in the arms of one of the Indian followers, who helped her on towards the river bank. The water was cold, and she had waded half-way across when the doctor caught her up and insisted on carrying her the rest of the way, but slipped on the mud of the opposite bank, giving them both a ducking. Somehow the heel of one of her slippers had come off while she was crossing the river, and from now on she was troubled by leeches which got under her clothes and clung to her skin, hair-thin at first but swelling to the size of garden slugs as they gorged on her blood. Even at the infrequent halts she could do nothing about them for lack of privacy.

Firing was going on all round them – whether friend or foe she neither knew nor cared – and crossing the Cachar road she lay down

in the ditch on the other side, waiting for things to quieten down. The refugees then surged on down the road, going westwards, herself drawn along with the flow. Only once more were they fired on that night, and – due to the efforts of the rearguard left behind at the Residency – there was no pursuit. The wounded in the jolting, swaying doolies suffered the most, but were fortunate not to have been left behind to the mercy of the Manipuri sepoys. Four miles down the road they looked back and saw that the sky was aglow, flames leaping up from among the trees where they knew the Residency stood. All Ethel's worldly possessions were there, except the tattered clothes she stood up in. They pushed on and marched until daybreak when they halted, the senior officers undecided which route to take.

It was fortunate for them that Captain Cowley was that very moment marching up from Cachar with a detachment of two hundred men of the 43rd Gurkhas on ordinary relief duty, ignorant of the disaster which had occurred at Imphal. The first hint he had that something was wrong was the reluctance of the Manipuri officials *en route* to provide him with supplies, and their unusually truculent attitude.

Major Boileau was aware that this detachment was on the move and due to reach Leimatak thirty miles from Imphal and some twenty miles beyond where they were halted, on 25 March. Not wanting to come under fire from the strongly held *thana* at Bishenpur six miles further down the road, they decided to take to the paddy-fields and try and find a path leading over the hills, rejoining the Cachar road at some point on the far side of Bishenpur.

By now Ethel was very tired. She had had nothing to eat for many hours, and the water they had come upon during the march was too filthy to drink. Her feet in their indoor slippers, one of them heelless, had been cut about during her flight making walking painful, the more so as she was weighed down by her sodden clothes. When the sun rose and began to beat down on her uncovered head she was given a *pagri* to bind round it by one of the followers, but found it too uncomfortable, and seeing her in difficulties with the *pagri*, one of the officers gave her his helmet to wear. The going was heavy through the paddy-fields, each one enclosed by a bund of mud over which she tended to trip, and she was glad when they reached the foothills. But the slope of the hillside was steep, sorely trying her strength, and she frequently had to stop to get back her breath. Part way up they came to a level area shaded by trees with drinkable water nearby, and another halt was called, Ethel at once falling alseep on the ground. She was woken by the sound of the others moving on and had to struggle to her feet

and limp on with them or be left behind. The pace was faster now because, looking down the hill the way they had come, they had seen what they took to be a war-party of Naga tribesmen dancing along in their wake, brandishing spears. Whether or not they were on a head-hunting expedition as was supposed, the rifles the Gurkha sepoys aimed at them deterred them from coming close, and after a while they gave up the pursuit.

An exhausting climb up the Leimatak ridge to a peak 6,700 feet high lay before them. So tired that she could hardly force her aching limbs to climb the narrow, rocky path, so steep in places that she had to clutch and crawl on hands and knees, somehow Ethel struggled on throughout the hot afternoon. They reached the summit at last, and, while briefly resting there, a young Naga who had been in the Grimwoods' service as a groom appeared from nowhere, having braved not only the wrath of his own people but also the rifles of the trigger-happy Gurkha sepoys, and presented Ethel with a gift of three hen's eggs. She was touched by his gesture but could not bring herself to eat them raw, though she broke the top of one of them and tried her best; and the other two were later crushed in the pocket of one of the officers who had put them there for safety. She later had nothing but praise for the kindness and courtesy she had received from the officers, but the lack of privacy, being the only woman among a multitude of men, she found particularly trying.

During the halt on the hilltop Major Boileau sent out a small patrol to reconnoitre the way ahead. This soon came upon a *thana* manned by sepoys under a Manipuri officer who, when his men had taken up positions for firing, showed by signs that he wished to parley with the patrol leader. When the patrol, rifles at the ready, had approached within speaking distance the officer shouted that he had orders to let the memsahib and the sepoys pass through, but that all the European officers were to return to Manipur. The patrol beating a hasty retreat under a hail of ill-aimed bullets rejoined the main body at the halting place, and the march continued, easier now because they were going downhill.

Night fell on the longest day Ethel had ever known, and still they straggled on. Her slippers had long ago given out altogether, and it was agony picking her way down the rocky track in her bare feet. She tried to comfort herself with the thought of Frank and the Chief Commissioner's party in the comparative comfort of the palace dungeon, in her misery even envying them a little. In the small hours of the morning of 26 March, having covered a total distance of some twenty miles, they were forced to rest, choosing a grove of trees in a

hollow between two hills, and when she lay down some of the officers covered her with their greatcoats, enduring the bitter cold themselves. She was roused from a deep sleep less than three hours later, and as the sky behind them began to lighten they moved on again. More than once that morning she knew what it was to despair, but hope revived when they suddenly rejoined the Cachar road, and walking became a little less of a torture to her.

Further down the road they surprised three Manipuri sepoys squatting by the roadside cooking their morning rice and managed to capture one of them. He told them that Cowley's detachment had arrived at Leimatak the previous day and had not yet passed by on his way to Imphal. Congratulating themselves that they must meet up with them soon, they shared out the Manipuris' breakfast amongst themselves, a meagre enough ration, Ethel being allotted slightly more than the others, and pursued their way. But they were not yet out of the wood.

Half a mile further on they found the road blocked by a rough stockade and as they drew near it came under heavy fire from the hillside. They had walked into an ambush intended for Cowley's detachment. Instinctively Ethel threw herself down and lay against the slope of the hill by the side of the road, trying to present as small a target as possible, only to be pulled to her feet again because the stockade was to be rushed. Knowing it would be impossible for her to clamber over it in her encumbering skirt, she ran to the other side of the road, lost her footing, and rolled over and over down the *khud*, fortunately not a deep one. She scrambled to her feet, skirted the stockade and, holding on to the foot which the follower who had helped her before extended down to her, pulled herself up to the road again, rejoining the others on the Cachar side of the stockade. Completely exhausted, she lay down panting from her exertions while the Gurkha sepoys who had taken up a kneeling position exchanged fire with the attackers.

Then someone called out that he could see men coming up the hill towards them from the direction of Cachar. If they were Manipuri soldiers she knew that this was the end for her, but in her exhaustion hardly cared. Someone else shouted that from their khaki uniforms they must be Gurkhas, another shouting back that the uniform of the Manipuri sepoys was also khaki, and all was doubt and fear and uncertainty. To test the matter Major Boileau ordered the bugle to be sounded, and hope rose again when a bugle call sounded in reply, until it was remembered that the Manipuri buglers blew a similar call. Someone tied a handkerchief to the end of a stick and waved it to and fro, but they could see no answering signal. Cries were again raised

that they were Gurkhas, Gurkhas, and Ethel shut her eyes, unable to bear the strain of uncertainty any longer. All doubt was swept aside when the figure of a European officer was made out at the head of the advancing men. Someone urged her to make a last effort, for bullets were still coming their way from the hillside;

> and I remember [she wrote] getting up, with a mist in my eyes and a surging in my head, and running as I have never run before or since down the hill, helped along by two of the officers. I remember putting my foot on a stone which rolled away from under it, and gave my ankle a wrench which sprained it, and I turned sick and giddy with pain; and I remember meeting Captain Cowley, and seeing his men rushing past me up the hill, and then I remember nothing more for some time. I did not faint, but I believe I sat down on the side of the road and sobbed, for the strain had been more than I could bear after all the horrors of the previous two days, and tears were a relief.

There is no need to describe in detail the last stages of that journey to Cachar. It is perhaps a measure of the demoralization that had overtaken Major Boileau and his fellow officers that, although the dangers of their flight were now behind them, they prevailed upon Cowley to turn round and with his detachment provide an escort for the fugitives. For them their ordeal was nearly over. There were army rations to eat and cocoa, beer or whisky to drink, and Ethel was grateful for a stiff peg to help her pull herself together. Far more precious to her were the hairbrush and sponge she was given, and the pair of woollen stockings and great big sepoy's boots, just the things for her swollen feet. Since her ankle was so painful, she was carried next day in a doolie, but afterwards walked most of the way, sometimes riding for a spell on Cowley's pony. Several times they were fired on, but as they neared the Cachar border the Manipuris began to keep their distance. The *thanas* they passed were undefended, so having appropriated whatever foodstuffs they could find and carry away they burnt them before proceeding on their way. On 31 March they crossed the Jhiri river and were in safety at last.

At the Jhiri rest-house on the far side Ethel had the unspeakable joy of her first bath in ten days. When she took off her clothes she found that her body was covered in leech bites and that some of the creatures, black and swollen, were still clinging to her. Clothes and other necessaries provided by the planters' wives were waiting for her at Lakhipur, and at Silchar which they reached early in April she was given a heroine's welcome. She stayed in the house of some old friends, and from this haven wrote two letters to Frank telling him

of her escape, addressed care of the Regent, which were sent by the hands of some Manipuris returning to the capital.

One evening a week after her arrival she was in the Deputy Commissioner's bungalow when a telegram in its yellow envelope was handed to him, which he read and then left the room. Her friend, who was waiting for her outside, seemed upset, and when they got back to the house broke it to her as gently as she could that the telegram had contained information, emanating from the Regent, of what had occurred at the palace on the night the Residency had been abandoned, news that brought Ethel's world tumbling in ruins around her.

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The last she had seen of Frank was when, while the cease-fire was still holding, he had left her to accompany the Chief Commissioner, Colonel Skene, his Assistant Secretary Cossins and Lieutenant Simpson to the telegraph office by the entrance gate to the Residency while the Regent's letter, written in Bengali, was translated into English by a clerk. Since it was unthinkable that a British force should surrender its arms to the Manipuris, which was the only condition on which they would agree to extend the cease-fire, it was decided that the only course was to accede to the request, made in the Regent's name but obviously inspired by the Senapati, for Mr Quinton to come over to the palace and talk things over.

So the five of them had left the Residency compound, unarmed and taking with them no escort except a young bugler, and walked the two hundred yards to the main gate of the palace, outside which a long conversation was seen to take place. According to one report the bugler was turned back with the words: 'We don't want children here', while the five Englishmen went inside. What happened then can only be pieced together from various sources, none of them eyewitnesses.

A crowd of excited Manipuri sepoys inside the palace gate, shouting and brandishing their weapons, jostled Mr Quinton's party as they entered. Almost at once Grimwood was killed – laid low by a spear-thrust according to some accounts (perhaps inspired by memories of the end of General Gordon), though the weapon is more likely to have been a sword or bayonet – his friend Simpson falling at his side severely wounded. Amid the turmoil arising from this unpremeditated slaughter, the four survivors were dragged to the durbar hall where they had fetters put on their wrists and ankles as if they were common criminals. Of the next two hours virtually nothing is known,

but from the scraps of evidence available it seems that some sort of trial took place.

And before continuing the story it is necessary to remind the reader that Manipur was a sovereign state in treaty relationship with the Government of India. Its inhabitants were not British subjects, and the laws applicable within its boundaries were the laws of Manipur. Looked at from the point of view of the princes, what had happened was that a foreign power had invaded their territory, taken up arms against them, and tried to kidnap one of the princes, the one who since the flight of the Maharajah and his supersession by the Regent five and a half months before had been the *de facto* heir-apparent. Suicidally foolish though it may have been for a puny Princely State to square up to the mighty paramount power, the decision to resist British armed incursion – albeit taken in a fit of hysterical anger – can surely not be said to have been unlawful. Now, having laid violent hands on the ringleaders of the force that had made an unprovoked attack on them, the princes chose to treat them as criminals who had, contrary to the laws of Manipur, taken up arms against the ruling house. The logic of their reasoning seems irresistible.

After some sort of trial, then, and no doubt it was a travesty, the four accused were found guilty and condemned to death. Before being taken out to the place of execution – we are indebted to Miss Wright for this detail – Mr Quinton asked to be allowed five minutes in which to say his prayers, which was granted. They were then led, one by one, to the block – Simpson being in such a bad way from his wounds that he had to be supported on either side as he staggered to his death – and in the moonlight summarily and publicly beheaded. The mob then fell on their bodies and mutilated them.

The bombardment of the Residency, which had recommenced at midnight while Ethel had been snatching a little sleep in a chair on the veranda, was the signal that Manipuri justice had been done, and that, having thoroughly burned his boats, the Senapati – for it cannot be doubted that his was the master-mind behind the executions – had determined on a holocaust. The rearguard left behind while Major Boileau's party made good their escape from the Residency, having admirably fulfilled its purpose of preventing a close pursuit, had broken up into small groups that set out independently for Kohima to the north. Constantly harrassed by Manipuri sepoys, they suffered many casualties before the remnant fought their way clear. The now-deserted Residency was set on fire, the treasury with its coin and stocks of ammunition looted, all the buildings in the compound destroyed, and the bodies of the dead European officers mutilated.

Melville of the Telegraph Department and a signaller called O'Brien who had joined him were set upon by Manipuri sepoys and some Nagas at Mayangkhang on the road to Kohima and killed, their bodies being later found in a ditch, cut to pieces.

Most horrible of all the atrocities carried out at the Senapati's instigation, showing how he still harboured a deadly grudge against Colonel Johnstone for the many humiliations he had suffered at his hands, was the despatch of seven Manipuri sepoys to Khan-jhub-khul where Johnstone's little son Arthur was buried, with orders to open the grave and scatter the child's remains to the four winds.

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Jemadar Birbal Nagarkati in command of the thirty-three Gurkha sepoys of the 43rd stationed at Langthobal heard the news of the fighting at Imphal too late to be of assistance. Instead, showing considerable powers of leadership, he led his men through sixty miles of hostile country, fighting a number of minor engagements on the way, and reached Tamu in forty-eight hours where, on 27 March, he reported what he knew to Lieutenant Grant. Mr Quinton, Colonel Skene, Grimwood and many others were reported dead; the Chief Commissioner's substantial escort killed, taken prisoner or in headlong flight to Assam. At once it sprang to Grant's mind that the lady of the dark eyes and the burnt cake must be in mortal danger, and his response was immediate.

> I wired all over Burma [he wrote home when things had quietened down] and asked for leave to go up and help Mrs Grimwood and rest to escape and got orders at eleven p.m. on 27th. At five a.m., 28th, I started with fifty of my men, one hundred and sixty rounds each, thirty Gurkhas, Martini rifles, sixty rounds, and three elephants; marched till five p.m., then slept till one a.m., 29th, marched till two p.m., slept till eleven p.m., marched and fought all the way till we reached Palel at seven a.m., 30th, having driven one hundred and fifty men out of a hill entrenchment and two hundred out of Palel, at the foot of the hills, without loss. . . . I marched at eleven p.m., 30th, and neared Thobal at seven a.m., meeting slight resistance till within 300 yards of river, three feet to six feet deep, and fifty yards broad; there seeing a burning bridge, I galloped on poor Clinker (the old steeplechasing Burman *tat* I had just bought on selling my Australian mare Lady Alice), and was greeted by hot fire from mud-walled compounds on left of bridge and trenches on the right in open all across the river. I saw the wooden bridge was burnt through, and made record-time back to my men, emptying my revolver into the enemy behind the walls.

Never before did damsel in distress have such an impetuous knight errant to rescue her; but the rest of the tale must be told more briefly. They were held up at Thobal fourteen miles from the capital where they dug in and for ten days under constant shell-fire fought off incessant attacks, suffering in casualties one Indian other rank killed and three others wounded. While his little force was under siege Grant corresponded with the Regent and the Senapati by the hand of a Gurkha prisoner put on parole who passed to and fro between the palace and Grant's 'fort'. In order to bluff the princes about his true strength and importance he signed his letters 'Col. A. Howlett, Com. 2nd B Regt.'. Typically, the Regent sought to convince him that he had not been responsible for what had happened, and the Senapati sent over 500 pounds of wholemeal flour and 50 each of *dhal* and *ghee* in the hope that Grant would retire. This he refused to do unless a member of the durbar gave himself up as a hostage, and fighting was resumed. On 8 April – by which date Ethel was in Silchar, recovering from her ordeal – he was ordered to retire at the first opportunity and join the punitive column marching in from Burma under General Graham; and his *beau geste* was brought to a close.

Simultaneously a column was marching in from Kohima under Colonel Rennick and another from Silchar under Major-General Collett, the three totalling nearly three thousand rifles, all converging on Imphal; and the rebellion, as it was termed, was soon stamped out. During the fighting both Jemadar Birbal Nagarkati and Lieutenant Grant were wounded, and so, alas, was Clinker.

> At Palel we found three or four hundred Manipuri soldiers who did not expect us; they saw us half a mile off and bolted after firing a few shots. I went on with the mounted infantry, and after trotting till within 300 yards of the retreating army, we formed line on the open and went in. I rode for a *palki* and umbrella I saw, and shooting one or two on my way got close up; but a hundred or so had made for the hills on our right and made a short stand, and suddenly down went poor Clinker on his head, hurling me off. Jumped up – I was covered with blood from a bullet-wound in the poor beast's foreleg, just below the shoulder. Two men came up. I twisted my handkerchief round with a cleaning-rod above the wound, stopping the blood from the severed main artery, and, refilling my revolver, ran on.
>
> By this time the men had jumped off and were fighting with the enemy on the hill; the *palki* was down, and I fear the inmate of it escaped. We killed forty of them without loss, excepting poor Clinker and another pony. After pursuing three miles we stopped, and returned to the infantry which were rather out of it, though they doubled two miles. Found poor Clinker's large bone broken, and had to shoot him at once. . . .

Poor Clinker! He was 300 yards from eight hundred rifles for twenty minutes and never touched, and a shot killed him at full gallop.

Now *'bus'* (enough) about myself in the longest letter I have ever written.

Retribution swiftly followed. The Manipuri sepoy who had killed Grimwood was hanged on 24 May. The Senapati and the Thangal General (whose part in the affair was never made clear, Johnstone firmly believing he was not such a fool as to have supported the executions) were hanged on 13 August, in public. Of the men responsible for the deaths of Melville and O'Brien one was hanged and eight sentenced to transportation for life. The seven sepoys who had desecrated Arthur Johnstone's grave were flogged on the orders of the military authorities. The Regent, his brother the Angao Sana and several of their henchmen suffered transportation for life to the Andamans, the penal colony in the Indian Ocean.

The palace area and its surroundings were declared a British Reserve and cleared of most of the buildings there, only the ramparts, the coronation enclosure, some temples and the durbar hall being left standing. It had been at the foot of the steps leading up to the coronation enclosure, where two masonry *chinthes* (or dragons, as Miss Wright called them) stood guard, that the executions had been carried out. According to her account, the *chinthes* had been daubed with the victims' blood and, whether this is true or not, the Engineers were given the task of blowing them up with high explosive. The bodies of the Chief Commissioner and his companions, which had been left above ground, were reunited with their heads and given a decent burial.

The paramount power had reasserted its paramountcy with a vengeance, and it only remained to settle the question of the succession. After much deliberation the Viceroy's choice fell on somebody out of the direct line from Gambhir Singh, who he thought would be more amenable to the *diktat* of the Government of India, the candidate's principal qualification being that he was only five years old.

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There followed the usual *post mortem* or witch-hunt, for whenever a disaster occurred that tarnished the prestige of the paramount power somebody's head had to roll. The spectacle of the process is not an edifying one.

First the press had to have its dog's day. It was then a mere midget

compared with the monster it has since become, but already showing lively signs of two of its less admirable propensities – a relish for mischief-making and the knack of getting the wrong end of the stick. On this occasion the infant Fourth Estate played into the hands of the Viceroy for, instead of concentrating its attention on those aspects of the Manipur disaster against which criticism might validly have been levelled, it made a catchpenny song and dance about the Chief Commissioner having acted dishonourably in trying to 'allure' the Senapati to a durbar with the underhand object of arresting him, a suggestion of 'treachery' the Viceroy had no difficulty in refuting.

Nevertheless the telegram Lord Lansdowne despatched to the Secretary of State for India on 11 May 1891, in which he repudiated the charge of treachery brought against the Chief Commissioner, betrays a distinct uneasiness and an anxiety to deflect the finger of criticism from his own august person. Whilst purporting to clear Quinton's name, he was careful to explain that he personally had never authorized the arrest of the Senapati 'at Durbar'. (Much confusion was caused at all levels by the fact that the word durbar, according to the context, can mean the place where a public levee is held, the levee itself, or the executive government of a Princely State.) Lord Lansdowne also went to unnecessary lengths to blacken the character of the Senapati by reference to his past career, slurring over the uncomfortable truth that he had committed no recent crime which might have justified his arrest. 'His cruelties,' he vaguely alleged, 'were notorious.'

In case the Minister was still unconvinced, he fired off another telegram on 5 June consisting of no less than twenty-two numbered paragraphs. It is a remarkable document. First he propounds his understanding of the legal basis for the Government of India's interference in the internal affairs of Manipur, citing various precedents, as being the 'right and duty to settle successions in Subordinate Native States' and, rather oddly in the circumstances of the present case, the 'right and duty to uphold Native Chiefs recognized by us except in case of gross misrule, and to punish unlawful revolt against their authority'. Realizing that his own orders had clearly breached the second proposition, he shifts his ground and tries to shelter behind the fact that, though disposed to restore the absconded Maharajah – whose abdication Grimwood had accepted 'somewhat hastily' – he had given way on the point in the face of objections 'earnestly pressed' by the Chief Commissioner.

> Nevertheless [he continues] we could not permit a revolt against a Chief recognized by us to remain wholly successful and unpunished, and

> virtual authority in Manipur to pass into the hands of Senapati who, as lately described by Johnstone in letter, is 'a man of infamous character', and who was notoriously turbulent, and the real leader of the revolution of September 1890. . . .
>
> Under these circumstances we decided that Senapati should be removed from the State [that is, if he refused to come quietly, should be kidnapped], and Quinton while at Calcutta did not question propriety of this decision.

Whether or not Quinton was in a position to 'question the propriety' of the Viceroy's decision, we know that he disagreed with it, concurring with Grimwood's view that, if the Regent were confirmed as Maharajah, he would, *with the Senapati's support*, prove a strong and popular one, as indeed he had done during the five and a half months he had occupied the *gaddi*.

Having, he hoped, pasted over the ugly facts with specious argument, the Viceroy turns with obvious relief to the red herring of the Chief Commissioner's alleged treachery, to which he devotes the next thirteen paragraphs of his telegram. Rightly, he declined to comment on the military questions involved, preferring not to offer any opinion until the findings of the Court of Inquiry being held in Manipur had been promulgated. Still he could not resist a last attempt to divert any possible blame for the *débacle* from himself, by the futile assertion that 'both in letters and personal communication with Quinton, we [always the royal we] instructed him to take care that he had a sufficient force'.

The response of Lord Cross the Secretary of State to this egregious piece of special pleading was, predictably, to apply the whitewash brush and give his wholehearted endorsement to everything the Viceroy had done. He only added that, whilst acknowledging that Lord Lansdowne had no reason to contemplate that Quinton intended, if the Senapati refused to 'surrender', to arrest him in Durbar, he should take care in future that 'persons summoned to attend Durbars, which are almost universally understood to be held for ceremonial purposes, should not be subjected therein to measures of personal restraint'. One does not know whether to marvel more at Lord Cross's failure to grasp that Quinton had not declared a formal durbar in that sense at all, but had merely required the princes to attend him in the durbar-room of the Residency in order to have the Viceroy's orders read out to them, a very different thing; or at the alacrity with which he fell in with Lord Lansdowne's little game of concentrating on the irrelevant to the exclusion of the real issues involved. Dog, as they say, doesn't eat dog.

The debates in the two houses of parliament at Westminster followed the same false trail of the charge of treachery. In the Commons there was an uproar when Sir John Gorst the Under-Secretary, replying on behalf of Lord Cross who, being a member of the Upper House, was not present, blew the gaff by 'advancing the theory that the Government [of India] did not like to have able men in the Native States, and that that in fact was the real reason for getting rid of the Senapati, a policy of cutting off the tall poppy-heads', a theory emphatically repudiated by Lord Cross in the House of Lords. There the debate was conducted on a higher plane but with the same result. The ex-Viceroy Lord Rippon criticized what had been done as an unsatisfactory compromise between restoring the absconded Maharajah and acknowledging the Regent; instead, it had been decided to acquiesce in the palace revolution but to punish its principal author. The debate petered out in further exchanges as to the propriety of arresting the Senapati 'in Durbar', and the Viceroy was let off the hook.

But, if any individual was personally responsible for the events in Manipur of March 1891, that person was unquestionably Henry Charles Keith Petty-Fitzmaurice, fifth Marquess of Lansdowne. When his orders to the Chief Commissioner of Assam – that the Senapati should be removed from Manipur; that the Regent should be recognized as the Maharajah; and that the Chief Commissioner himself should go to Manipur and make known the decision on the spot – are analysed critically in the legal and political context obtaining at the time, the conclusion is inescapable that the Viceroy committed the Government of India to an act of colossal folly, overweening arrogance and manifest illegality. Bearing in mind how much blood flowed as a direct consequence of his orders, his anxiety to shift the blame from his own shoulders becomes understandable, though hardly the more laudable.

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What of any contributory responsibility for the disaster of the other actors in the drama? Johnstone writing in his retirement in England forcefully expressed the view that both Quinton and Grimwood had lacked the qualities requisite for the positions they held. The appointment of the Chief Commissioner, he wrote, was the product of a system whereby the Government of India acted on the principle that the private claim of its servants should take precedence over the interests of the country [India] generally. Ability as an accountant or a magistrate, 'or to look after stamps and stationery', did not qualify

an official to administer an unruly province. 'His claims as regards pay should not be allowed to weigh at all with the Government of India; it is unjust to the people, and [it] would be cheaper to give an enhanced pension than ruin a province.' Of the Viceroy's orders which led to the trouble he remarked: 'It is difficult to say which showed the greatest want of wisdom, the Government in issuing such an order, or the Chief Commissioner in accepting such a mission, quite derogatory to one of such high rank.' But, as has already been suggested, having expressed his disagreement with what was proposed, the Chief Commissioner can hardly be blamed for not refusing to carry out the Viceroy's instructions.

As to the decisions he was called upon to make as events unfolded, it is difficult to see that he had any real alternatives. When the Senapati had refused his repeated attempts to get him to the durbar-room at the Residency, he handed matters over to the military, and when force of arms had failed to achieve his objective he took the courageous step – in order to prevent his people from being annihilated – of putting his own head into the lion's mouth. In one respect only can he be faulted, and that is his failure for reasons of security to take Grimwood into his confidence as to his intentions at a much earlier stage. Colonel Skene determined the size and component of the military escort on the basis of Quinton's assurance that there was 'no likelihood of offensive trouble in Manipur'; and accordingly brought along, on what he expected to be no more than an 'outing', many young soldiers without previous experience of active service. They were issued with only 40 rounds per man for their Snider rifles, and no reserve ammunition was taken; the available mountain guns were also left behind. Had Grimwood been told at the outset that the intention was to arrest the Senapati and been asked what he thought the local reaction was likely to be, he could not fail to have mentioned the possibility of armed resistance and reminded the Chief Commissioner of the large number of military personnel and the considerable armoury and arsenal within the palace walls. Cautioned by such advice from the man on the spot, Quinton would surely have given the colonel a less bland assurance concerning the possibility of trouble ahead.

Of Grimwood, though he does not actually name him, Johnstone appears to suggest that he lacked the rare combination of qualities necessary in a Political Agent assigned to so tricky a State as Manipur, for which he blames the Government of India and its delegate the Chief Commissioner for selecting him. The method of selection, he wrote, was for the post to be 'put up to a kind of Dutch auction'.

What this boils down to is the opinion that Grimwood lacked the experience and forceful personality necessary to handle such a bunch of toughs as the princes of Manipur; and there may be some truth in this. His and Ethel's ability to get on easy social terms with them was doubtless a useful asset when things were going well, but when the crisis came and the Maharajah sought refuge in the Residency Grimwood did not have the personal authority to stop the rot there and then by putting some guts into him and at once arranging for a sufficient military presence in Manipur to restore him to the *gaddi*, if necessary by force of arms. Had he been able to do so, the situation might have been retrieved without bloodshed. That this is how Johnstone would have acted is confirmed in a letter to the *Pioneer* newspaper written by an official who knew him:

> Oh! for a moment of Colonel Johnstone's presence at such a crisis. One strong word, with the ominous raising of the forefinger, would have paralysed the treacherous rebel the Senapati from perpetuating this outrage.

Be that as it may, from the moment Mr Quinton's party arrived in Manipur to carry out the Viceroy's orders Grimwood's conduct cannot be faulted. He gave loyal support to the Chief Commissioner in all his attempts to resolve the deadlock by negotiation and, when these failed, accepted without demur the role of unofficial ADC to Colonel Skene, a military task which as a civilian he should never have been asked to undertake. He and Lieutenant Simpson, who out of pure friendship never left his side, present figures of no mean stature as they accompany their seniors through the palace gate to their death.

The brunt of public blame for the disaster was borne by the senior military officers, and it must be admitted that little glory was earned either in the attack on the Senapati's house or the retreat to Cachar; but in this and other matters the historian is hampered by lack of evidence. Many questions must therefore remain unanswered. If Colonel Skene ought not to be blamed for the comparatively weak escort he chose for the protection of the Chief Commissioner, in view of the political assessment that armed resistance need not be anticipated, should he have reappraised the situation when, after crossing the Manipur border, his men were repeatedly asked by Manipuri sepoys, presumably on orders from the palace: 'Haven't you brought your big guns with you?', a question only pertinent if the idea of armed resistance was already in their minds? Probably not, and anyway by then it was too late for the force to halt in its tracks while reinforcements were called up.

For a proper evaluation of the conduct of the other military officers a vital piece of evidence is lacking, namely the orders Colonel Skene gave to his second-in-command Major Boileau before setting out for the palace with Mr Quinton and the others. It cannot be that he went off without giving any, and there is a clue to what they may have been. After the attack on the Senapati's house had failed and the officers had forgathered in the Residency cellar under bombardment from the guns on the palace ramparts, the colonel's first thought had been to evacuate the Residency and try and get to Cachar. It seems probable, therefore, that his instructions to Major Boileau had been on similar lines: if the mission to the palace failed, he was to do his best to lead the survivors to safety.

If those were his orders, the only remaining question is whether Major Boileau began the retreat before he had received reliable information that Mr Quinton's party were beyond assistance. One can only guess, but the probability is that nobody, even in his most pessimistic moments, entertained the possibility that Mr Quinton and his party might be risking their lives; at worst they might be detained in the palace until such time as the political situation had clarified. There is, too, Mrs Grimwood's evidence that throughout the gruelling march to Cachar she clung to the belief that her husband was a prisoner, even envying him the comparative comfort he must be in while she was struggling westwards. Boileau then, when the party failed to return – perhaps influenced by the shout from the ramparts: 'Your Chief Commissioner will not return' – may well have been carrying out his colonel's instructions in ordering the Residency to be evacuated and the march to Cachar to commence. It was a simple matter of tactics for a rearguard to be left behind to hold off pursuit as long as possible, and then to form themselves into small groups and break out to the north towards Kohima.

The official verdict was otherwise. After the three-column punitive expedition had restored order in the State, a Court of Inquiry was held in Manipur into the conduct of the senior officers, as a result of which Major Boileau and the next in seniority Captain Butcher were court-martialled and cashiered for gross neglect of duty in the face of the enemy. That may sound conclusive, but much later – in fact in 1929 – a military historian in a position to know what had gone on behind the scenes wrote that 'there were other and more private reasons for this sentence which were not made public'. Again one can only guess, but would it not fit the facts if those two officers were thrown to the wolves, made to bear the brunt of the blame for a disaster which had seriously tarnished the prestige on which British

rule in India so largely depended – in order to save the face of the man really responsible, the Viceroy?

Mrs Grimwood in her account of her three years in Manipur, on which this narrative has drawn extensively, avoided any kind of accusation or insinuation against any of the persons involved, alive or dead. It was not in her power, she wrote, to speak of blame or to try to place extra responsibility on anyone; 'and if it were, I should hesitate'. She had only praise for the officers who looked after her on the march to Cachar and naturally had a particularly warm word for Lieutenant Grant, who for his gallantry was awarded the Victoria Cross and also promoted major. She herself received the Red Cross (a medal that seems to have fallen into disuse) at the hands of Queen Victoria at Windsor.

Less fortunate was Captain Cowley whose relief party the fugitives had been so overjoyed to encounter at a critical moment of their retreat to Cachar, and who had allowed himself to be persuaded by Major Boileau to escort them back to the border, instead of pressing on and leading his two companies into the fray as Grant had done. For this the Court of Inquiry held that he had been guilty of neglect of duty. That the Commander-in-Chief, General (later Field-Marshal Lord) Roberts, considered this verdict harsh is clear from the remark he endorsed on the proceedings, which is typical of his magnanimity. It was sufficient punishment for this officer, noted the hero of Kandahar, to know that the golden opportunity that comes to every officer, perhaps only once in his service, had come his way, and that he had failed to seize it.

6

Lushai Rising (I)

'O Chiefs of the Thangur, Fanai Chinjha, Lakher and Poi tribes! I have called you all for this purpose, that you may all know each other, and ever after live together like brothers without attacking each other.

'I have not much to say to you. I hear that you are always saying among yourselves: "Soon the foreigners will leave our country and return to their own". That is fools' talk and the word of a liar. We shall never leave these hills. Listen once for all to my words. When the Klong Dong here below you runs back into its source again, then we shall leave your country; not before. For a hundred years you have been raiding our villages. Twenty years ago Thangliena [T.H. Lewin] came to this very spot to punish you and release the captives, but you again raided our villages. Then our Great Queen grew angry and said to her sepoys: "Who are these people who raid my villages? Go up and take their country". Therefore from all sides sepoys entered your country. I burnt Hausata's village and took my brother [Lieutenant Stewart]'s gun from Hausata's grave. I fined Hausata's brother Vantura. The sahib from Aijal [R.B. McCabe] burnt Lianphunga's village. I went to the east and met the sahib from Burma [Macnabb] and brought back all the loot that the Klangklangs took from my brother, and I recovered the heads of my brothers. You know this is true; some of you were with me.

'Our Great Queen has many sahibs and thousands of sepoys. See, Khalkhama and Lianphunga killed one sahib [Captain Browne] and at once ten sahibs replaced him. Zakapa and Lalluaia killed some of our sepoys and more came in their places. Lianphunga and Khalkhama were made prisoners. Lalluaia and Zakapa cannot be chiefs, for they will not be allowed to build a village.

'Do not let me hear anything more of this gossip, this fools' talk, about the sepoys going away. See, my sepoys have brought up their wives and families, and I intend soon to take a wife and bring her here to live and be your queen.

'There is one more word to be said. We did not come here for

pleasure; we did not want your land; but you have obliged us to leave our country, which is far better than yours, by your folly in continuing to raid our villages; and now you have got to pay us tribute of a basket of rice per house, and to give us coolies when we want them. But do not fear, we are not like you. Had we been so, we should have carried off your wives and children and burnt your villages; but that is not our custom, and we only ask you to obey us and pay us tribute.

'You know that I am your friend, and that I am always ready to hear all you have to say, and that as long as you obey me you will not be hurt.'

In these words Captain John Shakespear of the 1st Leinster Regiment, Superintendent of the South Lushai Hills, then scarcely recovered from a bout of malaria, addressed in their own language the chiefs he had summoned from far and wide to a durbar held at Fort Lungleh in the late afternoon of 1 January 1892. It was a unique occasion, being the first time that chiefs of different tribes and clans under his jurisdiction, many of them at mortal feud with one another, had been persuaded to sit down together at the same feast. As he noted in the official diary he sent by runner each week to the Commissioner in Chittagong – from which his address to the chiefs has been transcribed – those who had come in person or sent representatives included Haolongs and Thangluahs, both descendants of the great Sailo chief Thangur; clans from the Muallianpui Klang; Lakhers, once known as Shendus and much feared for their ruthlessness; and Pois, cousins of the Chins who lived across the Burma border.

The rest of the evening was given over to festivities. There were wrestling matches among the chiefs' followers, an exhibition of dancing by sepoys of the garrison, a fireworks display that caused great astonishment and for a finale the release of gas balloons amid loud cheers. Two mithan having been killed for the occasion and a quantity of issue rum provided, the chiefs were left to eat and drink the night away while Shakespear and the other European officers present settled down to an *al fresco* dinner, concluding with renderings of 'Auld Lang Syne' and 'God Save the Queen'.

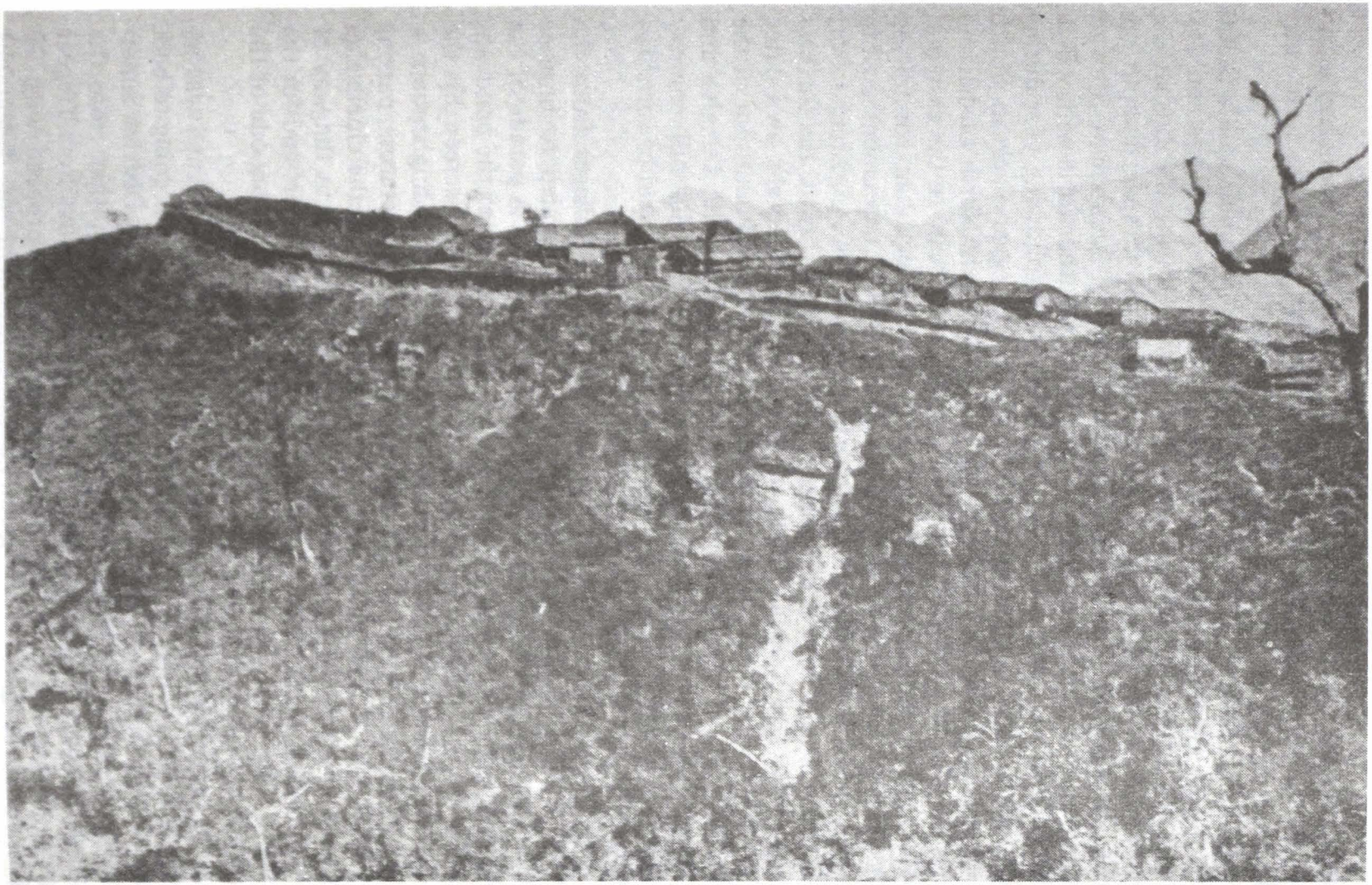
Next morning he required the chiefs, who were in an irritable mood after the night's potations, to swear an oath of friendship to one another in due tribal form by eating a piece of raw mithan's liver and repeating the words: 'Not until the rivers run back into the earth will we fight one against another'. The ceremony was conducted largely for form's sake, Shakespear being well aware that the perpetual feuding among the tribes was at that time a source of strength to the occupying power by preventing any effective combination against

them. Peace would come to the hills only when the chiefs had learnt the hard way the futility of further resistance, and these were early days.

Lungleh itself, a large timber stockade on an open saddle 3,300 feet above sea-level enclosing accommodation for 3 officers and 250 men, had been established as recently as 1889 during the Lushai Expedition when a force under General Tregear had rampaged about the hills dealing out punishment for the murder of Lieutenant Stewart when out surveying the previous year. The two other forts with which this narrative is concerned were established the following year during the Chin-Lushai Expedition, when General Tregear back in South Lushai had co-operated with a column operating in North Lushai and another one marching in from the Chin Hills of Burma to the east, and further punishment was inflicted on villages which had committed unprovoked atrocities against British subjects. The permanent post in North Lushai capable of housing a garrison of 200, christened Fort Aijal, had a supply base at Changsil on the Dalesari river, the furthest point which boats from Silchar could reach. The general's own name was attached to the fort of the same size constructed on a spur of the Darjau Klang east of, and in helio communication with, Lungleh and commanding extensive views eastwards over the wild hill country stretching towards the Tao peak. At that time also a road of sorts had been made from Lungleh to Haka in the Chin Hills.

Before the chiefs and elders returned to their villages from the durbar they were treated to a military display intended to impress upon them the military might at Shakespear's disposal. A parade of the Frontier Police under Lieutenant Pughe to the music of the band was followed by a display of rifle-shooting at a bamboo screen by the whole force, and field-pieces – the screw-guns of Kipling's poem – were fired at a tree, the shot, to the wonder of the spectators, passing clean through it. For the rest of the day he interviewed the chiefs clan by clan, hearing petitions, explaining his requirements in the way of tribute and the provision of coolie labour both as porters and for the repair of the fort, warning them against feuding, rewarding one of the elders for good service.

His daily routine at Fort Lungleh which he then resumed was interrupted on the night of 5 January when, just as he was going to bed, Captain Hutchinson of the 2/2nd Gurkhas, Assistant District Superintendent of the Frontier Police, came in to report that from the distant flickering in the sky to the east it appeared that Fort Tregear was in flames. At once he ordered Hutchinson to proceed with 30 rifles to investigate, the Assistant Superintendent of Telegraphs



9. *Fort Tregear*

Mr Goodall volunteering to accompany him, while Pughe with 20 rifles and Lieutenant Clerk in charge of mules carrying rations for twenty days and the kits of both parties followed behind. It was a relief to learn that the fire, starting in the quarters of Dr Antonio the Medical Officer, who was burned to death, had been accidental, though the destruction of the fort buildings was virtually total, only the men's cookhouses outside the stockade escaping. The discipline of the sepoys had been attested by their abandoning their own belongings to the fire in order to save the cash in charge of the guard and the reserves of ammunition. Temporarily reducing the garrison from 50 to 20 men, Shakespear instructed Hutchinson to put in hand the rebuilding of the fort without delay as an object lesson to the neighbouring Lushais in the determination of the British not to leave the country.

By a fortunate coincidence Lieutenant Boileau of the Royal Engineers was expected to arrive any day on special duty to explore the route of a permanent road connecting Chittagong with Burma and would be on hand to lay out the defences of the new Fort Tregear. This was sited on the ridge to the south of the burnt-out fort so as to be nearer the water supply, its defences reinforced at certain points with bullet-proof stockades. Despite the friendly atmosphere at the durbar Shakespear was taking no chances.

Through geographical and historical accident the administration of the tribes living in the complex of mountainous country then known as Chin Lushai Land was divided between three authorities hundreds of miles distant from one another, though linked by a system of telegraphs. Shakespear as the Superintendent of the South Lushai Hills based at Fort Lungleh reported to the Commissioner of Chittagong, a division of the Province of Bengal, while the tract immediately to the north in the care of Mr R.B. McCabe, ICS, Political Officer, North Lushai Hills, with headquarters at Fort Aijal was under the Province of Assam, both Bengal and Assam forming part of British India. On the other side of the Thio river to the east lay the Chin Hills and to the south the Arakan Hill Tracts, both controlled from Burma, though only loosely because the annexation of Upper Burma had but recently taken place and the country was not yet fully pacified. This division of responsibility had not escaped the attention of the tribes, who tended to regard the British administrators, separated from each other by vast distances of wild hills which could be traversed only laboriously if at all, as semi-independent chiefs who could be played off one against the other. For this reason in his address to the chiefs Shakespear had been careful to refer to his far-off colleagues as his brothers, trying to dispel the notion that whatever mischief the tribes

got up to in the area administered by one of them was of no concern to the others. Unfortunately more drastic measures had to be resorted to before the lesson was brought home to them.

A step in the right direction was the planning of the road between Bengal and Burma which Boileau had come to investigate. Another was to establish clearly on the ground the line separating the respective responsibilities of Shakespear and McCabe, so depriving the tribes of a vague Tom Tiddler's Ground where they could make trouble with impunity; for which purpose they had agreed to meet at chief Kairuma's village and settle the boundary-line between them. In pursuance of the same policy Shakespear had arranged, after leaving McCabe, to proceed to Tao over the Burma border in order to discuss matters of mutual interest with Mr Macnabb, the Political Officer in charge of the newly established post at Haka in the Chin Hills.

Before starting north Shakespear gave orders for Hutchinson accompanied by Boileau and 30 rifles with attendant coolies to march from Fort Tregear via Dotona to chief Lalbuta's village, where he would meet him. Thence they would proceed to chief Daokoma's village in order to nip in the bud a dispute between chiefs that threatened to get out of control. Shakespear's party, which left Lungleh on 21 January, consisted of 62 Frontier Police under Pughe, Mr Hogan the Civil Medical Officer and 120 Gurkha coolies, 70 of whom he would send back after the first day's march, intending thereafter to require the villages through which he passed to supply him with the porterage he needed as well as with his requirements of rice. At each village at which they halted, while Dr Hogan was kept busy treating the sick, Shakespear called up the chiefs and elders, explaining what was required of them in the future, in some cases imposing a fine of pigs, goats and guns as a punishment for failing to send their quota of coolie labour to Lungleh. Daokoma was a Haolong chief who had fallen out with chief Kairuma over the rights to Sielshir hill east of the Tuichang under McCabe's jurisdiction, where shots had recently been fired, and the affair threatened to escalate into a full-scale war between the Haolongs and the sons of Vuta, rival Sailo clans. After hearing his case Shakespear cautioned Daokoma to make no further move until the dispute could be brought before McCabe at Kairuma's village.

Shakespear's and Hutchinson's parties converged at Lalbuta's village on 28 January, as planned, and proceeded together to Daokoma's, a village built on a series of grassy knolls at an elevation of 4,600 feet, where they made contact with McCabe by helio. The country round about was open downland with bracken and firs and

here and there clumps of trees, in contrast to the hills Shakespear was used to in the south which were covered with dense forest and undergrowth. To his intense annoyance chief Kairuma refused to sell him rice for his men on the plea that his village was subject to Assam, not Bengal. McCabe's party, which marched in on 30 January, consisted of 100 rifles under Captain Loch of the 3rd Gurkhas, Commandant of the Frontier Police garrison at Aijal, Surgeon-Captain Melville, and 99 coolies. The two superintendents quickly reached complete accord on all matters of mutual concern to them, and their decisions were promulgated to the assembled chiefs by McCabe at a durbar held the following day.

The Sielshir hill dispute was settled in favour of Kairuma, and Daokoma forbidden to establish a new village there. Nine Haolong villages which could more conveniently be administered from Aijal were assigned to Assam's jurisdiction, only Daokoma remaining under Lungleh. Finally McCabe impressed on the chiefs that the two sahibs were brothers carrying out a uniform policy under one authority, that of the Queen-Empress. When the durbar was over McCabe privately commended Shakespear on his prompt action in intervening in the Sielshir hill dispute, thus averting a serious inter-tribal conflict which, extending over their two jurisdictions, would have been awkward to contain. Satisfied with the results of their meeting, the two went their separate ways.

Shakespear's party marched east to the Muallianpui Klang where the villages were sited in open country covered with oak trees and grassland, whose people met them with pots of *zu*, the local rice beer, and gave them a warm welcome. These clans lived in constant fear of headhunting raids by Chin tribes over the border and were reassured by the news that a military expedition was being sent out from Haka to punish the guilty villages. The party arrived back at Fort Tregear on 7 February, having covered some 150 miles in eighteen days, of which they had been halted for four.

'All these Muallianpuis are far more friendly and frank than the Lushais,' Shakespear wrote in his diary, 'and altogether finer fellows.' McCabe, too, had disparaging things to say about the Lushais in the entry he made in his diary on his way back to Aijal:

> Like children, they are more easily led than driven, and being of a naturally cowardly and inert disposition turn instinctively to falsehoods and subterfuges to evade compliance with orders repugnant to their tastes.

An idea of the very different personalities of these two men can be gained by a comparison of the styles of these entries.

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On 11 February, only four days after returning from his meeting with McCabe, Shakespear was off again, accompanied by Pughe and Boileau and 40 rifles, to keep his appointment with Macnabb, the Political Officer attached to the column under Major Browne marching over from Haka. At Sangao where he had business with the chief he heard that the Haka column had already burnt Hmunlipi as a reprisal for raiding. Signallers were sent up to the knoll half a mile north of the village and at once saw the column's flashes low down in the Shertok valley where they were camping for the night.

Next morning Shakespear's party reached the Kaladan river, the frontier between the Lushai and Chin Hills, which they forded, and were breakfasting by the Sesi stream when their bugler was wounded in the sole of his foot by a *panji*. These are sharpened stakes driven into the ground at an angle, the spikes facing in the direction from which attack is expected, and capable of inflicting a severe wound. The coolies from Sangao told Shakespear that the road to Tao was bristling with them because the people of that village feared an attack from Hmunlipi whose chief had recently been killed. On the spur between the Sesi and Shertok valleys where the murder had taken place he was shown the dead man's haversack, basket and water gourd still lying there and two nearby trees holed by bullets which had gone astray. On the way down to the Shertok valley Pughe, who with an excess of zeal had placed himself in front of the advance guard, was himself wounded by *panjis* in the left shin and right knee, so incapacitating him that he played no further active part in the events with which this narrative is concerned. Boileau, more cautious, was keeping an eye out for a suitable route for that stretch of his road that would pass from the Kaladan to the Tao gap.

The following day, going on ahead with Boileau and ten men, they came on the Haka column coming up from the camp below Tao village where they had bivouacked so as to be near water for their transport mules. As with McCabe, Shakespear soon reached accord with Macnabb, who agreed that, in the event of any further outrages against Lushai villages by Chin tribes under his control, Shakespear should on his own initiative proceed to the spot and exact compensation from the villages responsible. It did not escape Shakespear's attention that, unlike his own escort who were all men enlisted in India, several of Macnabb's armed followers were northern Chins who, he thought, would one day form a useful body of police. His belief that no such confidence could yet be placed in the Lushais, who tended to put their tribal interests first, received confirmation when, having concluded his business with Macnabb, he

returned to Sangao on his way back to Lungleh.

Before leaving for Tao he had sent Hutchinson with an escort to apprehend Dokola, an unruly chief who had recently led a head-hunting expedition to the Korchau and ambushed a party from Kilkara's village, killing two of them and making off with their heads. He had borne no malice against the men he killed, who were in fact complete strangers to him, but out of filial piety had wished to procure for his deceased father a proper complement of ghost-slaves to fetch and carry for him in the Village of the Dead. Chief Dopura of Sangao refused point blank to assist Shakespear in any way in laying hands on Dokola, saying that however great the reward he offered him he would not live a week after he received it. While Pughe in considerable pain was taken back to Tregear in a doolie carried by coolies hired at Sangao, the rest of the force under Shakespear set out for Dokola's village to lend Hutchinson a hand.

On 16 February Hutchinson had left Fort Tregear for Dokola's with a subadar and 32 rifles, a helio party of three, a bugler and 61 coolies, 46 of them Gurkhas, the rest hired from one of the friendly Muallianpui villages. His report to Shakespear on his adventure, in which he gave rein to his talent for descriptive writing, is worth quoting at length as typical of experiences that as a matter of routine fell to the lot of the few, hand-picked junior officers posted for duty on the frontier.

> We descended by a good path down the western slope of the Darjow hill for two hours, and then struck the Koi-lui stream; the marching now became very hard; we had to diverge several times through dense bamboo jungles to avoid water-falls: one particularly fine one was a sheer drop of 500 feet as shown by the aneroid; in other places we had to slide down the rocks; there was only a slight trace of a path showing that it was occasionally used by Lushais. We reached the Koladyne [Kaladan] at 12 noon, making our way in and out of the jungle along the bank, then striking across a hill we reached the Darjow stream at 2.30, and shortly after again struck the Koladyne, marched along the bank till about 4, and as the coolies were done up, halted for the night among the bamboos.
>
> 17th. – Got off by 5.30 a.m., continuing along the Koladyne, marching very hard indeed in and out of water; forded the Koladyne at 10 a.m., and reached the mouth of the Mat river at 11, and followed other bank of the Koladyne, the route becoming harder and harder. Forded the Koladyne again at 3.40 p.m., and held a council of war; all agreed to push on as far as possible, so, the men having fed, we again started about 6 p.m. Striking the Phunka stream we scrambled along somehow or other with the assistance of a few bamboo torches. After going along the stream for about a mile or so, we found we had missed the path, and had to retrace our way:

whole party very cheerful in spite of everything. At 8.30 p.m., we found the path, and ascended what seemed to be a fearful steep slope through dense bamboo till 11 p.m. I now ordered the men to lie down for a few hours, and take some rest; the want of water was felt badly, and unfortunately the bamboos were waterless.

At 3 a.m., I aroused the men, and we continued our march by moonlight. We reached the old *jooms* in about an hour, and then struck down a path into some of this year's *jooms*. Two houses were heavily laden with *dhan*, but nobody was about. We then went through high tree jungle up to the top of a hill. While ascending, I heard a cock crowing, so knew we were near our goal, and advanced with great caution. On topping the summit, I saw the village with lights of fires in the houses lying below me. We moved rapidly down the side, but were observed just nearing the north entrance, and a yell was given. I charged into the village with some 15 men who were near me. Men with guns came tumbling out of the houses; and I heard shots fired. I had ordered my men not to fire, but to follow me in a rush on the chief's house, the situation of which I knew. Unfortunately, a man with a gun took deliberate point-blank aim at me, and I fired at him with my pistol; he lurched forward, dropping the gun, but was seized and carried off by some other men near him, the gun remaining with me. The delay of a minute or so just stopped me from getting Dokola who made away as I entered his house in company with some other men.

I did not know at the moment that it was the chief, as nobody had ever seen him, but I should have got the lot; as it was, they cleared away in the jungle. I did not feel justified with so small a party in entering the jungle, as in the excitement of pursuit we might easily have been separated, and suffered considerable loss; we can never cope with these savages in their native jungles with a small force. I now examined the result of our rush, and found we had captured 4 guns and 2 spears, and 10 men. When we entered there must have been 40 or 50 men armed in the village, but only half-a-dozen old women; the morning meal was cooking, and in some instances had been commenced. So it will show how complete was the surprise. I ordered the men to search the village, and amidst the things found were a knife, a prismatic compass belonging to Lieutenant Stewart, a ball ammunition box belonging to one of the Sergeants of the Leinster Regiment killed with Lieutenant Stewart, a brown leather shoe, and some revolver cartridge cases, the bullets and powder of which had been extracted, and some *lotahs* belonging to our sepoys. I now turned my attention to the captives, and gave them to understand very plainly that, unless I got the chief by the evening, I should shoot all men, and that you were coming on the next day, and we were determined to hunt them down wherever they took refuge, remove their crops and livestock and grain, then destroy their village entirely. I gave them their choice of release on the production of chief, or to remain and die. They said they would produce the chief, and save their village, so I released them.

I opened communication by helio with you at about 2 p.m., and reported progress. During the day deputations of two and three men came in, saying they could not find the chief. What terms would I give them, and would I not hurt the chief if they got him? I refused all terms; but unconditional surrender of chief would save the village from total destruction. The last offer was that they would give me the chief's son, to which I replied I would shoot them if they came again to me without the chief, and made a show of preparing the sepoys for immediate start. They then went away. I was busy helioing my plan to you between four and five, when there was a sudden rush of Kukis round the central stockade where for safety I had stored my rations, and outside which was the helio station, and in a moment a man embraced me, as I was sitting on the ground, writing a message. One of the signallers, not knowing what was up, was on the point of clubbing the man with his rifle, when they shouted, 'Dokola Lal! Dokola Lal' – the Rajah Dokola. I forthwith pinned the man, and summoned the guard, and very shortly had him securely bound in the stockade, with double sentry over him.

I got your note in the evening, and sent you a short note of details. From subsequent enquiry, it was elicited that the men met by Subadar Tagwa while reconnoitering all belonged to this village, and that they informed the chief that a party would certainly come that way, that he simply laughed at them, and said no sahib or sepoys could come that way which was so difficult even for Lushais, and that he happened to know that the advance, if made, would come from Vantura's side. All women and children had for safety been sent to the *jooms* and surrounding jungles, as is the usual custom, the guard of men alone remaining in the village. . . .

The night passed quietly; all my men slept in verandahs of houses around the stockade, in case they set fire to the village during the night and attempted a rescue, and every precaution was taken against surprise.

So it was that when Shakespear arrived at Dokola's on 19 February he found Hutchinson in possession of the village and the chief a prisoner in the small stockade in front of his house. There were loud lamentations when two days later they led him away under guard. In the lock-up at Fort Tregear, which they reached on 22 February, Dokola having managed during the night to loosen the ropes that bound his hands and feet made an attempt to escape just after the reveille had sounded, but was easily overpowered. Shakespear, who had received a confirmatory order by telegraph to hang him for murder, was disgusted when it was later countermanded and he was told instead to deport him to Chittagong for trial. 'It is a great pity,' he wrote in his diary, 'as deportation has next to no effect and only makes chiefs chary of coming in to see me, without any corresponding advantage; whereas to hang a chief would startle the whole country

into belief that we really did mean what we said.'

He made what he could of the situation, calling the chiefs up to Fort Tregear on 3 March to hear him pass sentence on Dokola but, as he feared, they were scarcely impressed, one of the elders being heard to say to his departing chief:

'Go in health. You will see the sahib's village.'

'Yes,' replied Dokola, 'I shall see the sahib's village.'

But already matters more serious than a private murder case were engaging Shakespear's attention. He had received a letter from Hutchinson, whom he had sent to meet Mr Greenstreet, the Superintendent of the Arakan Hill Tracts to the south-east at Serkawr – a Lakher village which will feature largely in a later chapter – in which he reported that he had found the place deserted and that one of Greenstreet's coolies was missing, presumed killed or kidnapped by the people of Serkawr. More ominously still, he heard next day from a friendly Muallianpui chief, Lalluova, that McCabe had been involved in a fight at chief Lalbura's village between Aijal and Kairuma's, two sepoys and three Lushais having been killed and the village burnt. There was trouble brewing in the north, and Shakespear was impatient to hear further from Hutchinson so that he could get away.

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The spark that had started the conflagration had been apparently trivial. Called upon to supply a hundred coolies to carry loads to Aijal, chief Lalbura had neglected to comply. Since McCabe proposed making a tour in March of the Haolong villages recently assigned to his jurisdiction, he realized it would be unrealistic to expect obedience from them while one of his existing villages was openly defying him. Accordingly, on 28 February with 100 rifles under Mr Tytler the Assistant Commandant of the Frontier Police at Aijal, two native officers, Surgeon-Captain Melville, and 87 coolies he set out for Lalbura's, determined to enforce his order. He was given an early indication of the truculent mood the Lushais were in when they arrived at the camp by the Sonai river where they proposed to bivouac for the night, to find it had been burnt. At Lalbura's, a large village of more than 800 houses seventeen miles north-east of Aijal, there was no sign of the chief, and the elders when questioned about the failure to supply coolies surlily replied that everyone had been busy in the *jhums*. A number of southern Chins were seen loafing about the village, while the inhabitants, clearly anticipating that there would be

fighting, were hastily removing their belongings from their houses and taking them away.

As customary in Lushai villages, a large building constructed of wood and bamboo stood on one side of the open square at the highest point, opposite the chief's house. This was the *zawlbuk*, or bachelors' house, where the unmarried men would gather in the evening to sing songs and tell stories until it was time to visit their sweethearts, returning late at night to sleep there. This McCabe commandeered as his headquarters, directing the sepoys and coolies to find accommodation in the surrounding houses. At dusk a large body of Lushais assembled at the south end of the village but, deterred by the double sentries Tytler had posted round the camp, made no attack, and the night passed quietly except for the coming and going of people removing their household effects to safety.

In the morning McCabe summoned the elders and demanded Lalbura's presence at the *zawlbuk* within two hours, failing which the village's reserves of paddy he had caused his men to collect and stack in the open square would be burnt. The Lushais' response to his ultimatum is best told in McCabe's own words:

> Lieutenant Tytler and I each taking a guard of 10 sepoys and 40 coolies proceeded respectively to the south and north ends of the village and commenced to collect supplies, and within half an hour I noticed about 300 Lushais armed with guns emerge from the jungle to the north-west of the village and advance towards the north crest of the hill which commanded our camp. I asked Lieutenant Tytler to fire a volley at the advancing Lushais; this was done, and caused the enemy to seek cover in the jungle. Twenty sepoys under Jemadar Abhiram Thapa with Surgeon-Captain Melville were sent to occupy the north crest; 20 sepoys under Jemadar Budhai Singh proceeded to hold the south crest; while Lieutenant Tytler, myself, and 45 sepoys held the centre and west face of the village.
>
> Before we could complete these dispositions, we were attacked on all sides by crowds of Lushais who crept up between the houses and after firing disappeared to reload, to again reappear a few seconds later. From the number of the enemy, I could see that we had to deal with Bungteya's men as well as with Lalbura's, and I heliographed to Captain Loch to send me some more men and ammunition, the signallers having to send the message under a heavy fire.
>
> We had barely time to complete the message before the Lushais had set fire to the houses all round us, and the flames spread so rapidly that we succeeded with difficulty in removing our baggage and ammunition from the houses and stacking them in a heap in an open square in front of the *jolbuk*. The coolies were made to lie on the ground behind the baggage, and we maintained our position in the centre of the village despite the fact

that the heat was so intense that the sepoys' brass plates, which were lying on the west face of the stack of baggage, were twisted into fantastic shapes. The spare ammunition had been made comparatively safe by covering the boxes with wet blankets. Meanwhile the flames had caused Jemadar Budhai Singh's party to join the main body, the jemadar himself having been shot through the muscle above the left hip.

As soon as the flames subsided, I loaded the coolies and proceeded to the north crest of the village, where we joined the party under Jemadar Abhiram Thapa and Surgeon-Captain Melville, who had succeeded in driving the enemy from the north face of the village and forcing them to retire to the saddles lying to the north and north-west. In this first attack the Lushais lost several killed and wounded, and we captured five guns, our casualties being one coolie wounded in the arm and Jemadar Budhai Singh shot through the left hip. As the Lushais dared not advance through the burning village, they concentrated their attack from the north and north-west sides, but gradually retired as our pickets advanced. The jungle was full of baskets of paddy, and I employed the coolies on carrying these in and stacking them on the crest of the hill which we occupied, thus making a defence from attacks from the south side of our position.

In his report to the Chief Commissioner of Assam McCabe described these events as a 'treacherous attack made by Lalbura on myself and my escort', which seems disingenuous, for it is clear that, whether treacherous or not, the attack had been deliberately provoked. Perhaps even at that early stage he realized that his high-handed actions were likely to involve him and his small force in more than he had bargained for. His sepoys were chiefly Gurkhas and Jaruas, wearing the new khaki-drill uniforms which had recently replaced their former dark green serge, and armed with Snider rifles in place of the old Enfield. They were well-disciplined and steady under fire and, man for man, more than a match for untrained tribesmen armed with home-made flintlocks, old-fashioned Tower muskets and a few looted army rifles. But they were vastly outnumbered, and the position McCabe had chosen for their defensive position, in the middle of the village, made them sitting targets.

During their first two days under siege they were subjected to desultory firing from groups of Lushais concealed on the outskirts of the village, several sepoys being wounded, one of them mortally. The inhabitants had by now evacuated the village, the women and children and old men taking refuge in the surrounding jungle with such belongings as they had been able to carry away with them, the men of fighting age remaining on the outskirts in order to harry the British at every turn. Detachments detailed to collect materials for the stockade McCabe ordered to be constructed for the protection of the camp, or

to bring up water or round up livestock, or to carry ammunition and supplies from the depot established at the Sonai, or to destroy the *jhum*-huts with their stores of paddy – all were liable to come under fire from Lushais lying in ambush who, having discharged their pieces, made off as fast as they could. Heliographic communication was maintained with Aijal seventeen miles away where Captain Loch's primary responsibility, after seeing to the defences of the fort, was to keep up a dialogue with the western clans in order to dissuade them from taking part in the uprising.

On 4 March McCabe, realizing that, however secure his defensive position in the middle of Lalbura's might be, he had not the manpower to go over to the offensive, helio'd for reinforcements, asking for 200 military to be sent to Aijal so as to release the garrison there, enabling them to join him for offensive action against the insurgent villages. It was noticed next day that among the tribesmen opposing them were Pois from the Chin border – easily distinguished by their topknots from Lushais whose hair was drawn back into a bun at the nape of the neck – evidence that the Hakas of the Chin Hills, not yet subjugated despite the punitive operations in progress in that direction, had decided to join the fun for what they could get out of it. Several days of ambuscades and untidy skirmishing ensued, but a convoy carrying supplies from Aijal via the Sonai under a havildar commanding the small escort managed to get through, arriving safe and sound on 7 March after an anxious journey, to McCabe's intense relief. To date the losses sustained by his force amounted to four sepoys killed and two native officers, three sepoys and one coolie wounded, all doing well under Dr Melville's care. Not a heavy butcher's bill for so much reckless expenditure of ammunition by the insurgents, whose own losses could not be assessed but were probably greater than McCabe's.

From the now well-stockaded camp in the village parties, each comprising twenty sepoys under a havildar, were despatched every day on reconnaisance patrols. Some of the coolies were sent back to Aijal under escort, and one detachment brought back a heliograph lamp from the Sonai depot so that McCabe could communicate with Loch at night. And daily the work of destroying Lushai camps, *jhum*-huts and granaries continued, such stores of paddy as could be carried being brought in as rations for the sepoys and remaining coolies, their diet reinforced by looted fowls, pigs and the occasional mithan. Casualties slowly mounted.

McCabe, at the centre of a crisis of his own creation, was powerless to act upon a message telegraphed from Haka and relayed to him by

helio, asking him to punish certain Zahau villages in his area which had been raiding Klangklang villages over the Burma border. Another message from Haka caused him to note testily in his diary:

> Again, on the 10th Haka asks 'in whose jurisdiction Nikwe is?' I presume this is meant for Nikola, a Poi village south-east of and dependent on Lengkam, so I wire and say he is under me, although he is really an off-shoot of the Zahaus under Haka and is now harbouring Jakapa, whom Captain Shakespear on behalf of the Bengal Administration is anxious to catch, so that we have three Administrations at work over Nikola, a petty dependent Poi village of less than 200 houses.

There will be occasion later to enquire further into the doings of the troublesome Nikwe and his cave of Adullam.

On 9 March another message arrived at the besieged village, its name now promoted to 'Fort' Lalbura, above which a Union Jack sent in from Aijal had been hoisted amid cheers from the garrison:

> Bengal. *Begins*;- 'Shakespear is anxious to march with 150 men through Lalluova, Vansanga, Lalthona to Daokoma with view of relieving McCabe. This movement involves some risk. Is it necessary or McCabe sufficient?' – *Message ends.*

7

Lushai Rising (II)

The southern Haolong chief, Lalluova, to whom Shakespear was to owe so much, and his kinsmen Saipuia, an old friend of Lewin's, and Vansanga were the chiefs of the villages situated in a line running north-east from Lungleh in the direction of Daokoma and Lalbura, and Shakespear came to the conclusion that the most effective aid he could give McCabe with the force available to him was to ensure that these villages did not lend active support to the rebellion in the north.

The report from Hutchinson of his discussions with the Arakan Superintendent Greenstreet at Serkawr, though unsatisfactory, was not dangerous, and full of his usual descriptive detail. 'In the evening,' he wrote, 'the sepoys of both parties interchanged courtesies and invited us to an *ex tempore* "nautch" and sing-song, the band consisting of an empty ghee tin, a brass basin, and clapping of hands'; pleasantries with which Shakespear, his mind concentrated on the serious situation in the north, can have had little patience. He had left the new Fort Tregear with a reduced garrison of 70 rifles, returned to Lungleh, and on 12 March, leaving Lieutenant Cave-Browne in charge of the garrison there, set out for Saipuia's village with 148 Frontier Police under Lieutenant Daly, 230 coolies (of which 25 were Santhals, the rest Gurkhas) in the charge of Lieutenant Towsey – both officers recently posted to him – Boileau of the Royal Engineers and Dr Mungavin the Chief Medical Officer. After a trying march in hot sunshine they reached the village at 3 p.m. to find the chief uneasy in his mind but full of friendly protestations. Next night they halted at the village of Lalthangbunga, a brother of Lalluova, who met the party with *zu* and was most hospitable.

They stayed two nights at Bualpui, Lalluova's own village, and Shakespear spent a long time with the chief trying unsuccessfully to find out from him what were the real intentions of Vansanga and the other chiefs to the north of them, eventually concluding that Lalluova didn't really know.

> One minute he talks of their burning Lungleh and attacking him [Lalluova] and all his brothers, the next he talks of coming with me to Daokoma's. I think he is very much afraid that, if it does come to a fight, we may turn on him and say 'You did not warn us', and therefore tells us the very worst he has heard; then when he finds it does not alter our determination to go on, he gains confidence and thinks we shall yet triumph over our foes and grows more helpful. He tells of thousands collecting to attack us – all the villages except those of his family being concerned; and then talks quite hopefully of their all submitting, and the next moment enlarges on the danger he runs. He is, of course, quite wise enough to exaggerate the dangers in order to increase his own reward.

On balance Shakespear believed that he was not exaggerating and that Vansanga and his allies, feeling secure because of the distance of their villages from Lungleh and the lateness of the season, would try to outface him. It was risky, he reflected, but too late to turn back now, and on 16 March he marched out with his small force towards Vansanga's village. Lalluova, too nervous to come with them, saw them off with gloomy forebodings, sure they would be attacked and, there being so few of them, easily defeated.

About two miles from Vansanga's they were confronted on the path by a mob of armed Lushais who called on them to stop, saying their chief was coming to parley; but, since they were halted at a place where tall dense grass grew on either side into which Lushais had been seen to be infiltrating, to have waited there would have put his long line of coolies at their mercy. So Shakespear told them he would not stop and that they must put away their guns and tell their chief to meet him in the village. He gave the order to advance, and the Lushais sulkily retired, many disappearing into the jungle as if intending to surround his force. They had gone some way when shots were heard in the rear and, seeing that this made the Lushais who were giving ground before them stop and take aim at the advance guard, Shakespear gave the order to fire. A single volley was enough to clear them out of the path, and the force pushed on till they reached the open ridge connected to the main range by a series of knolls on which the village had been built. Here, halting his party under cover of a mound, he went forward to parley with the Lushais, only to be met by a shot from the nearest house seventy yards away. The situation demanded instant action, for the force was now sandwiched between the Lushais defending the village and those who had managed to infiltrate behind his party on the path, so he ordered another volley to be fired and, detailing Daly to give covering fire, sent the advance guard into the village, firing as they went.

Boileau having selected a suitable site for a stockade, the coolies were told to stack the baggage there and guards were posted, everyone else being sent out to catch and bring in whatever food they could lay their hands on. A movement by the Lushais towards the village was checked by a volley from Daly's covering party, and a sortie by 50 sepoys under a havildar drove them off for the day. In the evening two men came from Lalluova's carrying mail and promising to bring up the men's rations in the morning.

17 March was spent collecting timber for the stockade and fortifying it and husking the paddy that had been commandeered from the surrounding houses. About 10 a.m. two men from neighbouring villages were seen approaching, waving branches to signify their peaceful intent, and Shakespear after warning them that, if they or any of their friends took arms against him he would not answer for the consequences, told them to let it be known that he was going to Zante next day where all chiefs who were friendly disposed towards him should come, unarmed, to meet him. Those who failed to turn up he would treat as hostile.

He made an early start leaving Daly, whom he could trust to act wisely if he was attacked, with 50 rifles at Vansanga's to organize the new stockade. To his credit, the vacillating chief Lalluova accompanied by a youth of his agreed to go along with Shakespear's party, which consisted of 100 rifles under Towsey, 190 coolies, Boileau and Dr Mungavin. 'The road,' Shakespear noted in his diary, 'was fair, but a good deal up and down', an understatement signifying an arduous hill march. Nearing Zante they found that the Lushais had constructed no less than four stockades blocking the path to the village, behind each of which could be seen between fifty and sixty armed men. Leaving Boileau with the main body to take up a position from which they could give covering fire, he set out with the advance guard on a detour to the east through some dead ground in order to rush the first stockade. This route was up a steep hill covered with thorny jungle, and when they had struggled up to the top 'a simultaneous volley from the stockades and from our main body opened the ball'.

Finding the ground too difficult for a rush on the stockade to be made from that direction, Shakespear signalled to his men to take cover behind a pile of logs, for the fire from the stockades was very heavy, and then ordered his Lushai bugler Daulat, who had remained constantly at his side, to sound the Advance for the main body. The men behind the logs poured three volleys into the stockades and then, with Shakespear in the lead, advanced up the steep slope towards the first one, in which there was a small gate. At this the entire Lushai

host fled, abandoning the newly built stockades and the village, and took up positions in the surrounding jungle from which they kept up a continuous harassing fire.

Posting sentries round the deserted village Shakespear took stock of the position. Casualties had been light: a Gurkha sepoy shot in the side and Lalluova's boy slightly wounded in the leg. From a wounded Lushai found near the first stockade it was ascertained that men from Tangliena, Kamlova and Lalrhima had been among those who had opposed them. Towsey and Boileau who had gone all round the village reported that it was too big to be held, and that it would be impossible to destroy enough of it to make the rest defensible. Besides, there was no rice in the village, every grain having been removed from the houses, a sure sign that resistance had been intended from the first. Shakespear therefore ordered the village to be burnt and led his force back to Vansanga's, where Daly reported all well: his men had been busy all day cleaning rice.

After begging Shakespear not to retire, or he and all his people would be annihilated – and being assured that, if he and his kinsmen remained true, they would be made the biggest chiefs in Lushailand – Lalluova and his limping boy set off home, carrying a message to be telegraphed from Lungleh to Chittagong, in which Shakespear asked for 300 Gurkhas to be sent him as reinforcements.

> I am sure now [he wrote in his diary] from the determined resistance made today that the rising is a big one. At present our position is most precarious, and any hesitation now would be fatal. It is only by holding on here and putting a bold face on the matter that we can succeed; but full and complete punishment must at once be meted out, and a complete submission obtained. I cannot do this without more men.

Determined to retain the initiative, he now planned a raid on Lalthona's village beyond Zante and after only one day's rest at Vansanga's, now strongly fortified and well stocked with paddy, set off at twenty minutes past midnight on the morning of 20 March, with Daly in command of 94 Frontier Police, Boileau and Dr Mungavin, with ten coolies to carry the wounded. It was a moonlight night and travelling in silence they reached the outskirts of Zante without incident at 2.15 a.m., from where they followed a path leading below the village to the east of the road in the direction of Lalthona's. When the sun rose they could see the village, still a long way off, its position clearly a strong one, for the hill on which it stood was precipitous, devoid of cover, and crowned throughout its length by stockades, which as they came nearer they saw were crowded with defenders. The only approach was up the spur by which the road entered the

village, which would put the attackers under fire from the whole line of the stockades, but (as Shakespear wrote) 'I trusted to Lieutenant Boileau and the luck of the British army, and I was not disappointed'. The nut was finally cracked after a skilful and energetic outflanking movement by Boileau with sixteen men who gained the crest of the hill after a two-and-a-half hour climb, causing the defenders, finding themselves outflanked, to flee in disorder. On taking possession of the village they found that the hill on which it stood overlooked to the north-east a gently undulating country, reminding Shakespear of English downs. Skirmishing parties were sent out to drive off the Lushais who were keeping up a dropping fire on the village, which was summarily burnt, and the force marched back to Vansanga's, unmolested except when two Lushais sitting on the top of Zante hill took pot shots at the three European officers marching by, fortunately missing them.

Although on 22 March the *dak* runner brought him a telegram from the Commissioner informing him that he had not forwarded his request for reinforcements to the appropriate quarter as he would not sanction further operations that season, which Shakespear considered a fatal mistake, he knew he must keep up the pressure or be driven out of the hills. Accordingly, day after day parties were sent out from Vansanga's, hunting any armed Lushais who might be found, laying ambushes for them, harrying the *jhums*, destroying stocks of grain, keeping clear the road to Lalluova's down which the supply convoys came. 'Still,' he wrote, 'I cannot conceal from myself that the position is most critical. The whole country round us is "up"'; and constantly he bemoaned the smallness of the number of men at his disposal, which prevented him from inflicting decisive punishment on the rebels by systematically hunting them down and destroying all their grain. A fearful nor'wester on the night of 27-28 March bringing torrential rain which soaked them to the skin added to his perplexities.

He now modified his request to the Commissioner for reinforcements, asking instead that 200 men of the 3rd Bengal Infantry then at Demagri should relieve sufficient Frontier Police at Lungleh and Fort Tregear to give him a fighting force of 250 rifles, and that he be permitted to take as many Santhal coolies as he needed from the reserve until they could be replaced by Gurkhas. On a visit to Lungleh on 4 April he found all well under Cave-Browne's steady leadership and that the advance guard of the Bengal Infantry reinforcements under Lieutenant Carden had already arrived. Even more encouraging was a wire from Bengal that a column from Fort White in the Chin Hills was on its way. On 9 April a wire had just come through from Fort

Tregear that firing was going on when the line went dead, and owing to evening mists the helio was out of action. (The cutting and removal of the telegraph line was one of the normal hazards in the hills, the wire finding its way into the village metal worker's melting pot to be cast into bullets or into hairpins, ear-rings and other ornaments for the adornment of the inhabitants, male and female.) Then on 10 April came a message that the Burma column, having reached Nikwe's village just over the border in Lushai, had been on the way home when they had received orders to turn round and proceed at all hazard towards Daokoma. McCabe, who had been kept informed, also wired, saying he was starting that day with 400 rifles to attack Poiboi's village.

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Anxious to satisfy himself personally that the western Lushai chiefs were quiescent, McCabe had left the newly stockaded 'Fort' Lalbura, over which the Union Jack bravely fluttered, for Aijal on 16 March with a large escort, easily brushing aside two half-hearted ambushes on the way. His plan was to advance against Bungteya, the centre of a powerful group of eastern Lushai villages, before turning his attention to Poiboi, an isolated group of villages in which the absconded chief Lalbura had briefly sought refuge and whose neutrality he doubted, preferring to deal with the stronger combination first. As a preliminary, a force from Lalbura reconnoitred towards Bungteya, destroying a stockade on the way, while another party moving towards Poiboi reported no enemy activity. But all over the district the Lushais, finding the forts too strong for frontal attack, had resorted to hit-and-run guerilla tactics, regularly sniping at the convoys bringing supplies to the entrenched sepoys. A heavy wind-storm bringing rain in its wake did extensive damage to buildings, both at Aijal and Lalbura, presaging the end of the fine weather.

About this time, in order to divert attention from the eastern Lushai people in their struggle against McCabe's force, a party of Lushais from Maite, Poiboi and Lalbura raided a tea estate in Cachar district, killing 45 persons, all British subjects, and carrying off thirteen into captivity. Against this background McCabe summed up the situation in his diary on 10 April:

> I cannot reiterate too strongly how firmly I am convinced that burning a Lushai village and then withdrawing is no punishment. We must hunt the enemy down from camp to camp and *jhum* to *jhum*, destroy their crops and granaries, and force them by want and privation to accede to our terms. We cannot expect the chance of a fair [*sic*] stand-up fight; and in

jungle warfare of the type met with in these hills we must anticipate that our losses in actual fighting will exceed those of the enemy. Exposure and starvation are our strongest allies, and with their assistance I believe that the Lushais will be very shortly craving for peace. A raid and the acquisition of a head is a holiday performance, but the real business of a Lushai's life is to acquire means of subsistence by agriculture; and he cannot afford to ignore the latter for the pleasure of undue indulgence in the former.

Learning that men from Poiboi had been involved in an attack on Lalbura, he revised his plan and decided after all to proceed first against that group, its principal village comprising 722 houses being situated twelve miles north-east of Lalbura. Before setting out from Aijal he telegraphed to Shakespear at Lungleh asking him to hold on to his post at Vansanga's as long as possible, prompting the latter to note irritably in his diary: 'He is very anxious that I shall not retire. I had no notion of doing so'; and from the lack of cordiality in their exchanges it may be surmised that between the officious civilian and the forthright soldier little sympathy existed.

McCabe's party consisted of 225 Frontier Police and 75 sepoys of the Bengal Infantry under Loch with four lieutenants to assist him, two surgeon-captains, and Mr Sweet the Executive Engineer to note alignments for bridle roads and assist in transport work. His arrangements for provisioning Lalbura, which with its garrison of 156 effectives he considered impregnable, and what he rather grandly called 'the expeditionary force' were meticulous, logistics being McCabe's strong suit. They spent the night of 10-11 April at Lalbura where they were tormented by a plague of flies and set out for Poiboi next evening, marching throughout the night in moonlight, intending to surprise the village at dawn. But since many of the coolies suffered from moon-blindness their progress was unexpectedly slow, and it was not until 9 a.m. on 13 April that, after marching for thirteen-and-a-half hours, they reached the Tuirini river beside which they bivouacked. There they rested all next day, making the 2000-foot ascent to the village in the small hours of the following morning and reaching the crest of the hill at 5 a.m. Though resistance was negligible, McCabe made the most of the affair in his diary:

Well-directed volleys silenced the fire from the smaller stockade, and the larger one was successfully stormed, the enemy abandoning the position and retiring towards the village of Lalruya, which they burnt and then fled to Poiboi. They were so closely followed up that they did not hold the strong stockades which they had erected on a hill commanding the entrance to Poiboi, but pursuing their flight set fire to the village in every

quarter, and it was with difficulty that 25 houses were saved at the north end. . . . The defences consisted of strong palisades with interior trench and banquette, the whole in the form of a lunette. They were bullet-proof, and were defended on the flanks with small outworks.

McCabe was not to be outdone by the soldiers in the matter of military jargon.

The campaign then settled into the familiar pattern. Detachments were sent out in all directions to forage or to lay waste the countryside; coolie convoys were attacked – once an attacker in the disorder of retreat inadvertently dropped the severed head he had been carrying; and stocks of paddy were burnt. Soldiering in such rough country was made the more arduous as the weather broke up, burning hot days alternating with strong winds and rainstorms at night, conditions that operated even more hardly on the hungry and homeless Lushais who had had to seek refuge in the jungle. And signs were not lacking that their morale was beginning to crack as first one chief, then another, came in to submit, bringing with them their families, slaves and followers. On 30 April McCabe led his force out of what was left of Poiboi; it was raining and, as he noted in his diary, 'nothing now remains but the charred soil to mark the site of the second largest village in Lushai'.

They had a miserable journey back to Lalbura, a heavy thunderstorm soaking them to the skin and making a torrent of the stream they had to cross no less than six times as the path twisted from one side to the other. Since the Tuirini now in flood was unfordable, they had to cross it by means of a dilapidated cane suspension bridge that only allowed two or three persons over it at a time. But in his report on the exploits of the expeditionary force McCabe permitted himself a note of self-congratulation. No equally severe punishment, he noted complacently, had ever been inflicted on any Lushai community before. Despite exposure to wet and tempestuous weather, indifferent accommodation and constant marching both sepoys and coolies had maintained fair health and worked with a willing and cheerful spirit. Thanks to the vigilance and watchful care of the medical officers in combating sporadic outbreaks of cholera and enforcing hygiene, the force was capable of immediately undertaking an expedition against Bungteya.

So on the night of 16 May he marched them out again. Despite a steady downpour of rain from midnight to dawn they reached the village, which was situated ten miles north of Lalbura, at 6 a.m. and stormed the stockade. Not wanting to be without shelter at that season, they hurried on to take the village before its inhabitants could

set it on fire. Sixty Bengal Infantry sepoys with Martini rifles were placed on a commanding knoll with orders to fire volleys into the houses while the main body advanced on the village at the double. All but three of the houses were saved, and of the rest, having selected fifty in a compact cluster at the north end, they destroyed the remainder so as to give themselves a clear field of fire. Except for a few fowls, goats and pigs the place was empty.

While the force was approaching Bungteya McCabe had noticed a large fire burning twenty miles to the south. It was some time before he learnt its significance, to explain which it is necessary to look eastwards and recall what had been happening in the Chin Hills.

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The annexation of Upper Burma to the Indian Empire in 1886 proved to be an easier proposition than the pacification of the country, which took the British army of occupation more than six years to accomplish. The Chin Hills had been low on the list of priorities, but had been given a taste of what was in store for them by the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-90. The following campaigning season had brought about the partial subjugation of the northern tribes and the establishment of Fort White as a permanent post. Further operations in the north took place in 1891-92 including a visit to Manipur made by the Political Officer Mr B.S. Carey with the principal object of impressing upon the Chins that no part of their hills was inaccessible to the British. He hastened back to Fort White so as to be in time to join a column under Captain Hugh Rose of 2/3rd Gurkhas, which was about to set out to co-operate with a force from Haka then confronting the Tashons, the most powerful tribe in the central Chin Hills. When their resistance had collapsed Rose's column was strenuously engaged in marching about the country, showing the flag in previously unvisited tracts. Whilst thus employed Mr Carey received news of the severe fighting in the North Lushai Hills and at once telegraphed proposals to lend assistance by advancing into Lushai from the east so as to draw off the eastern clans who, in combination with their western allies, were attacking McCabe's fort at Lalbura. His plan, which was approved, was for the column to head west, visiting on the way certain southern Sokte Chin villages as well as the Hualgno-Zahau tract as far as the western border, then to cross the Thio river into the Lushai Hills and punish the notorious chief Nikwe, a Zahau Chin who had migrated across the river, for his ravages on both sides of the border, in particular a recent raid in which five Klangklang Chins had

lost their heads. 'This man,' wrote Shakespear a little later, 'is the chief of a village that is apparently a simple cave of Adullam for the whole of the Chin-Lushai Hills. To him fled all who had made other places too hot for themselves, and thence issued bands of murderers who spread terror on all sides.'

The column covered the 84 miles from Fort White to the border over difficult country in seven days and reached Nikwe's village of 400 houses on 3 April. (By this date McCabe was back in Aijal preparing for his raids on Poiboi and Bungteya.) Nikwe, whom they found to be a stout, square-built man, was honest enough in explaining his position to Carey: since every man's hand was against him, his hand was against every man; and though Carey believed he was as much sinned against as sinning, he realized that, since the column had marched so far to punish him, he could not merely let him off with a caution. So he ordered him to surrender the two ringleaders in the recent raid, to pay a fine of guns, *dahs*, spears and a mithan, and to deliver up the heads of the murdered Klangklangs. Under threat of hostages being taken, the penalty was paid; Nikwe's house was (rather churlishly) demolished; the heads were burnt; and the column marched away, no great contribution having been made to McCabe's relief. On 5 April when the column was eighteen miles beyond Nikwe's village and still four days' march away from their outpost at Botung, with only three days' rations left, Carey received a mailbag from Fort White which contained a telegram from the Chief Secretary in Rangoon informing him that Shakespear and his force were in a critical position at Vansanga's, and that the Bengal Government urged that Rose's column should go to their assistance with all speed. 'It is not necessary,' Carey later wrote with commendable restraint, 'to enlarge on the feelings of the officers of the column when they only received this information after they had made half their return march from Lushailand, and when the transport was worn out and rations all but exhausted, and the food-supply taken from Nikwe's village partially consumed.'

Being in no position to turn round and march back the way they had come, they pushed on to Fort White in order to collect rations and fresh transport before returning to Lushai. This could be done neither easily nor speedily, for coolies had to be recruited in Burma and from among the not altogether willing Siyin and Sokte Chin villages – the latter needing some high-handed persuasion before 'volunteers' started to come in – and mules had to be brought up from the plains. Daokoma, the stronghold in the Lushai Hills which the column had been directed to attack and where it was to rendezvous with Shakespear's force, was some 120 miles from Fort White

across the grain of the hills, a march that would have necessitated their carrying thirty days' rations for the round trip. This proving logistically impossible, it was decided that at the conclusion of operations the column would pass through to Lungleh, proceeding thence to Rangamati in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, from which pleasant station they would travel by country-boats down the Karnaphuli to Chittagong, there embarking on a steamer to take them back to Burma. Knowing that the prospect of a sea voyage would strike terror in the hearts of the Chin coolies, this part of the programme he wisely kept from them.

It was a substantial force that set out from Fort White under Captain Rose on 21 April, consisting of 12 officers, 100 rifles of the King's Royal Rifles, 150 sepoys of the Garhwal Rifles, 44 Madras Pioneers and a mountain gun. To carry twenty days' rations for such a large body of troops required 178 Burmese and 181 Chin coolies and no less than 390 mules; and even so, owing to desertions by the Burmese, 200 additional coolies had to be recruited from neighbouring villages *en route*. It was, then, a huge straggling caravan that began to wind its way along the precipitous paths zigzagging up and then down the tangle of hills on the other side of which their objective lay.

Four days' march brought the column back to Nikwe's village which, since its people refused to submit to being disarmed, was burnt, Nikwe himself being placed under arrest. Whilst there Carey was approached by three men who introduced themselves as the chiefs of Lengkam, a village lying to the north, and assuring him of their friendliness offered to conduct the column through the country. Consulting his notes, Carey found that this was one of the villages named by McCabe as being in rebellion against him, so these chiefs also he arrested, later learning from Shakespear and McCabe that they had been valuable captures.

From this point the column struck out into the unknown and unexplored. To their anxieties about the route, for no reliable guides could be procured, and the likelihood of more coolies deserting were added the discomforts of bad roads and deteriorating weather. On the first night out from Nikwe's a heavy thunderstorm broke bringing continuous rain which made cooking impossible, and the men had to get what rest they could lying on the ground, both hungry and wet. After a march of sixteen miles next day they failed to find water and spent another uncomfortable night by the roadside, again cheated of an evening meal, this time by lack of water with which to cook it. Next morning at a deserted village they managed to locate a small trickle of water, which allowed them to prepare their first cooked

meal since they had left Nikwe's, and a mile or two further on they came on a large stream at which the mules got their first drink for more than forty hours.

There was worse to come. Next morning they set out in pouring rain for Lalbuta, but the cloud that enveloped them prevented them from seeing in any direction, so that they could only flounder on, hopelessly lost, halting after four miles by some paddy-bins, in which the fortunate managed to find some shelter. The gunners with the mountain gun had a hard time of it, taking six hours to cover the first half mile from camp and the whole of the rest of the day to reach the bins; but the mules suffered most. On that four-mile stretch forty-two of them died or had to be destroyed and many more were exhausted. Altogether, of the 390 mules which started from Fort White more than 200 perished during the course of the expedition.

Chins accompanying the force were sent off to Kairuma to procure guides and to Lalbuta to enlist a small number of coolies; and after another day's march in continuous rain the column, having covered four miles, reached Lalbuta, which they occupied at nightfall. The weather clearing, they were able to make thirteen miles the next day, bringing them to Raltienga, at which village, in Carey's graphic phrase, 'I caught guides'; and from this point on the column lived off the country.

That night great activity was noticed at Daokoma several miles away across a valley, the village and its environs sparkling with the lights of torches. On the morning of 2 May they started towards the place, the path leading down a rocky ravine to a stand of dense bamboo jungle through which they had to slash their way, across the Tui Chaung, then in blazing sunshine up the steep slope on the other side. Passing through newly built stockades they climbed the cliff on which the village stood and took possession of it. Cattle and pigs were its sole occupants.

At once helio communication was established with Vansanga sixteen miles off, and next day Shakespear and a small force marched into Daokoma to meet them.

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Although Shakespear had commented irritably on McCabe's suggestion that he might be thinking of retiring from Vansanga, the fact remains that his small force there had been sorely beset. On 3 April he had left the place for Lungleh, leaving Daly in charge with Hutchinson to assist him, though both were in bad health. They were kept fully occupied

beating off sporadic attacks on the stockade, laying waste Lalrhima's *jhums*, and keeping open the supply route from Lalluova's. On 7 April Daly noted in the 'Diary of Vansanga Stockade' that their helio had been playing on the hills round Daokoma all day in the hope of making contact with the column promised from Burma, not appreciating the difficulties facing Rose and that it would be nearly a month before he would appear on the scene.

At Lungleh Shakespear began to make arrangements for meeting Rose's column though, having been refused the reinforcement of 300 Gurkhas he had asked for, he had some difficulty in scraping together a sufficient escort. In the end he started out on 21 April accompanied by Lieutenants Boileau, Clerk (Transport Officer) and Carden of the Bengal Infantry with 82 Frontier Police, 15 B.I. and 22 coolies, leaving Lungleh manned entirely by the unfit. He was in an unusually pessimistic mood, showing that the strain of all he had been through was beginning to tell.

> *Lungleh, 20th April 1892* . . . the force available for the subjugation of an enemy numbering some 3,000 fighting men in the most difficult country in the world is 247 men, many of whom are ill and some are raw recruits. With this force I have to hold my depot at Vansanga, punish the enemy, and guard a convoy of 300 coolies. It is impossible to do this, and I should refuse to move out from here were it not that the Burma Column has actually started, and I am bound to meet them at Daokoma's on the 26th, and yet after having met them we shall be but little better off, for they will only have rations enough to remain in the neighbourhood five to nine days, during which time nothing can really be efficiently done by going leisurely from one village to another hunting down the men and destroying everything. Yet if it was not for the advance of the Burma Column, I should be absolutely helpless and should have to retire on Lungleh.
>
> The situation could not be much worse, however, than it is, and I can see no hope of finishing the work now, and yet if it is not finished it means that we shall be troubled all the rains, and the Hill Tracts are liable to be raided. I cannot keep the Burma Column because I cannot feed them, and without the Burma Column I have not enough men to efficiently hunt the people down. . . .
>
> *21st, Saipuia's*. . . . Mr McCabe wires that he has destroyed Lalkai, Lalruma, as well as Poiboi, and will be moving towards Bungteya on the 24th. He says that he can best co-operate with me by punishing the big eastern villages, but that will have absolutely no effect on the people who are bothering me. The villages who are troubling me most are the ones I gave over to Mr McCabe at his own suggestion when we met at Kairuma, and against whom at his request I came out to 'demonstrate' last month. Now that these villages have given so much trouble, and that I am utterly

powerless to punish them, I do not think it is too much to expect Mr McCabe to look after his own people. If left alone they will not attack towards Aijal, but will make our occupancy of Lungleh during the rains very unpleasant. . . .

They marched by three trying stages, enduring heavy rain at night alternating with burning sun by day, to Vansanga where Shakespear was pleased to note that in his absence the fort had been improved both as to comfort and its defences. Hostiles were seen across the valley but they kept their distance, nor was there any night attack, probably because the Lushais were unable to get their matchlocks to go off in the rain. On 28 April he went with a small party under Clerk to have a talk with Lalluova, who further depressed him by singing his usual doleful dirge of enemies everywhere; all the roads to Daokoma had been stockaded and were impassable; the policy of destroying stocks of grain was futile because the people had sown their *jhums* with Indian corn that ripens in a couple of months; and so on. Back in Vansanga impatiently awaiting the arrival of Rose's column, news of an attack on Lungleh caused him more worry, but at last about 10 a.m. on 2 May letters were brought in by runner from Rose and Carey, written from Daokoma after their heroic march.

When next day Shakespear and Carey clasped hands at Daokoma neither can have known that the mere fact that a column from Burma had been able to march into Lushailand from the east had been enough to break the back of the rebellion. They therefore took stock of their resources and found that Rose's column had only enough rations to allow it to engage in filibustering operations for five days before it would have to set out for Lungleh *en route* for Chittagong and home. They made the best use they could of the time they had.

Having burnt the grain and shot all the cattle in Daokoma, they set fire to the houses and made for Rochungnunga by different routes, Rose's mountain gun ineffectively firing shells towards Lalkanglova on the way. Leaving a party there, Rose sent a detachment to Lalkanglova, himself accompanying another to Lalhrima, both leaving at midnight in the hope of surprising the villages. There was minimal resistance and they were burnt, after which their granaries were destroyed and their cattle shot. Similar treatment was meted out to Tlangbuta, a village only one march from Bungteya and three from Aijal, its destruction being as good as actually joining hands with McCabe. It had been the flames caused by these operations that had caught McCabe's eye as his force approached Bungteya. The two marauding parties came together again at Vansanga and active operations were brought to a close.

Shakespear had been impressed by the fact that a novel component of Rose's column had been the large number of Siyin and Sokte Chin coolies, who had proved themselves reliable until, on reaching Lungleh, they learned that they would be returning to Burma by sea. Rather than face such a terrifying experience they absconded in a body, eventually reaching home after a journey through the Klangklang and Tashon country.

In the report on the adventures of Rose's column which he wrote at Chittagong on 25 May Carey spoke with understandable pride of its achievements, giving the credit to Captain Rose for his example and determination that had inspired all ranks and concluding that, although the Lushais might annoy Shakespear's line of communications during the rains, he did not doubt that the back of the rebellion had been broken and that quiet would soon be restored. Shakespear writing his own diary at Lungleh on 13 May noted more cautiously that, despite the damage done to the rebels, its effect should not be exaggerated. He thought it improbable that the lesson they had been taught had been sufficiently severe to deter the Lushais from again attacking his posts and convoys; but nothing further could be done that season. He was unstinting in his praise of the Burma column whose intervention he was sure had prevented a catastrophe. They had 'made a wonderful march, and it is hard for those who have not traversed these hills in April and May to appreciate the hardships they have suffered or the difficulties they have overcome'; ending 'I trust it may be satisfactory to them to know they have helped us out of very great difficulties'. Lieutenants Hutchinson, Boileau and Daly accompanied Rose's column to Chittagong, all badly in need of a rest.

After McCabe's force had stormed Bungteya on 17 May the chiefs in his area continued to come in to submit. For a while Maite, Lalbura's aged mother's village of 500 houses, held out until, diplomacy having failed, Loch attacked and captured the place in the early evening of 25 May, destroying all the houses except what he required for his camp. They returned to Lalbura's and on 7 June started for Aijal. In contrast to the warm tributes to others paid by Carey and Shakespear, there is an ungenerous entry in McCabe's diary for 19 May, by which date (it will be remembered) operations in the eastern hills had been concluded with complete success:

> . . . The Lushais informed me today that the Burma and Lungleh columns had both retired and that the post at Vansanga had been abandoned and destroyed. It is most marvellous how quickly the Lushais obtain news [and also how ready McCabe was to believe what they told him], and I have no doubt but that we shall soon experience the results of the withdrawal of

> the force from the Southern Lushai Hills. I know it was unavoidable, and that it will considerably weaken my hands, and can only do my best to make the Lushais see that we are still able to bring them to their senses.

The civil service mind seems in evidence here, and it may be hoped that he entertained more charitable thoughts towards his 'brothers' in the south, whose burden had been every bit as heavy as his own, when he received at Aijal the persons of the rascally Nikwe and the three Lengkham chiefs who had joined the rebellion against him, all of whom had been arrested by Rose's column. Nikwe's end was to be in keeping with his red-handed career. Taken to Calcutta with the Lengkham chiefs, he had killed one of them with a billet of wood, been tried for murder and, pronounced insane, detained for the rest of his days in a lunatic asylum.

Carey and Shakespear had both been right in their prognostications: the back of the revolt had been broken, but some of the chiefs were still talking big about the revenge they would exact on the British when they had recovered from their enforced sojourn in the jungle. There was still work to be done in the coming seasons, bringing recalcitrant villages to heel and apprehending those rebel chiefs who had so far eluded capture; but already there were signs of happier times ahead.

5 June was a Sunday and, since the officers and clerks remaining in Lungleh wanted to see a Lushai village under peaceful circumstances, Shakespear took them over to chief Lalruma's. 'We were most hospitably received,' he wrote, 'and had to drink a great deal more of the product of the local brewery than we wanted to. The gallant Commandant [Cave-Browne] made such an impression on the Princess Royal, a pretty maiden of seven summers, that she would accept of no excuse, but insisted on his drinking cup after cup, until he had to run away in self-defence. . . . Having delighted the juveniles by throwing them handfuls of *pice* to scramble for and offering various prizes for agility, we set off for home.'

8

The Cross of Lorrain (I)

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

The words in the last chapter of St. Mark's Gospel were crystal-clear, the command unmistakable; and when he heard the Call that day in London – it was 11 February 1905 – there was no shadow of doubt in his mind that they were addressed to him, Reginald A. Lorrain, personally. Moreover, the corner of the world to which he was directed to proceed was implicit in the summons, too, for his elder brother had already been at work for some years, converting the heathen in Further India. Difficulties there were – he had no formal qualifications for the task to which he was called, nor had he private means – but with the help of the Lord these would be, in fact soon were, surmounted. His brother had written to him of the need for a missionary among the wild headhunting Lakhers* who lived in the remote hills to the south of the Lushai villages where his own work lay, and at once Reginald drafted and circulated a pamphlet in which he sought funds for a proposed Pioneer Mission to the Lakhers. The missionary societies he approached declined to interest themselves in the venture, perhaps because of his lack of qualifications, but a benevolent lady of fortune who happened to read his pamphlet sent him when it was most needed a cheque for £45, on the strength of which he resigned from his job in a London office and enrolled for a year's medical training at Livingstone College. This meant postponing his marriage to a Swedish girl, Maud Louise Ulander, to whom he had already been

*Pronounced Luck-airs.

engaged for a number of years, but she was of the stuff of which missionaries' wives are made and acquiesced with a good grace.

Almost two years later, in a pea-souper fog, the newly married couple, after hurried goodbyes to friends and relations, boarded the train at Euston bound for Liverpool, where they embarked in the s.s. *City of Glasgow*, which reached Calcutta after an uneventful voyage on 16 February 1907. Reginald's brother and sister-in-law were at the docks to meet them. J. Herbert Lorrain, after working for some time among the Abors who live in the Assam uplands that straddle the Dihang river, had returned several years before to the Lushai Hills, the scene of his first missionary endeavours, where he would remain for the rest of his long life. He was already at work on a dictionary of the Lushai language, which would not be published until 1940 but remains the standard work. Reginald could not have had a more congenial or experienced mentor to guide his own early footsteps in the missionary field.

The two brothers and their wives, after a short stay in Calcutta where Herbert had been attending a conference of the Baptist Missionary Society, set out on their complicated journey to Further India. They travelled by train to Goalundo near the junction of the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers and thence by steamer downriver as far as Chandpur. Another train took them to Chittagong where they boarded a smaller steamer that carried them up the Karnaphuli to Rangamati, the headquarters of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. There they transhipped into country-boats and proceeded up the river to Kasalong and on again, skirting the Barkal rapids by means of a trolley plying across the hillside, rejoining the river a mile and a quarter further north. The steamer from Chittagong had been crawling with red ants that ate the food in their lunch-baskets, and sleeping at night in the country-boats they needed their nets to prevent the swarming mosquitoes from eating them. They pulled into the river-bank where a flat rock marked the Lushai border and made camp for the night, and after a last cup of tea, a reading from the Bible and silent prayers the two couples retired to their respective boats to sleep. They left the river at Demagri and struck inland on the four-day trek across the hills to the civil and military station at Fort Lungleh, two miles from which on a site on the hillside lay Herbert's mission station.

Reginald and Maud stayed at the mission in Lungleh throughout the months of the rainy season, watching how Herbert went about his work, learning the rudiments of the Lushai language, and generally preparing themselves for the challenge, or the ordeal, that lay ahead of them. Reginald will also have taken the opportunity to clarify in

his mind the religious beliefs he had come so far to impart to the Lakhers. The pioneer mission he embodied in his own person was described in its brochure as inter-denominational, and he himself was not in holy orders; nor does it appear that he had undergone any religious training. He was a fundamentalist, requiring no other authority than his own interpretation of the Bible, and the words in which he clothed his beliefs were borrowed from the evangelists. He also derived inspiration from the words and tunes of hymns, especially those of a revivalist tenor. The bedrock of his faith was simple and unshakable.

He postulated that the Lakhers, 'these dark-skinned brothers of ours', headhunters or the sons of headhunters, were a primitive, savage people living in jungle homes amid heathen darkness, fettered by chains of superstition designed by the Devil, without knowledge of Christ, without hope, but crying out for help. They lived in perpetual terror of evil spirits, manifesting the awful power that the Evil One exercised over them; and to Reginald's way of thinking this was no mere figure of speech.

> Their whole lives are permeated with the constant thought of avoiding offence towards these much-dreaded realities, and in my mind these fears are not without foundation, for the enormous power that evil spirits seem to have over these wild hillmen is very great, and ofttimes powerfully real.

In fact, the evil spirits that demanded from them frequent propitiation by means of animal sacrifices were real demons, emissaries of the Devil himself. Holy Scripture was quite specific as regards the ultimate punishment awaiting these heathens – 'he that believeth not shall be damned' – and for all his belief in God's Mercy Reginald saw no hope for them, no joy looming on the other side of the River of Death, just blank, black darkness.

Only the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ could snap the fetters in which the Evil One had enchained them, and give them blessed hope of a life hereafter in the presence of God. (When on this subject Reginald's words tended to run away with him.) Where people had no knowledge of the Saving Power of Jesus Christ they were absolutely at the command of the Devil and his embassy. Only one Power could set the captives free: the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son Who had come into the world to save sinners. Only by teaching them the Great Love of the Son of God, Who had died on Calvary to save these His children, could they be drawn into the Gospel Net from the depths of heathenism and won from the very gates of Hell in order to sparkle like jewels in the Crown of the King of Kings.

His vision was an exalted one. Where previously only pagan chants had been heard would burst forth hymns of praise to Jehovah, putting the Devil and all his legions to flight; and for each soul he brought into the Kingdom the Joy Bells would ring out in Heaven. Through him, God's steward, the Gospel of Christ would reach the uttermost limits of Lakherland, the strongholds of the Devil would crumble, and the Standard of Jehovah stream in the wind from every pinnacle in the land. By means of his ministry the bonds of sin and the chains of superstition and ignorance would be snapped, and the tribes led out of their heathen darkness into the Glorious Light of the Lord Jesus Himself.

The very thought of the work that awaited him was intoxicating.

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On 19 September 1907 after a light lunch Reginald and his wife accompanied by his brother and sister-in-law set out on ponies from Lungleh with two Lushai servants, making for Serkawr eight days' journey to the south, the village at which he was to commence his ministry to the Lakhers. A long-haired Yorkshire terrier called Crusoe was also brought along with them. Two miles short of Zobawk where they proposed to spend their first night on the road they were caught in a heavy shower of rain and arrived at the makeshift rest-hut soaked to the skin. They took off their wet clothes and gave them to one of the servants to be dried in the kitchen, and sat around wrapped in blankets, enjoying a cup of tea before turning in. Next morning they branched off south from the Lungleh–Haka road along which they had ridden the previous day and took the narrow bridle-path leading to Thual-Thu, where they spent an uncomfortable night. On to Mampui where they rested, being a Sunday, confined to the small rest-hut, since it rained heavily most of the day. Chawnhu was the last Lushai village they stayed at, and from then on they were traversing country which had been settled by Poi tribes from the Chin Hills over the Burma border to the east, among whom were the Lakhers. After passing Longtlai they struggled, leading their ponies, up the long slope to the summit of the Paitha range, from which they had extensive views over the countryside. Making the difficult descent on the far side of the crest they could just make out on a hillside far away the huddle of roofs that was Serkawr, still several marches away.

The next night they slept in a Lakher village – probably Laungpuveng – and for the first time Reginald found himself among the people to whom he had dedicated his life. In the evening they assembled on

the veranda of the chief's house and, since he understood a little Lushai, were able to give him some idea of their mission. Next day they crossed the Kaladan in country-boats, the ponies being swum across the river higher up, followed its course for a few miles, crossed a mountain torrent by a precarious cane bridge, then climbed the two-thousand-foot hillside leading to the cleft where Serkawr lay. They reached the village at four o'clock in the afternoon, 26 September 1907.

Nobody came to meet them on the outskirts of the village as they were entitled to expect, and as they walked along the muddy lanes between the shanty houses the few people who were about took little notice of them. They made for the largest house, which they took to be that of the chief, and found him on the veranda with his wife, some of his children and one or two others. There was no cordiality in his greeting.

The chief, whose name was Theulai, was a spare man of nearly seventy with a peaked, hollow-cheeked face, his thinning hair worn in a topknot over his forehead. He had a striped hand-woven blanket wrapped round his body, beneath which he wore nothing but a loin-cloth. Belonging to the Tlongsai tribe, he had in younger days been concerned in many headhunting forays; but since the northern Lakher villages including Serkawr had been incorporated in the South Lushai Hills District and brought under British administration he had thought it prudent to mend his ways and had proved himself an exemplary chief.

That first afternoon, to the studied insult of Theulai's failure to arrange that his distinguished guests were met with due formality on arrival at his village was added his wife's contemptuous gesture in presenting to the two European ladies the minimal gift of a stick of sugar-cane each. It was a token of things to come, for Reginald was soon to learn that the most implacable opponents of his ministry were the Lakher women. At this first meeting between the missionary's wife and the chief's wife, who were never to be friends, they will have sized each other up, each noting with feminine curiosity the peculiarities of the other's costume.

The chief's wife will have seen a small, sharp-featured woman, her abundant hair – or what could be seen of it under her flat straw hat – brushed up in a roll from her forehead, wearing a full dark skirt reaching to the ground and covering her sensible boots and above it a crisp white blouse. She herself wore the customary dark blue cotton petticoat, its lower border of embroidered silk showing beneath a skirt of the same colour which was supported by a series of brass

10. *Lakher chief Theulai*

belts extending from waist to hip. A gap between the short, sleeveless jacket, loosely tied over her breasts, and her skirt-top left her navel exposed. Many strings of bead necklaces hung round her neck, metal ear-rings from her pierced ears, and bracelets of brass beads on a cotton string jingled at her wrists. Her hair was tied in a loose knot at the nape of the neck, held in place by a heavy brass hairpin, and its ends straggled down in an untidy way.

Theulai had encountered European men before, bluff military officers as ready to share a jar of rice-beer with him as to order their sepoys to burn his village to the ground, and also the more troublesome civilians with their constant demands and regulations; but nobody quite like Reginald. He was a neat, slender man with sharp eyes behind metal-rimmed spectacles. His hair, cut short at the sides, grew thick above his forehead, and the waxed points of his moustache stuck out horizontally beyond his pallid cheeks. Theulai was soon to learn that behind his mild manner lay a steely determination.

Agreeing to call the village elders to a meeting at his house that evening, at which Reginald would be given the opportunity of explaining his purposes to them, the chief had his visitors taken to some huts on the outskirts of the village which he allotted to their use. Their walls were of woven bamboo which let in the daylight, but the bamboo roof seemed rainproof. Each had two fair-sized rooms which could be used as a sitting-room and bedroom with two smaller rooms adjoining for bathroom and pantry. In no time the ladies had put up curtains, laid down rugs and made the huts take on an appearance of home.

The meeting that evening in the chief's house was satisfactory, so far as it went. Only Reginald and his brother attended, with one of the Lushais to act as interpreter, their wives remaining in one of the huts with the terrier Crusoe, who was glad to be done with the indignity of travel in a basket. The atmosphere was polite if not cordial. They were given logs to sit on and faced the chief and his unsmiling wife with the village elders round them, all squatting on their heels, their expressionless faces glinting in the light of the wood fire burning in the clay hearth, which sent sparks up to the roof. Yes, replied Theulai to their query, he was pleased to entertain them at his village; pleased also that a white man wished to live among them permanently as the Lakhers' friend, to help them in every way and to tell them of his God. On a more practical plane he gave leave for Reginald to build a bungalow near the village. Having achieved that much, the brothers made their way back through the stinking alleys to their anxiously waiting wives.

The site chosen for the mission was on a hillside at some distance

from Serkawr, a quarter of a mile above the spring upon which they would depend for water, and high enough to benefit from the breezes that blew along the valley of the Kaladan. The trees and undergrowth growing there had to be felled and cleared away, the earth levelled, and all the building materials collected from the surrounding jungle before the actual construction of the bungalow could begin. But though the Lakhers took an intense interest in everything their foreign visitors did – even peering at them through the door and window apertures of their hut while they were eating, never before having seen people using a knife and fork – they would not for any inducement assist in the building of the mission bungalow. Had not the government officials at Lungleh despatched a team of Lushais to do the job, Reginald's ministry would have been frustrated at the outset.

Ten days after their arrival at Serkawr Herbert and his wife left to return to their own missionary labours at Lungleh. At a bend of the road a mile beyond the village where a large tree spread its branches the brothers and their wives said goodbye to each other, and the pair left behind would have been less than human if they had not felt a momentary panic as they watched the others trotting away on their ponies until they were lost to sight in the jungle. There were now just the two of them, alone in a strange land among wild people whose language and customs were as yet unknown to them, pledged to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a race of heathens. At this moment as never before or since Reginald needed the assurance to be found in the last chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel: 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world'.

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The heathens to whom Reginald had brought the Gospel of Christ were animists whose religious beliefs, however primitive, were woven into the very fabric of their lives. By reason of the inaccessibility of their villages and their murderous reputation they had received no taint of Hinduism or Islam from the plains of India to the west, nor of the Buddhism which the Burmese across the hills to the east wore so lightheartedly.

The Lakhers believed in one god, Khazangpa, who controlled the universe and the destinies of individual men and women. They imagined him as living in the sky and endowed him with human characteristics. He had a wife and child, ate and drank, could be forgetful, was all-powerful. Generally benevolent, Khazangpa was strictly just, rewarding the deserving with health and wealth, punishing

the wicked with an early death. He needed to be propitiated by the sacrifice of a pig in due form of ritual and to be invoked by prayer:

> O Khazangpa, graciously accept this sacrifice.
> Grant me clever sons and good-looking daughters,
> Bless my livestock that they may increase,
> Watch over me in sickness that I may not die.
> May I be a successful hunter, let my fields prosper,
> O bless me in all my endeavours.
> Guard my whole family and keep us from harm.

They also believed that everyone has a guardian angel, or *zang*, constantly about one, male in the case of men, female in the case of women, who if propitiated by due sacrifices would forward all one's endeavours. They entertained the pleasing notion that, if a man's *zang* took a fancy to a girl's *zang*, the couple would marry and live in harmony together. They believed, too, that they were beset on all sides by evil spirits called the *leurahripas* – minions of Hell to Reginald's way of thinking – which inhabited all natural phenomena, the most potent residing in the high hills and the mountain torrents, the lesser ones in rocks, trees, in fact all inanimate matter. These were malignant demons who desired men's deaths, which they brought about either by engineering accidents or murderous attacks or by inflicting sickness on them. They took pleasure in destroying men's possessions, by fire and other means, a favourite trick of theirs being the prolonging of a loved one's illness whereby a man was constrained to sacrifice his livestock one by one until he was ruined; for their appetite for sacrifices was insatiable. In order to circumvent the mischief of the *leurahripas* the Lakhers had devised a system of taboos – they called them *ana*, meaning something prohibited – whereby it was forbidden to do or say or see or touch certain things or to visit certain places, superstitions of the same order as the compulsion felt by town-bred English children not to walk on the lines between the pavement stones.

They believed that each person has a soul that not only leaves the body on death but may do so temporarily when its owner is asleep. Some people are unfortunate enough to have bad souls which, when so wandering, are apt to do harm to others. When a person falls ill it means that either Khazangpa or a *leurahripa* has captured his soul, and because it is not always easy to decide, by divination, which was responsible a succession of sacrifices had to be carried out on a trial-and-error basis. If all failed, it meant that the soul would not be released but was on its way to the *Athiki*, or the Village of the Dead, which they visualized as a mirror-image of the living world with its pleasures and pains and also its social distinctions. In the *Athiki* souls were

reunited with those of their loved ones, including animals, for they, too, have souls. For the lucky few who have contrived during their lives to kill a human being and a long list of prescribed wild animals, including an elephant, a tiger and a rhinoceros, and have performed over each the due sacrificial ceremony, is reserved a special paradise called *Peira*, where their souls will abide in bliss. Those who have died from unnatural causes or of certain unpleasant diseases go to a special abode called *Sawrawkhi*. Souls are not envisaged as being immortal, but after a long, long time they, too, die in their turn, and then death is permanent.

Sacrifices were the outward expression of the Lakhers' religious beliefs, private in cases like the sickness of a member of one's family or those to induce fertility in women, in others – such as those carried out at each stage of the agricultural year – involving the whole village in feasting, dancing and the consumption of rice-beer. Depending on the occasion, the ceremonies were conducted either by the head of the family or by an elder appointed for the purpose by the chief, for there was no priesthood as such in Lakherland.

Which may be one reason why the inhabitants of Serkawr were puzzled to understand what manner of man it was who had come to live among them, offering to educate them, to cure their diseases, and above all to replace their traditional theology with all its ramifications in their daily lives by some wonderful religion he had brought with him from his distant country overseas. The Lakhers were a hard-headed lot and may be forgiven if they viewed these offers with a degree of scepticism.

But for the time being Reginald had no time to spare for evangelism as he supervised the construction of the mission bungalow on the cleared hillside. Leaving Maud with Crusoe for company in the village hut to attend to the household chores and supervise the cooking, for the Lushai servants were of little help, he would set out early each morning for the building site. The posts to which the walls of woven bamboo were fixed consisted of small tree-trunks, lopped of their side branches and set firmly into the ground. The layered roof had a base of young saplings laid end to end, on which were fastened lengths of bamboo, and above these a dressing of leaves was secured by means of bamboo slats. There was a veranda on all four sides, eight feet wide in the front. All the furniture was made from wood obtained from the surrounding jungle, except for the tables which were fashioned from the packing-cases in which the Lorrains' belongings had been transported to Serkawr. Since there were no window-panes, they had to make do with shutters instead. As a precaution

against fire a separate cook-house was built fifty feet behind the bungalow. They laid out a garden in which in due course they built a chicken-run and goat-house and a stable for their ponies. As soon as the place was deemed fit for habitation they moved their belongings to it from the village hut and began their new life. Although their bungalow was substantial enough to keep out the elements, they had other dangers to contend with. Snakes, for example; but had not Our Lord given an assurance that those who go into the world to preach His Gospel shall take up serpents? Tigers were another matter, especially when one night in the rainy season an old tigress, which was later shot, clawed down the bamboo-matting wall of the goat-house and made off with one of their milk-goats. The semi-domesticated mithan were a frequent nuisance, blundering against the bungalow at night so that it threatened to collapse and doing much damage in the garden. But usually the Lorrains were too tired to take much notice of such intrusions.

The loneliness of the life, too, they had to get used to. It was a welcome event shortly before their first Christmas at Serkawr when a British punitive expedition passed through. Members of the Zeuhnang clan living in unadministered territory had raided a British village the previous year in order to recover a family of slaves which had escaped, and had hanged the father from a tree. It was exciting to watch the files of sepoys marching by with their glittering bayonets, the train of mules with the dismantled mountain-guns strapped to their backs, and the long line of coolies carrying the baggage. They invited the officers to tea at the mission bungalow: Major Cole the Superintendent of the Lushai Hills District, Major Loch the Commandant of the Lushai Hills Military Police, and the Medical Officer Mr Hurst. It felt even lonelier when the soldiers had gone, but it was good to receive news from Major Loch that the expedition had encountered no opposition, the guilty village tamely paying over the fine of twenty guns which had been imposed on it for having committed a breach of the peace. Whether or not the Lakhers were yet ready to receive the benefits of civilization, they were no longer the fierce warriors of old.

Besides the dangers from wild life and the loneliness the Lorrains had many hardships to put up with during their first two and a half years among the Lakhers. For one thing, they could get nobody to work for them. This was not a deliberate boycott, but the fact was that the people had no use whatever for money, except that a coin with a hole punched in it could be hung round the neck as an ornament. For the same reason the people were unwilling to sell them rice or vegetables, and as their stocks of tinned food dwindled they

sometimes went hungry. They eventually solved the problem by importing sacks of salt from the plains, a commodity of which the Lakhers were in short supply, which they bartered to them in small amounts for whatever local produce was available.

Even to survive was hard work. In addition to his proper labours Reginald had to fetch water several times a day from the spring several hundred feet below the bungalow, to collect firewood from the jungle, and in the early mornings to go out with his gun to shoot whatever he came across that was edible – pigeons, squirrels, they could not afford to be particular. The bread Maud baked was a great standby, but it was unpleasant working in the smoke-filled cook-house, and the yeast she made from bananas often failed to leaven the dough. Later, when they had had sent up to them a packet of hops, the yeast she made from it was much more reliable. And her work was not done when she had cleaned the place and cooked the food, for she also had to do all the laundry herself under the most primitive conditions. Not content with looking after her husband's and her own needs, she took pity on the Lakher children who often came to the bungalow to see what was going on, wide-eyed, unwashed, and stark naked. In winter-time they shivered with the cold, and Maud spent the evenings, while Reginald was at his studies, making them little shirts on her sewing-machine.

Despite all these hardships they were blessed with good health. Had not Our Lord said of those who went out to spread His Word that 'if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them'? Crusoe, who slept on a chair by their bed, was less fortunate. One night, after they had been a year and a half in Serkawr, he woke up suddenly, gave a bark, and fell dead.

9

The Cross of Lorrain (II)

Although they now had somewhere to live, Reginald could not commence his ministry until he had mastered the Lakher language, a difficult undertaking since it had never been reduced to writing. He would go to the village each day in order to visit the sick, for they were willing enough to take the medicines he prescribed for them, and never missed an opportunity of asking the Lakher word for every object in sight, which he jotted down in a notebook in a phonetic spelling of his own invention. It was a slow process but he persevered, remembering that Our Lord had said of those who go into the world to preach His Gospel that 'they shall speak with new tongues'.

The miracle – though Reginald never presumed to call it such – occurred after they had been settled in Serkawr for thirteen months. He was taking a stroll in the village one Saturday evening when a woman's voice called to him from the veranda of the chief's house, and going over he found squatting there the chiefess of a village two days' journey away. When he asked her why she had called to him she replied, and surely there was a note of mockery in her voice: 'Will you come and tell us something about your God?'

He regretfully declined, saying that his command of their language was as yet inadequate to the task, but she insisted, beckoning him to climb the log ladder on to the veranda, where he was provided with a low stool to sit on. A crowd of men and women gathered round to see the fun and listened intently while he sang a hymn that he had translated into simple Lakher. When it was finished he was astonished to find that his tongue was loosened, and with a fluency he had never known before he told them

> of the great Love that God had for mankind and for the Lakhers, about how His Son Jesus Christ had left all in Glory to come and tell us of the Fatherhood of God, and how He had died upon Calvary that they might live and that spiritual light might come into their souls.

It was, he wrote, a Red Letter Day for Lakherland, the first in all

human history in which the Love of God had ever been spoken in the Lakher tongue.

So Reginald's ministry began, and thenceforth he would hold open-air meetings in Serkawr and the villages round about, at which he would sing his hymn and try to get across to his taciturn audience the Message of God's Love. He supplemented his preaching with two other activities with a more practical appeal to them. As already mentioned, such medical skill as he had acquired during his year at Livingstone College was much in demand. This, too, was clearly in accordance with Our Lord's words that those who go into the world to preach His Gospel 'shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover'. Such unswerving faith had he in his divine mission that time and again he put his entire credibility as a healer at risk, staking all, as it were, on a single throw of the dice.

Once, on hearing that chief Theulai was seriously ill, he hurried over and found him lying on his low wooden bed in his dark, windowless house, surrounded by the usual crowd who were discussing his case at the tops of their voices in between taking their turn at one of the pots of rice-beer with which the walls were lined. For ten days he had been growing weaker and weaker, largely due to lack of nourishment, and since the sacrifices which had been offered up to Khazangpa and the *leurahripas* had failed to restore his health, they were already discussing the succession to the chieftainship. Theulai agreed to place himself in Reginald's hands and meekly swallowed the pills he prescribed and also drank the milk he brought from the mission, which had to be disguised by discolouring it with permanganate because Lakhers have an aversion to milk. On each visit, after administering the medicine, Reginald and Maud, who often accompanied him on his rounds, would kneel and pray to God, for Jesus Christ's sake, to bless the drug and to save the chief's life and show him the way to salvation. To the annoyance of some, who would have been glad to see Theulai's son succeed to the chieftainship, their prayers were heard, for the chief recovered and was soon out and about again, as spry as ever. Reginald's prestige rose, but there was no possibility of Theulai becoming his first Lakher convert – and what a triumph that would have been – for, as the chief ruefully remarked, his wife would not let him.

For all his disappointment that he had so far effected no conversions, Reginald's faith in his divine mission shone as brightly as ever, leading him to an even more nerve-racking test of his powers which, had he failed, might well have undone whatever he had already achieved in winning the confidence of the Lakhers. He had laid hands

on the sick chief, and he had recovered. The challenge he was now to accept approximated to an attempt, in the Lord's name, to cast out devils.

Walking through the village with Maud one Saturday evening, they passed the house of one of the elders, which was barricaded by a low bamboo fence, and found him busy with the pots and pans and other paraphernalia of an important sacrifice. A pig that had just been killed was being chopped up and the pieces tossed into a cauldron of boiling water. In reply to their questions the elder told them that his little son was sick and, despite lavish sacrifices to the *leurahripas*, was surely dying. The pig he had just killed was the last of his stock, and he had no more to offer. Asked why he had not come to the mission bungalow for medicine, the man hung his head; and so long as the ritual fence surrounded the house it was *ana* for Reginald to go inside and examine the child. He noticed the *anahmang*, or sacrificial utensils, in their doll's house: a wooden plate and cup for the food and drink to be offered to Khazangpa; the stool for him to sit on; the cloth for his headdress; and the pipe for him to smoke while digesting the sacrifice. Reginald was well aware of the religious awe with which the elder regarded these toys, and not wishing to break the taboo by stepping over the fence, he asked him if he would remove it and throw the utensils away, so that he could enter the house, give the child medicine, and pray to the Christian God to spare his life for Jesus's sake. It was a brave challenge, and the elder after pacing up and down in deep thought showed an equal courage in ordering his assistant to remove the fence and to cast the *anahmang* down the hillside.

The Lorrains went inside the house and found the man's wife crouched by the fire in the centre of the room, surrounded by sympathetic friends and relations, with the child, scarcely breathing, in her arms. An examination showed that he was suffering from pneumonia which had been so long neglected as to make recovery unlikely. Nevertheless, Reginald took a bottle of Brionia pills from his pocket, put one in the child's mouth and gave three more wrapped in separate papers to the mother, with instructions when to administer them. Then he and Maud knelt and, while the crowd around them looked on in wondering silence, prayed to God to reward the man for his courage in defying Khazangpa and putting his trust in Him instead. In four days the child was well again.

In a work of fiction this incident would have made a dramatic turning-point in Reginald's missionary fortunes. After witnessing the miracle of the boy's recovery the people would have come flocking to the mission bungalow, begging for admission to the Fold. Nothing of

the kind happened. Though he continued to conduct services in the villages – preaching, praying and singing hymns – nobody came forward to receive from his hands the Gift of Salvation through Jesus Christ. In Heaven the Joy Bells remained disappointingly silent.

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The other practical activity with which Reginald supplemented his evangelizing was the founding of a school. It began in a small way with two boys from a village two days' journey from Serkawr, who were soon joined by a friend. The authorities responsible for administering the Lushai Hills now began to take an interest in the Lakher Pioneer Mission just inside their southern border, for whatever the official view of Christianizing the tribes – and there were those who deplored the attempt as destructive of the good as well as the bad aspects of tribal society – the spread of literacy was to be encouraged as conducive to good citizenship. Once more they provided Lushai labour at government expense, this time to build a school house, the first in Lakherland, on a site between Serkawr and the mission bungalow. Made of wood and bamboo, its ground-plan was in the shape of the letter T, and Reginald saw to it that a small spire of bamboo-matting was erected above the front gable, for he had decided that the building should serve as a church as well as a school. Two huts were put up nearby as dormitories for the scholars.

On 24 August 1908 when the building was used as a school for the first time there were six pupils, five more enrolling soon afterwards; but disappointment lay ahead. An appeal for funds launched in Britain had brought in hardly anything, and since the Lorrains had no money of their own to feed and clothe the boys, the school had to close. It took ten and a half months to accumulate sufficient funds to enable them to open it again. Donations began slowly to come in, well-wishers at home being asked to sponsor the education of a schoolboy at a cost of £3 a year. The Government of India signified its approval of the venture by making a grant for the support of four pupils. The rest of the money they needed the Lorrains had to raise as best they could, Maud contriving to save infinitesimal sums by using her sewing-machine to stitch up the cloths the Lakher women wove on their looms. Money never ceased to be a problem, and the school was perforce run on a shoe-string.

The forced closure of the school proved a blessing in one respect, since it gave Reginald some leisure for the intensive study of the Lakher language. That he made good use of the time is amply

demonstrated by the tangible results of his industry. He compiled English–Lakher and Lakher–English dictionaries, each containing between 7,000 and 8,000 entries, and wrote a primer of the Lakher language. He translated 37 hymns from the English Hymnal into Lakher, the number being subsequently increased to 68; and after much soul-searching made a complete translation into Lakher of St. John's Gospel. No wonder, what with the household to run and Reginald's preaching and visiting the sick, the Lorrains found themselves busy from five in the morning until midnight.

After they had been in Serkawr for a year and a half Reginald managed to secure an invaluable helper in his linguistic work. Saro had shown unusual interest when he was holding a service at his village three days' journey away, and after much persuasion agreed to come and live at Serkawr and help him with his work. True to form, the man's wife was utterly opposed to the idea, refusing even to speak to Reginald, and, when she saw that her husband was determined to go, summarily divorced him. Saro married another girl, built a hut at Serkawr, and settled down with her. He was an intelligent man who quickly learned to read and write under Reginald's tuition and was soon working five or six hours a day on the dictionaries and the primer without complaint.

The school reopened in September 1909 with four pupils, the number gradually increasing to twenty-two ranging in age from ten to thirty-five, with not a girl among them. The subjects they learnt as they squatted on the school-room floor or, if they preferred, sat on boxes placed along the walls, on which were hung coloured pictures illustrating scenes from scripture, were the three Rs. As important as their lessons was the instruction they received in personal cleanliness, and it is remarkable how happily and easily they settled into the school routine. At first they were allowed to wear their traditional costume consisting of a loin-cloth and a cloth draped round them with the addition of the shirts Maud made for them on her sewing-machine, and to keep their hair long, dressed tribal-fashion in a bun over the forehead. Later, as Reginald's determination to break the tribal mould in which his pupils had been reared hardened, he required them to wear khaki shorts in place of the loin-cloth and to cut their hair in a convict crop, rules that put him at odds with the civil authorities who resented his attempt to detribalize the youths who entrusted themselves to his charge.

A typical day at the school began at five minutes to seven in the morning when the pupil who had been appointed head boy for the week went across to the mission bungalow from his dormitory and

struck the large brass gong that hung outside the front veranda. This was the signal for the others to get up and hurry to the back of the bungalow where they formed up in line as if they were soldiers on parade. When at seven o'clock sharp Reginald appeared they raised their hands in a military salute, a greeting he acknowledged in similar fashion and then told them off for their various early morning tasks. Some swept out the dormitory huts, others fetched water or firewood, others still were directed to dig or weed the garden or to see to the needs of the livestock – ponies, cows, goats and chickens – until the gong sounded again at nine o'clock. This sent them trooping down to the spring carrying large cakes of soap to wash themselves from head to foot.

At nine-thirty the gong summoned them to the school-room. There Reginald was waiting to lead them in singing a hymn, and after he had offered up a prayer the day's lessons began. The boys liked to work two by two, repeating the alphabet to each other, stumblingly reading aloud from the primer, the more advanced puzzling over the problems of simple arithmetic. They worked with absorbed concentration until at midday the gong sounded for lunch, provided for them by the Mission, after which they were free to play or relax until one, when the gong called them back to the school-room. The afternoon session lasted until three or four o'clock according to the season, and they had the rest of the day to themselves, except that on Wednesday evenings there was a church service and singing class combined. On Sundays the routine was varied with Sunday-school in the morning and a church service in the afternoon held, weather permitting, outside the village in the open air, when the tribesmen and their wives would gather round to listen in wonder to their lads singing hymns in praise of the foreigners' God, while around them pigs rootled, fowls scratched about, mithan lowed, and pi-dogs behaved according to their nature.

Sometimes of an evening in the bungalow the Lorrains would pause in their work and look at each other in rapture, listening to the sounds of prayers being intoned and the singing of hymns from the dormitory huts as the pupils put in some voluntary practice on their own. Surely the time was at hand when the Strongholds of the Devil in Lakherland would fall, and the Standard of Jehovah stream in the wind from every pinnacle in the land.

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That time was long in coming. By hard work and perseverance, refusing to be discouraged by disappointments or rebuffs, the Lorrains had managed in large measure to win the Lakhers' confidence. They now spoke their language, not with complete fluency or accuracy, but sufficiently well to express the Gospel Message in words their audience could understand. By their simple medical skills, and with God's help, they had been able to do something towards alleviating the people's ailments, now and then managing to pull off something in the nature of a *coup*, as when they healed the ailing chief or brought the child back from the gates of death. With God's help, for without it they could have achieved nothing. All their failures they ascribed to their own shortcomings, all their successes to the direct intervention of God. They worked incessantly for the good, as they understood it, of the people, with no thought of reward for themselves other than the satisfaction of knowing that they were the humble instruments of God's will. They never doubted of ultimate success.

16 September 1910, three years almost to the day after they first set foot in Serkawr and nearly six years after Reginald had received the Call in London, was the glorious day when he made his first Lakher convert. That evening after school one of the boys, the twelve-year-old Thaitu, accompanied by a friend came up to him. It was the friend who, as was the Lakher custom when asking a favour of someone, spoke on Thaitu's behalf, saying that he wished his name to be enrolled on the Christian Register as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Reginald took the boy to his study and examined him earnestly, so as to be sure that the conversion was genuine; but Thaitu's mind was quite made up, and, kneeling together, Reginald commended him to God's care. It was a start, if only a little one, and during the remainder of the first five years of his ministry Reginald had the satisfaction of welcoming into the Fold only one more lad, not (he had to admit) a very intelligent one.

Had he failed in some way that so few came forward to enroll themselves as Christians? Reginald rebuked himself for his impatience: God was working in His own way, in His own time. And even if now, in retrospect, a reason may be suggested why the Lakher people did not at once cast off their animistic beliefs and come flocking to enlist under the Banner of Jesus Christ, it is possible to see in the process of delay itself a manifestation of the Infinite Wisdom of God. For perhaps in his zeal Reginald did not see sufficiently clearly how disastrous for Lakher society such a cataclysmic, wholesale conversion would have been. Savages they were, some of them had themselves in the past followed the practice of headhunting, though it was by now

virtually stamped out. Heathens they were, fettered by chains of superstition of the Devil's design, without Christ, without hope. All this Reginald knew before he embarked on his mission. What he could not have known then, what he could only learn gradually through long residence among them – and even then, because he tended to see things starkly in terms of black and white, only partially – was that the Lakhers, too, worshipped God (though they called Him Khazangpa) and had much in their religious beliefs that was compatible with Christianity. He seems not to have thought it necessary to study closely the fundamentals of their beliefs, which have been sketched earlier in this narrative. Had he done so, he would have been astonished, dismayed even, to find how little they differed in essentials from the fundamentals of his own faith. They believed in a benevolent and all-powerful God who controlled the universe and the destinies of individuals. They believed that everybody has a soul which, if not quite immortal, passed after death to a place where it reaped its deserts for its owner's conduct in life. The Guardian Angel, too, is a concept not unknown to Christian thought; and as for the *leurahripas*, their reality would never for a moment have been doubted by the medieval Church. Reginald was perhaps too ready to brush all this aside as heathenish trash, to discount the possibility that Lakher theology was capable of being modified, its cruelties and other excrescences pared away, so that the Gospel of Jesus Christ might be engrafted upon it.

He tended, too, in his preaching to try and get across to the Lakhers concepts beyond their comprehension. He learnt, for example, that there is a little weed that puts forth a blood-red flower just when the young rice shoots begin to appear, and that the Lakhers believe that the flower has the virtue of protecting them from the *leurahripas* when they are at work in their fields.

> Surely [wrote Reginald] here we have a wonderful suggestion of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ which comes between the sinner and his sin, which frees him, protects him, keeps him, so that all those who have accepted the Blood of Jesus Christ as a redemption for their sin are no more under the power of the Evil One, but that the True and Precious Blood of Jesus Christ is keeping and supporting them from all the powers of the Devil, not only on their farms but when they travel from village to village, when far away from home, or at home, with no visible sign, but a power through Faith to see the Wonderful Crimson Fountain that flowed for them from Calvary.

Intoxicated by the outpouring of his evangelical eloquence, Reginald sometimes overlooked the intellectual limitations of his hearers. What

on earth, or in Heaven, could they have made of such a passage?

If there was a certain insensitivity in Reginald's presentation of the Gospel Message to these simple people, it was through a Gift of God of another kind that their hearts were eventually won over.

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The human relationships in which the Lakhers were held in emotional bondage were – in the order of decreasing intensity – those between members of the same family, fellow villagers, and people of the same tribe. The rest of the world were strangers, probably hostile. In his comings and goings amongst them Reginald could not have failed to become aware of their essentially domestic disposition. Though there was much to deplore in their religious practices, their uncleanliness and rude manners, he found to his surprise little to condemn in their standards of morality. They were for the most part honest in their dealings: they neither lied nor stole. And it must soon have been borne in on him that their sexual code – the traditional target for missionary reform – put to shame the laxity and vice prevailing in countries that claimed to be civilized. For the Lakhers marriage and the bringing up of healthy children was the basic concern of life, to which all other activities were subordinated. Love-making among the unmarried young was regarded with tolerance, though promiscuity was frowned on, and usually a girl only permitted the boy she intended to marry to share her sleeping-mat. Almost invariably marriage followed, especially if pregnancy had resulted, because for a girl to give birth to an illegitimate child involved her in permanent disgrace. This frank attitude resulted in stable relationships in which the wife enjoyed equal status with the husband.

Adultery, especially by the wife, was of rare occurrence, not only because it brought disgrace upon the woman who committed it, but because of its likely financial consequences for her family; for if the husband divorced her the bride-price he had payed for her had to be returned. And the fact that a man who seduced another man's wife was liable to a heavy fine was usually enough to dampen his ardour. Prostitution was unknown among them, as was rape and homosexuality. Had it been possible to explain to them what pornography was, they would have been completely baffled; and had there ever been a case of a child being sexually abused, punishment would have been immediate and probably fatal. For the Lakhers reserved their greatest love for their children, treating them with tenderness and indulgence. They gave them no formal training, but from an early age involved

them in all the family's concerns, the boys accompanying their fathers on hunting trips, the girls helping their mothers with the cooking and housework and the weaving of cloth. The whole family turned out in all seasons to work in the fields. Such an upbringing made for self-reliance and independence of mind; which makes it the more remarkable that the pupils at the mission school took so readily to the discipline and long hours of study Reginald's curriculum imposed on them. The explanation perhaps lay in the fact that they were not compelled to attend school but chose, of their own free will, to do so.

It was just when, after its ten and a half months closure, the school reopened that Maud neared the time for her confinement. The idea of sending her away to some place in India where she could receive proper medical attention when the baby was born never seems to have occurred to them. Instead, her brother-in-law Herbert and his wife set out from Lungleh, as her time approached, so as to be at hand in case of need. On reaching the Kaladan they found that the water was so turbulent after the heavy September rainfall that no boat could be put across, and for three days they had to camp out on the farther bank. When they did manage to get over and arrived at the mission bungalow on the ponies Reginald had sent to fetch them from the riverside, Herbert's wife was feeling so ill that she had to be put to bed. Typhoid was diagnosed, so instead of the expectant mother being able to take things easy, being fussed over by her sister-in-law, she was busier than ever helping the two missionaries to nurse the sick woman, who grew weaker and weaker.

Maud's labour was difficult and protracted, and while one woman lay in the adjoining room fighting for her life against typhoid, the other fought equally hard to bring her first child into the world. In vain, it seemed, for she too grew weaker, and the brothers had almost begun to despair of her life when – due, as Reginald believed, to the direct intervention of God – he not only, as if by inspiration, hit upon the cause of his wife's distress but discovered that Herbert had by chance brought with him the drug that might put matters right. It worked like magic, and on 18 September 1909 she was safely delivered of a baby girl. Mother and daughter throve, and as if in sympathy Herbert's wife began quickly to recover.

The people of Serkawr had been taking a proprietary interest in all that was going on in the mission bungalow, turning up in numbers at all hours of the day and night, often at the most inconvenient moments, in order to learn the latest news and carry it back to the village, whence by means of the jungle telegraph it was relayed in no time to the villages round about. Now they began to arrive in their

11. *Maud Lorrain and Tlosai*

scores with gifts of fruit and vegetables to see with their own eyes the first European child that had ever been born in Lakherland. Reginald may be forgiven, when he saw them crowding round the child's home-made cradle, for being reminded of the shepherds and the wise men who had gone to pay homage to a Babe born in a manger in Bethlehem two thousand years before. The Lakhers called the child Tlongsai Zua No, meaning the Lakher Princess, Tlongsai being the name of the tribal group to which Serkawr and the surrounding villages belonged. Great was their delight when they learned that she was to be christened Louise Marguerite Tlosai (such was Reginald's transliteration); and they always used her third name.

The child fascinated them, and they never tired of watching her and asking her parents endless questions about her, marvelling that she remained healthy on a diet of mother's milk unsupplemented by rice, trying to discover the secret of why her skin should be white while that of their own children was brown, and constantly seeking assurance that she would not be taken away from them. From the date of Tlosai's birth a change came over the Lakhers' demeanour towards the Lorrains. They did not, alas, come flocking to the mission bungalow asking for admission to the Fold, but a new warmth and sympathy replaced their former stiffness and reserve – even the attitude of the women towards them softened a little – as if, for the first time, they recognized them as human beings like themselves.

Tlosai was three years old, a pretty, serious-faced child with ribbons in her fair hair that fell to her shoulders, when after five years in Lakherland the Lorrains decided to take a holiday in England. The Mission needed more benefactors if their work was not to be hampered by lack of funds, and now Reginald had real achievements to point to – the school, the dispensary, his dictionaries; and if he could still only boast of two converts to Christianity, he had absolute faith that, with God's continued help, more and more would be brought into the Fold. Years of hard work lay ahead. There would be difficulties with the civil authorities, who continued to view with disfavour what they considered to be his undesirable tampering with tribal culture; but Reginald was learning patience. All would come right in the fullness of time.

And from such humble beginnings the work he and Maud had initiated would indeed burgeon in the years ahead. Their staunchest helpers would be Tlosai and later her missionary husband Albert Bruce Foxall, and when Reginald died at Serkawr in 1944 aged sixty-four not only were there flourishing churches in many Lakher villages on both sides of the India–Burma border, but primary and middle schools

as well. Maud died at Serkawr in 1960, Tlosai at Ludhiana in India eight years later. That same year the Foxalls' only daughter Violet married a Lakher, Lapi Mark, who works as Judicial Officer in the District Council at Saiha, where they and their four children are now living; though they still have a house at Serkawr, not far from the site where the team of Lushais from Lungleh constructed a bungalow for the Lorrains when they first arrived in Lakherland, strangers in a strange land, more than eighty years ago.

After five years of unremitting effort they had made only two converts; now in Lakher villages in India alone the Christians number more than twenty thousand under fifteen native pastors, and there are some sixty primary schools, twenty middle schools, twelve high schools, and one college where the medium of instruction is English. The indigenous Christian church which succeeded the Mission in 1970, some years before Bruce Foxall's death at Serkawr, now has its own printing press which continues Reginald's work of spreading the Gospel Message in the Lakher language. So wonderfully, in Lapi Mark's words, has God blessed this work through one family.

All this lay in the distant future as Reginald and Maud packed their bags for the long journey to England. When they had first arrived at Serkawr nobody had come to meet them at the outskirts of the village. There were now three of them, and as they left the village at sunrise they were accompanied for some distance on their way by chief Theulai, now in his mid-seventies, his wife, and a crowd of men, women and children, all eager to wish them well. It was a heartening send-off, and as they rode away on the first stage of their journey the Lakhers' last words to them still rang in their ears:

'You will bring Tlosai back to us again, won't you? You will bring Tlosai back?'.

10

The Siren-Song of Shingche-Chögye (I)

There was a monastery with seven or eight priests at Pemakoi, but no other house. The Tsangpo is two chains distant from the monastery and about two miles off it falls over a cliff called Shingche-Chögye [the name of the tutelary god] from a height of about 150 feet. There is a big lake at the foot of the falls where rainbows are always observable.

That description, translated from the oral report of his Tibetan travels given by Kintup in 1884, four years after his return to India, was responsible for one of the most obsessive wild goose chases of modern times. Kintup, a Sikkimese whose identity was hidden behind the initials KP, was a secret agent employed in the Great Game by the Survey of India to gather information about its Himalayan frontiers. In 1879 he had been sent with another agent, a Mongolian monk, passing himself off as his servant, on a mission to try and solve the so-called Riddle of the Tsangpo. It was known that six mighty rivers – the Yangtze, Mekong, Salween, Lohit, Dibang and Dihang – originating among the snow mountains of Tibet poured their waters into the plains by way of deep, narrow gorges they had cut through the living rock. Another great river the Tsangpo flows from west to east in southern Tibet, and several attempts had been made to penetrate that remote, forbidding region in order to determine into which of the six rivers – or was it a seventh, the Irrawaddy? – the Tsangpo merged.

It was not to be the destiny of Kintup and his companion to solve the riddle, though they reached as far as Pemaköchung [Pemakoi] in the tangled country lying between the massive peaks of Gyala Peri and Namcha Barwa, rivals of Everest itself. Soon afterwards the monk, tiring of exploration, secretly sold Kintup to a Tibetan as a slave and bent his footsteps homeward. After many months Kintup contrived to obtain his freedom and continued the quest alone under great difficulties. His methods were necessarily primitive. He measured distance in the manner Kipling's Kim had been taught by Hurree Chunder Mookerjee, by counting his paces with the aid of the beads of his rosary. And, in order to test whether, as was thought probable,

the Dihang was the river into which the Tsangpo flowed, it had been arranged that the explorers would throw marked logs into the Tsangpo, and that a look-out would be kept at the point where the Dihang entered the plains of Assam. Kintup managed to carry out his part of the scheme, only to find when after many adventures he got back to India that the watch at the other end had not been kept. He dictated his report from memory, for he could neither read nor write, and vanished into obscurity.

But the demon falls he had described nagged at men's imaginations. If they really were a hundred and fifty feet high they might bear comparison with Niagara. Moreover, their existence, if proved, would help to solve another puzzle associated with the Tsangpo; for it disappeared into the mountains of southern Tibet at an elevation of some 10,000 feet above sea-level, and, a hundred and twenty miles further south, the Dihang emerged on to the Assam plains at an elevation of only 500 feet above sea-level. Assuming that the one flowed into the other, what happened in the unexplored tract in between? Did the water lose height gradually in a series of bends and rapids, or was there, as Kintup's report suggested, a spectacular cataract – perhaps more than one – awaiting official discovery? The voice of Shingche-Chögye seemed to be calling the adventurous to come and find out.

Several had heard it and made abortive attempts to reach the area before its insistent nagging induced an officer of the Indian Army to devote the greater part of his accumulated leave to a search for the falls. Captain F.M. ('Eric') Bailey, then approaching his twenty-ninth birthday, set out from Peking in January 1911, taking with him only his sixteen-year-old Tibetan servant Putamdu, who in response to a telegram from Bailey had somehow got from Tibet to Calcutta, thence by ship to Shanghai, and so overland to Peking, where he reported for duty. Bailey was not totally unqualified for the task he had set himself. He had been on Younghusband's expedition to Tibet in 1904 and afterwards acted as Trade Agent first at Gyantse and then in the Chumbi Valley. Nor was his sole objective to establish whether the falls were a myth or a reality, since he planned to make a rough survey of his route, to collect natural history specimens – mammals, birds and butterflies – and to augment his knowledge of Tibet, its people and language.

The pair made their way across China by such means as were available: by train to Hankow; up the Yangtze first by Japanese steamer, then through the rapids by house-boat; finally on foot or by chair, reaching Tatsienlu on 9 May. After going over the passes to Batang,

they rejoined the Yangtze, down which they floated for a time by coracle. Nearing the Tibetan border they came under the jurisdiction of Chao-Er-feng, the notoriously cruel warden of the marches who was implementing with heavy hand China's policy of strengthening their hold over the Tibetans by forcing their own culture on to them. Early in June, with an escort of Chinese soldiers detailed to keep an eye on them, they crossed the Pö La at 13,800 feet into Tibet proper. From the Mekong river, where they shook off their escort, they were entering unmapped country. On the far side of the snow-drifted Mekong-Salween divide they stayed some days at Menkong, unaware that another English traveller, Frank Kingdon-Ward the plant-hunter, was only two days' march away. On the other side of the Tsema La they encountered streams flowing south towards the Irrawaddy and made their way up one of them as far as Lagyap.

On 20 June they traversed the Irrawaddy–Brahmaputra watershed by way of the Zhasha La (15,600 feet) to Dokong. There they met a man from Rima who told Bailey there was a route to Assam through the Mishmi Hills by which Noel Williamson, the Assistant Political Officer at Sadiya, had travelled the previous year. Hereabouts traces of Chinese influence were so widespread that it became clear to Bailey that China was in process of taking over Tibet. Beyond Drowa Gompa they came to the Zayul Chu which lower down, named the Lohit, flows into the Brahmaputra in Assam.

While staying in Sangachö Dzong Bailey visited the monastery nearby and received from the abbot, besides a gift of yak meat and butter, some Indian tea which Noel Williamson had presented to a Tibetan official the year before. Continuing their journey they skirted the Ngamtso Lake, five miles by six, and on 27 June arrived at Shugden Gompa on the edge of the tract where the falls, if they existed, must be located. Bailey's idea was to follow the tributary that flowed past Shugden to its junction with the Tsangpo, from which point the cliff mentioned by Kintup should not be far distant. The road to Pemaköchung lay through the valley of the Nagong whose inhabitants, the Pobas, had a reputation for fierceness; and news was just then coming in of a fight between them and the Chinese in which many Chinese soldiers had, so it was said, been killed. Whether true or not, the Dzongpön, or district administrator, who was also the abbot of the monastery was adamant in his refusal to allow Bailey and Putamdu to travel that way, fearing that they would be killed by one side or the other, and that he would be blamed for it. He gave practical effect to his prohibition by ensuring that no porters presented themselves to shoulder the travellers' baggage. It was frustrating to have got

so far only to be turned back, but Bailey had no option but to give up his attempt to locate the falls that year; and perhaps as the two began to retrace their steps they might have heard, had they been listening, demon laughter borne to them on the wind.

In any case Bailey's leave was fast running out. Although there was an alternative route involving a circuitous journey of many weeks through the hills to Burma, he decided to return to India via Rima along the banks of the Lohit through the Mishmi Hills. The strain of travelling rough for more than four months on an inadequate diet consisting mainly of rice and *tsamba*, supplemented by a daily egg laid during morning halts by an obliging hen which was carried along in a basket, was beginning to tell on him. He suffered intermittently from fever and mountain-sickness, his boots were falling to pieces, and as they descended towards the plains they were assailed by sandflies, damdims, mosquitoes and multitudes of leeches.

Following the Zayul Chu they came to Chikong early in July and found there two hundred Chinese soldiers billeted in huts. Here they set eyes on the Blue Man, rumours of whom had reached them from time to time and who proved to be a Bengali from Calcutta, his inky skin having earned him his nickname. A worker on a tea-garden in Assam, he had been carried off by raiding Mishmis and sold to a Tibetan as a slave. He firmly declined Bailey's offer to take him back with him to India, being unwilling even under a sahib's protection to place himself again at the mercy of the Mishmis, a jungly hill tribe with whom Bailey made his first, unpromising acquaintance when they reached Rima:

> . . . three dull, morose men with very few clothes and wearing necklaces of dogs' teeth, with long hair tied in a topknot on their heads. Each one had a bearskin bag in which he kept his tobacco mixed with other things. They were smoking pipes all the time and condescended to accept some cigarettes which the Chinese officer at Chikong had given me.

The journey did not prove wholly a failure. Bailey mapped a good deal of unexplored country, collected many natural history specimens and acquired valuable experience which he would put to good use on future explorations. What gave him most satisfaction was the side trip he made with a local hunter up the Di Chu after takin, those rare Himalayan goat-antelopes superficially resembling the African gnu; and for several days he had the pick of a herd of more than two hundred of them assembled at a hot sulphur spring to which they were irresistibly attracted.

On the night of 14-15 July, while he was camping near the village of Ti-ne, some Mishmis came in, on their way to Chikong at the

summons of the Chinese officer, who wanted to see representatives of what he called the Monkey People, evidence that the Chinese were now seeking to extend their influence even beyond the ill-defined southern borders of Tibet. Bailey, appreciating the significance of this southward trend for the security of Assam, persuaded the Mishmis to turn back and to place the matter before the Political Officer at Sadiya, whoever he now might be; for the Mishmis had also brought disturbing news of Noel Williamson, of whom Bailey had already heard on several occasions during his journey, news that made him view the prospect of entrusting his own and Putamdu's lives to the unpredictabilities of the hillmen during the remaining weeks of their travels with considerable unease.

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Williamson and his companion in misfortune Dr Gregorson ought to have known better than to place themselves without a proper escort in the hands of the Abors, the Mishmis' even more savage neighbours, for both were familiar with their record of hostility towards the British. The Abor clans inhabited a remote tract west of the Mishmi Hills and well to the north of the Assam plains with which they traded in a limited way through the intermediary of the milder Miris, over whom they claimed sovereignty. All these tribes, as well as the Daflas and Apa Tanis living further west, were of the same Tibeto-Burman racial stock, but since they lived in virtual isolation from one another each had developed its own language and customs. The name Abor, which the tribe itself did not recognize, was the Assamese word for uncontrolled in the sense of savage and sufficiently indicates the reputation they enjoyed among the plains-dwellers, and deservedly.

An early cause of conflict between them and the British was their claim to have exclusive right to all the fish and gold in the Dihang, pursuant to which they were accustomed to levy a toll on the few plains villages which made a living from washing gold taken from the river. In 1858 Abors of the Minyong clan from Kebang raided a Beeah village only six miles from the civil station at Dibrugarh as a punishment for its refusal to pay the toll. This unofficial taxing of British subjects had to be stopped, so a punitive expedition was despatched against the Minyongs, which unfortunately, owing to faulty intelligence and discord between the commander of the force and the civil officer accompanying it, failed to reach its objective. Emboldened, the Minyongs stockaded themselves at Pasighat, and a much larger force

had to be sent out the following year to dislodge them. Kebang was never punished, and the raids continued.

For long the authorities in Assam hesitated between building a line of fortified posts along the northern border of administered territory, somewhat on the principle of Hadrian's Wall, and a more forward policy of pushing north into the foothills and establishing a permanent military presence there; for something had to be done to improve the security of the district with its developing tea industry. In 1839 the Assam Company had been floated with a capital of half a million pounds, and during the next twenty years it brought some four thousand acres under tea cultivation with an annual production of 760,000 lbs of tea. This led to an unseemly 'tea rush', land being bought up and cleared regardless of its suitability, and many government officials threw up their jobs and joined the stampede for quick money. There followed the inevitable crash, the slump continuing until about 1869 when the industry put its house in order and things began to recover. In 1872 27,000 acres were under tea cultivation in the Brahmaputra valley alone. Because there was no local labour force available, it had been necessary since the eighteen-fifties to import workers from Bengal and later from other Indian provinces, and by 1923 the tea industry provided employment for more than half a million of them. Obviously, effective measures had to be taken to protect not only the substantial sterling investment in the area, but also the lives and property of this huge imported population, from the depredations of the wild tribes living in the hills.

The security system eventually adopted was the creation of a buffer zone between the plains where normal administration obtained and the unadministered hills, its southern boundary, known as the Inner Line, being marked by a series of forts, its northern one, the Outer Line, running along the foothills. Over this zone, entry to which from the plains was only permitted to those few having some valid reason for going there to whom passes had been issued, the British exercised loose political jurisdiction through a Political Officer. To the north, between the Outer Line – which was, of course, invisible – and the undemarcated frontier with Tibet, the tribes could behave as savagely as they pleased, though the area was nevertheless claimed as British territory. At the same time an effort was made to bring the tribesmen under some sort of control by means of treaties under which, in consideration of their good behaviour, they received from the Government of India an annual *posa*, or subsidy, consisting of presents of salt, iron, cloth and other commodities unavailable in the hills. In 1862 agreements of this kind were entered into with eight

Minyong communities, Kebang itself following suit the next year; and treaties were later negotiated with other clans. Thus, by a system of bribery backed by the threat of military force, an uneasy peace was maintained, and the tea-merchants of Mincing Lane waxed rich.

The area north of the Inner Line, known until 1912 as the Dibrugarh Frontier Tract, was administered by an Assistant Political Officer with headquarters at Sadiya, who reported to the Deputy Commissioner at Lakhimpur. The first person to hold the appointment was F.J. Needham of the Bengal Police who worked among the tribes from 1882 until his retirement in 1905. His duties as laid down by the Chief Commissioner of Assam were to make himself thoroughly acquainted with the history of British relations with the tribes; to get to know personally the tribal leaders and to establish cordial relations with them; to learn their languages, especially that of the Abors; and to regard border politics as his special sphere, endeavouring to train his judgment to right and sound opinions upon all questions relating to the subject. In carrying out his duties Needham seized every opportunity of exploring unknown country.

In 1885-86, accompanied by the Commandant of the Lakhimpur Frontier Police Battalion, Captain Molesworth, but without an armed escort, he made a journey eastwards along the course of the Lohit, reaching to within a mile of Rima in the Zayul valley, where they were turned back by Tibetan officials. The chief interest of this early journey lay in proving that, since no river comparable with the Tsangpo other than the Dihang flowed into the Lohit between Sadiya and Rima, the Tsangpo and the Dihang must be one and the same river under different names. Needham also found that the Mishmi clans through whose country they passed were friendly disposed, having apparently undergone a change of heart in the thirty years since they had butchered two French priests in the same area. The Government of India, when a report of Needham's journey was sent in, was less sanguine and, remembering that the murder of the priests had necessitated the despatch of a punitive expedition in 1855, gave the Chief Commissioner a sharp rap over the knuckles for having authorized the journey, making clear that in future the sanction of the Central Government would be required before anyone crossed the Outer Line.

In 1888 and again in 1891 Needham made notable journeys through the hills into Burma. Then, in the winter of 1893-94, came an unwelcome reminder that the tribes as yet were far from tamed when in two separate incidents sepoys were ambushed and killed near the Bomjur outpost on the left bank of the Dihang, and their rifles carried off. A punitive expedition was imperative, and a force assembled

under the command of the new Military Police Commandant, Captain Maxwell, consisting of 100 men of the Gurkha Rifles, 400 men of the Military Police, an artillery detachment with two mountain guns, and a full complement of subordinate British officers. For some reason the operation was treated as being a civil affair, the Commander-in-Chief having no responsibility for its planning or conduct.

Needham, who went with the expedition as Political Officer, at first blamed Dambuk and Sillak villages for the killings, and after some desultory fighting they were captured and burnt; but later information suggested that the people of Damroh, the principal village of the Padam Abors to the north, had also been implicated, and the Chief Commissioner's consent was sought for the expedition to march north and punish Damroh. This was given in typical civil service, buck-passing terms: 'If Needham and Maxwell think it quite safe, I sanction advance on Damroh but no farther'.

From then on everything went wrong. Sixty sepoys under a subadar and all the followers were left at Bordak to look after the impedimenta, while Maxwell led the remainder of the force, with Needham in tow, northwards. The going was hard, some resistance was met with – Lieutenant East receiving a wound in the hand from a poisoned arrow – others fell ill with dysentery, and rations began to run low. On 27 February, leaving half the force in camp by the Yamne river, Maxwell, Needham and the rest made one last effort to reach Damroh and destroy it, but thick jungle and heavy rain proved too much for them, and they were forced to struggle back to the river. While the main force was suffering this setback, the party left behind at Bordak had been attacked by men of Padu and Membu at the instigation of the Damroh *gams*, or headmen, and all but two of them hacked to death with *dahs*, the attackers making off with fourteen rifles and a great quantity of ammunition.

Recriminations followed, Maxwell in an attempt to shift the blame on to the Political Officer protesting that 'when Mr Needham told me the place [Bordak] was perfectly safe I implicitly believed him, and I believed, equally of course, that the unfortunate men left behind were perfectly safe'; but this cut no ice, and both men were severely reprimanded, Needham for committing a grave error of judgment, Maxwell for not having insisted, as the officer in command of the force, on leaving an adequate guard at Bordak, however unnecessary the Political Officer might have considered it. For good measure, the Chief Commissioner himself received a severe reprimand from the Government of India for having permitted the advance on Damroh to be attempted at all. The root cause of the disaster was, once more, the

failure to define clearly the respective responsibilities of the civil and military officers, and this lesson was not forgotten. In the result, although on the return march Padu and Membu were attacked and Bomjur later burnt, Damroh and its neighbouring villages suffered no worse punishment than to be 'blockaded', that is, prevented from trading with the plains. It was yet to be brought home to the British that it was dangerous to allow Abors to get away with murder.

Next it was the turn of the Mishmis to disturb the peace. In May 1899 they raided a small Khampti village only sixteen miles north-east of Sadiya, killing three people and carrying off another three. Needham pronounced that the Bebejiyas had been responsible, a tribe which (he now believed) had also been involved in the Bomjur killings six years before. A blockade of their villages having proved ineffective, the Chief Commissioner proposed a punitive expedition and recommended that the force should consist of 400 men and a company of Madras Sappers, in this improving on Needham's original estimate of the manpower required, which he had put at sixty Military Police. The Commander-in-Chief – for this was to be a military affair – went one better and authorized a total of 900 infantry, police and sappers; and in the event, in the mocking words of the Viceroy Lord Curzon, it was a 'miniature army' comprising 27 British officers, 7 British NCOs, 31 Native Officers and no less than 1126 rank and file with a supporting host of coolies which assembled at Sadiya and sallied forth against a few, wretched Mishmi villages.

Having got as far as Hunli at an elevation of 3,880 feet above sea-level, the commander – Needham's old friend Molesworth now a lieutenant-colonel – was forced by heavy snow to send back the greater part of his army, while Needham with 130 rifles and attendant coolies went on a promenade of the Bebejiya villages, burning those he judged to have been responsible for the Khampti raid: a small dividend for such an enormous investment in military personnel. Even more embarrassingly, Needham was forced to confess that, far from being the bloodthirsty cannibals he had been led to suppose, the Bebejiyas were on the whole a well-behaved and inoffensive tribe, anxious to be friends with the British, the recent raid having arisen, not from wantonness or devilry, but some mundane blood-feud of a kind endemic in the hills. Altogether, those concerned fully deserved the eloquent castigation the Viceroy permitted himself when he read the self-congratulatory reports of the Chief Commissioner, the Military Commander and the Political Officer:

> . . . I am inclined to wonder whether euphemism can further go. The actual results of the expedition were the recovery of 3 children, the

capture of 1 gun, the seizure of 2 Mishmis (who have since been released), the slaughter of a few tribesmen, and the destruction of a number of villages. For these returns we have sacrificed the lives of 34 unhappy coolies; have expended [several lakhs of rupees]; and have gained the cheap honour of having marched with a force of 130 men, out of an army of 1,200, through a difficult and almost impassable country.

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Despite having committed some errors of judgment in his time, Needham on his retirement in 1905 was held, by his explorations and discoveries, to have 'acquired an international reputation, and his work from 1882 to 1905 laid the foundations of the modern North-East Frontier of Assam'. Certainly for some years his successor Noel Williamson was able to wander in safety very much where he liked without an escort; and it became his practice to take a European friend or two along with him, to see something of the country and the unadministered tribes. And from the direction in which his footsteps often tended it cannot be doubted that he, too, heard the inveigling voice of Shingche-Chögye calling him to come up and find the falls where rainbows perpetually danced.

His companions when he set out in the spring of 1909 were Colonel Lumsden, a veteran tea-planter who during the South African War had raised and led his own cavalry regiment known as Lumsden's Horse, and the Reverend Jackman, an American missionary based at Sadiya who had done preliminary work among the Abors on their periodic visits to the plains. Ostensibly a routine tour along the fringe of the Inner Line, they turned north into the hills at Pasighat and penetrated thirty miles beyond the Outer Line on the right bank of the Dihang as far as Kebang. The Abors living there were well-disposed, but would not allow them to proceed further because they were at war with the clans higher up the valley. Here Williamson met Madu, the chief *gam* of the large Minyong village of Riu, who invited him to pay him a visit there on a more auspicious occasion. The evidence is confused as to whether the Government of India's sanction had been obtained for this trip, but it appears that after the party's return sanction was given for another visit to the same area but under the protection of a large Military Police guard.

The next year Williamson made a second journey eastwards along the banks of the Lohit, accompanied by Mr Ward of the Margherita Collieries, getting just beyond Walong some stages short of Rima across the Tibetan border, whose Dzongpön paid a visit to his camp

12. Gam *of Riu addressing a gathering of Abors*

where gifts were exchanged, including the chest of Indian tea of which Eric Bailey was to be given a sample when he was travelling in the other direction the following year. Although Williamson had come upon no traces of Chinese occupation when he was in the area, he learned from Mishmis later that year that the Chinese had occupied Rima in strength and had ordered them to start cutting a road towards Assam, a situation Williamson confirmed for himself on a brief flying visit early in 1911. His report caused some alarm, for if the Chinese were allowed to extend their influence down to the Outer Line they would 'dominate all the tea-gardens north of the Brahmaputra'. Even so the new Viceroy Lord Hardinge declined to authorize a more forward policy.

> Should it be possible to obtain further information about the country beyond the Outer Line without risk of complications [note the phrase], we should be prepared to authorize explorations for the purpose, but we would not permit any general increase of activity in this direction, nor can we recommend that any sort of promise should be given to the tribes [British subjects, though they may not have known it] that they may rely on our support or protection in the event of Tibetan or Chinese aggression.

Events were soon to force the Viceroy's hand.

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The historian trying to discover what Noel Williamson's real objective was when he left Sadiya that morning with his friend Dr Gregorson, three servants, two orderlies, ten Miris and thirty-five Gurkha coolies under a *sirdar* eventually concludes that someone has been tampering with the evidence, as if Williamson had deliberately kept his motive dark for fear that his journey would be vetoed. The following exchange of telegrams tells the story:

22 March 1911

Government of India to Lieutenant-Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam:

> Your letter of 6th instant. Do Lieutenant-Governor's proposals contemplate Mr Williamson proceeding beyond the Outer Line on present occasion?

23 March 1911

Lieutenant-Governor to Assistant Political Officer, Sadiya:

> Presume that when touring between Inner and Outer Line it will not be necessary for you to cross the Outer Line? [Note the phrasing intended to exonerate himself in case of trouble.]

30 March 1911

Lieutenant-Governor to APO, Sadiya:

> My telegram, dated 23rd March, regarding Inner and Outer Lines tour. Please wire urgent whether you propose to cross Outer Line or not?

No reply was ever received, and accordingly Central Government sanction for the tour as the rules required was never given, for the simple reason that Williamson had left Sadiya with his party on 14 March and was thereafter inaccessible; no doubt intending, if his action were ever questioned, to argue that, since no express veto had ever reached him, he had assumed that his proposed tour had been approved. Such a robust attitude would be in keeping with the character-sketch of Williamson given by his friend Sir George Dunbar, bart., Commandant of the Lakhimpur Military Police Battalion at Dibrugarh: 'he was a man of splendid physique and endowed with the greatest courage, energy and determination, all of which are the most valuable assets in a Frontier administrator'. Dunbar also had a shrewd insight into tribal character:

> Now if an Arbor asks you into his village, you can go there in perfect safety. It is only when you say you want to pay a visit and he scrabbles with his toes in the mud and makes excuses (he never says 'No' outright) that it is necessary to be careful –

cautionary words it would have been well for Williamson to have borne in mind.

It is from Dunbar's book *Frontiers*, from which these quotations have been taken, that a hint of Williamson's ulterior motive emerges. Whereas the Government of India had been led to believe that the purpose of the tour was to arrange for the collection of a poll-tax from those Abors who had begun to cultivate land south of the Outer Line, and elsewhere it is stated that his object was to ascertain the extent of Tibetan and Chinese influence in Abor country, Dunbar let slip that Williamson had it in mind 'to get up to the falls'. On that supposition all becomes clear. In particular it explains why he chose to take with him Dr Gregorson, a senior tea-garden medical officer who had travelled in Sikkim (Kintup's homeland) and spoke Tibetan, and whose Tibetan servant Tamba went along with them. There can be little doubt that Williamson deliberately hoodwinked his superiors in order to pursue a will-o'-the-wisp whose name was Shingche-Chögye.

Not that he was a novice, having had twenty years' experience of dealing with hill tribes. Originally a member of the Indian Police Service, he had previously served in the Lushai Hills and the Naga Hills, both of them tough training-grounds, and more recently had

accompanied punitive expeditions against the Rangpang Nagas and in the Dafla Hills. He had been trained by the Survey Department at Dehra Dun, the seminary for those whose lives were to be dedicated to the Great Game, and was an expert cartographer. He did not believe in going among the tribes with a large, intimidating escort, preferring to win their confidence by giving them presents, treating the sick from the medicine-chest he took along with him, and charming them with his gramophone and magic-lantern.

On 21 March the party reached the Dihang at Komlinghat on the right bank, where they camped for the night. In the morning, when they were already loaded up ready to make the crossing to Sissin on the other side, four young Abors presented themselves, explaining that they had been sent by Tahat, one of the Kebang *gams*, who advised Williamson not to proceed further because unfriendly Abors were preparing to attack his party. Some misunderstanding seems now to have arisen. Williamson had no intention of going to Kebang, a village he had already visited two years before, especially as he knew there was now an outbreak of smallpox there. Worried that the Abor messengers might be carrying the infection, he told them to keep away from his followers and gave the order to march, brushing the Abors aside when they tried to bar his way with outstretched arms. Reluctantly they returned the way they had come, and Williamson, Gregorson and their retinue crossed the river to Sissin, where owing to sickness among the coolies they stayed for a week.

That there was a faction in Kebang hostile to Williamson's party entering their tribal territory seems clear, but the circumstances under which the spark that caused the conflagration – the evidence for which was pieced together from various witnesses – was ignited could hardly have been anticipated. Indeed, it could be said that what happened was partly due to the death of King Edward VII the previous year.

Three of the Gurkha coolies having fallen seriously ill, it was decided to send them back to Pasighat in the care of one of the Miris, who was also entrusted with three letters to be delivered to the postal authorities. They left camp early on 29 March, recrossed the river and that evening got as far as Rotung, where they were given food and lodging. Gratified by their reception and perhaps made talkative by too much *apong*, the local brew of rice-beer, the Miri began to hold forth in order to impress his hosts. Flourishing the three letters, he explained to them their purport. This one in the red cover [the standard envelope of the Telegraph Service], he said, was an order for an army to be sent to punish the men of Kebang for trying to halt

Williamson's party at the river. The envelope edged with black – the official sign of mourning for the king's death – was a summons for guns whose shells could shatter mountains and penetrate stockades as if they were made of grass. The grey one, he went on, contains instructions to the *gams* of Pasighat to assemble coolies to carry the baggage of the soldiers about to descend on the Abors and wreak havoc among them. Pleased with the effect of his fiction on his audience, the Miri retired to rest.

Not so the *gams* of Rotung, who at once realized that such dire letters must never be delivered. News of what impended was sent by runner to Kebang, and next morning, 30 March, as the letter-carrier and the sick coolies drew near Old Rengging they were ambushed and killed out of hand. When news of the letters reached Kebang it seemed to corroborate the hostile *gams'* suspicions of Williamson's intentions, and the cautionary words of the friendly Tahat were shouted down. The overwhelming majority of the council voted for action, and without delay over a hundred excited braves set out on the warpath.

They caught up with Gregorson, now accompanied only by his Tibetan servant Tamba, his Miri interpreter Moria, the *sirdar* Lal Bahadur Rai and three sick coolies, at a place called Panggi, at 1 p.m. The doctor was sitting on his camp-bed in his tent talking to Moria, while Tamba was outside cooking the midday meal; all three were instantly hacked to death. The sick coolies lying on the ground suffered a similar fate, and only Lal Bahadur managed though wounded to make good his escape. The Kebang braves, after looting the camp, hurried on to Komsing, reinforced on the way by some men from Baluk.

Komsing was a large, tree-shaded village built on a spur that sloped down to the river, with a high wooded ridge rising behind it. When Williamson's party arrived it was crowded with people, obviously not all of them belonging to the village, and at first they seemed friendly enough. Madu the Riu *gam* who in 1909 had invited Williamson to visit his village was there to welcome him. Williamson told his Naga servant Vichi to put up his tent by a fenced garden in the middle of the village, and the coolies to carry their loads to the *moshup*, or bachelors' house, nearby. Seeing them being given *apong* to drink, he jovially called out to them not to drink too much and to keep a careful eye on the baggage. Then, while Bhudhiman the cook was heating water for his bath, Williamson, dressed in shorts, vest and *chaplis*, strolled over to the *gam* Lombeng's house, followed by many Abors, among whom he recognized the youths who had tried to stop him at the river. Noticing they were armed, he asked the *gam* the reason: did they intend to attack him? No, was the reply, it was the

Kebang custom to carry weapons. At this moment the Kebang men drew their *dahs* and hacked him to death; then leaving his body where it fell dashed off to the *moshup* and began slaughtering the coolies and Miris. The trail of those who got away was picked up by the Abors' hunting-dogs, and they were pursued to the river bank where most of them were killed.

Vichi had been in Williamson's tent cleaning the party's weapons – a pistol, two magazine-rifles and a Martini-Henry – when he heard the uproar. He was joined by the cook and one of the Miris, and all three began firing into the mob of yelling Abors, hitting several innocent bystanders in the process. Seeing this, Lombeng shouted at them to stop firing, and they took the opportunity to leave the tent and fought their way down to the river, keeping the pursuing Abors at bay with shots from the weapons they carried. Here they were joined by four Gurkha coolies who had survived the massacre, and for three days they fought off the attacking Abors until their ammunition was exhausted. Then they ran for it, but of the seven only three of the coolies managed to get clear; and of the original fifty followers who set out from Sadiya only five coolies survived, besides the *sirdar*.

The men of Kebang, still in a state of high excitement, insisted they were entitled to Williamson's belongings, which they carried off in triumph to their village; and there they celebrated their victory all night long with boastful shouts and quantities of *apong*. It must have been annoying that nobody knew how to work the gramophone and the magic-lantern.

11

The Siren-Song of Shingche-Chögye (II)

In Dibrugarh Captain Sir George Dunbar was having his breakfast after morning parade on 5 April when he was handed a telegram from Sadiya with news of the disaster in the Abor Hills. For just such an emergency had he been training his Military Police Battalion, and at once he gave orders for the components of the moveable column standing by to rendezvous at railhead, rode to the railway station to commandeer a special train, and went on to report to the Deputy Commissioner Mr Bentinck, whom he found trying cases in his court-room.

'When do you start?' asked Bentinck.

'The train will leave at two o'clock this afternoon.'

'Right. I'll come with you. Orderly, bring in the next case.'

Getting down from the train at railhead on the bank of the Lohit river, the Dibrugarh component of the force started collecting dug-outs from nearby villages and were so engaged when the flotilla from Sadiya bringing the rest of the moveable column under Captain Hutchings the second-in-command hove in sight. The force embarked in their precarious craft, headed downstream, shot the rapids where the Dibang flowed in from the north, then turned off along a narrow channel leading to the Dihang. They were paddling northwards upriver when they were overtaken by the steam launch of the Laimekuri Sawmills out on a similar rescue operation, whose manager Harrison told them he had picked up three of the Gurkha coolies from Williamson's party at a village near the mouth of the Dihang. It had been these men who first sent news of the disaster to Sadiya, whence it had been relayed by telegraph to Dibrugarh.

After a few hours' sleep on the bank they pushed off at first light and continued upriver all day. That night, because they were now nearing the foothills, they camped as a precaution on a small island in mid-stream and in the morning found poisoned arrows sticking in the sand uncomfortably close to their bivouac. Since there were impassable rapids ahead, they tied up the dug-outs on a low promontory a

little further on; and, leaving behind a detachment under a jemadar to make a base camp, the rest of the rescue party amounting to about a hundred rifles pushed on into the hills on foot. 'It was like going up the Great Pyramid, as far as rock-climbing went,' wrote Dunbar, 'weighted with equipment, and with no Arab guide to boost one up.' They were travelling blind, for the area they were in was shown on Dunbar's map, obviously conjecturally, as a series of dotted lines and place-names with question-marks beside them. In mid-afternoon they came on an Abor village that proved to be New Rengging, whose inhabitants took to the jungle after a few shots had been fired in their direction. 'This was just as well,' Dunbar commented later, 'because the Deputy Commissioner would remain in the forefront during the whole proceedings, and went striding along as coolly as he used to go out to bat for Harrow at Lord's; and I felt I had enough explanations to make as it was.'

While they were having a meal in the deserted village one of the sentries challenged, and in came the other two surviving coolies from Williamson's party, both in a bad way. Learning from them that Williamson, Gregorson and the rest were unquestionably dead, it became apparent that their rescue bid had been abortive, and they retraced their steps, coming upon the dead body of another of Williamson's coolies by the riverside. Back at Pasighat the morning was spent improving its defences while Bentinck and Dunbar made plans for an immediate advance on Kebang and, if that went well, Komsing.

Their impetuosity was deflated that evening when, as Bentinck, Dunbar and Hutchings were smoking their pipes by the river, Harrison of the Sawmills with an officer of the Mahratta battalion stationed at Dibrugarh arrived by boat with a message from the Lieutenant-Governor that on no account were they to go dashing off into the hills. And Dunbar was informed that he would be held personally responsible for the action he had already, on his own authority, seen fit to take and for any political consequences that might result. Dunbar was a devil-may-care character, and it may be doubted whether this admonition had any effect on him except to release a flood of strong language.

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Major-General Hamilton Bower, CB, officer commanding the Assam Brigade at Shillong and one of the most illustrious of those engaged in the Great Game, might have stepped out of the pages of Buchan. As a young lieutenant in the Bengal Cavalry he had been on a shooting

trip at Yarkand in High Asia in the spring of 1880 when he received orders to lay by the heels Dost Mahomed, a Pathan who had murdered the explorer Dalgleish while trekking in the Karakorums, and then gone to ground. It was a tall assignment, but the young man did not earn the nickname 'Buddha' Bower for nothing and soon had a network of agents scouring the country throughout Turkestan. After two years' patient work Dost Mahomed was recognized in the bazaar at Samarkand by one of the agents, who prevailed upon the Russian governor to throw him into gaol, where he hanged himself before extradition proceedings could be completed. During the next few years, besides adding to his reputation as an explorer with successful journeys across Tibet and in the Pamirs, Bower began to climb the ladder of his profession, being earmarked as an officer destined for unusual responsibilities. He served under Kitchener in the Sudan in 1896, saw further action in China during the Boxer Rebellion, became colonel of the Wei-Hai-Wei Regiment, and for five years commanded the Legation Guard at Peking. Among several other eastern languages he both spoke and wrote Chinese. Of commanding height, he exercised authority with a quiet assurance and was an admirable choice to command the Abor Field Force.

From the wide-ranging instructions issued on 25 September 1911 it is clear that the Government of India had at last decided to tidy things up on this frontier, once and for all. Bower's orders were:

(1) to exact severe punishment and reparation for the murder of Williamson, Gregorson and his party and, by establishing British military superiority over the tribe, to endeavour to compel the Minyongs to surrender its chief instigators and perpetrators;

(2) to visit as many Minyong villages as possible and to make the tribe understand that in future they would be under British control which, subject to their good behaviour, would be of a loose political nature;

(3) to visit Damroh, the village Needham had failed to reach in 1894, with the proviso that, if the Padam Abors behaved themselves, the visit was not to be of a punitive nature;

(4) to endeavour to maintain amicable relations with any Chinese officials or troops encountered, but if this should occur within the territory of tribes on the British side of 'recognized Tibetan–Chinese limits' to invite them to withdraw, but, if necessary, to compel them to do so;

(5) to explore and survey as much of the country as possible, if practicable visiting [the tinkle of goblin laughter is still

audible] the Pemakoi falls and incidentally settling the question of the identity of the Tsangpo and the Dihang rivers.

It was proposed to send out at the same time a friendly mission with an escort of Assam Military Police, independent of Bower's command, to patrol the Mishmi country eastwards from Bomjur with the dual object of ensuring that they did not throw in their lot with the Abors and of obtaining information for boundary purposes, the latter made the more urgent by the advance of the Chinese as far as Rima. In the light of Williamson's recent journey to Walong no opposition was expected, the Mishmis having asked to be recognized as British subjects, but this did not mean that they should be given any guarantee of protection. Another friendly mission under civil aegis was to visit the Miris and Daflas to the west, travelling up the Subansiri river to the Kamla, then northwards or eastwards as deemed appropriate at the time, exploring and mapping all the way.

A formidable programme requiring careful planning, for which the intelligence provided by Dunbar's moveable column based at Pasighat proved of the greatest value. Throughout the rains, with the help of the Pasi *gams* and of the *sirdar* Lal Bahadur whom they had sheltered after his escape, they had pieced together information concerning the country, routes and villages lying between Pasighat and Kebang. They had also established a stockaded post on a high feature at Balek nearby as a signal station communicating with the plains.

Whether or not General Bower was aware of the castigation administered by Lord Curzon when a 'miniature army' had been launched against a few, wretched Mishmi villages in 1899-1900, he ensured that his own force would have a comfortable margin for error. Besides those engaged in road making and on the lines of communication there were some seven thousand fighting troops, not to mention two 'war dogs' specially imported from kennels in England to act as additional sentries; and the transport arrangements included between 3,500 and 4,000 coolies from the Naga Hills. This considerable force began during September to assemble at the base camp called Kobo near the junction of the Dihang and Lohit rivers.

From the first it was realized that the success of the campaign would depend more on the sappers and pioneers than the infantry, and for good measure they brought along two smooth-bore 7-pounder guns (which in the event proved a mere encumbrance) and a Vickers Maxim machine-gun, this last being the proudest weapon of the Assam Valley and Surma Valley Light Horse – Lumsden's Lambs, for short – a volunteer unit recruited from the tea-gardens. This enthusiastic body was nearly seven hundred strong and, since a detachment of only

twelve troopers and one officer was to accompany the expedition – its only European unit – the choice was made by lot. Amongst the infantry was a composite battalion drawn from the Naga Hills, Lushai Hills, Lakhimpur and Dacca Military Police Battalions under Major Bliss with Captain Dunbar, his impetuosity by now forgiven, as second-in-command. Eric Bailey wangled himself a job on the political staff.

Back from his Tibetan travels, for which he was docked twenty days' pay for overstaying his leave, Bailey had been posted for training to Aligarh in the United Provinces. From there he was summoned to Simla in order to expedite his report on his journey, which was required by the staff officers planning the Abor expedition. Through the influence of a family friend, Sir Henry McMahon, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, he got himself posted to the expedition, but received a less than cordial welcome from the other officers who had obtained a place in the show by more conventional means. Besides, he had no real interest in soldiering, and a compromise was reached when he was shunted off to tour the Chulikata (or crop-haired) Mishmi villages in order to ascertain the temper of the tribe.

Mr Bentinck, the DC at Lakhimpur who had accompanied Dunbar on his rescue bid, and W.C.M. Dundas of the Indian Police who had inherited Williamson's job were appointed Assistant Political Officers to the expedition, to give every possible assistance in political matters; but, in recognition of former conflicts between the civil and the military, General Bower was named Political Officer as well as commander of the force: 'Your authority and responsibility,' the order ran, 'will be complete'.

The general arrived by train at Dibrugarh station on 5 October and spent the day inspecting troops and stores and checking final plans for the campaign. In the evening he was driven by car to the waterfront to embark on the s.s. *Battani* for the river journey to Kobo. The 1/8th Gurkhas under Lieutenant-Colonel Murray, DSO, were already on board, and the cheers of the sepoys augmenting a cacophany of hooting from the river steamers at their moorings and the whistles of railway engines in the yards completely drowned the strains of the police band playing for all they were worth 'There'll be a hot time in the old town tonight'.

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Working without respite from Reveille to Retreat the advance party managed to get the supply base ready by the time the general disembarked. It had been named Kobo in consequence of a misunderstanding.

When the reconnoitring party first put ashore they found an Abor hanging about who, on being asked the name of the place, thought he was being asked his own name and thus earned a minor immortality in military history. Kobo was laid out as a model town complete with street names: the Mall, Piccadilly, Harley Street (where the field hospitals were), Scotland Yard (the Military Police post) and so on. A *banniah* had opened business as a general store, there was a post office, and for a short time – presumably in Fleet Street – a cyclostyled newspaper called the *Kobo Times* was published.

For nine days the advance was postponed because of rain that at one time threatened to flood the base, then on 20 October a Flank Column under Lieutenant-Colonel Fisher of more than 2,000 men including coolies with fourteen elephants carrying the heavy equipment struck north towards Ledum, its task to neutralize the Minyong and Galong clans living to the west of the Dihang. It was hard going, but initially they met with no opposition. The first division of the Main Column numbering some three thousand men with the general in their midst moved out two days later to repeated cheers from the line-of-communication troops left behind and the trumpeting of supply elephants, making for Pasighat along the road already constructed by the sappers and pioneers working ahead of them. During the march the sight of a partial eclipse of the sun was generally accounted a good omen, but whether for the invaders or the Abors who could tell? The second division of the Main Column totalling some two thousand men followed behind at a day's interval. Progress was slow, six miles being considered a good day's march, for the speed of such a vastly extended crocodile proceeding in single file and kept together by a system of whistles is that of its slowest member; and later when road-building became more difficult as they got into the hills the rate of progress was even slower. Pasighat was reached on 25 October, and the views up and down the Dihang were much admired.

This for a short time became the force's main base, but hardly had defences in the form of a ditch and parapet stockaded at the corners and encircled by barbed wire been completed when it was superseded by a forward base seven miles up the river at Janakmukh. This was sited in a hollow of the hills on the river bank, reachable by convoys plying from Kobo. After leaving Rengging on 2 November the Main Column was now entering the territory of the Minyongs, and extra precautions were taken, on the march and in bivouac, against surprise hit-and-run attacks by parties of Abors.

The Flank Column was first to draw blood. They had a difficult march, often having to slash a path through thick jungle, and they

were much pestered by leeches. After leaving Mekong on 23 October they were subjected to a shower of arrows, none of which scored a hit, and their return rifle fire killed two Abors and badly wounded several others. At Ledum, which they found deserted, they constructed a strong fort and sat down to await the arrival of stores by coolie train from Kobo. From Ledum patrols were sent out to reconnoitre the entire region. On 27 October there was a brief skirmish at Mishing, a village recently established by emigrants from Kebang, in which two more Abors were killed and others wounded, the Gurkha sepoys again sustaining no casualties from the arrows loosed off at them. Here the column concentrated, and on receiving the report of a patrol which had shot an Abor found to have been carrying two hundred and fifty arrows Colonel Fisher persuaded himself that a combined attack on his column was about to be launched, to forestall which he ordered Dunbar with 250 Military Police to scout the Lebang road beyond the Siveng river, while Major Lindsay led a hundred men of the 2nd Gurkhas towards Kaking in the country of the Galongs. The Gurkhas met with resistance at Dorsing, a village of forty houses built on the top of a hill approached by a steep path. The fight that ensued, which was typical of many such encounters during the campaign, was described in his customary boys'-adventure-story language by Angus Hamilton, a journalist who wrote an account of the expedition. When reading the following extract it should be borne in mind that Hamilton was never permitted to go beyond the base camps.

> Delay was fatal; and, as the track was completely blocked and the stockade defended by arrowmen and stone chutes, the troops, led by their officers, attempted to rush the position, only to be repelled again and again by the stone chutes which swept the face of the path with the thunder and effect of landslides. Arrow fire, well sustained and cleverly directed, followed upon the descending rocks, which of themselves brought bad bruises to several of the attacking party, the enemy precipitately retiring when the last collection of boulders had been released. The check at this stockade was not sufficient to deflect the advance of the little column. Only one rifleman had suffered seriously, though many bruises could be counted on the heads, legs and bodies of others. Accordingly, a party of forty men pushed on to Dorsing village, which had already been deserted, and destroyed it.

But no. For all Hamilton's striving to cast an aura of heroism over the British force, nothing can disguise the fact that it was a paltry business, and that no military glory was to be won by trained soldiers with modern weapons confronting half-naked savages armed with home-made bows and arrows. The one-sidedness of the contest is attested by

the fact that the total casualties suffered on the British side during the entire campaign were Dunbar's second-in-command Harrison, who died of pneumonia; one officer wounded; two other ranks killed and two wounded; and three followers killed and three wounded. It was hardly a battle training ground for the Great War which lay less than two years ahead.

Dorsing became an outpost of the Military Police for the rest of the campaign, and from it detachments were sent out to subdue Kaking, Kharan and other villages in the vicinity.

The Main Column meanwhile was inching forward as the new road unrolled before it like a carpet. The Abors kept out of the way, allowing the surveyors to get on with mapping the country at their leisure. There were fine views of the snow mountains of Tibet to the north and of the Assam plains to the south. Now and then patrols came upon reminders of the massacre they had come so far to avenge. Williamson's fishing-rod was found; and across the Sirpo river at Old Rengging, a village built on a steep hillside overgrown with jungle where on 9 November they made camp, a fatigue-party extending the perimeter unearthed some skulls and bones, broken baskets, and fragments of letters and diaries – relics of the loquacious Miri and the sick coolies who had been sent back by Williamson and killed by men sent from Rotung. Here the weather broke, and for three days the column was deluged with heavy rain.

If there was little military glory to be won by the infantry, the less-publicized units of the army – the sappers and miners, the pioneers, the supply and transport corps – were the real heroes of the expedition. To build a road at speed through such formidable country and to bridge the numerous rivers were real achievements, while to feed and clothe such a huge, polyglot force required planning and organization of a high order. Each of the races represented in the force required its own particular diet, and in transporting the packs of rations by road and water, often in bad weather, care and ingenuity had to be exercised to ensure that they arrived in a dry, undamaged condition. Tins of bully-beef and bully-mutton provided the staple meat ration, but these were supplemented by live goats, geese and ducks brought up from the plains. (Imported chickens tended to sicken in the unfamiliar climate, so local fowls were bought from friendly Abors.) A common sight was a line of half-naked Naga coolies, each carrying a spear and ho-hoing as was their custom, carrying heavy loads in baskets on their backs supported by a band across the forehead, out of which stuck the heads and necks of geese which added their honking to the chorus. By the time the Nagas had left the expedition

in time to reach home for the spring sowing two Nepalese coolie corps had been raised whose carrying capacity was augmented by a corps of mules. These endearing animals, besides having a tendency to go dead-lame after struggling all day up to their hocks in mud, presented their own supply problem, for the sparse grass in the hills was inadequate to their needs, and bales of hay had to be brought up for them from supply depots hundreds of miles away in India. They had their own idiosyncrasies, too, making a fuss if their loads included a basket of quacking ducks, but contentedly slogging forward with a bleating goat slung in a gunny-bag on either flank.

Soon came signs that the Abors' will to resist was beginning to crack. Dundas hurried back to Sadiya to receive the submission of the Damroh and Dambak *gams*, who came in preceded by a courier bearing a sword and spearhead bent double in token of peace. After a long harangue, in which they denied complicity in the murder of Williamson and Gregorson, they broke their weapons and threw them on the ground, swearing future obedience to the British and promising to pay taxes and to provide labour for transport and road-making.

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On 16 November the weather cleared, and as the sun came out the Dihang valley disappeared from sight in a heavy mist, water poured down the ravines on the hillsides into the river, and the trees dripped. Next day General Bower with his headquarters staff and three companies of the 8th Gurkhas set out to reconnoitre the route to Rotung, descending the steep slope to the Lelek river where the baggage was left under guard, then climbing the equally steep rise on the other side. They advanced circumspectly, alert to the twin dangers of stone-chutes and poisoned arrows, one of Lumsden's Lambs having recently been wounded by an arrow through his thigh. The heights overlooking the advance were picketed and scouts sent forward ahead of the Main Column. From the ridge the path led down to the Egar river, beside which the general decided to make camp. He then took several officers and an escort of twenty Gurkhas up a nearby hill in order to locate and inspect the stockades the men of Rotung were reported to have constructed across his line of advance. After climbing some two hundred yards up the steep slope they saw ahead of them the first, smaller stockade, which appeared to be undefended. Above it a larger one had been built on a commanding height, in a position from which stones and arrows could be loosed on an attacking force held up at the first stockade. The general was examining this through his field-glasses

when a shot rang out from behind the larger stockade, and Lal Bahadur the *sirdar* fell to the ground, wounded in the chest. There followed a shower of arrows and boulders which fell among the group on the hillside, the general's hand being grazed by an arrow and the Provost Marshal receiving a bang on the head from a falling stone.

Parties were despatched to outflank the stockade, and as soon as rifle-fire could be brought to bear on it the Abors started to retire. When the place was rushed and taken the bodies of eight Abors were counted behind the stockade, and the Gurkhas sent in pursuit of those in flight accounted for two more. Several bodies, they learnt later, had been carried away by the Abors, making a total 'bag' – the sporting term in general use among the British officers – of eighteen. The general's reconnaisance party then retired to the camp by the river for the night.

When the advance continued next day Rotung was seen to be burning, set fire to by the men of Panggi in retribution for the trouble its inhabitants had brought on the hills, and among the ashes the column established a convenient camp affording excellent views over the surrounding countryside. Here they waited until a telegraph line from Rengging was working, and meanwhile warm clothes were issued and patrols sent out. One of them, besides 'potting' six Abors, brought back a muzzle-loader, a stock of arrows and some of Williamson's cartridges; another made its way to Kalek, which they burnt. The Flank Column under Colonel Fisher, having received the submission of the Galong *gams*, rejoined the Main Column at Rotung camp, and the whole force continued its ponderous advance.

On receiving a report that Kekar, a Minyong village built on a high hill across the Dihang from Sissin, was strongly held and stockaded, General Bower made plans for a three-pronged attack on it. One party would cross the river and seize Sissin hill, another the heights commanding the village from the west, while the rest of the force made a frontal attack on the place. Except that the left flank party were late in reaching their objective, this is substantially what happened, the engagement only differing from earlier skirmishes in that the mountain guns were brought into action for the first and only time in the campaign, ineffectually as it turned out; and Lumsden's Lambs on Sissin hill were allowed to blaze away with their Maxim, raking the rear of the stockade and the Abors' line of retreat. Afterwards they claimed the credit for slaughtering the majority of the thirty or so Abors from Kebang and Rotung whose bodies were counted when the position was occupied, unopposed.

Slowly the road was pushed forward further into the hills; more

and more villages were taken and destroyed, Kebang itself three thousand feet above the Dihang on 9 December; and still more *gams* came in to submit. On Christmas Eve the general received a message from King George V: 'I wish to express to you and all ranks under your command my hearty good wishes for Christmas and the New Year. I watch with interest the steady progress of your columns and look for a successful and speedy termination of the expedition. – George R'. Gradually the emphasis shifted from punishment to reconciliation, and soon it was all over.

The first three objectives set out in the Government of India's instructions to General Bower had been achieved. Punishment and reparation had been exacted for the murder of Williamson, Gregorson and his party the previous year. The Minyongs had been subdued, and the power of Kebang, which for long had tyrannized over its neighbours, had been broken. Damroh and Dambuk had submitted. The individual murderers were given up, tried and found guilty, and it reflects well on all concerned that they were not hanged in a fit of righteous retribution, but sentenced to various terms of imprisonment according to the degree of each's guilt. The same fair-mindedness is shown in the shrewd comments of an officer with the force who was given the job of taking down some of their confessions.

> Since the moment when they had apparently first made up their minds to confess they had had no chance of collusion, so that the agreement between their several versions of the tale was particularly striking. More striking still was the extreme frankness of their confessions. This has been set down by some critics to a wicked bravado, and a tendency to glory in their misdeeds. This, I think, is a mistake. They certainly showed no abject remorse and no desire to throw themselves upon their captors' mercy. But, on the other hand, they showed no defiance, no swashbuckling swagger. They told their tales in the most matter-of-fact way. One man would name that part of his victim's body that he himself had succeeded in striking, and would then proceed to name the parts where others had inflicted their blows; and this without any apparent thought either of giving a comrade away or, on the other hand, of giving him his due. It was not my business to try to extract their motives, but the impression left on me by their bare confessions was that their minds were morally a blank. Their deeds had been neither deeds of shame nor deeds of glory, but simply matters of course. The fear of punishment seemed also absent from their minds at the time. They were in the legal sense ideal confessors, for no thought of 'fear or favour' seemed to influence them.

The end of hostilities was marked by a ceremony performed on 10 January 1913 at Komsing, the village where Williamson had been killed by men of Kebang. In the middle of the village, on the exact

spot not far from the *moshup* where he had fallen, the Abors had been required to build a cairn of stones. Sixty sepoys of the 1/8th Gurkhas were paraded before it, Colonel Murray standing at attention in front of them with six other British officers and an interpreter. Lal Bahadur, whose wound had not proved serious, was also there. Facing the soldiers at a distance of a few yards stood the Minyong *gams* surrounded by a crowd of wondering Abors. As the First Post sounded, the guard of honour presented arms and the officers saluted. Then Colonel Murray stepped forward and unveiled a plaque he had brought with him, which had been securely fixed to the cairn. It read:

ON THIS SPOT WAS MURDERED NOEL WILLIAMSON
ASSISTANT POLITICAL OFFICER, SADIYA,
March 31st, 1911.

Stepping back he addressed the *gams* through the interpreter, charging them in the name of the Government of India to preserve the memorial with reverence forever afterwards. The Last Post sounded, and the officers uncovered their heads.

A few days later Dr Gregorson was similarly honoured near the place where he had met his death.

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The Miri Mission ran into serious trouble and was only saved, if Hamilton's account is to be believed, by some fancy gunplay on the part of Captain Graham. It was a civilian affair organized by the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, and the old mistake was made of having dual civil and military control. The Mission's objects were to establish friendly relations with the 'Hill' Miris living between Bhutan and the Dihang, and to survey the country to the west of the area where the Abor Field Force was operating. In charge were Mr Kerwood, Sub-Divisional Officer of North Lakhimpur, a civilian of only three years' standing, and Captain Graham of the 5th Gurkhas in command of an escort of fifty rifles. Five other British officers including two surveyors were attached to the force in various capacities. Kerwood's instructions were vague in the extreme, the escort proved too small, rations ran low because there were too few coolies to carry the quantity needed, and the medical arrangements were quite inadequate.

The Mission started from Dulangmukh on 11 November 1911, but had to go back and reorganize, and eventually got away early in December. A camp was established at Gocham, from which survey

parties were sent out, the one sent to the Subansiri valley narrowly avoiding conflict with the local tribes. An advance was made to Chemir, from which place a small party went off to explore the Khru valley, while Captain Graham with the main party moved north, reaching Rugi early in February 1912, having as a cautionary measure nabbed the *gams* of Seitom while they were asleep. The moment of truth came when they were camped at Tali nearby. 'Dawn had scarcely broken and the camp was hardly awake' – let Hamilton tell the story:

> Captain Graham was lying in his blankets at work; Mr Kerwood was asleep; the sepoys, except for a guard, were either cooking breakfast or cutting wood some little distance away. All was peaceful when suddenly the sentry fired his rifle and shouted, 'Sahib, the enemy are upon us'. Captain Graham, seizing his revolver, jumped out of his blankets to find but very few yards away a party of three hundred tribesmen, armed with swords and spears, charging down upon the camp. Firing as rapidly as possible, Captain Graham held the enemy at bay, as, with extraordinary gallantry and coolness, he dropped men shot by shot, the last falling as near as eight yards from him in the actual perimeter of the camp. It was a fine and plucky action, and saved the situation until the sepoys were able to reach their rifles. Soon, as the rifles began to speak, the raiders fled. Twenty dead were left behind in the field, no less than ten being killed by Captain Graham in his single-handed defence.

Stirring stuff, but hardly the way to achieve the Mission's principal object of establishing friendly relations with the Miris, especially as, judging Rugi and Tali to have been the villages responsible for the attack, they proceeded to burn them. The Mission then started back and, moving through the Apa Tani valley and the Dafla country, reached Diju Tea Estate in North Lakhimpur on 16 March.

The Mishmi Mission consisted of two columns. Dundas with Major Bliss in command of the escort led the Lohit Valley Column along the well-trodden route beside the river as far as Walong, just short of Rima, and found the Mishmis friendly and willing to accept British protection despite Chinese overtures. Since no Chinese officials or troops were encountered, the expedition's fourth objective went by the board. The Dibang Column under Captain Bally with Captain Neville as Political Officer and Eric Bailey as Intelligence Officer marched up the Sisseri valley during December, visiting Chulikata Mishmi villages whose inhabitants had lived in fear of the Abors of Damroh and Dambuk and rejoiced at their downfall. Thence the Mission proceeded further north, reaching Chigu at the end of January 1912.

And what of the falls, the expedition's fifth objective, which were to be visited, if practicable? The task was assigned to Bentinck, the DC

at Dibrugarh who has appeared several times before in this narrative. With an escort of 300 rifles under Captain Trenchard he toured the Minyong villages, then turned north, reaching Singging on 31 January 1912. There they were confronted by a range of snow-capped mountains more than 17,000 feet high barring the way to the area where the falls were supposed to be, some hundred miles further north.

> Day after day Mr Bentinck's party continued, beating a way against the very face of nature [it is Hamilton again] and frowned down upon by the mountains as, with slow progress, it skirted precipice and river, or, on occasions was absorbed by the jungle. It was just a march into the sheer and utterly unresponsive unknown, and, before it had proceeded very far the fogs, torrential rains, and deep snows which made themselves felt as the column daily struggled forward, united in the production of a concatenation of circumstances that showed that it would be impossible for Captain Trenchard and his colleagues to accomplish their object.

In short, they were forced to admit defeat and turn back.

But Shingche-Chögye had not yet finished his sport with those disposed to listen to his siren-song. When the Dibang Column of the Mishmi Mission had got as far as Ilupu, a village at the confluence of the Matan and Di rivers, Bailey learnt that there was a village further north called Mipi which was inhabited by Tibetans. They reached it after a march of eight days, and, having allayed the suspicions of the headman, Gyamtso, Bailey succeeded in wheedling out of him information about the route going north into Tibet. What he had in mind, of course, was somehow to detach himself from the Mission and make his own way by Gyamtso's route to the neighbourhood of Pemaköchung and try once more to locate Kintup's falls. With the survey party attached to the Mission was a young sapper officer Lieutenant Morshead, an Old Wykehamist, with whom Bailey had made friends. First he obtained Morshead's ready agreement to go with him, then put the matter to Neville, the Political Officer, who felt bound to telegraph headquarters for permission to let them go. The reply – 'We approve but the party should not enter Tibet' – was unhelpful, as was its sequel, which laid down that Bailey and Morshead should not proceed without further orders. Somehow, and probably the name of Bailey's powerful backer Sir Henry McMahon was dropped to good effect, Neville was persuaded to let them go, hoping to avoid censure for doing so with the same argument as Williamson would have used on a former occasion, to the effect that they had left before orders actually forbidding the journey had been received. So began one of the classics of Tibetan travel.

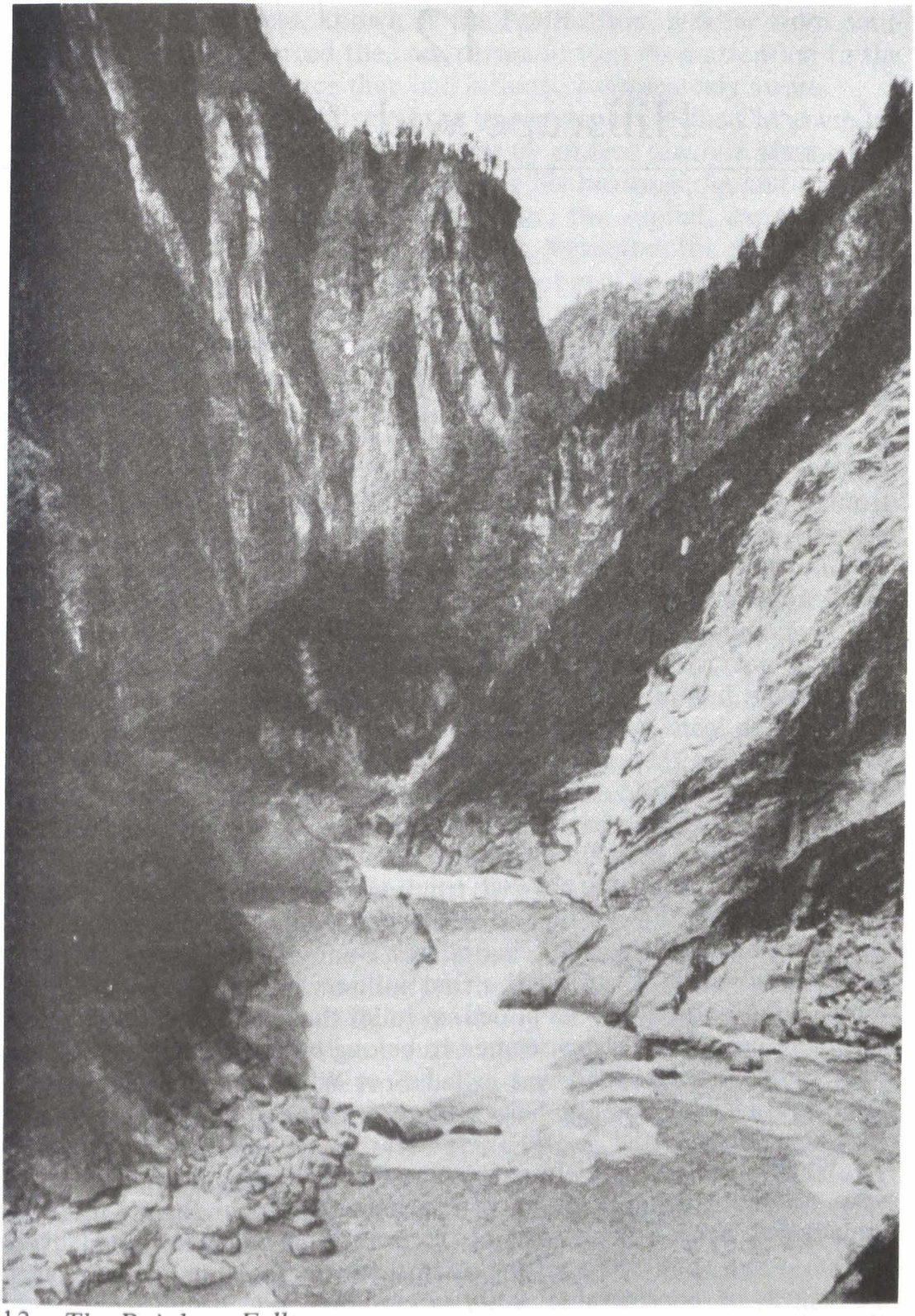
The pair set out on 15 May 1912 and did not get back to India

until mid-November. One of Bailey's minor achievements on the journey was the discovery of the blue poppy which is named after him; another was the solving ot the riddle of the falls, which proved such a let-down that at first the solution was not universally accepted. His diary for 17 July with the by-line 'Gyala. 9300ft.' contains the following entry:

> The [Tsangpo] river at this point was still and calm, flowing between cliffs forty feet high – the rapids had ceased about a mile and a half back. We could see the flood water level, which is reached in September, twenty feet above us.
>
> On the opposite bank were several houses with a monastery called Gyala Gompa and a small stream, which falls through cliffs. Chained in the stream we were told was a god called Shingche-Chögye, who was visible through the water when the stream was low in February and March. This clearly was the waterfall that Kintup ... had been referring to, but [he] had said it was the Tsangpo itself and not just a small tributary which made the fall. We resolved to investigate further on our return from Pemaköchung.

While at Pemaköchung Bailey had with difficulty got down to the Tsangpo at a point several miles away where 'the river plunged over a ledge and dropping about thirty feet sent up clouds of spray which formed a cloud about twenty feet above the top of the fall': clearly the rainbow falls, though not the Niagara the world had been led to expect. They retraced their steps, and at Gyala Gompa on 3 August Bailey inspected the tributary falls from a platform on which pilgrims lit butter-lamps in honour of the god. Puzzlingly, he wrote of 'a fall of about thirty feet', clearly confusing its height with that of the rainbow falls he had described a few days earlier, for when Kingdon-Ward visited the place in 1924 he found there 'a collection of poor little temples clapped against the face of the cliff over which a glacier torrent leaps 200 feet into the Tsangpo', which more or less tallies with Kintup's estimate of the height of the tributary falls.

And it is Kintup who has the last word, for during the thirty years since he had dictated his report of his Tibetan travels he had been living in obscurity, quietly plying his trade as a tailor in Darjeeling. When Bailey got back he ran him to earth and questioned him. No, he had never said there were great falls on the Tsangpo (as later exploration has proved), just the thirty-foot drop with the rainbow cloud near Pemaköchung. He had also mentioned the stream that falls 150 feet into the Tsangpo opposite Gyala, and somehow in transmission or translation – probably due to supernatural intervention – the descriptions of the two falls had become conflated.



13. *The Rainbow Falls*

12

Hillscape with Chins

Lashed on either side of the tug of the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company in which for six days we chugged up the Chindwin were flat barges laden with merchandise and crowded with voluble Burmese passengers in their many-coloured *longyis*. We disembarked in steamy April heat at Kalewa, a huddle of hovels round the jetty and two rows of open-fronted shops lining the Tiddim road. With me were two Chin companions, my Zahau orderly Nei Hrang and a Haka, Ni Kam, who was on his way home on release from the army. For the Chins and the other non-Burmese races, who occupy more than fifty per cent in area of the country called Burma, 1947 was a year of crisis. When the Burmese majority were promised immediate independence, the hill people who had no wish for the British connection to be severed were dismayed to learn that they would be left in the lurch, to make what accommodation they could with the new régime. It was in this atmosphere of betrayal and reproach that I made a farewell journey through the Chin Hills, sixty years after the earliest expedition had taken the first step towards their subjugation.

In a hired Chevrolet 15-cwt. truck we were driven, often dangerously, along the fair-weather road that led westward into the hills. We passed No.2 and No.3 Stockades, place-names commemorating the route followed in 1888 by the first military expedition. Below the crest of the Letha range we pulled up to let the engine cool, and in the crisp air the wild hillscape seemed to belong to a different planet. The place where we stopped was called Fort White after the general – later field-marshal and the hero of Ladysmith – who had commanded the expedition.

When the British, yielding to pressure from commercial interests who saw rich pickings in the offing, annexed Upper Burma in 1885 and exiled King Thibaw and his consort Supayalat, they had little notion what they were letting themselves in for. For several years afterwards a considerable army was employed in hunting down the armed gangs of dacoits that roamed the countryside killing and

pillaging. This process, known as the Pacification, was far from complete when events forced the conquerors to turn their attention to the Chins, of whose existence they had hitherto been scarcely aware.

Between the Chin Hills and the upper reaches of the Chindwin lay the petty Shan state of Kalé ruled over by an aged *sawbwa*, Maung Ket. Being found incompetent to administer his territory, he and some of his followers were removed to Mandalay, the capital, early in 1887 and his nephew installed in his place. In November the exiles escaped and found refuge with the Tashons, the most powerful tribe in the central Chin Hills, who had already given refuge to a Burmese dacoit leader, the self-styled Shwegyobyu Prince, who at the time of the Annexation had been a vaccinator in government service. These acts of defiance by the Tashons, who believed themselves out of reach of British retribution behind their barrier of hills, coincided with an outbreak of serious Chin raids on villages in the plains. The Siyins living in the north attacked a party of Shans in the Kalé valley, killing one and carrying off four others. The Tashons themselves committed two raids on Shan villages, and the Hakas to the south sent out marauding parties into the Yaw country which accounted for eight killed and twenty-eight kidnapped. At first the British tried to cope with the situation by establishing a chain of military posts along the frontier, but this merely led during the rains to renewed raiding, and in the space of two weeks twelve more Shans were killed, fourteen wounded and no less than one hundred and twenty-two carried off into slavery.

In preparation for a punitive expedition No. 1 Stockade was constructed in the foothills as a base to which stores were brought up by bullock-cart, and early in December 1888 work was begun on improving the track leading into the hills. Since this led in the direction of the Siyin Valley, it was decided to deal with that tribe first before tackling what was thought would prove the more formidable task of punishing the Tashons further south. But the Siyins showed themselves brave and stubborn fighters who fiercely resisted every step of the advance. On 7 December Lieutenant Palmer commanding a detachment of the Madras Sappers was shot dead in an ambush. A Gurkha sepoy guarding the road-making party was killed on 24 December, and next day – Christmas Day – while the road was being widened along a narrow spur the force was attacked by a large body of Siyins and Tashons who, pouring a heavy fire into their midst from the surrounding heights, forced them to retreat. A sepoy was captured by the Chins and later put to death by them. As a protective measure stockades were being built at intervals of five miles, in which the force slept at night and stores were stockpiled. These were frequently attacked,

ambushes were a daily occurrence, and to distract the invaders' attention the Chins renewed their raids on the plains.

General Sir George White, VC, arrived on the scene on 30 December. A month later a large body of Siyins again attacked the road-making party, which was sent back to No.3 Stockade while the fighting troops dealt with the situation. Hearing firing ahead, the general with a small reinforcement of Gurkhas went forward and, when the Chins made a stand behind a stockade of their own making, ordered an attack, which was brilliantly led by Colonel Skene – who was later to lose his life in the Manipur massacre – the general himself joining in the fun. In the report of the action he made next day to the Chief Commissioner of Burma there is a note of exhilaration that betrays how much he was enjoying himself.

> Enemy yesterday attacked our working-party on road above this, and held our covering-party, 40 British and 100 Gurkhas, from 9 till 2, when I arrived and ordered their positions to be charged. We carried all, driving them entirely away, getting off ourselves wonderfully cheaply – only one Norfolk dangerously wounded. Enemy in considerable numbers, using many rifles and plenty of ammunition. They fired at least 1000 rounds, standing resolutely until actually charged, even trying to outflank us. Their loss probably about eight or ten, but they were carried down the *khuds* at once. Most difficult enemy to see or hit I ever fought.

To this day, the Siyins take pride in this tribute to their fighting qualities, but the encounter was nevertheless a severe setback for them and marked the turning-point in their fortunes. Although they continued to harass the advance ceaselessly, they realized that in the end they would be unable to save their villages, now in full view a thousand yards below the road from the summit of the Letha range.

It was the same view that confronted me on 25 April 1947 when, after spending two days in Tiddim, I drove to Fort White and began the easy nine-mile walk round the rim of the Siyin Valley, a broad basin on whose sides nestle the principal villages of the tribe – Thuklai, Buanman, Limkai, Lophei, Khuasak – intervisible one from another and composed of clean, well-spaced houses, many having corrugated-iron roofs. The chief, a middle-aged man with puckered brow and mild, troubled eyes, had led an attack on the Japanese during the recent war, despite a crippled leg. His wife was young and shyly attractive. There were wooden memorial posts on the path outside the village with primitive carvings on them.

Khuasak had been the first of the Siyin villages to be attacked by the punitive expedition under Sir George White. No.4 Stockade was completed on 31 January 1889 and three days later, five miles further

along the road, No.5 Stockade, from which a strong force descended on the valley. After firing a few shots the inhabitants of Khuasak took up what moveable belongings they could carry, set fire to their houses, and abandoned the village. Buanman and Thuklai were captured a little later, and a post made at the latter village which was named Fort White. (This proved to be unhealthy, so the post was moved to No.5 Stockade which took over the name, which it bears today.) Since the Siyins refused to surrender their Shan and Burmese captives and continued to annoy the British force with desultory sniping, parties were sent out which destroyed every one of the villages.

Colonel Skene with a garrison of Gurkhas occupied the Thuklai fort throughout the rains, their line of communication with the plains including a telegraph being kept open by detachments left in the stockades along the road. The Siyins, meanwhile, sullen and unsubdued, were encamped on their neighbouring *jhums* and continued to make a nuisance of themselves. The fort was no more than a collection of huts, with a few blockhouses for the sentries, protected by an abatis of felled trees, and it became a nightly game for the Siyins to crawl over the perimeter and make off with cattle from the cattle-pens. Once, creeping between the sentries, they shot a sleeping *drabi*, beheaded the corpse, and escaped unscathed with their dripping trophy. To counter these tactics, Gurkha volunteers, bootless and wearing few clothes, would lie out at night near the approaches to the village in small 'Naga parties' and waylay the marauders on their way to or from the fort. Other annoyances were the cutting of the telegraph-wire – not only to interrupt communications with the plains, but also to provide metal to be melted down and moulded into bullets – the ambushing of ration convoys, and ceaseless sniping at the fort and the stockades by day and night.

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At 7a.m. on 3 May 1947 I left Tiddim with my two Chin companions and a string of six mules in charge of two *drabis*, one a Gurkha in black battledress with a *kukri* at his belt and the other a Chin. We halted at Saizang, a large village with slate-roofed houses extending over two slopes, and moved on in hot sunshine down to a stream that flowed into the Manipur river. To one unaccustomed to hill walking it was a hard day's march, and we did not reach Mualbem after a stiff climb until 5p.m.; but a day's rest and a jar of *zu*, or rice-beer, shared with chief Thuam Kho Mang put us to rights, and it was pleasant in the cool of the evening watching the clouds float down over the

hills and listening to the ringing of crickets and the occasional plop as bubbles rose to the surface of the *zu*-pot. Next day, leaving the mules behind, we descended the path to the stream, crystal-clear below a waterfall and forming a pool where boys were bathing naked, then zigzagged up the hillside to Hmunpi. The chief's house was decorated with skulls – mithan, deer, boar, monkeys and two which from their size I took to be human – and he proudly brought out for my inspection his double-barrelled shotgun and four ancient muzzle-loaders. These were villages of the Zanniat tribe whose men wore little but a loincloth, the women a black skirt and white blouse worn back to front and set off by strings of coloured beads or necklaces of coins. The women wore their hair in a bun at the back skewered by a pin, the men theirs in a topknot. The coolies who carried our baggage from Hmunpi to the next village were girls wearing the black skirt but hanging lower and unevenly, opening at the front. There was laughter before we set off as they squabbled over who should have the lightest loads.

In the compound of the bungalow at Bualkhua was a bougainvillaea in full bloom. When I called with Ni Kam at the house of the Christian pastor, a Haka, we found he was out, but his wife, a pretty woman with a sensitive face, invited us inside and gave us scented, milkless tea and bananas. On the walls of the front room where we sat were coloured pictures illustrating the life of Christ, and a Bible in the Lai language lay on a table. She had four children, well-scrubbed and well-behaved girls of nine and ten, a boy a little younger, and a six-month-old baby at the breast, gulping. She spoke of their missionary work, disparaging the unconverted. The pastor Than Sai came in after a ten-mile walk, a short kindly-faced man, gentle in speech and shy, and apologized for the meagreness of his hospitality. When I gave him a present of tea and condensed milk he thanked me, saying that I the visitor should receive, not give; and when we said goodbye he promised always to remember my name and to pray for me.

At Simzawl which we reached just after nine in the morning of 8 May there was a party in progress with drum-beating, *zu*-drinking and processional dancing, in celebration of the return after three days of a hunting party whose bag, so far as I could understand, had been a single jungle-fowl. There was a fine view of the Falam hills across the Manipur river with here and there Tashon villages clustered on the slopes, conspicuous among them Tashon itself whose chief, Van Hmung, lay old and sick and dying.

Old Tashon had been the main objective of the Chin–Lushai Expedition which had been mounted in the cold weather of 1889-90.

The plan had been for a column from Thuklai – the original Fort White – under Colonel Skene with B.S. Carey as Political Officer to enforce the submission of the Siyins and other northern tribes; another from Gangaw under Brigadier-General Symons to proceed towards Haka in the south via Zokhua; while a third under General Tregear with Captain Shakespear as Intelligence Officer marched from Lungleh in the southern Lushai Hills to link up with Symons' column at Haka, laying a mule-track as it went. Flying columns would then converge on Tashon from north and south in order to exact punishment on the tribe for its various transgressions.

Progress of the Southern Column, due to the difficulty of road-making in hill country, was much slower than anticipated, which delayed the whole campaign. Carey with the Northern Column established a camp at Yawlu on the track to Falam from Fort White, where he made use of the delay by entering into negotiations with the still-hostile Siyins and their neighbours, who frankly acknowledged that their attitude would depend on the outcome of the forthcoming trial of strength between the British and the Tashons. Mualbem where I had stayed continued to hold out, and when a force was sent against it the inhabitants set fire to their houses and fled.

The expedition's principal enemy, however, was not the Chins but sickness, especially malaria, which threatened to bring the whole operation to a standstill. Of the combined average strengths of the Northern and Southern Columns, including coolies and followers, of 6,726 there were 5,172 admissions to hospital (some going sick more than once), of whom 207 died. The total deaths in action in both columns added together was only nine including two British officers and a private of the 1st Cheshires. Fortunately, the campaign turned out to be little more than a ponderous progress intended to demonstrate to the Chins the futility of further resistance.

The Northern Column having been saved the trouble of destroying Mualbem marched south via Shinshi, Bualkhua – where I had met the pastor and his wife – Laté and Parté, while the Southern Column made heavy weather of their progress to Haka, which took them sixty-six days. As the two columns began to converge on Tashon, armed Chins numbering not less than five thousand kept pace with them at a respectful distance as they approached their capital. Despite their protests General Symons ordered camp to be pitched a thousand yards from the village and on 11 March summoned the chiefs and repeated to them his terms. They must deliver up to him all their captives and cease to attack British subjects, pay a fine of ten thousand rupees for having harboured rebels and raided into the plains, and also an annual

tribute of two elephant tusks and ten pieces of silk in acknowledgement of British sovereignty. As they parleyed in the general's camp the Chin army surrounding them settled down in groups of from ten to a hundred, calmly awaiting the result of their deliberations.

The chiefs' reply was polite but firm: they would not pay tribute in acknowledgement of British sovereignty and doubted whether they could raise the money to pay the fine. The two forces confronting each other were fairly evenly matched, and there seemed a real possibility of a pitched battle; but the general was not to be hustled and, wishing to keep things at a low temperature, sent the chiefs away, allowing them two days for reflection before reaching their final decision. Carey who was present wrote a vivid description of the scene:

> The crowd was a motley one, the Tashon chiefs dressed in the gaudy tartan of the tribe, well armed with bright guns, vermillion and black parti-coloured *dah* scabbards, and beautifully inlaid powder-horns. The Hualgnos were conspicuous by their chignons, which contrasted with the lofty head-dress of their neighbours, the Zahaus, who were present carrying the strange 'Shendu' chopper-shaped *dah* in basketwork scabbards. Scattered around in bunches were the scowling Siyins, the half-breeds from Tawyan and Minlédaung, the semi-independent clique of Kuangli, and the trans-Nankathé tribesmen of Sokte and 'Poi' origin. The congregation was armed with a variety of weapons; spears and flint-lock guns predominated, but bows and quivers of barbed arrows were carried by not a few. Each man bore his food-supply for a few days on his back.

Next day General Symons with a small party met Colonel Skene with the Northern Column at the river below the village and noticed how, although the Chins had erected elaborate fortifications to impede their advance, these could easily have been outflanked. The day was spent by the Tashon chiefs in consultation with the chiefs and elders of the outlying villages who, mindful of the fate of the Siyins, urged them to comply with the general's demands and so induce him to go away with his soldiers and leave them in peace. How could they have any intention of staying when they had not brought their womenfolk with them? At the durbar held next day in the camp the Tashon chiefs endeavoured to save as much face as they could by haggling with the general over the fine they were required to pay for their misdemeanours, a game the general decided to go along with in order to conclude matters without recourse to bloodshed. He therefore remitted half the fine, accepted the balance as well as the first year's tribute and, on apparent good terms with the chiefs, gave orders for the columns to march away. Perhaps it would have been wiser after all to have compelled the submission of the Tashons by force of arms, because the

14. *Occupation of Falam*

partial saving of face enabled them to retain something of their influence over the tribes, which they used in coming years to foment rebellion against the occupying power. For the British had decided to stay, and at the end of the campaigning season left substantial garrisons to endure the rains at Haka, Fort White and Nos.3, 4 and 5 Stockades.

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That was the beginning of British administration of the Chin Hills, and as I made my own way to Falam in May 1947 I was witnessing its ending. From Simzawl we continued south until, just past Parté below us to the right, we reached Lumbang, the principal village of the Zanniat tribe, where I was courteously entertained by chief Hlur Mung. He was a lean, thoughtful man of middle age, wearing white trousers, an open-necked shirt, blue blazer and trilby. He had spent a lifetime of loyal service. In the Great War he had accompanied the Chin Labour Corps to France, because the Chins, for whom Kalewa was the end of the world, refused to go without him. Whilst overseas he had on some occasion seen George V and cherished the memory. In the recent war he had served with distinction in the Chin Levies opposing the Japanese advance towards India. Now he was deeply anxious about the future, mistrustful of the Burmese and understandably reproachful of the British, saying: 'We do not know what will happen in the future. During the last war it was enough that the government needed our help. We gave it as well as we could – twenty-seven of the Zanniat serving in the Levies lost their lives. Now the villagers, who know no better, are saying that after all we have done they have forgotten us.'

Like other villages but on a more than usually elaborate scale Lumbang was supplied with water by means of a conduit system of hollowed logs, each overlapping the next and supported on forked posts, which zigzagged for hundreds of yards down and across the hillside carrying spring water to the houses in the village. Sometimes these flumes ran under the path through a culvert and at others spanned it so that a tall man could walk beneath without stooping. Wherever one went in Lumbang it was to the accompaniment of water-music.

Leaving at 6.30 on 10 May we followed the path downhill for about two hours, crossed a small suspension bridge over a stream and further on a larger one across the Manipur river, on the other side of which we came on an inspection bungalow, where we rested awhile. Nei Hrang stayed behind to see to the coolies carrying our baggage,

who had fallen far behind, while Ni Kam and I walked on up the hill to Tashon, a large village built near the site of Old Falam where General Symons had secured the submission of the Tashons. The house of chief Van Hmung was in the centre of the village, a substantial wooden building with raised veranda, to which we mounted by ladder-like steps. The chief's daughter led us through an outer room, in which I noticed photographs of British royalty, into an inner room, in the corner of which Van Hmung was sleeping under a pile of hand-woven Chin cloths. Waking him, his daughter helped him to sit up – for he was an old man with wrinkled, sunken face whose once-powerful body was now sagging and feeble – and acting as interpreter shouted at him so as to get through his deafness. I was given bananas to eat and *zureo*, or rice-spirit, to drink, which I did sparingly, having had previous experience of its potency and disagreeable taste. At the chief's request his daughter laid on the bed for my inspection a sheaf of photographs of official ceremonies in which he had participated, his medals and his gold regalia. Before I left he asked me to go into a further room the walls of which were crowded with animal skulls and horns, and downstairs in the space below the floorboards I saw three huge elephant skulls, like Henry Moore sculptures.

From Tashon we went on to Falam, the administrative centre of the Chin Hills where the Deputy Commissioner had his headquarters, and stayed there a few days, then set out westwards on 14 May heading for Ni Kam's village, Klangte. Wildlife of all kinds was plentiful. Lizards rustled away into the undergrowth at the approach of our footsteps, birds of many species caught our eye – green, red-and-black, yellow-and-black, red-and-yellow – and there was a continuous shrilling of crickets. Once a snake slithered across the path, later we saw a small jungle-cat with stumpy tail, and now and then there would be a clatter as a deer bucketed away through the jungle. The country grew wilder as we made our way along the narrow track through jungle, pestered by insects, out again into sunshine, our clothes becoming soaked as we brushed through a brake of chest-high fern. It was a long, tiring march, its final stage enlivened by the whooping of hoolocks.

Ni Kam's house in Klangte, a village straggling over two hills, had a thatched roof and stood in a courtyard enclosed by wooden stakes. In the evening we took our ease over the *zu*-pots, made much of by his wizened, withered-breasted mother and his voluptuous, black-skirted wife who dandled a naked baby in her lap. Although there were Christian converts among them, most of the men still wore their long hair looped in a topknot. Due to some mineral deficiency in the water

many people, old and young, suffered from unsightly goitres, and the young children tended to display the swollen bellies associated with worms. It was noticeable, too, that while men and women in their sexual prime were clean and dressed tidily, the children and the elderly went dirty and unkempt. Children of any age were allowed to smoke pipes and drink *zu*.

In the late afternoon a pig was killed in my honour, and as if spontaneously a party developed as more and more of the neighbours dropped in. Ni Kam's house had only one room, the bamboo floor of which was springy. Along one wall were raised sleeping places, around the room household cooking pots, baskets of grain, boxes, trunks – in fact, all the family possessions – and, standing in the corner, were several tall *zu*-pots. The assembled gathering of perhaps twenty-five people – a few old people, but mainly young men with their wives or girl friends – filled the room to capacity. Two by two, a man and a girl, we took our turn sitting on low stools before a *zu*-pot, sucking up the pleasant-tasting fluid through a wooden tube, then gave way to the next pair. Food was brought in on rectangular bamboo platters, great mounds of boiled rice and pork, and after the meal the singing began, a chanting from between half-closed lips, to a quiet rhythm, a girl seated on the floor between the knees of a young man tapping a drum while someone else beat time with a pair of mithan horns. They were love-songs, and now and then a man would hold a girl in a long kiss and then take up the tune again.

Leaving Ni Kam behind at Klangte, Nei Hrang and I continued westwards on 17 May, making for his village just over the border in the Lushai Hills. We stopped for a morning meal at Mualkai and afterwards had a pleasant walk to Klangkhua whose wild-eyed deposed headman forced his grievances on me. Here a grubby long-haired English sheepdog, left behind by one of the British officers when he went home, waddled up to me as if recognizing a European and extended a paw to me. On next day via Tikhuangtùm to Zawngte, where I received hospitality from Zahau friends, and news came – which seemed to cause no sorrow in the village – of the death in Rangoon of the paramount Zahau chief, Thang Tin Lian, who had played an ambivalent rôle during the Japanese occupation. There was a thunderstorm in the afternoon bringing rain and hail, and in the evening, sitting on the veranda of the inspection bungalow where I was putting up, I watched the mithan lumbering in from the forest where they had been allowed to graze all day, sleekly black semi-wild cattle with broad, back-sweeping horns.

An uneventful walk to Leilet, where we spent the night, then we

continued westward next morning, 20 May, moving steadily down the valley until we saw the Thio Va below us like a silver ribbon thrown on to a green carpet, the frontier – though there was nothing to indicate it – between the Chin and Lushai Hills, between Burma and India.

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The progress of the third column which took part in the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-90, the one which marched from the southern Lushai Hills under General Tregear, remains to be sketched. Three thousand eight hundred strong, its principal task was to construct a mule-path from Lungleh to Haka connecting with the one being made in the opposite direction from Kan. Troops and stores were taken from Chittagong by boat up the Karnaphuli as far as Demagri, a detour overland having to be made in order to bypass the Barkal rapids, and thence by coolie to Lungleh. The general and his staff arrived there on 24 December 1899, and soon afterwards the chiefs responsible for the murder of Lieutenant Stewart and his party the previous year came in to submit. Further on, Fort Tregear was established at a point on the Darjau Klang which had an ample supply of water.

On 22 February 1890 a reconnaissance party under Captain Hall with Captain Shakespear as Intelligence Officer was sent forward to make contact with a party from the Haka Column at Thau. They marched to Sangau, forded the Kaladan – the same river as I forded going in the opposite direction and known further north as the Thio Va – and made camp at Saishih, six miles short of Thau, which was reached the following day after a hard march. While they were building shelters the Haka party under Captain Rundall emerged from the jungle, and there was much mutual congratulation and clasping of hands. They now learnt that Thangzang where Rundall's party had camped the previous night harboured the heads of Lieutenant Stewart and the two Europeans who had been killed with him, and these grisly relics together with some of their belongings were retrieved, after pressure had been applied.

'East of Thau the country was much more open,' noted a senior medical officer accompanying the Lungleh Column, 'and the change from dense bamboo jungle to open pine forests and grassy valleys where the violet and the daisy bloomed under foot was a most welcome one to the weary travellers.' Having covered a hundred and fifty rugged miles, the column started back to Lushai, taking the opportunity of releasing captives on the way, sometimes forcibly for many

were unwilling to give up their condition of bondage which was the only way of life they remembered.

I had agreed to make a detour to Vaphai in the Lushai Hills to enable Nei Hrang to get married, for which I understood that arrangements had been made. It was a stiff climb on the far side of the Thio Va to the outskirts of Chawngtui, where a large number of his family and friends came to greet us with hot tea and *zu*. They accompanied us along the rim of the valley to Vaphai, where I was installed in a screened-off corner of the house of the young headman Lal Ro Khuma. It seemed a prosperous village, the surrounding country was greener and grassier, the hills less precipitous than in the Chin Hills, and the social atmosphere, too, was in strong contrast to what I had experienced in Ni Kam's Haka village, largely due to the predominating influence of the Baptist Mission. *Zu* flowed less freely, and though everyone was friendly there was some constraint, felt particularly when we were invited to a service in the chapel that evening, a performance I could not help comparing with the impromptu party that had developed at Klangte.

The chapel was stoutly built, clean inside and furnished with pews every bit as uncomfortable as those in an English parish church. At the east end was a wooden pulpit with steps leading up to it, and on each side of the nave choir-stalls facing inwards. A hurricane-lamp was suspended from the ceiling, and in the centre aisle near the front hung two large drums. When we came in they were in the middle of a hymn, to which men were beating time on the drums. The congregation consisted mainly of women, for the men were tired after working all day in the *jhums*. The hymn concluded, the elder deputizing for the absent pastor intoned a prayer, and there followed a free-for-all in which the congregation prayed or chanted or sang as the mood took each of them, one impassioned bass voice outvying the rest. One of the drummers came forward and read passages from the Baibal, then delivered a sermon, all in the Lushai language which I did not know. Another hymn was sung, to a familiar tune that yet had an exotic overtone; there were more prayers; and the service ended with what I took to be the Creed.

An idle day followed during which I sampled the local *zufa* – a milky form of *zu* – went for a stroll, and chatted to Lal Ro Khuma, while his sister, a pretty girl of fourteen, busied herself bringing water and firewood, spinning cotton, never still for a moment. She wore a blouse and short black petticoat round which she had wound a patterned Lushai shawl. In the afternoon a pig was killed and the village invited to a feast in the headman's house, but not to celebrate Nei

Hrang's marriage, because for some reason the arrangements had gone wrong. Big bowls of rice and cooked pork were placed on the floor, and the guests sat round them, men and women segregated, a special bowl being provided for the children while the headman's wife looked on and encouraged them. The village glee club came in after the meal was over and entertained us with hymns, invisible voices from the darkness since the lamp hanging from the rafters shed no light in their direction. In an interval the choir-master made a speech, in which he said that, hearing my store of cigarettes was running low, the girls of the village had made me some; and one by one they came up and handed me a little bundle of home-made *biris*, some smiling frankly, some serious, others turning away shyly. When I had made a speech of thanks 'God Save the King' was sung, but it was not the end, for two more songs followed, a song of welcome, then one expressing sorrow that I would be leaving in the morning.

*

While Carey was on sick leave in England during the rainy season of 1890 Captain Rundall took his place as Political Officer, Northern Chin Hills. Although the remaining Siyin clans now formally submitted, the tribe continued to give trouble, especially in the matter of cutting the telegraph-line; but Rundall's main task was to curb the Kamhaus who were again raiding in the plains. To deal with them he established a base at Tiddim, to which place the mule track to Fort White – now relocated near No.5 Stockade – was extended, and detachments were sent out to operate against the offending villages.

An uneasy state of affairs also existed in the south, which came to a head when Thetta, a large Haka village, broke out in open hostility, perpetrating a series of outrages in which a British police officer and several others were killed. When the village was attacked on 2 January 1891 a British officer and two sepoys were shot dead, and so stubborn was the defence that the attackers were forced to withdraw. Tamely accepting a paltry fine of guns and livestock and the promise of future good behaviour, the force returned to Haka. Another hostile village, Shurkhua, only submitted after it had been shelled by two guns of the 2nd Bengal Mountain Battery.

As in the previous year, columns from north and south converged on Tashon where a durbar was held and the second year's tribute collected; but the south was still far from subdued. The post at Zokhua a few miles south-east of Haka was attacked, for which a fine was exacted from the village nearby. More serious was the opposition

put up by the Klangklangs whose main village lay to the west of Haka. A large body of them attacked a force of a hundred sepoys of the Garhwal Rifles under Lieutenant Mocatta while they were halted for their morning meal beside the La-aw Va. In the ensuing exchange two sepoys were killed and a British lieutenant and thirteen others wounded. Carrying the dead and wounded, since they had only brought two hospital doolies with them, they began their slow retreat to Haka forty miles away. Another fight took place at the Pupi stream, in which an estimated five hundred Chins took part, and only brisk work by the mountain guns prevented a disaster. Rations and ammunition began to run low, they were continuously harassed on the march, and things were looking really black when a relief party sent from Haka caught up with them as they approached Klangklang. Casualties had been five killed and fifteen wounded.

No punitive expedition against the villages responsible could be mounted that year, for every available transport coolie had been sent to support the operations in Manipur which had been urgently undertaken in retribution for the deaths of the Chief Commissioner of Assam, his escort commander Colonel Skene and three other Europeans, who had been done to death at the instigation of the Senapati, an episode recounted in earlier chapters. First things first; but sometime the Klangklangs would have to be brought to a better frame of mind, in preparation for which a base was established near Shurkhua.

And there had been achievements during the season as well as setbacks. The Tashons had suffered the indignity of having a permanent post established at Falam in the centre of their tribal area, a visible sign of their subordination to the occupying power. In the north the Kamhaus and Soktes had been brought to heel by a column operating from Fort White, and detachments had been constantly on the move, visiting the more distant villages in order to acquaint them with the requirements of the new régime. Carey returned from leave in November and joined Captain Rose, who had taken over military command in the north from Rundall. They had a busy year ahead of them, including the Lushai Relief March which has already been described.

*

The letters Lieutenant J.K. Watson of the King's Royal Rifle Corps wrote to his father, a major-general, provide a close-up of what campaigning in the Chin Hills in the 1891-92 season was really like. He and a hundred men of the KRR formed one component of the Baungshe Column which, based on the newly constructed fort at

Shurkhua, was to operate in the southern part of the hills. Also with the column were a hundred rifles of the 12th Burma Battalion, fifty Madras Pioneers and two guns of the Mountain Battery, each detachment under the command of a British officer. The baggage was to be transported by 850 coolies.

They rendezvous'd at Minywa close under the foothills on the Myittha river, whose marshes provided an ideal breeding-ground for the anophiles mosquito, thus ensuring a high malaria rate among the soldiers and coolies throughout the campaign. On arrival there they were faced with administrative shortcomings about which Watson fumed at length to his father. Not only had there been a slip-up somewhere concerning the issue of boots but – perhaps incredibly to those who have not served in the army – no arrangements had been made by the Commissariat Department for provisioning the column. 'So you have the extraordinary and I suppose well-nigh unprecedented state of affairs – namely, a column starving at its base at the very outset of operations.' Somehow the default was made good without those responsible being court-martialled, as Watson and his brother officers thought they deserved.

For other reasons he viewed the coming exertions with less than enthusiasm.

> And tomorrow, Christmas Day, we make a start towards Shurkhua, which is about 7 marches from here in an almost westerly direction. The road is only a small track throughout, and we've got some ghastly looking ranges of hills to get across.

The pioneers had gone ahead to prepare a camp site at the first halting place, and the rest of the column would follow the next day, observing all military precautions, though Watson was sceptical of their efficacy in the prevailing conditions. The path either had thick jungle on either side or formed a mere ledge traversing a precipitous slope, making it impossible for flanking parties to be sent out. Had they been so minded, the Chins (he believed) could have caused havoc among the laden coolie train strung out in single file over some four miles. Malaria soon began to take its toll, making marching a misery for those who contracted it. 'With luck perhaps you can just manage to march along to the next camp, but Heaven help the fever-sick man who has to be carried along the hill paths in a hospital doolie – bump, bump, bump – and as likely as not dropped over the *khud*.' Now and then in his letters, written when he could snatch an odd moment and often under uncomfortable circumstances, Watson manages to bring a scene vividly to life, as in this description of Christmas night at the first camp.

> Dinner over, the sound ones got round a big camp-fire and, with all solemnity, drank the health of those at home. It was a striking sight, looking through the bamboo jungle where scores of camp-fires blazed. Round some were gathered Tommies discussing their tots of rum; further on a group of swarthy warriors, Pathans of the Mountain Battery, nearly all men with three medals on their breasts, and thundering fine hardworking men they are. You can just see two little screw-guns, and behind them the double row of battery mules. Away to the right there is a great blaze of light: the little Gurkha coolies are cooking their meal.

Climbing up and down along the hill paths all day long, day after day, placed a sufficient strain on the men, weakened as many of them were by the ravages of malaria, but the mules fared even worse, many losing their footing and going over the *khud*, often injuring themselves so severely that they had to be shot. Rear-guard duty for the men was particularly exacting, for they had to remain behind in order to bring in any soldiers or coolies who had fallen by the wayside on the march, usually not getting into camp until late at night. On 31 December they woke 'to find all standing water frozen, and everything stiff with hoar frost', and Shurkhua visible across the valley four miles away, perched up on the hillside. On the march that day two mules slipped and fell six hundred feet. One broke its back and had to be destroyed, the other miraculously surviving unscathed.

The post was situated beside the road leading to Haka and overlooked the village, which had been shelled to good effect the previous year. Accompanying the column were a number of Chin 'friendlies' who, having themselves submitted, had come along to enjoy the discomfiture of their fellows. As a race they failed to impress Watson, who found them bumptious, truculent-looking devils. He noted their oiled hair worn long in a topknot and their fondness for *zu*, which he found not bad stuff, rather like cider; but, as he wrote to his father, 'the Chin always drinks for "drunky" and not for "drinky"'. Later, when he had had a better opportunity of gauging their qualities, his opinion of them rose. 'In his native land with a perfect knowledge of every hill-track and hiding place, and with his wonderful endurance and activity, the Chin is almost invulnerable.'

Early in January 1892 the column began its promenade, striking south from Shurkhua down to the Boinu river, which they had to ford six times, then climbing the steep slope on the other side, a climb made hazardous by a falling mule that survived with a few cuts about the head a drop of five hundred feet. From Aika they marched to Lotaw, to which village the base was moved from Shurkhua because it had a better water supply and was more central for the purpose of

their operations. There was disappointment when the inhabitants of Lungno, who had shown signs of offering resistance, thought better of it and met the Political Officer Macnabb and his small escort under Watson outside their village with gifts of *zu*, fruit, chickens and eggs. Though the soldiers were denied their 'bit of fun', they found when they later visited the village its approaches bristling with *panjis* which would have caused casualties among men and mules.

By this time two British privates had died from fever with complications, and when the column reached Kailing all the sick as well as the two mountain guns which had proved a nuisance to transport were sent back to base at Lotaw. Watson's original one hundred men of the KRR were now reduced to fifty-three effectives, 'a good instance,' he wrote, 'of the survival of the fittest'.

The column which had been proceeding in a south-westerly direction now turned north, climbing to the top of a ridge ten thousand feet high, then descending a spur that led gradually to the Rua Va, a march everyone enjoyed.

> There was a fairly clear view to the east, and I must say as one saw range after range rolling away into mist it *did* seem rather wonderful how you could get a column of 300 men with some 1000 coolies and followers through such a country – a country which yields practically nothing for the sustenance of such a force. Away west it was more hazy, and after three or four ridges there was nothing to be seen but a dead straight line of mist which almost hoaxed us into thinking that we were looking at the sea.
>
> There was a rare air up there, which made one's ears tingle. The path for 6 or 7 miles ran right along the top of the narrow ridge, the hill-top mostly bare, but now and again you would come to several acres of oak and rhododendron in a blaze of blossom, and here the ground was white with hoar frost. Wild flowers seemed scarce, but there were a great amount of everlastings.

On 30 January the column reached Haka, bitterly cold at that season, where Watson learned of his posting as Transport Officer in charge of the 380-strong Darjeeling Coolie Corps supporting the Klangklang Column, whose task it was to punish the four or five villages which had taken part in the attack on Lieutenant Mocatta's party the previous year. It had a strenuous month but, except that Hriangkhan was shelled into submission and Watson led a bloodless foray to Hmunlipi nestling in a horseshoe of hills, there was no fighting. These villages were plundered of thatching grass and planks for the construction of a post overlooking the La-aw Va. The weather had already broken when they reached their farthest point north at Klangpi, a village midway between Ni Kam's Klangte and Nei Hrang's

15. *Political Officer interviewing Chin chiefs*

Vaphai at a distance from each of twelve miles as the crow flies.

Back in Haka on 4 March Watson's luck still held, and he found himself posted with his coolies to the Tashon Column which was to occupy Falam and operate against the central tribes in conjunction with the Nwengal [Sokte] Column from Fort White. He was also made Transport Officer with a hundred and fifty mules under his care. It, too, proved to be a bloodless affair. On 13 March after a long climb the column reached the top of the ridge giving a view up the valley where Falam lay, at the bottom of which though out of sight flowed the Manipur river. Falam was hidden by a spur, but immediately below them lay the now-deserted village of Tashon, where the coolie transport halted while the main body advanced on Falam. It was a pretty sight, wrote Watson, seeing the column move off: 'Men and mules looked like so many flies on a wall'. When the Nwengal Column joined up with them, 'both columns combined marched through Falam village, just by way of show, I imagine. . . . As my coolies were not required to take part in this parade and as I've seen quite enough Chin villages to satisfy my curiosity, I stayed at home'.

But there were still more villages to be visited as the season's work continued, more mules lost their lives, and the general wear and tear began to play on Watson's nerves.

> All small luxuries in the way of stores ran out long ago; clothes in rags; boots gone to pieces; men looking fairly fit but thin as rails and fine as sticks. Some of our fellows (about 30) have been on all three columns, and four months' continual marching, with no change from the everlasting diet of bully-beef and biscuit, is bound to leave its mark. All this and hardly so much as a shot fired. You must own it's disappointing.

The more so when he heard that, while he was enjoying the pleasant camp 'in an open grassy valley with the Lai Va stream running through it, the ground simply carpeted with violets and other wild flowers, here and there patches of rhododendron bushes all ablaze with crimson blossom', there had been a real fight at Shurkhua in which some thirty-five Chins had been killed and another twenty wounded, as against British casualties of one sepoy killed and one wounded. The village was burnt.

The Tashon Column having done its work, Watson led his coolies back to Haka in alternating heat and rain and was not sorry in mid-April to 'start down the hill' again.

*

1893, a year in which a serious rebellion of the Siyins and Soktes had to be quelled, saw a reorganization of the administration of the Chin Hills. Falam was constituted the civil and military headquarters with a Political Officer in charge and an APO responsible for the affairs of the Tashons, Zahaus and Hualgnos. Another APO at Tiddim kept an eye on the Siyins, Soktes and Kamhaus, and a third APO at Haka dealt with the Hakas, Klangklangs and their neighbours. Much the same administrative structure obtained at the time of my 1947 journey. It is surely to the credit of the handful of British civil officers, though backed by a military presence, that despite local disturbances that were quickly put down they soon had the tribes in a complaisant frame of mind; and over the years a strong bond of trust was built up between the Chins and the foreigners they had at first so strongly resisted.

In December 1894 a newly raised Military Police Battalion called the Chin Hills Battalion composed of Sikhs, Pathans, Garhwalis and Gurkhas with Captain Whiffin of the 18th Bengal Lancers as its first commandant relieved the 1st Burma Rifles in the Northern Chin Hills. Two years later, increased from six to ten companies, the battalion took over from the military in the Southern Chin Hills as well, its distribution then being Falam – Tiddim – Fort White – Haka. In early years its principal task was the disarming of the villages that had not yet submitted. The first Chins, thirty Siyins, were recruited in 1910, and by 1915 there was an entire Chin company consisting of Siyins and Hakas in equal numbers. Chin recruitment was given impetus by the departure of many of the Indian soldiers for active service during the Great War; as the then commandant recorded: 'Men wept to be allowed to go'. Next to be recruited, in 1916, were some Hualgnos, a tribe living in the south-west of the Falam Sub-Division and closely related to the eastern Lushais.

That year three Chin havildars were promoted jemadar and left the battalion to accompany the Chin Labour Corps to France. It is difficult now to appreciate what a momentous experience it was for people for whom, as I had been told by chief Hlur Mung who also accompanied the Corps to France, Kalewa had hitherto been the end of the world, to entrust themselves to a troopship crossing a seemingly endless expanse of salt water to some impossibly distant continent. Just how traumatic it was is attested by the fact that the Hakas in the south and the Kukis in the extreme north on the Manipur border, afraid of being press-ganged and forcibly sent overseas, rose in rebellion after many years of tranquillity; and from 1916 to 1918 the battalion was heavily engaged in restoring order in the hills.

The battalion's responsibilities were greatly increased in 1922 when it took over six posts in the Upper Chindwin valley several hundred miles away from headquarters at Falam. Between the wars the racial mix of its soldiers was constantly changing, its composition in 1925 being two companies each of Garhwalis, Gurkhas, Kumaonis and Chins. And it was frequently called upon to provide columns to operate far from home: in 1925 in the Arakan Hill Tracts, next year round Kanpatlet in the extreme south of the Chin Hills, in 1929 in the Naga Hills. Then, in 1930, a serious rebellion broke out in the Delta district of Burma at the instigation of a monk, Saya San, primarily in protest against a system which permitted unscrupulous Indian moneylenders to acquire a substantial proportion of the agricultural land in the country. The battalion provided four detachments, three of them composed of Chins and commanded by Chin officers, to take part in the operations against the rebels, which continued for two years before order was restored.

Experiments were made in recruiting some of the other Chin tribes – Chinboks, Zahaus, Soktes, Kamhaus, Kukis (later known as Khongsais) – but not all proved satisfactory, and by the time the Japanese invaded Burma in 1942 the battalion's Chin component consisted of one company each of Siyins, Hakas and Khongsais and a composite company of Hualgnos and Zahaus. There was also a company each of Gurkhas and Kumaonis. When that year the ill-equipped and ill-trained formations, which were all the British were able to pit against the Japanese, were unceremoniously bundled out of Burma through the passes to Assam, the battalion retired in accordance with a prearranged plan to their hills where they remained – the only regular unit to do so – in contact with the enemy, preventing them from infiltrating westwards into India. It was a time of muddle and heroism and conflicting loyalties, for whilst the overwhelming majority of the Chins kept faith, some chiefs, seeing the sorry débâcle as the end of British rule, made overtures to the Japanese; and there were cases in the battalion of soldiers deserting to their villages in order to be with their families when the expected onslaught came.

In 1944 they were relieved by 71st Punjab Regiment and retired to Imphal, whence they were flown to Shillong for a rest and refit. Six months later the battalion joined the Lushai Brigade at Ywasi and led the successful attack on Gangaw. It was then put on a pack-mule basis and given the rôle of cutting the Japanese line of communication between Tilin and Pakkoku. Its final wartime exploit was to advance on a line Yedu – Ngapa – Minbu in order to deceive the Japanese into thinking it was a brigade striking to cross the Irrawaddy at a point far

to the south of the real crossing planned near Pagan. During this time the battalion marched some eight hundred miles, won ninety-nine decorations and remained continuously in action until June 1945, shortly before the Japanese surrender.

My own journey, undertaken in the aftermath of these achievements, was in the nature of a farewell, for in a few months the British would be gone, leaving the Chins to their own devices.

After much hand-shaking and a second breakfast of a cup of tea and a boiled egg outside somebody's house we left Vaphai at 7a.m. on 23 May and walked for three and a half hours in pelting rain to Leilet, recrossing the Thio Va, now thigh-deep. Having gone ahead, I mistook the path and went some miles out of my way before being put right by some Chins I met on the road, but reached Zawngte at 3.30 in the afternoon, a village only a short march distant from Klangpi, the farthest point north reached by the Tashon Column in 1892. The rain had brought on to the road huge frogs, and red and yellow land-crabs scuttled about. We stayed the next night at Klangkhua and went on to Klangte, where we rested for a day. Ni Kam came on with us, and we had an up-and-down march via Sihsang to Khuapho. There an old pensioner of the battalion, Khul Dun, a good-looking man with, unusually, a moustache and the beginning of a beard, called on me in the bungalow and, the talk turning to *shikar* as it often does with Chins, asked if he could borrow the .303 rifle we had with us. I let him have it with five rounds, and three quarters of an hour later he returned with a dead barking-deer slung across his shoulders. Heaving it down at my feet, he pulled four rounds out of his pocket and gave them back to me. We ate well that evening.

At 7.15 a.m. we moved off in the rain, which cleared after half an hour, and there was a straight and level five-mile walk before we began to climb, up and up into the cold cloud, then downhill through wild, fir-covered country with now and then a view of the Timit Va, a fast river flowing between cultivated fields. Another climb, a sweep round the rim of the hill, and so down to Haka, seen from the distance as a huddle of roofs among trees. Here we stayed a few days and left again on 2 June, spending the night at Chunsung where there was a sick mithan that had been mauled by a leopard. Where the path divides at Ramklau Ni Kam left me to return home. He had been the best of travel-companions, always at my side to explain or interpret, as unabashed before chiefs as before coolie girls. With his Haka topknot surmounting a triangular, elfin face and his gentle disposition he was in strong contrast to my other companion, the gangling Nei Hrang, a Christian Zahau; but he, too, was faithful and attentive.

And so to Falam, thence setting out after a few days for Tiddim on our return journey, for my leave was already overspent. We turned off to call on chief Van Hmung at Tashon and found him much weaker, unable to sit up or eat. A bull mithan was tethered in the courtyard of his house in readiness for the funeral feast. At Lumbang chief Hlur Mung entertained us in his house. Our way took us, but in the reverse direction, along the route of one of the early expeditions, past Pinetree Camp and Bamboo Camp to Fort White. We found time for a brief visit to Khuasak in the Siyin Valley and saw among the wooden memorial tablets outside the village one recording three Siyin names and the number of Burmese they had killed or captured and, underneath, the statement that on 28 April 1894 Captain Arthur Bentinck Murray had been killed there.

Daily rain in Tiddim precluded any hope of a vehicle leaving for the plains until, on 14 June, the clouds lifted at last. During my stay there two months before I had enjoyed the hospitality of the elderly Kamhau chief, Pum Za Mang, a jovial, Burmanized Chin with a figure like the Buddha. He now lent me his Dodge 15-cwt. truck, and in the morning we drove off in a light drizzle and coming over Kennedy Peak ran into cloud. After a few hours' motoring the green plains appeared below us, threaded by a winding river; and looking back as we zigzagged down the last slope we saw ridge after ridge stretching upwards and away into the distance, the farthest and highest obscured by cloud. From the clammy, oppressive heat of the plains the hills rose like a barrier, keeping their secrets. A whole world had closed like a book.

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This is a lively narrative of some dramatic incidents among the hill tribes on this oft-forgotten frontier of India between 1857 and 1947. There are chapters on the Lushais, Nagas, Lakhers, Abors, Chins and those responsible for pacifying and administering them, concluding with the author's personal memories of the Chins.

The author, John Whitehead, first became involved with them during the Second World War. After serving with the Mahrattas in the latter stages of the Burma campaign he was posted as training officer to the Chin Hills Battalion, then being converted to an artillery regiment, in which capacity he remained in Burma until 1948.

Since his return to the United Kingdom he has made a special study of the north-eastern frontier of India and is at present completing an anthology chosen from the travel-books of the botanist and Himalayan explorer F. Kingdon-Ward.

★ ★ ★

John Whitehead has published, besides many essays, articles and reviews, three volumes of poetry and more recently the following books concerned with the work of W. Somerset Maugham: *A Traveller in Romance: Uncollected Writings: The Critical Heritage* (with Anthony Curtis); and *Maugham: A Reappraisal.*

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