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THE GORGE OF THE ARUN

Captain C. J. Morris, 3rd Q.A.O. Gurkha Rifles

Read at the Evening Meeting of the Society, 18 June 1923.

WHEN the monsoon put an end to our climbing activities on Mount Everest it was decided to go down to Kharta for a short rest before returning to India, and if the weather permitted to visit the Kama valley. On the morning of 10 June 1922 we looked on Mount Everest for the last time, and proceeding *viâ* Rebu and the Doya La reached Teng, at the entrance to the Kharta valley, on the 14th, after a quite uneventful journey. Major Norton and Captain Bruce had been awaiting us for some days, as they had come on before us in order to try and recuperate from the effects of their frostbite.

The Arun, one of the principal tributaries of the Kosi, rises behind the main chain. It drains the plains of Tingri and Khamba in Tibet, and then with the force of its accumulated waters carves its way through the main chain of the Himalaya directly between the gigantic mountain massifs of Everest on the one side and Kangchenjunga on the other. Between our camp at Teng and the village of Kyimateng, a distance of only 20 miles in a straight line, the river drops 4000 feet. We were particularly interested to explore this part of the Arun, and to find out whether this tremendous drop consisted of a series of great rapids and waterfalls, or of a steady fall in the bed of the river. Also it was quite apparent from our view of the river from Teng that the gorges would be of the very greatest interest. But it was doubtful whether we should be able to undertake this journey on account of transport difficulties and weather. In the mean time we made arrangements for the whole party to go over to the Kama valley.

Having dumped all our heavy kit we set off on our first march. It was a short one of only a few miles, for it was necessary to halt for the night at Kharta to pay our respects to the Dzongpen, who had done so much for the 1921 Expedition, and in whose district we were now travelling. Although the Kama is only two marches from here, and also forms part of the Kharta district, the Dzongpen told us that during the ten years in which he had held office he had found it quite impossible to visit the country thereabouts, as he had been told that it would be necessary for him to go a portion of the way on foot owing to the state of the roads,

and he considered this an indignity he did not feel justified in submitting to. I think this attitude is quite typical of the ruling classes in rural Tibet, and must in a great measure account for the slack way in which the country is governed in the less-frequented parts. In the evening the Dzungpen entertained us all to dinner, but not having been brought up to eat macaroni with a pair of slender chopsticks and to consume numerous cups of tea spiced with butter and rock salt, I cannot say that I thoroughly enjoyed the function. However, the ever-thoughtful Norton had tactfully arranged that the courses of the Dzungpen's dinner should be alternated with others of our own cook's manufacture, and this most skilful arrangement saved the majority of us from going hungry to bed.

On the following morning we were off early, as we had a long uphill march over the Samchung La. Looking back from the top of the pass one has a wonderful view right up the part of the Arun valley which lies in Tibet; but on the other side of the pass a still more wonderful sight was in store for us, for here the ground was covered with bright yellow primulas (*Sikkimensis*) and dwarf rhododendrons in full bloom. We could see nothing of the country in front of us, as a thick mist was drifting across from the Chog La and it now began to rain. As we reached the bottom of the pass the mists cleared a little, and we were able to catch a glimpse of the road we had just descended by. We pitched our camp on the banks of the beautiful lakes in the valley between the two passes, but it was not until early the following morning that we were able to realize the full beauty of the scenery surrounding us. I have never seen such wonderful colouring in water, ranging from deep purple to bright cobalt-blue.

Making another early start we were soon at the top of the Chog La, which still had a good deal of snow on it. We had hoped to get a view of Makalu from here, but after waiting over an hour we gave it up as hopeless, as the clouds were getting thicker all the time. After a long and rather tiring descent we reached our camping-ground at Sakyateng in the Kama valley. We were now almost enveloped in the clouds, and remained practically so during the whole of our stay here. Photography was extremely difficult, as it often meant waiting for a considerable time in the hope that the clouds would lift for a few moments and allow one to take a picture. After a short rest here we had intended to split up into small parties—some visiting the Popti La and lower Kama, while others explored the upper part of the valley. But owing to the bad weather and the difficulty of obtaining any coolies locally it was decided that only Captain Noel and I should go down to Kyimateng, where the Kama flows into the Arun, and from there attempt to find a way through the gorge and return to Teng by that route. The remainder of the party were to return to Teng at once, and to make arrangements for the homeward journey across Tibet pending our arrival.

Sakyateng itself is merely a small collection of grazing huts used by

Tibetan shepherds who bring their flocks to graze at this season of the year. I imagine that the huts are unoccupied during the greater part of the year, and the position of the camp probably changes from year to year according to whether there is good grazing in the vicinity or not. It would be interesting to visit Sakyateng in say twenty years' time, and to see whether the place was still used. It would also be a matter of great interest to find out how these temporary villages are named, as I was unable to find any one who could tell me the meaning of Sakyateng, which might have given one a clue.

Hearing that a party of Tibetans had come from Kyimateng with supplies of salt, we went over to interview them in the hope that they might be persuaded to carry our kit for us. They agreed to come as far as Kyimateng, and with the help of a few of our own Sherpa porters we were able to make a start. Looking from the shelf of Sakyateng, on which we were camped, one sees 2000 feet below the white thread of the Kama torrent which issues from the glaciers of Mount Everest and Makalu. The steep hillside is clothed in dense green forest at this season of the year, and the steady drizzle of rain soaks the undergrowth and drips from every leaf. A fairly good path leads down the left bank of the river as far as Chutromo, where, crossing the river, it ascends to the Popti La, a more or less frequented trade route between Nepal and Tibet. Of course this was about the worst time of the whole year in which to travel, for we could not hope for more than a few occasional hours without rain. Nor is the rain the only thing to contend with, for in a densely vegetated country like the Kama the undergrowth swarms with hungry leeches, and it is almost an impossibility to escape from their attentions.

We set off from Sakyateng on June 27, in heavy rain. We had hoped to reach Kyimateng, but after marching some three and a half hours we met Noel's servant, who had been sent forward to buy supplies, and was now on his way back to meet us. He told us that we were not even half-way to Kyimateng, so we decided to camp for the night at the first suitable spot. A short distance beyond we came to the bridge leading across to the Popti La, at one time a much-frequented trade route between Nepal and Tibet, but now more or less discarded in favour of the more direct route straight up the Arun valley. Near the bridge is a small clearing, known as Chutromo. There were a few deserted stone huts dotted about, but they appeared not to have been occupied for some considerable time. It was this fact that first caused me to think that these small grazing villages do not exist in the same place for more than a few years. It would also seem to prove that the Popti route has fallen into disuse.

The rain had now ceased, and we made haste to pitch our tent before it should start again. A little later a somewhat watery sun made its appearance. No sooner had the sun set than thousands of tiny midges emerged, making rest almost impossible. They continued their attentions far into the night, and at last, driven to desperation, we lit a small fire of

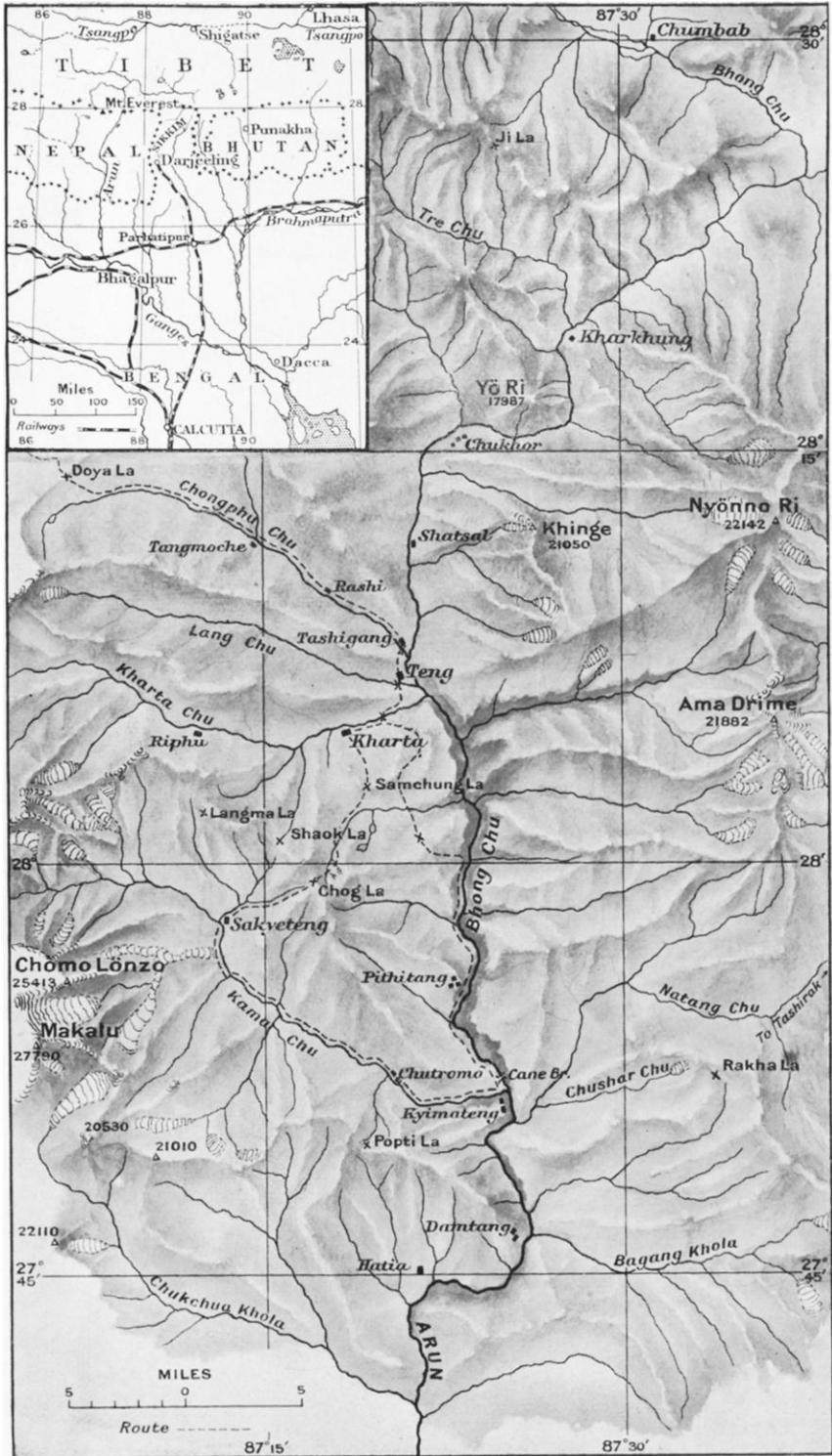
juniper twigs at the tent entrance, and took it in turns to sit up and keep it from going out.

There was no rain when we started the next morning, but thick clouds were drifting slowly up the valley. We were soon level with the Popti I.a. In spite of the humid atmosphere of the valley below there was still a little snow lying in the shadows on the Pass. The forest now became still more wonderful, and the trees were very much larger as we got lower down. Here and there by the bed of the river we came across delightful little glades, carpeted with moss and thick with purple irises. The path became almost invisible at times owing to the thickness of the undergrowth, and for about 2 miles was about 4 inches under water; but here the Tibetans had cut down large trees and laid them end to end along the path, which enabled one to keep fairly dry as long as one did not fall off, a not infrequent occurrence.

At last the forest ended abruptly and we were walking across grassy slopes, high above the river. Just before the end of our march we came across a party of Gurkhas, the first real Nepalese we had yet met. They had come up from Dhankuta, one of the largest villages in eastern Nepal and a few days' march down the Arun, to graze their flocks, and were halting here a few days before going on to the rich grass lands above the gorge. After a steep descent we crossed the river by a quaint little bridge, almost hidden by the overhanging trees, and commenced the short but steep climb up to the village of Kyimateng. We camped a little outside the village, which is perched on the high cliffs overlooking the junction of the Kama and Arun rivers. Looking up the Arun from our camp we could just see the tiny village of Tsanga, but the river here bends sharply to the left and is lost to view—while looking down the river we get a glimpse into the forbidden land of Nepal.

Kyimateng, though strictly speaking in Tibet, is a typical Nepalese village. The neat little houses are each surrounded by well-kept fields of Indian corn, wheat, and barley. The fields are bounded by stone walls, and each contains a small machan (light bamboo structure) from which a look-out is kept for bears at night. Kyimateng and the surrounding villages are so inaccessible that the people do not appear to come under the influence of either Tibet or Nepal, leading an independent life. The village boasts of five *Gömbos* (headmen), who all came to pay their respects early the following morning. They were extremely interested in our tents and cameras, and after a thorough inspection of everything we possessed, left in order to carry out their various duties in the village. They were unable to tell us anything of the route through the gorge, but promised to find out and also to try and get us another relay of coolies, for our original ones had not bargained to go beyond this place.

We spent the rest of the morning taking photographs in the village, and in the afternoon, as Noel was still busy with his kinema, I went to return the *Gömbos*' visit and to find out what our chances were of making



SKETCH-MAP OF THE GORGE OF THE ARUN (BHONG CHU)



NEPALESE AND TIBETANS FROM SAKYETENG



THE POPTI LA FROM THE NORTH BANK OF THE KAMA, $1\frac{1}{4}$ MILES BELOW CHÔTROMO

a start in the morning. To my horror I found practically the whole village drawn up outside the chief Gömbo's house. Bamboo matting had been laid down on the ground outside, and after an exchange of greetings we sat down to numerous cups of tea, fortunately without butter or salt this time. We conversed on general topics for a time, and then I thought it best to find out what arrangements had been made for us. The Gömbo at first said that there was no road through the gorge, and in any case no one was willing to go with us, as all the men in the village were occupied in the fields at this season of the year. I knew the information about there being no road to be incorrect, as the Gurkhas we met on the road the day before had told us they were on their way there. However, after a promise of double pay he guaranteed to find us coolies for the following morning.

It was necessary to pay the coolies in advance to the Gömbo, and in so doing I had an insight into the method of bookkeeping in force in this part of the world. A large board and a bag of beans were produced. The beans were laid out in rows, a row for each coolie, and a bean for each anna of the amount we agreed to pay each man. After counting the total several times the amount due from us was arrived at, and the board with the "account" on it was carefully removed inside the house. There are quite a number of Nepalese living in the village, and in consequence most of the inhabitants are bi-lingual, speaking Gurkhali, the *lingua franca* of Nepal, and Tibetan with equal fluency.

The Gömbo told me that the Popti route was being used less every year, and also that there was a fairly frequented path from Kyimateng to Tashirak, a Tibetan village some 30 miles away to the east, from which Captain Noel was turned back when he attempted to approach Mount Everest in 1913. In his paper ("A Journey to Tashirak in Southern Tibet, and the Eastern Approaches to Mount Everest," *Geogr. Journ.*, May 1919) Noel mentioned that "the approach to Mount Everest from the east would probably be across the Arun and directly west up the valleys leading to the foot of Everest." His route would undoubtedly have taken him the way we had just come, and it would have been a source of great satisfaction to him to have been able to go across to Tashirak again, and so complete his previous journey, but there was no time for this.

The road from Kyimateng, after recrossing the river and passing the fields of Lungto, which, although only a few hundred yards from Kyimateng across the river, is a purely Tibetan village and contains no Nepalese, plunges once more into the forest. The path mounts up over the cliffs, almost hiding the view of the river below, but revealing across the valley the magnificent waterfalls of Tsanga, some thousand feet in height. We continued through the forest for about three hours and then emerged on to a small alp, high above the river-bed. We found here a small matting hut, unoccupied but guarded by two savage dogs which were chained up inside. We decided to camp for the night. Strangely enough there was

no sign of water near, and we had to wait until the return of the occupants of the hut before we found out where they obtained it. Fortunately they soon returned, warned of the strangers' arrival by the savage barking of the two watch-dogs. They turned out to be Gurkhas—of the Rai tribe—and, like those we had previously met, also from Dhankuta. The old man, who must have been nearly eighty, had been, many years ago, in one of our Gurkha regiments, so we were soon talking of weapons and methods long since obsolete. He was able to tell us a certain amount about our route ahead, and said that this tract of country, although uninhabited by Tibetans, was yearly visited by large numbers of Gurkhas. The high cost of living would not appear to have penetrated as far as Nepal yet, for the old man was delighted to sell us a sheep and two chickens for the small sum of two rupees.

At the present time Nepal is an absolutely closed country, and is likely to remain always so. It is in some ways a great pity, for in this small kingdom is some of the most magnificent mountain scenery in the world, while the people certainly are amongst the most interesting. In this part of the Arun, though, it is possible to get quite a fair insight into the life of the high-living Nepalese. When one considers that they are out at day-break with their flocks and wandering about the hills until nightfall, it is no wonder that they are a hardy race. It is a common belief that all the inhabitants of Nepal, known generally as Gurkhas, are of one race. There are, as a matter of fact, at least eight distinct races, most of which speak a language totally different from the others, although all speak Khaskura, the *lingua franca* of the country.

The tribe inhabiting the north-east corner of Nepal, which adjoins the part of Tibet we are at present concerned with, differ from all the others. They are known as the Rai tribe. This tribe is again divided into a very great number of smaller tribes, and each of these sub-tribes again has a distinct language of its own. Many years ago, before Khaskura was known throughout the country, it must have been difficult for a Rai, particularly, to wander very far afield, for he would soon have been in a district where his speech was unintelligible. It would be interesting to trace the origin of all these languages. I presume that they probably have some connection with Tibetan.

In addition to the Nepalese there live, in this north-eastern corner, the Sherpas. The word Sherpa is Tibetan, and means "an easterner." They live on the highest slopes of all, speak Khaskura and Tibetan, and are extremely proud of being Nepalese subjects. They are the hardiest men of all, and provided us with the porters who did such magnificent work on Mount Everest, and without whose labours very little would have been accomplished.

Like all mountain people, the Nepalese are extremely fond of music. Their tunes are quite unlike the music of either India or Tibet; in fact, in some of the songs of eastern Nepal the scale employed is the

same as our own. They are either sung to the accompaniment of a mādal (a kind of small drum, played with the flat of the hand and the fingers) or on an instrument known as the bānsuli. This is merely a slender piece of hollow bambo with a series of little holes in it, with which the notes are formed. It gives a sound rather like a flute, but of course much thinner in tone. I will give you a few illustrations of the best-known tunes on the piano. But you must realize that it is difficult to give a true idea of Eastern music on this most Western of all instruments. You will notice in some of the tunes a striking resemblance to some of the old Scottish airs.

With regard to the words of the songs, it is not really possible to translate them into English. In most cases they are picturesque descriptions of the scenery, and give one a very good idea of the geography of the country and the customs of the people. The Arun figures in a very great number of them. We must now leave this to me most fascinating subject and continue our journey.

This part of the Arun, situated between Teng and Kyimateng, has no great waterfall, but passes through three deep gorges, one at Kyimateng, one at Teng, where, as we saw before, it enters the main range, and another between these two. For the rest it is a raging torrent running through narrow forested defiles. The remarkable drop of 4000 feet is caused by a steady fall in the bed of the river. In the centre of the gorge this fall is less pronounced and the river widens to nearly 80 yards. The average width of the river is from 30 to 40 yards, and the section of the valley is roughly V-shaped. In order to pass these gorges the path ascends and descends many thousands of feet. Looking down from the precipices one gets occasional glimpses of the torrent below, the cliffs above frequently rising to as much as 10,000 feet above the water and ending in snow-capped peaks. Here and there the promontories of the cliffs afford a wonderful panorama which rewards the exertions of the terrific ascents. But as these alternate ascents and descents are not single occurrences, but the normal nature of the track, one soon ceases to revel in the scenery and would willingly forgo these bird's-eye views from the cloud-level for the sake of a few yards' marching on the flat.

At the end of our second day's march the track appeared to come to an end. We could find no place suitable for camping, so we cut away the undergrowth from what did duty as the road. While we were doing this a swarm of bees descended on us, scattering the porters in all directions. They quickly wrapped their faces and hands in blankets, and it was some time before we could persuade them to uncover themselves. We spent the rest of the evening trying to discover the path, but were unsuccessful in finding anything. Noel and I both decided that we would not face the long and tiring journey back again the way we had come, so the only thing to be done was to make a road of our own. This we did by cutting a way through the thick jungle with kukris (a curved knife, the national weapon of the Nepalese). Fortunately the trees were mostly bamboos, so

that this was comparatively easy. We mounted over the great central gorge, and on the far side of it, dropping down to the river-bed, found a narrow strip of sand just big enough to contain our tiny camp.

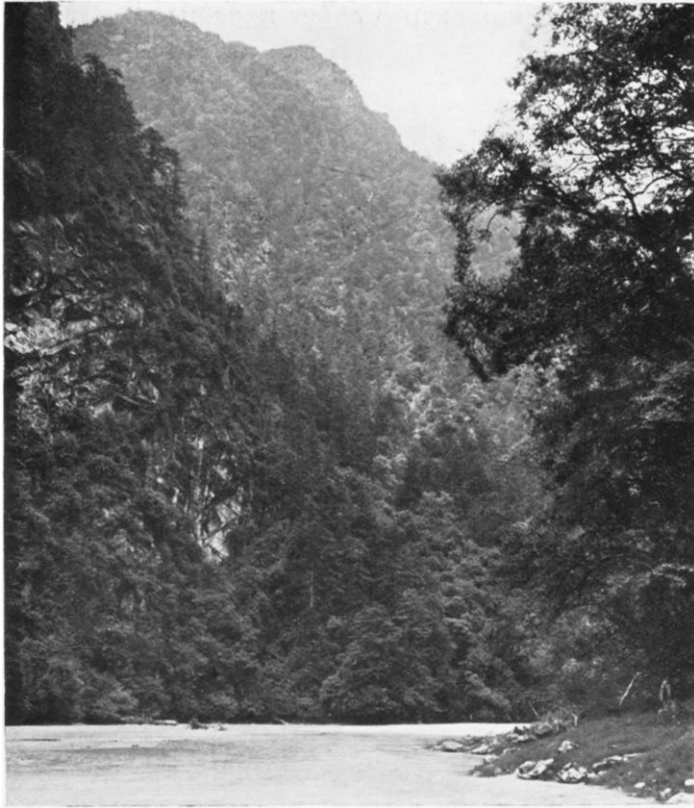
This was one of the most beautiful spots seen in the valley. Wild flowers grew here in great profusion, the most conspicuous amongst them being a giant white lily, fully 6 feet high. That evening the rain, which had been falling for most of the day, cleared, and the rising clouds revealed the luxuriant walls of the valley, which seemed to rise almost vertical above us, with black caverns beneath, where the trees trailed and projected over the water's edge.

During the fourth march we struck the track again, which is here apparently used by the Tibetans, who come down from the Teng end of the valley in order to cut wood. This path led up a side valley descending from the mountains round about the Chog La. We camped at the head of this valley, and next day crossing the Sakai Chu, a small stream which descends from the Samchung La, and the Yulök La, descended to Kharta. Here we were able to get ponies, and were soon back with the main party again. After a brief rest, during which we developed the whole of our photographs, we all set off once more on the long journey across the plains of Tibet. After an uneventful journey we reached Darjeeling again early in August. Our journeyings were now over for this year, but still we had the joys of being in a civilized country again, and were able to appreciate them all the more.

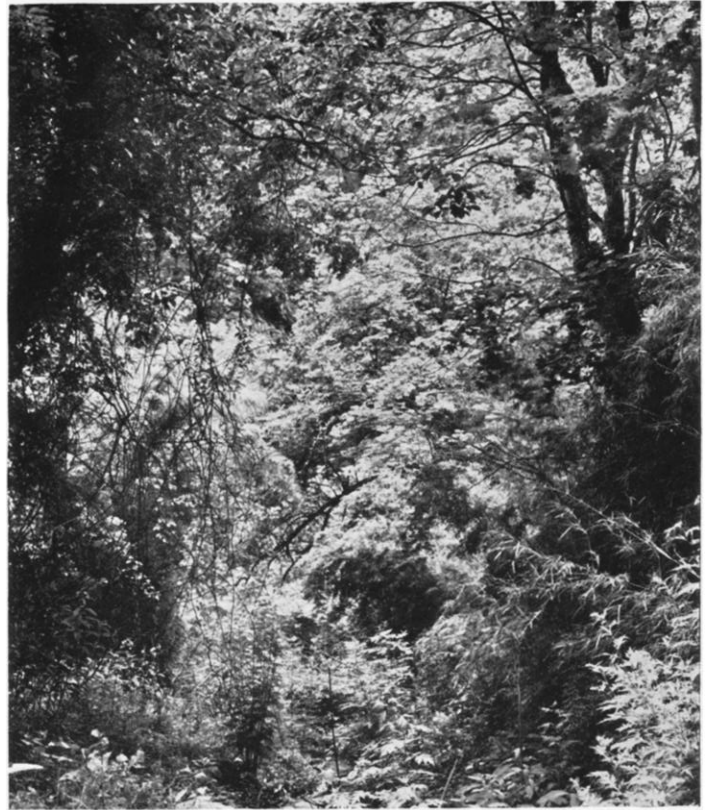
Before the paper the PRESIDENT said: The paper to-night by Captain Morris is upon the Arun gorge, and I ought perhaps to explain at once that the Arun river of which Captain Morris proposes to speak is not the river in Sussex, and the gorges of which he is going to tell us are not, therefore, some geological freak upon the estates of the Duke of Norfolk. Captain Morris, as you no doubt all know, was a member of the last Mount Everest Expedition, and to his credit lies one of the most distinctively geographical pieces of work which that Expedition accomplished. The Arun river which he is going to describe rises, as a matter of fact, on the northern side of the great Himalayan watershed, and it forces its way south through an immense gorge in that watershed. In the course of some 20 miles it drops something like 4000 feet, and Captain Morris's purpose when he undertook this piece of exploration was to ascertain, so far as possible, the nature of this remarkable gorge. He will, no doubt, be able to illustrate his remarks by a series of photographs of the wonderful scenery which he encountered in the course of his journey. I now have great pleasure in asking Captain Morris to give us his description of the gorge as he found it.

Captain Morris then read the paper printed above, and played on the piano a number of Nepalese airs which he had recorded.

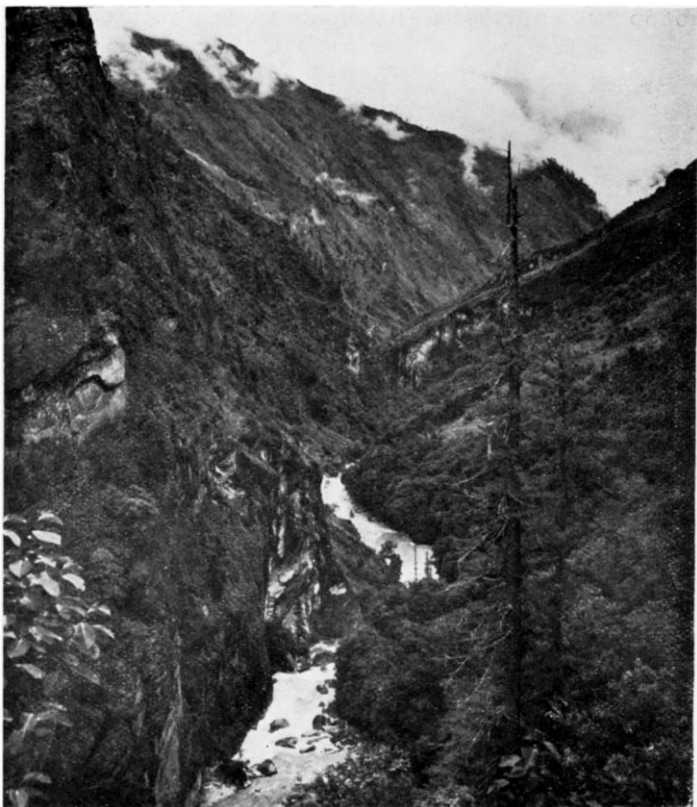
The PRESIDENT: I am sure we all regret that Captain Noel, whom Captain Morris accompanied, is not able to be present this evening to add anything to what his companion has told us of their journey. But we are singularly fortunate in having with us to-night Sir Charles Bell, whose knowledge of Tibet and the adjacent regions is perhaps unrivalled. He has recently spent



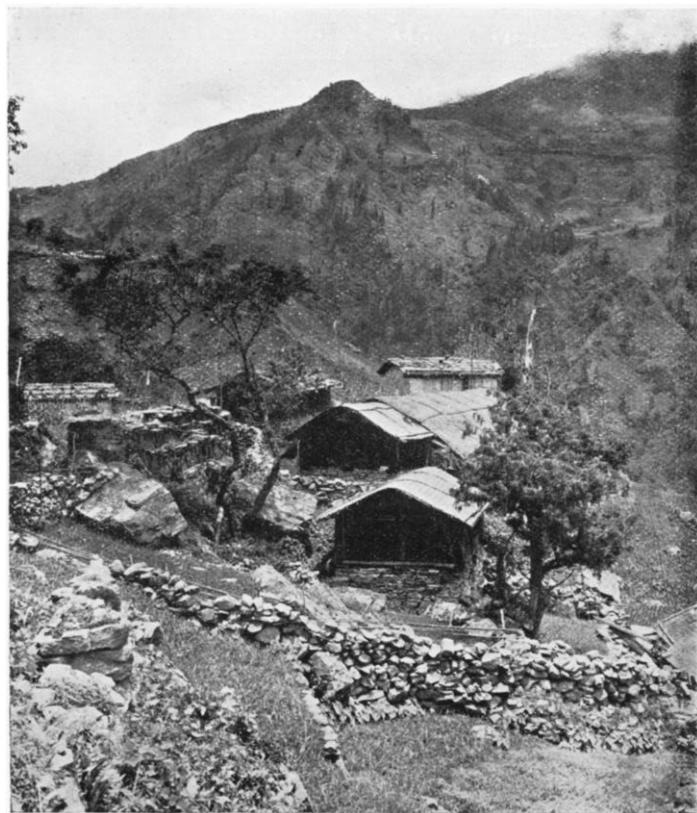
LOOKING SOUTH FROM ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE GORGE



THE ARUN FOREST: END OF THE TRACK AFTER THE SECOND DAY'S MARCH



LOOKING SOUTH FROM ABOUT 4 MILES NORTH OF KYIMATENG



LOOKING NORTH UP THE ARUN FROM KYIMATENG: FALL OF TSANGA IN BACKGROUND



NEPALESE (RAI) FAMILY FROM DHONKUTU AT SUMMER GRAZING CAMP IN THE ARUN VALLEY



CAMP IN THE ARUN FOREST WHERE TRACK ENDED ON SECOND DAY'S MARCH



ENTRANCE TO CENTRAL GORGE, LOOKING SOUTH FROM MIDWAY BETWEEN KYIMATENG AND TENG



NORTHERN ENTRANCE TO ARUN GORGE, LOOKING SOUTH FROM TENG

a prolonged period, a year or more I think, in Lhasa, and I shall be glad if he will say a few words on the subject of the paper of this evening.

Sir CHARLES BELL : The lecture that we have listened to this evening has brought back very vividly to me the twenty years or so that I spent in Tibet and on the Tibetan borderland. I propose, with your permission, to say a few words upon one or two of the many interesting points which our lecturer has raised. He was talking, among other things, about the grazing settlements. Those settlements are typical of Tibetan life, because the Tibetans at first were entirely a grazing people and at a much later period in their history took to cultivating the soil. As far as my experience went, the practice was for the settlements to move up a valley further and further as the summer advanced, usually staying about a month or six weeks in each place. They would start—in north Sikkim or in Tibet—at an elevation of some 8000 feet in March, and gradually move up to 13,000 or 14,000 feet by July. Then, as the winter approached, they would gradually come down again.

Captain Morris referred to the number of abandoned or semi-abandoned trade routes that he found. I do not wish to dogmatize, but I would suggest that this abandonment may be due, at any rate in part, to the opening of the British trade route through the Chumbi Valley. This latter attracts more and more of the Tibetan trade every year. The trade between Tibet and India passes over a frontier about 2000 miles in length, and half the total amount of trade comes down the Chumbi Valley. Gurkhas have often told me that the opening of this Chumbi Valley route has more and more destroyed their own trade routes, because the people have deserted their rough tracks and gone down this better road.

I was much interested to hear about the gigantic lily of which Captain Morris showed us such a lifelike picture, for this beautiful flower is to be found in north Sikkim also. I have seen it 6, and perhaps even 7, feet high with extraordinarily beautiful flowers which grew two and two a long way down the stalk. Another point on which I would venture to confirm what the lecturer has said is as regards the different Nepalese languages. As he has rightly told us, the different tribes of Nepal each speak a dialect of their own ; and he has further informed us—a point on which I was ignorant—that the sub-tribes even have languages of their own. These languages of the different tribes of Nepal are almost the only languages outside Tibet that are closely connected with Tibetan. The language of the Khas tribe is of course derived from Sanskrit. It often happens in Tibet that after going a very short way, crossing perhaps a range of hills into another valley, one finds a marked difference in the dialect. Of course there are no railways in the country to unify these differences, and even no roads as we understand the word "road." The porters who worked for the Mount Everest Expedition, although they belong to a Tibetan tribe, yet when they go to Lhasa, are not understood by the people there. They have to find somebody to interpret for them until they can learn to speak the Lhasan dialect. So far does this difference of dialect go that the Tibetans have a proverb in which they say, "Every district its own dialect ; every priest his own doctrine."

It was of especial interest to me to hear about the Arun country, in which I have never been myself, because it was in that part of the world that in the year 1792 the Chinese conducted a military expedition which has become famous in history. It was about 1791 that the Gurkhas, who had then newly come into their power in Nepal, made an expedition into Tibet and raided the highly venerated monastery of Tashi Lhunpo, the seat of the Tashi Lama

near Shigatse. The Chinese organized an expedition against them. In European books the numbers engaged in that expedition have been greatly exaggerated: nevertheless it was a considerable expedition and was composed of both Chinese and Tibetan soldiers. The expedition, as you know, marched across the whole of Tibet from the Chinese border, some 2000 miles at least, defeated the Gurkhas in several engagements, and finally dictated an ignominious peace almost within sight of Khatmandu, the capital of Nepal.

When I was in Lhasa a couple of years ago I saw various monoliths there with historical inscriptions, and among them was one which recorded the defeat of the Gurkhas. According to the usual Chinese practice, they were in high-flown style. I had a translation made, and in it I read, among other flowery praises, that the glorious army "crossed the mountains, so difficult to travel through, as if they were traversing a level plain; they crossed rivers with great waves and narrow gorges as though they were mere streams: they fought seven battles and gained seven victories."

We have had a good practical account of the Arun river from our lecturer this evening. Tibetan accounts of their own rivers are sometimes inclined to be fanciful. The Tibetans believe that four large rivers rise from that mountain in western Tibet which the Indians know as Kailas and which the Tibetans know as Kang Rimpo-she, "The Snow of Great Price." Of those rivers we are told that "The first proceeds from the mouth of a horse and flows through Tibet, the land of horses; the second comes out of the mouth of a lion and flows through Ladakh, where men have the strength of lions; the third issues from the mouth of an elephant and flows through Nepal, the land of elephants; the fourth proceeds from the mouth of a peacock and flows through China, the land of beautiful women." Whatever the other rivers may have achieved, I cannot help feeling admiration for the river that flows through China, because, in order to reach China at all, it would have to climb over or burrow under three of the most substantial mountain masses in Asia.

The PRESIDENT: Major Morshead, who was a member of the Mount Everest Expedition of 1921 and 1922, is also present, and in asking him to say a few words I would at the same time congratulate him upon his recovery from the severe attack of frostbite from which he suffered.

Major MORSHEAD: I am afraid I have nothing to add to the interesting lecture we have had to-night.

The PRESIDENT: Then I ask Prof. Turner, the Sanskrit scholar, who has recently made an extensive study of Nepalese languages, whether he would add a word or two.

Prof. TURNER: I feel, after you have heard Captain Morris and Sir Charles Bell speak of this country of Tibet where it neighbours Nepal, that I have no business at all to address you; for the nearest I have been to Tibet is but to see its snows from India, and the furthest that I have been in Nepal is but a few yards when I walked along the ridge which separates British India from Nepal on the Darjeeling side, and where every now and then the path passes to the Nepal side of the boundary pillars. But as I listened to Captain Morris's rendering of those Rāi songs I felt I had but to shut my eyes and I was back again on that mountain path, the mists surrounding me, with now and then a clearance through which I could look down into one of those mysterious valleys of an almost unknown land, while high above, coming down the path from some distant valley on a four or five days' march to the nearest market, there was a party of Rāini girls singing such songs as Captain Morris gave us.

There is one point I might elaborate which both Captain Morris and Sir

Charles Bell spoke of : the history of the languages spoken in that part of the world. They both mentioned languages in the plural and I repeat it, for, as we were told, the languages spoken there are almost innumerable. Not only are conditions so different from what we are accustomed to in Western Europe where the same language may be spoken by millions of people in more or less the same form, whereas there are a great many languages differing, as we have been told, from valley to valley or even from village to village, but the matter is sometimes even more complicated, and where the speakers of one language have migrated, for some reason or other, you may to-day find living in the same village, side by side, families speaking languages completely unintelligible to each other. So that a household may have one language as its mother tongue, while the next household has another language as its mother tongue, and neither could understand the other unless they had a third language in common. And if you will permit me for a moment to take up your time I should like to tell you how it came about that they have this third language in common.

All these multitudinous languages—and the Linguistic Survey of India speaks of at least twenty different languages in Nepal alone, all mutually unintelligible—which are spoken from the far north-west in Baltistan to the far south-east in Burma, belong to a family commonly called the Tibeto-Burman. They are connected, on the one hand, with the Tai languages to which belongs Siamese, and, on the other, with Chinese, and the whole are sometimes grouped under the name of Mongolian or Indo-Chinese. The Mongolians coming from the north and pressing down into the more fertile valleys on the southern face of the Himalayas, spoke probably a language which was sensibly the same. But, as the pictures that you have seen to-night have shown you, the country is such that communication is difficult in the extreme, even if, unlike the Tibetan governor, you are willing to move on your feet, and at the same time there has been no political power stretching over that whole extent of country which would hold a community together. The result was that in course of time this extraordinary diversity of language developed, just as in Europe the Latin language, which was spoken over the whole of the Roman Empire, diverged with the break-up of that empire into the various Romance languages of to-day. Such a state of affairs in which the people of one valley speak a different language from the people of the next and two households in the same village may have different languages is not likely to be stable when it comes into contact with a higher civilization. And what we can observe to-day is a process which has been going on for a considerable number of centuries. The Mongolians pressed forward on to the southern slopes of the Himalayas from the north, and at the same time there were peoples moving into and along the mountains from India. These people whose languages are spoken over the whole of North and Central India entered India from the west, and their language, called Sanskrit, is of the same stock, the same family, as our own or as Latin and Greek, and very nearly the whole of the population of Northern and Central India now speak languages descended from this one language, Sanskrit. From the earliest times after their arrival in India these people, called the Aryans, tended to press up into the mountains up the lower slopes of the Himalaya, and at a comparatively early period, certainly by 600 A.D. and probably several centuries earlier, they had already reached this mountain land of Nepal. They bear the name of Khas, a word which you can find in the names of various tribes and castes along all the southern slopes of the Himalaya, and which occurs again probably in the name of the country Kashmir,

and possibly of Kashgar ; Pliny mentions it in his geography as the name of a tribe in northern India, the Cesi. Those people speak an Aryan language descended from Sanskrit, and that language they call Khaskurā, the language of the Khas ; or Parbatiyā, the language of the mountains ; or Gorkhāli Bhāshā, the language of the Gurkhas.

About the middle of the eighteenth century a Khas tribe speaking this Aryan language, who were settled round the little town of Gorkhā in Nepal, gained under their leader, Prithivā Narāyan Shah, the ascendancy in the valley of Nepal where lies Khatmandu, and from the valley of Nepal they spread their power over the whole of what is now Nepal, and at one time far exceeded its present boundaries until their power clashed with that of the Honourable East India Company. Their language, an Aryan language descended from Sanskrit, being the language of the ruling caste and of government in Nepal, has tended, and is still tending, to oust all the various disjunct Mongolian dialects and to become among the people the common means of communication, so that now where you have one household speaking a language quite unintelligible to its next-door neighbour, they both have to learn Khaskurā in order to communicate with each other. This is the language, often I must confess in a very mutilated form, which is used as the general means of communication in the Gurkha battalions of the Indian Army.

I think possibly a future historian may draw attention to this one small point, that here in India we have been in close alliance for a century with a country with which our borders march for over 700 miles, from which we have drawn many thousands of men to serve in our Indian Army, and yet, if you will forgive this anti-climax, of whose language we have never yet produced a dictionary. It is true that some vocabularies have been made, but nothing like an attempt at a complete dictionary of the language has yet been published, and the reason of that is the reason of so many other of our present difficulties, the lack of funds.

I do not know, my lord, whether before the Royal Geographical Society I may turn from this short excursus on the language of the people of whom we have been hearing to-night to say a few words on one of their other activities. Captain Morris has told us of the people of Nepal, and he has shown us such very charming photographs of some of the individuals, that I feel I may be forgiven. We have heard to-night casual mention of the Gurkha battalions of the Indian Army. I feel that the British public at large have no clear realization of what the inhabitants of that little strip of country—it looks little enough on the map though it is 700 miles long—have done for us in the last few years. The population of Nepal is estimated to be not more than 3,000,000 people, and of that probably less than half belong to the fighting tribes. And yet during the years of the war 200,000 men were recruited from that country to help us ; 55,000 were actually enlisted in the Gurkha battalions of the Indian Army. We had a certain ideal, perhaps, before us, and they too had their ideal—not the same as ours : it was the ideal of being true to their salt. When General Bruce came back from the Mount Everest Expedition he opened in Darjeeling a memorial to the Gurkhas who had fallen in the war. It was a Rest House for those widows and orphans who come down from the mountains to receive their pensions from the British Government year by year. In the middle of the courtyard there is a pillar on which is this inscription in Khaskurā : “ To all the Gurkhas who in England’s Great War between 1914 and 1918 passed to the other world this dharmasala is built.” The bodies of those who thus passed over fell in many parts of the world. Gurkha soldiers were to be found

cheerfully enduring tropic heat or the cold of the northern winters or the thirst of sandy deserts. Almost wherever there was a theatre of war Gurkhas were to be found, and everywhere they added only lustre to their name for high courage. Gurkhas helped to hold the sodden trenches of France in that first terrible winter and during the succeeding summer. Their graves are thick on the Peninsula, in Sinai, and on the stony hills of Judæa. They fell in the forests of Africa and on the plains of Tigris and Euphrates, and even among the wild mountains that border on the Caspian Sea. And to those who know, when they see the map of that country which we have had before us to-night, of Nepal, there must always recur the thought of what the people of that country have done for us.

The PRESIDENT : In conclusion, I would ask Major Wheeler, a member of the Mount Everest Expedition of 1921, who did the photographic survey of the country, if he would say a word.

Major WHEELER : I am afraid I have very little to say with regard to the paper we have heard to-night ; although I was in Tibet in 1921, I looked at the the Arun gorge only from the village of Teng, which is quite a long way off. I was, however, very much interested to hear Captain Morris's description of the Expedition up the gorge, and to see his beautiful pictures. There is only one point in his paper that I would like to refer to : that is his remark as to having to wait sometimes an hour before taking one snap-shot. From my own experience I think that he was extremely lucky, for I found many times that I had to sit on the top of a mountain for nearly a whole day in order to get one picture !

The PRESIDENT : In thanking Captain Morris for his lecture this evening I would venture to congratulate him upon the success of the experiment of interposing a brief musical interlude in a geographical discourse. I was particularly interested in the tunes of the folk songs which he gave us, because I always found an immense attraction myself in the music of the people of the eastern Himalayas, and I can certainly confirm what Captain Morris said as to the curious resemblance which the music of these mountain peoples often bears to the music of our own mountain peoples in the United Kingdom, the people of Scotland. Not only do the tunes bear a strong resemblance to many Scottish airs, but the people of Sikkim, at any rate, possess instruments which recall to any Scotchman very vividly his own national form of music. They have a combination of two instruments, one of which produces the exact sound of the drone of the bagpipe, and when that is combined with a particular form of horn it is almost impossible, if you shut your eyes, to doubt that you are listening to the familiar drone of the pipes. So much so that one of the constant companions of my rambles in those parts of the world, a Scotchman and an elder of a Scottish kirk who figures under that title in a recent publication of my own, was on one occasion misled into believing that the inhabitants of a certain village, out of courtesy to our nationality (which was probably quite unknown to them), were regaling us with a rendering of "Scotland for Ever."

In bringing this Session to a close may I venture, on your behalf, to assure Captain Morris that the concluding lecture of a Session during which we have had many interesting accounts of a number of out-of-the-way parts of the world, has been by no means the least interesting.
