



THE GATE OF TIBET.

NOTES FROM A FRONTIER

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To
Lady B.
in token of friendship

FOREWORD

THE following miscellaneous notes were written on a journey across Western China to Burma in the Spring of 1913; during the course of which some four months were spent in a study of the conditions prevailing in the tribal regions on the Tibetan border.

My thanks are due to the Editor of the *Times* for his courteous permission to reproduce Chapters I to IV, which first appeared in the columns of that Journal, to the Council of the Manchester Geographical Society for permission to reprint Chapter VIII, and to the Editor of the *North China Daily News* for his courtesy in allowing the reproduction of Chapter IX.

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CHAPTER I.

TRADE OF WESTERN CHINA

CONDITIONS AND PROSPECTS

The trade of Western China, by which I refer especially to that of the rich and populous province of Szechuan, may be said to be handicapped at the moment by two great adverse factors—lack of rapid and safe communication with the outside world and an unfavourable exchange. The first of these hindrances has always existed and has hitherto been considered irremediable, but at last the difficulty seems to be on the eve of being overcome, firstly, by steam navigation on the Upper Yangtze, and, secondly, by railway connections with Hankow. The second drawback is merely a transient one, and is accounted for by an adverse balance of trade due to the suppression of opium and followed by the Government's prohibition of all exports of silver from the province.

The lack of easy and rapid communication between the Treaty ports of the Lower Yangtze and the richest province of China has been the one great obstacle to the progress of Szechuan since time immemorial, and all intercourse with the great markets of Hankow and Shanghai has had to be carried on by means of native junks, which have been hauled by human agency over the seething rapids and swirls of the gorges with incredible loss of life and property. However, in 1897 Mr. Archibald Little navigated the first steam vessel, a wooden launch named the "Leechuan," from Ichang to Chungking, and in 1900 demonstrated with the SS. "Pioneer" (now H.M.S. "Kinsha") that notwithstanding the enormous risk, steam navigation on the Upper Yangtze was a physical possibility.

RIVER COMMUNICATION.

Three years ago the Szechuan Steam Navigation Company was formed with Chinese capital and Cantonese management, a powerful little steamer, the "Shutung," was shipped in parts from Great Britain and put together in Shanghai, and the services of Captain Plant, an expert on rapids, were secured as her commander. The "Shutung" has now been running for nearly three years between the months of April and November, and the venture has proved such a financial success that a second vessel of twice the carrying capacity has been ordered from Great Britain, and it is expected that she will be placed on the service next spring. The initiative of the Chinese company having created a precedent, various other native projects are now being seriously mooted, and a steamer belonging to the Chungking Piecegoods Guild was detained by the river authorities in Shanghai only a month ago on the grounds that, owing to the absence of certificated officers, she would be a danger to navigation. Meanwhile, foreign interests have not been idle. It is an open secret that a powerful Japanese concern proposes to place a couple of steamers on the Ichang-Chungking run next year, and one of the leading British steamship companies has already secured a site and water frontage at Chungking. The greatest drawback is the lack of suitable and safe anchorage. Another difficulty is the shortage of highly-trained officers possessing the requisite knowledge of the river.

On the whole it appears likely that we shall see a regular steamer service inaugurated long before the projected railway brings relief to the situation. Here in Szechuan it is usually termed the "Forty Years' Railway," and it is extremely unlikely that goods from Ichang will be laid down by rail in Chengtu within the next ten years. The engineering difficulties to be surmounted are enormous, and, although the recent wave of public opinion in favour of

railway construction will probably accelerate the laying down of the line once the money is forthcoming and the work taken seriously in hand, merchants in Szechuan place their hopes rather on steamer traffic than on railways for the relief of their burdens.

OPIUM AND THE TRADE BALANCE.

Turning to the second great impediment to the free interchange of goods between Western China and the coast, we are brought face to face with the thorny subject of opium prohibition. Szechuan is practically self-supporting, and, with the one significant exception of cotton, produces within her borders not only all the commodities necessary to support her vast population of some 50 millions, but hitherto has always had a large surplus for export, which more than equalled imports from other provinces and abroad, thanks to the heavy shipments of opium, medicines, and skins. The absolute cessation of the opium shipments amounting annually to upwards of 10,000,000 taels, has created a temporary adverse balance of trade and turned the exchanges against her. As much as 2,000,000 taels of ready silver was exported in 1912 to adjust the balance of imports, and great consternation was caused among the merchants when the Provincial Government suddenly decided, in view of the monetary stringency, to prohibit the free export of silver.

The par of exchange between Shanghai and Chungking is 952—that is, Shanghai 1,000 taels = Chungking 952 taels; but during the summer months when the river was in flood and communications difficult, a draft on Shanghai for 1,000 taels could often be purchased in Chungking for 880 taels, and this exchange profit was frequently the only remuneration of the import merchant after selling his goods. The present rate is 1,060, and has been as high as 1,100, so that not only are the merchants' profits seriously curtailed on their imports from Shanghai, 90 per cent. of which are Lancashire cotton goods, but they have been obliged to buy

exports—notably gallnuts on account of their portability—ship them to Shanghai, and sell them, often at a loss, in order to provide the wherewithal to meet their liabilities.

CURRENCY DIFFICULTIES.

A further incubus on the native Hong is the provincial ordinance that Government war notes may be tendered in all payments in the proportion of 30 per cent. paper and 70 per cent. good silver, and traders are bound to accept this ratio despite the fact that the notes have fluctuated between 10 per cent. and 15 per cent. discount. The question of the paper currency is now, however, receiving the attention of the authorities in Chengtu.

The currency of Szechuan compared with other provinces of China appears to be in a fairly satisfactory state. The dollars minted in Chengtu are current everywhere, although it is stated that the recent issues are being made 4 per cent. lighter in view of their scarcity. A fixed exchange of 71 taels silver = \$100 in coin is recognized. Mexican dollars are not current at all, and Hupeh dollars only at a discount. The old strings of cash seem to be giving place to the new ten-cash pieces (copper cents) minted in Chengtu. These coins exchange at 118 to the dollar in Chengtu. In 1897 I find that the average exchange in Szechuan was 1,220 cash to the tael. To-day it stands at 1,800, so that the currency of the people expressed in silver has depreciated 15 per cent. within the past 15 years, and this, without doubt, is the main cause of the enormous increase in the cost of living. The celebrated German traveller, Baron von Richthofen, in 1872 referred to the price of hiring baggage coolies as 250 cash per diem. To-day one is fortunate to secure very weedy looking specimens for 500 cash, the men of better physique usually having joined the army.

Notwithstanding the disadvantages that have been stated, trade in Szechuan, both foreign and domestic, is good,

and the leading native Hongs in Chungking admit that during the year ended February 5 they made sufficient profits to recoup themselves for all losses sustained during the Revolution, and they look forward with confidence to even more satisfactory results in 1913.

Turning now to the foreign trade, we find that although European firms are now opening up branches in the Treaty Port of Chungking for the purposes of buying native produce and transacting general agency business, the import trade, with the exception of the two virtual monopolies of kerosene and cigarettes, and the rapidly expanding trade in soda ash, is almost entirely in the hands of native merchants who have branch houses in Shanghai, with whom they are in constant telegraphic communication. This is most noteworthy in the trade in cotton and woollen textiles, which represents 90 per cent. of the total foreign imports, the goods being almost entirely of British origin. The merchants are wealthy firms turning over in one or two cases as much as eight lakhs of taels per annum (£100,000), and their knowledge of cloth is so perfect that they invariably purchase on quality and not on "chop" as is the case in other parts of China. In fact, provided the article meets with the requirements of the consumers, the fact that it has hitherto never been introduced does not militate in any way against its sale. Szechuan is the most promising province in China in which to introduce new qualities. There seems even to be a slight preference for new trade-marks and chops.

At first it appears strange that in a highly specialized and progressive organization, such as the Lancashire cotton trade undoubtedly is, British merchants should not have taken immediate advantage of the opening of Chungking to foreign trade in 1891 to establish branch offices and carry on a direct trade with the native buyers from all the great distributing centres such as Suining, Chengtu, and Chiating, who draw their supplies almost entirely from Chungking, and who visit that city several times during the year. Such

a course of action would have relegated the large Hong, who import direct from Shanghai, to the position of brokers, a position very similar to that of the native dealers in Shanghai.

DIFFICULTIES FOR FOREIGN TRADERS.

The reasons why this apparently ideal trend of events has not taken place are mainly financial ones. Under present conditions in China, where it is practically impossible to obtain accurate information as to the financial standing of native Hong, foreign firms are obliged to insist upon cash being tendered against delivery of the goods. On the other hand, the large native houses, being closely in touch with their clients, allow six months credit, and grant a discount of $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. per month if payment is made before the expiry of this term. Furthermore, the native organization is so specialized and complex, and so many vested interests have been built up around it, that any import of European goods into Chungking by a foreign firm is practically boycotted until the holders are forced to sell at a loss. Banks of sufficient standing to satisfy the requirements of British firms are unfortunately non-existent, and, owing to the arbitrary attitude of the Shansi banks, even the Chinese Hong are now forced to finance their own cargo.

These reasons, together with the fact that the average British Hong in the Treaty Ports is strongly inclined to "let well alone," and usually dissuades the members of its staff from learning the language rather than encouraging them to cultivate closer relations with their Chinese clients, have so far been strong enough to prevent foreign firms participating in the distributing trade of Szechuan.

There are signs, however, that this unsatisfactory state of affairs is likely to change in the near future. It is believed that the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation will shortly establish an agency in Chungking. It is rumoured in Chinese official circles that upon recognition of the new *régime* in China by

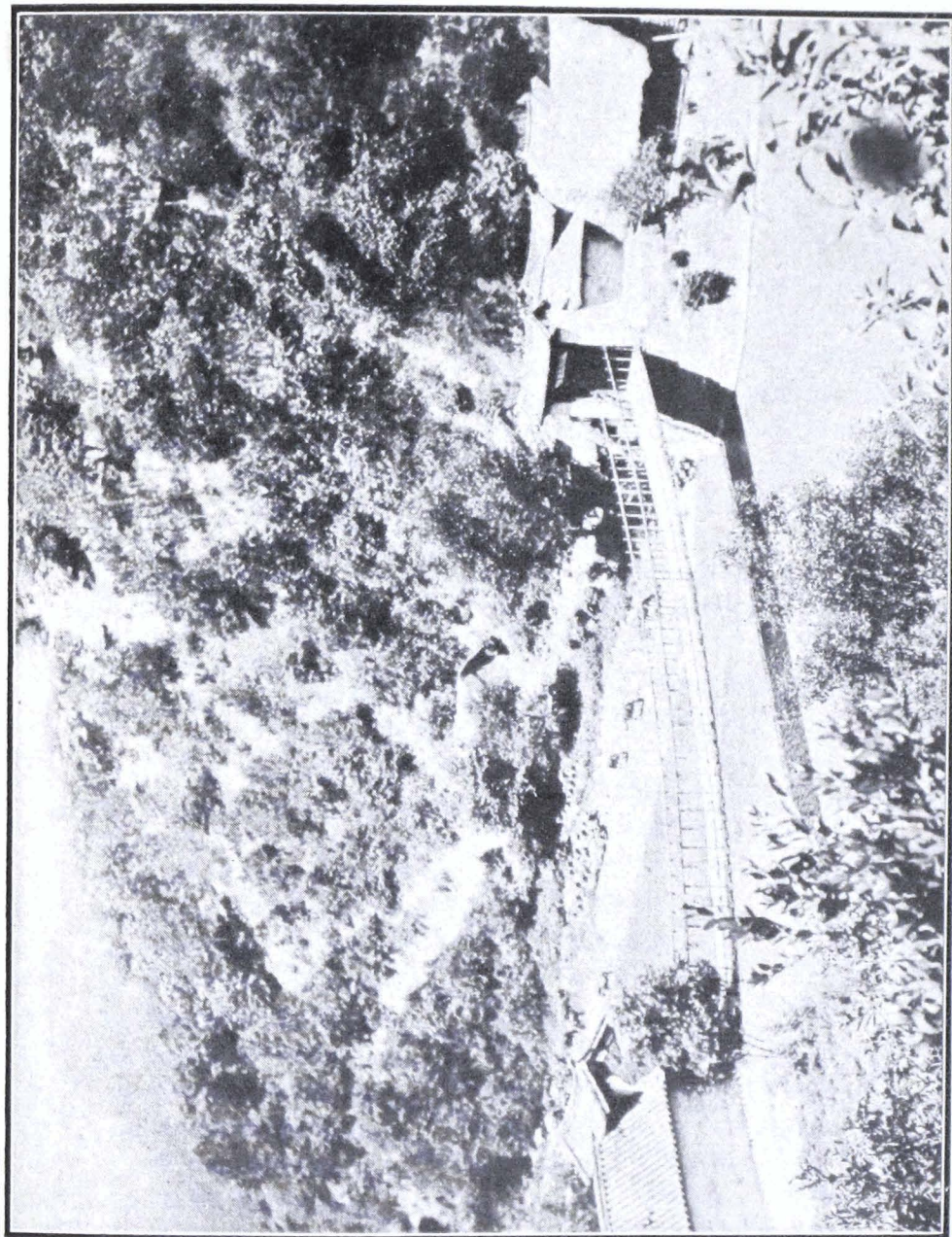
the Powers, as an act of grace all provincial capitals will be declared open to foreign trade and residence, which will bring Chengtu into prominence. Negotiations are being carried on between the Chengtu Chamber of Commerce and the provincial authorities whereby each merchant guild shall commute all likin within the borders of Szechuan for one annual payment, based on the value of its trade, and hence the old vexations and delays at the likin barriers are likely to be abolished once and for all. The inauguration of a regular steamer service will bring Chungking within 12 days of Shanghai, and the journey downstream should occupy less than a week.

GERMAN ACTIVITY.

The time is coming when British firms will find it necessary to devote their attention to this, the largest and wealthiest province of China, with its 50 millions of people, if they wish to maintain their predominant position in the trade of the country. The two leading German houses of Carlowitz and Co. and Arnhold, Karberg and Co. are both active. There are now in Chengtu two German representatives, the one an agent for arsenal supplies and the other an electrical engineer anxious to secure the contract for a proposed tramway to Kuanhsien. In December last the German technical attaché from Shanghai paid a flying visit to Chengtu and took the opportunity to inspect the irrigation works at Kuanhsien. Meanwhile, although the Chinese officials express a desire to extend the sources of their supply of arms and machinery, British manufacturers remain unrepresented in the province.

The future would appear to rest in the hands of powerful firms or groups of manufacturers with a perfected distributing organization like that of the British-American Tobacco Company, disposing of their goods in every large consuming centre by means of guaranteed and secured native agents who would sell on commission, prices being fixed

either in Europe or in the Treaty Ports. Only by such methods can it be assured that the ultimate consumer will derive the benefits of low prime costs and cheap transport, and the elimination of the host of dealers, brokers, and agents in general, who cramp and confine the trade, and batten on percentages, for which they give no adequate return.



IRON CHAIN BRIDGE OVER THE SHUN PI HO.

CHAPTER II.

WESTERN SZECHUAN AND THE REPUBLIC

THE CHIA RUNG STATES

Many rumours having been current in Chengtu of disaffection among the semi-Tibetan Chia Rung States—rumours, which, if true, foreshadowed the coalition of all the tribes from the Min to the Mekong in one great upheaval against Chinese suzerainty—I decided, before proceeding on the long journey to Tatsienlu and the west to make a rapid tour through the tribal country lying to the north-west of Chengtu. The tribes occupy an important strategic position, especially at the present time when the Chinese troops are barely holding their own in Eastern Tibet. The Chia Rung States are eight in number. They occupy the mountainous tract of country lying on the right bank of the River Min, their eastern boundaries being coterminous with the frontier of China along a line extending from Sungpan Ting in the north to Kuanhsien in the south. To the west they abut upon the Horba States and Dergé, with whom they are bound by close ties of kinship and race. The independence of the Chia Rung States is practically absolute. Although they acknowledge the suzerainty of China, and in the past have regularly paid tribute to Chengtu and Peking at long intervals, their chiefs wield despotic sway and the power of life and death within their own territories. In spiritual matters they acknowledge the supremacy of Lhasa, whether they belong to the orthodox yellow sect of Lamaism or to that esoteric Bon cult, which is supposed to be a survival of the native worship of ancient Tibet, and which has obtained a firm hold in these States. In short, the chiefs only acknowledge the nominal suzer-

ainty of China because their exposed situation and proximity to the Chengtu plain render them an easy prey to Chinese reprisals.

PRINCE SO AND THE CHINESE.

I left Chengtu on March 26 and proceeded *via* Kuanhsien to Tung Ling Shan, the mountain stronghold of the chief of Wassu. Here I was most hospitably entertained by the chief, Prince So, a courtly and well-informed man, and spent two days with him, visiting the nearer villages in his demesne and obtaining an insight into the daily round of a feudal Court. The chief, who, although only 52 years of age, is in failing health, largely due to over-indulgence in opium and other excesses, has always been exceedingly friendly both with the Chinese officials and with European travellers. He informed me that upon the outbreak of the revolution in Szechuan he not only remained strictly loyal to the new Government, but assisted the Chinese expedition sent to avenge the burning of Sungpan by the Ngaba tribesmen with both men and stores. His levies, consisting mainly of trained hunters and good shots, appear to have rendered excellent service, while the Lu Chun troops, sent from Chengtu, contented themselves with looting. So far the Szechuan Government have not recognized this friendly act in any way; but, on the other hand, have issued the most peremptory orders to the chief to suppress all opium cultivation in Wassu, intimating that disregard of their instructions would lead to serious consequences. In former times the poppy was grown in a few places in the State, but of late years cultivation had practically ceased. The chief informed the Chengtu authorities that he would be personally responsible for every poppy found in his territory, and in the meantime despatched his own emissaries to feudal States within the jurisdiction of the official at Li Fan Ting to ascertain how far the Chinese were successful in lands within their own control. He

found that cultivation still continued and that the officials were practically powerless.

These unfortunate incidents, together with the fact that Prince So cordially despises the new type of young official, who, by virtue of a few years study in Japan, imagines himself superior to these old tribal chieftains, whose families have often, as in the present case, ruled over their lands in an unbroken line for nearly 30 generations, have created a most unfriendly feeling between Wassu and Chengtu, and the chief avows that he will refuse to pay tribute to Peking in the future should China remain a Republic, which he gravely doubts. Republican ideals are offensive to him, and he frankly states his belief that China can only be governed by the strong hand, although he admits the possibility of a Constitutional Monarchy. From careful inquiries I ascertained that this is also the attitude of the other chiefs, who are all connected by family ties, and who are tacitly ignoring the authorities on the question of opium suppression.

OUTPOSTS OF EMPIRE.

Leaving Wassu by the main road to the north I crossed the Min at Wei Chou and followed the line of feudal States which were annexed by China centuries ago and formed into a chain of strategic outposts, from which the independent tribes could be controlled. Five military camps, or "Tun," were created—Chiu Tze, Hsia Mou, Shang Mou, Kanpo, and Tsakulao—each camp being placed under the command of a military official (Shou Pei), who was granted the privilege of hereditary rule. These officers married the daughters of the neighbouring chiefs, and their descendants to-day are much more closely allied, both by ties of blood and self-interest, to the tribespeople than they are to the Chinese. Their chief is Colonel Kao, of Tsakulao, who has nominal control of the four States of Somo, Damba, Choschia, and Tsung Kang. Kao tells me

that he is related to the chiefs of ten independent States, and he has recently married the younger sister of the Prince of Wassu.

The cultivation of the poppy has decreased in the feudal States to some extent, but there is no doubt whatever that in the independent territory it continues as before. The position of the officials is rendered the more difficult by reason of the fact that there are no troops on whom they can rely to enforce their demands; and, furthermore, the family alliances of the five military Residents with the reigning chiefs form a very strong private interest, which conflicts with their duty towards the Chinese Government, and in case of an open rupture it appears most probable that they would side with the tribes.

FEUDAL SERVICES.

The Chinese settlers hold their land in the Li Fan Ting valley on feudal tenure. One member of each family is liable to be called upon to assist the officials, in case of need, to suppress outbreaks among the tribes, and in return for this military service the land tax is remitted. These levies are known as the Teng Ping (shield troops). Even to this day they are armed with sword and shield, but many of them now possess muzzle-loading hunting rifles. They number 3,000 men, and are attached to one or other of the five camps. As a military force they are a negligible quantity, and the Chinese Government relies on the intimate relations of Colonel Kao and his colleagues with the chiefs to keep the peace along the border. To-day there is not a single trained Chinese soldier between Kuanhsien and Sungpan, and the nearest effective force is in Chengtu, six hard stages from Tsakulao, so that should the chiefs decide to make common cause with their kinsmen to the west, the road to the rich and fertile Chengtu plain lies open to them. However, in spite of the strained relationship between

suzerain and Sovereign, it appears most unlikely that the chiefs will precipitate an open rupture. Owing to their exposed position any such action would be followed by immediate Chinese reprisals, and in the end they would lose that liberal measure of autonomy which they have contrived to retain for so long and in face of such great difficulties.

CHAPTER III.

THE FATE OF EASTERN TIBET

CHINESE METHODS

The destiny of the congeries of small Tibetan States extending from the T'ung to the Mékong, and usually labelled on our maps as Tibetan Szechuan, still hangs in the balance. It is now nine months since Yin Tutu, with loud flourish of trumpets, proclaimed the creation of the province of Western Kham, which embraces not only the tribal country between Tatsienlu and the former frontier of Tibet proper at the Ch'ing Ling Shan, but also the States lying to the west of Batang, which were brought under subjection by the late Viceroy Chao Erh Feng. The situation, however, remains virtually unchanged, and the Chinese are little further advanced now than they were before the winter set in.

The reasons for this apparent condition of stalemate are many and varied. In the first place the army has been obliged to winter either at its base in Tatsienlu or in the other garrison towns, owing to the impossibility of conducting military operations over passes blocked with snow. As a result of the harsh treatment of the chiefs of the native States the authorities have had the greatest difficulty in obtaining a sufficient supply of animals and drivers to keep the garrisons supplied with stores. The most serious disability, however, under which the Chinese are suffering is dissension within their own ranks and the bitter feud existing between the Pien Chün—the frontier veterans of the late Chao Erh Feng—and the Lu Chün—the Republican troops who were marched up from Chengtu last summer under Yin Tutu. The old Army of the Marches was

deeply attached to the late Viceroy, and bitterly resented his execution during the revolution.

A LAMA STRONGHOLD.

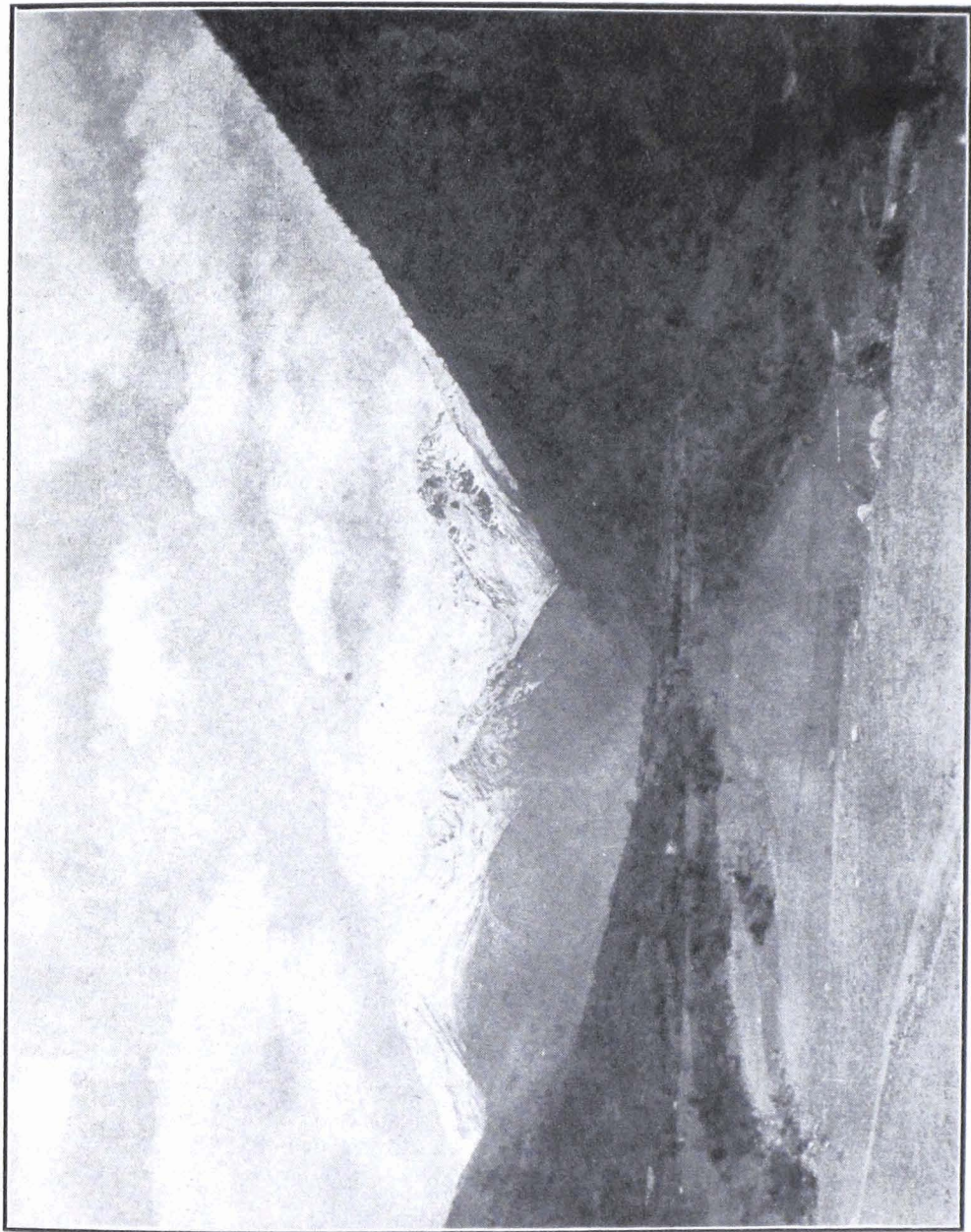
The future depends entirely upon the issue of the struggle around Hsiang Cheng, the fortified Lamasery of San Pei Ling, which was only captured by Chao in 1905, after a siege of six months, by cutting off the water supply. The main body of the Lamas have now retired upon this stronghold, which is almost impregnable to an army supplied with only light mountain guns, and from news received through Tibetan runners they are more than holding their own. The 4,000 men who are operating before Hsiang Cheng are mainly Lu Chün, with a sprinkling of the frontier force. Discipline is very lax, notwithstanding liberal pay and great leniency, and their heart is not in the cause. The road between Batang and Chiamdo through the country of the Draya nomads is still unsafe, but both the main highway to Batang and the north road through Kanzé to Dergé and Chiamdo are perfectly quiet. A native runner who has returned from Chiamdo states that rest-houses have now been erected along the whole northern route. Although the rest-houses built by Chao Erh Feng on the southern route to Batang are still intact, with the exception of two, the trade that is being carried on with Tibet now follows the north road, which merchants regard as the safer one.

A Hsüan Fu Shih named Wang, specially appointed by the President, has gone forward to Chiamdo to meet representatives of the Dalai Lama and discuss terms of peace and the definite demarcation of the frontier. He is to be followed shortly by another special delegate named Li. News has come to hand that the Envoy was courteously received by the Lamas at Kanzé, but sufficient time has not yet elapsed to allow of a message from Chiamdo. It is generally known that the President recently telegraphed

from Peking that he wishes the trouble to be settled amicably if possible, and this fact may partly account for the dilatory tactics of the force before Hsiang Cheng.

I had a conversation with the King of Chala—the Ming Cheng chief—some days ago, and obtained an insight into New China's methods of dealing with subject chiefs. The King appears to have been shamefully treated by the Chinese officials while Li Tu-Pan, the Wei Yuan who preceded Yin Tutu, was in authority. Much of the King's temporal power had been appropriated by the Chinese during Chao Erh Feng's *régime*, but now all the State revenues have been taken over. Even the King's private lands and cattle have been confiscated. The hardest blow of all was the execution of his brother on a false charge of treason. Although the present Tutu has endeavoured to conciliate the King with medals, uniform, a sword, and a pension of 200 taels a month, the gross injustice still rankles. The Palace in Tatsienlu was looted and burnt by the troops, and the King has now only two small residences, the ancient seat of the family at Sê To, a mile south of Tatsienlu, and the beautifully-situated Summer Palace at Yü Lin Kung.

Although most of the other chiefs in the tribal country have been placed on the pension list, this is the only case where their personal property has not been respected, and it is the more unjust inasmuch as the help and co-operation of the King have been essential to the Chinese advance. The position of the King was unique in Eastern Tibet on account of the control of the Lamaseries, which the chiefs of Chala have always exercised. Notwithstanding his present fallen state, he is held in deep respect by his subjects. I am given to understand that all the chiefs of Eastern Tibet are waiting for the Dalai Lama to make some definite move. They would even be prepared to submit to European suzerainty if only this Chinese incubus, which is crushing the life out of them, could be removed.



THE SNOW PEAKS TO THE SOUTH OF TACHIENLU.

THE CHINESE FORCES

A Chinese expedition of 400 men which has been operating against the Lolo tribes in the vicinity of Sanya, ten days' march from here to the south of Chala, has just returned with several Lolo prisoners. They state that the country is now subdued. The return of this force raises the strength of the garrison of Tatsienlu to 1,400 men. Insubordination is rife, and the recent further depreciation in the Government war notes, in which currency the troops are paid, is causing widespread dissatisfaction. To meet the situation the authorities are endeavouring to keep the men on the move, and are drafting them along the road towards Yachow.

If the true history of this first Chinese Republican expedition is ever published, it will provide an amazing record of inefficiency and incompetence. Although Yin Tutu has strained every nerve to ingratiate himself with the troops by misplaced leniency and liberal pay, the *moral* of the force has always been at a low ebb. The men are drawn from the third Szechuan Division, and although they are better armed and equipped than the Pien Chün of Chao's expedition, as a fighting force they cannot be compared with the old troops, whose discipline was excellent, and who are still feared throughout all Tibet. The army possesses neither an Intelligence Department, an adequate Supply and Transport Corps, nor a single company of engineers, while the medical and commissariat services are practically non-existent. The main line of communications from Chengtu and Yachow is along an ancient highway which in many places has entirely collapsed, and although gangs of coolies are constructing a new road between Chengtu and Yachow, the methods adopted are so crude that in a few years' time its condition will be little better than before. A couple of resolute Tibetans could easily in one night have wrecked the road in several places, cut the

telegraph lines, and escaped to the mountains. In the absence of military transport, not only animals, but men, women, and children are being commandeered to convey rice and stores to the base camp at Tatsienlu. This has brought legitimate trade with Tibet to a standstill.

Although glowing accounts have been written of Chinese successes in the field, there is no doubt whatever that, had there been the merest semblance of cohesion among the Tibetans, the Expeditionary Force would have been driven out of the country beyond Tatsienlu. The fighting has never been other than guerilla warfare. Chinese detachments have advanced into the country without adequate information or even scouts, and have fallen an easy prey to Tibetan ambushes.

The serious dissensions among the Generals have precluded any comprehensive scheme of "drives" or lines of fortified posts, and the ultra-provincialism of Szechuan caused her to reject the offer of Yunnan troops, with whose co-operation the main body of the Tibetans could have been hemmed in on all sides. There is not the slightest doubt that a division of northern troops could have crushed the rebellion months ago, and if the Lamas still hold out at Hsiang Cheng, and the peace overtures prove abortive, this appears to be the only solution of the problem.

THE CIVIL ADMINISTRATION.

Turning to the civil administration of the new province, we find that the excellent programme which was elaborated during the interregnum between Chao's conquest of the country and the outbreak of the present rebellion, is more or less in abeyance during hostilities. The proposed system of government is admirable, but here, as elsewhere in China at the moment, it is the personal equation which is lacking. No respect is shown by the people for their new rulers, with whom they are completely out of touch. An acrimonious discussion is taking place between the provincial authorities

in Chengtu and Yin Tutu. The Finance Department at the capital declare that a million taels (£125,000) have been advanced for the purposes of the expedition. The commandant asserts that he has only received half that sum, and insists that the balance must have leaked out along the route between the Treasury and Tatsienlu. In the meantime the Chengtu authorities are endeavouring to negotiate provincial loans with the French and German Consuls. Another rather glaring case of speculation has just occurred in Tatsienlu. A deputy from one of the Yamens was sent into the State of Badi Bawang to collect taxes. He duly made his remittances to headquarters, but upon his return found that the official had absconded with the funds. Stringent regulations have been drawn up for the suppression of gambling, but the officials themselves are the worst offenders.

In such hands is the government of this great region of the Marches to be placed. At the time of the proclamation of the new province it was stated by Young China that the administration of Eastern Tibet would be largely modelled on the lines of British rule in India, and here is the result, as we see it to-day in the most important town on the Sino-Tibetan border.

CHAPTER IV

CONSERVATIVE INFLUENCES IN CHINA.

THE MERCANTILE ELEMENT.

Competent observers are almost unanimous in asserting that one of the most disquieting features of the new Republican Government, especially in Western China, is the complete lack of respect for or fear of the authority of the officials by the mass of the people. There have been so many cases of flagrant opposition to the will of authority, when that authority conflicted with the vested interests of certain sections of the population, cases where the arm of the law was not sufficiently strong to enforce respect for its statutes, that with any other people than the Chinese, imbued with their strong sense of equity and reason, the result must inevitably have been open anarchy and mob rule.

The present revolution has, however, brought into deep relief the influence and stability of the great mercantile community operating through their Chambers of Commerce. Of all the factors constituting the complex organism of Chinese society the mercantile element is at once the soundest and most conservative. The interests of the traders are so bound up with the preservation of law and order and the unhampered interchange of commodities, that they strongly deprecate any movement in the State which is calculated to cause even temporary dislocation of their legitimate business. With the downfall of the Manchu *régime* and the consequent suspension of all authority for the time being, the Government of almost every city in China was for months virtually carried on by the Chambers of Commerce and associated guilds.

In Shanghai, during the interregnum between the flight of the Taotai and the inauguration of the new Bureau of Foreign Affairs, the Consular body co-operated with the native Chamber, appointed a Chinese magistrate acceptable to both parties, and drew up a series of regulations for the conduct of the Mixed Court and the maintenance of order and justice.

CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND OFFICIALS.

Now that a new system of government is being gradually evolved throughout the 18 provinces, this power, temporarily wielded, shows no signs of being relaxed, and the commercial bodies are acting as a most wholesome check on the actions of the new officials, many of whom are totally inexperienced and completely out of touch with the needs and customs of the people whom they are called upon to govern. Even in this remote corner of China, where trade interests are comparatively insignificant, the inequitable rulings of the magistrate have been appealed against, and the local Chamber in Ningyüan Fu has on four distinct occasions forced him to reverse his decision under the threat of referring the whole matter to the Provincial Government at Chengtu.

In questions relating to taxation the opinions and advice of the mercantile community are being freely taken. Heretofore trade has borne a totally disproportionate amount of both Imperial and local taxation, and has suffered most from the extortion and obstruction of a corrupt and insatiable Mandarinate. There is abundant evidence to prove that this inequitable state of affairs is being remedied. Negotiations are proceeding in Chengtu between the provincial authorities and the Chamber of Commerce for the regulation of all taxation on goods in transit, and the framing of a permanent tariff which will obviate the old delays and exactions. The *likin* dues have already been fixed on a 2 per cent, *ad valorem* basis, one payment covering the goods

throughout the province. Octroi, lotishui, departure, and consumption taxes, and the thousand and one burdens under which trade was crushed in the past, are being removed, the principle aimed at being commutation by one annual payment by each guild—the amount to be based on the statistics afforded by the guild registers, practically the only authentic figures obtainable bearing on the vast internal commerce of China.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE REPUBLIC.

The present Administration owes more than it realizes to the actions of the commercial bodies in suppressing anarchy and exerting their influence towards promoting a sound and lasting basis of government. It is noteworthy that the majority of the prominent merchants belong to the Kung Ho Tang, the more conservative of the two political parties, and are almost unanimous in their support of President Yuan Shih-kai.

If the present Republican form of government survives the almost insuperable difficulties which lie before it, the result will be attained, not by the administrative ability, foresight, or rectitude of the new officials, nor by the adoption of alien political systems and democratic shibboleths, which are never likely to flourish on Chinese soil, but by the innate common sense and stability of the Chinese people—and especially that of the merchants, which has carried them safely through great national crises in the past and may be relied upon to enable them to weather the present political storm.

A people whose watchword is tolerance and reason and whose daily life is one incessant struggle with the stern realities of existence, will never consent to be governed by any superficial doctrine of cant expounded by a body of students educated abroad, who are more familiar with the defects of foreign political systems than they are with the merits of their own.

CHAPTER V.

CHINA'S LOLO PROBLEM.

Such prominence has been given of recent years to Chinese expansion in Eastern Tibet and the expatriation of the tribal chiefs in that region that the existence of an extensive tract of absolutely independent territory inhabited by warlike and marauding tribes in the heart of China's largest and most populous province of Szechuan, is not generally known.

The origin of the Lolos (or Ngo-su as they call themselves) is shrouded in obscurity. According to the careful researches recently made by the D'Ollone Mission among the tribal records, they originally inhabited southern Yünnan and Kuei Chou, but having rebelled against Chinese rule during the reign of Yung Cheng in 1727 their power was crushed, and the survivors fled northwards across the Yangtse and took refuge in the wild mountainous region of the Ta Liang Shan. Here around the sacred mountain of Chonolevo and to the south of Mount Omei, where their three principal deities are supposed to reside, they collected their scattered forces and reformed those close tribal organizations which have since become such a thorn in the side of China.

Although Lolos are found to-day in various parts of Yünnan and Kuei Chou, their principal home is among the rugged mountain ranges which extend from Yachou southwards to the Yangtse. They are divided into two separate and distinct groups. North of the T'ung river are to be found the Tributary Lolo, who cultivate the valleys between Mount Omei and the Tachienlu road. These tribes, while retaining their autonomy, are tributary to

China, and so long as they are permitted to remain undisturbed, offer no resistance to Chinese suzerainty.

South of the T'ung, however, and extending over two degrees of latitude to the Yangtse at Chia Chiao T'ing, is the territory occupied by the Independent Lolo. This large area of upwards of 11,000 square miles has the Yangtse as its eastern boundary, and the main road from Szechuan to Yünnan down the Chien Ch'ang valley as its westerly limit. This is the habitat of the true Lolo, who maintain their feudal organization, and not only refuse to acknowledge Chinese suzerainty, but wage constant warfare along the frontier, raiding the villages, and pillaging, murdering and captivating Chinese subjects with impunity.

The land is divided among numerous tribes, their Chiefs or 'Nzemo' being closely bound by marriage ties. There are three distinct classes of Lolo society:—The "Black Bones" or nobles, who are the patricians of the clan, the "White Bones" or plebeians—retainers and vassals of the former—and the "Wa Tzu" or Slaves, who are all captive Chinese. The territory is closed to Chinese subjects and they are strictly forbidden to cross the frontier except on the express invitation of a Chief, who is then answerable for their conduct and is termed their Respondent. Practically only two classes of Chinese ever enter the country, the men engaged in collecting the eggs of the white wax insect, who pay a substantial fee for this privilege, and a few experts specially invited to slit the pods of the poppy and extract the opium.

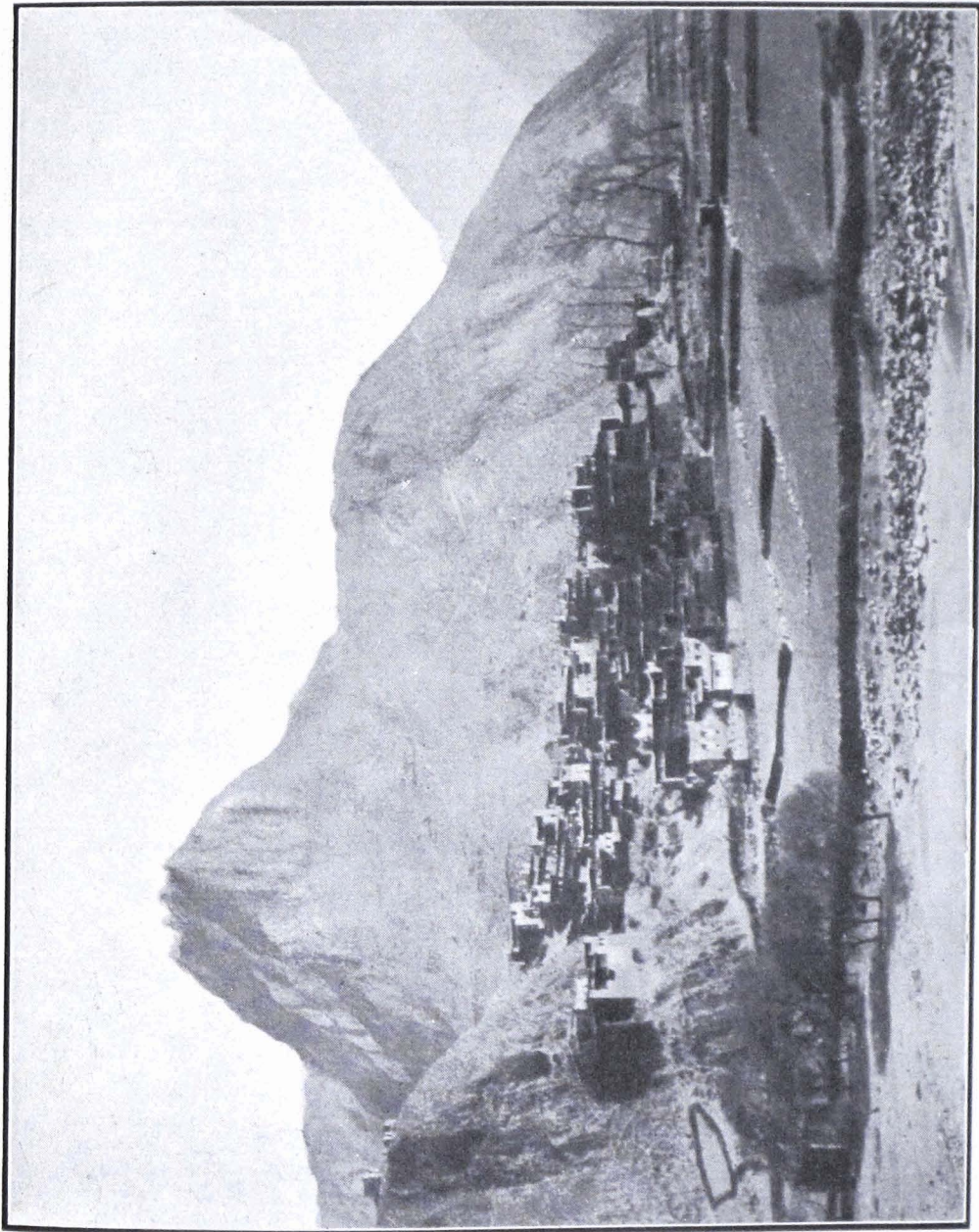
The government has made countless attempts to subdue this wild region, but owing to the extremely mountainous and difficult nature of the country, the pusillanimity of the troops employed, and the savage bravery of the tribesmen fighting for their hearths and homes, have been invariably repulsed, and during the past few years the Officials have acknowledged themselves worsted and have merely attempted to maintain the safety of the highway to Yünnan

through the Chien Ch'ang valley. To attain this end blockhouses were erected along the road south of Fulin at intervals of a mile or so, and subsidies ranging from Tls. 50.00 to Tls. 150.00 have been granted to the chiefs of the frontier clans to induce them to keep the peace. In some cases hostages were retained at the Yamens as security for the behaviour of certain border tribes, but even these precautionary measures were not sufficient, and caravans on the main road were constantly plundered, villages burnt, and their inhabitants carried away into slavery.

If such was the state of affairs under the late régime—what is the situation to-day? Since the Revolution the tribes have everywhere waged open warfare, and there is scarcely a hamlet from Fulin to Huili Chou that has not a pitiful tale to tell of pillage and massacre. The Lolos now no longer content themselves with attacking remote villages, but come down into the open valley, and for months the screams and shouts of the terrified villagers were constantly heard during the night by the residents of Ningyüan Fu. Only six weeks ago a hamlet not more than three hundred yards from the north wall of the city was wiped out one night, and this within half a mile of the General's Yamen, where there were a couple of hundred so-called troops! The survivors came into the city to have their wounds dressed by the Mission doctor. At Yüeh Hsi T'ing fighting is constantly going on, and the day I passed through the town the Chinese General Lo Tung Ling was heavily engaged at P'u Hsiung only a few miles to the East, and was barely holding his own. With one or two exceptions the blockhouses on the road were deserted, and no serious attempt whatever is being made by the authorities to cope with the situation. The telegraph line to Chengtu, which was destroyed by the Revolutionaries, has never been repaired, and the valley is isolated from the outside world notwithstanding the fact that a most important inter-provincial highway runs through it. I called on General Liao in Ningyüan, and found him a strong able man, who

had seen thirty years service in Yunnan, but he has recently sent in his resignation as the provincial authorities will provide him with neither men nor funds. The subsidies to the Lolo Chiefs have been discontinued since the Revolution but no extra effort has been made to safeguard the road. The only troops in the valley are a thousand or so ill-disciplined Han Chün, who should be classed as bandits rather than soldiers. Although for the moment peace reigns along the border line during the time that the Lolos harvest their crops, the trouble is certain to break out again in a couple of months.

It is strangely inconsistent that China should have embarked upon the difficult and costly task of subduing the peaceable tribes of Eastern Tibet, beyond her frontier, while within the province of Szechuan itself is this ever-menacing Lolo problem involving the murder and slavery of hundreds of her own people.



THE FEUDAL STATE OF KANPO.

CHAPTER VI.

OPIUM IN THE CHIEN CH'ANG VALLEY

The all-absorbing question in this remote valley of Western China is the disposal of the largest crop of opium which has ever been raised. In order to appreciate the difficulties of the situation it must be remembered that the Chien Ch'ang valley is a narrow strip of fertile alluvial soil forming the basin of the Anning Ho, and wedged in between the Independent Lolo Territory on the east and the semi-Tibetan tribes to the west. It is nowhere more than three miles in width, and extends almost due north and south for 110 miles, forming the principal link between Szechuan and Yünnan. Although belonging geographically and climatically to Yünnan, it has always been under the rule of the provincial Government of Szechuan, and to the Prefect of Ningyüan Fu was entrusted the onerous duty of protecting the trade route against the constant depredations of the wild Lolo tribesmen. There are practically only two outlets to this remote but extremely productive region—the ferry over the T'ung river at Ta Shu P'u to the north, and the town of Huili Chou on the southern route to Yünnan. In these two insignificant places the conflict is now being waged, which is to decide whether the present Government is in a position to completely suppress the distribution of native opium in Western China.

This region of Chien Ch'ang has always produced the best opium grown in Szechuan,—in fact the drug so closely resembled the Yünnan product that in the markets at Peking and Shanghai it was often sold as Yünnan opium. Early last autumn it was known that the present crop would be a record one. In view of the high prices ruling

throughout the country and the resulting profits to the farmers, the acreage under poppies showed an increase of from three to five times above the normal.

The officials made a feeble effort to suppress the growth, but were obliged to desist in face of the determined opposition of the people. They thereupon let it be known in their reports that opium was being grown, but almost entirely in the independent Lolo country, over which they have no control. Careful investigation reveals the fact that little more than 10% of the present crop has been raised by the Lolos, but that poppy cultivation has been carried on all over the valley and the neighbouring foothills by Chinese, who harvested their crop without any opposition from the officials. Furthermore, the Chief of one Lolo tribe to the north recently admitted that his people were unskilled in slitting the pods, and that this process was carried on by expert Chinese, who were provided with passports through the territory for this purpose.

A general influx of opium merchants provided with several lakhs of silver took place in the early spring, but notwithstanding the demand, the crop was such a heavy one that during March the price was as low as 600 cash per ounce. The problem was how to get the drug past the likin barriers to the north and south, and especially that at Ta Shu P'u where the Yachow Kuan Ch'a Shih had given strict injunctions that not a single package was to be allowed through. The roads east and west were impracticable owing to the difficult nature of the country and the enmity of the tribes, and it was soon realised that since the official barriers could not be evaded, they must be forced. The first consignment was held up and confiscated, and then began a struggle between the wits of the merchants and the authority of the central Government, the former rendered desperate by the immense sums at stake, and the latter weakened by the venality and corruption of the officials—a struggle which throws many sidelights on present

Chinese thought and methods, and which would be ludicrous but for the gravity of the principle at issue. At the time of writing the honours rest entirely with the merchants, and the bulk of the crop has already been safely transported past the barriers to Yachow and disposed of there. As a complete proof of this, the price in Ningyüan Fu has risen to 1,140 cash per ounce, and stocks have been greatly depleted. Not a single package has passed the little ferry over the T'ung openly, but the situation has provided ample scope for those complicated and ingenious devices, in the employment of which the Chinese mind excels.

Two methods have been adopted. Firstly stratagem aided by bribery, and secondly the export of large quantities under the aegis of travelling officials.

The ruses by means of which the drug has been smuggled under the eyes of complaisant officials—their vigilance being in inverse ratio to the amount of *douceur* received—make an amusing story.

A favourite method has been to place small packets of opium among the baskets containing white wax insects, which travel by night, as a low temperature is required to prevent the premature hatching of the eggs. One ingenious merchant remembered that a certain official had died in Ningyüan two years before. He thereupon had a coffin made with a false bottom, underneath which he packed the opium. Lime and a deceased pig were then filled in and the lid nailed down. The funeral procession then started for Yachow, but the story had leaked out, and the merchant was obliged to spend Tls. 200 in bribes to the Customs officials at Yüeh Hsi. To save their own face, however they ordered the coffin to be opened, but 'ere the lid had been removed, the stench was so strong that they quickly nailed it down again, and accepted this as positive proof that the obsequies were *boná fide*.

A well-know European official passed though Ningyüan Fu in the early spring and obtained from the Yamen

several "Feng P'i" or official seals for placing on his baggage. They supplied two seals in excess of his requirements, which the opium people managed to acquire. Two large boxes of opium were dispatched under this apparent official protection, and although they were stopped en route, the consignment eventually reached Yachow, and in twenty-four hours had vanished into consumption without leaving a trace. Perhaps the boldest attempt of all was the endeavour to make use of the name of the Christian Mission—a scheme which was only frustrated by the blundering of the consignee and the vigilance of the Mission in Yachow. Two large barrels, which had been used for packing foreign goods, and which bore the Mission chop, were sent by a member of the Church in Ningyüan to a confrère in Yachow. They passed all the barriers and reached their destination, but the receiver, instead of selling the drug at once, placed the barrels in the Missionaries' compound, stating that they contained goods belonging to a church member in Ningyüan, who expected to arrive shortly. The suspicions of the mission were aroused, the barrels were opened on the street before the local official and a large crowd, and found to contain £600 worth of opium, which was promptly burnt.

Robbery is rife in the tributary Lolo states to the north of the T'ung. Bands of brigands lie in wait on the roads, and as soon as the opium has safely passed the customs stations, they seize it, knowing that the unfortunate owners dare not complain to the authorities.

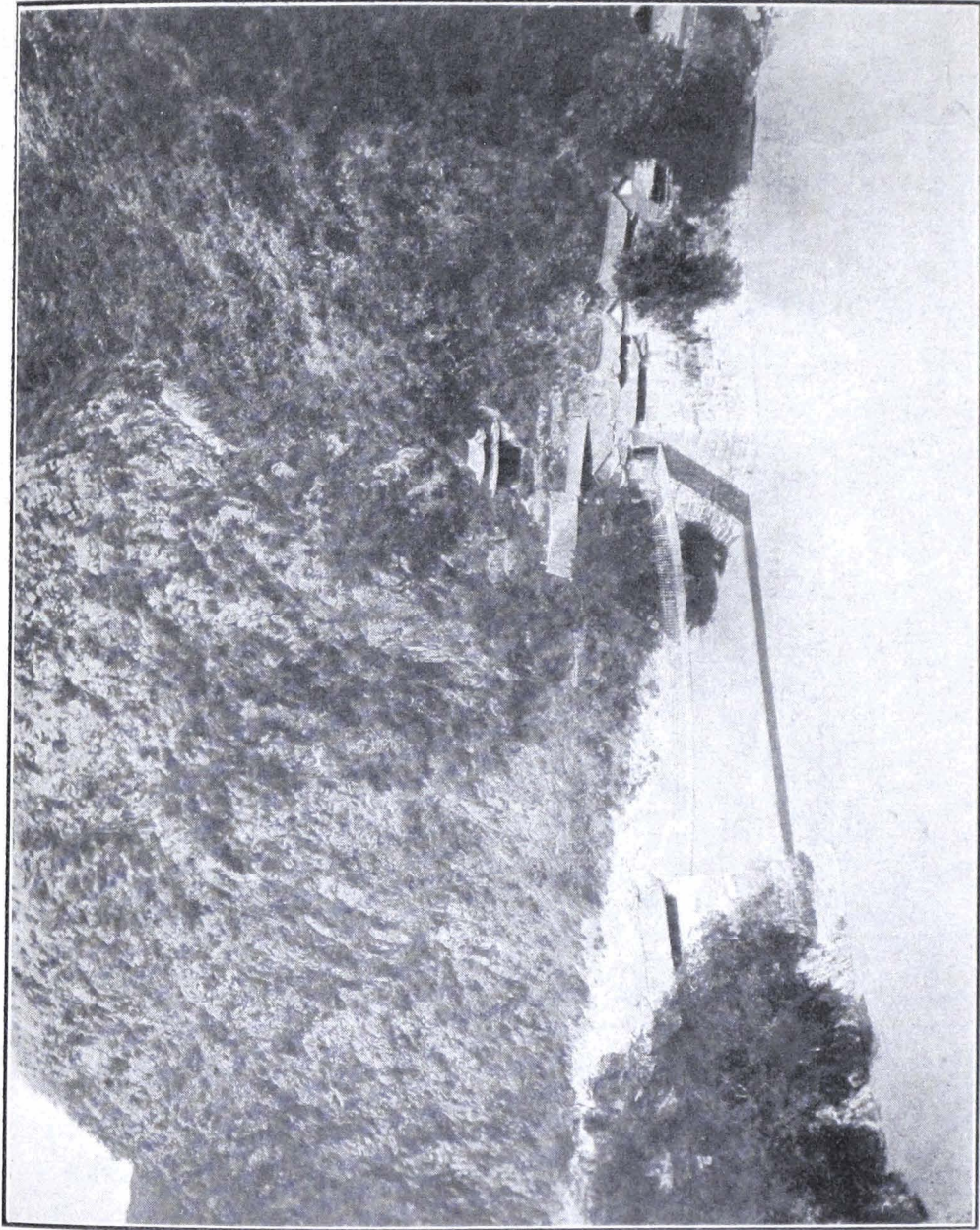
The largest consignments which have left the valley, however, have been exported in the baggage of officials. A Customs officer named Wang and the Hsüan Fu Shih named Ch'en, have left Ningyüan for Yachow during the past two months, and each of them carried several thousand ounces of the drug among his impedimenta. The Fu is expected to leave shortly, as his office has been abolished under the new régime, and for the past month his yamen underlings have

been collecting opium, both for export at their own risk, and also for account of merchants, who are paying a fixed rate of fifteen dollars per hundred ounces for the privilege of official protection. Whether the officials themselves are pecuniarily interested in this traffic is a moot point. That they connive at the actions of their underlings is beyond all question.

Meanwhile, superficially, great efforts are being made to suppress the traffic, and for three days I travelled in the company of an unfortunate man who had attempted to pass his cargo through openly, but the stuff was confiscated at Ta Shu P'u, and he was being sent back in custody of two Yamen runners to make his explanations to the Kuan Ch'a Shih, who was then at Yüeh Hsi. Only this morning a hundred ounces which had been collected from poor unfortunate people in the city were burnt in the Hsien's Yamen with great flourish of trumpets to demonstrate the vigilance of the local Mandarins for the benefit of the Kuan Ch'a Shih, who has just arrived from Yüeh Hsi. This official—a native of Szechuan named Liang—corresponds in rank to the Taotai of the Manchu régime, and has jurisdiction over the Ch'uan Nan circuit. He appears to be an earnest man, but has contented himself with employing the old effete methods. He spends annually four months at each of his Yamens in Chiating, Yachow, and Ningyüan, and has recently come down to the Chien Ch'ang to investigate the opium traffic.

All along the road opium shops are carrying on a thriving business, but they closed the day H. E. Liang passed through, so that he may report to Peking with a clear conscience that the smoking of opium in public places has completely ceased. The traveller, however, has a very different story to relate; and strange to say, the Yamen people are the greatest offenders, and secretaries, runners, and soldiers not only smoke in their homes, but the lamp is to be seen in almost every inn on the road. In the

smoking of opium as in the case of gambling and other offences in Szechuan, there is to-day one law for the officials and wealthy classes and another for the masses, on whom the statutes are rigorously and often unjustly enforced in order to cloak the malpractices of their Superiors.



IRON CHAIN BRIDGE OVER THE MÉKONG.

CHAPTER VII.

A JOURNEY ACROSS A LITTLE KNOWN PART OF WESTERN SZECHUAN.

The white patches on the map of China bearing the fascinating word "unexplored" are to-day few and far between. I esteem myself very fortunate in having had the opportunity of making a journey through that unsurveyed stretch of fine mountainous country, inhabited by Moso and Lolo tribes, and lying between the Chien Ch'ang valley to the north-east and the Yünnan border to the south-west, having Yen Yüan Hsien and Yungpei T'ing as its administrative centres.

I left the beautifully situated city of Ningyüan Fu on June 16th with a caravan consisting of two riding mules for my servant and self and six pack animals for the baggage. Much has been written about the excellence of the Chinese pack saddle as a safe means of transport, and competent military authorities declare that the design cannot be improved upon for that purpose, but few Europeans seem to have appreciated its advantages as a riding saddle. With a folded blanket wedged in between the two wooden projections to make a level surface, a second blanket above this, a rug folded and sewn at the two ends forming a couple of most efficient wallets, and a pair of twisted cane stirrups suspended by ropes, I have ridden for hundreds of miles, uphill and down dale, and on one occasion remained for six hours in the saddle over extremely mountainous country without feeling unduly fatigued. The main essential is patience, as the speed of the average mule train does not exceed three miles per hour, but this slow rate of progress, together with the docility of the usual pack beast enables

one to make notes and sketches of the country traversed, and occasionally to take compass bearings without dismounting.

After crossing the Chien Ch'ang valley, and having the misfortune to be held up for two days at Ma Tao Tzu owing to the swollen state of the Anning Ho rendering it unferryable, we struck the road to Yen Yüan Hsien and crossed the Anning Ho—Yalung divide by an easy pass, reaching Tê Li P'u at the end of the second stage. The road as far as Yen Yüan had already been traversed by Mr. (now Sir Alexander) Hosie, and the French traveller de Marsay, and is well-known to the French and British Missionaries, so that I will only describe its main features. On the third day we followed the left bank of the Yalung (known locally as the "Chin Ho"—Gold River) upwards for eight miles to the village of Ho Pien Ts'un, and then crossed by ferry. The ferry is placed at a bend in the river. After flowing south-west the stream takes a course almost due south just above the crossing, and bends south-east again a few hundred yards below it. The Yalung is here a hundred yards in width, and flows in a swift turbid stream through a magnificent gorge with almost perpendicular cliffs rising to summits several thousand feet above the bed of the stream. On the hillside above the ferry is a salt likin station to tap the traffic between the brine wells west of Yen Yüan and the Chien Ch'ang. It will be remembered that in 1910 Captain Audemard of the French Navy accompanied by Mgr. de Guébriant, the venerable and intrepid Bishop of Chien Ch'ang, constructed a light craft and floated down the Yalung from the falls at Ta Ho Pa to the confluence with the Yangtse. Captain Audemard subsequently made a most remarkable voyage in a shallow draught boat on the upper Yangtse from the bend north of Tali Fu to the limit of steam navigation at P'ing Shan Hsien, proving that for more than five hundred miles above the then supposed limit of navigation there are no serious

obstacles in the form of rapids, and that the river is, in fact, navigable for very light craft.

Once across the Yalung the road follows the narrow ravine formed by an affluent as far as Hang Chou, the end of the third stage, and then strikes south-west over the Lan Pa Pass (11,000 feet) to Hsiao Kao Shan, from whence a short sharp descent brings the traveller to the district city of Yen Yüan, situated on a broad plateau at an elevation of 8,800 feet, extending to the brine wells at Pai Yen Ching, twelve miles to the west. As my objective was Yen Ching, I merely stayed an hour in Yen Yüan to change the escort of the two wretched Yamen runners, who are provided by the officials for the protection of travellers, but whose sole arms, I usually found, were my own discarded provision tins, which they greatly cherished.

Outside the gate of the city I was surprised to see a field of poppies by the roadside. The opium had already been extracted from the pods, but the stalks were still standing despite the late season of the year, and enquiries elicited the information that the local official had recently been changed on account of opium suppression. The late magistrate, Tsen by name, was a man held in high esteem by the people for his just rule, but he realised the impossibility of eradicating the growth of opium from within his jurisdiction, which comprises large tracts of country governed by practically independent Lolo Chiefs. A special deputy was accordingly sent down by the provincial Government to destroy all crops of poppies found in the district, and proceeded to carry out his instructions. The people surrounded and beat him, but did not molest the magistrate on account of his good name, whereupon the Deputy reported to Chengtu that he had been attacked by Tsen's orders, and called for his dismissal. The Tutu, without any further investigation, recalled the magistrate and sent down the present incumbent—one Ch'en, a man of no account, for whom the people have little respect, and who, at the time of my visit, was

away at Yen T'ang—two days to the west—engaged in suppressing a serious Lolo outbreak with the aid of tribal levies supplied by the friendly Chung So Chief.

The little mud-walled town of Pai Yen Ching is situated at the western extremity of the Yen Yüan plateau and has a population of nearly 10,000 souls, all of whom are dependent for their livelihood on the two brine wells which lie in a ravine to the South. The salt industry is interesting as typifying the simple but effective system of co-operation so common throughout China. There are two wells about 75 feet deep, one large and the other small; the former in the hands of a close corporation of sixty-six shareholders, the latter worked by a company limited to twenty-four members. The clear brine is raised by means of buckets at the end of bamboo rods worked by hand, and is then sold to the boilers at a fixed price of Tls. 14.00 per unit of 300 coolie loads (600 buckets). Prior to the Revolution the rate was Tls. 18.00, Tls. 6.00 being paid to the Government as a royalty, but now this impost has been raised and the price lowered. The evaporating works are now in the hands of 200 families, but no limit is fixed to their number. After evaporation, the white salt, which is in the form of hollow cones—that being the shape of the evaporating pans—is sold to the local merchants at Tls. 44.00 per thousand Catties, of which sum the Government takes Tls. 5.80 as likin. The salt is almost entirely exported to the Chien Ch'ang valley by mule transport at the heavy cost of Tls. 2.00 per hundred Catties. It is wonderful when one considers that these two small wells maintain a population of 10,000 people, without taking into account the numerous muleteers and others engaged in the transport trade.

The only other place of interest in Yen ching is the mosque, a miserable building with wooden roof, but the Ahong explained that originally there were three Mosques in the city with 300 Moslem families, and that in the sixth year of T'ung Chih several hundred Panthay rebels came

north from Tali Fu and stayed six days. The Chinese forced them to retire, and not only drove them back but destroyed all the Mohammedan buildings and historic stone slabs. There are, at present, only forty families in the town, but as is usually the case with the Faithful in China, they hold together and maintain a small school of their own, and two of their number have even made the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina.

It had been my intention to hire a fresh mule team at Yenching and endeavour to proceed by a new route to Yungpei T'ing to the east of that taken by Dr. Logan Jack in 1900, but I soon found that on account of the Lolo insurrection at Yen T'ang, the mule trains from Yungpei had ceased to arrive, as they were afraid of being summarily commandeered by the Chinese Authorities en route. After waiting three days, the only animals obtainable were a poor team belonging to a Hua P'ing Hsien merchant, so I reluctantly decided to proceed by the eastern road, parts of which had been covered by Mr. Hosie in 1883, but which was still unsurveyed and practically unknown, and passed through the heart of the wild and interesting Lolo country.

Leaving Yen Ching by the west gate, we struck across the low sandy hills skirting the plateau to the southwest, and met team after team of ponies and mules transporting the lignite found locally to the evaporating furnaces at Yen Ching. After a rather monotonous journey of twenty miles we reached the small village of Huang Ts'ao Pa, and were obliged to stay in the same Inn with the mules, since here, as elsewhere on the road, there is no accommodation whatever for travellers, and in summer the stench of sore backs and foul saddle cloths is most trying. On the mountain side above the village is the home of the Chung So Lolo chief, who rules over a large area extending for fully fifty miles to the south, but at the time of our visit, this potentate was absent with his forces at Yen T'ang assisting the Chinese officials in quelling the Lolo outbreak.

From Huang Ts'ao Pa the road runs south over mountain spurs covered with fine pine forest and beautiful cream rhododendrons in bloom near the summits, and then descends through grassy valleys between the ranges. For twenty-five miles we did not pass a single hamlet, but in one or two places saw rude log huts inhabited by Lolos, and on one of the passes was a guard house occupied by a couple of tribesmen to protect the road against brigands. These "Shao Fang" are placed at all dangerous places in accordance with an agreement between the Yen Pien T'ing official and the Chung So T'u Ssu. A toll of twenty cash per annum is paid once on every return journey by the regular traders between Hua P'ing and Yen Ching, but as we were supposed to be on official business, after being hailed, we were allowed to pass free. Further down the valley we met the Yen Pien T'ing official, resplendent in scarlet riding coat and with decorated horse trappings and escorted by a dozen troopers. He also was on his way to the danger centre of Yen T'ang. The Yamen at Yen Pien T'ing has only been opened during the past five years owing to persistent trouble with the Lolos. The place was previously known by its tribal name of Asola, but according to the present arrangement, the official rules over the country as far as Yünnan border, where his jurisdiction is coterminous with that of the Hua P'ing Hsien, a district also of recent creation, and formerly known as Chiu Ya P'ing, by which name it still appears on the maps.

The second stage from Yen Ching brought us to Pai Tzu Tien, and on the third day's march we followed the left bank of a clear mountain stream, which flows south, and eventually bends eastward to join the Yalung. The scenery was exceedingly beautiful, the rough rocky path winding up and down through rich foliage and hedges of giant cactus with occasional views of a perfect maze of mountains to the south. Towards the end of the march Chinese villages were numerous, and the valley bottom was terraced with

paddy fields fringed with rows of beans. After passing Lung T'ang—erroneously located on the maps to the north of Pai Tzu Tien—we rested for the night at the busy village of La Tsa Tien, where I was obliged to find shelter in the city temple and endure the prolonged gaze of almost the entire population, who turned out to see the extraordinary spectacle of a foreigner.

Leaving La Tsa Tien, we continued down the left bank of the stream southwards for four miles to the iron chain suspension bridge at Ma Li P'ing, which we crossed and proceeded south-west up the gorge formed by an affluent. The main stream here deflects eastward, eventually reaching the Yalung about Lat. 27° N. After a long march of twenty miles we crossed the Szechuan—Yünnan boundary at San Kuan Ssu. The line here runs north-west to south-east and cuts the small stream, known locally as the Lu Mu Ho, five li to the east of the Ferry of Li Chia Tu by which we passed into Yünnan. The scenery in this valley surpasses anything I had ever seen in China. The pure, clear stream emerges from a picturesque chasm, the rocky walls covered with creeping plants, and the heights above covered with coniferæ and rhododendrons, while, here and there, in a little clearing, might be seen a primitive thatched hut overlooking a few green paddy fields on the water's edge.

A steep ascent from the Ferry brought us to the hamlet of Hui Wo Tzu, merely a collection of hovels on the mountain side, but we were relieved to find a spacious cool verandah along the front of the mule inn, on which it was possible to sleep in comparative comfort. The following morning a short climb of twenty li brought us to the summit of the Pass, from which a long winding path led down to the well-irrigated valley and town of Hua P'ing Hsien, where we were most hospitably entertained by the official, and found a welcome rest after the heat and exertion of the road.

CHAPTER VIII.

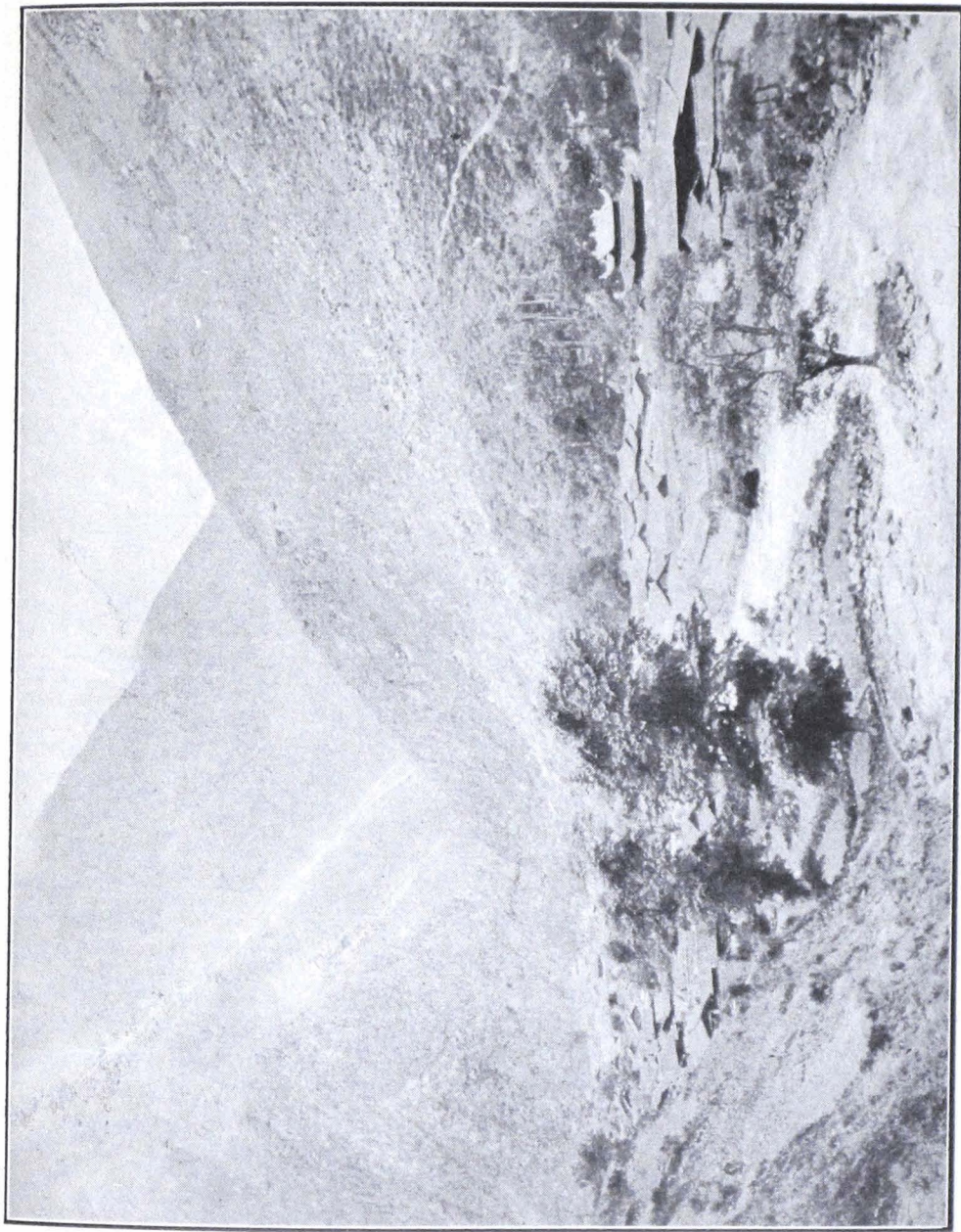
THE MARCHES OF CHINESE TIBET

(Addressed to the Manchester Geographical Society,
February 24th, 1914.)

The study of frontiers and borderlands forms one of the most attractive and enlightening subjects in the whole field of geographical research. Lord Curzon in his celebrated Romanes lecture at Oxford said : “ Frontiers are the razor’s edge on which hang suspended the modern issues of peace or war, of life or death to nations.” I propose to-night to deal with one of the most complex and involved frontier questions in the whole of Asia—with a land interesting, not only on account of its wonderful physical configuration, but mainly on account of the manners and customs of its many and varied tribes, and the vital political issues which are being fought out at the present moment on its bleak, treeless plateaux.

A good deal of misconception prevails with regard to Tibet. Tibet may be said to be little more than a geographical expression. With the exception of the rich and fertile valley of the Tsangpo, and the regions in the immediate vicinity of Lhasa, which form Tibet proper, the country may be described as a vast agglomeration of semi-independent and nomadic tribes, united only in acknowledging the spiritual supremacy of the Dalai Lama at Lhasa, and recognising in a general way the vague and shadowy suzerainty of China.

It is practically impossible to define the political boundary between Tibet and China on the east. The whole question is being threshed out at a conference which has been sitting at Simla during the last few months between the



TACHIENLU FROM THE SOUTH.

Longchen Shatra, or Prime Minister of Tibet, and an Envoy of the Chinese Government, the negotiations being held under the auspices of the government of India. The Chinese claim absolute sovereignty as far as Chiamdo and the line of the Mékong. The true frontier of Tibet, however, lies some 500 miles to the eastward, and extends almost due north and south from Sungpan along the banks of the Min to Kuanhsien, and then through Yachow and the Chien Ch'ang valley to the Yangtse. Along this line the rounded hills of the red basin of Szechuan province are left behind, and the traveller sees before him a mighty buttress of snow peaks, which seem to keep watch and ward over the plateaux beyond.

To the west of this boundary the inhabitants of the bleak inhospitable uplands are tribes of Tibetan origin, steeped in Lamaism and in that esoteric Bon cult, which is the survival of the ancient nature worship of Tibet, the Chinese being confined to the high roads and a few trading centres and military depots such as Tachienlu, Mengkung and Li Fan Ting.

It is this vast stretch of country extending from the true frontier of Tibet at Tachienlu westwards for some 500 miles to the upper reaches of the Mékong at Chiamdo, which is known as the Marches of Chinese Tibet, the Marches of the Mantze, or more frequently as the tribes country.

In the east the country consists of wind-swept treeless plateaux from 12,000 to 14,000 feet above sea level, surrounded by high ranges with an elevation of from 17,000 to 20,000 feet, but as one proceeds westwards one encounters a series of stupendous mountain ranges, separated by narrow valleys, well forested in the lower parts with all the higher peaks extending above the snowline, while on the confines of Tibet proper we find one of the most remarkable features in Asiatic orography.

To the east of where the Brahmaputra, after pursuing its placid eastward course through the heart of Tibet, plunges southward through the mountain barrier in a series of rapids

before it reaches the plains of Assam at Sadiya—to the eastward of this bend we find a continuous mountain chain, distinct and apart from the Himalayan system, rounding off the heads of shelving velleys which slope westwards to the Brahmaputra, and dominating a series of enormous parallel mountain folds, which enclose between their successive crests the deep troughs of some of the greatest rivers in Asia. So close set are the successive ridges and ranges which part the Salwin from the Mékong and the Mékong from the Yangtse, that at a point level with the head of the Assam valley, one hundred miles would bridge them all and would also include the Nmai Kha—the source of the Irawadi. It is this region of eastern Tibet which contains the greatest present wealth and the greatest promise for the future. Travellers leaving the cold altitudes of the Chang Tang behind them and descending gradually through the long narrow valleys to the Chinese frontier, are never weary of recounting the delightful change of climate and scenery which they encounter. There are magnificent forest-covered slopes beneath the snow-clad crests of the main ridges; there are numbers of well-watered, well-cultivated and well-populated valleys hidden away amongst the folds of the main chains. The larger and better known valleys such as Dergé on the Dre Chu or Upper Yangtse or Chiamdo on the Nam Chu or Upper Mékong, are populous, prosperous and priest-ridden, while the lesser known valleys such as Poyul and Zayul are great centres of Tibetan art and industry. The whole region is full of unexploited mineral wealth. Gold is washed in the bed of the Upper Yangtse, while silver, mercury, iron, copper and lead are found throughout the region. There is one great drawback however, to the development of this country, and that is the lack of good communications. The piling up of a succession of mountain chains and river valleys bearing north and south entails for all routes running east and west the constant crossing of one divide after another. The road through the Marches is only once—and that in the valley

of the Yalung— below 12,500 feet, while twelve passes, not one of which is under 14,500 feet, must be crossed. Despite these great physical obstacles, the country is traversed by one of the most celebrated roads in all Asia, and certainly the most elevated trade route in the world. This is the great “Junglam,” or official highway, from Lhasa to China. It is the most important of all the routes connecting Lhasa with the outside world, and is that by which Tibet has been conquered by China on successive occasions. It must be remembered that while the gates of Tibet have always been jealously guarded against European advance from the west and south, and the wild, bleak steppes of the Chang Tang have effectually hindered trade development from the north, there has always been a steady intercourse carried on with the western provinces of China, and practically the whole of this trade flows through the marches to the frontier town of Tachienlu. The distance between Tachienlu and Lhasa is roughly 1,000 miles, and the journey occupies two months. Leaving Tachienlu the road strikes westward over the Jédo Pass and across the Kaji La to the Yalung at Ho K’ou. Here a new steel suspension bridge has recently been constructed by French engineers to the orders of the Chinese Government, and replaces the old method of crossing the river by raft. Three more passes of over 14,000 feet bring us to Litang with its Lamasery and Palace, and after a further five days of strenuous climbing the traveller arrives at Batang on the Upper Yangtse. From Batang the road strikes through the country of the Draya nomads to Chiamdo, and thence over a series of tremendous passes, reaching 18,000 feet in altitude, and not one of them falling below the height of Mont Blanc, finally descends to Shobando, from whence the remainder of the journey to Lhasa is comparatively easy. Along this road every three years the two Ambans, or Chinese High Commissioners, proceed to Lhasa with an enormous train of officials, soldiers and couriers, themselves returning three years later with all the spoils collected

during their term of office. To travel along the Junglam is to realise what a prodigious task the administration of Tibet really is. The changing of officials and the upkeep of the garrison in Lhasa means a constant stream of ingoing and outgoing Yamen runners, soldiers, couriers, and tribute-bearers connected with the Tibetan administration, and the problem of their sustenance and transport is one of the greatest grievances among the peoples of the Marches. The method employed by the Chinese is known as "Ula." Ula is a species of socage service rendered to princes, government officials, and priests. By this system, in return for a grant of lands adjacent to the highways, the native tenants are obliged to provide means of transport from one stage to another. The control of the system is in the hands of the native chiefs, who form settlements at convenient places along the main roads, where a fixed number of animals are kept for the transport service. The nature of the Ula varies in different districts, but the transport is usually effected by mules, horses, cattle or yak. The system has been greatly abused by both Chinese and Tibetan officials, and it has afforded an opportunity for squeezes, which the avaricious Lama has not failed to turn to his own profit. The result is that in the region between Tachienlu and Batang, families are constantly migrating to less public districts away from the main roads in order to escape the exactions of Ula. In order to accommodate travellers, solid stone rest houses have now been erected at the end of each day's march, and a regular service of postal couriers has been inaugurated between Chengtu and Lhasa, while the telegraph line has been extended as far as Batang.

One of the main points of interest, however, connected with the Junglam is that it is over this most remarkable mountain road that the Chinese armies have constantly passed to the conquest of Tibet. There is certainly no military route in the world to compare with it for altitude. The retreat of the Greeks under Xenophon from Persia, the

advance of Alexander to India over the northern passes, and his subsequent retreat from India through the Makran defiles are all marvellous records surpassing those of modern times, but they will not bear examination when compared with the crossing of these awful passes and gorges of Eastern Tibet by successive Chinese armies. There is, however, one of these expeditions which must rank for all time as one of the greatest of military achievements, and as it is of special interest as illustrating the military possibilities of the eastern and most direct route between Lhasa and Peking, a brief reference will not be out of place here.

In 1792, during the reign of the great Manchu Emperor Ch'ien Lung, the Gurkhas of Nepal inspired by the lust of loot invaded Tibet. An expedition numbering 18,000 men crossed the Kuti pass and advanced with great rapidity on Shigatse. They captured the city and looted the palace. The cowardly Tibetans fled in a panic. The infant Tashi Lama was carried off to Lhasa, and Chinese assistance was at once invoked to repel the invasion. Then followed one of the most remarkable retributions that the world has ever seen. Over the gigantic mountains and snowbound passes of Eastern Tibet a force of no less than 70,000 Chinese was led in two columns by General Sand Fo into the elevated regions of the plateau. The Gurkhas rapidly retreated to a position near their frontier called Tengri Maidan. Here the first battle was fought and they were completely defeated. The Kuti post was captured after a second fight, and the Chinese advanced by way of Kirong to Khatmandu, the capital of Nepal. The Chinese artillery consisted of light field guns made of leather, which fired a few rounds and then burst. The Gurkhas had no guns, and they made their last stand on the river banks at Tadi, about twenty miles from Khatmandu.

To appreciate the position it must be remembered that this unwieldy force of 70,000 Chinese had marched across one of the most difficult mountain districts in the world for

800 miles from their own frontier before reaching Lhasa. They had then advanced at least another 400 miles over uplands at elevations which were never less than 10,000 feet, involving the passage of many passes higher than Mont Blanc before meeting the enemy. Practically they were without artillery, and they had in front of them the most tenacious and most valiant foe that ever stood up to fight in Asia—a foe, too, that was flushed with recent success. It is true that the strength of the Chinese at starting may be reckoned to be vastly greater than that of the Gurkhas in the field against them, and it is improbable that they dispersed that strength by holding positions on the line of advance. But they must have lost numbers in the passes of the mountains which barred their progress through that 1,200 miles of route from their frontier (2,000 miles at least from the populated district of China), and it could have been little more than an advance guard that faced the Gurkhas on the river at Tadi. The Gurkhas on the other hand in falling back on their base, were consolidating their strength from day to day, and as they turned with their backs to the river (like terriers against a wall), they were fighting for their women and their homes behind them, and they knew well what defeat would mean. The Chinese wavered. They were massed in front of the Gurkhas, who were between them and Khatmandu, and they were terribly spent with the length and the trial of that long march in the thin atmosphere of the Tibetan highlands. There seemed a chance that the attack would fail at the critical moment. It is under such circumstances as these that great generals prove their right and title to the confidence which their country has bestowed upon them. Sand Fo was a great general, and he rose to the occasion. He turned his leather guns on to the rear of his own wavering troops and drove them and the Gurkhas in front of them in one comprehensive sweep into the river. The Chinese trampled over friend and foe alike, and they speedily sacked Khatmandu. Oriental methods of treating

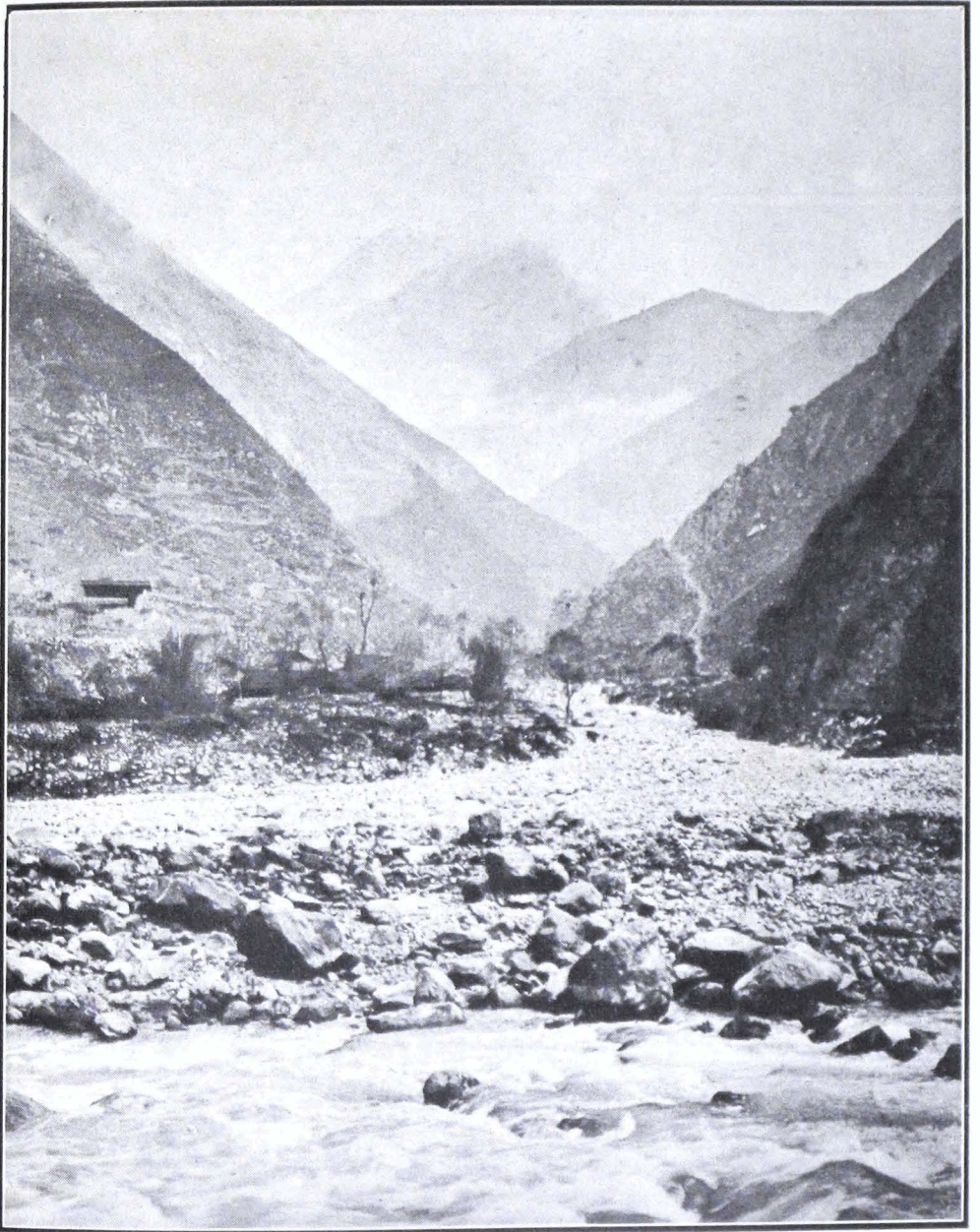
the vanquished are usually distinguished by deeds of the most ingenious and repulsive barbarity. Even the Gurkha of to-day is not gentle with a foe. But ingenious as he is in his methods of savage reprisal he is probably more than equalled by the Chinaman. Khatmandu has never forgotten the lesson that was learnt at that blood-stained time. Every five years a deputation proceeds from Nepaul through Lhasa to Peking, and there offers tribute at the foot of the Dragon throne.

Such at least is the story as culled from the lips of an ancient Gurkha official by Mr. Brian Hodgson, and retold by Sir Clements Markham in his "Tibet." As Sir Thomas Holdich aptly states: "There may be other ways of accounting for the defeat of the valiant Gurkha than those narrated by this ancient Gurkha warrior, but the fact remains as a marvellous record of Chinese persistency that Nepal was utterly subjugated by the Chinese at a distance of some 2,000 miles (stretching across a solid barrier of mountains) from their base. It is a useful commentary, first on the usual statements of Tibetan accessibility, and secondly on the usual criticisms applied to the Chinese soldier."

The Marches of Chinese Tibet are peopled by a number of independent and semi-independent tribes, whose origin and early history is still to a large extent veiled in obscurity, presenting problems of the greatest ethnological interest. They may be divided into two distinct groups—The independent Tibetan states to the west, and the tributary Mantze and Chia Rung tribes inhabiting the uplands on the eastern border.

The western states include the kingdoms of Dergé, Chantui and Sanai, and the territory inhabited by the Draya nomads. The states are virtually independent and even hostile towards China, and are directly controlled by the Dalai Lama and his Council. The people are indistinguishable from those inhabiting anterior Tibet generally.

In the north, along the upper waters of the Dre Chu or Yangtse, are numerous pastoral tribes, which in 1732 were organised by the Chinese Government into thirty-nine hundreds each under a Deba or chieftain. These tribes comprise the Khampa, but the name is generally applied by western Tibetans to all the people of Kham or anterior Tibet. The Khampa, the most dreaded warriors of the Tibetan army, are fine horsemen, tall and athletic but quarrelsome and untrustworthy. They usually belong to the Gélupa or orthodox sect of Lamaism, but in Dergé the Nyingpa, or red cap Lamas, are more numerous and influential. In the pastoral regions to the north polyandry prevails, while in the agricultural districts to the south of Jyekundo monogamy is the rule, and polygamy is met with among the richer classes. In Tibetan countries the distinction between lowlands and highlands, ploughland and pasture, is most marked, and it is a general rule that polygamy obtains in the valley while polyandry prevails in the uplands. In the valley farms the work is lighter and more suitable for women, but the rough life and hard fare of a shepherd on pastures 13,000 feet or more above sea level is too severe for the sex. The two systems, working side by side, seems to mutually compensate the evils of each, but it is a somewhat singular fact that the conduct of courtship and matrimony should be regulated by the barometrical pressure. Temporary marriages are, however, recognised throughout the tribes country, and are not considered immoral, in fact the matrimonial relations existing throughout all Eastern Tibet are little removed from promiscuity. Family names are unknown, and children are spoken of as of such and such a woman. The father's name is hardly ever mentioned. This country is almost a *terra incognita* to Europeans beyond the limits of the "Changlam," or Great North Road, which passes through it. This trade highway strikes to the north-west at Tachienlu and follows up a succession of valleys through Romei Chango, Dawo, and



A MOUNTAIN GLEN IN THE TRIBES COUNTRY.

Kanzé until it finally drops into the Dre Chu valley at Dergé, where the best saddlery, guns, and swords in all Tibet are made. From here it passes northward to Jyekundo, and then strikes almost due west across the Chang Tang highlands for three hundred miles till it reaches the great pilgrim route connecting the Kuku Nor with Lhasa. On account of the easy gradients, most of the brick tea and other articles of trade with China pass along this highway. The Changlam is essentially the trade route to Lhasa, just as the Junglam is the official or Mandarin road. Very few European explorers have penetrated this north-western portion of the Marches. Both Rockhill and Bower, after being turned away from Lhasa, were forced to return to China by this route. It was near Jyekundo that the ill-fated French traveller Dutreuil de Rhins was murdered in 1894, and of late years these valleys have received considerable attention from Captain Kozlov and other Russian explorers, who have proved that there is no great difficulty in reaching them from the Kuku Nor and Mongolia. With a firm *pied à terre* at Urga, Russia now practically controls Mongolia, and dominates the Kuku Nor region of northern Tibet. It is but a step southward down the long curving valleys of the Yangtse or Mékong to the rich and populous Tibetan centres of Poyul and Zayul, while beyond these lie the Brahmaputra basin, Assam, and the plains of India. The tireless activity of Russia in Mongolia and north-east Tibet, together with recent Chinese pressure upon the frontiers of Assam and Upper Burma has necessitated a complete revision of Indian frontier policy. The storm centre has, in fact, shifted from the north-west to the north-east. That the Indian Government has been fully aware of this fact for some time was shown by the change in status of Assam by decree at the last Durbar, a change which foreshadowed the early formation of a North-East Frontier Province on the lines of that province, which has been so ably administered for many years on the north-west border.

In 1911 we saw the Abor expedition with the Miri and Mishmi political missions extending our knowledge of the country beyond the Assam border. This last spring has witnessed the advance of exploring columns from Myitkyina in Upper Burma up the headwaters of the Irawadi almost to its source, and the creation of a new Deputy-Commissionership to administer the wild region to the north of Myitkyina and lying between that station and Assam. In this way the Hukong valley and the scattered Shan villages about the head streams of the Irawadi have been taken under British administration, and the whole region placed in charge of one of the ablest frontier officers that the government of Burma has in its service.

Before leaving this corner of Asia I should like to mention the great achievement of Captain Bailey of the Indian Army ; who, accompanied by Captain Morshead, set out some months ago from Sadiya in Assam to discover whether the Tsangpo of Tibet is in fact the Brahmaputra of Assam. After a most arduous journey through terribly involved Abor country, Captain Bailey established beyond all question the fact that the Tsangpo, the Dihang, and the Brahmaputra are one and the same stream. He also satisfied himself that the reports of the Indian pundit Kintup, and the information given to Colonel Waddell with regard to a series of great Falls are very much exaggerated. To quote Captain Bailey's own words :—"The river nearly the whole way from Gyala is a foaming rapid. At Kintup's Falls the rapid develops into a fall of about thirty feet; here rainbows were seen." Again, referring to the river lower down, he writes :—"We met a great many people who had seen this part of the river, all of whom agreed that there was nothing in the way of Falls on it, though at the confluence of the rivers at Gompo Né there are remarkable rapids and whirlpools." I quote these words in extenso because they refer to the solution of a problem which has engaged the minds of geographers for the past century. It

was a problem which I had hoped to solve myself in the course of my journey last year, but I was obliged to alter all my plans and route, and finally reached the headwaters of the Irawadi instead of the basin of the Brahmaputra as originally planned.

We will now consider the agglomeration of semi-independent and tributary tribes lying to the east of the Sino-Tibetan borderland, who are collectively spoken of by the Chinese as the Chia Rung States, the tribesmen being known as Mantzu, Sifan, or occasionally as Kou Sifan—adulterous Sifan, on account of their low standard of morality. It is among these tribes that I was privileged to make two journeys in the spring of last year, but before giving you an account of my travels, I will first describe a few of the points of interest connected with these peoples.

The Chia Rung States are eighteen in number, and cover the mountainous stretch of country from the line of the Min river westwards to the valley of the Tachin or Great Gold river. This territory seems to have puzzled geographers ; and, as a rule, the states are either not marked on the map or else their relative positions are incorrectly given. As a matter of fact all these states are independent, their rulers being thoroughgoing despots, who seldom, if ever, pay any attention to China's claims of suzerainty. They wage inter-tribal wars without either asking China's permission or invoking her aid. They are not—as is the case with feudal states—bound to render China military service, and as a rule there are no Chinese permanently settled in the territory. The origin of the Mantzu is veiled in obscurity, but from scraps of history I have been able to pick up from the people themselves, there seems little doubt that they are descended from emigrants from Ngari near Khamba Zong in Western Tibet, who came over either with Genghis Khan or his son Ogotai at the commencement of the thirteenth century to help the Chinese to subdue the warlike tribes of the upper Min river. As a reward for

these military services they were given the land they occupy to-day. Hereditary titles were conferred on the Chiefs or "T'ussu," who were left in control of these mountainous regions if only they would check the raids of the aborigines, and render tribute to the Chinese Government as an acknowledgment of China's sovereign right over the country. The Chinese character Mantzu means "One who cannot be overcome," but this has now been altered to the character signifying "barbarous, unruly," which is contemptuously used by the Chinese and is much resented by the tribesmen.

The Chia Rung are essentially agriculturists cultivating with skill crops of wheat, barley, buckwheat, maize and miscellaneous vegetables. Sheep, cattle, ponies and goats are kept by the more wealthy, the ponies being sold to Chinese traders, but the wool is woven into cloth for their own use. Like the western Tibetans, they live largely on milk, butter, and meat. They are skilled gunsmiths and swordsmiths, and in the state of Somo are manufactured most of the gunbarrels in use throughout Eastern Tibet. Among the Chinese they have a great reputation for building embankments, and other irrigation works, and all the wells on the Chengtu plain are sunk and kept in repair by Chia Rung tribesmen.

The Mantzu live in settlements of from fifty to a hundred families, invariably perched like an eagle's aerie, crowning some eminence on the steep mountain side. Each settlement is dominated by one or more tall, chimney-like towers, some sixty to eighty feet high, which resemble from a distance the smokestack of some Lancashire factory. These towers serve a double purpose—firstly as beacons in case of a sudden raid, when a fire is kindled on the top and friendly villagers rush to the aid of the inmates, and secondly as storehouses for valuables and grain. The cattle are driven into the lower storey and shut in by great heavy doors. In case of being hard-pressed, the inhabitants take their stand around the tower and finally retreat to the upper

storeys, from whence stones are flung on the enemy. They resemble in many respects the Peel towers of Great Britain. It is also extremely likely that these towers have some obscure connection with religious matters, and in this respect they may have some remote affinity with the pagodas of China and Burma.

The T'ussu or Chiefs always inter-marry within their own circle. The son of a chief always marries the daughter of another chief so that the hereditary rights may be passed on from one generation to another. The chiefs are absolute despots within their own boundaries, possessing the power of life and death over their subjects. Although theoretically the Chia Rung States are tributary to China and under the nominal jurisdiction of the Viceroy of Szechuen, practically they acknowledge no obedience save that of fear, and their position is to a certain extent analogous to that of the independent and semi-independent states in India. In spiritual matters they acknowledge the supremacy and direction of the Lama hierarchy at Lhasa. Lamaism is all-powerful in the Chia Rung States, and appears in all three forms—the Gélupa, the Nyingpa, and the Bonpa—the yellow, the red, and the black systems.

The Gélupa or yellow-capped sect, is the state religion of Tibet founded by the great reformer Tsongkapa in the fourteenth century. It owns as its head the pontiffs of Lhasa and Tashilunpo, usually known as the Dalai Lama and the Tashi Lama, and is first in importance and numbers throughout all Tibet. The inhabitants of the Marches are bound by the strongest ties of race instincts, education, and religion to Lhasa. It is their holy city, and to it all Lamas who wish to exert any influence at all must go for study, as all appointments to official posts in the Church are made by Lhasa.

The Nyingpa, or Red Lamas, are regarded as unorthodox, but except that their ritual is not so elaborate as that of the Gélupa, their temples and religious symbols

differ little from those of the Established Church. The priests are allowed to marry and are therefore objects of scorn to their orthodox brethren. The temples of red Lamaism are few and far between in the tribes country, but in the state of Dergé they are the most numerous.

Lastly we come to the mysterious Bonpa, or black sect of Lamaism, which exerts an enormous influence throughout the Marches, and whose phallic tendencies are largely accountable for the low state of morality in certain regions. The Bon creed is really a branch of Shamanism, and is the survival of the old nature worship of Tibet, which probably underlies most of the religious systems of the East. The greatest prominence is given to the procreative force in nature, the idols usually representing giants and demons with their female energies. This is most interesting in view of the Tibetan conception of the origin of the race. The Tibetans claim as their first parent a monkey, which crossed the Himalayas and there married a she-devil of the mountains. The young progeny of a apes ate some magical grain given to them by the Compassionate Spirit of the Mountains (now incarnate in the Dalai Lama), and wonderful were the results which happened. Their tails and hair grew shorter and shorter and finally disappeared. They began to speak—they were men! and noticing the change they clothed themselves with leaves. Thus they account for their chief traits of character and disposition—from their father's side they say they have derived their love of piety, whilst from their mother (as can only be expected) they have inherited their roughness, cruelty, ferocity and deceit.

The Bon religion without doubt survives from pre-Buddhist times, and is to be found in Lhasa itself in the form of the oracles, wizards, and the black-hatted devil-dancers who are attached to the principal state Lamasery of Dépung. In the ritual, however, the Bonpa deliberately defy the orthodox Lamas, and this strange and perverse feature must be due to persecution in post-Buddhistic times. Prayer

wheels and cylinders are wilfully turned from left to right, sacred objects and Chortens are passed with the left instead of the right side turned towards the image. The Bonpa refuse to repeat the mystic formula "Om mani padme hung," which is continually on the lips of every orthodox Lamaist throughout Asia, and have substituted a mantra of their own. Sacred books are read in the temples, which are the exact counterpart of the chief Buddhist Sutras with each direction wilfully reversed. The Bon temples differ entirely from those of the Gélupa and Nyingpa. They are usually strikingly picturesque, and are frequently built in places difficult of access. An atmosphere of secrecy and mystery thus surrounds them which is probably due to centuries of persecution at the hands of orthodox Lamaists, yet notwithstanding this, Bonism retains a firmer hold on the people of the Chia Rung States than any other religion. The principal symbol in use is the well-known swastika, fylfot, or flying cross, which is known as Yungdrung. A mystical bird—the Chiung or Garuda (resembling a Chinese phoenix) is also regarded with great favour as an emblem of fruitfulness. I was awarded the privilege of going through the Bon temple attached to the chief's palace at Tung Ling Shan, the capital of the state of Wassu, and here obtained indisputable proofs of the phallic tendencies of the worship. Aphrodisia is the one topic of all the representations in the temple at Tung Ling Shan. The most persistent prominence is given to obscene Vidam groups which are not only represented in the usual idol form, but also in frescoes which literally cover the walls.

The effects of this esoteric cult of Bonism on the lives and manners of the Chia Rung tribesmen are most marked. Wherever Bonism is most strongly intrenched, there the morality of the people is at the lowest ebb. It seems extremely likely that in mediæval times the Chia Rung States formed part of a confederation known as the Nü Kuo, or matriarchal kingdoms. The rulers appear to have been women, and

inheritance of power and property passed down in the female line. Relics of this system are still to be found. The state of Damba is still ruled by a woman, and females occasionally act as Chiefs of Somo. In Badi-Bawang the matriarchal system is in full force, and the present occupant of the throne is the descendant of a long line of queens going back for some thirty generations. It is in Badi-Bawang that Bonism is the recognised state religion, and the ancient Bon form of marriage is still in vogue.

The Mantzu women lead a strenuous life. They cultivate the fields, tend the flocks, take the farm produce to market, hew wood and carry water. The domestic duties of cooking, mending clothes, washing, and housekeeping generally devolve upon the men, yet the women are not unkindly treated, and are far from being downtrodden. They are usually short in stature (averaging about five feet), are sturdy and buxom with dark olive complexions. When young they are often good-looking, but once past the early twenties they age rapidly, and the old women verge on the hideous. The ordinary garb is a gown of grey homespun serge reaching to just below the knee and bound around the waist with a scarf. The legs and feet are usually bare. Their long black hair is commonly parted down the middle, and hangs down the back in a large plait. Bangles, ear-rings, and amulets, made of silver inlaid with turquoise, or coral, are invariably worn, while the more wealthy women decorate themselves lavishly with silver ornaments, and cover their heads with a piece of cloth held down by the plait of hair, which is wound round and decorated with silver and beads of coral and turquoise, the lower part of the cloth hanging free over the back of the neck and shoulders.

The men average above five feet seven inches in height. The face is usually oval with pointed chin and straight nose, sometimes almost aquiline. Their dress is the usual attire of Eastern Tibet. A pelisse of undyed "pulu" cloth of local make or else of sheepskin gathered round the



THE LAMASERY AT TSAKULAO.

waist by a girdle from which are suspended flint and steel, tobacco pouch, and dirk. Round the neck is usually a leather cord from which is hung over the chest a silver charm-box containing relics. The legs are swathed in felt putties or else in leather boots with cloth uppers extending to the knee. The headgear is usually either a blue cloth turban, or else a pudding basin shaped black felt hat.

Towards the end of March last year I found myself for the first time on the borderland of Chinese Tibet, and it may interest you to trace for a short time the course of my wandering in the frontier regions. After a long journey across the whole breadth of China, I had decided to come over to Kuanhsien and attend the official opening of the barrage which controls the irrigation for the rich Chengtu plain. We had formed a party of three, the other members being the British Consul-General at Chengtu, and Mr. W. N. Fergusson of the British and Foreign Bible Society, one of the greatest authorities on the Chia Rung States and a born traveller and observer. The irrigation works at Kuanhsien are among the most wonderful of Chinese engineering feats. A barrage is built across the river Min at the spot where it gushes forth from the mountains of the borderland, and a canal was cut a thousand years ago which sub-divides into thousands of channels and dykes, forming a network which efficiently irrigates the whole of the Chengtu plain with its four millions of people.

We were sitting in the Taoist temple at Kuanhsien one evening after a hard day's climbing. We had just heard the news from native sources that a rising was imminent among the Chia Rung States, and that a coalition of all the tribes from the Min to the Mékong had been formed, and a great upheaval against Chinese suzerainty was on the eve of breaking out. I at once decided to leave the following morning on a rapid tour through the feudal states and Wassu in order to ascertain whether this rumour was correct before proceeding on the main journey westward

to India. Mr. Fergusson very kindly provided me with letters of introduction to King So of Wassu and Colonel Kao, the Chinese Superintendent of the feudal states, and the following morning I was away at daybreak with one servant, a headman, and ten coolies.

Our immediate objective was the castle of Tung Ling Shan, the seat of the Chiefs of Wassu and the capital of that state, situated across the river Min two days' hard journey to the north. The road follows the banks of the Min the whole way, now along a rock cornice one thousand feet above the stream, now crossing a small affluent on an improvised wooden bridge.

The gorge of the Min as seen in the early spring is perfectly glorious. High on either side the gaunt bare cliffs rise almost sheer to a height of three thousand feet and then gradually recede to the snow-clad summits. In March the Min was a clear pure stream breaking over a succession of boulders in foaming cataracts, but upon our return three weeks later, the melting of the snows in the Tibetan hinterland had begun, and the waters were already turbid and muddy. A most striking feature is the number of logs which float down with the stream. Hundreds of square logs about fifteen feet long are marked and dropped into the river at Mao Chou, and then float down on the current as far as Kuanhsien and even Chiating, some two hundred miles away. The fall of the river is twenty feet to the mile. Bands of men come down and set the logs free from places where they pile up on the banks, but each village usually attends to the logs piling up on its shores. This practice is a very ancient one and the logs are never stolen.

I entered the state of Wassu by the undignified expedient of sliding down a rope, or rather I should say across a rope bridge. These single rope bridges are found throughout the Chia Rung States. They differ entirely from any bridges found in China proper, but are of similar designs

to those in constant use in Sikhim, Nepal, and Bhutan, and thus furnish additional evidence of the affinity of these peoples. A hawser made of three strands of bamboo and usually from eight inches to a foot thick is stretched across a stream from cliff to cliff, usually from a higher to a lower point. The ends of the hawser are stretched over a wooden frame on each bank and usually made fast to boulders. To cross the bridge one is supplied with a length of strong hempen rope hanging free from a circular runner of oak or some other tough wood. The runner clips the cable, and the rope is fastened under and around the legs and waist to form a cradle. When all is properly secured, one grips the runner with both hands, gives a slight spring or push-off with the feet, and then shoots away down the rope at increasing speed. The momentum obtained in the downward rush carries the passenger as far as the bottom of the sag in the cable, which is usually three-quarters of the way across, and the remainder of the distance has to be covered by laboriously hauling-up, hand over hand. Crossing these bridges is somewhat fearsome work to the novice, and for a heavy man the hauling-up is exceedingly laborious. The essentials are to keep a cool head and to see that one's hands are clear of the cable, otherwise they would be cut open by the terrific friction. The tribespeople, both male and female, hardly ever use ropes. They simply throw one arm over the runner and suspend from that. It is a common sight to see men with loads, and women with children on their backs cross these bridges. Heavy loads and animals are slung from the runners and hauled across by a rope.

The rivers of the tribal territory are not navigable in the ordinary sense of the word, but on certain stretches of the Tung river, and also on the Min, skin coracles are used, which vie with the rope bridges for sheer, crude sensation and excitement. I never was called upon to travel by coracle during the course of my wanderings, but saw them

in use on the Min. The construction is exceedingly simple. A willow framework in the form of a huge basket is covered with a coat of bullock hide, the seams of which are carefully sewn together and coated with pine pitch. The structure when complete is quite watertight and looks like a huge oyster shell some four feet in diameter and three feet deep. The problem on these waterways is to have a craft which can stand the strain of the fierce rapids and be steered with almost no sweep. It must also be light enough to be carried to the starting point. The coracle, weighing about 70 lbs., answers these purposes, but by no means inspires the novice with confidence as to its construction and mode of progress. Fergusson, who has used the coracles on many occasions, describes one river crossing as follows :—

“All hands huddle down in the bottom with their legs curled up in a most uncomfortable position, and it is fatal to move after the craft is shoved off. As for ourselves, we shot upstream in the backwater until we struck the current, when the coracle was sent swirling round and round in the vortex, and bobbing like a cork on the waves. One moment we were down in the trough with the feeling that we would surely be engulfed ; the next, we were riding the crest of the waves, but all the time being carried down stream at the rate of fifteen to twenty miles an hour. Just below the landing stage the river foamed over some boulders, and cut the shape of the letter S. To a stranger it looked as though we must surely be carried on to the boulders. But the ferryman, by means of his paddle, steered and propelled the coracle forward in a wonderful way and safely landed us.”

As a novelty productive of excitement not unmixed with danger these coracles and single rope bridges may, with confidence, be recommended to “World’s Fair” promoters and showmen generally.

But—to continue our journey. After reaching Wenchuan and sending a special messenger up to the castle with my card and letter of introduction, the Chief sent down

word that, although he was unwell and would not be able to look after me himself, he would be glad if I would stay a few days with him. The castle of Tung Ling Shan is some 2,000 feet above the river Min and occupies a perfect strategic position. The fastness itself is a settlement of some sixty families in the centre of which is the palace of the king—the whole being dominated by a tall watch tower. The houses are built of stone and present a well-cared for appearance, but the streets and alleys are indescribably dirty and evil-smelling. We were hospitably received by the Chief's private secretary, a Chinese, who also acts as tutor to King So's only son—a bright youth of fourteen, who is also the heir to the neighbouring Kingdom of Druckagi. Both King So and his son speak fluent Chinese, and so we were able to converse freely. The king himself was brought in to see me, being carried on the back of a serving man, and looking very much pulled down by fever and the effects of excessive opium smoking and drinking. He is a man of 52 years of age and is the twenty-eighth Chief of Wassu in a direct line of succession extending back over 800 years. He is a great sportsman, and as the mountains, forests, and ravines of his kingdom teem with wild animals (among which may be counted such rare specimens as the takin, serow, and goral) he has been occasionally visited by European sportsmen on shooting expeditions.

The state of Wassu is one of the wildest and most beautiful of the Chia Rung States, but is most sparsely peopled, and the total population would not exceed 20,000. The state is divided into twenty-eight "Chai" or districts, each under a headman, and they take it in turn to supply the personal servants at the castle, and also the men who till the king's private lands. The religion of the people is Bonism, but the presence of Chortens, mani mounds, and prayer flags indicate the influence of orthodox Lamaism. The chief denied the existence of an anti-Chinese league, but

was open in his contempt for the new republican authorities, describing the new officials as children, having—as he put it in the vernacular—“neither reason nor a knowledge of custom.” Under the Manchu régime, tribute was paid to Peking every twelve years, and to the Viceroy at Chengtu every five years, but since the revolution, these customs have been allowed to lapse. The opium question, however, proved to be the main grievance. Poppy cultivation has always been extensively carried on in the tribes country, and the Chinese have, of late years, made an effort to stop this without success. Since Wassu is the nearest of the Chia Rung states to Chengtu, the chief has been pestered with Chinese spies and emissaries seeking information with regard to opium. This is the more annoying inasmuch as the poppy has never been extensively grown in Wassu, the tribesmen not being sufficiently skilled in slitting the pods and extracting the opium.

We spent the remainder of the day in feasting and drinking and the chief placed the contents of his cellar at my disposal. It was amusing to see the various bottles of cheap liqueurs, which had either been left by previous travellers or else purchased in Chengtu, but as the labels betrayed names which seemed strangely uncouth, I deemed it wiser to confine myself to the usual native spirit, distilled from maize, and to the tea which is grown on the Kuanhsien foot-hills. After a comfortable night spent in the official guest-room, I expressed a wish to see the chief's private temple, and was taken round by the young prince, who explained the significance of the various phallic emblems with the greatest sang froid. The head Lama is a cousin of the chief. This relationship between Lama and rulers is quite common. In the Tsakulao Lamasery, the principal Lamas are all relatives of native chiefs, and the present king of Chala belongs to a family of Lamas.

After a further long chat with the chief, a meal was

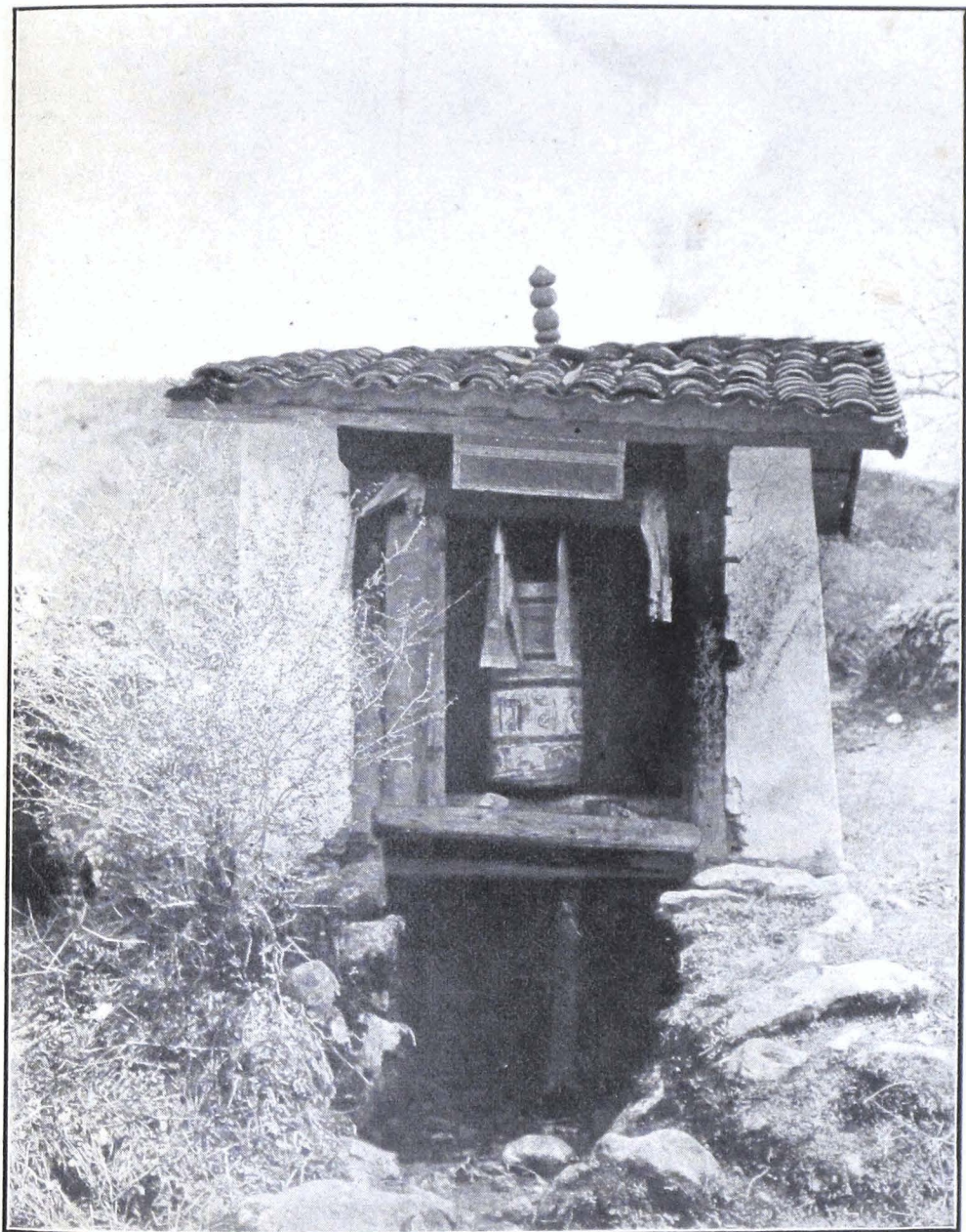
served at noon and he begged me to stay a few days longer, but it was necessary that I should continue my journey in order to reach Tachienlu in May, so we were obliged to leave. As the bearers set down my chair and all was ready for departure, the old chief was carried out to say good-bye. He asked me which way I intended to travel on my long journey to India. I said, "Through Tachienlu and Batang." He put his hand on my shoulder and said: "What is the use of running into danger unless it be in battle. Go by the main road, and do not be like my old friend Po Lu Ke." (This refers to Mr. J. W. Brooke, the daring explorer, who was murdered in the independent Lolo country in 1908). I told him that it was the custom of Englishmen to find out new roads. He replied, "I fear it will be with you as it was with Po Lu Ke, and I don't want to lose my friends." He gave my men a lot of food, and presented me with a large pod of musk and a leopard skin, and we retraced our steps down the hillside to the foaming Min. I hope I may see him again. Despite his many failings he is every inch a man.

About two months after the journey which has just been described we found ourselves in the wonderful frontier town of Tachienlu, the capital of the state of Chala, and the starting point of the great trade routes to Lhasa and ulterior Tibet. Constituting, as it does, the gate into a corner of Tibet which is by far the richest in cultivation, the best in climate, and the most productive in mineral wealth, the importance of Tachienlu cannot be overestimated. The town of Darchendo or Tachienlu lies at an elevation of 8,500 feet, and is built, as its name implies, at the confluence of the Dar and the Chen, at the western end of a narrow valley, so narrow that for miles together it has no floor but the path and the torrent, which—after fifteen miles of cataracts—plunges into the Tung at Wassu Kou. The town itself is hemmed in on all sides by steep treeless mountains, whose grassy slopes lead up to peaks clothed in eternal snow.

Formerly Tachienlu occupied a site about half a-mile above the present town, but about one hundred years ago it was totally destroyed by a landslip due to a moving glacier, and earthquake shocks are frequently felt.

Notwithstanding its great political and commercial importance, Tachienlu is a meanly built and filthy city. The houses are usually of one storey and are built of wood resting on foundations of shale rocks. Disastrous fires are of constant occurrence, when the whole town is gutted with the exception of the few fine old stone Tibetan "Gochuang," or Hongs. The population consists of about 700 Tibetan families and 400 Chinese families, and with its floating members may be reckoned at a total of 9,000 souls. Tachienlu may be said to be impregnated with a nomadic atmosphere. It is one of those wonderful frontier towns where one meets all the types and hears all the dialects of Central Asia. Yak caravans from the Horba states and even from Lhasa and the remote regions of Western Tibet swing in daily over the Jédo pass and the great north road bringing musk, wool, skins, deerhorns, gold dust, and medicines for Chinese use, and taking back brick tea and Chinese fancy articles. The annual trade through the town reaches the total of Tls. 2,800,000 (nearly £400,000), of which brick tea alone accounts for £120,000 in value, and amounts to the prodigious total of 11,400,000 pounds in weight. Inasmuch as tea is perhaps the most important item in the diet of the Tibetan, a few remarks concerning this enormous trade may not be out of place.

The tea, which is exported in such tremendous quantities from China to Tibet, consists almost entirely of the merest refuse, which is grown in the district of Yachou in Western Szechuen. I have seen it myself being taken into Yachou to be packed, and at first thought it was fuel. It looks like brushwood, and is, in fact, merely branches broken off the trees and dried in the sun without any pretence at picking. In Yachou it is taken to the Chinese factories and made up



A WATER PRAYER CYLINDER.

into bricks for the ignorant Tibetan—as the Chinese call him. It is no exaggeration to say that the tea of the Tibetan market is ten times worse than the worst tea in China. The leaves and twigs, already sun-dried, are steamed in a cloth suspended over a boiler. The mould consists of four stout boards, inside which is a neatly-woven mat basket, and the steamed and softened leaves and twigs are dropped into it. A little rice water is added to agglutinate the mass, which is then consolidated, layer after layer, by blows from a heavy iron-shod rammer. The mould is afterwards taken to pieces, the cake with its mat envelope is brought back to the fire, and when it is thoroughly dried, the ends are closed up, and the long narrow package is ready for transport to Tachienlu on the backs of porters.

The coolie's burden is arranged on a light wooden framework disposed along the whole of his back and rising in a curve over his shoulders and high above his head, the structure being supported by a couple of coir strings, through which his arms are passed. The great weights which can be carried in this manner are incredible. On one occasion I passed a man with as many as eighteen packages, each of eighteen catties in weight—a total of over 400 pounds on his back. The greatest burdens are carried not by the most muscular men but by those of the straightest conformation. Every few hundred yards or so a rest is taken, and as it would be impossible for the carrier to raise his burden if it were deposited on the ground, he carries a kind of short crutch, which is slipped beneath as a support. Travelling six or seven miles a day, and resting in wretched hovels of inns at night, these porters toil with their prodigious loads over two mountain passes, 7,000 feet above their starting place, along an execrable road where every step of the way must be picked, making the 120 miles to Tachienlu in 20 days or less, and receiving 250 to 300 Cash a day (approximately 5d.), only half the sum received by a good chair coolie.

Before leaving the question of the tea trade with Tibet, I would like to refer to the ingenious attempts which have been made to estimate the population by the amount of tea entering the country. Fergusson, who is an authority on the subject, has estimated the total quantity of tea annually consumed in Tibet to be roughly $28\frac{1}{2}$ million pounds. Allowing four pounds of tea per person per annum, he arrives at a population of 7,100,000 souls. This is obviously excessive. I would incline to the opinion that an allowance of six pounds per head should be made, although I am aware that the Tibetans use a family pot and stew the tea until every ounce of tannin is extracted. This is a very poor method of computing the population of a country, but as there are no statistics available, and the estimates of experts vary from one and a half millions to eight millions, one is reduced to crude methods. The only general census we have to guide us was one taken by the Chinese in 1737 for the two provinces of U and Tsang only, which gave a total of 316,000 Lamas and 636,000 laity. Making a liberal allowance of over 500,000 people for the province of Kham this only gives one and a half millions as the total population of the country. There seems to be no doubt whatever that the population is dwindling. The cause of this decrease is chiefly the enormous tax of celibate Lamas, which the present priestly government extracts from the people—about one out of every two males; and, to a lesser degree, the practice of polyandry and promiscuity, decimating epidemics of smallpox, and excessive infantile mortality. The high death-rate among the infants is largely due to the rough, exposed life led by the Tibetans, though excessive altitudes have their effect, which has been proved by the distressing experience of the Moravian missionaries in Ladak, where the cemetery is filled with infant graves, few children having survived their second year.

Tachienlu is a great religious centre, both the yellow and red sects of Lamaism being represented. In and near

the town are as many as eight monasteries, while the symbols of the Faith are everywhere apparent in the form of prayerwheels, prayer-flags flying from the roofs and the summits of the hills, mani stones and cairns. Everywhere is kept revolving the mystic spell of "Om mani padme hung." According to the Lamaist creed the Dalai Lama at Lhasa is the reincarnation of the most powerful of the early kings of Tibet—the great Srongtsan Gampo, who in his turn was an earthly incarnation of that compassionate spirit of the mountains, who had given the early Tibetans the magical food which transformed them from monkeys into men. This compassionate spirit is identified with the most popular of the Bodhisattvas—namely Avalokita, the "Lord of Mercy," who relinquished his prospect of becoming a Buddha and passing into the Nirvana of extinction, in order to remain in heaven and be available to assist all men on earth who may call upon him to deliver them from earthly danger, to help them to reach paradise, and escape hell. All of these three great objects are secured by the mere utterance of the spell of this Lord of Mercy, namely "Om mani padme hung," which means "Hail! oh thou Jewel in the Lotus." It is not even necessary to utter this spell to secure its efficacy. The mere looking at it in its written form is of equal benefit. Hence the spell is everywhere made to revolve before the eyes. It is twirled in myriads of prayer-wheels, incised on stones in cairns or mani mounds, carved on buildings, as well as uttered by every lip throughout Tibet, Mongolia, Ladak, and the Himalayan Buddhist states down to Bhutan, and from Baikal to Western China.

Strictly speaking only the abbot of a monastery has the right to be called a Lama, which means "Superior One." All the other inmates of monasteries are called Trapa or students. The monastic life is open to all men or women who are pure Tibetans or Mongols, with the exception of butchers, who are regarded as outcasts.

Meat is a staple diet with the monks of Tibet excepting the few who have taken the higher vows. The Lamas evade the Buddhist prohibition to take life for this purpose by employing butchers to do it for them, whilst they assign to the butchers for doing this the position of outcasts. When no butchers are available it is usual for the Lamaist to drive the cattle over a precipice or make the beast strangle himself. Roughly speaking, one half the population of Tibet are Lamas. In the villages and towns most families contribute one member to the fraternity, and this is often exceeded by two or three. Most orphans and nearly all illegitimate offspring are sent to the Lamasery, while superfluous girls (due to polyandry) enter the nunneries. Under these circumstances one can realise the force of the Tibetan proverb: "Without a Lama in front, one cannot approach God."

In Tibet proper the Lamaseries control the wholesale commerce of the country, and the enormous tea trade with China is also in priestly hands, although in buying an article from a Chinese merchant the Lama has to deal with very different mettle to what he would encounter in a bargain with one of his own unsophisticated countrymen. I would shrewdly suspect that the honours in the tea trade rest with the Chinese.

During my stay in Tachienlu I called on the king of Chala at his castle of Sê To, and obtained an interesting insight into New China's methods of dealing with subject chiefs. The Ming Cheng T'u Ssu, or "Clear bright Ruler" as he is known in the vernacular, is a pleasant-mannered gentleman of forty-five years of age, and is the twenty-fifth of his line to sit upon the throne of Chala. He does not seem to possess the ability, and certainly has not the regal bearing which characterised King So of Wassu. I am told that the principal hobbies of the Chala chief are mending clocks and extracting teeth. His prowess with the forceps is well known throughout his kingdom. He

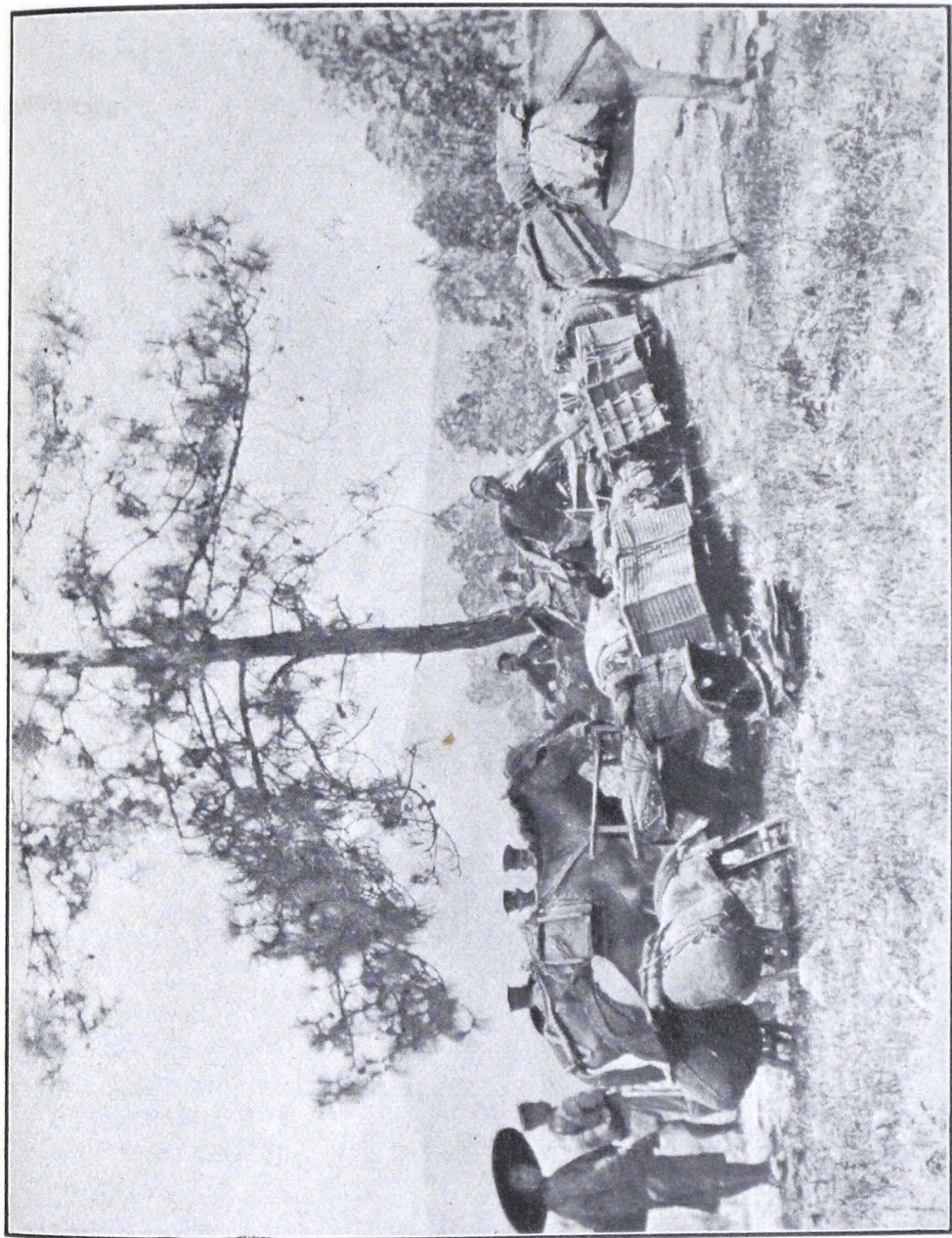
received me very kindly and offered us tsamba and buttered tea. The tea is really quite a warming and refreshing beverage if one entirely rejects the idea of tea from one's mind, and imagines that one is drinking soup. The tea was offered in a silver-lined bowl, and a plate of tsamba or parched barley meal was placed before us. The correct procedure is to drink the tea until there is just a little left at the bottom of the bowl, then add a lump of butter and several spoonful of tsamba, and work the whole into a paste with four fingers of the right hand, keeping the thumb clear; then break a piece off, roll it into a ball in the palm of the hand, and eat it, finally washing all down with a draught of tea. Tsamba is quite good as a rule, it is the sourness of the yak butter, which spoils the flavour of everything it touches.

The Chief had a horse brought round and we rode out together to his summer palace at Yü Lin Kung, twelve miles to the south of Tachienlu, where we spent the day inspecting his flocks, bathing in a hot natural sulphur spring, and discussing the past, present and future of Chinese Tibet. The Chief has been shamefully treated by the Chinese officials. Much of his temporal power had been appropriated by the Chinese during H.E. Chao Erh-Feng's régime, but now all the state revenues have been taken over, his brother has been executed on a trumped-up charge of treason, and even some of his private lands and cattle have been confiscated. As a sop to his injured feelings, the Chinese Governor of the Marches has presented him with medals, uniform, a sword, and a pension of 200 Taels a month. Although most of the other Chiefs in the Marches have been placed on the pension list, this is the only case where their personal property has not been respected, and it is the more unjust inasmuch as the help and co-operation of the Chala T'ussu have been essential to the Chinese advance. Since I returned to England I have received news that the king

disappeared the very night last August on which the Chinese Governor of the Marches entered Tachienlu. His whereabouts are unknown, but he is believed to have fled westward to join the revolted tribes.

If the true history of this first Chinese republican expedition is ever published, it will provide an amazing record of inefficiency and incompetence. Although the men are better armed and equipped than the frontier guards of the last expedition, as a fighting force they cannot be compared with the old troops, whose discipline was excellent, and who are still feared throughout all Tibet. Although glowing accounts have been written of Chinese successes in the field, there is no doubt whatever that, had there been the merest semblance of cohesion among the revolted Tibetans, the expeditionary force would have been driven out of the country beyond Tachienlu. The fighting has never been other than guerilla warfare. There is not the slightest doubt that a division of northern troops could have crushed the rebellion a year ago. Should, however, the present peace conference prove abortive, it is doubtful whether even the whole Chinese army could hold the borderland in face of the open hostility of Lhasa.

The future lies in the hands of the peace delegates now sitting in conference at Simla, upon whom the task has devolved of demarcating for all time the political frontier between China and Tibet. We can only hope—and after all the consideration and kindness I have received at the hands of the Tibetans I sincerely do hope—that the results of their deliberations will be to the benefit and the amelioration of the conditions of life of the tribesmen of Chinese Tibet.



THE AUTHOR'S CARAVAN.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BHAMO-TENGYUEH RAILWAY.

(Paper read before the Manchester Chamber of Commerce,
December 17th, 1913).

The bold and fascinating project of linking up the two most populous empires in Asia by a system of improved communications is one which has attracted the earnest attention of pioneers and statesmen ever since the expanding frontiers of India first found themselves coterminous with those of the Chinese Empire. The vast Himalayan mountain system to the north, and the almost impenetrable nature of the tribal country beyond the Assam border to the north-east have, however, been too great natural obstacles to be overcome, and it was soon realised that a line of least resistance must be found to the south of that involved mountain nexus, which extends across Asia in a series of mighty ranges to the north of the 28th parallel of latitude; and even in the early years of the 17th century, attention was already being directed to the possibilities of a trade route through Burma.

The intrepid agents of the East India Company first entered into direct relations with the Court of Ava—as Burma was then called—in 1695, when a commercial mission was despatched to the capital to seek trading concessions. This was followed by a further mission under Captain Symes in 1794; and in 1826, as a result of the first Burma war, the provinces of Arakan and Tenasserim were ceded to the company, and the British flag was first planted in Lower Burma.

It was soon ascertained that a considerable trans-frontier trade with China was being carried on through the wild and

independent Shan States, and to Captain Sprye is due the credit of being the originator of the scheme to attract the trade of the land-locked provinces of western China to the ports of Lower Burma. In 1831 he strongly advocated the opening of a trade route through the southern Shan States of Kengtung and Kenghung, but his proposals were not approved of by the Government of India, and the question was dropped for some years.

In 1867 it was discovered that the upper Irawaddy was navigable for steamers as far as Bhamo, not more than 42 miles from the Chinese frontier along the pack road to Tengyueh, a town which was then in the hands of the Mohammedan rebels. The mission was well received, and the Panthay Sultan acknowledged the suzerainty of Great Britain, and even sent his adopted son Hassan over to England to seek recognition for his Government, together with pieces of rock hewn from the five corners of the Tali mountain, as the most formal expression of his desire to become feudatory to the British Crown. Five years later, however, the Panthay rebellion collapsed. The sultan committed suicide, and the Chinese stamped out the last embers of insurrection by a series of wholesale massacres and general devastation from which the province of Yunnan has scarcely yet recovered.

The most interesting and eventful mission of these early years, however, was that of Colonel Brown to Bhamo, during the winter season of 1874-5. Arrangements had been made between the Government of India and the Foreign Office, whereby Mr. Raymond Margary, one of the most promising members of the China Consular service, was seconded in order to cross China from Shanghai and meet the mission on the Burma frontier.

Mr. Margary safely accomplished the arduous journey, but upon his again crossing the border into China, he was treacherously murdered at Manwyne, and although ample reparation was demanded and obtained by the Chefoo

Convention of 1875, no further attempt was made officially to open communication between the two countries. The adverse reports of Mr. Margary and Mr. Colborne Baber, who accompanied the Grosvenor Mission two years later, for long dispelled all ideas of railway connections between Bhamo and the trade centre of Talifu; and as such great prominence has been given to Mr. Baber's remarks on the subject, I will quote a few of the passages.

Referring to the main pack road between Talifu and Tengyueh he writes: "if British trade ever adopts this track we shall be delighted and astounded in about equal proportions." Again he remarks: "By piercing half a dozen Mont Cenis tunnels and erecting a few Menai bridges the road from Burma to Yunnanfu could doubtless be much improved." It must be remembered, however, that Mr. Baber was not an engineer, and furthermore that the scope of engineering was much narrower in 1875 than it is to-day, and that he never strayed from the main road, which certainly does answer to his description of it. It should be added that a practical route, to which I will presently refer, was surveyed by Mr. Lilley in the early summer of 1907.

In 1881 Mr. A. R. Colquhoun and Mr. Holt S. Hallett brought forward a scheme for connecting Moulmein at the mouth of the Salwin with Ssu Mao, the trade mart in southern Yunnan, by way of Raheng in Siam, and thence up the Menam Valley, and through the Shan States of Kengtung and Kenghung into Yunnan. The basis of the whole scheme was the supposed axiom that any railway passing from west to east north of latitude $17^{\circ} 50'$ is impracticable. Now, in 1881 British occupation did not extend beyond the river Irawaddy, and the line connecting Rangoon with Prome was the only railway completed in Burma, so that the arguments which could be adduced in favour of the line would carry greater weight then than at the present day.

Notwithstanding this there were enormous disadvantages to the proposed line. A distance of over 600 miles had to

be constructed through Siam and the southern Shan States before the Chinese frontier was crossed, and it was felt that the scheme would do more to develop Siam than our own possessions. In addition to this, great difficulties would have been encountered to the north of Ssu Mao, and over 300 miles of extremely mountainous country separated that place from Talifu, which must be the objective of any railway from Burma into western China; so that, although so long as our rule extended merely over Lower Burma this route seemed to form the only outlet to the markets of western China, the scheme was never taken up with enthusiasm.

The annexation of Upper Burma in 1885 and the establishment of British Rule in the Shan States brought the frontier of the Indian Empire coterminous with that of the province of Yunnan for a distance of some 900 miles, and interest in the China railway was once again aroused. By 1889 the extension of the Burma railway system to Mandalay was completed, and in the early spring of that year the Indian Government appointed a Commission to investigate conditions in the northern Shan States with special reference to trade routes and frontier matters. The Commission was fortunate in securing the services, as Commercial Attaché, of the late Mr. William Sheriff, a leading merchant in Rangoon, who had been trained in the office of Messrs. Stewart, Thomson & Co., of this city, and who brought the full weight of his experience and enthusiasm to bear on the question of railway extension. Mr. Sheriff found that a considerable amount of Chinese trade had always filtered across the Salwin and thence down through the state of Theinnee to Mandalay: in fact that for centuries this had been one of the main lines of communication between Burma and China. He also ascertained that since the middle of the last century, tribal warfare had raged unintermittently, so that intercourse had been diverted to the northern Tengyueh-Bhamo road.

Mr. Sheriff at once began to agitate both in Burma and in Manchester for an extension of the railway system from Mandalay to Kunlong on the Salwin with the object of eventually extending the line into China. His labours met with success. Construction of the line was begun in December, 1895, the great engineering difficulties of the rise from the Irawaddy plain and the bridging of the Gokteik gorge were overcome, and in March 1903, the line was open to traffic as far as Lashio, the administrative headquarters of the northern Shan States, 177 miles from Mandalay.

Lashio is still the terminus, but the 88 miles which separate it from the Yunnan frontier at Kunlong have been carefully surveyed, and the extension of the track could be at once put in hand if the construction of a line through Yunnan were undertaken. As Lord Curzon pointed out in a speech at Rangoon in 1901 "there is no valid reason why we should carry on our present railway at the extra cost of considerably over half a million sterling to the Kunlong Ferry, across which the entire Sino-Burmese trade is successfully transported in two dug-outs and amounts to less than 100 tons a year."

It will be noticed that so far very little mention has been made of the proposed line from Bhamo to Tengyueh. The conclusions of Colborne Baber and others as to the formidable nature of the obstacles to be overcome between Tengyuen and Talifu had been accepted by engineers as effectually placing the route beyond the pale of practical politics, and it was not until the survey of the Bhamo-Tengyueh section in 1904, and the finding of a feasible route between Tengyueh and Tali in 1907, that the fact impressed itself on all observers that there is, after all, no insuperable obstacle to the construction of a meter gauge railway from Bhamo to Talifu. Before entering into details, however, I think it would be as well to say a few words with regard to the alternative scheme of a line connecting

Kunlong Ferry on the Salwin with Tali and Yunnanfu, and thence to the Yangtze at Suifu.

In 1898 the Yunnan company sent out a strong expedition in the charge of Major (now Col.) Davies to reconnoitre for a railway line to connect Kunlong Ferry on the Burma frontier with some point on the Yangtze to which boats could ascend. The results of two years' careful work are described by Col. Davies as follows :—

(1) A reconnaissance was made for a railway starting from Kunlong and reaching the Yangtze either at Suifu or at Nachih sien.

(2) The total distance from Kunlong to the Yangtze is 1,000 miles. The greater part of the line would traverse exceedingly difficult country, necessitating in places a grade as steep as one in twenty-five and possibly a few short lengths of rack. The total cost of a meter gauge line would be perhaps £15,000,000 to £20,000,000 and the time required for construction would be at least ten years.

(3) Though there are great possibilities of future trade, the province of Yunnan is, owing to bad communication, at present so little developed that the railway cannot be made as an immediately paying commercial speculation.

Taking everything into consideration Major Davies came to the following conclusions :—

(1) The construction of the whole line from Kunlong to the Yangtze is too vast a project to be undertaken at once.

(2) But if we are content to do nothing in the way of a railway extension into Yunnan, the French will in the future be in possession of the greater part of the line which will some day connect India with eastern China, and will also be in a position to take from us the trade of western Yunnan.

(3) To counteract this the Burma railway should be extended from Lashio to Kunlong, and the Yunnan railway

constructed from Kunlong to Yünchow, with a view to the gradual extension eastwards in the future.

(4) And to this last conclusion, arrived at by perhaps the greatest living authority on railway matters in Yunnan, I would draw your earnest attention. Major Davies writes :—“ If the proposed railway from Bhamo to Tengyueh can be extended eastward to Hsiakuan, it must prove a formidable rival scheme to the Kunlong route. But if Tengyueh is to be the terminus, it is likely to be ineffective in retaining the trade of even western Yunnan.”

Now, in the early summer of 1907, Mr. Lilley, one of the engineers sent by the Government of India, did succeed in finding a practicable route between Tengyueh and Hsiakuan, and although his report has been jealously retained among the archives of the India office, and is regarded as strictly confidential, the main conclusions have become known. At all events we know sufficient to prove that the construction of a metre guage line from Bhamo to Talifu is no longer “ a figment of the brain of an unpractical theorist ” (as Mr. Colquhoun once called it) but is a matter of practical possibility.

We will now consider the amount of foreign trade which passes along the trade route from Burma to Talifu by way of Tengyueh, and the conditions under which this trade is carried on. The mart of Tengyueh was opened to foreign trade by the Treaty with Great Britain of 1897, and a custom house was established in 1902. The place was selected because it was the seat of a Chinese Taotai and the nearest official Chinese city to the frontier. It is beautifully situated in a fertile valley at an elevation of 5,000 ft. and is at a distance of 22 miles from the Burma frontier and 120 miles from Bhamo, the total distance being covered by mules in eight daily stages. Eastward, a terrible road crosses the gorges of the Shweli, Salwin, and Mèkong on chain suspension bridges, and reaches Talifu in twelve hard days' march, the distance being only 160 miles.

It will be remembered that in this corner of Asia the great rivers flow in deep troughs lying almost due north and south, and a traveller proceeding to or from Burma crosses one divide after another with sometimes a steady rise of six to eight thousand feet in a day's march. For instance, the bed of the Salwin lies at the abnormally low level of 2,200 ft., while the Salwin-Shweli watershed is crossed on the same day by a pass 8,000 ft. in elevation. It is over these terrible obstacles that British goods are transported on pack mules from the Burma frontier to Hsiakuan, the great commercial centre of western Yunnan, the time occupied in transit being at the least three weeks and usually one month, and the cost averaging Tls. 8 per load of 160 pounds.

The traffic is practically confined to the dry season, and the months of January, February and March when freights are comparatively low. During the summer months when the monsoon is raging, the road between Bhamo and Tengyueh is practically closed, as both mules and muleteers are attacked by a virulent form of malaria, and the mortality among the animals is very heavy. In August last I was obliged to pay \$18 per load for transporting my heavy gear to Bhamo; while on the wild mountain track to Myitkyina, which I followed myself, I was compelled to rely on porters, and for ten days was never dry day or night, the streams being swollen waist deep, and the track under water almost the whole way. The average annual freight between Bhamo and Tengyueh has been computed at \$8 per load of 160 lbs. A mule tax of fifty tael cents per head on import animals is levied by the Customs authorities, and Tls. 10,000 of this collection is appropriated annually for the reconstruction and repair of the trade route. The number of mules registered at the Custom House during 1912 was 72,561.

For the first ten years after the opening of Tengyueh to foreign trade, the figures showed no elasticity whatever,

the total trade averaging roughly $1\frac{1}{4}$ million taels per annum, of which Tls. 1,000,000 consisted of imports, and the balance exports. Since the revolution, however, there has been an enormous increase, especially in the import of fancy articles, and the trade of the mart in 1912 reached the total of Tls. $2\frac{1}{2}$ millions, and it is confidently expected that the figures for 1913 will show a further considerable advance. The imports were valued at Tls. 1,800,000, and consisted mainly of Bombay yarn to the proportion of 61 per cent. of the total, the balance being made up of Manchester piece goods and sundry articles.

In past years the trade in Lancashire cotton goods has been mainly confined to a few well-known chops of grey shirtings and T. cloths. But since the revolution there has been a much greater demand in the cities of western Yunnan for fancy woven goods and the numerous cheap and showy articles which are grouped under the heading of foreign sundries. The value of the trade at present is very small, it is true, but there is no doubt whatever that with improved communications the province could be developed and markets extended. I was astonished at the variety of foreign articles displayed in the shops of Hsiakuan and was told on all sides that the development in the demand for foreign goods since the revolution has been most marked, the young student party apparently signaling their political emancipation by resorting to showy garments made from dyed and fancy goods.

The duty on goods entering China by the Burma route is lower than anywhere else in the eighteen provinces. By a strange anomaly, the tariff in force at Tengyuen is that framed in 1858, and in accordance with the Burma Convention of 1894 imports pay only $\frac{7}{10}$ ths and exports $\frac{8}{10}$ ths of the scheduled rates. Now the tariff rates, although originally fixed on a 5 per cent basis do not represent now-a-days much more than 3 per cent *ad valorem*, and as this light duty is still further reduced by $\frac{3}{10}$ ths and $\frac{4}{10}$ ths, we may take

the tariff at roughly $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent *ad valorem*. Goods destined for Yunnan pay the full Burma duty upon entering Rangoon, but are provided with a certificate at Bhamo, which is endorsed and sealed by the Customs Commissioner at Tengyueh upon payment of the China import duty, and is returned by the consignee to his agent in Bhamo, who subsequently obtains a refund of $\frac{2}{3}$ ths of the Burma import duty originally paid at Rangoon. This light import contrasts very favourably with the exorbitant transit dues levied by the French Government on all foreign goods in transit through Tonking. In this case goods destined for China pay one-fifth of the full duty as transit dues, but the duties are so high that in many instances—as for example cotton yarn—the transit dues amount to more than twice the total China import duty.

These heavy dues together with the high freight rates charged on the French line, have brought about the anomalous state of affairs—that Bombay yarn can be imported into Talifu by way of Tengyueh, and a month's arduous journey on pack mules, and sold at \$4 per load less (roughly 5 per cent) than the price at Yunnanfu, the terminus of the French Railway from Haiphong. And when the Yunnan Railway is held up by land slides, which happens almost every rainy season, and the market price consequently rises, yarn imported from Bhamo is sent across to the capital and there sold in successful competition with the railway borne yarn.

The actual survey of the Bhamo-Tengyueh line was made in 1904 by a party of engineers lent by the Indian Public Works Department with Mr. A. R. Lilley as Engineer-in-Chief, and the results of their labours are embodied in the report to the Government of India dated July 14, 1905, from which we learn that the proposed alignment of the railway is by way of the existing trade route down the left bank of the Taping river. Tengyueh, at an elevation of 5,000 ft. stands on one of the upper

reaches of the Taping drainage, Bhamo on the left bank of the Irawaddy and three miles below the junction of the Taping river, is only 370 ft. above sea level. A fall of 5,000 ft. has therefore to be negotiated. There is, however, no intervening ridge to be crossed, and the descent is gradual, the Taping valley falling in a series of gently descending valleys. Two inclines of one in forty amounting to twenty-two miles in length are necessary, but no steeper gradient is anywhere required. The length of the line will be 42 miles in British territory and 82 miles in China. The gauge recommended is two feet six inches.

The alignment along the whole length of 124 miles may be abstracted as follows :—

Ten miles of one in forty through difficult gorge.

Twelve miles of one in forty through easy country.

Twenty miles of line in narrow difficult gorge.

Eighty-two miles of line in easy plain and valley.

It will be seen that there are very few engineering difficulties to be encountered and the total cost of the line, including rolling stock, is estimated at not more than Rs. 11,442,100 (£762,807).

Now let us consider the prospects of the railway, first as a purely local line, and secondly as a link in the chain of a through communication between Burma and the main centres of Yunnan.

The late Mr. Litton, once British Consul at Tengyueh, estimated that within Chinese territory within a day's journey of the line was a population of 300,000 souls. Of these, 200,000 reside in the main valleys through which the railway proceeds, at a distance of two or three miles from the line. The people are more prosperous and their conditions of life are better than those of the inhabitants of the more prosperous parts of Burma, so that there is little doubt that they will as freely resort to the railway as the natives of Lower Burma.

In Lower Burma in similar circumstances, a population of 225,000 gave 880,000 passengers. In the present case, the population is more compactly situated and the railway will be brought to the very doors of the great majority. Applying the co-efficient deduced above, the number of passengers would be 1,170,000. Taking twenty miles, as the average length of journey, and a mileage rate of six pies per mile, a sum of $7\frac{1}{4}$ lakhs is arrived at. This represents the passenger receipts from residents near the railway in Chinese territory. From twenty to thirty miles east and north of Tengyueh perhaps half a million of people reside in the Yungcheng, Shweli, Kutung, and Kuyung valleys, and it may confidently be reckoned that they will furnish a a lakh of rupees annually to passenger receipts. There remain forty-eight miles in Bhamo and the Taping valley to be considered.

This is a sparsely populated tract, but there will certainly be a regular but small coaching traffic in the plain country near Bhamo, and receipts from these forty-eight miles may moderately be taken as three-quarters of a lakh. The gross passenger receipts for the whole line may therefore be taken at nine lakhs of rupees.

Turning now to the probable goods receipts, it was at first suggested that existing mule rates should be halved. Reckoning an average rate of freight from Bhamo to Tengyueh at Rs. 8, and that a mule carries two maunds, this would have worked out at slightly more than three pies per maund per mile, which, as over 60 per cent of the imports consist of cotton yarn, would have been enormous. A flat rate of one pie per maund per mile has therefore been taken, from which we obtain gross receipts of some Rs. 70,000 on the foreign trade.

The total local trade, including the heavy transport of rice from the rich Kanai plain to the less prosperous valleys lying to the east and west of it, and the local trade in produce which would be stimulated on the Burma side of the

frontier, may be taken as yielding $1\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs of rupees, so that the total receipts of the line based on a conservative estimated would be twelve lakhs.

Now the railway is estimated to cost Rs. 11,442,100 on which the interest charges at 3 per cent would amount to Rs. 343,000. The cost of maintenance and working has been taken at Rs. 100 per week per mile and amounts to Rs. 644,800 or 54 per cent of the gross earnings annually. To meet charges of interest and working, a sum of about two lakhs would therefore be available, and a dividend of 2 per cent could be paid from the very commencement of the line.

Writing in 1905 Mr. Lilley stated that the traffic prospects of the Bhamo-Tengyueh Railway are but slightly influenced by any of the large and important issues which affect the general question of the Burma-Yunnan railway.

“On its own merits as a local line dealing with local traffic this project commends itself. It is as a short local line capable of commanding considerable trade with a well-to-do industrious population, and independent of such foreign trade as at present exists that this project is more particularly advocated.”

These lines were written at a time when it was considered impossible for the railway to be extended eastward beyond Tengyueh, and that it must of necessity be merely a local line. The situation is now completely changed by the discovery by the 1907 survey party of a practicable route between Tengyueh and Talifu. Although their report is retained in the railway department of the India office as a confidential document, the following figures have been published by a well-known authority, and may be confidently accepted as an accurate estimate of the character and cost of a line connecting Tengyueh and Talifu. Taking the two schemes, we find that the total distance from Bhamo to Talifu would be 386 miles, the ruling gradient would be one in 25 and the total cost not more than £4,500,000 sterling.

We have seen that the first section of the line would be on a paying basis from the beginning, but the commercial prospects of the Tengyueh-Tali section are not so bright, and we must look carefully into the political situation to obtain solid reasons for its construction.

It must be remembered that there are two distinct spheres of influence in Yunnan. The British sphere lying to the west of the province along the Burma frontier with the city of Talifu as its centre, and the French sphere to the south and east, where the borders of Yunnan march for hundreds of miles with those of French Indo-China. The provincial capital of Yunnanfu may be considered the focus of French influence in eastern Yunnan.

For years the French Government have had designs for linking up western China with their colony of Tonking. Thanks to the untiring energy of M. Paul Doumer, an agreement was signed by the Chinese authorities in 1907 granting the concession for a railway from the frontier at Laokai to Yunnanfu, which would bring the latter place into direct communication with the seaboard at Haiphong.

The engineering difficulties encountered were immense, yellow fever carried off thousands of coolies, and upon the completion of the line in 1910 the cost was found to be almost twice the amount of the original estimate; and although the railway is a great feat of engineering, passing as it does over country, the difficulties of which are probably paralleled in very few other parts of the world, yet the expenses of upkeep are enormous on that account.

In 1911 the goods traffic between Mengtze and Yunnanfu was held up for no less than six months owing to an exceptionally bad landslide, which entailed the re-aligning of the track for a considerable distance, and every summer the company declines to guarantee delivery of goods on account of the frequent breaks in the line. This uncertainty, together with the iniquitous system of high freights and

exorbitant transit dues, has prevented the line from being a real success, and the Chinese authorities who have always resented this strip of railway, which is practically French soil, penetrating into Yunnan, are anxious to neutralize its effect by an alternative railway through Kuangsi and down the West River Valley to the coast at Canton.

Surveys were completed by the Deputy sent down by the Board of Communications in 1910 and a comparatively easy route was found starting from Paiseting, the limit of navigation on the West River, and proceeding through Hsingyihsien in Kueichow on to Yunnanfu. This will connect with the line shortly to be constructed by Messrs. Paulings from Shasi, in Hupeh, running through Changteh and Kueiyang to Hsingyihsien. Great efforts are being made by the French and Belgian syndicates to secure the concession of the West River line but it is possible that the right to construct will be acquired by an American group, inasmuch as the railway adviser to the Yunnan provincial Government is an American, and the Chinese somewhat erroneously consider the United States to be the only nation which has not a political axe to grind.

Although the French railway has so far not been a commercial success and the trade of Tengyueh has held its own in Western Yunnan, French influence in Yunnanfu has been active of late in agitating for extensions of the system, and the original railway agreement practically gives France the refusal of the construction of branch lines when her railway has reached Yunnanfu. There are only two lines which would be of sufficient importance to warrant careful consideration; the one leading to the Yangtsze, which is too grandiose a scheme for consideration under present circumstances: or a branch westward to Talifu, which would mean the acquisition of a position of paramount importance throughout Yunnan and almost up to the British frontier. It is to prevent this further encroachment on the British sphere in Western Yunnan and the consequent loss of

prestige and influence that the railway should be constructed from a political point of view.

Railways in the east are outward visible signs of power and influence, and the moral effect of the line on the frontier tribes would be most salutary. The past three years have witnessed a very unsettled state of affairs along the border to the north of Tengyueh, and considerable anti-British feeling was prevalent through Yunnan with regard to what was known as the Pienma Frontier case. Fortunately this has now subsided, and while I passed through Tengyueh, the Deputy Commissioner from Bhamo and the Chief of the Military Police Battalion were making a three months stay there in order to study the language and cultivate more friendly relations with the authorities. The present official is a most enlightened man who has had great experience with Europeans in other part of China, and would not be likely to throw obstacles in the way, although naturally he would have to obey instructions from Yunnanfu.

Even from a political point of view alone, I would suggest that it is advisable for the railway to be constructed, but when one considers the commercial possibilities in addition, the whole scheme seems to be but the natural concomitant to the expansion of British trade and energy. Although the province of Yunnan has a population of not more than ten million people, it must be remembered that its development has been retarded mainly by the difficulty of communications and the terrible Panthay rebellion of fifty years ago.

The wealthiest part of the whole province lies in the western valleys which draw their supplies from the trade centre of Hsiakuan, the commercial suburb of Talifu. This prosperous town has a population of 30,000 and is by far the most important centre of commerce and industry in the province. It now draws the bulk of its supplies of foreign goods from Burma, but if the French ever extended their line from Yunnanfu and placed their freights on an economic

basis, it is extremely probable that the trade would be diverted to Tonking.

In Yunnan, as in the neighboring province of Szechuan, the whole population is clothed in cotton garments and yet practically no cotton is grown in the province. The whole of the clothing of this part of China has to be imported either in the form of raw cotton, cotton yarn, or cotton cloth. The greater part comes as cotton yarn and is woven into cloth in the homes of the people. In 1912 of £125,000 worth of cotton yarn imported into Tengyueh, £140,000 worth was sent inland under transit pass, £100,000 worth being absorbed by Talifu and the surrounding valley.

The opinion has frequently been expressed that by constructing a railway across Yunnan to the neighbouring province of Szechuan, the immense trade of the latter market would be diverted from Shanghai and the lower Yangtze to Rangoon and the Irawaddy.

After traversing both provinces I cannot too strongly state my opinion that such a development is not only extremely unlikely but practically impossible. Szechuan is situated on the Yangtze basin, and although the rapids and gorges of the river have always impeded the quick transit of goods, these obstacles are now being overcome, firstly by steam navigation between Ichang and Chungking, and secondly by railway communication with Hankow. The proposed line through Yunnan would be 1,000 miles in length from the Burma frontier to the Yangtze, would have a ruling gradient of as high as one in seventeen and would cost more per mile than the Rocky Mountain section of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

As Lord Curzon said in 1907: "The building of a railway across Yunnan to the Yangtze would be, if not a physical impossibility, at any rate so costly an undertaking that neither the Home Government nor any other company or syndicate could conceivably undertake it. The idea that if it were built, the wealth of Szechuan would stream down

a single metre gauge line, many miles of which would have to scale the mountains by a rack, to Rangoon, while great arterial rivers flow through the heart of the province of Szechuan itself, which are quite competent to convey its trade to and from the sea, is one as it seems to me in the present stage of Central Asian evolution, almost of mid-summer madness.”

This stricture, however, does not apply to the line now under discussion, which would be on a dividend-paying basis from the commencement, and the cost of which, even if extended on to Talifu, the natural objective of all lines from Burma, would not exceed £5,000,000.

The question arises—who is to build the line and what funds are to be used? The Indian Government would doubtless construct the section to the Burma frontier, but beyond that point we have to deal with the fears and prejudices of a nation who have had bitter experience of foreign concessionaires in the past, and who are firmly determined to keep the control of the railways in their own hands. The day for concessions like the French line to Yunnanfu, which virtually gives France sovereign rights over the line of track, is gone for ever. When I was in Bhamo I had a long talk with the Chinese headman on the subject; and while he strongly advocated a railway to Tengyueh, he would not listen to the suggestion that it should be under foreign control, and insisted that the Chinese merchants were quite able to finance the undertaking themselves.

I would venture to suggest two alternative solutions to the problem. Firstly, the Chinese might find the capital themselves and let the contract for construction to a firm of leading British contractors such as Messrs. Paulings or Weetman, Pearson and Company, who are quite prepared to carry out the construction work on easy financial terms without requiring any other guarantees than that they should be paid for their work. Or secondly, that a syndicate

such as the British and Chinese Corporation should take the matter up with the active support of the British Government, should raise the capital necessary for the construction as they have done in many other railways in China, and should obtain adequate security that the bondholders would be repaid, and that the railway would be run on economic lines.

This they have succeeded in doing in other parts of China notably in the case of the Shanghai-Nanking, the Tientsin-Pukow and the Canton-Kowloon Railways, and there is no reason why the scheme should not be successfully carried out in the case of the proposed Bhamo-Tengyueh-Talifu Railway. A great deal will depend upon the support afforded by the British Government, as it is unlikely that the Chinese will give their assent to the scheme without strong and steady pressure being brought to bear by the British Legation at Peking. The Government of India are furthermore in possession of the survey reports and general information which has been collected on the subject, and their assent and co-operation would be necessary in constructing the 42 miles of line on the Burma side of the frontier. As a preliminary measure I would urge that strong representations be made to the Secretary of State for India setting forth the urgent need, both in the interest of Lancashire trade and also of the Empire as a whole for the construction of the Bhamo-Tengyueh Railway.

When one has travelled for weeks and months over the awful passes and gorges of western China with nought but range after range of mighty peaks as far as the eye can reach, and often not even sufficient level ground to pitch a 7 by 7 mountain tent, and when one has seen how British goods are transported for hundreds of miles on the backs of wretched pack mules struggling over execrable roads and constantly succumbing either to sudden landslides or to the deadly malaria, the power and vastness of British trade makes a deep and lasting impression which can never be

effaced. And if by this brief and imperfect statement of the case for the Yunnan Railway this afternoon, I have contributed in some small way to the general advancement of our trade and interests in Western China, it will be one of the most gratifying results of an arduous though most enjoyable journey.

