

THE HILLS OF NEPAL.

I.

UNKNOWN NEPAL

By

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INTRODUCTION

“ JOURNEY TO NEPAL ”

“ ROAD TO KATHMANDU ” *by* SIR CLUTHA MACKENZIE



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P R E F A C E

(Designed to be read.)

THIS book is really of pictorial and musical origin. My friend, Theon Wilkinson, brought back from Nepal a collection of photographs which is unique. During my own travels with the Gurkhas, I was able to learn a large number of their songs, of which no written score exists outside their country, or in it. As Nepal is one of the last ancient closed countries in the world, it seemed particularly worthwhile that such rarities should have a larger public.

There are, of course, a few books about the country, some of them rare, some racy, one or two even reliable. However, much of what is now in print is based on a limited observation, since few travellers are able—indeed, allowed—to venture far out of the valley of Kathmandu. The Terai is known to a few lucky hunters; but it is no healthy place for Europeans to linger in: and great tracts of the northern part of the country have never been crossed by a white man at all.

The Gurkha soldier has contributed so much to England's military history that he deserves to be known and understood: therefore I have tried, as far as possible, to make my story that of the Nepalese peasant, the villager, hillman and farmer, rather than to indulge in panegyrics on the carvings of the capital or the tigers of the Terai.

There is too, as in all books, a selfish motive. We,

who are pleased to call ourselves civilised and progressive, often lose sight of the purpose of civilisation and the direction of progress, and make these abstract concepts an end in themselves. Spending the greater part of our existence in accordance with rules which we did not frame, moving in the shadow of powers and fears which we can only dimly comprehend, living after the false philosophy of the importance of time, we seem to have lost a secret which the Gurkhas still have. Their clocks, when they have any, are always wrong; they scratch the surface of their little fields, and plant their rice, and the monsoon sweeps it away; they build their house upon the rock, and the ground opens and swallows it up: they continue to smile. Amongst them I have found it possible to put aside the pressing pettinesses of civilisation, and taste something of their simple pleasure, in the sunshine, in food when one is hungry, in the hope of dawn and the quiet of dusk, in dance and song, story and riddle. They are no Romantic's dream of a Noble Savage, no poet's vision of a lost Arcadia. Their monsoons and malaria, the indigence of their farmers and the infertility of their fields are real: and so is their happiness.

Civilisation is beginning to impinge upon them. Tourists follow the flag, and commercialisation treads the path of commerce. I would speak of the Gurkhas whilst their clocks are still wrong, and they have time to be happy.

This book is the work of many hands, and may seem to contain views which are varied, if not inconsistent: certainly its spelling may alarm the scholar. It is, of course, impossible to render the

PREFACE

different languages of the country exactly into English spelling : I have simply tried to make it as phonetic as I could, without using a special alphabet.

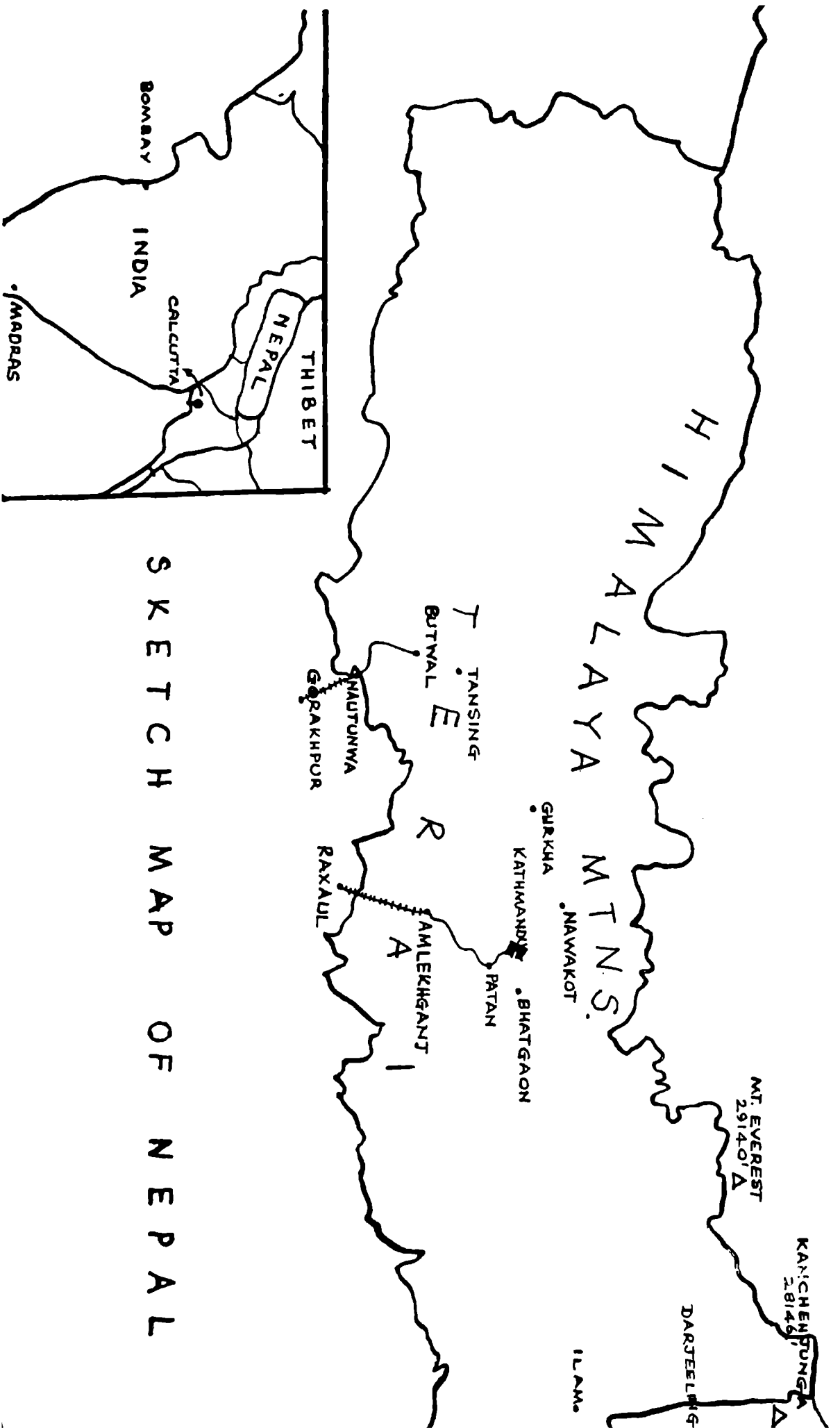
I have to thank many people for all that they have contributed to this book.

I have especially to thank Sir Clutha Mackenzie the author of the *Road to Kathmandu*, and in doing so would like to record my admiration for one who despite the handicap of total blindness ventured over very difficult country to help war blinded Gurkhas and in so doing produced this remarkable account.

R. N. W. B.

Bradford, Yorkshire.

January, 1951.



S K E T C H M A P O F N E P A L

JOURNEY TO NEPAL

I HAD been with the Gurkhas in the army for nearly three years, and the characteristic which had most impressed me was their happiness. They were invariably smiling, even when things were unfavourable, and it would have been quite natural to grumble: but grumbling and grouching were entirely alien to them. They were always ready to smile and to help, and whenever Johnny Gurkha met Tommy Atkins they would soon be chatting and exchanging cigarettes, although neither knew a word of the other's language.

I was already familiar with his martial repute, and with the curved fighting knife, the kukri, with which he had won it; but I wanted to find out what sort of a person he was, what sort of country he lived in, and why he seemed always to be so happy. With these questions in mind, I decided to take my next leave in the Darjeeling district, which borders on the eastern frontier of Nepal.

The train pulled out of Sealdah station in Calcutta on a hot, sticky August day. The platform was crowded with Indians draped in dirty white rags and wearing either a cloth coloured turban or a little white pork pie hat. A tea vendor, with his wooden pannier of earthen cups, cried "Hindu chae!"—"Tea for Hindus!" A water carrier ladled water from his bucket into the cupped hands of thirsty travellers. Blind or lame beggars, and dirty, unwanted children, covered with festering sores, wailed pathetically for

money—"Baksheesh, sahib, baksheesh!" There were red-bearded Pathans, each carrying a big stick, and a wandering Sikh dentist with his little leather bag, ready to put in a gold tooth for you while you waited: rich Kashmiri were selling worthless trinkets to the British soldiery: bangle sellers from Bengal offered fine stocks of peacock feather fans and gaily coloured handkerchiefs to the Gurkhas going home on leave: an unshaven barber worked on a customer standing on the platform; and travellers slept all over the station among bundles of their belongings, apparently undisturbed by the unceasing whines and wails of "Baksheesh" and "Chae," and only waking to spit the alarming red juice of the betel-nut.

After a seemingly endless two days of travelling through similar stations, I arrived at Siliguri, which is comparatively free from beggars and dirt. I had to change trains here, and took the opportunity to have a wonderful curry meal at the station restaurant. This consisted of a well disguised vegetable, and some chopped chicken, hidden in a mess of boiled, unhusked rice.

On walking to the other side of the barrier, I came face to face with a small-gauge train, so tiny that it seemed rather as if it had come out of an English amusement park. I took my seat in a modern observation compartment, beautifully upholstered in blue leather. The wooden benches of the third class coaches were packed with Gurkha sepoy's back from the war, some of them on their first leaves home in Eastern Nepal.

For the first few miles the train chugged along through flat, jungle-covered country: then, quite suddenly, it began to climb. It turned and twisted its way up a steep gradient. The track kept crossing

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the road, as if competing with it, to see which could gain the most height in the shortest distance. The train would rattle over the road, burrow into a tunnel, and emerge a few seconds later some twenty feet higher up. In several places it breasted a steep rise, and then carried on down a few yards of level siding. The fireman then got out, and altered some points ; after which the train shunted up the next slope backwards. Again the points were changed, and the train took the ensuing rise forwards, and so on, zig-zagging in the most terrifying manner. From the carriage window I could see a mass of trees and scrub, looking like so much moss, in the bottom of the valley, thousands of feet below me.

The Gurkha sepoy disembarked at Ghum, to draw their pay from the Eastern Recruiting Depot, before beginning their five, six, or ten day march home. A few miles further on, the train drew into Darjeeling, the railhead. Here a crowd of men offered to take my luggage to the hotel ; but when I handed it to them, they immediately carried it over to the women-folk, who did the actual portering, the men acting merely as agents. The women seemed to make little of a pile of trunks and cases ; they put a rope round all the luggage, and then attached it to a band (namlo) which went across their foreheads.

There are two bazaars in Darjeeling : up on the highroad is the European centre, with shops and cinemas, and down below is the typical Oriental market, with its wandering crowds and open-fronted stalls. Second-hand clothes shops are numerous, selling anything from a worn mess jacket of the Green Howards Regiment to a Chinese mandarin's winter underwear. Junk shops deal in old tin cans, empty medicine bottles, and the knobs off bedsteads.

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To this market come traders from Thibet and Bhutan, wearing high boots and curious fur hats from which dirty, ragged locks protrude. Farmers from Sikkim and Nepal bargain for their year's provisions, or have their fortunes told by the many astrologers who do business here. These astrologers crouch over weird figures scrawled on their slates, and lay down the law to the credulous villagers, who fear anything that is predicted ill-omened.

In the valleys surrounding this busy centre, tea bushes grow, beneath a jagged row of snow-capped mountains, half hidden in mist. This mist continues above the range in a belt; and out of it, seeming to hang in the clouds, is a splendid, solitary peak—Kinchenjunga. At first it is as if you were seeing a mirage; for it hangs there like some castle in a fairy tale, unreal, real. There, over in the west, are the mountains of Nepal.

Next morning I set off on the trek, with Padam, my orderly. We left the heavy kit behind us at the hotel, and carried only the barest necessities, as we returned along the four mile stretch of tarmac road to Ghum. It was a wet, misty day, not unlike a traditional November day in England. Even the flowers along the road looked more English than they should have done. Hydrangeas, tiger lilies and gladioli grew in the gardens. There was even a rose in one. The wild flowers were very like those of England, differing only a little in appearance—bugle, dead nettle, trefoil, meadowsweet, daisies and buttercups. Little brooks and waterfalls ran down the fern-covered slopes on either side of the road. The very trees seemed somehow familiar, and I felt that I was in a country which I already knew.

Just as we reached Ghum, a train came in along



II.

THE ROAD TO KATHMANDU.

the unfenced track beside the road. I joined the milling crowd of Gurkhas who got down and walked round the bazaar. Most of the shops were kept by Gurkha pensioners. Up a side street which leads to the Buddhist temple are the shops owned by the kukri makers. A ring of hammers on tempered steel greets you as you pass their doors. There are one or two gold and silversmiths making ear-rings, nose-rings, bangles, bracelets, necklaces and nose-studs. Further on are the shops where madals, a kind of tomtom, are made. Most of the other shops sell provisions, and are well stocked with spices, mace, cardamon, peppercorns and red and green chillis. I went into one of the eating-houses in the main street, and sat down at a wooden table. "Where do you come from and where are you going to?" is the question with which conversation is usually opened between strangers. This inquisitive and naïve method is typical of the eastern peasant, and very unlike the standard comments on the weather usually made to strangers in England. I said that I came from England, and was just wandering round. A Subedar, a Viceroy commissioned officer, came into the shop, and, hearing what I was saying, invited me to come and sleep up at the depot for the night. I thanked him and accepted.

The day had started at six, and so far I had had only some spiced tea to drink, and nothing to eat. I asked for food, and was given a large brass plate stacked about six inches high with rice, and a little brass bowl containing a thick gravy made with lentils. As it was growing dark an old soldier came into the eating house, and, on seeing me, immediately invited me to go and have a drink with him. He led the way out into the winding street, dimly lit with oil lamps

in the shops, to a two roomed wooden shack belonging to a friend of his. We sat down at a wooden bench beneath the only picture in his room, a photograph of the King and Queen of England, cut from an illustrated paper. Some rum was brought in, and drunk neat in large metal tumblers, while stories of the regiment were retold.

As we talked, the daughter of the house brought me an omelet, and filled the brass cups with some red mixture called "orange water." One sip assured me that this potent brew bore no resemblance to orange juice. The girl was charming, smiling all the time, not the least shy or reticent, and joining in with the conversation. She wore a dark maroon blouse, and a long, dark skirt of some rough woven cloth: wound round her waist were several yards of once-white cotton. Her legs and feet were bare, and her only ornaments were thick bangles of silver round each ankle. As it seemed to be the custom of the women of the country to wear ear-rings and nose-rings, I asked why she was not so attired. "Oh, she is not married," came the reply. "It is only when they are married that women can demand all a man's money."

The young boy in the house was admiring himself in a mirror, and I asked him why he kept his pigtail. "Kuni!" said he, giving the rather abrupt, but typical answer, which can be translated as "Dunno!" For this reply the boy had his ears pulled by a member of the family, and then he shyly admitted that it was because his father and mother had told him to keep it so, and their parents had told them. "I had heard that it was so that God could pull you up to heaven when you die," I said: and "Kuni!" answered the boy once more.

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After a few more drinks, we left the shack, and trudged up the steep hill to the Depot. The Subedar showed me to a stone bungalow, where I lay down on a string bed framed with wood, and slept enthusiastically.

Padam woke me at about five o'clock, and produced some tea with so much milk and sugar in it that it was almost of the consistency of treacle. However, it tasted very well, and served to wake me up. We climbed down the hill to the bazaar at Ghum, which was busy even at that hour, and set out on the rough, downhill road towards the frontier. We exchanged greetings with a road gang who were singing what sounded like a Hebridean lilt, as they pulled a roller at the end of a long rope. As the morning went on, the number of people on the road increased: most of them were on foot, but some prosperous looking men rode by us on horseback. Nearly all the travellers were Mongolian-featured hillmen, hurrying to the market at Darjeeling; one or two, however, were long-faced Indian traders, chewing betel-nut and carrying tin boxes on their heads. The hill people carry their luggage as the Darjeeling coolie women do, with the "namlo," that is the band round their foreheads. Practically every man of substance carried an umbrella, hooked into his coat collar, and dangling down behind.

After about seven miles, we came to Suki Pokri. Here there is a street, perhaps a hundred and fifty yards long, lined with open-fronted shops raised above street level by verandas of baked mud. As Padam belonged to the Thapa caste, we had to find a Thapa house for our tea. With this we ate some fried ata-bread and a potato chutney. Indian villagers generally eat only once a day, a large meal of rice

being taken at about six in the evening. I saw no reason for keeping to this practice, and, whenever we stopped for a cup of tea, I always looked out for a Pouri, a kind of unleavened bread baked in fat, and a mixture of crushed vegetables to eat with it.

The eating-house contained a number of tin trunks. Padam explained that soldiers coming home from a battalion bring their friends' luggage also, and leave it in such places as this. Then when the old soldiers of the villages come down to the Depot at Ghum to collect their pensions, they collect the boxes too, and take them to their families.

We did not wait long in Suki, but set off down the hill towards Manibungen, the frontier village. We had not gone far—scarcely a couple of hundred yards—when we met a man with a pony, who hailed us as long-lost brothers. We recognised him as Ranbahadur Tamang, an ex-muleteer and lorry-driver in our regiment, who had been demobilised some months earlier. Having dealt for so long with mules in the army, he was determined, when released, to buy a horse: and now he acted as a carrier between his village in Nepal, and the Darjeeling bazaar. He said that he was very happy now, for he had just married a girl in his village, and with his other wife at the Darjeeling end of his journey he was assured of comfort after his day's travel, whichever way he was going. Accordingly he needed no persuasion to return with us to Nepal.

Ran asked me whereabouts in his country I was going, and, as I had only heard of one town in East Nepal, I decided that we would go there. Luckily Ran's village was on the way, and he put our packs on the pony. The party, now increased to three humans and one animal, went on down the road in

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a slight mist and drizzle. Every so often we left the road, and took a short cut through the jungle, following the tracks made by the villagers on their way to market, and joining the road again some fifty feet lower down. Groups of villagers went by us in parties of six or more, walking in single file and carrying sticks and kukris in their cummerbunds to ward off both the wild beasts and the robbers.

A visitor unacquainted with the Gurkhas might conclude, from this rather ostentatious carrying of weapons, that the Gurkha was fierce and warlike : in fact, the sharp-edged kukri that he carries with him is much more a domestic than a death-dealing tool, and is used for cutting anything, from chopping firewood to paring toe-nails. However, when traveling these woods in gathering darkness, with the jungle around him alive with sounds, the Gurkha must find great comfort in his trusty kukri, for attacks by wild beasts and robbers are by no means unknown.

Occasionally we would pass a man on a mountain pony, and once we met a train of donkeys, heavily laden with baskets full of stones, on their way to the place higher up where the road was being mended. On coming round the side of the hill, we approached a cluster of houses ; this was Manebungen, the last village inside the British border. It consisted of about fifteen mud shacks propped up with wooden beams : here I gratefully halted, and, while Ranbahadur took the horse over to a shed to load up a bag of rice for our journey, Padam and I sat down in a nearby house to drink rum and tea.

“ Where is the Frontier ? ” I asked. “ The other side of that stone,” was the reply. I looked about me but could see no frontier guard, no customs house,

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no barrier ; but, what was more, I could see no road. The road just stopped. . . .

Manebungen itself is only a tiny settlement, mounted on a kind of col, or saddle, between two hills. From it you may look in the direction of the tea gardens of Darjeeling along one valley, and down towards Nepal along another. Hills always affect me in the same way—I want to see what is on the other side !

After we had sipped our tea, and bought enough white cigarettes for the journey, we started off down a mud track. (By “white” cigarettes is meant the ordinary English kind, as distinguished from the “biree,” or two inch rolled leaf tied with a band of red cotton, and sold in bundles of twenty for a few annas).

We had neither watch nor calendar with us, but it never seemed to matter at all what time it was. There was still light, and it was the rainy season—these were the only things that counted. It rains so hard at certain times of the year, that some tracks are impassable, and men do not like to travel then, because it may mean that they take ten days instead of five to get home.

Everything in this valley seemed so different from the one which we had just left that I was filled with amazement. Perhaps the most noticeable feature of all was the degree of cultivation—that is to say, its intensity. Every square inch seemed to be utilised. The fields were terraced out of sheer mountain faces, some of them only a few yards long and growing in all perhaps a dozen rows of maize.

Having walked all day so far downhill, it was not surprising that we eventually came to a river, already swollen to twice its normal size by the rains. It was

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a typical mountain torrent, clear, fast and bitterly cold, which must have had its head waters somewhere in the snows : we had to wade through it up to our thighs in places, and found it difficult to keep our footing against the force of the current.

Once across, we began to climb. It is easy to understand why all hillmen carry short sticks. The angle of ascent is so steep that only a very short stick is necessary, or, indeed, useful—and necessary it is, as I found to my cost. The ground was very rough, and where it was not covered with undergrowth it was a mass of loose rubble. As it had been raining for some time, you received the impression that you were for ever trying to climb a waterfall. Once, when I could stand still in sufficient safety to turn round, I saw the valley some thousands of feet below, and all the massive hills standing about me, like tireless guards over the frontier. Even through the muggy damp of the atmosphere, the stream at the bottom sparkled, and I thought of the Gurkha song—“Tahin tala pani ko dhara, kina malai tirika lagdena”—“Right down there is a stream bed. Whew! What a thirst I have!”

I asked Ran if there were any fish down there : he replied that there were, and that one could have good fishing with a bomb. I remarked that at Rangoon, in the lake out there, our Subedar Sahib always fished with a line. “Too slow!” said Ran. “Either use a bomb, or chase them into a net.”

Padam led our party, and I followed. Then came the horse, and then Ran, holding on to the animal's tail. Up, up, up ; most of the way there was no sign of even a footpath, and it would have been quite impossible to take any kind of vehicle on the route. As we plodded slowly on, farmers, with heavy baskets

on their backs, would pass us almost at a run. We seemed to have been labouring upwards for years, certainly for some six hours, before the gradient grew a little less severe, and we saw, ahead of us, a little red mud hut, with a stone slab outside. On this we sat down for a rest, and the old lady of the house came out with little brass cups of home brewed rum. As I was drinking this, I happened to glance down, and saw that my trousers and puttees were swarming with fat, blood-sucking leeches. I lit my first cigarette of the day, and took some grim pleasure in burning the brutes off. We found the repulsive creatures dangling from the horse's flanks too. Ran brought some salt from the woman, and made a solution to rub on our legs and sticks, which, he said, would keep these parasites at bay.

Revived with the rum, we started off again, and now the time passed quickly. Soon we had reached the summit of the range of hills, and started descending precipitously into the next valley. Shortly before dusk we reached the little cluster of mud houses which was Ran's village—Mangalbar. Ran led the way to his red mud hut with a thatched roof, and ushered us up two steps on to the baked clay veranda, where we were protected from the drizzle by the overhanging thatch. An old man came from the house to greet us, bringing reed mats for us to sit on. Meanwhile Ran took the horse to the hovel next door, and there unloaded our blankets and bag of rice.

From the veranda I could see two or three women busy cooking on an open fire, and some men smoking and talking, not in Gurkhali, the lingua franca, but in their own caste language, which was completely incomprehensible to me. Padam, meanwhile, being

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of a different caste from Ran, had wandered off to find a Magar Gher, that is a house inhabited by members of the Magar caste. Here he would talk Magar Kura, a different tongue entirely from that used in Ran's house. In this one village there were representatives of five different castes, all with their own languages, as different from one another as English and Spanish. The different castes were all quite friendly with one another, but they did not eat together, nor, as a rule, intermarry.

Ran's house consisted of one room. As there was no chimney, it was fairly reeking with smoke, and I was glad that the superstition concerning strangers made it impossible for me to enter. The only furniture that I could see was a couple of stools, made in the shape of diabolos, with bamboo struts topped with deerskin.

Soon supper was ready, and an incredibly old and wrinkled woman came and laid a blanket on the veranda by my feet. Then came the food; an enormous quantity of rice on a flat, brass dish, about two feet in diameter; then six little brass cups, which I was told contained goatsmeat, spinach, chopped onions, and tomatoes; some lentil gravy, rum and tea. Before I began eating I went through the little pantomime which custom demands. After washing my hands, I took a little from each cup, and set it aside as a propitiation for the gods. Next, taking a little from one of the cups, I raised it to my forehead, before eating it. After that, apart from the fact that there no utensils of any kind, it was all plain sailing, scooping up the rice in one hand, and shovelling it in as best I was able. When I took a sip of the oily stew that passes for tea, I had great difficulty in not returning it immediately; but as the liquid trickled

down my throat, it became suddenly warm and rather pleasant. "What is in it, besides tea?" I asked. The list that followed was quite amazing. The words that I understood included pepper, cinnamon, cardamon, ginger and nutmeg, but there were at least half a dozen other ingredients which were beyond my vocabulary.

Whilst I was eating on the veranda, the rest of the family ate within, either because of the superstition that it is unlucky to eat with strangers, or because I was not of their caste, and their religious scruples forbade it. However, we carried on a conversation through the open door, and I could dimly see them by the glow of the fire, for there was no other form of lighting.

After the meal, the rum cups were refilled for a final potation. Then, with my pack as a pillow, and a blanket wrapped round me against the night air, I lay full length on the veranda. I had had a long trek, and a full meal, with plenty to drink. As I relaxed gratefully, I could hear the excited beat of madals and the clapping of hands from some party over the valley: and this was sufficient lullaby.

My alarm clock was even more simple. A hen walked over me, and I woke to find the rest of the household already up and about. The women folk were returning from the stream with pitchers of water on their shoulders. A young girl was shaking rice into a flat wicker basket, letting the wind carry away the chaff, and watched by a hungry cockerel. In the roadway, two parties of children were playing, one at tipstick, the other at something more complicated, with three coins. They played with intense enthusiasm, until a voice from the house called them to do some menial task inside.

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Ran brought me a cup of the highly-seasoned tea, and then led me to the bathroom—a place beside the stream overhung with bushes. The water was bitterly cold, and I envied the smooth-faced Gurkha, who does not have to shave until he is quite an elderly man.

Ran loaded the horse with our bag of rice and some onions, and we started along the track to the next village. I was not entirely sorry to leave Mangalbar, for, although it was very sheltered and picturesque in the bottom of the valley, with the mountains rising to ten or twelve thousand feet on all sides, there was an abundance of flies and mosquitoes.

For a while we walked through the same intensely cultivated tiers of rice and maize fields, rising high up the hill slopes; above a certain height they gave way to jungle and shrub. The only tree which I recognised was the bamboo, which grew profusely everywhere. We climbed higher yet, above the line of shrubs and trees, where we encountered huge boulders and sheer masses of granite. Then we dropped down into the valley again. The track we were following kept crossing the streams, but at times the stream itself was all the track there was. As we clambered over the high boulders, and scrambled up the waterfalls, I was assured that this was the high road to Illam, a large town of Nepal. Padam and Ran both tried to teach me the names of the various plants and flowers, of which they had a thorough countryman's knowledge. The names were weird and wonderful to the European ear—"Fookey fool" and "Tooty booty."

We stopped twice at houses by the way to refresh ourselves with home-brewed rum. Ran referred to this as "filling up with petrol," an expression which

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only a Gurkha who had been in the army would understand. The average villager knows as much about motor cars, cinemas and electricity as an English peasant knew of the Holy Land at the time of the Crusades. All the Gurkha knows of our civilisation at all is what he learns from his fellows who have served in the forces.

After climbing to the top of several peaks, we eventually dropped down to a little village of scattered mud huts, called Ghorki. Both Ran and Padam wanted me to walk through the streets as quickly as possible, lest I should attract the attention of any questioning police, or Government officials. When I was half-way through the village, however, I heard a loud shout. Fearing the worst, I turned round, to see, not a policeman, but my own office orderly, Bombahadur, whom I had left several months ago in 20th Division Headquarters, in Indo-China. Bombahadur was very happy, and very gaily dressed. He had on a little black hat with a bobble on it, and embroidered flowers in black silk round the sides : over his shoulder he had a bright red sash to carry his kukri, and his black stockings were topped with a design in bright red and green. He was on three months' leave to help farm his father's crops, and to rebuild a house washed away in the last heavy rains. He had come with his wife to the Ghorki bazaar, to buy a supply of salt, cigarettes and lamp oil, the only commodities which were indispensable to him, and which he could not grow himself. His companion, too, was a resplendent sight. She had a gold stud in one nostril, and a thin silver ring in the tip of the nose ; hanging from her ears were discs of silver of the circumference of saucers ; round her neck she wore two chains, one of bright green beads alternately set

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with circles of gold on a thick black cord, the other a smaller chain of white, tooth-like objects, set in silver, and similarly strung; as a pendant she wore a charm of thick, embossed silver, some two inches square; but despite all this finery her blouse, waistcloth and skirt were old, dirty and torn.

Bombahadur was a very popular man in his own village, for he could both read and write, and was accordingly much in demand as a scribe. Apart from official correspondence between the headman of the village and the Government, there was little inter-village communication, by postal or any other means. Bombahadur, for instance, had no friends in villages only a short distance away; and most of the letters which he wrote were to sons in the army, from their parents, or to commanding officers, to say that someone's father had died, or that help was needed with the crops or the building of a new house. There was a system of postal runners, but most letters were sent with people who happened to be travelling in the direction of the letter's destination. Both Padam and Ranabahadur, I discovered, were carrying mail for friends.

In the villages of this district I could see no signs of educational systems at all. Children acquired what knowledge they could from their parents; and when the father had been an N.C.O. or Gurkha Officer in the army, the children had a reasonable chance of learning to read and write, but there were no books for sale in any of the village shops. Paper, too, was very precious, and was chiefly used for cigarette making. From various conversations with Padam and Ran, it seemed that the most popular subject taught by the fathers was a variety of religious history, incorporating magical surgery. Padam taught me

several semi-religious charms for curing sprains, laying ghosts, and keeping wild animals at bay. The lesson in history consists of the singing of a long and monotonous saga about the god Krishna or Budibul Rana who killed ten men single handed: the tune was very different from the jolly lilt to which the evening drinking parties rallied.

Eventually we arrived, dead tired, at a little village called Namsaling, where we decided to spend the night. It had been raining all day, and the main street was a stream of mud about a foot deep. The houses, however, were less primitive than those of Ghorki. Some were even two stories in height, with carved doors and wooden windows of the famous fretwork. I was wondering where I might be able to sleep, when the Mukia, the headman of the village, approached me, asked where I had come from and why, and then offered me a room in a well-built bungalow. In it I found a wooden, planked bed, an armchair and a table. Perhaps the horse had impressed the Mukia, for this was either his own house or one kept for the most distinguished visitors. As I rested inside, the headman brought in a wooden barrel about a foot high, which he left on the table. While I was wondering what this was for, he re-entered with a steaming kettle and a bamboo tube. He took the lid off the barrel and put the water inside. He inserted the bamboo through a lid, and assembled the whole thing. "Try that," he said, "it will stop you from getting ill during this wet weather." I sucked through the tube, and tasted a warm, sweet liquid, very pleasant and slightly intoxicating. I opened the lid of the barrel, and found inside some little yellow and black grains. I asked if it were some form of opium, and was assured that it was not. Later I

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discovered that it was a drink called Janr, and was made from a kind of millet.

There were several chickens about the house, and I bought one for five shillings to have with the evening meal of rice. The only other meat available was goat, or, in some very low caste houses, wild pig. As the Gurkhas are Hindus, beef, of course, is never eaten.

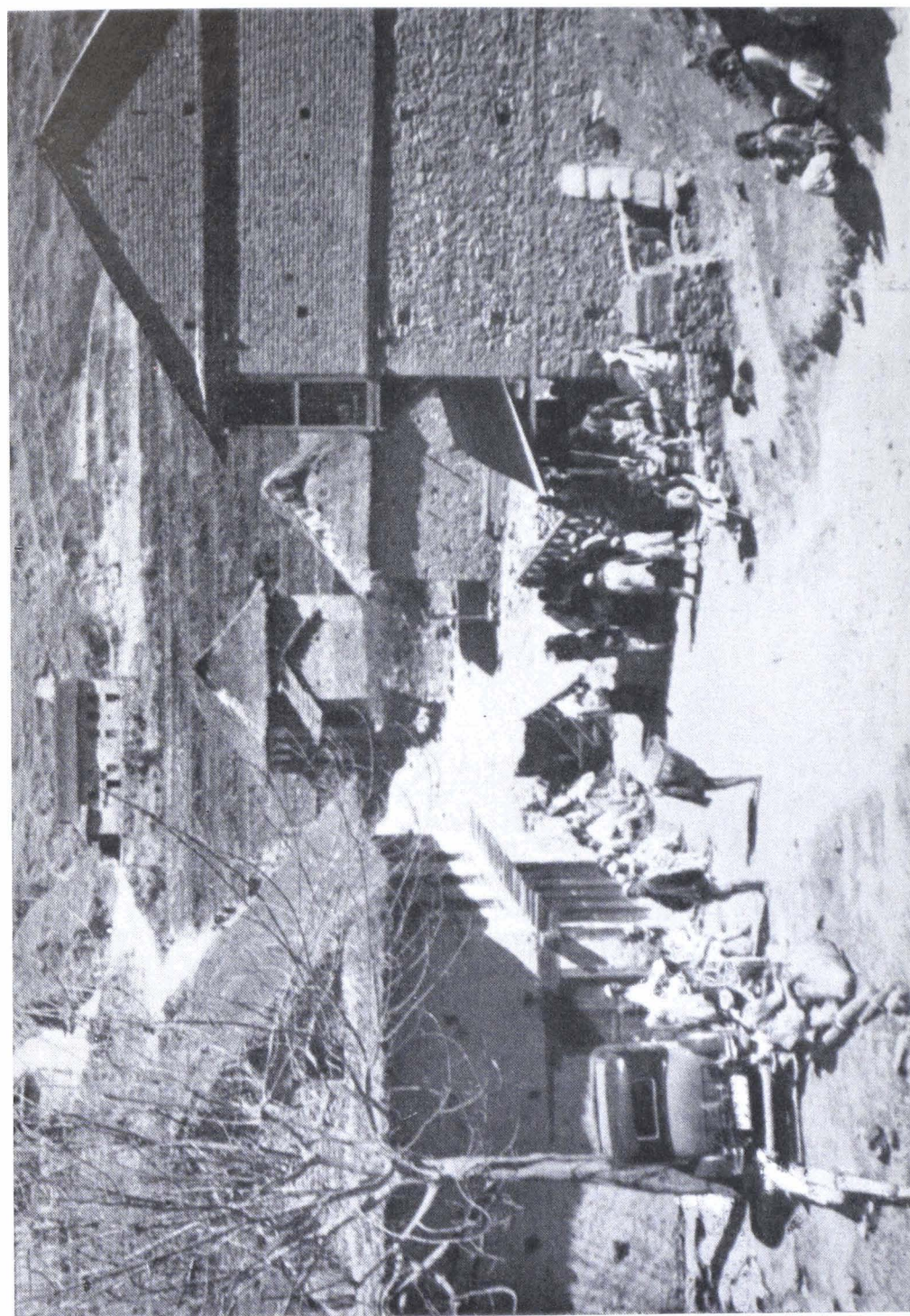
After supper a crowd of peasants came into my room to see what a white man really looked like. One youngster was not very impressed, and said that they already had a white man in the village. There was a slight titter from the crowd at this, but my interest was roused. When I saw the other "white man," however, my interest turned to shock, for the poor fellow was an albino.

Padam thought that it would be a good idea to have a nautch, a party of singing and dancing. Accordingly we sat down in the best room in the bungalow, along with some twenty villagers and a quantity of local liquor. The madal was taken off the wall, and a young lad began drumming on it with the tips of his fingers every now and then giving it a hard blow with his thumb. Padam warned me not to sing any of our army songs, as the villagers would not approve: but soon they were all joining in the chorus of one of the very well-known songs. After the chorus had been sung perhaps half a dozen times, one of the men, cocking his head on one side and looking away bashfully, sang "aah" through a series of quavering notes until he decided he had attained the right pitch; then he sang a couplet in a high, cracked tenor, without any apparent timing. This recitative was answered by another pair of lines from the opposite side of the room, also sung in the same way. Then the whole crowd, swaying from side to

side, and keeping strict rhythm with the beat of the madal and the clapping of hands, sang the chorus in unison for six or seven times more. The tune was very simple, using only four or five notes of a scale, and everyone joined in with great vigour.

After a while, a circle of about a yard and a half in diameter was cleared in the middle of the floor and a young village lad was pushed forward. He sang the next couplet, improvising a welcome to the travellers, saying how happy he was, and, at the same time, greeting the crowd by raising his hands to his forehead. Then, as the crowd joined in the chorus with a crash, he did a kind of shuffle round the circle, stamping his right foot behind his left, and swaying his arms in the air in time to the music. He repeated this dance anti-clockwise, and then dropped down on his haunches. As the chorus continued, he performed the same shuffling step round the circle on his haunches, every now and then kicking one leg forwards in Cossack style, and giving a "whoop!" that was strongly reminiscent of a Highland Reel. When he had completed the circle, he stood up again and turned round and round very swiftly in the centre. The crowd finished the chorus they were singing, and started shouting and jumping about, mad with delight. The singing and dancing carried on far into the night, a new person chanting the extemporised verses, a new boy or girl dancing in the circle, but the words and music of the chorus never varying. At length the Mukia broke the party up, and all the villagers wandered back to their mud huts in search of rest. My search was otherwise: for me the night was one of many scratchings.

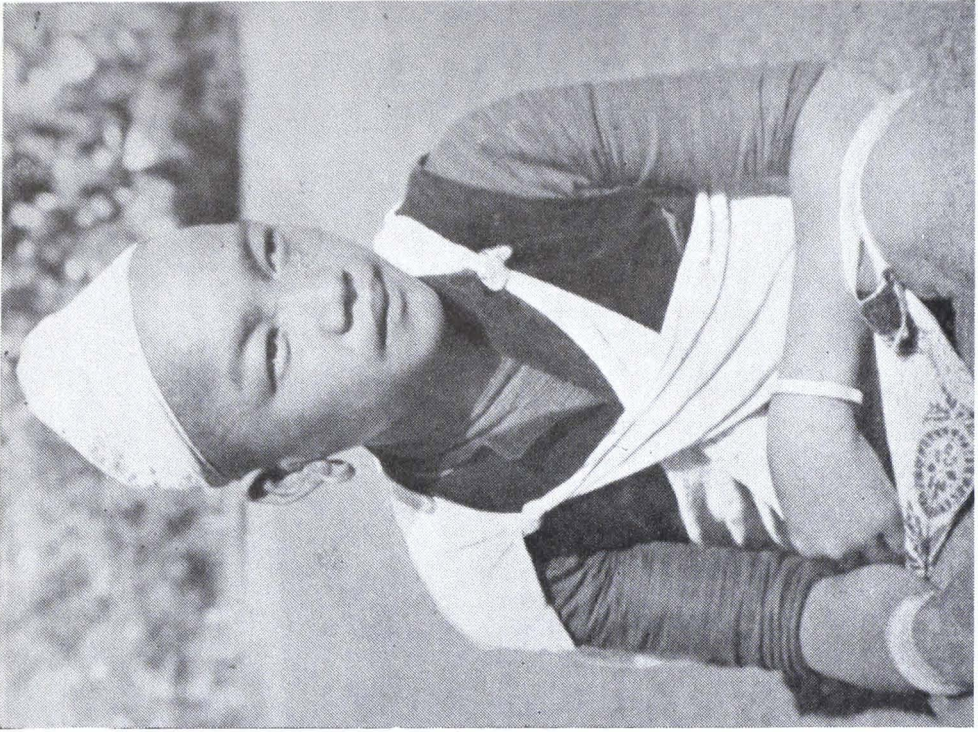
‡ In another day we were due to reach Illam, and Ran did not want to accompany us any further, as



III. VILLAGE SCENE ON THE ROAD, A car is mounted on a frame for carriage.



IV. A GIRL IN THE ELABORATE OR-
NAMENTS OF BETROTHAL.



V. A YOUNG BOY, WEARING THE GURUNG
COAT.

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a concentration of about five hundred troops was reputed to be there. He feared he might be arrested for bringing a foreigner into the country, and so, leaving him and the horse at Namsaling, Padam and I set off alone. It was not long before I was joined by a band of peasants, who were singing, as they trudged along, "Gurkhali kali bhayo man phali . . ."—"I'm a Gurkha empty-handed, scatter-brained with drink I'm branded, that's a fact, dear sir. The day's work's done, and I have eightpence; on rum I'm going to spend a sixpence, sir. My brother's mate is my sister-in-law, but her true love is a wild monkey, sir."

We slithered down a steep track at an angle of 60°. Although there must have been only three or four miles of this tortuous going, it took us the best part of four hours to cover it. The Gurkhas call this sort of going "uralo." At length we came to the bottom of the slope, where there was a large and fast-running river crossed by an iron suspension bridge. This we had to pass in single file, and as I waited my turn I noticed a plate on it reading "D. Ord, Westminster, London." Whether D. Ord assembled it, and if so how, I was unable to find out. The whole thing was rather like a mirage come true, and when I crossed it I was quite prepared to see a Lyons Corner House at the far end. There was, however, neither cafe nor tube station, and the track rose steeply above me, winding its way through the jungle-clad hills. This was "ukalo," the same gradient as "uralo," but in an adverse sense. The trees and bushes were alive with birds about the size of sparrows, but having brilliant plumage, scarlet, yellow and gold, blue and vermilion. As we passed each clump of ferns, we set off a spark, startling in its brightness, soaring to

the top of the trees. The climb on an empty stomach was becoming too much for me, and I was glad to see a little house beside the track, after about two miles of the ukalo. Here we stopped for mangoes, corn on the cob, and a dish of milk that was turning to cheese but tasted very good.

At last we arrived at Illam, one of the largest towns in Eastern Nepal, though by English standards little more than a village. The houses were imposing here, having two, well-built stories, with carved wooden verandas and lattice windows. They were clustered round a wide level square, the largest stretch of flat ground that I had encountered since I left India. We walked across the square to an eating-house in the far corner. As we were sipping tea hot, a very well-dressed gentleman in white jodhpur breeches came up and introduced himself as a lieutenant of the Nepalese State Army, and proceeded to question me as to my business. Satisfied that I was not a spy, but simply mad, he took me to the house of one of his Subedars, and very soon two fried eggs were conjured from the room at the back and set before me.

After a meal, we wandered up one of the streets leading away from the square, escorted by various Nepalese officers, and almost the entire township. On the left the lieutenant pointed out the house of the General, who, he regretted to say, was unfortunately on a visit to the capital, Kathmandu. I had personal reasons to be thankful for his absence. As we were walking about the streets, a host of children came swarming out of one of the buildings, which, I was told, was a school. Despite the imperative ringing of a bell shortly afterwards, bidding them return to their study of religious history, they all preferred to stay and watch this curious monster of

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a white man. The officer left me outside a cloth shop, and, with many excuses, departed upon his business. I felt sorry for having put anyone so courteous in the predicament of having to decide whether to arrest me or not. His place was soon taken by two policemen in military uniform; and whether they were there as my bodyguard or my escort I did not know, but they dogged my footsteps wherever I went. They were very jolly men, and obviously enjoyed this unexpected turn of duty. When we were in one house chatting to friends of Padam, another man in uniform came in to join the two soldiers beside me. I asked him if he had come to relieve my bodyguard, and he replied that he had merely come to see what I looked like. It turned out that he was a dak runner, the equivalent of a postman, and was part of the army. His uniform was ragged and worn, quite different from the spick-and-span dress of the Gurkhas when they are serving with the British Army in India. His pay, he said, was fifteen rupees a month—just over a pound—but he thought himself well off, as, apart from the few who were fabulously rich, everyone in the country was really very poor indeed, if wealth is measured in terms of cash only.

Illam presented a picture of a town totally unspoilt by any invention of the last two centuries. It was entirely devoid of any form of machinery—no electricity, no gas, no smoking factories, or engines of any description. There were no telephones, wireless or cinemas, those inventions which we are apt to look upon as indispensable parts of our civilisation. It was like a stage set for a play of feudal times in England, and the lack of modern machines did not worry the population one iota. Life was carried on as it had been for centuries, unhampered and

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undisturbed by industrial revolutions, and only a little shortened, it may be, by the lack of a Public Health Department, and the absence of drains. It was however remarkable that there was little evidence of disease. Compared with India, where mangy dogs roam about the streets foraging the piles of garbage, and beggars with open, running wounds limp about the streets, amid the dust and dirt, whimpering and wailing for buksheesh, Illam seemed a positive paradise of cleanliness. The streets were entirely without beggars, and the baked mud floors of the houses presented a well-swept appearance. Only a few flies and a hen or two lent an Eastern air to the scene, by landing on anything or anyone who happened to be indoors.

As we strolled back into the square again, we saw a familiar figure : there was Ran, complete with pony and baggage, earnestly assuring a group of officials that I was quite harmless. He had followed us up, just to ensure that we ran into no kind of danger.

As we took the road back from Illam, our escort left us at the border of the town. Their place was suddenly taken by a band of musicians, who ceremoniously piped us out of town on a weird assortment of pipes, flutes, oboes and whistles. When the piping was done, however, the band became rather a nuisance, importuning payment. This was the first time on the trip that I had been asked to pay for anything, the usual practice being to give everything free, for which some suitable present may be made in return. Padam, who was carrying a purse for safety, managed to persuade the soliciting band that we were not very rich, despite our show of opulence in possessing a horse. He was in high spirits, now that the end of the trek was in sight ; he could see no



VI. THE NARROW-GAUGE RAILWAY BETWEEN RAXAUL AND AMLEKGANGE. The train is seen going backwards towards India, as there is no turntable. Its maximum speed is 15 m.p.h., and it never runs to time since all the station clocks are out of order.



VII.

A STAGE ON SIR CLUTHA MACKENZIE'S JOURNEY.

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point in walking over those hills just for the fun of it.

As we were going through the jungle on the last stages of the journey, we caught sight of a family of monkeys, and I was amused to hear Padam calling them "very low caste people." The Gurkhas' dislike of monkeys springs from the fact that they will throw things at you as you pass, and that, according to local belief, the monkey loves to enter your house, steal your matches and set it on fire. The term is one of very strong abuse when applied to a person, quite different from our own use of it, which especially when given to children, may be almost affectionate.

We were walking now with about a dozen other peasants, with several ponies and horses and men, all in single file. "Why not ride?" asked one of the party. I was extremely tired, and grateful for the suggestion: but I soon found that riding bareback up the steep, rock-strewn slopes was quite a different matter from riding with a saddle in the plains. At every rock the pony would contort his body in such a manner that I was continually in terror of being precipitated down the mountain-side into the river valley below. It was not long before I decided that the effort and exertion of riding in such conditions were more wearying than walking, and I continued the rest of the journey to the plains on foot.

As we came once more to the frontier of India, a policeman asked me where I had been. "To the back of beyond," I answered, "To see my mother, who is a Pun, and whom I have not seen for over twenty years." He seemed to take the joke in all seriousness. All that remained now was to thank Ran and pay him for his services, both in money and in kind, before setting off back to Burma to rejoin the unit, after one of the most interesting leaves I ever spent.

“THE ROAD TO KATHMANDU”

(The following account is by Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Clutha Mackenzie, Sometime Adviser on Blind Welfare to the Indian Government.)

Late one airless afternoon our metre-gauge train rumbled to its last halt at Raxaul. For two days and nights we had droned rather wearily across the endless plains of North India. Accompanied by my daughter Christina, Wilkinson (a young Gurkha Captain, as A.D.C.) an orderly and a bearer, I was on my way to the Court of Nepal. We left the servants and a string of somewhat noisy coolies to wrestle with our vast collection of bags, bed-rolls, baskets of stores, water-bottles, bunches of bananas and what-not. A Legation Officer led us, in pulsating heat, across dusty wastes among the railway sidings, godowns and stacks of coal and timber typical of most railheads, and at length through a mango grove to the Legation Bungalow. It looked cool, but it wasn't. Nor was it quiet. Crows cawed raucously, coppersmith and brain-fever birds made their maddening noises, and, just beyond the garden, musicians outside a Hindu Temple contributed their share of discord. Darkness silenced that lot of birds, but screech owls, jackals and cicadas took their place, and the temple musicians never wearied. But from our wide veranda we could catch, though the mango trees, the gleam of moonlight on a small, sluggish, muddy river, beyond which lay hope, mountains and mystery : for this was the

Indian Frontier, and to-morrow we would cross it into the romantic, forbidden land of Nepal. Baths over and whiskies drunk, we settled down contentedly to dinner. Oil lamps filled the room with smell and heat, while swishing punkahs fanned us and kept the mosquitoes from settling.

We took train again next morning, though not a very serious train. Its gauge was little more than two feet, but the tiny white-painted saloon was quite comfortable. It hauled us twenty-five miles in the course of the morning across the Terai—level terrain of swamp, cultivated patches and heavy jungle. The Terai is far famed for its magnificent hunting—elephant, panther, tiger and nilgai—and for its vicious brand of malaria. Yesterday we had been among the moody, sullen faces of northern Bihar—now we were surrounded by sturdy hillmen, smiling, friendly and care-free. What a sense of elation and happiness it gave us! It felt as if we were all one jolly party on a holiday outing.

White travellers in Nepal are still few. Only those may enter who are honoured by an invitation from the Maharaja himself, a privilege given but rarely. In fact, in cantonment clubs and messes everyone who had heard of my coming expedition exclaimed “By Jove, you lucky fellow! I’ve always longed to go, but of course there’s no chance for me.” Everywhere we went the people crowded round us to enjoy the novelty, chattering and amused, and breaking into shouts of laughter at the slightest encouragement. The train was certainly well filled—jammed to the limit inside, and with as many people as could hang on festooned on the outside. A cheerful, smiling face thrust itself in at one of our windows; its owner carefully explained that he was a genuine third-class

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passenger, and had paid for his ticket. Having thus established his bona fides, he added that he had made his way along the outside of the moving train in order to have a look at us. He gave us a "Who's Who" of himself—a mountain man, come to this pestiferous plain to cut timber from the jungle to supply war needs over the border, and his wife and two children had died of the fever—it was a bad place, hot and horrible; but he went on smiling all the same.

An untidy clearing in the jungle, and Amlekganj, rail-head, hot noon and our first sight of the hills arrived all together. Masses of Johnny Gurkhas, returning home from three, four, five years of distant service, left the train and rushed for the military trucks. They had made themselves gay with peacock feathers in their slouch hats, crimson scarves about their shoulders, and multi-coloured blankets secured to their packs. Gurkha women in their bright greens, reds and oranges; children and peasants, apparently still in good spirits in spite of the intense discomfort of their mode of travel, squeezed into 'buses and on their roofs. Everyone got on who could, and the unluckier ones philosophically set out on foot, or settled down to await to-morrow's convoy. We sat in our coach, not quite so grilling as the road outside, until the word came that all was ready. Then the three of us squeezed into our first-class accommodation, which meant that we shared the extremely cramped front seat with the Buddhist comedian at the wheel and the super-heated fumes from the engine. Off we rattled, swaying ominously. I suspected that the 'bus bore no Gurkhali notice, "Licensed to carry 20 passengers." In the absence of the tiresome people who afflict civilised communities—inspectors of mechanical fitness, traffic

ROAD TO KATHMANDU

roads and bridges—I offered up a little prayer to the Almighty for our safety throughout the thirty-five miles of gorge, cliff and river which lay ahead. I found I was not alone in this, for our driver too, alive to the perils of the journey, and maybe solicitous for the safety of his swarm of passengers, did the same ; only I wish for the sake of my nerves that he had done it a different way. Here and there along the road stood a picturesque Buddhist or Hindu temple, pagoda-like, with the figures of the gods smeared in vermilion and rancid butter. As we sped past them, our driver took both hands from the quivering wheel, clenched them under his chin, and bowed his head in an attitude of prayer. He was considerate too of his passengers ; for when we approached a tunnel with little clearance, he stopped the 'bus and warned his roof travellers to flatten themselves.

For two hours we twisted between sandstone cliffs, lurched along dry river beds which looked as if they were mighty torrents in the monsoon, and drew ever nearer to the mountain rampart ahead. The road ended below it at the village of Bhimfedi. We squealed to a halt. " Bus ! " said the driver, with a triumphant smile and wave of his arms. " Bus " doesn't mean " passenger vehicle " ; it means " that is all—finish. " Quite clearly our prayers had been heard.

There was a turmoil of peasants, coolies and all the village children whose elders stood on the outskirts of the crowd, to enjoy the daily entertainment of the convoy's arrival. Out of it emerged a large and pompous man, filled with the importance of his office. He was the Postmaster, and with him was our Mukia, who turned out to be an extremely pleasant and efficient little man. No visitor to Nepal goes

unaccompanied by an Officer of the State on any expedition. The Mukia was one of these Officers, and it was his duty also to supervise all details of our journey. He wore a cloth jacket and jodhpurs, and on his head the black cap and crescent moon badge of a Nepali official. Like all the men, he had a silver-mounted kukri stuck through the cummerbund with which his waist was swathed, ever ready for use as slasher, axe or knife. He bowed solemnly. Behind him were ranged a score of syces, baggage and dandy coolies, three sturdy Thibetan ponies from the Maharaja's stables, and a dandy. He handed us his instructions. The dandy and its crew of six stalwart hillmen had been sent to carry me wherever the precipitous track was too rough for me or the ponies, or whenever I might be weary. As the privilege of riding was strictly reserved for the gentry of Nepal, we were asked not to let our servants mount the ponies. Christina and I climbed on our steeds, leaving Wilkinson and the Mukia to allot the baggage among the coolies, and set off across a dry river bed. Beyond, we could see the track making amazing zig-zags up a vast mountain face. Soon the ponies, their shoes ringing on the rocky path, carried us above the blistering heat of the valley. At the end of an hour we halted in the charming shade of a grove of pines, evergreen oaks and rhododendrons, scarlet with spring blossom. We waited for our coolies to catch up—four o'clock and time for a late lunch. I never enjoyed a meal more. We sat with our legs dangling over the rock edge, gazing down into the valley far below. A gentle breath, cool and sweet after that lifeless, hot-weather air of the plains, stole through the trees. A murmur of talk and laughter floated up from our tattered coolies on the path below, con-

tentedly smoking their first issue of cigarettes. The traffic of this national highway to the capital trickled by—coolies plodded upwards with cases of merchandise; jolly children tripped down the path bearing great bundles of evergreen oak leaves on their heads for the cattle of the valley; then a Nepali gentleman was carried by, borne in a basket on the back of a single ragged coolie; he was followed by a holy man of considerable personality, who wore a cloak of leopard skin over his strong, well-fed body. His greasy hair hung in long locks, framing a powerful face. “Alas,” he said, stopping beside us, “I have been so unfortunate as not to have tasted food these three last days. My belly is empty and rumbles. I am a very holy man, and have made many long pilgrimages to many of the most sacred places of our Lord and Master, Buddha. If you will be so kind as to confer on me the means of securing that food which is necessary for the support of our mortal bodies, or, perhaps we might say several meals, I shall ask God to bless you for ever, to give you everlasting peace; and I am sure my prayer will be granted.” We could not lose this chance of eternal felicity, so we willingly gave him what he asked, and received his generous blessing.

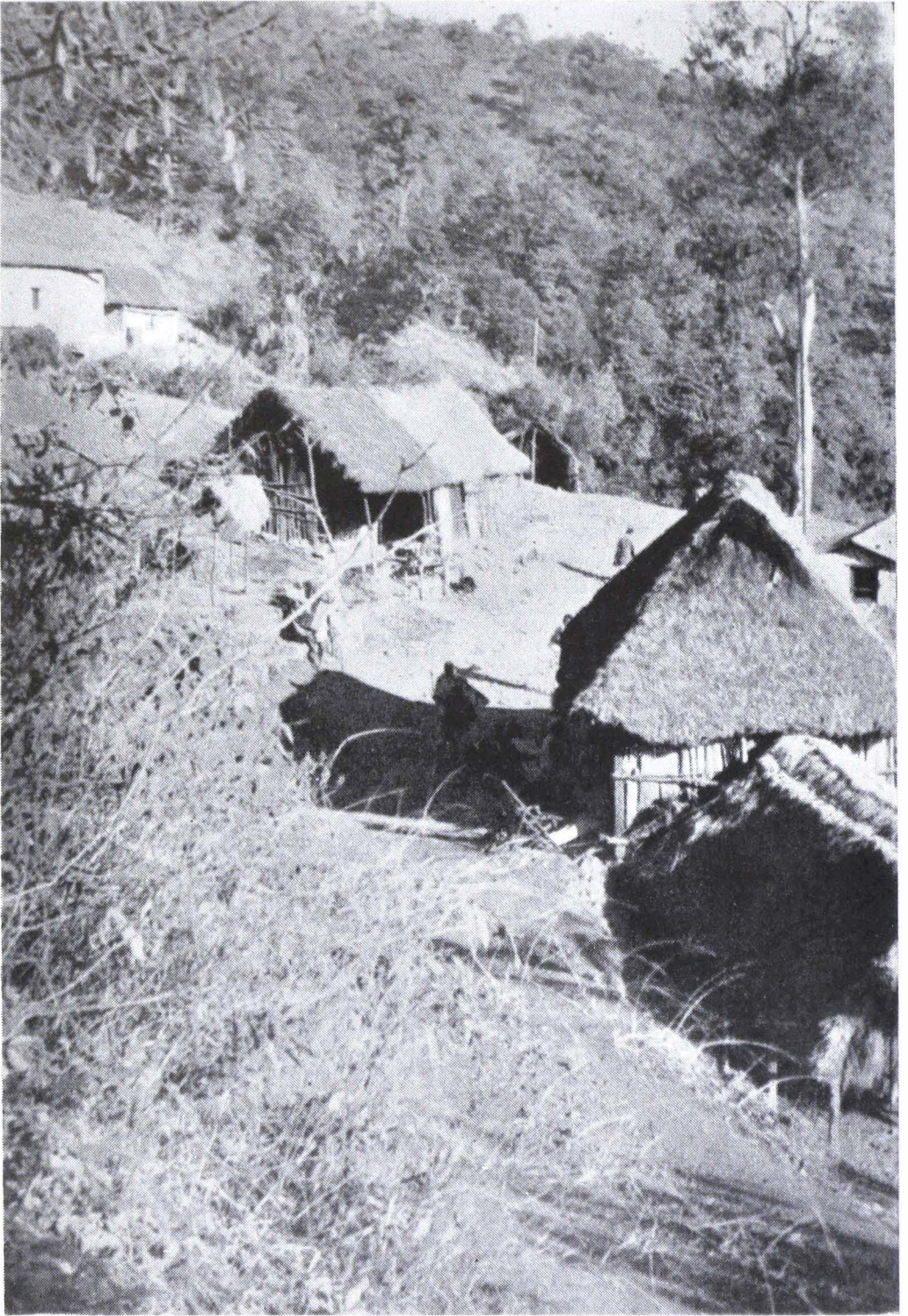
It was after lunch, as we toiled steadily up through the forest, that we met the most astonishing of the passers-by. I heard a light tom-tomming of a drum and a tripping song floating from down the zig-zags above us; Christina announced that these pleasant sounds came from an amazing little man, an elf of the forest itself. He was a Gurkha of the mountains, dressed in a red jacket, blue shorts, and with his tip-tilted Nepali cap set at a rakish angle. His feet were

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in sandals, and his legs bare. The spirit of *joi-de-vivre* which possessed him could not find enough outlet in drumming and singing, and he danced his way down that rugged path, improvising his steps as he capered round large boulders, or pirouetted on top of them. Behind him, as is fitting in this part of Asia, his wife plodded stolidly along, bending below her burden of household goods. He was supremely unconscious of the outside world around—it seemed only that life was good, the air like wine; youth, happiness and health filled his whole soul with love of the present. He would have passed us by unnoticed, save as obstacles like the boulders to be danced around; but apparently our Mukia felt it was not right that even a mountain elf should show such levity in the presence of His Highness the Maharaja's distinguished guests. He admonished him with a sharp word, and the little gnome, all contrition, deflated abruptly—smile, song, drumming and dance fled in a flash. He bowed his head, eyes on the ground, and clasped his hands under his chin in humble respect, while our cavalcade went by. I felt like getting off my pony to comfort him, and to say that we loved his song and his happiness, and that he must go on, but, thanks to the spirit of the hills, he could not be repressed for long. No sooner were we passed, than he burst once again into his rhythmic progress. I listened to every note as they grew fainter in the forest deep below, until they lost themselves, drowned in the clattering of the ponies' hoofs. These hills were like that. Everyone seemed to be gay and laughing. The coolies themselves had no more than the barest existence. They toiled with heavy loads, day in day out, up and down these mountain faces. Their clothes were rags, their food



VIII. ANOTHER STAGE ON SIR CLUTHA MACKENZIE'S JOURNEY.



IX.

A GROUP OF VILLAGE HOUSES.

ROAD TO KATHMANDU

the poorest, they rested in sheds like cattle ; yet they were for ever enjoying themselves and cracking jokes in their running commentaries on the passing scene. They are like the rest of the Gurkhas—the rougher the conditions the happier they seem to grow and the more they laugh.

The sun set in a blaze of green and gold, red and purple, across ridge upon ridge of mountain. Smoke from an old forest fire here and there helped the brilliant colouring. Far away in the distance, only as a hot grey haze, were those airless Indian plains we were so happy to leave behind. At this peaceful hour we reached the Maharaja's rest bungalow on a wooded ridge at Chisagarhi. Australian eucalyptus grew about it in large groves and smelt good. Christina, Wilkinson and two servants had planned to busy themselves at once digging out provisions, cooking dinner, making beds and so forth, but, unexpectedly, odours of wood smoke and roasting onions and chicken tickled our noses as we rode into the compound. Our kind host had thoughtfully sent cook and servants. The boiler outside the kitchen, too, was bubbling with hot water to cleanse us of sweat and dust. What with syces, coolies and ponies, we were quite a company, and there was a busy scene as they jabbered over the distribution of baggage to our rooms, and provisions to the kitchen. Then they took their evening cigarettes and went off to light their little camp fires and cook their food. A big yellow moon rose over Chisagarhi Pass above us ; a lonely trumpet call sounded from the Nepali fort guarding the Pass, and lingered in clear, sweet, fading echoes between the ridges. And so night and peace came upon the cool, still, contented upland.

Breakfast was at six, and we set off half an hour

later, with a long day over two passes in front of us. An hour's steep climb brought us to the top of the Chisagarhi Pass. It opened up a new world of range upon range of mountains, one behind the other, ever higher, until far away above them all rose the world's greatest peaks. They stretched from the distant blue West across our front until they were lost in the dazzling gold of the rising sun. It was intoxicating. The ravines echoed the songs of the birds; scarlet rhododendrons and wild pear blossom splashed the green forest; cocks crowed in nearby villages; the early sun lit valley walls with amber light, or left them still in quiet shadow; and while we gazed over it all, the coolies laughed over their unending jokes as they puffed at their top-of-the-pass issue of cigarettes. No wonder the people were so happy. No wonder Johnny Gurkha loves his country, and is everlastingly homesick for it, as any Highlander is for his glens and heather.

The track was now too steep for riding, so I set out at a brisk walk, intending to defy that dandy forever following almost like a coffin awaiting its owner's death. Soon the path tilted to a fifty-degree angle and turned into a succession of rock ledges and vast boulders. I picked my way carefully down, but the pace grew too slow for the rest of the party and we would never reach Kathmandu before nightfall. So the six dandy coolies laid their box on the ground. Reluctantly I got in and sat cross-legged on the hard boards. For the first time since I was a small boy I was borne along on men's shoulders. It may be that people get used to it, but I had that queer impulse to hold my breath to lighten the load. To the coolies it was only right and proper that I should ride in their dandy, for in Nepal gentlemen do not go

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on foot. I lit my cigarette to help me feel at ease. The coolies seemed quite unconcerned, keeping in step on the rough staircase, and even breaking into a rhythmic jog-trot where the surface was comparatively smooth. They chattered and laughed, while the mountain air was niffy with the acrid smell of unwashed bodies and of breakfasts which had included a garlicky variety of onion. I lit another cigarette. I calculated the burden, and was comforted to find that it amounted to no more than fifty pounds a man, including the weight of the dandy. Just as I was beginning to settle down to comparative resignation, one of the bamboo poles began to make noises like Chinese crackers. "Bad trouble" I said, from my limited vocabulary. "It is all right," they answered. Anyhow, I decided that dandies were a primitive and unhappy type of vehicle, only for use in extreme emergency.

It is no easy task to keep in order the mountain tracks which, clinging precariously to the sides of gorges, or climbing dizzily over huge mountain barriers, connect with one another the villages scattered through this five-hundred-mile-long country. The monsoon rains come in a deluge of many inches a day, turning the tracks into cataracts, and sweeping the surface soil and finer pebbles away. For all that a motor road into Kathmandu would be quite possible. Tortuous roads have mastered similar terrains in penetrating other parts of the Himalayas. But there is a difference. The Pass of Chisagarhi is the barrier which divides the Asia that has come under Western influence from the Asia that has looked upon the West and found it wanting. Long ago Nepal decided that she liked her old way of life better than what she saw of India, with its religions, customs and

UNKNOWN NEPAL

economy upset by the restless, crazy, efficiency-loving white man. She concluded, for example, that health services, vaccination, sanitation, the prevention of famines, and education, had only led to a rapid rise in population—so rapid that no one was better off, and endless struggles were arising over food, land and everything else. It seemed better to allow God's old plan of life and death to operate. Interference would only arouse his wrath, and bring endless trouble. Political isolation is easier without motor roads and railways leading to the capital; and so the steep grades and great rocks of that twisting track have a special purpose.

Far below a mountain river droned in the gorge. Sometimes we plodded down in the full blaze of the morning sun, but more often in the cool shade of cliffs and forest. At nine o'clock we rested beside the bridge at the bottom, where picturesque village houses perched among rocks.

Most of the day we spent riding or walking up the Chitlong Valley. The track wound along the river, mounted steeply over bluffs, meandered through terraced fields, or picked its way among scattered village houses. These houses were rather like Swiss chalets, two-floored. The ground floor, painted red, was apparently shared by the family, with the cattle, goats and chickens. Cows gazed benignly at us from the open doors; hens clustered their small chicks together, and bustled them indoors for safety from our cavalcade. Upstairs, women and girls threw open the wooden shutters, and, unlike Indian women, smiled readily at us. The upper walls of the houses were whitewashed and painted with floral friezes, while many doors and eaves were decorated with carved woodwork. There were holes in the roofs to

let out the smoke, and mushroom-shaped devices on the gables, designed, we were told, to ward off evil spirits. As the day advanced we met party after party of gaily dressed peasants gathering towards the villages. In the villages themselves musicians were tuning up, ready for festivities of sorts. Nepal, it seems, has many holidays, often lasting for several days or a week. They are religious festivals, but the Nepali takes a cheerful view of sacred occasions, as he does of most things. Singing, dancing, gambling and strong drink help to make them go with a bang. Every aspect of that valley was vibrant with life. Built by the labour of centuries, where slopes allowed, little terraced fields have been stepped out of the mountain side. On every terrace crops of wheat, onions and potatoes flourished, tidy and well-tilled. Fruit trees blossom in the villages. Small children and babies were innumerable, some crying, others playing happily with sticks and stones. Young men, red rhododendrons stuck in their hair, and carrying traps and spears, bound for a day's fishing, smiled at us. One wonders whether there was not a good deal to be said for Nepal's political outlook. Here were no cinemas, newspapers, wireless sets, telephones nor electric light ; yet everyone seemed so contented and prosperous. They must have their family tragedies, of course, and their disputes. One knows too that they are dogged by evil spirits and ghosts, though they have various specifics for warding off their evil intent.

I am able to record that the valley was not without a motor car, for in a village we came across just one. It was a twelve horse-power Austin, but for the time being it had acquired a rating of about forty man-power. We could not estimate its man-power exactly,

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for its present motive power had left it resting in the sunshine beside a quietly roaring cataract, and had joined in the fun and games in a nearby village. The car lacked wheels, and in their place were strong bamboo poles upon which it was being borne to Kathmandu by about two score of coolies. Kathmandu possesses about a hundred miles of rough motor roads. The ruling class in the city admittedly like some of the West's physical comforts—large palaces, electric light, long baths, sanitary fittings and motor cars.

We lunched at a very hungry two o'clock, by which time we had reached the top of the valley and were at the base of the next wall of mountain. The sun was hot and we sat on a grassy bank in the shade of blossoming wild pears. Ragged urchins, shepherds and curious passers-by gathered to watch and laugh in friendly interest. A strolling band of gaily dressed musicians and dancers halted to entertain us. Their songs, we gathered, were either apostrophes to God, or blatantly non-drawing-room. The instruments were the usual skin drums, flutes and lutes of simple people. We handed the coolies an almost full tin of sweet, condensed milk, and urged them to try it. One by one they looked at it from all angles as if it might explode, smiled, giggled, laughed, and shook their heads. Milk, they said, it could not be. Finally a bolder one took charge. He tasted it, decided it was good; then passed it along the line, pouring a share into each man's hand.

The ascent which followed, to the top of the Chandragiri Pass, seemed the roughest and steepest of the journey, a rugged staircase of big, loose stones. The ponies had a disconcerting method of tackling it, but the Mukia approved, and said it was their normal

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procedure. My pony, instead of taking the grade at a deliberate plodding gait, rushed, stumbled, clattered a hundred yards or so, then halted, completely blown, to recover his wind. He himself decided when he was ready, and voluntarily started off on his next rush. Bred in such altitudes as those of Thibet, these ponies have discovered, I suppose, that this method is best suited to steep grades and rarefied air, but it is not comfortable. At the summit, as is the custom, each of us threw a stone on an immense pile, as a customary offering of thankfulness, and to ward off evil spirits.

The view was amazing. We had topped the rim of a great cup. A deep basin lay far below, one hundred and fifty square miles of rich, green plain, dotted with brown, red-roofed villages, and walled in with forest-clad ramparts; beyond the rim a second and third, the hazy, snowy summits of the great giants hanging in the sky. It is just one of those mysterious, romantic, inaccessible valleys of Rider Haggard fiction—pagodas and idols, palaces and beautiful princesses, precious stones and ivories, and a strange race with a character and civilisation all its own. Here too is all the background of rare beauty—crystal streams flowing amid the terraces, fields of luxuriant crops, orchards and orange groves, shady trees and tall bamboos. This lonely, unexpected oasis, deep in the heart of the giant mountains, is the Valley of Nepal, the seat of ancient kingdoms, whose origins and histories lose themselves in the mists of legend. According to tradition and geologists alike, the valley was once a lake, the waters of which were at length released by the river wearing a narrow defile through the mountains, or by the rending of a great earthquake.

It was a long descent from the Chandragiri Pass—down, down, down. Shadows were lengthening; the

day had been long, and there is a limit to how much one's mind can take in in a day. I felt too that my pony must be tired, though the Mukia said he was well used to such journeys, and was usually taken much faster by the gentry of Nepal. Towards the bottom we passed through compact villages of a different type, with cobbled or paved streets, and frequent flights of steps down which the ponies clattered. The people were different too—these were the Newar race, who inhabit the Valley of Nepal, and were enslaved by the Gurkhas in the middle of the eighteenth century.

At last Thankot, road-head, and the large, official-looking car of the British Minister. It looked out of tune with its surroundings, but was most welcome for all that. We tipped our entourage, issued the last of the cigarettes, patted the ponies ; then sank back into our car. We rolled along the eight miles to Kathmandu past endless fields of green wheat, which looked as if they found the soil rich. Placid evening was settling over the Valley ; the golden sunlight was fading from the ridges ; not a leaf stirred in the avenue of trees bordering the road ; shepherds were driving their cattle, sheep and goats leisurely homewards.

Then into Kathmandu, the strange old capital. Dusk was settling over the city. Before we turned along the road leading to the rambling palaces amid their walled gardens, we got out of the car to pass for a few minutes through the grotesque, time-worn gate of the ancient city.

Tiered pagoda roofs lifted themselves against the evening sky ; above them hung a faint silver line of the high snows. Brass dragons, multi-armed gods, fierce fanged tigers of the underworld, and, from doors

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and lintels, hundreds of ever-watchful eyes of Buddha, looked down upon us. Fearsome serpents and sub-human creatures stared from the temple eaves and guarded the entrances to shrines. Within the sanctuaries sat rows of gods, or a single gigantic deity, smeared with rancid ghee and vermilion, and lit weirdly by the flickering yellow flames of myriad dip lamps. A dully gleaming gate of solid gold led to a specially magnificent temple. It was all mysterious, fascinating, beautiful. Temple bells were sounding, huge drums set up deep, slow vibrations through the evening air ; men chanted prayers before the shrines, and the murmur of the throng wove through it all.

This was Kathmandu.

NEPALESE VILLAGE LIFE:
DOMESTIC DETAILS: TRADE AND
AGRICULTURE: FAUNA AND
FLORA

THE building of houses in Nepalese villages is not so much the task of one local craftsman or artisan, but rather the duty of the male sex. "The man who would marry must build him a house." If he is a peasant living outside the Valley of Kathmandu, the basis of his dwelling will be bamboo and reeds, so that a heavy monsoon or storm may sweep it away, and he must build another. In Kathmandu Valley the usual village consists of about half a dozen sturdy houses, of two stories, built of stone or baked mud; the lower story, which is used not only for human beings but for livestock as well, is plastered with red mud, the upper with whitewash. The roof is thatched, and has sweeping eaves, under which a space is left for the escape of smoke, as there is no chimney. The windows are closed by carved wooden shutters. The builder is hampered from the start by his tools, which are very primitive indeed. The visitor will be particularly startled by the absence of the most important wood-working tool of all—the saw. Wood is shaped and fashioned by hammer and chisel, or by adze; and even these are of a very crude kind. This makes the larger houses a marvel indeed, for they are very rich in wood-carving, having elaborate beams and lintels, eaves, props and shutters. The designs are most intricate, and of a traditional and religious

origin and significance : they are the work of the Newars, the aboriginal race of the country before it was conquered by the Gurkhas in the eighteenth century. The oldest buildings in Nepal, the very early temples, are made of small, sun-dried bricks, held together not with mortar but resin : they are, in general, excellently preserved.

A fair ability with his hands is necessary to every Gurkha peasant, since the task of keeping clear country tracks, and maintaining bridges is the duty of the villagers, and in charge is the Mukia or Headman of each little community. In the main Valley there are about a hundred miles of motor road—very rough motor road at that : elsewhere there are no roads at all in the European sense of the words, only rough, mountainous tracks, or jungle paths. The country is, of course, almost all mountain or swamp, so this state of affairs is largely beyond remedy : it is not improved by the social system which prevents anyone but a gentleman from riding a horse or elephant. Carts are unknown, and even the main route into Nepal is too steep for pack animals. Thus it comes about that human labour is the chief means of transport, though the Maharajah has an overhead cable railway installed in the valley. Coolies carry most of the country's goods, bearing enormous loads—a ten foot baulk of solid timber is considered a fair burden—along roads which are often hacked out of a cliff face, sometimes no more than a foothold supported on stakes driven into the ground ; or over delicate-looking bridges of ropes, some of them suspended by chains forged in the fifteenth century. The wealthy are carried in chairs or baskets, or on litters.

Besides controlling all the labour necessary for the

maintenance of communications, the Mukia, whose position is hereditary like that of his final superior, the Maharajah, has to deal with the various problems, legal and political, which may arise locally ; and he is in touch with higher state authority to whom he sends periodic reports. The labour of his village is all part of a social—one might almost say religious—pattern. It is bound in with the caste system, and certain trades are the prerogative of certain castes. Strangely, the artists, the wood-carvers, and musicians are of very low caste.

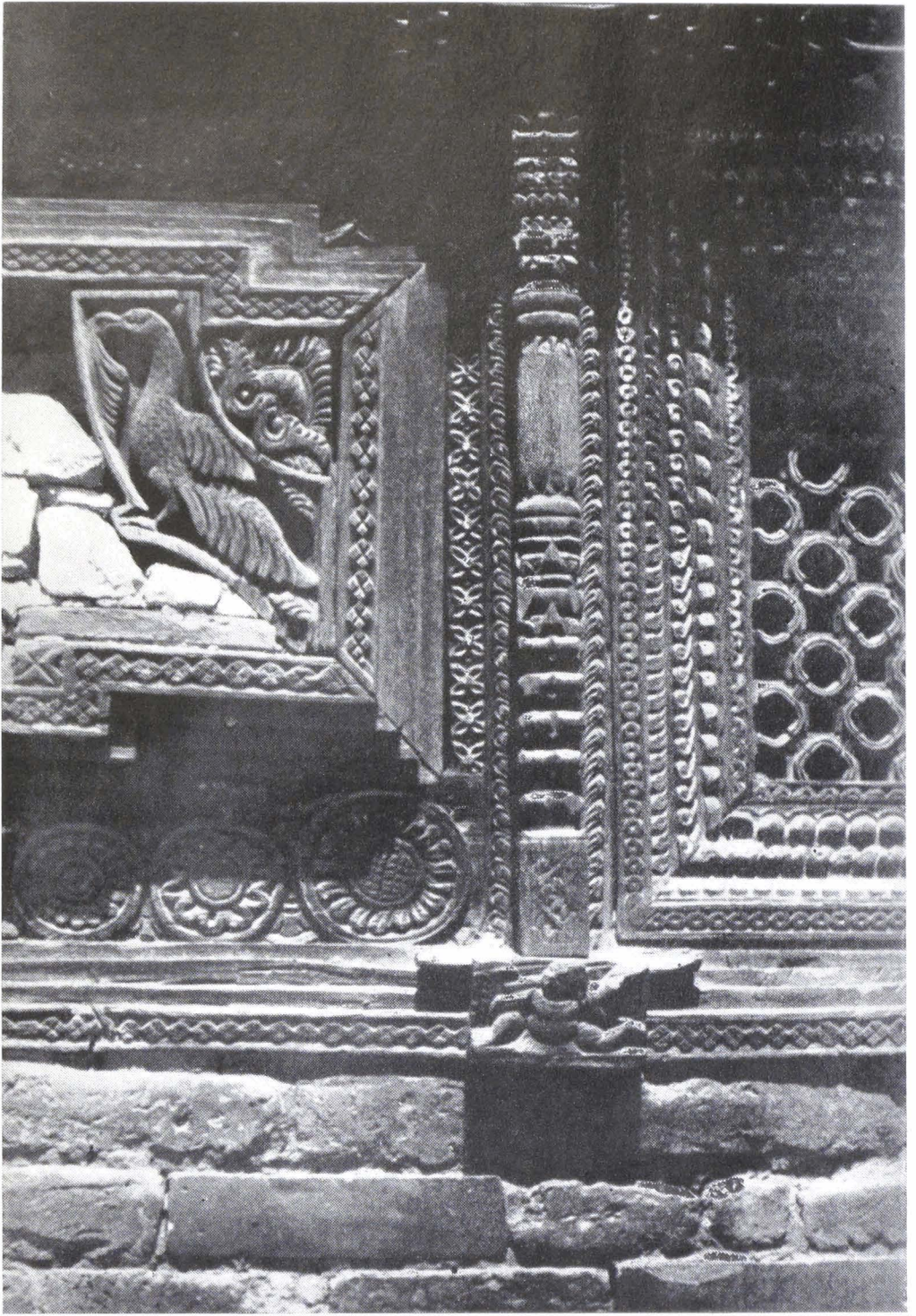
It might be thought that to have such a system within the confines of a small unit like a peasant village would lead to endless trouble and awkwardness. In point of fact it does not. The system is rigid in many matters, it is true : for example, a man who marries out of his caste becomes automatically a complete outsider ; but there is strangely little embarrassment in the mixing of the upper and lower strata, merely an acceptance and observance of the rules which limit their intercourse.

Although it is thus, for instance, quite impossible for a man to enter the house of someone whose caste is lower than his own, or eat in the presence of anyone of a different caste at all, there is quite a sense of freedom in the communal life of the village. Many of the houses are thrown open for nautches, or dances, and for the dispensing of drink at the many religious feasts, which are quite secular in their celebration. The amusements of the villager, as might be expected in peasant communities, are simple : dances, songs, tale-telling, riddles and the drinking of home-brewed rum are the most popular. The songs are often of a very salacious kind ; and one form of musical evening, which appears, *mutatis mutandis*, in many



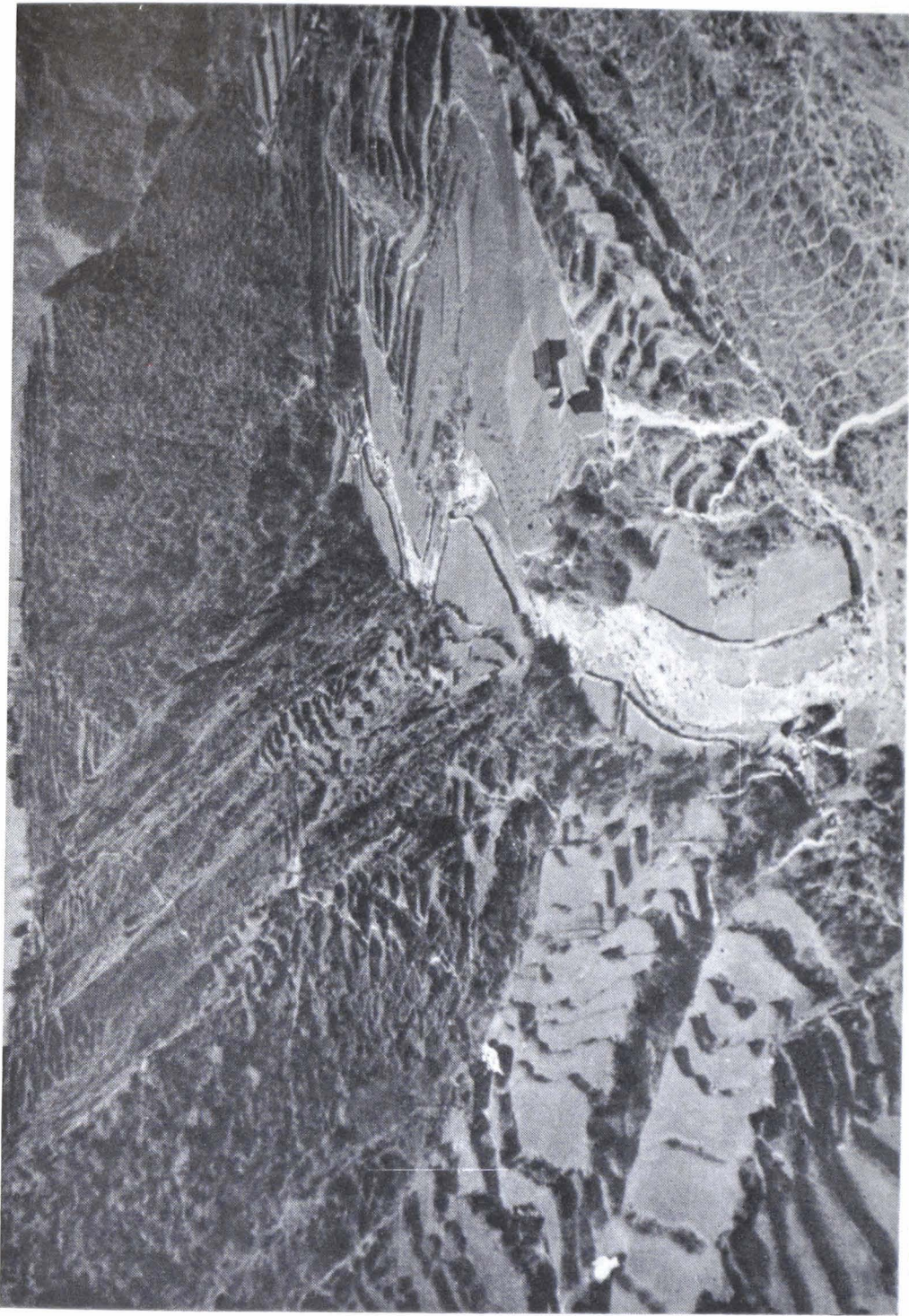
THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN KATHMANDU.

X.

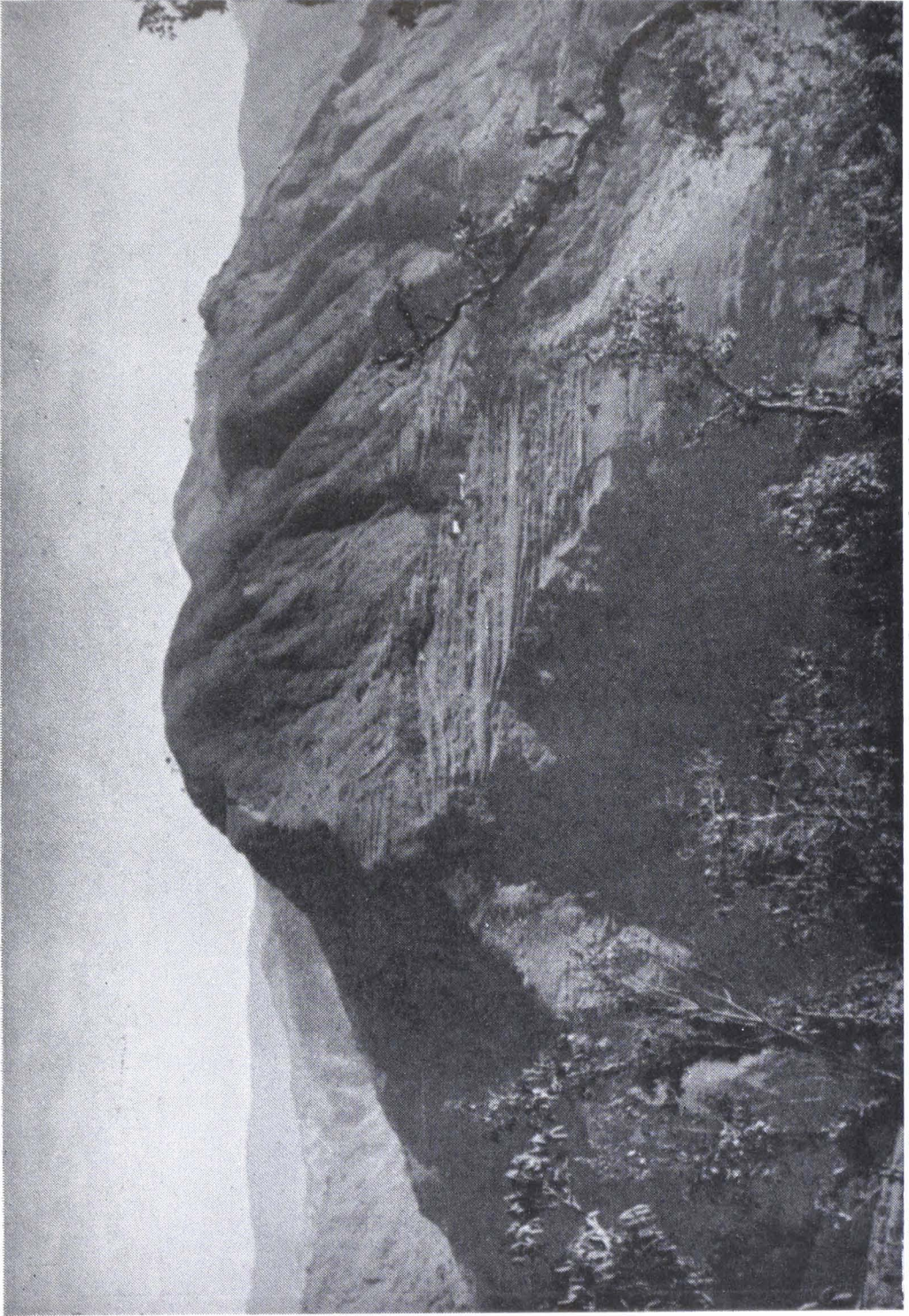


XI.

DETAIL OF CARVING ON TOWN HOUSE.



XII. THE FIELDS OF OKULDUNGA. Note the terracing, the patient labour of centuries, to prevent erosion.



XIII. THE FIELDS OF OKULDUNGA. Note the terracing, the patient labour of centuries, to prevent erosion.

parts of the world, consists in starting a song, and then requiring another man to cap your verse extempore. The Gurkha has a great fondness for drink, and an evening of this kind may become quite exciting, for there is a kind of easy bonhomie about the Gurkha ; outside the caste system, he has little of the European preoccupation with social position—videlicet, snobbery—which can make an English party so fearsome an ordeal.

The women too are much more lively and communicative than is usual in the East ; there is no conception of purdah here at all. The woman, indeed, is very important, for she is really her husband's bank account. The Gurkhas, like most simple civilisations, distrust the idea of putting their money into the hands of others for safe keeping, and are equally averse from burying it in the ground, where thieves may break in and steal : so the common course is to spend it all on jewels. This explains why even a poorly-clad woman may be seen wearing a very heavy armament of precious metals and semi-precious stones. If her husband be rich, she will have armlets, bangles, anklets, necklaces, rings, ear-rings, nose-rings and studs, and brooches. The most striking thing about the royal regalia of Nepal is the immense profusion of jewels. All the senior officials of the Government wear caps closely sewn with pearls, set with large diamonds, and hung with emeralds, over which is raised the military plume.

Brightness and display are noticeable in all the garments worn by the Nepalese. A man's dress consists of a bhorto, or shirt, with trousers—either shorts or jodhpurs : in peasant communities a kilt is often seen for working purposes. The rumal, or handkerchief, is considered an important part of dress,

and a jacket, padded with cotton wool, is worn over the other clothes by members of the higher castes. A particularly striking variant of this is the coat worn by the members of the Gurung caste, a coat gathered up into a kind of receptacle at the back, of obviously utilitarian origin. Some of the remoter hill tribes weave a tough cloak of nettle fibre to go over the rest of their clothes in severe weather. The ordinary jacket, the *chaubandi*, is double breasted, and fastened at the waist: underneath it is a long sash of white cloth. The garments will be set off by a vivid collection of colours in scarves, stocking-tops and shawls. The latter garment is worn by the women over a simple bodice and skirt. Wealthy women wear an elaborately draped and framed kind of sari: but, as has been said before, the jewels are the most important part of a woman's attire. Her hair is drawn up high at the back, and she may have an attractive fringe over her forehead. For formal appearance the man dresses his head with oil, and puts on a pair of shoes—either the simple, strong local article, or a European design if the wearer can afford it. Usually his feet are bare, and, if he has to go a journey to the bazaar, he carries the precious shoes in his hand. Similarly he treasures his clothes: army issue of great age, sometimes, it may be supposed, dating back to the Indian Mutiny, may be seen in the remoter parts. The soldier will spend all his off-duty hours in the merest singlet and clout in order to preserve his uniform spick and span.

The Gurkha is, in fact, surprisingly fastidious in person—surprising that is to those whose conception of the East is based on a few photographs of Bombay beggars. He knows the use and value of tooth-cleaning, which he carries out with a frayed stick,

and he may be seen cheerfully giving his hands a manicure with his lethal-looking kukri, which, indeed, is an instrument of many uses. He is generally smooth-faced until middle age, like most Orientals, and only produces a sparse growth of hair on the upper lip. In order to control this, he carries a small pair of pinchers, with which the hairs are deracinated, one by painful one. It would not be unfair to accuse him of a certain dandyism. He loves to have his head sleek and shining, his clothes bright and new, his complexion smooth ; and—a delightful touch, though carrying quite the wrong associations in the English mind—he is passionately fond of flowers. He will often wear a single bloom behind his ear, believing with the old Persian poem :—

“ If you have one pice, spend it on rice.
 If you have two pice, spend half on flowers,
 For flowers are the nectar of the soul.”

Personally clean as he may be, his house is not so salubrious as might be wished. He has one of the unhealthiest of English customs—an open hearth—without our inadequate answer to it, a chimney. Smoke escapes by a hole in the roof, or under the raised eaves. The ground floor of the house is shared with pigs sometimes, goats and chickens almost invariably. The atmosphere is far from peaceful, as the house, though often quite large, will be overrun with children, and various indigent relatives, whose kinship is frequently of a surprising remoteness. It is doubtful if polygamy, though here a quite accepted convention, is a perfect recipe for domestic tranquillity. There is always disparity of ages between the wives, and, particularly in the case of an old man who has married several times, in the children. The

oldest wife has the strongest legal claim over her husband, and may demand all his favour, but she will scarcely be the most attractive to him. On the other hand, the younger wives are in a less secure position, since the full marriage ceremony is not usual for second betrothals. They are therefore inclined to be jealous, and do all they can to undermine the position of their superior.

The peasant's meals vary a good deal, according to his income and caste. These two factors govern the number of meals, and, of course, the kinds of meat eaten, if any. The ordinary peasant will not eat more than one full meal a day, the wealthy one may take two, but only the really prosperous will have meat regularly—usually goat or chicken. As the Gurkhas are Hindus, they never eat beef, and to kill a cow is a capital offence. The origin of this law is not hard to guess in a country where every blade of grass is utilised. Cows are important for the milk they yield, and if the practice of killing cows were not penalised, there would soon be a shortage of milk; likewise, if the oxen were killed for food, it would result in a shortage of beasts of burden. In many parts, of course, the religious attitude has reached such proportions that the animals are not used for work at all; and as they cause so much disorder in the large towns of India, so, in Nepal, they do great harm to the precious maize crops. A cry is often heard about the villages—"Eh bhaine gaile makkai khayo!"—"Hey, lassie, the cow's in the corn!"

The Gurkha family dines together; there is no segregation of women and children. A guest of a different religion or caste has to take his food in solitude on the veranda outside. The table service is of brass—small beakers and plates. The staple of

the meal is always boiled, unpolished rice, served out in individual portions, with a thick gravy made of lentils; in addition, the eater helps himself at will to chillies and onions from a large central dish. The meal is taken on the floor, the diners squatting or reclining, and always without shoes. No table implements are used, and the food is manipulated with the right hand only—the hygienic reasons for this are discussed elsewhere in the chapter on unusual customs.

Religion, of course, is a reality in Nepal, and what would be regarded as its “interference” in daily life in many parts of the world is here quite happily accepted. Be the meal never so poor, a small portion from each dish is set aside for the gods before the meal begins.

The two chief beverages are tea and rum, taken in small brass cups. The method of drinking is the same as that observed in peasant communities in Southern Spain and Greece. The vessel is not allowed to touch, that is to “pollute,” the lips, but is held above the head, so that the fluid falls in a stream into the open mouth.

The times and content of the peasant meal are roughly as follows. On rising, tea, heavily sweetened and spiced so as to be almost like treacle in consistency, is taken, without food; or else native rum, a spirit made from sugar, but not so potent as our liquor, may be preferred. The first meal of the day is at about ten o'clock. This consists of rice, chillies and sauce, with the usual beverages, and, in the case of the wealthy, meat as well. At noon there is more tea: and at about half past six, those who can afford it have a meal similar to the earlier one.

It will be observed that the regimen is monotonous and unhealthy. The amount of spice consumed is,

of course, partly to flavour the monotony, and partly to act as a diaphoretic. Nevertheless, the diet is a poor one, and the prevalence of certain diseases, such as pulmonary tuberculosis, may be attributed, in many cases, to malnutrition.

With a diet of this kind it is clear that crops will be rather limited. Wheat is unknown, maize taking its place. The other main crops are rice, mangoes, barley, dhal (lentils), alu (potato), rhumbera (tomatoes), gopi (cabbage), gopiful (cauliflower) and kursani (chili).

It should, of course, be mentioned that Nepal embraces a very wide range of soil and fauna and flora. The curious may have recourse to the work of Sir Brian Hodgson, F.R.S., who was Resident from 1822–1843. When his period of office ended, he applied for permission to remain in the country; but, this being refused, went to the neighbouring State of Sikkim, where he lived until 1858. He lived on in England for another thirty-four years.

In his survey of the country, Hodgson divided it into three classifications—the Terai, of Indian type, up to 4,000 feet; the Central Himalayan Region, from 4,000 feet to 10,000 feet; and the Palaearctic Alpine Region, from 10,000 feet to 29,000 feet, which of course, leaves 141 feet, the summit of Mount Everest, presumably without life of any sort.

The Terai is one of the unhealthiest spots in the world, breeding a particularly violent form of malaria. The vegetation is swampy, tall grasses and rank undergrowth. The animals include elephant, rhino, samba, buffalo, cheetal, hog-deer, swamp-deer and other animals of Bengali type. The soil is, of course, quite unsuitable for cultivation.

The Valley of Kathmandu is in Hodgson's second classification. Here the soil is rich, a thick, black

NEPALESE VILLAGE LIFE

mud deposit being the humus basis of it, and cultivation flourishes. Here there are no Indian animals or plants, but forms more like those of Europe. In the hills, the soil is very poor indeed, and has given rise to the system of terraced fields. These are often the products of generations of intensive farmers. The fertile soil is so scarce that the peasant terraces it out of the mountainside into fields sometimes only about three feet wide, and the same height. Working these is very hard, and the peasant's difficulties are increased by the primitive nature of his implements. The only forms of fertilisation are black leaf mould, and the rich mud of the valley, when this is obtainable. This is spread on the surface of the soil, and the rain is left to wash it in. As there is no notion of rotating crops, however, the results are poor. Natural fertilisation is unknown, since cow dung is collected and used as fuel. Irrigation, necessary for the production of rice crops, is carried out by a system of open gullies and ditches. Cultivation consists in little more than ploughing, and this is often very superficial, since it is no more than a scratching of the earth's surface by means of a wooden beam. The ploughing is the only field task always done by the men; the work of harvesting is properly that of the women. The wealthier farmer—an individual seldom met with outside the Valley of Kathmandu—may have a bullock to pull his plough; but horses, although used as pack animals, and for the wealthy to ride upon, are never employed at all in agriculture. Because of their cramped dimensions, the fields of the average peasant smallholder do not warrant the use of a draught animal at all. Farm carts, indeed, the very principle of the wheel itself, seem almost unknown in the hilly regions, where the tracks are so precipitous and

boulder-strewn that they would be of doubtful service. The structure of the country, and, more important, the means of entering it are impractical for any large wheeled vehicle. Cars are owned by various high officials of the State, but they have to be carried over the Pass by coolies, as described elsewhere. The familiar bullock-cart of India may be seen in Kathmandu, but not elsewhere. It, and all other farm implements, are made almost entirely of wood.

Livestock are thus bred only for food and fuel, and they are not, in general, well looked after. The traveller will notice lean cows, goats and poultry. Like the Thibetan, the Gurkha has no conception of kindness to animals as a part of a civilised being's conduct: but nevertheless, since he rarely uses an animal for draught purposes, cruelty is seldom seen.

The variety of animal life, of course, is enormous. It ranges from the big game of the Terai, mentioned already, through ferrets, racoons, badgers and porcupines, civet, mongoose, wild dog, bears and leopard, to goats and sheep in the north. There the sheep is reared for wool, and in the villages of the mountainous districts the women may be seen walking the streets with a piece of raw wool at their waists, from which depends a strand of spun thread with a weighted cone-shaped spindle at the end. This method of spinning was in use in our country in the Middle Ages, and is still taught in our schools of arts and crafts.

There are further difficulties in the way of breeding livestock. Winter feeding in those areas which have snows, is hard, and usually consists of dried leaves. And Nepal is unhappily rich in dangerous animals. The tiger and panther may be found in almost any part of the country. There are, too, some seventy

varieties of snake, including all the most deadly—the King Cobra and Russell's Viper; while crocodile haunt the swamps of the Terai.

The methods of agriculture have not altered much since Kirkpatrick first recorded them in the late 18th century; and, indeed, there is little reason to suppose that they have altered much since a far more remote time than that. In spite of their primitive nature, and the hardness of much of the soil, Nepal is not without natural resources and potential wealth. The forests, which flourish under ideal climate and rainfall, are part of the great Himalayan timber belt which stretches from the Indus to Sikkim, and the size and quality of the timber grown in them are alike remarkable. Side by side with such quaint exports as beeswax and hemp, may be noted the mineral potentialities of the land, not yet fully exploited. Some gold is found in one or two of the rivers, though most of it is brought in from Thibet. Iron and copper mines have been worked for centuries, the copper deposits being especially rich. There is plenty of lead, a metal now more valuable than formerly, and probably some silver near Nowakot. There are also deposits of antimony and mercury, and some arsenic and pyrites in the West. Non-metallic minerals include a fair amount of marble and jasper, limestone and slate.

How far these things are, and will be, exploited is uncertain. Nepal is more important internationally than it has ever been before, but its contact with the outside world is as slender as ever. In spite of its resources, its exports are not great, partly because of the difficulties of transport, partly because its imports are small—the products of civilisation are allowed only to a limited class of people.

For the most part, the Gurkha, when he is not a

fighting man, is still a farming man. He is hard-working, thrifty, storing his money with care, and, if he is not of Newar stock, given to hoarding it, so that here and there, in remote huts and holdings, may be found coins of the eighteenth century, the fragments of a soldier's accoutrements in the Indian Mutiny. Once a week the farmer leaves his home and goes down to the nearest village, where a weekly market is held, to sell his produce and buy such simple things as salt and cigarettes. His land is little, and will grow less, for on his death it will be equally divided among his sons : his life is hard, with little measurable reward. Nevertheless, despite the poor soil, the rains which sweep away his house every year, the monotonous meals and the inimical climate, he is a very cheerful individual, and, like farm-workers the world over, strangely unhurried. He has no conception of arbitrary time at all, rising when it is light, sleeping when it is dark, getting up and talking in the middle of the night, if he is not tired, by the light of a purloined army hurricane lantern, or a tiny native lamp—a wick set in a shallow dish of oil little different in pattern from that carried by the foolish virgins. Seasons go by him, the crops rise and fall, he does not know what day of the week it is, what year maybe ; he cannot tell you, without much trouble, how old he is. Does it matter ? He belongs to the happiest race on earth.

RELIGION AND SUPERSTITION: CURIOUS CEREMONIES AND CUSTOMS

THE treatment of religion given here will be very slight, since the subject is a very complicated one, and only an expert on Asiatic creeds could deal competently with it. Most writers on Nepal either concentrate on the religious art of the country, or deal sensationally with the more gory festivals and the obscene Tantric cult. This gives a rather false impression.

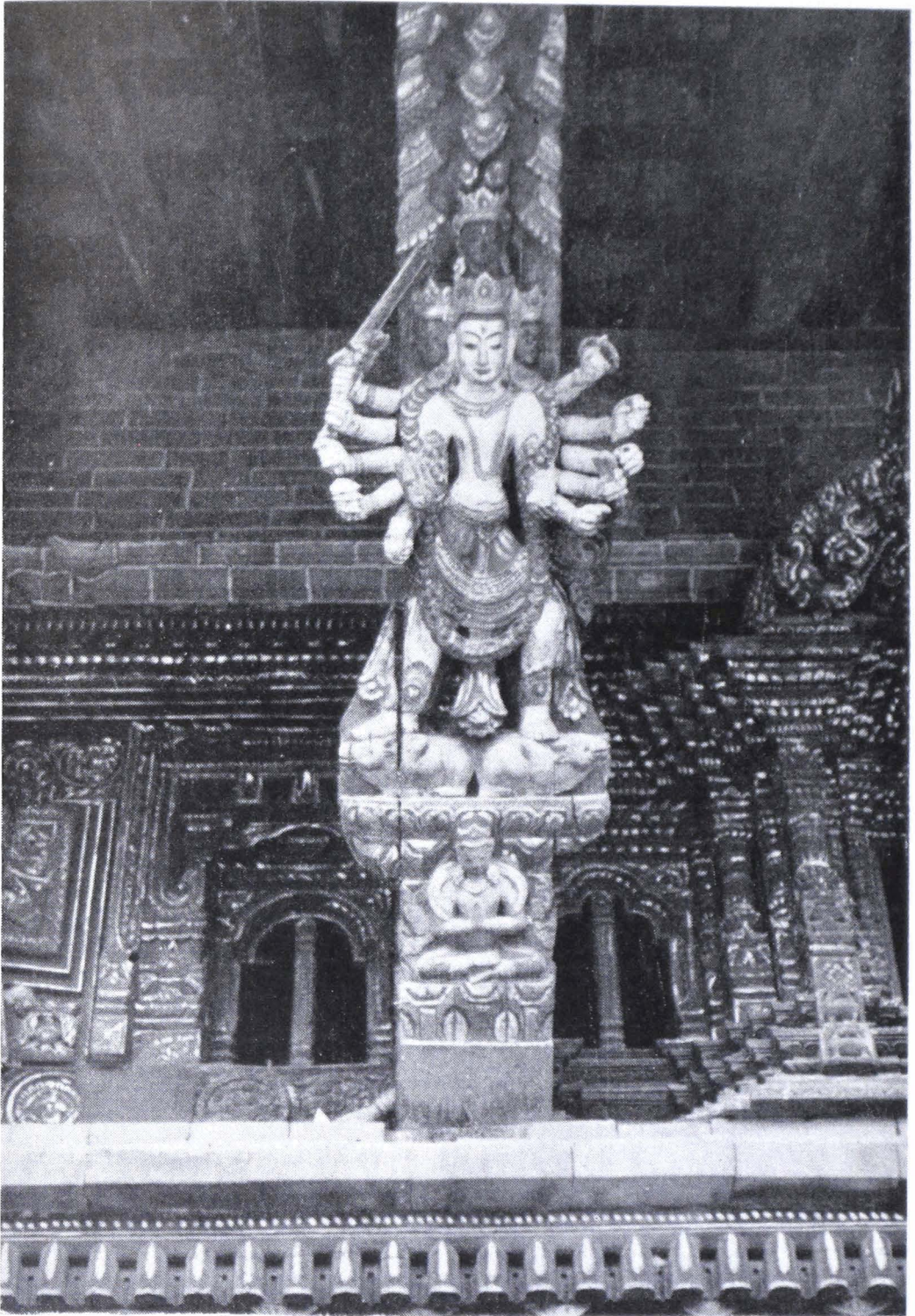
In Nepal there are at least three forms of religion, all going on side by side, blending and overlapping one with another, and mixed with all sorts of superstitions as well. It presents, in fact, a kaleidoscope of ideas, observances and images, from which nothing clear emerges. Allowing for the general differences between Oriental and European religions, the picture is really not unlike that of England, where we have a range of faith, within the Christian Church, from extreme Roman Catholicism to Congregationalism and the Salvation Army: and we have, besides, plenty of people who believe that the only hope of mankind's survival is for us all to eat carrots or take up home weaving again.

There is one great fundamental difference, however: in Nepal, religion is something absolutely real. Those doubts and rationalisings which beset the more highly civilised races do not exist in the land of the Gurkhas. He has never heard of the square root of minus one,

nor does the phrase “ a fortuitous concourse of atoms ” mean anything to him. His religious festivals often interrupt his work, and take up time and money which he can ill afford, but he does not skimp them, nevertheless. Only in war is he prepared to give up some of the outward observances, and even here there are limits, as will be explained elsewhere in this chapter.

The official religion of Nepal, that is to say the religion of its ruling class, is Hinduism. There is, however, a very strong Buddhist following. Nepal offers a unique field of research into Buddhist literature, of which it has a great amount never touched by foreign scholars ; and it offers too, a remarkable study of the interaction of Buddhism and Hinduism as social systems.

Like India, Nepal began as a Hindu country, and then went over to Buddhism. At this time, Nepal looked to India as a close and important neighbour : but when India returned to Hinduism, the intercourse between the two countries became less and less, until the Mohammedan conquests of Bihar and Bengal in 1204 A.D. From this time the relationship between the two countries practically ceased ; and from this time the resemblance between them ceased also, since the invasion which altered the whole course of Indian life and history never touched Nepal. Nepal, in fact, became much more closely associated with Thibet and China—not the least striking influence is the adoption of the type of temple building known as the pagoda, in which form many of the old Buddhist temples were built. Bodhnath remains to this day a celebrated place of Lamaist pilgrimage, and is visited by immense numbers of Thibetans. It is, in fact, the literal home of Buddhism : for in the lonely region



XIV. SHIVA, GOD OF DESTRUCTION. Hinduism the State Religion.



XV.

BUDDHA, WHOSE HOME IS NEPAL.

of Rummindei, according to legend and to a pillar set up by the Emperor Asoka, some two thousand years ago Gautama Buddha was born there.

In many places, especially the higher regions of the North, pure Buddhism remains, undoubtedly still under the influence of Thibet; but the two religions were combined when the Hindu Gurkhas invaded the country in the eighteenth century, and a kind of Brahmo-Buddhist compromise is the general religion to-day. The correlation of the two is quite remarkable. Buddhism, after all, is one of the most peaceful religions, with its belief in one universal, omnipotent, serene spirit, which has and always will exist, untroubled by the vicissitudes of the physical world; and the contemplative statue of Buddha, and his unwinking eye are seen everywhere in the religious art of the country. Side by side with this appears the terrible, many-armed, frightening figure that symbolises all the restlessness and fear of Hinduism. Their images appear rubbing shoulders, their temples are cheek by jowl, the serenity of the one is mingled with the rigid caste system and Brahman arrogance of the other.

Interwoven with these is a third form of worship—Tantrism. This is supposed to be of Hindu origin, and to embrace some of the tenets of the cult of Sivaism. It takes its name from the Tantras, the manuals of magic, religion, charms and counter-charms, which are of comparatively modern date, some of them being no older than the eighteenth century. The headquarters of the worship of Siva (the Vedic Rudra, the Destroyer) in India are in the extreme north and south. In spite of the fact that this religion must have been in its infancy when the Gurkhas conquered Nepal, it seems not improbable

that Tantrism has its roots much further back in the history of man than that. Its rites, which, apparently, no visitor to Nepal has seen, are dark, bloody and obscene. Copulation, natural, unnatural and bestial, figures in its art. In all probability it is linked with those primitive rites of early man in which fertility of crops, livestock and human beings was sought in the very beginnings of religion. How wide is its influence in Nepal to this day may be judged by the fact that every kukri—and a Gurkha is not dressed without one—has a little nick just above the hilt which, in spite of the various quaint explanations of it which have been offered, is certainly a phallic symbol of Tantric origin.

The effect of having these three religions in full spate is strange, in so far as each seems to borrow from the other. The allowing of such a state of affairs may be remarked as showing unusual tolerance. Actually there is a practical basis for this amicable arrangement. The priests—it is said in no disrespect, for every religion needs its funds—are businesslike in their attitude, and they naturally cast their net as wide as possible. Hence the Hindu and Buddhist can find his appropriate image even in the very temple-yard of his rival. Against this apparent toleration may be set the fact that missionaries of any outside faith whatsoever are absolutely prevented from working in Nepal. No word of any new religion has entered the country since the Gurkhas overcame it some two hundred years ago.

On the other hand, pilgrims are welcomed, and every year sees thousands of Indians from the south and Thibetans and Chinese from the north. Every twelve years there is a specially large influx to visit Bodhnath, where, at such intervals, a sacred stream

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flows from the dome, every drop of which is sufficient to expiate the sins of a lifetime. The pilgrims keep the temple clean and decorated—it is one of the finest in the country—and it is kept in repair by authorities at Lhasa in Thibet. It is reputed to be built over the ashes of a Thibetan Lama. The centre of Buddhism in Nepal, however, is at Swayambhunath, on the sacred Baghmatti River, which is to the Nepalese as the Ganges is to the Indian. The Buddhist temple there is a great centre of pilgrimage : and all around it are temples to the other branches of religion mentioned above—the Tantric Vajra Dhateswari and other Sivaistic deities, Lamaism, Brahmanism.

The effect of all this confusion of thought on the mind of the ordinary peasant is difficult to define. Fear certainly plays a great part—fear of wood spirits, of ghosts and supernatural forces generally will emerge from the superstitious side of his religion, and from the Hindu part of it, which is largely a belief of terror : on the other hand, the serenity and calm, the strange happiness in the midst of poverty and hardship which make the Gurkha the attractive figure he is may be supposed to spring from Buddhism. From this it is but a step to what is popularly called Fatalism in the West ; and this stoical attitude, and belief in destiny undoubtedly plays a great part in making the Gurkha the finest, coolest, grimmest fighting man in the world.

Having given a rough outline of the strange, multi-coloured religious background to the Gurkha mind, we may go on to examine some of his customs, which, in the light of what has been said, may not appear unduly unreasonable.

There is no absolute system of ethics corresponding to our Decalogue in Nepal ; it would not be possible

UNKNOWN NEPAL

in a country whose religions are so tangled : but certain rules pertain generally.

The following, which represents the credo of an ordinary Gurkha peasant serving in the Army, is of interest, as it will give the Western reader some notion of the basic morality of the race ; some of the items are clearly subjective, but they represent, in general, the ethical outlook of the ordinary Nepalese.

The items were transcribed on the spot from a Gurkhali song, which the singer, an orderly on active service, said was of religious origin, and contained a list of things which were prohibited. There were twelve such things :—

1. Thou shalt not kill man nor cow.
2. Thou shalt not wear shoes on the road, and so kill the ants.
3. Thou shalt not wear shoes when eating.
4. Thou shalt not tell a lie.
5. Thou shalt eat with the right hand only.
6. Thou shalt put aside a portion of all that thou eatest, and do “ names kar,” (i.e. adopt an attitude rather like our own praying position, such as is used amongst the Gurkhas as a greeting gesture) to the remainder, and to the first mouthful.
7. Thou shalt give to the aged and infirm such small paisa as thou hast, and to those that sit on the roadside.
8. Thou shalt not praise thy neighbour’s wife above thine own.
9. Thou shalt not commit abortion, nor shalt thou encourage thy neighbour’s wife to commit one for thine offspring.

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10. Thou shalt not eat anything except bread and fruit the day before Dashera (the main annual religious festival) begins.
11. Thou shalt say, on arriving at thy house door, "Hariram Narein."
12. Thou shalt not start a journey on a Saturday, nor arrive home on a Tuesday.

It will be seen that this code, the order and variety of which is astonishing to a European mind, embraces rules of three kinds—those which are strictly of religious origin, those which are entirely practical, and those, such as the giving of alms to the aged, which appear in the philosophy of any society which has ever been conscious of a desire to raise itself above the level of mere barbarity. It may be added, in a parenthesis that is not intended to be cynical, that begging is virtually unknown in Nepal—a striking contrast with its professional status in neighbouring India.

Those rules which have to do with the killing or eating of animals are all religious. Perhaps the most startling is the first one, which equates homicide with bovicide. The very strict Hindu, of the higher castes, eats no meat at all—not even that inescapable dish of the East, the lean, stringy and ubiquitous chicken. The ordinary peasant will eat goat or chicken when he can afford it: further down the scale are some who will eat wild pig: and the lowest of the low even eat domesticated pork: but no one, under any circumstances, will eat beef. To harm a cow in any way is a grave offence: to kill one, quite unthinkable. In Pashupatti stands a great, gold-decorated temple where is reputed to be one of the finest Hindu statues in the world—the image of the bull Nandi, kneeling, and heavily plated with gold.

Amongst the purely practical rules of this code are, obviously, those to do with the praising of another man's wife, and the committing of abortion, both of which are highly dangerous things, and liable to have serious ramifications. The strange regulation about eating with the right hand only, and one which is rigorously kept, is no more than an elementary rule of hygiene, a precaution which will be appreciated by those who are familiar with the more personal and intimate habits of the East.

This collection of rules, ranging from the strictly religious—the preservation of insect life—to the ridiculous, is oddly at variance with the Hebrew Decalogue ; which, after all, was similarly the product of a primitive people, living largely on the land and livestock, strictly secluded from other races by religious laws, just as Nepal is secluded by geographical ones. Yet there is an immense difference in the spirit of the two codes. The Hebrew one is chiefly moral, and those legal parts of it are merely simple adjuncts to praise God, without going into any small details of personal conduct at all. The Nepalese code, on the other hand, is chiefly concerned with rather small points of behaviour, and has very little in it that is of general moral quality. The reasons for this difference are probably two. The first is that whereas the Hebrews were essentially a nomadic race when their code was formulated, Nepal has been almost the most static in the world since the Gurkha conquest. The second reason, and much more important, is that which made the Hebrews so different from all the tribes of their own time, as from the modern Nepalese—they were monotheistic. In Nepal there are deities without end : Narain, the God of the Miracle ; Singhini and Vyaghini, the “ Terribles ” ; Vajra

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Satwa, the sixth celestial Buddha ; Khal Bhairab, goddess of Death ; Tulaja Devi, the special protectress of the Maharajah ; Hanuman, the Monkey God ; Vajra Dhateswari, a Tantric goddess ; Devi Sitla, the goddess of smallpox.

It may be noticed with some surprise that the code does not mention adultery. Nevertheless, there was a traditional punishment for this offence, and one of great severity. The punishment was meted out by the offended husband, *coram publico*. The nose and lips of the unfaithful wife were severed with the kukri : and her lover was slain by decapitation with the same weapon. If, however, he preferred dishonour to death, he might crawl below the raised leg of the husband, as a sign of complete humiliation. This was not so lenient an alternative as may be thought, since the Gurkha has a tremendous personal pride, such as may be most familiar to us in tales of ancient Sparta, or of the Samurai of Japan. Death was usually preferred.

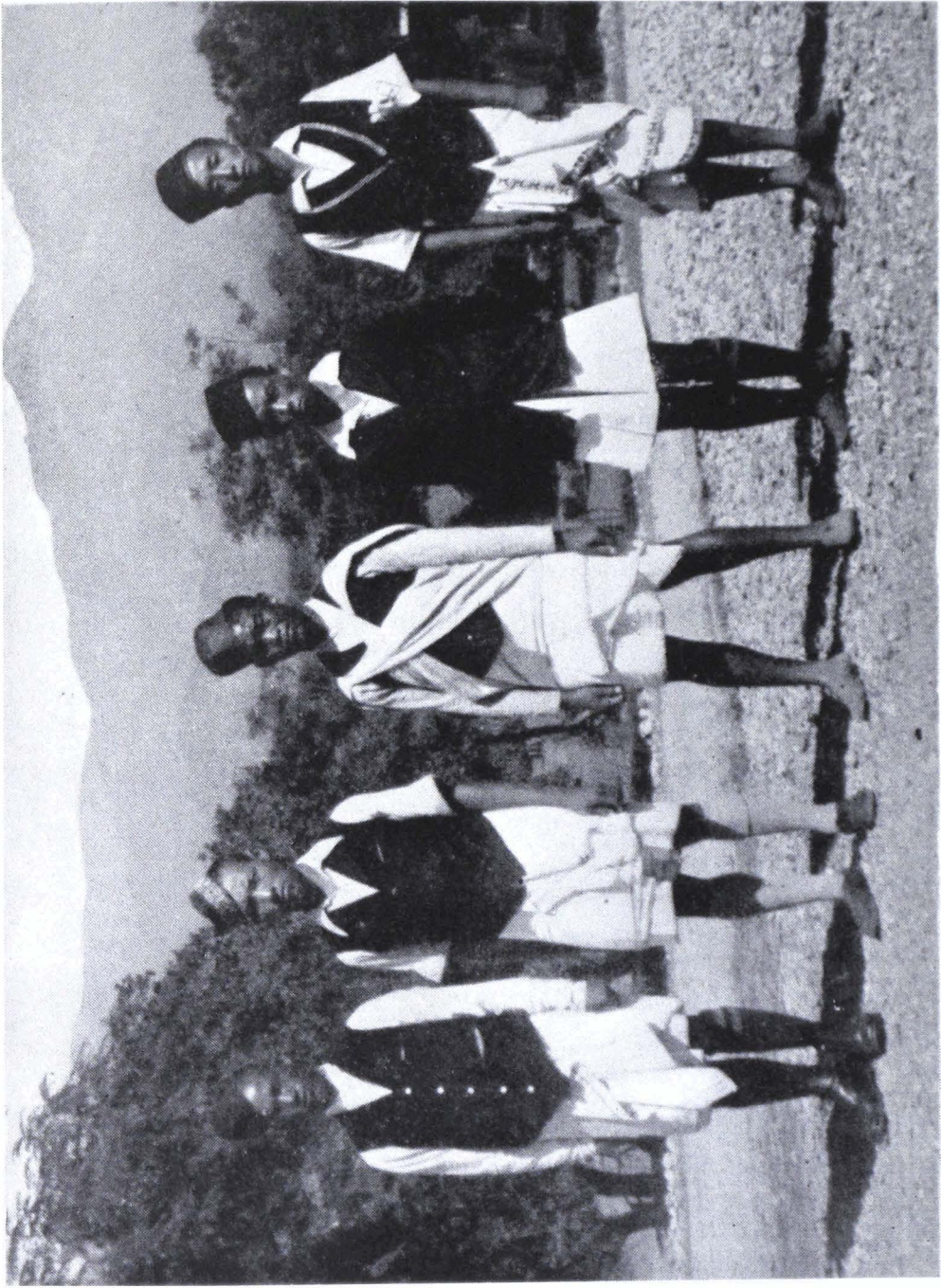
Although this practice is now not in use officially—though there are many remote places in Nepal, and many a strange and ancient rite—one disconcerting result is that a Gurkha will under no circumstances step over the legs of another person, as this would be to offer him a terrible insult. The Sahib, sitting at ease in the mess of an evening, may be astonished at the rude directness with which he is asked to move his outstretched legs so that a Gurkha may pass without stepping over them.

This is the more remarkable, as the Gurkha, in the usual manner of Eastern civilisations, is most ceremonious in many matters—and not merely the aristocrat and the more civilised inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley, but every peasant. The Nepalese

manner of writing a letter, for example, is very different from ours: from a remote village, written out by the solitary literate man in it, may come a screed as flowery as an international compliment. The typical letter begins always with a formal invocation, some half a dozen lines in length, in which the writer hails and salaams the recipient, who is greeted as the three times three great one. Then follows whatever message is to be conveyed, couched in prose at once formal and decorative. After this comes an ending as elaborate as the opening, in which numerous abject excuses are made for the paucity of the letter, which is said to be the fault not of the pen, but of the writer. Literacy is very low in Nepal; but the script is an elaborate and rather beautiful form of calligraphy.

It will be observed that such a style of writing is not suited to business; and indeed it is rarely so used. The chief function of a letter is to convey greetings and remembrances, very little else. There is no business letter, no business jargon, no "esteemed communications to hand," no "ref. yrs. 16th ult.," for there is, in this happy land, nothing which could really be called business.

The same ceremony is observed in letter writing in Japan and China: and Nepal also shares, with these countries, a formality in the matter of family relationships. There is a complex system of nomenclature, which embraces not merely a set of official names for First Son, Second Son, and so on, but also quite remote relationships—"Kanchba ba" is the correct title of a paternal uncle younger than one's father; the husband of one's father's sister is correctly spoken of as "phupaju." It is considered impolite to address anyone by his name at all. The soldier is known by his number: but even his officers will



XVI. A GROUP OF FIVE SOLDIERS IN THEIR NATIONAL DRESS. Each one belongs to a separate caste, and speaks a different language.

Facing page 69]



XVII.

THE WIVES AT HOME, RICE-PLANTING.

not escape. A British General may find himself pleasantly spoken of as “Laure Dai”—“Elder brother of the War.”

It is an interesting matter for the reflective to observe how the progress of what is called civilisation is in inverse proportion to the observance of such niceties of behaviour. An English letter of two centuries ago, while not quite so elaborate as that of modern Nepal, had nevertheless something of the flavour of politeness about it. This lingered for a while in the Victorian business letter; but could not withstand the exigencies of industrialisation, the increasing tempo of life, the curious doctrine that time means money. The West will argue that the politeness of the East is a shell for hypocrisy. At the same time, there is no doubt that such small graces add to the pleasantness of living, and convey the impression that life is not an affair of split seconds.

The handshake—either a flaccid interchange of manual moisture, or a competition in clutch—is unknown in Nepal. The usual gesture of greeting is the raising of the closed hands before the face, as in our attitude of prayer; the salaam; and the touching of heart and lip. Amongst some of the more remote parts, a man may still be seen kissing the feet of his superior. Gesture plays quite a large part in daily intercourse, though it is not used as it is among the Latin races, to lend emphasis to conversation. In talk the Gurkha is rather unemotional, a stolid hillman; but he uses a number of formalised gestures, such as the raising of an object given him to the level of his face, instead of saying “Thank you.”

In spite of this unemotional and ceremonious exterior, the Gurkha has a core of sincerity which it is hard to appreciate to the full, or to express without

becoming rhapsodical. The Gurkha soldier is absolutely devoted to his Sahib; and it is one of the great disadvantages of Gurkha troops that, though they fight so splendidly, the death of their officer will upset their morale seriously. The Gurkha does not cherish hatred—a personal feud would be unthinkable in Nepal—and so he does not go to war to fight out some deep antagonism against the Japanese, or whoever the enemy may be: he merely fights for his officer.

Once he has decided to become a friend, he is a friend for life, and nothing can shake his fidelity. Amongst his own people he maintains the practice of blood brotherhood. This leads to an extended moral code; so that, for example, sexual liaisons between brothers in blood are not very much looked down upon, though they are not so frequent as amongst the Sikhs and Pathans.

Marriage, on the other hand, is not a very binding contract. Adultery is quite common, and, while there is no official form of divorce or dissolution, desertion is a not infrequent substitute, and the wife who feels herself unappreciated will find herself a new partner without much heart-searching. Unless she is a man's first wife, it is not likely that she will have had a full marriage ceremony, no more than a betrothal and a feast. She is not regarded at all as a mere chattel. Marriage itself is an expensive affair, but not for the bride. The girl who cannot find a valuable dowry need not despair of finding herself a husband, for it is he who is expected to provide not only all the expenses of the ceremony, but the trousseau as well. This consists of lengths of cloth and various silver ornaments. The Gurkha love of bright colours, and the universal use of jewels, even

by people otherwise poorly dressed, has been mentioned elsewhere.

The proper marriage consists of a religious ceremony, followed by a large and lengthy feast and dance, to which all the neighbourhood come as a matter of course. Perhaps the whole cost of the marriage, which the groom has to meet, is 600 rupees—approximately £50 by the standards obtaining at the time of writing. Girls marry young, often at fourteen or so: men also marry early, but they, of course, are not monagamous. A man will marry again as circumstances dictate and finance permits. There is no numerical restriction, like the Moslem limit of four wives, though more than two wives are rare for financial reasons. The expense does not, by any means, end with the wedding. It is considered a desirable thing to maintain a wife in luxury; and there is, in all parts of the country, a strict division of labour between the sexes. The men are responsible for building, house-repairs and decoration, hunting, ploughing, road and bridge maintenance: the women for tending livestock, cooking and gathering the harvest. The large majority of men are warriors during some part of their lives, so they are away from home; and the women are quite capable of looking after the smallholding in their absence.

They will be helped by other members of the families—for families are large, and great numbers of people live in one house, often swelled by the inclusion of all sorts of distant relatives, cousins, aged aunts and the like. Children, who get no formal schooling except in one or two of the larger communities, are expected to take part in the day's work as soon as they can walk. The arrival of a child, for all it is a frequent occurrence, is still an important one. The

birth itself is not a matter of great fuss, for the village women are skilled obstetricians. Once it is over, however, there are celebrations lasting eleven days. Great anxiety is entertained until the child's horoscope has been cast. In every village community, there is someone who acts both as astrologer and doctor—he is quite often the village priest as well: and he, with much abracadabra, casts the child's future. The horoscope is cherished, since it governs thereafter every significant action in the life of its subject; it will be consulted scrupulously in order to determine the most auspicious day on which to arrange a marriage, a journey, a purchase; indeed, the very soldier will anxiously examine his horoscope to find out if the first day of his leave falls upon a day which augurs well for travel, and if it does not he will hesitate about making the home journey until a more auspicious time.

Superstition plays a large part in common life—even the child's name, which will very rarely be used, is chosen by astrology. There is little choice. He will be given two or three names, of which the last one is always his caste—Gurung or Thapa or whatever it is, and the penultimate one usually Bahadur, meaning courageous. The Maharajahs carry a train of names—Shum Shere Jang Bahadur Rana—which is prefixed by one individual name alone; all members of their family bear the other five.

There is too a universal belief in ghosts and evil spirits, bringing in its train the usual ceremonies of propitiation and sacrifice. That these play a part in every meal has already been touched upon. There is a special incantation and invocation to be used before the slaying of an enemy. Spells have many uses. They are employed for such diverse purposes as the

killing of an enemy at a distance, allaying a hostile spirit, and curing a sprained ankle. These spells are not in the current language of the country, but in a strange, mutated speech, rather like some of the "code languages" used by our schoolboys. There are two methods of using it. One is to insert a disyllable—"imshi" "chari" or "bhai"—between each syllable of the curse: the other is to reverse each syllable of the formula, something akin in spirit to the reversal of the Lord's Prayer in the Black Mass.

Superstition and religion often meet. The great yearly ceremony of Dashera is essentially sacrificial. It commemorates the victory of the goddess Durga over the evil spirit Mahishasur, who takes the outward form of a buffalo. Thus the principal feature of the feast is the slaughter of thousands of buffalo. The slaying of this representative of evil naturally gives great joy to the other deities so the ceremony is accompanied by much singing and dancing, gambling, drinking and feasting. The whole occupies ten days, and is closely associated with the army. On the ninth day the sacrifices take place. Each battalion has to sacrifice at least one buffalo, and every senior officer is expected to provide it. A man is chosen to perform the sacrifice, which is carried out by the severing of the animal's head with a single blow of the kukri, or, if the animal be a heavy one, with the larger sacrificial knife, the kora. If this is done correctly—a real feat of strength—the man is given a white scarf: if incorrectly, he is covered with shame, and disaster may be expected to follow the unlucky omen. Other people, who cannot afford a buffalo, are expected to perform a similar ritual with a goat. The celebrants are then anointed with a Tikka—a trident-shaped mark on the forehead, made with the

blood mixed with rice grains. The next two days are those of the crow and the dog: guns and mortars are hung with flowers, in sign of the martial spirit of the festival, and there is universal holiday and rejoicing.

Next to the buffalo, the rhinoceros is considered most acceptable to the gods. When one is slain, its blood is offered as a libation. On ordinary Srahd days the customary libation of milk and blood is poured from a rhino horn. Its urine is hung at the door as a charm to avert evil spirits.

Medicine is very crude. The potions of the physician are more reminiscent of the witches' cauldron in *Macbeth* than of a healing science. The fouler the ingredients, the more they are favoured. There is a good deal of magic in their selection: gold is a great specific, as it was in the Middle Ages in Europe; and tiger whiskers are esteemed as a love potion, a choice whose origin is clearly symbolic rather than chemical. Many animals are invested with strange significance. The monkey is actually spoken of as a kind of human being—a very bad man of low caste, who is constantly at enmity with his superior brother.¹

Not only medical, but spiritual precautions are necessary. The Gurkha who leaves his country has to go through an elaborate ritual of purification, to excuse him from any contamination while away—and even to touch the neck of a water bottle while drinking from it is a defilement. The rite, known as Pani Patya, is carried out for the soldier by the regimental pundit, and is repeated when he returns home. When he returns to his fields, he may sacrifice a goat to obtain a good harvest. A pole is erected, across which the animal is straddled to receive the *coup de*

¹ cf. A recent explanation of the Abominable Snowman.

grace from the kukri. The weapon itself has some superstitious connection. If it is drawn in anger, it is considered ill-luck to sheathe it again until it has tasted blood of some sort. At the base of the blade, on the cutting edge, is the small double indentation, elsewhere referred to in the remarks on Tantrism, which is a phallic symbol, showing the knife as the weapon of the man, the mark of virility. Great pride is taken in it, and it is required to give a true ring when tapped with the finger-nail : contrary to popular belief, it is never thrown, but used for slashing, cutting edge downwards.

It is not surprising that blood-letting is known amongst such a people : they have good reason to know the leech, for this unpleasant parasite infests parts of the country, and makes travel a nightmare to the squeamish. In the Terai breed malarial insects, and the germs of many virulent fevers. Hospital treatment is unknown. Tuberculosis abounds because of overcrowding and incorrect diet. Sanitation is primitive, water supplies are primitive. Medicine is shrouded in superstition : and even were this put aside, there is still a great foe to medical progress—apathy. The Gurkha is a fatalist. Too much medicine, in the end, means too many people, too many babies surviving, too many old people lingering on past their working usefulness. Already there is little food and wealth. With more people, there would be more hardship. The gods, in their wisdom, have always seen to it that disease and death kept the country economically stable. Why seek to do better than they ? Life still offers simple recreations—the song, the nautch, the drinking party. There are many games to while away the evening when the work is done, such as the three card trick, usually

played with European cards, but sometimes with the original Indian pack, the circular, papier maché disc. These are well-thumbed, so that certain important cards are easily recognisable, like a polished double six in dominoes, the cards are therefore dealt from the bottom of the pack. Other gambling games are played with fifteen cowrie shells, thrown into the air, stakes being laid on the number which will fall smooth side upwards. A kind of dice provides a milder entertainment: and girls and children play at tip stick, chequers and knucklebones. There is hunting too. The big game of the Terai is reserved for the aristocracy, but the peasant with his little treasury of powder, or his clay pellet bow, can pursue one of the seventy species of bird known in the kingdom, or take a bomb down to the river and get good fishing. Gaming is so popular that the State has had to introduce legislation to limit the stakes at the festivals.

Life has its amusements: and it is not unbearably long—as a great English thinker wrote, if man were given an immortal body, he would die nevertheless of the weariness of doing the same things over so often. The Gurkha seldom lives beyond his fortieth year. If he does not die in battle—and Gurkha casualties in the two World Wars were enormous—malaria or tuberculosis will carry him off.

If it is possible, he is taken to die by the shore of one of Nepal's two holy rivers. There he is laid, his feet in the purifying waters, so that his spirit may slip easily away upon its journey into the Unknown.

The final rites over the body are carried out by the eldest son. All the hair is shaved from the corpse, eyebrows, moustache and scalp, except for the Tupi, the little topknot. The family arrays itself entirely

RELIGION AND SUPERSTITION

in the mourning colour, which, contrary to Western usage, is white.

A Hindu funeral procession is chiefly remarkable for the amount of noise it makes, which is partly an expression of grief, partly the warding off of evil spirits. The *cortége* is accompanied by professional musicians, playing loudly upon all manner of instruments—shrieking wood-wind, bells, gongs. The wives, who are now not allowed the ancient custom of *suti*—immolating themselves with their husband—express their sorrow in tremulous wailing.

Thus the body is borne to the shores, where it is cremated. If the family can afford it, this is carried out in a proper burning-ghat. Otherwise, a simple pyre of logs is built up, in which the body is (often inadequately) burned.

The family returns noisily home, to fast on one dish of rice a day for a fortnight. The charred remnants of the dead man are borne away on the holy tide of the Baghmatti. The birds of prey may tear at his body, as it floats on its troubled way: the soul is at peace.

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ALTHOUGH he has such a wide reputation as a warrior, it is often pointed out that the Gurkha is really a peace-loving peasant, working hard to scrape a living out of the rugged landscape of his country, so beautiful but so hard to cultivate, competing all his life against poverty, disease and inadequate implements. It is, in fact, partly from the infertility of his land that his soldiering arises: the dragon's teeth are sown in poor soil.

The population of Nepal is somewhere between six and seven million souls: and there is virtually no industrialisation. It follows that if the soil be poor, there is likely to be poverty, unemployment and discontent. The Government has never been able to absorb the surplus man-power. Early in the nineteenth century, the State tried to deal with this problem by instituting a system of national military service. This worked on a system of rotation, requiring a complete change of the whole army every year from full pay to no pay. Thus one-third of all the available man-power was in use at any time, the remaining two-thirds being in their villages. These latter refused to work, considering farming to be beneath the dignity of a man of arms: and the whole unsatisfactory state of affairs was brought to a close by an arrangement to allow Gurkhas to join forces in British India. The Nepalese State Army still exists, of course, with the addition of a militia formed in 1879.

The Gurkha has a long military history. He is

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descended from an aristocratic race of warriors, the Rajputs : he entered his present homeland as a victorious and fierce invader. Within a few years of his arrival in Nepal, he was conducting campaigns against Thibet and Britain. It was a military affair that first took an official representative of Britain to Nepal, when, in 1798, Colonel Kirkpatrick went there on behalf of our Government, over a Chinese invasion.

To this day all the higher officials of the country are given military titles—including statesmen and judges. The officers of the police force and post office are all members of the army. It is permissible to say that the country is run as a military state, one of the very few now existing.

The standing army of Nepal has always been a large one. In 1832 the British Resident calculated that the rotation system made some 30,000 men available for service with the British, while there were about 18,000 in the State Army. He volunteered the following opinion : “ They are by far the best soldiers in India, and, if they are made participators in our renown in arms, I conceive that their gallant spirit and unadulterated military habits might be relied on for fidelity : and that our good and regular pay and noble pension would serve to counterpoise the influence of nationality.” His recommendation received no support. It was in vain that one expert after another called attention to the importance of providing some balance to the suspect Sepoys of the Gangetic valley, and urged the recruitment of Gurkhas as a new element of strength and safety. It was not until the Mutiny of 1857 that the authorities fell back too late on the scheme which the Resident had advocated in 1832, which might have rendered impossible such a catastrophe.

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The standing State Army, first consolidated by the rotation of service system in the early eighteen hundreds, goes back to the first invasion force of 1768. Its modern form began with a gift of rifles in 1892, but figures are available from much earlier than that. The comparative statistics given below will convey some idea of its growth.

	Date	1812	1841	1859	1922	1950*
Capital ..		5,659	10,140	20,048	22,520	25,000
Provinces ..		9,029	9,153	6,014	6,077	3,000
Militia ..					12,860	12,000
Total		19,687	19,293	26,062	41,457	40,000

* Approximate figures only available for 1950.

Generalship of this army is hereditary. Its chief objective, apart from the obvious one of maintaining a defensive force for use in case of war, is to provide employment for the male population which might otherwise be unoccupied, and to supply police and mail runners. The troops are garrisoned in the various small towns up and down the country. At Illam in the eastern part of Nepal, there was a typical state of affairs when one of the writers visited it. There were about five hundred troops stationed there. They were nominally in charge of a General, who was, of course, a relative of the Maharajah, and who lived almost the whole time in Kathmandu. Under him was a lieutenant, who was the real officer of the unit. The garrison passed its time drilling, mounting guard, policing the area and looking after postal services and communications.

This is but one of many similar stations. Others may be found at Dhankuta, Sindhulia, Odaipur,

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Karphukgarli, Dojpur, Pati, Wakhaldunga, Ra, cha, Dhulikhal, Tan Sing, Kuljiung, Dailekha, Salyana, Dullu, Dhumaldhara and various posts in the Valley of Kathmandu itself.

The distribution of regulars and militia is as follows :—

Regulars

Palpa and Butwal	3 Battalions
Baitadi and Dipal	1 Battalion
Kathmandu Valley	26 Battalions

Militia

Dipal	2 Battalions
Pokra	2 Battalions

In a country whose fighting prowess is chiefly associated with an ancient weapon like the kukri, it is surprising to find how modern the training and equipment of the army is. Training is on the same lines as in the British Army, and instruction is given in the use of rifle, bayonet and kukri. There is almost no cavalry, since the country is quite unsuited to such a mode of warfare, but there is a very heavy emphasis on the use of artillery, with which, especially mountain guns, the army is very well supplied. In Kathmandu, where there is the country's only military hospital, an arsenal turns out its own heavy artillery—field guns and howitzers. On the great parade ground there, may be found the largest magazine in the country : another lies at the foot of the holy town of Swayanbhunath at Langha Khel, near the south stupa of Patan. There are many arsenals, amongst them those of Nakhu, Sunderjal, Nayakot, Balaji, Themi, Piuthana and Dhankuta. Formerly there was an unrestricted right to import arms and ammunition

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through India, and most of the modern weapons were so obtained ; but this was limited by a treaty in 1920, since which time Nepal has had to contribute towards its own armament.

Britain's first contact with the Gurkha as a fighting man was in 1765, when the Gurkhas first invaded Nepal. The ruler of the country, Jayaprakassa, sought British help against the invader : and a small force under Captain Kinlock, went to the Terai. It was repulsed.

The next military meeting was an inimical one too. In 1814, as a result of various outrages on the frontier of British India, Britain declared war on Nepal. This time the victory was on the other side, and Nepal sued for peace, a treaty being signed in 1816.

Only three decades later, a much more pleasant state of affairs existed. The legendary Prime Minister, Jung Bahadur, made an offer of six regiments of Nepalese soldiery, under his personal command, to the British Government of India, in the event of trouble with the Sikhs. The offer was appreciated, but, unwisely, not accepted. Hence the Indian Mutiny in 1857, in which Gurkha troops helped the British to great effect. Some 3,000 Nepalese troops fought outside the gates of Delhi. During the engagement, they were successful in capturing some of the enemy guns : and the story is related that their jubilation was such that one soldier thrust his hat into the muzzle of a gun as it was captured, thinking, as he explained, to mark it as "one of ours." Since that time the Gurkha and the Tommy have been friends—"sathis." In memory of the occasion, their first active alliance, the 2nd Goorkhas wear the colours of

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the regiment with which they fought, the King's Royal Rifles : and they are very proud indeed of their green and red side hat. This pride is matched by the reverence in which the Truncheon given to this Regiment by Queen Victoria is held : all ranks, when passing the guardhouse where it is kept, are expected to salute.

From this time onwards—1857—the recruitment of Gurkhas into the British Army in India, with the active co-operation of the Nepalese Government, has been fully established. No British recruiting officer ever passed the border, yet the volunteers came in their thousands, and their record of service is unsurpassed in the annals of any military race. They assisted in the Afghan wars, both in the latter part of the last century, and again in 1919 : but their especial glory was in the two World Wars.

During the 1914–18 war, 200,000 Gurkhas volunteered for service with the British Army—a figure which represents something like 20 per cent. of the eligible male population. During the course of this bitter and bloody struggle, the Gurkhas suffered a casualty list which is a sad tribute to their courage and devotion, its final total reaching the shocking figure of 20,000—one man in every ten. During the Second World War, when the use of Gurkha troops had a tremendous influence on the course of the Japanese campaign, and Africa and Italy, the volunteering was even heavier : there were 24,000 casualties, and twelve awards of the Victoria Cross.

The remarks of the British Representative in 1832 have been quoted already : they show an admiration of the Gurkha as a fighting man which has been felt by all the British military officials who have come into contact with him ever since. Lord Kitchener,

at a parade in Kathmandu in 1906 offered the following tribute :—

“ Should it fall to my lot to be appointed leader of troops in the event of serious war, I should feel proud to have under my command the army of Nepal, and to associate it with the Gurkhas of our army, who have long been recognised as some of our bravest and most efficient soldiers.”

As a provocative rider to this may be added the remarks of General Kaiser, the Nepalese Ambassador, speaking at a meeting of Gurkha ex-servicemen at Oxford, in 1948 : he stated that he hoped India would be as happy under its own rule as it had been under that of Britain.

With the loss of India, indeed, our retention of half our pre-war strength of Gurkha troops in Malaya and Hong Kong assumes great importance. In 1948 the new Gurkha Brigade was formed. Four regiments of rifles were already selected for transfer to British service. A British Gurkha Division is distributed in Malaya and Hong Kong. Each Infantry Brigade consists of 2 Gurkha and 1 British Battalion. There are altogether about 10,400 Gurkhas serving, and their British officers are chiefly recruited from those who officered the original Gurkha troops before the loss of India ; though now Gurkha officers are being trained, the ultimate hope being to arrange for the better of them to go to Sandhurst. The recruit signs on for a period of four years, after which, if his service is satisfactory, he may extend it indefinitely. The basic pay is as in the former Indian Army.

From the disposition of troops, the history of the army, its present position and armament, we may turn

to the most important element of all, the fighting individual himself.

The Gurkha is, of course, one of the best known warrior races in the modern world, just as the Swiss Mercenary was some centuries ago—and for much the same reasons, to be found in the homelands of both. He delights in his reputation, and endeavours in every way to maintain it. In the First World War, the Germans were known to be particularly apprehensive of Gurkha troops, about whom various legends of a gruesome nature accumulated. One of these was that the Gurkha was a head hunter, which is quite untrue: the tale may have its origin in the fact that the Gurkha, proud of his reputation, often used to cut off the ears of his victim, in order that there could be no shadow of doubt about the total of men he claimed to have killed.

His skill as a fighter rests upon two things. The first is, naturally enough, his physical prowess. He has good eyesight, like most hillmen, and makes a very fair shot: no doubt his ability is the sharper because of his love of hunting and sport. His forte is, however, hand-to-hand fighting, with bayonet or kukri. Many stories of his prowess with the latter are known: an unusual one may be added here—the writer once saw a large wooden grandstand laid flat in five minutes by a group of Gurkhas who wanted some firewood.

The second reason for his martial excellence is one which is nowadays, in a time that tends to get away from discipline in every form whatsoever, more controversial. It cannot be denied, in spite of the value of initiative and individuality, that the record of the Gurkha in the past has rested largely upon his absolute obedience to command, and his love of

drill. There are tales of Gurkhas jumping out of aeroplanes without parachutes, because of a mistaken order. How true these may be is not to the point : the important thing is that if a Gurkha were ordered to do such a thing by a British Officer, he would almost certainly do it. His devotion to the Sahib is astonishing. The only thing which is necessary to a Gurkha troop to make it into one of the finest fighting machines in the world, is to give it a European officer. And all that the officer needs to do is to learn Gurkhali. This is one of the reasons why Wingate's Chindits were publicised at the expense of the Gurkhas, who had no Gurkha-speaking officers behind them. A knowledge of the language is more essential than military ability. All the military work of the troop will be supervised by the Jemadars and Subedars, the senior native officers : the C.O. merely acts as a figure-head. Drill and discipline will never present a problem. It is not uncommon to see Gurkhas drilling one another after their ordinary day's routine. Senior soldiers, recuperating after a battle, will practise various parts of the Manual. It is reported of one of the many Gurkhas who have come to the shores of this country to receive awards for bravery that he was highly impressed by everything he saw, but most of all by the houses of Suburbia. Such excellent dressing and discipline was, he said, what he expected of a really advanced nation.

As might be expected, a fighting man with such a love of order and discipline does not go wildly into battle. There is none of the excitement shown by some native troops in action. The Gurkha does not charge, screaming texts from the Koran. He fights with a grim, quiet purposefulness which is the more terrifying as it is the more businesslike. It has been

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mentioned that he dislikes the wasteful use of powder and shot in his hunting, preferring to stalk his game and bring it down at a range which would hardly be considered sporting in England. It is much the same in battle. As soon as the enemy is within striking distance, he prefers to set aside his rifle and valuable cartridges, and go in with the kukri, or the bayonet, with which he is a first class performer, and make quite sure of his man, rather than to continue firing without being absolutely certain that the required objective is secured each time. His wiry, compact body, with centuries of hill-climbing ancestors to strengthen his physique ; his absolute devotion to his officers ; his perfect co-ordination to discipline and orders ; and his personal fearlessness make him an opponent to be dreaded by the most experienced antagonist. His religion helps. His chief deity is Siva, the destroyer, to whom he yearly makes fierce and bloody sacrifice.

Foreign service has become a very important part of the life of the Gurkha, and it may well be that this will be the chief factor in finally modernising a country which has changed very little in its way of life since the seventh century.

That the army acts as an education to everyone is well known. To the Gurkha it is often the only education which he gets, since there are very few schools in Nepal, and scarcely any of the peasants can read or write. The recruit is taught to read and write Roman Urdu, or Gurkhali, i.e. Gurkhali in English letters. He is not always very successful, but he must be before he is able to rise in the ranks. Generally he is quite amenable to education, for he joins very young. Boys come to the recruiting

stations, eager to join : they often do not know their ages, so they present a problem, which has been solved in the past by the formation of boys' battalions. It is believed that a school has now been established on the border of Nepal, at Natunwa, which is something that should have been done long ago.

Apart from this formal education, there is the much more important matter of seeing life abroad, coming into contact with other civilisations and ways of Government. Many Gurkhas, who have travelled abroad, come home with ideas of opening up their own country ; especially those who were in the road-building battalions in North Burma, and the picked intelligent troops in the parachute corps, who did such splendid work in Italy. These would welcome the coming of Western civilisation to their country. How far this is desirable is debatable : the point is discussed in the next chapter.

Most of the Gurkhas, however, sign on for long periods, and make the army their life and their home. They do not find recruitment quite so easy now, since the distances they have to travel are longer. Extortion is often wreaked upon them by the Indian ticket collectors. It is a favourite device to say that the traveller's ticket is out of order, and rely upon his illiteracy to collect a further sum.

The Gurkha soldier seldom lives to a ripe old age if his zeal in battle does not outrun discretion. As a Subedar, he may attain the honorary rank of Captain or Lieutenant in the regiment he has served. Retirement is not easy for him. He has to travel long distances to collect his pension, and there is little for which he is fit when he goes back to civilian life. Attempts have been made at training for civilian rehabilitation, but they have met with little success. It is of little



XVIII.

GURKHA OFFICER.



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use trying to teach a race with such a long tradition of craftsmanship its own skills : moreover, the craftsmen are all low-caste, and the warrior is too proud to take up work with degrading social implications.

It has been stated that some twelve Victoria Crosses were won by Gurkhas in the recent war. One of the writers was present at an engagement when an award of almost equal rank was attained : and the following account, written only a few hours afterwards, may be of interest, not only from its dramatic nearness to the event it describes, but also because it shows something of the way in which the Gurkha soldier fights and thinks. The account, written on some sheets of Service paper, headed " Burma, June 8th, 1945," runs as follows :—

" On the 6th of June we were ordered to recapture a village called Tanbingon, which the Japanese had reoccupied since we had last driven them into the Yomas, some weeks previously. On that occasion we had a troop of tanks, two men with a flame-thrower, hundreds of engineers, complete with portable bridges, and any amount of medium and field pieces and machine guns. We had been road bound, and had gradually driven the enemy back with few casualties on either side. The tanks, it is true, were damaged by mines, and the writer was raised from his seat when his jeep ran over an inferior Japanese mine ; but all this had been more an exercise than a battle, and the trophies had consisted mostly in a variety of lorries, and a vast quantity of field post cards and candles. For both of these latter commodities we were later extremely thankful. But the battle—this was different : this was an ' Infantry Do.'

" We marched ten or fifteen miles that evening

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through jungle just beginning to be unpleasant through the monsoon rains. The mules made a tremendous noise, which is always the more striking at night ; but we arrived at about 9 p.m., 600 yards south of the village. Here we formed our box for the night. At this point one unfortunate incident was discovered. The mess mules had, for some strange reason, been travelling with only one officer's ration—and that officer was not with us. This was unfortunate, as we had with us not only eight officers, but a gunner O.P. whom we had promised to feed. However, we made a meal somehow, and listened to orders. Briefly, these were as follows. A Company was to attack from the north ; B was to form stops on the east, and in our old camp site, so as to catch the enemy that A Company drove on to them ; D was to come up the road from the west, and C Company was to stay with Battalion Headquarters in reserve, 200 yards south of the village. This plan was very simple ; the main attack was to come from A and B was to shoot the Japanese when they were retreating eastwards. A Company moved at 1 a.m. round the west of the village, until they reported that they were in a position to the north, ready to attack.

“ Meanwhile, B Company had left at 3 a.m., and had started to organise the “ cut off.” At 4 a.m., B.H.Q. and C Company marched to their position at the fringe of the jungle. We were in communication on the 48 set with all companies ‘ on key,’ i.e. in Morse Code. D Company reported their progress up the road.

“ Then things started to happen. There was a sudden fit of firing heard from the east and north. A Company reported that they were held up, and suspected that the enemy had artillery. To B.H.Q.

this last detail was no news, as one or two shells had come rather close overhead. D Company was steadily pushing up the road, and B reported that they had split. The 4th platoon, staying in our old camp site, 5th and 6th formed ambushes round the track at the Nulla junction. This party would have B Company's wireless set. The part of 4th platoon remained a secret until the end of the day. Later we found out that when they reached our old camp site they found a lot of Japanese snoring under their mosquito nets without a sentry. They dealt with them, and this was the first firing that we had heard at B.H.Q. Unfortunately, another B.H.Q. heard it—the Japanese one. On rousing themselves they found that they too had company—B Company. It appears that the other two platoons of B Company had marched straight into a Japanese position before dawn, and were surrounded on three sides. Then the real thing started. They were in long grass, and the enemy were in well dug positions. It was necessary to stand, in order to see above the tall grass, which afforded no protection from the harassing enemy fire. Regardless of this, Major Collins, the Company Commander, stood up and went to each section in turn, firing his rifle at the bunkers to indicate to his men their target. While he was not doing this, he was administering morphine to the wounded and tapping out messages over the wireless.

“ One section, meanwhile, were sent to try and find the enemy flank, and work round it. This section was immediately held up by light machine gun fire, and their naik, Kishan Bahadur, was hit in the head. With typical fatalism, convinced that his hour was come, determined to make the most of it and to save his section from the withering enemy fire, he went in

himself with his tommy gun in full spate; and, having emptied his magazine, threw the weapon away, took a grenade in each hand, hurled them into the two nearest bunkers, and finally charged with his kukri.

“When his body was found next day, there were twelve Japanese lying round it. For this he was posthumously awarded the Indian Order of Merit, which ranks second only to the Victoria Cross.

“The next development was that lorry loads of Japanese were heard reinforcing their position, and both A and B Companies confirmed this on the wireless. Then it was that Major Collins realised the opposition was too heavy, and sent this, his last message.

‘One. 06.00 hrs. Firing old camp site. A.A.A. Hear small party en. in jungle. A.A.A. Cas. en. unknown, us one serious. Two. Cas. us now ten, en. unknown. A.A.A. Am withdrawing a little eastward. A.A.A. Please shell nulla junction 219044.’

After that it became very difficult to understand B Company’s messages. The C.O. understood only too well, however, that when messages came over in Gurkhali something was wrong, and we eventually picked up ‘Sablas bayo’—‘the sahib is dead.’

“So died a most courageous man, who was worshipped by his men to the last. His inadequate reward was an immediate mention in dispatches—the only British award, except the V.C., which is posthumously granted.

“After this the troops lost heart. A Company eventually pushed into the village, capturing two artillery pieces *en route*. Just before B.H.Q. moved in, the Brigadier and the C.R.A. appeared, in red tabs

and bearing walking-sticks, and delighted B.H.Q. by grovelling on their stomachs when a sniper had one of his wild pot shots at us, in which he had been indulging all morning.

“ Moving into the village, we lunched on a few ounces of cheese which I had in my pack. Up till dusk, A Company had been holding a fire duel with the enemy at the east end of Tanbingon ; and B Company came in at about 5 p.m. We had not heard of them since we moved in, and were becoming worried.

“ I have never seen men look so dejected. They all of them reflected the one tragic fact—‘ the sahib is dead.’ But despite this they had put up a most magnificent show, with the loss of about a dozen men. The battalion next day counted about seventy bodies : and when it is remembered that the Japanese always endeavour to remove their dead, it is reasonable to suppose that the enemy lost nearly one hundred and forty men, as well as two artillery pieces, quantities of ammunition, bullocks, mules, horses, and their rice supply, which they had been collecting to feed their troops trapped in the Pegu Yomas.”

The writer of this has since heard that on July 7th, 1950, the Indian Officers under whom these troops are now serving in India made provision for them to commemorate this battle.

THE HISTORY OF NEPAL: ITS PRESENT POSITION AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

IN studying the early history of Nepal, two factors must be borne constantly in mind: the manuscript sources are all religious in origin, full of symbolism and allegory, exaggeration and allusion, and, as factual representation, thoroughly unreliable; and most of the history is only concerned with a little valley, some ten miles long and fifteen miles wide, called Nepal, with no mention of the great area outside, with its scattered hamlets and local chieftains.

Selecting only those facts which are probably accurate, we can make out the following picture of the very early period.

The first information is about Buddha, who was probably born on the borders of Nepal towards the end of the 6th century B.C. The Valley soon came under his influence. He revisited the Valley somewhere about the year 450 B.C. to make a tour of the Hindu shrines, and to preach his own faith, and is reported to have made several hundred conversions.

The next important event was the visit of the great Emperor Asoka, from the northern part of India. He came on a Buddhist pilgrimage, and erected four stupas, or temple mounds, about Patan, in 250 B.C. which can still be seen. Having done this, he married his daughter to a high-ranking member of Nepal, and contrived to steal the throne for himself.

The strong Buddhist influence in the Valley dates from his time.

Our first reliable account of Nepal is from a remarkable Chinese traveller, Hiuen Tsang, who crossed China, Thibet, and the Himalayas by the Kuti Pass, so coming into this little-known country, in the year 637 A.D. His account is as follows:—

“The Kingdom of Nepal* is in the midst of snowy mountains. Its soil abounds in flowers and fruits, and it has a cold climate. The inhabitants of Nepal* are all of a hard and savage nature; to them neither good faith, nor justice, nor literature appeal, but they are gifted with considerable skill in the arts. Their houses are wooden, painted and sculptured; they are fond of bathing, of drama, of astrology and bloody sacrifice. Irrigation makes the soil of great value. Among them are both true believers and heretics. Buddhism and Brahmanism flourish. Buddhist sanctuaries and the temples of Hindu gods touch each other. Commerce is prosperous, and trade is well organised and directed.” This is a highly interesting comment, showing that the mixed religious state of to-day, the houses, the amusements and the cultivation have changed very little from the seventh century. The rather superior tone in which he speaks of the barbarity of the people may be accounted for by the fact that he would be conscious himself of his own country’s great and ancient civilisation and culture.

During the next century, Thibet rose to great power, under an Alexander, Srong Btaan Sgam Po. Nepal became almost a dependant state. Its ruler, Amsu Varman, was obliged to give one of his daughters, Bri Btsun, in marriage to the Emperor of Thibet. She had a great influence on the whole of the Far

*he uses the form “Ni-po-lo.”

East, for she took with her a Buddhist relic, and promulgated the faith throughout Thibet. With the religion went the accompanying native art of Nepal, which is all of religious origin and function. The astonishing result is that Nepalese art can be found not only in Thibet, but in China too. The arch in the Nan Kau Pass, near to Peking, is said to be of obviously Nepalese origin.

So much for fact, up to this point. There is plenty of fiction too. The chief historical document, to use the word in its widest sense, which deals with the early history of Nepal, is the *Vamçavali*. No manuscript of it earlier than the 16th century A.D. is known, but it professes to deal, in great detail, with the story of the Valley when it was still a lake. It gives the names of the earlier dynasties, starting with the founding of the Gupta, during the Kali Yurga, by Ne Muni, from whom the name Nepal was supposed to come. After the Gupta Dynasty, the sequence is given as : Ahir : Kirati : Somavanshi : Suryavanshi : 1st Rajput : Vaishya Thakuri : 2nd Rajput : Karnatak. Then follows the invasion of the country by Harishinha-deva, Raja of Simraun, in 1324, after which the evidence of the chronicle is more reliable. A period of great turmoil followed, under the Mallas, or Wrestler Kings, some of whom seem to have devastated the country, others to have been benevolent despots. The seventh ruler of the Malla dynasty, Jayastithi-Malla (1386-1429) instituted a formal legal code, and the enforcement of the Hindu caste system.

The rule of the Mallas, and their sphere of influence, was confined to the Valley of Nepal, but from this time we begin to hear something of the rest of the country. For example, there is a 13th century record which states that some twenty-four small states

surrounded the Valley, but without any central ruler, so that there were constant feudal wars between the princelings. From this time onwards, Hindus began to take refuge in the hills of Western Nepal fleeing from the Moslem penetration of their own country. There they set up private kingdoms of their own, maintaining their own caste system, and only gradually intermarrying with the native Mongolian hillmen. It was one of these semi-Indian kingdoms which eventually absorbed the other neighbouring States, and became the dominating influence. At this time, however, the Valley of Nepal was still the most important part of the country, and these new, disturbing elements in the west were unheeded.

The Mallas dynasty ruled for some six centuries. The inhabitants of the valley, which was their realm, were racially and linguistically different from their neighbours. They were called Newars. Their origin is no more certain than that of any other Nepalese tribe, but they profess to be descendants of the Nairs of southern India : they are presumably the aboriginal inhabitants of the country. Although their language and customs have many affinities with Himalayan people, their features are certainly more Aryan, their skin darker, their eyes rounder than those of the snub-nosed, Mongol-eyed hillmen. They were originally Buddhists, and turned towards Hinduism when conquered by Indian invaders. The valley in which they lived was divided into three city principalities, each within seven miles of the others, and exercising suzerainty over States and tribes to the east, west, and south. Between the 15th and 18th centuries, their valley was famous for its profusion of wealth, which was expressed in a great increase in commerce and culture. The Newars developed their own dis-

tinctive architecture, and became skilled in many manual arts, which survive in beautiful temple doorways, and carved doors and windows. But the Valley was not destined to retain its unique position for long. There was a little kingdom in the west, formed by some of the refugees of Rajput origin, which had gradually been consolidating its position for many years, and was centred in the little village of Gurkha, from which it took its name.

This little kingdom began its career of expansion, using the hardy Mongolian inhabitants to win its battles. First, under Prithwi Narayan it annexed three neighbouring States, then cast its eye upon the wealth of the Valley. In 1765 a fierce invasion began. The ruler of the Valley, the Emperor Jayaprakassa, was alarmed to the extent of seeking British help, and a small force under Captain Kinlock marched to the aid of the Valley. It caused a considerable diversion, but was forced to retire because of streams swollen by monsoon rains, and because of the deadly fevers of the Terai. The Gurkhas made certain of their victory by ruthlessly putting to death all the nobles of the Valley who had assembled to meet their conquerors. Gurkha nobility replaced them, the Newars became a subject race, and only the Brahmans retained their original status.

This Gurkha dynasty was from the first strongly antagonistic to Europeans, and closed the passes of the country to all European merchandise. It was still far from satisfied with its new power, and continued a gradual aggrandisement in the south and west, far beyond the borders of modern Nepal. Next it turned to the east, invaded Sikkim, and even threatened Thibet. This stirred China to action, as the Emperor of China was the territorial protector

and spiritual disciple of the Lamas. In 1792 he dispatched an army of 70,000 men, and advanced to within twenty miles of the Valley. This invasion forced Nepal to seek aid from Britain, thus forming the second occasion for British intervention in the history of the country. A peace mission was sent out under Colonel Kirkpatrick, from Calcutta to mediate between the Chinese and Nepalese. Unfortunately the mission was abortive, since the Nepalese had by this time accepted a treaty acknowledging the suzerainty of China, agreeing to make a mission of homage to China every five years—which continued until 1908—and making various minor concessions to Thibet. The British mission found itself unwanted, with an influential body of nobles anxious for their immediate return, and determined to make no sort of commercial agreement or alliance. In this unfriendly atmosphere, Anglo-Nepalese relations came to a halt.

Undaunted by this setback, the Nepalese continued their attempts at expansion. In 1794 they annexed further provinces to the west and east, until their territory extended from the borders of Kashmir to Sikkim. Nevertheless, although they met with great external success, internally their country was torn by dynastic complication and family feud. Political intrigue, murder, expulsion and civil war led to first one party, then another, turning to Britain for help. A British Resident was appointed in 1802, according to the terms of a hastily constructed treaty, but owing to public aversion to his presence, he withdrew in 1803, and the alliance was dissolved.

The internal chaos was brought to an end by the emergence of a powerful noble, Bhim Sen, who re-established the rightful king on a purely nominal

basis, while retaining all the real power in his own hands. This man, more than any other, laid the foundation of Nepalese unity by compromising with those who were prepared to compromise, and ruthlessly exterminating all who were not. In addition, he increased the power and prosperity of the country by extending and consolidating conquests to the west. But in this very process of expansion he was placed in a dilemma. Western expansion was checked by the martial Sikhs; north-eastern expansion by the Chinese; in the east there were many natural obstacles, and little hope of profit. Only the south remained.

So from 1804 to 1812 the Nepalese pushed steadily southwards into British territory, regarding the East India Company as a foe rather than a friend, and judging it by its past weakness of policy. The Company naturally sought a settlement, but the outrages continued, and, after an ultimatum for the return of the recently plundered and occupied villages had been rejected, war was declared in 1814. Its history is not to the credit of the British. Major Hastings, the Governor-General, made many strategic errors, the generals were old and inefficient, three or four of the main columns suffered reverses, from smaller numbers of the enemy, and only one column, operating in the west, met with any success. At last, in 1815, the detachments were reorganised, and General Ochterlony forced the Nepalese to capitulate with all the honours of war. The Gurkhas were compelled to evacuate the whole territory west of the Kali River, that is to say, all they had conquered in the previous thirty years. An important sequel of this was that some of the Gurkha soldiers who formed the remnant of the Nepalese Army, enlisted with the British, and were thus the first to serve under a British flag.

THE HISTORY OF NEPAL

The Government in the Valley refused to accept the defeat which their army had acknowledged, and delayed the ratification of the treaty. In 1816 hostilities were renewed, Ochterlony being once more in command. The Nepalese, finding the Valley threatened, sued for peace, and agreed to a treaty, the Treaty of Segauli, which has been maintained to the letter to this day. By its terms they returned all their territory in the west, and some to the south and east : Sikkim and Bhutan, Garhwal and Kumaon were given up, and a large part of the Terai, which last, however, was restored a year later. It set up a British Resident in the capital, and allowed for the creation of Gurkha regiments in the Indian Army.

From 1816 to 1839, relations with Britain remained rather unfriendly. There was considerable further friction, and obstacles were thrown in the way of trade, whilst any likely enemy of the East India Company was encouraged. The British Resident was treated with the maximum of rudeness, for he was a constant reminder of their defeat, and a hint of a subsidiary position inside the British Empire, an idea abhorrent to such a proud and warlike race.

While foreign relations continued in this state of tension, the internal administration of Nepal returned to its original chaos. The dual balance set up by Bhim Sen was upset, there was a series of political murders, each party clutching at supremacy, only to suffer in a few months the fate it had meted out to its rivals. This state of affairs lasted until the emergence of Jang Bahadur, in 1839.

This Prime Minister has become a figure of legend. He secured his position by massacring fifty-five nobles in the royal palace. He followed up these fierce

measures, however, by many constructive acts of wise statesmanship. He established order, reorganised the administration, and set up the rightful king on the throne, while being careful to retain all the monarch's power, including the King's Red Seal, himself. By his many acts of foresight and bravery he has become a national hero. He was born in 1817, and showed himself to be a master of all forms of sport, including gambling. When he lost his military command at the time of Bhim Sen's fall in 1837, he conceived the idea of catching elephants single-handed in the Terai to pay off his gambling debts. When he returned to public affairs, he was hated with an almost maniacal intensity by the heir to the throne, who plotted again and again to have Jang Bahadur assassinated. Once he was arrested and thrown down a well, but he had heard of the plot before, and had had the well filled with bales of cotton. Many such stories, half truth and half legend, are told about him in the villages of an evening.

In contrast with former rulers, Jang Bahadur was a firm believer in friendly relations with Britain, and in 1844 he offered six regiments under his own control in the event of war with the Sikhs. In 1850 he actually visited England, an unprecedented action for a Hindu, and proof of his achievements at home. He wished to see the source of British power, and was most interested in the military and naval establishments, and the great industrial organisations. He was impressed by Wellington and Derby, but compared the opera unfavourably with an ordinary brass band. On his return to his country he steadily enlarged his power. He defined his post as that of Prime Minister, made it hereditary in his family, and ensured its supremacy by securing its authority to

declare war and decide all other important affairs of state.

Abroad there was further trouble with Thibet, in the shape of a war from 1854 to 1856. It was carried on under the greatest hardships, for much of the fighting was done at altitudes of fifteen thousand feet. China at this time had her own troubles, floods and famine; so the Thibetans, receiving no help, were defeated.

During the Indian Mutiny of 1857 Jang Bahadur was able to give practical expression of his friendship for England. He offered immediate assistance, which was stupidly declined. Eventually, when things were going very badly, he was invited by Lord Canning to help. He sent 3,000 men to Lucknow, and later took the field in person with 8,000 men. He was highly successful, broke up much of the rebel army, and played a great part in the final battles of Lucknow and Delhi. After the Mutiny he disarmed 23,000 rebels and refugees; and received the return of a large part of the southern border of Nepal by way of recognition. His participation in the Mutiny trouble also helped the recruitment of Gurkha soldiers into the Indian Army, which, hitherto, had been frowned upon, and laid the families of the men open to persecution.

His last years were spent in untroubled peace: he passed much of his time in big game shooting. He organised a hunt for King Edward VII, when he was Prince of Wales, in 1876. He died in 1877, having made a very great advance in civilising the country, modifying the barbarous penal code, establishing a postal system and improving communications. He has been described as not only one of Nepal's greatest sons, but as one of the greatest leaders that have come out of the whole of modern Asia. This surely

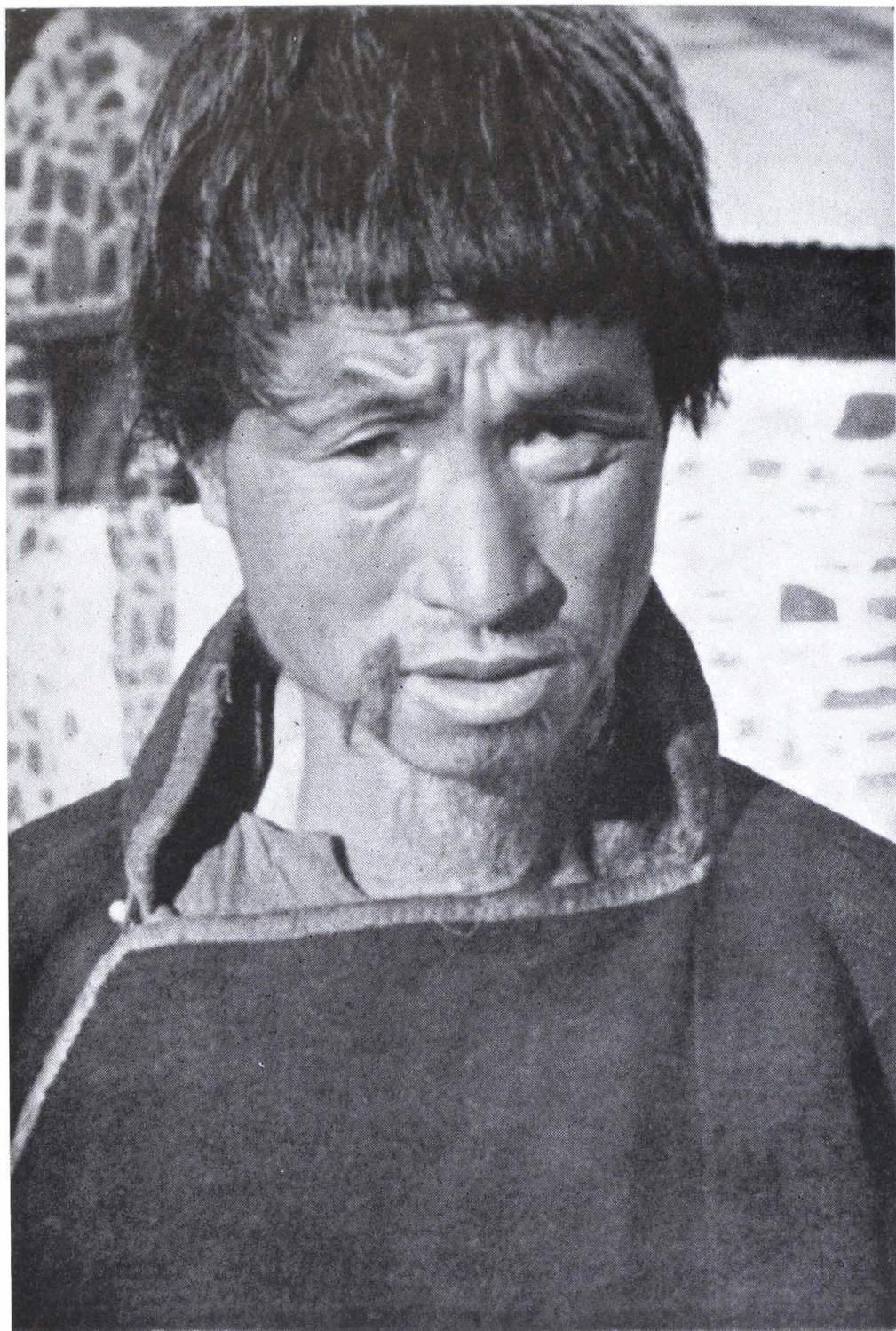
illustrates the advantages of reform of native Governments by their own leaders, and not by Europeans, however sympathetic.

Jang Bahadur's death was followed by the old sequence of intrigues and assassination, even more complicated than usual. The outcome can be simply expressed by saying that one of Jang Bahadur's sons, Bir Shumshere, had firmly established himself in his father's place by 1885, and held the position until 1901. From then to the present day there has been a series of Prime Ministers, all pursuing a fairly consistent policy of gradual improvement within their country and friendly relations with the British. The frequent palace revolutions of the past hundred and fifty years have had little effect on the people outside the Valley, who remain, in general, loyal to the Prime Minister, in spite of his autocratic rule. The local administration is in the hands of the village Mukia, who sends in the taxes, acts as police-constable, very often, and Justice of the Peace as well.

The constitution of the country is a strange one. It has always been a complete despotism, first of all under a hereditary ruler, of whom the original was a conqueror. After this there was, as in India, a puppet ruler, while the power was really in the hands of the strongest noble. After this—something quite new in the East—there was a written constitution drawn up by Jang Bahadur, about 1850, defining officially his *de facto* position of authority. At the same time it set up a legitimate king in the highest position of honour in the land. Though the king is still the important figure in all ceremonial occasions, from that day to this his power has been nil. He has certain attributes of divinity, and is regarded as an incarnation of Vishnu : so that his life is as little his



XX. A SILVERSMITH : A Craftsman of the aboriginal Newars.



XXI. A BHOTIAR FROM THE HIGH HILLS. A wandering Buddhist mendicant.

own as was that of the king-gods of Egypt and Mesopotamia. He is unable to risk his divine presence outside the capital as a rule, and may not leave the vicinity of the palace for more than twelve hours.

The Prime Minister's family and position were further strengthened by the law of succession. This has presented a tremendous problem in the West. Our own solution, of primogeniture, is far from satisfactory : for while it leaves no doubt about who must succeed to power, it leaves a way open very often for the appointing of someone too young to rule, which, in certain instances notorious in our history, has had unhappy consequences. In Mohammedan countries, on the other hand, there was no rule of succession ; and on the death of the reigning king there invariably followed a period of confusion and civil war, until one of the royal brothers or uncles had triumphed over the rest, usually by the effective method of blinding them or putting them to death in various unpleasant ways. This system had one merit which must be acknowledged : whoever ultimately took the succession was almost certain to be a ruler with the virtue of strength, and his reign would not be disturbed by insurrection, as all the disturbing elements would be wiped out.

Nepal has improved on both these ideas. Jang Bahadur made a careful study of the defects of each system, and produced a unique system of succession which has, on the whole, been remarkably successful. The throne, a purely nominal power, goes from father to son, as in England. The Premiership is vested in the oldest male heir of the entire family, including not only sons, but brothers, uncles and cousins. This system, succession by agnate, ensures that the claimant will always be well advanced in years, and so there

that the Soviet used its veto for the thirty-first time in order to exclude Nepal from U.N.O.

In studying the recent riots and revolts in Nepal, it is important to remember that violence in high quarters has been a frequent event in the history of that country. The titular head of Nepal, King Tribhubana Bir Bikram Shah, has for long lived in seclusion enforced by the Premier. The time had come, when it seemed likely to him that he would lose both his title and his life, as many other puppets have done in the past. There were rumours that he had organised riots in Kathmandu. He therefore left the country on the pretext of seeking medical advice, though he had great difficulty in so doing, and was forced to take refuge in the Indian Embassy. The revolt itself was a reflection, no less, of the spirit of insurrection which has appeared in India since the withdrawal of the British. It has created a feeling of unrest in Nepal which Indian Communists have been quick to utilise, with leaflet raids and other forms of propaganda, for their own benefit.

The King left a grandson, who was immediately made titular head of the country by the Prime Minister, Mohun Shamshere Jang Bahadur Rana, who soon diplomatically arranged a marriage liaison. The Nepalese seemed to have been honestly convinced of the rightness of recognising this little boy, Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah, as their King. Under these unprecedented circumstances, it seemed that they had crowned a king in the only constitutional manner possible. There was, in fact, some surprise in Nepal at the international interest aroused in such a national affair.

However, this state of affairs could not last, for there was still much irregular fighting, and the

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British Gurkhas were, in the main, adherents of the exiled king. The latter was in the peculiar position of supporting the rebels. He hoped to return to Nepal, and regain some of the political power of which his predecessor, Surendra Bir Bikram Shah divested the throne completely in 1867.

There was a further interested party in the shape of a band of aristocratic *emigrees* and exiles from Nepal, which has for long existed in comparative wealth round the border, especially near to Darjeeling. And since the Indian Congress Party was formed, a certain number of quasi-Gurkhas have been induced by political agents-provocateur, who may or may not have been influenced in their turn by Communists to start a "Nationalist" movement. Both of these sets of people hoped to make capital out of the vicissitudes of the King. They led a revolt, an onslaught on their native country. But few of the native inhabitants were sufficiently interested in the situation to go out and join them, the State Army was in the control of the Prime Minister's family, and the revolt petered out. If it had no other immediate effect, it showed the world how little it knew of this country which is so remarkable, and, to the British, so important. It further indicated to the Prime Minister that there was urgent need for him to reconsider the maintenance of the old policy of isolation. The best reason ever given for this was probably that supplied by Chandra Shamshere Jang Bahadur Rana to Landon, one of Nepal's chroniclers :—

“ My friend, the English have at times difficulty in the government of India : those difficulties arise in no small measure from the fact that in these days of easy travel all English sahibs are

not sahibs. Now I am convinced that the prosperity of Nepal is bound up with the maintenance of British predominance in India, and I am determined that the sahib who is no sahib shall never enter Nepal, and weaken my people's belief that every Englishman is a gentleman."

The time has indeed come for further democratic and civilising influences. The great numbers of troops who served abroad during the Second World War, particularly in Italy, saw the convenience of certain Western forms of civilisation, and highly skilled and trained paratroops and engineers must have ideas of their own for the improvement of their homes.

Nepal has, indeed, taken some steps during the present century, in the pursuit of progress. In 1920 Sati, the practice of the immolation of wives at their husbands' funerals, was abolished: and in 1924 an end was put to the persistence of slavery amongst the lower orders.

In 1948 the Constitution Act, instituted by the Maharajah, nominally created a state of universal manhood suffrage: but these, and all other political changes, are to be treated with some reserve. The possibility of putting such a scheme into operation in a country like Nepal, where very few people can read or write, travel is extraordinarily difficult, and there are about eight languages, and as many as sixteen different words for a cross-bred bull, is remote, and indeed has so far met with little success.

This Act was followed by a proposal to evolve a new and democratic constitution, which was expected to take about three years to produce and put into effective action.

Speculation on the sincerity of the Prime Minister



XXII.

YOUTH IN THE COUNTRY.

[Facing page 110



XXIII.

AGE IN THE TOWN.

in putting such a plan forward is, however, halted by new and equally surprising developments. The revolt having petered out, the exiled king found himself still with a strong support from the natives and the British Gurkhas. So strong has this proved, that, after long discussions in India, he has been able to return to Nepal, and to reassume his kingship.

It now appears that his position is stronger than ever before, since the revolt has caused a new and active interest in Government affairs: and he is at present planning to create an assembly of an unprecedented kind. He himself, for the first time since 1867, will, as king, have a position in the politics of his country. The assembly will consist of ten men: five will be members of the Rana family, four will be elected from other castes—it is supposed that the Ranas are to be elected too, but this seems doubtful—and the King.

Apart from the political developments, there are certain more material ones which can be spoken of with greater confidence. Nepal has its “Birmingham”—the town of Birat Naga, whose population is *c.* 25,000, which has two jute mills, three rice mills, and a hydro-electric power station.

Power, of course, is the mainspring of all industry, and nothing can be done without it. The prosperity of England has its roots in the coal deposits which were the basis of nineteenth century industry. In Nepal power is needed, and it seems that the mountain streams provide a great chance for the development of plants for electrical generation. There is a scheme for a station at Narayangari, which may be taken in hand, and which has been estimated by experts to have a potential generating power of over twenty-five thousand kilowatts.

UNKNOWN NEPAL

Once there is plenty of power, it may be that the natural resources of the country, in particular its mineral treasures, scarcely touched until now, will be explored.

Johnny Gurkha, working his poor little fields, is not very interested in the name given to his Government: his only real connection with it is the heavy taxes he has to pay, and these are collected by his Mukia. Autocracy or democracy, it is all one to him. But he has begun to realise that it would be better to have good roads, like those he has seen abroad, and, perhaps to be able to do other things than farm.

Roads, in fact, are being slowly developed, as are communications with the outside world. There is now an airstrip at Kathmandu, though it is not at present of service except in very good weather, and it is believed that there is soon to be a regular Indian service from Calcutta. Instead of the long journey, first by narrow gauge railway from Raxaul, then by bus through the jungle, and finally on foot or the shoulders of a dandy-party, over the arduous passes—seventy-five miles in three days—it may be possible in a few years, to make the whole journey by car, as a motor road has been begun, which should avoid the more difficult gradients. At the moment, there are no good roads inside the country, except those in the Valley. There are jungle trails south through the Terai to the various railheads leading into India: and there are some five passes, all of them very high and difficult, leading into Thibet. There are, however, no main arteries of communication running the length of the country. The Economic Planning Committee determined in 1948 that it would try to construct some such road as this: but to create five hundred miles of road where none has been before, in a country

which has not moved very much with the times for some twelve centuries, is a task which will take some time.

For the moment it seems that the schemes of using up the natural resources of cobalt, coal, tin, iron, copper, mica and graphite ; of constructing great power schemes to harness the waters of the mountain rivers ; and to start the manufacture of such civilised products as textiles, matches, soap and paper, will have to wait.

It is not easy to envisage how such things will be received in a country where most of the pupils leave school—if they are near enough to the centre of the country to be able to go to a school—so early that they have forgotten how to read and write when they grow up. Education, above everything else, is the first need if the other things are to follow. Education is not bothered about very much, for with it grows discontent—many of the agitators in the late rebellion were connected with Patna University.

Next to education perhaps comes hygiene. A famous man remarked that civilisation had nothing to do with water-closets : and it may be recalled that the Gurkha, in spite of his horrible medicines, his poor and monotonous meals, his wretched farm and the ardours of his hard and difficult country, has a quality that is lacking in the most advanced countries of the world, namely happiness.

APPENDIX A

NEPALESE LETTER

सौवस्ती श्री ३ श्री आगे तहां आती राजी खुसीको साथमा
 बसनु भायेको आछे लोहे भाई कै मालुम् होस् की इतामो आफु
 को गरीब दाई साहीब दुखित नाम भायो बीसन थापा कै तरफ
 जाती सादै दीन् दीन्को सेवा आसीक छ आछे कुरा मालुम्
 गर्नु होल.... आछे कुरा जेरै छुम् तर काहां छु लैस्क्य.
 आछे कुरा इती भायो जो गुलती छ कलम को गुलती छैन
 मेरो गुलती छ माफीक मालाई दीनु होस् सो पत्र को श्री सुभाम.

* * * *

“Sosti shri tin shri age tahan ati raji khusi ko sath
 ma basnu bhayeko aur laure bhai kai malum hos ki
 itamo afuko garib dai sahib dukhit nam bayeko bisan
 thapa kai teraf bati sadai din dinko siwa asik chha
 aur kura malum garnu hola . . .

. . . aur kura dherai chham tarah kahan tak lekhum
 aur kura eti bhayo jo gulti chha kalam ko gulti
 chhainna mero gulti chha mafik malai dinu hos so
 patra ko shri subham.”

* * * *

“Hail to thee Great One, three times Great One !
 First let me tell you that I am well here. Please
 understand, Younger Brother of the War, that here
 am I, your humble Elder Brother Sahib, whose un-
 worthy name is Bishop Thapa, who sends you day
 by day his blessing. Will you please understand . . .

. . . There is a lot more news, but how shall I write
 it all? That is all that I have to say. Whatever
 mistakes there are, they are not the fault of the pen,
 they are mine. Forgive me please—a holy farewell
 to thee from this letter.”

UNKNOWN NEPAL: AN ANTHOLOGY

APPENDIX B

THE MUSIC OF NEPAL

by

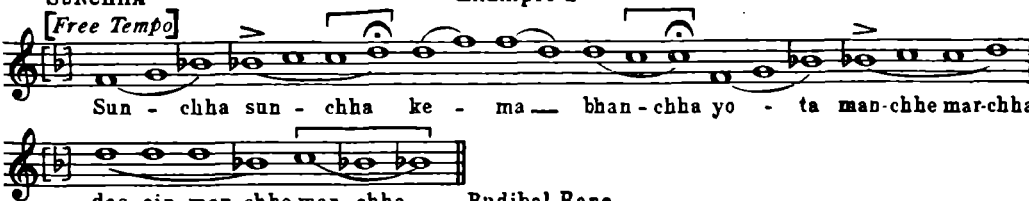
ALLEN PERCIVAL

MUSIC East of Suez is often strange, if not completely unintelligible, to Western ears, and that of the Indian continent is so complex that a musician may spend his lifetime with the mere essential systems in use. Yet the music of the Nepalese is stimulating and sympathetic to the ear of a European visitor. It is a mixture of many elements from the surrounding countries, yet individual in its actual sound; in fact, knowledge of a few of the songs can breed familiarity with all the others, and an ability to recognise a tune as "Nepalese."

In the continent of India, Nepal's two nearest neighbours are Thibet and India herself, and influences of both countries may be seen in her music. The history of this music is not easily traced, and there can be no accurate date of origin. The earliest music which can still be heard to-day is that of the semi-religious or historical chant by which fathers instruct their sons in the mysteries of the past. These songs show some similarity with those of India before the Muslim invasion, and it is possible that certain of the fleeing Rajput rulers may have introduced them.

Here is a typical example:—

SUNCHHA Example 1
[Free Tempo]



Sun - chha sun - chha ke - ma - bhan - chha yo - ta man - chhe mar - chha
das - ein man - chhe mar - chha. Budibal Rana

It will be seen that the tune is pentatonic, and is in a mode corresponding to the Ionian. In other words, it could be played solely on the black notes of a piano (in our key G Flat) or on the white notes (in our key C). Rhythmically it is very free, corresponding entirely with the words. This is a common factor in most Oriental music, namely that the emphasis may come at any point in what could be a Western "bar": stress is not important as such, but the phrases are divided into quantitative sections, without a definitely emphasised accent to the beginning of each bar. The tune may also be varied, or bear improvisation, while keeping the strong notes (F, B Flat and D, in this example). In this system is something of the "raga" of Indian music, the system of improvising on a basic "scale" of important notes. The formation of his own scale, hailed as a saving grace by the "twelve-note" composers of to-day has been practised by the musicians of the East from very early days. The cadences (marked —) are, however, purely Occidental. In the notes themselves, then, these religious or historical tunes are easily comparable with the epic songs of the Jongleurs and Troubadours of Europe, in the broad, majestic setting of the words. The difference, however, lies in the execution of them. They are often unaccompanied, but if accompanied a stringed instrument is never used—only the portative organ. This instrument, in which the bellows are worked by one hand while the other depresses the keys, may be seen in many European paintings, although it fell out of use in the Western World generally in the 13th century. In all these songs, the words are more important than the music, and the singer may very well slide from note to note in the style of much Oriental music, purely for emphasis on words.

The modern secular songs, however, are more interesting to the casual listener. The Gurkhas of Eastern Nepal have for long traded in Darjeeling, and their tunes are a mixture of East and West. In the broad sweep of their melody, and their strong,

APPENDICES

usually regular, rhythm, they are very like the Tibetan folk-songs. There is nothing "modal" about this one, for example

Hi MERO Example 2

[*Jerkily**]

Hi mero paradesi sol - ti cho-re - ra jawe - ga Hi mero paradesi

sul - ti cho-re - ra janu par - yo — Aju pani jam jam

bholi pa - ni jam jam parshi t' jai jaola rani rumal ma.

**This tune is not sung in the swinging way which would have necessitated a strict 2/4 Western time-signature.*

Indeed, it might well be taken for a Scottish dance ; and if one considers how keen and quick the Gurkha is to learn the bagpipe, how proud he is of his own "luga" (which is very like the kilt) and how many regiments still wear the insignia inherited from earlier commanders, many of whom were Scots, the bond is clearly seen. Whether the similarity is the cause or the effect of the friendship with the Scots is not easy to say. Certainly tunes such as that of Example 2 are not to be found elsewhere on the Indian Peninsula, and the comparison between the two countries is easily prolonged. Both are hilly countries, both have the virtue of personal economy allied to whole-hearted generosity ; both are strict in their belief in a Supreme Being ; and both are fond of dancing. A similar musical outlook is perhaps natural, but the songs are never an attempt to copy, always a sincere expression of musical thought.

The subjects of the songs are similar to the folk-songs of any people involved in a struggle for existence : songs of love, of last regrets, of valour and of war. The most interesting ones are to be found amongst those praising the geographical features of the country itself. These tell of the beautiful rivers and hills, the little villages, the valleys, the terraced fields ; of the Ukalo and the Uralo of the steep hills ;

UNKNOWN NEPAL

and of that favourite subject of all song writers—the ever-winding road.

TAHIN TALA Example 3

[Free Tempo]

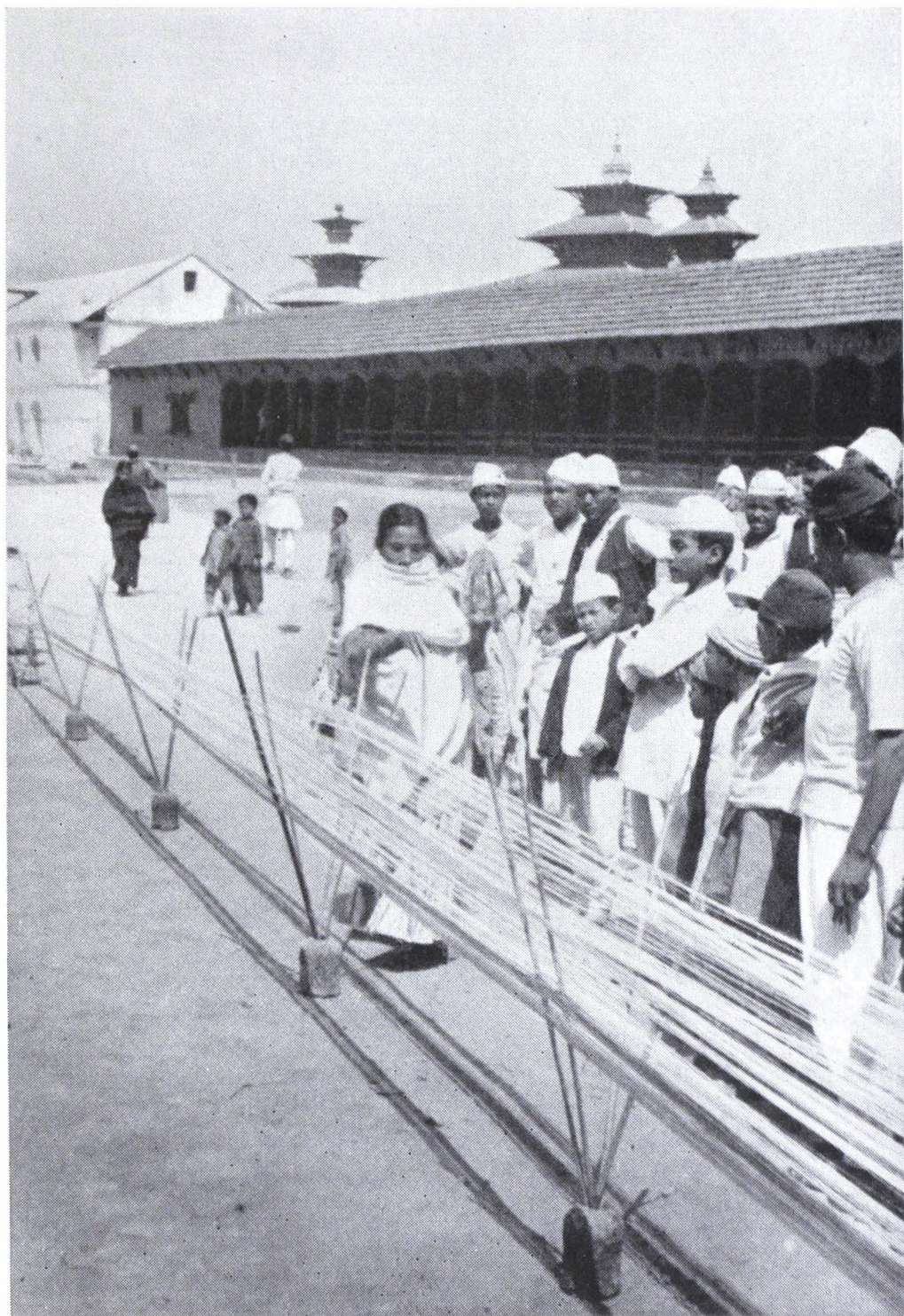
Tahin ta-la — pa-ni ko Dharakina mo-lai — tir - i - ka la - g - de - na.

This tune is more like that of the religious-historical song of Example 1. It is again pentatonic, and the stress is governed by the words. An interesting feature of this particular tune is that of the final ending: a very Western style of ending on the tonic, key-note or final of the mode.

It is obvious that the words of the last song are not of momentous value. In fact these songs *not* for special occasions (Jhamre) differ only according to tune, and not to words—i.e. one set of words may be sung to any one of several tunes. The problem of metre in different tunes is easily solved, as we shall see later. Very often the normal songs of the Gurkhas have their words improvised on the spot, as with the West Indian Calypso. This calypso singing is usually in rhyming couplet form, with a chorus in between each one. It may be compared with the Fado of Portugal and the Copla of Spain. The first line is called “ phet ” and the second “tuppa” (this is the line with a joke, pun or some kind of epigrammatic sting in it), and the whole tune is called a “ bakha.” Occasionally part-singing is heard, particularly by women, but the only normal counterpoint is the tune sung at the octave above in falsetto by a section of the singers. This falsetto singing is reminiscent of the Chinese custom of dividing parts. The “ calypso ” song is a test of the singer’s imagination, with a general knowledge which must be pithily expressed. In particular, songs of this kind are performed at weddings, the couplets being aimed alternately at the bridegroom and his bride, each increasing in complexity, punning, and, as the literary standard descends with the night, vulgarity!

The chorus sung by the assembled company is,





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musically, more interesting than the couplet. A good example of such a chorus is “Gheri Kan Ho” :—

GHERI KAN HO Example 4

[Quickly]

Gheri kan ho re-li-mai ta hin ta - la pa-ni ma - ti

The word “relimai” occurs with great frequency in the choruses, and is difficult to translate. The Gurkha himself, though his English is often colourful and expressive, has never given the author a satisfactory translation. “Hey nonny no” is perhaps admissible as an approximation. This word “relimai” is, however, the important clue to the interchangeable use of identical words to different tunes, mentioned earlier. Here is a typical chorus, indicative of the pride of caste taken by the Gurkhas :—

WARI PARI Example 5

[Steadily]

Wari pa-ri _____ se-poy ko Dhera ma - sa ma _____

Likh eni baider - a

It has a very proud conclusion, as the killing of such a sacred animal as the cow is highly reprehensible, and the highest caste—Thaukari—considers himself a match for this sacrilegious breaker of custom.

In order to sing these words to a different tune, it may be necessary to add more syllables, as in the following :—

WARI PARI (With 'Refrain') Example 6

[Quickly]

Wari pari re - li-mai se - poy ko Dhera _____ Ma - sa ma _____

re - li-mai li - kheni bai - der - a

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The notes in square brackets are “extra” to the words. This is where the singer inserts a “relimai.”

OPENING GREETING Example 7

[Free Rhythm]

Ham-ro colonel sahib lai sa la - m chha.
Maj-or sahib lai

Once the company has decided on the particular tune for the chorus, no change is made for the whole night’s singing.

These songs are not confined to occasional festivities. A similar type of song is used for any celebration, particularly in the Army. The occasion may be served by the end of a hard week, and the Saturday night “Nautch” is one of the most picturesque of all Nepalese customs. In the twilight, a hurricane lantern is burning in the middle of a score or more soldiers, sitting on their heels. The soft thudding of a tom-tom restlessly disturbs the air. A singer is pushed, showing signs of reluctance, into the centre. In a tremulous falsetto, he begins. (Example 8)*

The first seven notes are repeated until he has exhausted all the ways of greeting the company, and the little pendant figure of the last five notes completes his “opening speech.” After a pause, he sings the first verse of the evening, probably a “tuppa” aimed at a guest—“Happy to see you, but happier still that you brought the rum!” There is little or no tune to this verse: it resembles, more than anything else, the “Patter Song” of the music halls. Everyone then chants the evening chorus:—

DHERA DUN Example 8

[Steadily]

Jam jam pare - li an-kha ma ga - zu-li sam-jam-chhu Dhe - ra Dun.

* A [military station, which, like all camps, has its followers—hence the first phrase.

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Here again can be seen the broad sweep of melody, covering an octave in a very short space, as in Example 2 (— in both tunes). The hands clap, the tom-toms increase in volume, and the dance begins. The skilled dancer approaches the centre. With much hand movement, he proceeds in a circle inside the group, dragging one foot behind the other, tapping the ground with the heels in the manner of a Spanish Zapateado : as he returns to the beginning of his circle, he quickens : and, crouching on his haunches, goes round once more, shooting each leg out in front of him in Cossack style. These dances are very interesting, in that they are of very ancient origin, and yet the modern folk-dances of Andalusia, supposed to be of Arab descent, and of Russia, use many of the same movements. The dancing over, the singer calls for approval “ Ho ki hoina ? ” (literally “ to be or not to be ? ”) “ Ho ” replies the company in approval ; “ Pheri Bhani ” (say it again)—“ Ho.” And so the nautch goes on ; tuppa is followed by chorus and dance, much embellished each time, far into the night, always to the same tune.

In common with most countries, Nepal has its occupational folk-songs. These are of great antiquity, but bearing a striking resemblance to those of Western agricultural communities. This is a favourite planting song—

DAN ROKNI Example 9
[At a good pace]

Dan — rokni Dan — rokni Dan — rokni Dan — rokni

The musical notation shows a single melodic line on a treble clef staff in 2/4 time. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The melody consists of four measures, each starting with a quarter note followed by a dotted quarter note, then two eighth notes, and ending with a quarter note. The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (dotted quarter), B4 (eighth), A4 (eighth), G4 (quarter). The first measure has a fermata over the G4. The second measure has an accent (>) over the A4. The third measure has an accent (>) over the B4. The fourth measure has an accent (>) over the A4. The lyrics 'Dan — rokni' are written below each measure, with a long dash under 'Dan'.

The accent coincides with the downward sweep of the arm. With a very slight rhythmical change, we find our own song “ Billy Boy.” The planting songs of Appalachia reveal many such comparisons.

The Army career followed by almost every young Gurkha has inspired many of the songs now heard. The young recruit is sad at leaving home, and, in a short pathetic song, reveals his feelings—

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AMA LE KYA Example 10
[Slowly]

Ama - le ___ kya dukhi payo Bhai si-ano ___ ma bharti ho - na - le.

Here again, is the final Occidental cadence, and here again the free rhythm and pentatonic scale of the religious chant of antiquity. Whenever the Gurkha sings not for dancing or to help in his work, he reverts to the old form of melody which appears so much more Oriental. Even after his retirement from the Army, the soldier going to collect his pension at Ghum will sing, on his way down the hillside—

GURLALI Example 11
[Fairly Quickly]

Gu - khali kali bhayo man phali tin panya
 ho ki hazur - a Din ko kam - ai at an - na
 Dhai ko ma - ya Bhan - ju le
 Chau an-na ko rak-shi hazur - a
 Bhanju ko ma - ya bir ko bandar - le

*[Repeat this last bar with
diminuendo till it fades away]*

When the soldier, young or old, sings of his profession, he is bound to think of the possibility of not returning. Here is a sad, lyrical song, which can compete with any other nation in bringing tears to the eyes—

MANKA KO GUERI Example 12
[Slowly, with great feeling]

Mankako gheri Di-a hos pieri Timro jiu mor - de - na A-ma-le timro
 Yo janchhan bhane Dur mannu par-de - na.

After the raw recruit has got over his military misery, he sings a little more cheerfully—

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NAINA RISOM Example 13

[Quickly]

A-lu-ka-ti nai-na ri-som tir-ka-le ta-ma-le Bharti bhayo
 ni-na risom bhandinu a-ma-le Eh! Duroor - a naina risom
 na-ra-nu ho-la naya paltan naina risom jan dena dar-wai - ma.

The last example is the first song in which syncopation, i.e. the holding-up of the melody, is apparent. This probably indicates the influence of Eastern Nepal, for in the songs of Darjeeling there is almost invariably a break in the music. This may often occur in the middle of a word, and in this way is identical with the early Western musical device of the "hocket." This style ended its brief life in the Western World after the death of Machaut in 1374. These songs are notable too for the short compass of their notes, seldom more than a fifth or sixth, as in many French folk-songs.

CHISO ROTI Example 14

[With a swing]

Chi-so ro-ti na khao Ta-to ro-ti khao Ma-ti-le ba-to Ja-pon ay-o
 (German)
 Ta-lo ba-to jao!

Example 15

[Lightly, not too quickly]

Jam Jam kare-le an-na sherko pare-la dui paisa rumbher - a.

The first example was of the old expression of religious belief. This last song is a more modern tribute to a god, in this case the greatest of them all, Krishna, who is often to be seen depicted playing the flute, and is evidently a patron of music. This cult

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probably grew towards the end of the 15th century, though Krishna himself is of the early Vedic period. In the ancient and modern tunes can be seen the wide variety of style in the songs which may still enchant the Western traveller in this little country to-day.

KRISHNA
[Monotonously] Example 16

Krisna - le buj ay - o mu - ra - le mo - nai - ri - s'm.

APPENDIX C

The following is a list of the principal castes of Nepal, roughly graded according to the social order of their members.

Thakur.	Pun.	Tamang.
Rana.	Rai.	Sunwar.
Khas-Chettri.	Limbu.	Lepcha.*
Magar.	Newar.	Bhotia.†
Gurung.	Sherpa.	

The castes are themselves sub-divided.

* The Lepchas are virtually Thibetan.

† The Bhotias are chiefly from Bhutan: but the same style is often given to vagrant Thibetans.

